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The Age of Inexperience: Theories of Unlived Love in Early Modern France

LaBrada, Eloy Francisco Rodriguez

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THE AGE OF INEXPERIENCE:

THEORIES OF UNLIVED LOVE IN EARLY MODERN FRANCE

Eloy F. R. LaBrada

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Advisers: Claudia Brodsky & April Alliston

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Abstract

The pre-revolutionary period in Europe is often called the age of enlightenment and experiment: an epoch marked by Bacon's scientific *experimentum*, Locke and Hume's experiential empiricism, and Diderot's experimental fiction (to name but a few). But *expérience*, both "experiment" and "experience" in French, could refer to experimentations of all kinds, spanning from the scientific to the sexual, and thus raised serious concerns about what kinds of experiments ought to be undertaken and by whom. Which experiences are socially acceptable, and which are not? Who has the right to experiment/experience? When it comes to the education of "young women" in early modern France, it will not be experience but *in*experience —a "lack of experience"— that becomes a regulatory ideal preconized in many old regime didactic treatises and educational tracts. In what ways is experience regulated by gender norms circumscribing who qualifies as a subject of experience, who can and cannot have experience, as well as what does and does not count as experience? How is experience distinguished from inexperience, and when do such distinctions founder? This philosophical inquiry follows the trope of "inexperience" from its appearance in select writings of early modern France to its contemporary legacies, exploring how discourses of experience/experiment will have always been inextricable from the question of gender norms. After touching upon theories of experience in the history of western philosophy (Chapter 1), this work then moves to certain early modern texts — by Crenne (Chapter 2), Du Plaisir (Chapter 3), Ducos (Chapter 4), and others— which theorize amorous experience in terms of its unlivedness and by the ways in which it cannot be experienced in presence or in person. Subverting the distinction between experience and its inexperience, these theories of unlived love suggest that experience, most especially amorous experience, is ultimately impossible to delimit and define. A closing coda, engaging with these early modern texts philosophically and reading them in terms of the history of philosophy, contends that these theories of unlived love prefigure the interrogation of self-present experience credited to Nietzsche, Wittgenstein, Derrida, and others, by laying siege to the metaphysical presuppositions that have long structured conceits of "experience," from the Cartesian *cogito* to Husserl's transcendental *Ego*.

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i. the age of inexperience

> Philosophy is no doubt a delightful thing, Socrates, as long as one is exposed to it in moderation at the appropriate time of life. But if one spends more time with it than he should, it's a man's undoing, for even if one is naturally well favored but engages in philosophy far beyond that appropriate time of life, he can't but help but turn out to be inexperienced in everything a man who's to be admirable and good and well thought of is supposed to be experienced in such people turn out to be inexperienced in the laws of their city or in the kind of speech one must use to deal with people on matters of business, whether in public or private, inexperienced also in human pleasures and appetites and, in short, inexperienced in the ways of human beings altogether…To partake of as much philosophy as your education requires is an admirable thing, and it's not shameful to practice philosophy while you're a boy, but when you still do it after you've grown older and become a man, the things gets to be ridiculous…My own reaction to men who philosophize is very much like that to men who speak haltingly and play like children…when one hears a man speaking haltingly or sees him playing like a child, it strikes me as ridiculous and unmanly, deserving of a flogging.[1]

In *Gorgias* (380 BC) Socrates' interlocutor, Callicles, opines that philosophy belongs to the time of youth, or more specifically, to the time of inexperience, a statement that Nietzsche will mockingly reprise centuries later in his notebooks with the dictum: "You pursue *philosophy* with young, inexperienced people; [with] older people [you] turn to history."[2] How has philosophy, the so-called love of wisdom and thus seemingly the love of wisdom acquired through experience, suddenly come to be associated with inexperience? Earlier in the dialogue Socrates had maintained that experience (*empeiria*), while no more than rhetorical ruse and neither art nor craft, was still more artful than inexperience which, as another speaker remarks, can only lead to chance. Callicles, however, opposes Socrates' logic in proposing that philosophy cannot be the arbiter of what constitutes experience since it in fact removes the philosopher from the very experience he seeks to theorize, leaving him in an age of adolescence, that is, in an age of inexperience. Philosophy "is a man's undoing," Callicles warns, because it segregates him from city life and its laws as well as deprives him of vernacular and everyday speech. More deleterious still, philosophy not only entails "man's undoing," it undoes manhood itself: in keeping the philosopher unpracticed in "*human* pleasures and appetites," philosophy dehumanizes the thinker, as it were, such that he stays "inexperienced in the ways of *human* beings altogether," inexperienced and thus inhuman. Philosophy, in Callicles' view, perpetuates inexperience by withholding the thinker from human practices and pleasures.

Now, the question that needs to be asked is what philosophical practices Callicles claims to be "appropriate" for a certain "time of life," a time when it is acceptable to be "inexperienced," and what temporal moment requires the passage from the inexperience of philosophy to the experience of human life. For it is very clear that philosophy, as a love (*philo*) of wisdom (*sophos*), is not devoid of pleasures of its own, even if the pleasures of wisdom, to Callicles' mind at least, do not resemble human ones. The Greek *philosopheo,* to philosophize, encompasses the dual meanings of *being* a *philosophos* and *doing* whatever it is that a *philosophos* does, already intimating that philosophy, caught up in a certain being and doing of love, is certainly not without its pleasures. As Diotima says in the *Symposium* (385-380 BC): to be a lover of Wisdom is also to be Wisdom's lover; to be taken *with* Wisdom is also to be taken *by* Wisdom. But if philosophy has its own style of pleasures, what is Callicles' remonstration targeting when he remarks that philosophy does not enjoy *human* pleasure? A clue to a possible answer comes from Plato's *Phaedrus* (370 BC), wherein Socrates outright conflates the pursuit of philosophy with the love of boys. The most developed state of the soul (*psyche*) is the "soul of a man who has honorably pursued philosophy, which is to say, of a man who has pursued the love of boys in a philosophical manner."[3] Given that Greek practices of pederasty where highly regulated —preserved for youth of a certain age—might Callicles be implying that philosophy, as the pursuit of boys in a philosophical manner, ought not to continue past a man's youth? Has philosophy become a euphemism for a set of sexual practices that ought to be confined to the dalliances of inexperience but not to the responsibilities of experience, lest the humanhood of the boy-lover fall into question?

Clearly, this is not the sole determination of philosophy offered in Plato's dialogues and it is certainly not some prurient projection —wishful thinking, as it were— stemming from a contemporary perspective steeped in the excesses of psychoanalysis and queer theory. For experience and inexperience not only recur in Plato's dialogues, as is often remarked, they are also frequently concerned with the question of boy-love and virtue. In the *Phaedrus,* for example, the initial discussion revolves around the

consequences of lovesickness for youth, before closing with a description of the immortality of the soul and the love of boys,[4] and in the *Gorgias* Socrates references "catamites," the passive partners in pederasty, as an instance of uncontrolled appetite (*G* 838). But it is in the *Symposium* that this analogy finds its most robust rendering in a debate over virtuous modes of loving. "[T]he nature of any action —that is, whether it is good or bad— varies according to the manner of its performance," reports the lawyer Pausanias, in order to introduce his theory of boy-love.[5] In Pausanias' first formulation, actions in themselves bear no innate moral value, but the manner by which they are performed can alter and modulate these aforesaid actions. Pausanias draws upon the current circumstances of the banquet: "Take, for example, these actions we are now doing—drinking, singing, and talking; these are not in themselves either good or evil, but they turn out in this or that way according to the mode of performing them, and when well done they are good, and when wrongly done they are evil" (*S,* 217). This dualism between "good and evil," based upon the intemperate or immoderate performance of a given action, both recalls the dichotomy Pausanias has already constructed at an earlier moment in his discourse (namely, a split between two Aphrodites) and prefigures the subsequent binary his discourse will present (namely, between the "union of male and female" and the "love of boys"). In the first movements of his speech, Pausanias had claimed that there is not "one Love" — the Greek vacillating between "love" as an emotion and "Love" as a deity— but "more Loves than one," in order to better acclaim "which Love is deserving of praise" or rather, following Pausanias' phrase, which mode of *performing* love is deserving of praise (*S* 216). The question that Pausanias' discourse seeks to address is what kind of love is worthy of accolade and honorable in purpose, in short, what way of performing love is "good."

Love, Pausanias argues, is indissociable from Aphrodite, but there is no one Aphrodite. Rather, there is she who is "daughter of Uranus," and she who is "the daughter of Zeus and Dione" (*S* 216). The first is elderly and heavenly, the second young and common. The latter is a vulgar love of appetite, afflicting those "apt to love women no less than boys" and who seek to enjoy the bodies of their beloveds instead of

their souls (*S* 217). This mode of doing, whereby the lover "does whatever presents itself" because "they look only toward bringing the deed off," regardless of whether their actions are performed nobly or not (*Ibid*). So the question of how to do love, how to perform it, begins to verge on the question of how one ought to do boys. Pausanias ventures that those who follow the heavenly Aphrodite —"derived from a mother in whose birth the female has no part…she is from the male only" (*Ibid*)— is more noble, because this is the Love of boys stemming from a deity older in years and hence with "nothing of wantonness in her" (*ibid*). These lovers delight "in the more valiant and intelligent nature" of pederasty, where pederasty is understood to comprise young men of budding intelligence and *not* little boys,[6] pledging lifelong loyalty to their beloved's company rather than taking "them in their juvenile inexperience and deceiv[ing] them" in order to pass on to the next (*S* 218).[7]

Pausanias realizes that this fast distinction needs further clarification, for the "matter is not a straightforward one": which practices and pursuits of the lover are good and which bad? His answer resorts to his earlier remark that action is not good or bad *in itself* but only in how it is done: "practices are in and of themselves neither honorable nor dishonorable; rather, they are honorable when done honorably, dishonorable when done dishonorably" (*S* 220). But what is honorable and dishonorable action? To yield to the dishonorable is to yield to the vulgar love of the body rather than the soul, insofar as the soul is stable and the body changeable (*S* 221). Honorable love is to do service to the youth in improving his wisdom or "some other particular of virtue" (*S* 222). Caring for that which endures —wisdom and virtue— rather than surrendering to bodily impulse marks the difference between honorable and dishonorable action. Pausanias ends by remarking that the beloved boy, should he too be seeking virtue, need not worry if his "juvenile inexperience" is deceived by a lover who was only pretending to be virtuous. For even if his lover should reveal himself a villain, the fact that the beloved was willing to risk all for virtue maintains his nobility:

> If someone should give himself to a lover because he seems a good man, and in the hope that he will be improved by his company, and should in the end be deceived, even though the object of his affection turn [*sic*] out to be a villain, and to have no virtue, still, the error is a noble one. For he too has shown his true

> nature, that for the sake of virtue and improvement he will eagerly do anything for anybody, and there can be nothing nobler than this. (*Ibid*)

This rendition seems lucid enough, but a few questions linger: what is the virtue to be taught (a query Socrates notoriously argues is alternately teachable and unteachable throughout Plato's dialogues)? And what of the beloved boy's virtue if he should turn out to have been deceived by his lover? Is there not something licentious or vulgar in being willing "eagerly [to] do anything for anybody" in the name of virtue? What if a boy is willing to yield to his lover's demands of so-called vulgar, bodily love under the delusion that he is performing a virtuous act? Is the inexperienced youth's virtue left untouched or, if it is, can it be restored? Would the same hold if the boy came in a different gender?

These opening remarks on inexperience raise and reprise the questions that will be explored throughout these pages, questions concerning how experience, especially amorous experience, is both done and undone in language; how experience is not simply that which a subject does but that which, to quote Callicles, leads to a subject's undoing; and how the matter of gender, which appears in an early modern context under the sign of "virtue," requires an analysis of the ways in which experience is differentially treated, recognized, and affirmed. As these chapters will examine at length, the concept-metaphor "experience" has long served dissonant ends in various philosophical, political, and literary discourses —and has even been said to have met its "end" in some of them, despite the fact that experience would seem to have lived on, not only in philosophical discourse but in common parlance as well. Indeed, the Latinate base of "experience" —*experientia*— in its very etymology already intimates that experience will have always been linked to a certain survival insofar it gathers together the significations of emergence, (*ex*) experiment (*expereri;* "to attempt"), and pitfall (*periculum*; "danger"), implying that experience is itself a kind of trial and traversal, a living through and living on.[8] How has experience lived on in language, if it has, and what is its contemporary linguistic life—or rather, its linguistic afterlife? In everyday speech, experience is usually spoken of *as if* it were a substantive attribute one might possess ("to *have* [an] experience"), an identitarian

trait which marks who one is ("to *be* experienced"), an act or event in the aftermath of which knowledge is derived ("to *experience* something") and, in some contexts, the sophistication which comes from sundry sexual encounters ("to be *experienced*" can mean "to be *sexually* experienced").[9] Far from clarifying the matter, the language framing experience confounds it, for these mundane formulations already intimate the degree to which tacit metaphysical and phenomenological presumptions regarding ontology, identity, and epistemology remain entrenched in the very grammar by means of which "experience" is described: experience is taken to be "what" one has, "who" one is, "how" one knows, and even that which forms the "one" who has experience or who experiences; it is taken to be both process and product, event and outcome, subject and attribute, sensation and reflection.

While the received grammar of experience might indicate how experience is spoken of, and perhaps even how it is employed in discourse, it still sheds no light on experience itself: experience is presupposed but undefined, bandied about in conversation as though it were known—or rather, bandied about *even though* it is not known. The point is not that the conceptual contours of experience ought to be stabilized or an authoritative definition of experience established in advance but that, oddly enough, experience serves to ground statements and arguments when it itself remains ungrounded. Experience is taken for granted, referenced, and mentioned without hesitation to lay the foundations of so many claims, from the metaphysical to the incidental, but it itself is without foundation. In the terms of the later Wittgenstein, for whom it would be a mistake to conflate linguistic conventions with mental states, language does not mimetically reflect experience but constitutes a domain of rules orienting what can meaningfully be said about it. While it might be claimed that some propositions are *certain*, Wittgenstein doubts whether they can be *known*, that is, whether empirical evidence or foundational proof can be given to grammar beyond the particular realm of its linguistic practice, which is to say, the daily and ordinary acts of language-use which inaugurate a specific regime of rules: grammar orders and ordains the referential parameters governing "what counts as an intelligible description of reality, and is hence not subject to

empirical refutation."[10] In this sense, while experience might be endlessly referenced in daily speech its definition remains elusive and its evidence unestablished; although experience is often used as a source of empirical verification, experience is a word that itself has no empirical verification: "I did not get my picture of the world by satisfying myself of its correctness; nor do I have it because I am satisfied of its correctness. No: it is the inherited background against which I distinguish between true and false…All testing, all confirmation and disconfirmation of a hypothesis takes place already within a system…The system is not so much the point of departure, as the element in which our arguments have their life."[11] The fact that the term for testing and proving itself remains untested and unproven indicates that experience is a groundless ground, a word that operates without confirmation and without verification in regard to what it stands for. But this does not hamper its use in language—if anything it *enables* use, as a system of signs bearing only univocal and fixed designation could never be useable at all, precisely because it could never break away from the context in which it originates and be employed elsewhere, anew. Wittgenstein leaves the difficulty unresolved: to ground arguments in that which is no ground is to use a word without being able, ultimately, to justify or explain the rules by which such use proceeds: "To say: in the end we can only adduce such grounds as we hold to be grounds, is to say nothing at all." [12] To speak in the name of experience is, in this sense, to make use of it without knowing what it is, it is to make use of experience in language without knowing how.

Reading experience in this Wittgensteinian way might helpfully set aside the metaphysical wish to determine once and for all the epistemological and ontological outlines of experience, but several questions are still left to pursue: What does "experience" name and, if it is itself a name, to what extent is experience enmeshed in language? How is it determined, if ever, that an "experience" has been gained, and what authorizes the criteria specifying its acquisition, or, contrarily, its non-possession? How do "experiences" come to count or become claimable as experiences in discourse, and by what parameters do experiences become recognizable as such? At what point can it be declared, if indeed it can be, that there has been a

passage from a state of inexperience to the wisdom of experience? Is experience inescapably rhetorical and textual? If ineluctably given in language, is experience therefore reducible to it or does it escape full referential capture within linguistic binds and bounds? In canvassing early philosophical and literary works preoccupied by the limits and possibilities of experience in the context of amorous involvement, this theoretical inquiry, a philosophical narrative of sorts, seeks not only to consider the questions that the conceit of "inexperience" inspires, but, more radically, to consider "experience" as a question in and of itself.

This cascade of questions is not of recent date. Was not the pre-revolutionary period in Europe, the so-called age of enlightenment and experiment, an epoch marked by Bacon's scientific *experimentum*, Locke and Hume's experiential empiricism, Diderot's experimental fiction, and Rousseau's "experimental morality"; an era during which *expérience*, both "experiment" and "experience" in French, would have flourished in science, philosophy, literature?[13] Such historical caricatures, however frequently rehearsed they may be, remain problematic in presuming that experience would have been universally praised and unanimously approved, as if it were a right enjoyed everywhere or a concept celebrated by all. For the early modern conceit of experience referred to experimentations of all kinds, spanning from the scientific to the sexual, and thus far from a warmly welcomed notion was a hotly contested topic, one raising serious concerns about what kinds of experiments ought to be undertaken and by whom. Which experiences are socially acceptable and which are not? Who has the right to experiment/experience? Poised precariously at the crux of the epistemic and the erotic, experience vacillates between convention and controversy, respectable research and scandalous pursuit, most especially when the question of gender is involved. When it comes to the education of "young women" in early modern France, for example, it will not be experience but *in*experience —described as a "lack of experience" in the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française* (1762)— that becomes a regulatory ideal preconized in many *ancien régime* didactic treatises and educational tracts, according to which modesty means a desistance from knowing, propriety a demurral from seeing, and

chastity an abstention from acting. As remarks the philosopher Marie de Gournay in *Égalité des hommes et des femmes* (1622), young girls are reared "in ignorance and inexperience [*dans l'ignorance et l'inexpérience*]," condemned to know little and to experience nothing, in that innocence is considered to be the measure of feminine virtue.[14] For those not considered eligible for the right to experience, the age of experiment was, it would seem, the age of inexperience.

This work follows the trope of "inexperience" from its appearance in select writings of early modern France to its contemporary legacies in continental philosophy, exploring how discourses of experience/experiment will have always been implicated in and inextricable from the historical and political question of gender norms. Such a claim already runs counter to those humanist philosophical accounts, both early modern and contemporary, which have long postulated that experience would be a taken-for-granted descriptive feature of "personhood," a fundamental or logical attribute which defines humanhood and which could be presupposed regardless of social location and cultural context. In these humanist discourses, there would first be a presocial ontology of persons bearing inborn attributes that only subsequently comes to be subjected to the customs of a given society that would be imposed upon them from without. Consider, as an instance of this, John Locke's definition of personal identity: "we must consider what *person* stands for;—which, I think, is a thinking intelligent being, that has reason and reflection, and can consider itself as itself, the same thinking thing, in different times and places; which it does only by that consciousness which is inseparable from thinking, and, as it seems to me, essential to it."[15] According to this classical liberal conception of the individual, the fundamental properties of reason and reflection constitute the inalienable and universal properties of any and all persons such that "whatever social context the person is 'in' remains somehow externally related to the definitional structure of personhood, be that consciousness, the capacity for language, or moral deliberation."[16] This list of "definitional structures" said to existentially accompany all individuals or to logically and analytically define personhood has usually included experience, for it too, from Plato to the present, has generally been

considered to be a pregiven definitional structure of personal identity existing prior to the social and subsisting independently of it, an "internal feature of the person [thought to establish] the continuity or self-identity of the person through time" irrespective of time and place;[17] an existential attribute, precultural element of ontology, or innate capacity of consciousness that only afterwards comes to be formed and shaped by the external, social norms thrust upon it.

Over and against this framework, the questions to be pursued here concern the possibility that experience is not exterior to norms but in large part their effect, the possibility that experience, neither preexisting the workings of norms nor subsisting apart from them, only comes to "be" *because* it comes under the regulatory operation of norms. Prior to the ontological and phenomenological questions of whether experience exists and how it ought to be determined, in other words, is the question of what norms of intelligibility and what schemas of interpretation are in place that will allow a given experience to be recognized as existing. In what ways do historically contingent gender norms govern what can and cannot be recognized or legitimated as experience? Do gender norms simply meet and then modify an already existing concept of experience, or are they fundamental to producing that conception of experience itself? It remains to be explored how gender norms constitute experience and how experience becomes the means by which such norms are reinstituted and reinforced. For experience, perforce its entanglement in such norms, is not simply the medium or instrument through which gender norms act but itself acts as a gender norm. The norms structuring sexual experience instate sexual experience as a structuring norm. This is not an abstract point, but an incident of the everyday. Take, for example, the anxiety surrounding the matter of virginity and devirginization in both early modern and contemporary discourses, according to which certain gender norms legislate "by when," "with whom," and "how" sexual experience ought to be gained if one wants to be considered "normal," which then becomes a means of implementing sexual experience itself as norm delimiting what normalcy will and will not be. For norms are neither simply rules nor laws but those "implicit standard[s] of *normalization*" through which certain rules and laws are instituted

and validated.[18] As the set of implicit standards through which normalization is enacted, and thus neither an explicit ideal that one embodies nor an evident model that one follows, norms usually proceed so effectively that only their effects, and not they themselves, are noticeable or legible (when they are). Norms are only known through their effects —indeed, can only persist as effects— even if they are not reducible to their effects alone. Such norms enforce a valorizing frame for what will be acknowledged as intelligible or unintelligible, what will emerge within the field of the social and what will be jettisoned to its abject margins.[19]

Of course, to be foreclosed from the field of intelligibility defined by the norm is still to guard a relation to that very norm: what it is to be marginal or non-normative only gains its meaning by exercising a relation to the norm, even if that relation is one of exclusion.[20] To live outside the norm is still to live within it, to live *at* the limit and *as* the limit of those norms, a paradoxical outside within. For it is precisely because some "experiences" cannot be recognized as such within certain social norms of recognizability and acceptability that a paradox such as an "experience which is not one" or a "love that dare not speak its name" comes about, precisely because it cannot be recognized as one at all: an experience that cannot take place because, even if it does, it has no place in the normative discourse delineating what counts as experience. Mary Wollstonecraft long ago illustrated this point in *The Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), arguing that not only were women not given access to experimentation, proscribed from experience in general and deprived of scientific learning in particular, but that even when exercising intellect and engaging in thought-experiments, women's work was not agnized as experience at all.[21] Or, when it was recognized as experience, it was considered an underdeveloped and ancillary form of perception rather than a beneficial form of conceptual reasoning. The fifth book of Rousseau's *Émile* (1762), as Wollstonecraft notes, accords women the task of finding an "experimental morality [*morale expérimentale*]," but it is for men to craft a system. In a curious inversion of the worth of experience, Rousseau claims that women are empiricists ("woman observes [*la femme observe*]"), but men are reasoners ("man observes [*l'homme raisonne*]").[22] In this

sense, even when it is granted that experience is possibly attainable by woman, such experience is no more than a degraded, derived version of reason—and thus ultimately nothing like experience at all.

Indeed, Wollstonecraft's argument was even more radical than that: it was not simply that women were deprived of experience, as if there were first a pregiven identity named woman that was subsequently denied this or that right, but that the imposition of ignorance, "the state of idleness in which women are educated,"[23] engendered the very category of "woman" itself. Woman's so-called ignorance is not a natural disposition, the *Vindication* contends, but the product of an institutionalized infantilization and enforced ignorance that "cultivates" and crafts the very category of woman: "females…are turned into women when they are mere children, and brought back to childhood when they ought to leave the go-cart forever."[24] This ignorance, instituted and maintained by a restricted education, not only spawns the socially oppressed category of woman, but is then used as a retroactive justification by misogynists to maintain that woman is instinctively ill-suited to learning and naturally more ignorant than man: "Women are in this deplorable state everywhere, because truth is hidden from them so as to preserve their 'innocence' (the polite name for ignorance)…Thus **understanding** strictly so-called has been denied to woman; and **instinct**…has been put in its place."[25]

By a *post hoc ergo propter hoc* logic, then, the disallowance of understanding to women sires the superstition that women naturally lack understanding; women are prevented from learning and are then told that they had never had any capacity to learn to begin with; the normative standard that a woman's education should be limited begets the affirmation that woman's ignorance is normal. The institutionalized enforcement of woman's ignorance through restricted education, in other words, becomes the means to claim that woman have been ignorant all along by a retrospective positing as cause ("instinct") what is in fact only an effect of institutional and regulatory practices ("truth is hidden from them"). Forcibly denied access to experience/experiment, women are then said to have never had any experience at all, a move that shows the extent to which ignorance and innocence are not prediscursive truths or precultural traits, as Rousseau's

account of woman's "natural" state partially presumed in *Émile* (1762), but the effect of a regulatory fiction. Thus will the heroine of Wollstonecraft's philosophical novel *Maria or the Wrongs of Women* (1798) passionately enjoin her daughter, and by implication her readers, to act against the regulatory restrictions and political prohibitions brought to bear on feminine education. "Gain experience," Maria exclaims, "—ah! gain it."[26]

Wollostonecraft's sharp-eyed insights rejoin the contemporary claim, frequently voiced in Foucaultian accounts, that norms do not simply govern subjects but constitute them, for a productive rather than juridical view of power supposes that to be subjected to a norm is also to be subjectivated by it; becoming subject to norms is to become a subject in the first place.[27] From this perspective, to say that experience is ensnared in gender norms and itself serves as a gender norm would require a shift from a presuppositional understanding of experience as that which is "had" by a subject or that which a subject "is," as if experience were simply the descriptive attributes of a pregiven subject, to a critical account of experience as the very regulatory apparatus and disciplinary mechanism by means of which certain versions of the subject and its experience are installed and naturalized. The question cannot be whether or not experience ought to be phenomenologically construed *in itself* or conceptually determined *as such* —indeed, perhaps it is impossible to speak of "experience as such"— if experience is both induced and influenced by diffuse social norms that frame what can and cannot count as intelligible, claimable, or publicly acceptable experience. "Experience," understood not only as infused with norms but as itself a norm, would name a set of strategic relations generating a situation in which some experiences will be conferred intelligibility, because cohering to implicit standards of what counts as normal, and others not granted such intelligibility; a situation in which some will be recognized as subjects of experience and others will never reach recognition as subjects at all. What is recognized as experience, and according to what tacit criteria, standards, and judgments? Who is permitted to proclaim an experience their own, and who is dispossessed of the right to experience? Will experience have always been a heavily gendered, and thus heavily regulated,

political privilege, one available to few and denied to many? How is experience, far from merely a descriptive or analytic trait of personhood, a normative ideal that bounds the domain of what is considered thinkable, speakable, livable? And if the parameters defining experience are shaped by hegemonic norms circumscribing who qualifies as a subject of experience —who can and cannot have experience, as well as what does and does not count as experience— then how is experience distinguished from inexperience, and when do such distinctions founder?

An opening chapter touches upon the trajectories of "experience" in the history of Western philosophy —from Plato to postructuralism, Descartes to Derrida, Hume to Husserl—, giving specific focus to those early modern theories of experience and subjectivity which problematize experience rather than uncritically accept it (Prelude). The subsequent chapter dislocates this discussion of experience from the history of philosophy and translates it into literary history, turning away from experience in order to investigate the literary-historical contexts of gender/genre in which the question of *inexperience*, and no longer that of experience alone, takes hold (Chapter One). These philosophical and literary-historical contexts in place, ensuing chapters investigate those early modern romances, for the most part ascribed to feminine signatures, which take up and resignify the normative discourse of inexperience, elaborating an aporetic rhetoric of amorous (in)experience. In these romances heroines are advised to avoid rather than attain experience, to obviate rather than obtain it, but this does not mean that amorous experience is categorically refused. Through a language of unlived love, an idiom of inexperience as it were, amorous experience is not so much denied as defined by the ways in which it cannot be experienced in presence or in person; it is described in terms that leave experience indistinguishable in the last instance from its very inexperience. In this way these texts visit violence upon the conceptual grammar of experience, for inexperience is no longer portrayed as a substantive state ("to be inexperienced in love") or as an adjective modifying a substantive ("inexperienced love") — no longer portrayed, that is, as the attribute of a subject— but, in a very significant sense, is portrayed as a verb orchestrated by no subject: love is

inexperienced. Put another way, in the literatures of unlived love forged by Hélisenne de Crenne (Chapter Two), Du Plaisir (Chapter Three), Angélique Ducos (Chapter Four), and others, the normative discourse of experience —according to which experience is event and knowledge, inexperience the loss or lack thereof— is not simply condoned or condemned but retains an unsurpassable ambivalence. Neither fully transitive nor intransitive, neither fully active nor passive, and defying the constraints of grammar as well as the conceptual predicates of experience, is inexperience no longer what one is or has but what one does? In other words, do heroines, although inexperienced in love, nonetheless *inexperience* that love?

To be sure, even this formulation of inexperience as "what one does" cannot hold for long, as it implies that there would be a subject who does inexperience, as if inexperience where no more than an event or an action, and thus ultimately no more than an experience, operated by a subject. In what ways must inexperience be reimagined, not as what a subject is or has, but as a scene in which the predicates of being and having lose their conceptual purchase, a scene in which the subject has already begun to unravel? While the usual grammars framing experience allow the phrase "to experiences something," but not "one inexperiences something," in the language of unlived love inexperience becomes that impossible act of inexperiencing, a "non-acting action" as Simone Weil would say, whereby the boundaries separating experience from its inexperience break down. This raises larger questions regarding the fragile frontiers separating experience and inexperience: In what ways might the amorous experience of becoming undone become, in the last analysis, the undoing of experience? Might these romances reveal that differentiating inexperience from experience is not as facile as is commonly assumed and that it is not just inexperience, but experience itself, which proves to be lacking the very traits and predicates of self-presence that have traditionally been applied to it? And might they prefigure in this way the deconstructive interrogations of self-present experience set in motion by Jacques Derrida, laying siege to the grammars of the subject and the metaphysics of substance that have long structured philosophical conceits of "experience," from the Cartesian *cogito* to Husserl's transcendental *Ego*?

ii. letting be, letting go

> *How to tell him, "I want you to know yourself free" without the phrase trapping him between its paws of words, even to caress him and, in its desire to purvey to him its good intention, force him to hold back?* [. . .] *can one give without announcing it? How to announce without speech? Silence is also of speech.*
> —Hélène Cixous, *Limonade, tout était si infini*

These are, then, some of the major questions and texts to be addressed in the following pages. But before moving into the argument proper some caveats are perhaps in order, especially since most of the literary works mentioned here have long remain sheltered in shadow, relegated to the dustbins of history or confined to archival inurnment. Let these first pages be considered a foreword, or rather, a forewarning, regarding the problem of reading texts that are for the most part non-canonical —anonymously authored and historically neglected— within the contemporary terms of continental philosophy. For this study gathers texts seldom read together, if ever read at all, texts signed by pseudonyms — "Hélisenne de Crenne," "Du Plaisir," "Madame Gercy"— or sometimes not at all. Their authors are uncertain, their biographies unknown. All that remains are these fictions, often signed by a feminine alias or a name of nobody. Indeed, these fictions are themselves remains: the remainders of a literary history that has overlooked them, the remnants of a bygone past that has faded away with them. If these texts will not only speak about "inexperience," as will be argued, but will have themselves long remained unexperienced by other readers, how are they to be read all at once, if generally never even read at all?

Insofar as a portion of this critical study focuses on certain early modern French fictions falling outside the canonical purview, it gives these works a chance. That is, these texts of sixteenth- to late eighteenth-century provenance are given a chance to *be read*, which is not short of saying that they are given a chance to *be*. This last phrase reprises, of course, Maurice Blanchot's *L'espace littérature*, an oeuvre which states that to let a work "be" is anything but a guarantee of its ontological status or a confirmation of its stable existence—it is to let that work become, even if the risk remains that it become nothing.[28] Addressing literary works that have long been cloistered in archival oblivion is to confront fictions that,

crudely put, aren't. It is to address novels that are, for many literary historians, "nothing," or nothing any longer, as if these works could only be perceived in literary history by their very pretermission, as if they would have abided through time only because never having been present. They are when they are no more since, strictly speaking, as "failed" novels they were never even supposed to be; they are doubly fictional, not only because of their literary form but also because they have never been accorded recognition or reality; they are nothing now because they were never anything to begin with. As one critical study of noncanonical epistolary literature puts it, less successful "minor" works orbit around more famous authors, "assur[ing] the continuity of the tradition whereas the *chefs-d'oeuvre* mark the points of rupture [*la continuité de la tradition alors que les chefs-d'oeuvre en marquent les points de rupture*]".[29] Supposedly the work of hacks and has-beens, these minor texts, in this formulation, tessellate the background in quiet observance of a status quo they maintain but do not affect. At the same time, and in a strange sense, while these minor novels may not have "lived on" in literary history, they have certainly not been killed off either. Like the woman in Poe's *The Fall of the House of Usher*, these stories have not lived outside the archive because they have been entombed within it, whether it be in specialist archives or special collection libraries, and so theirs is a life in death, a life consigned to a certain illegibility and obscurity, because they have been considered a lesser tier of novels than those that have been traditionally recognized and accorded a literary afterlife. And by the very presumption that they are no more than decaying fossils of a prehistory that no longer matters — dinosaurs of the novelistic genre, as it were— these works have been relegated to the domain of the unreadable, never to be experienced in reading, always to remain in an age of inexperience.

Trying to let these texts "be" is not an argument for their willful neglect or a prayer for their disregard, as if the injunction were "let them be as they are, untouched and unread." Such pretensions to pristine virginity are troublesome at best, for if these texts might well have never been incorporated into the canon, they have not remained fully expulsed from it either— they linger, spectrally, *at* the limits of the canon and *as* the limits of that canon. To even speak of a non-canonical outside is to reinforce the dyad of "inside and

outside" by supposing there ever was a pure "inside" to the canon, when in fact the histories of canonization in France show a perpetual struggle of conflict, dissonance, and rearrangement for which no inside was ever fully secured or stably established.[30] And although they have for centuries passed nearly unperceived, these novels are not simply virgin and unmarked —they bear a history, or a set of histories, even if they have not usually been included within the terms of History itself. A part of the work of reading them thus confronts, to a degree, the difficult labor of excavation and exhumation, the autopsy of an archive. If in the eyes of conventional literary history these novels were never meant to be, are no longer relevant or simply no longer are, they are still, crucially, yet to be, which is just another way of saying they are yet to be read, and thus yet to be rewritten. As *L'espace littéraire* would have it, letting a work be is not just to "*let it alone*, but also *let it be written*,"[31] letting it be by not deciding its being in advance, letting it be by letting it become other than itself and hence other to itself:

> [R]eading does nothing, adds nothing; it leaves be that which is; it is liberty, not liberty which gives being or seizes it, but liberty that welcomes, consents, says yes, can only say yes and, in the space opened by this yes, lets the unsettling decision of the work affirm itself, the affirmation that it is— and nothing more [*l'affirmation qu'elle est— et rien de plus*].[32]

Let it be, let it be written. In Blanchot's formulation, no work is decided or determined in advance, no work can be assumed to exist as such before being read, and thus before being rewritten. This tension is embodied in the phrase "that it is— and nothing more [*qu'elle est—et rien de plus*]" because the "et" ("and"), by a trick of homonymy, might also heard to say "est" ("is"), which would yield: "that it is— is nothing more." Such a phrase invites the copula only to cancel it, for to "be" nothing more is to not be at all, eerily echoing the present predicament regarding the unread. To avoid girdling these unread or under-read novels within the confines of prefabricated interpretative frameworks and predetermined theoretical claims, these works demand readings that assent to ambiguities rather than readings that assert generalities.[33] This should not imply a retreat into a mystical and mystified romanticization or a refusal of critical engagement; if anything it compels a more sustained rigor of approach because it demands caution, uncertainty, and the

loss of hermeneutic mastery. It must be all the more tentative, because without precedent, all the more inventive because without rule. Since, as it stands, many of these novels of no one are so *hors d'usage* that they have never been extensively read, no prior theoretical framework or historical study concerning these texts can be referred to. The way is pathless. All the more reason *not* to assimilate them into conventional literary historical concepts, all the more reason to acknowledge their abiding non-familiarity. But how to read, as one literary historian puts it, "nobody's story"?[34] How to proceed when no prior path has been traced? To let these texts be is not to pinion them, hastily, in commonplace generic categories but, in a specifically Nietzschean sense, to "make light" of them: to tread, to read, lightly.[35] It is to accept their resistance to the constraints of generic categories one might wish to impute to them; it is to recognize the irreducible anonymity that endures in any attempt to approach them. These writings, some of which having never been exposed to critical scholarship or to the public eye, remain in a significant sense alien to the literary theories and histories that have never given them much regard.

The oft accused "blindness" of the traditional literary canon to scores of unreputed fictions has generally amounted to a rehabilitative effort to bring to light, to restore to visibility, seemingly otiose novels merely for the sake of making them less invisible. Such an interpretative praxis of recovery and discovery has hallmarked the ethos of many critical approaches to revising canonical traditions by summoning the conceptual *fourre-tout* of the "forgotten," the "excluded," or the "obsolete," as if making things more visible or representable would somehow constitute an inherently effective, powerful, or ethically encompassing good. It is important, however, to crimp the tendency to zealously catalogue new entries into the canon in lieu of questioning that very canon itself, a tendency to simply enlarge the canon in lieu of interrogating its hegemonic expanse.[36] For to uncritically celebrate any effort to deliver to view is just as dangerous as believing a complete refuge in the veils of invisibility is possible.[37] Indeed, both the unexamined, ruthless search to englobe obscure literary works within the canon, as well as the romanticized desire to keep them out of touch, may lead to a fetishization of visibility or invisibility as ethical or political virtues in and of

themselves rather than to a critical calling into question of the very framework that only views matters within terms of the visible and the invisible.

If blindness *or* insight is valued in and of themselves as aesthetic promises, the model of perception that polices the fault-lines of the discernable or the inconspicuous is left, as it were, unseen.[38] This would be to indemnify a model of perception that has contrived in its wake a problematic model of reading whereby the sight or observation of meaning as phenomenally apparent or self-presently apprehended in intuition is the only thing that is real or of epistemological worth**.** One of the major pitfalls of this consequentialist and perception-based view of revisionist literary history is to assume that any oeuvre only counts to the extent that it can be seen as a visible and phenomenal content, only matters to the degree that it can appear *in presence* to the mind's eye in order to have effect.[39] What does not always enter the line of vision or the regard of history, however, can mark the limits of such models of history and language governed by self-present perception without simply reinstating the unseen into the gazeable nor romantically valorizing the blind-spots of structuralist literary history as inherently subversive.

The censure of simplistic ways of seeing is of course not contemporary. Already in the eighteenth century, Denis Diderot's "Lettre sur les aveugles à l'usage de ceux qui voyent" (1749) posed a challenge to scopophilic fetishizations of perception and offered accounts of dynamic, interanimating interactions of geometric space without sight.[40] Indeed, Diderot's "blind insight," as it were, was that a reconsideration of aesthetic experience required the criticism of two ideologies governing theories of the visible throughout the early modern era: the romantic valorization of the unrepresentable, the absent, or the blind as the sublime, on the one hand, and the unrestrained enlightenment task of rendering everything fully visible and rationally calculable, on the other. From this perspective, the act of ushering disregarded literary works *into* the canon without questioning its structuring principles or its self-canonizing operations is to supplement its status quo with extra ornament; it is to place under its regard works that can only be validated by its gaze because only discernable within its terms. The practice of merely tabulating discounted literary works in

order to ensure them a place in a pre-determined pedigree and history merely augments the scope of the present canon's vision, a vision that can only see things in terms of seeing and not seeing.

The point is not to vilify the important bibliographical and historical research of recent years that has assisted in the re-evaluation of literary canons but, rather, to interrogate any effort of uncritical retrieval — the ceaseless pursuit of non-canonical works in the service of assuring them "canonical" approval— that does not equally question in what service and by what criteria these works are being retrieved. For whom are these texts being made visible and by what means? What confirms visibility and what does this representation, both aesthetic and political, entail? What does invisibility make visible and what remains invisible within visibility? There is no guarantee that because a literary work has been hidden from sight it cloaks something special, because so long-hidden, within its pages. But nor does it mean that it is absent of such possibilities either. Rather than romanticizing the literary closet within which non-canonical works too often reside, and rather than giving purchase to a vitalist view of literary history that seeks to resuscitate "dead" works as an inherent good, Blanchot's call to let works be would seem to sidestep the revelation of absent presences and the entire thematics of concealment and exposure. If the binary of disclosure and enclosure is one of the long-lasting effects of an uninterrogated metaphysics of presence, then might it still be possible to read without seeking to uncloset, unveil, or uncover, in *aletheia*, some long buried "truth"? When engaging with noncanonical works, to what extent do normative modes of "active reading experience" —the presumption that definitive claims ought to be made about what a text "says" and "means" in terms of its immediate intelligibility and transparent presentation— require revision? What alternative modalities of reading are required so as not to visit an interpretative violence upon texts that are seldom read?

The solution is not to uncritically and unilaterally "apply" contemporary concepts to these early modern fictions, nor to suggest that they simply prefigure poststructuralist or deconstructive theories *avant la lettre.* To argue for either is not only to presume that "poststructuralism" or "deconstruction" constitutes a

monadic body of thought, rather than provisional names given to a variety of views and practices, but also to subscribe to a questionable form of ahistorical "presentism," the belief that concepts can be applied to various historical instances with little concern for context, ironically making poststructuralism and deconstruction stand for the very models of unhistoricism and universalism that they have long been said to contest. But if it is desirable to dodge that particular interpretative trap, it would also seem necessary not to treat these texts as completely untouchable and unthinkable by contemporary perspectives, as if any attempt to reread this text in contemporary terms would inevitably fall prey to anachronism and ahistoricism. Or rather, if such attempts *do,* unavoidably, fall into a certain kind of anachronism and ahistoricism, then at the very least it should be possible to interrogate that anachronicity when time is "out of joint," to quote Shakespeare's *Hamlet,* to interrogate those historical differences that hold early modern texts at a remove from contemporary perspectives while also, at one and the same time, rethinking that very remove and questioning its limits. Can early modern and contemporary perspectives be read as inseparable but not identical, neither entirely distinct from one another nor completely reducible to each other? How might these texts be opened up, and opened to a new interpretative future, when brought to bear on continental and critical theory?

Clearly, as Derrida and others long ago forewarned, no inquiry can ever evade the system it undoes without, to a certain degree, falling prey to the very tendencies it sought to withstand.[41] Bringing underrepresented and uncanonized fictions to the public eye, as this inquiry does, is not without its perils, as it risks paradoxically reinforcing the tradition that has at length excluded them, ironically confirming the very presumptions that it aimed to avoid. In Hélène Cixous' words, to tread lightly —to *read* lightly— is still to tread: "lightness also bears weight. That which I have to say is lighter than lightness or isn't. The word 'lightness' is already a weight. There is not a word light enough to not weigh down the lightness of lightness."[42] This is the unfortunate burden that will come, inevitably, with the attempt to make light of the these texts, rather than simply bringing them to light, for even Blanchot's appeal to let the work "be"

cannot fully evade imposition and constraint. Even to say to these texts, "I want you to know yourself free," as Cixous remarks, is still to constrain and capture, insofar as the demand that there be freedom remains a demand and thus cannot, in the final instance, be free.[43]

ii. motifs and motives

> *…minority writers (who are conscious of being so) enter into literature obliquely…they cannot help but be stirred heart and soul by their subject— "that which calls for a hidden name," "that which dares not speak its name," that which they find everywhere although it is never written about.*
>
> —Monique Wittig, "The Point of View: Universal or Particular?"

As for the silhouettes of this study, its contours and construction: taken at its most bare form, this writing falls into six vignettes. An opening Prelude, "I can't love you unless I give you up," sets the mood for the argument proper, beginning in Chapter One, through a selective reading of Edith Wharton's *The Age of Innocence* in terms of the history of Western philosophy. Meditating upon some the general philosophical questions and quandaries that arise when attempting to address the figures of experience and inexperience, it analyzes Wharton's novel alongside philosophical theorizations of experience, extending from Plato to poststructuralism, in order to suggest that discussions of experience in the history of Western philosophy will have always been attended by the problem of substance metaphysics (experience as "being" something that one "has," a foundational and self-identical substrate underlying knowledge), a problem due in large part to the constraints of a grammar of the subject (because propositions take subject-predicate form, experience is spoken of as if it were something that a subject could "be" or something a subject could "have"). Through recourse to Nietzsche, Wittgenstein, Derrida, and others the question becomes: Might the conceptual features and predicates often associated with experience, as something one has or is, turn out to be a grammatical fiction, an effect of the language in which experience is given and the language-game in which it is used, even if experience is not therefore reducible to or commensurate with language? In what ways is experience, if not beyond or outside language, nonetheless irreducible to with it?

Not only this, the prelude also begins to ask whether examining the odd concept of inexperience,

or a "lack of experience," might accentuate the aporias that have plagued the concept of experience all along its fractured history in philosophy. For inexperience's definition as *a lack of experience* contains, in a single word, the very annulment of the concept to which it refers: an experience lacking itself, an experience that is not yet or that is no longer. Such an oxymoronic formulation can only but repeal the very phenomenological diction it seems to invoke, paradoxically dismantling the conceptual terminology it also mobilizes. How is it determined, if ever, that an "experience" has been gained, and what authorizes the criteria specifying its acquisition, or, contrarily, its non-possession (and what, furthermore, authorizes this language of "possession," "gain," and "acquisition")? How do "experiences" come to count or become claimable as experiences in language and must they? Does experience have a subject who precedes it and acquires experience as it would an object, or might the very conceit of a subject who exists with an identity prior to its entry into the cultural discourse of experience be a regulative fiction? By what parameters are recognizable experiences distinguished from their inexperiences? To what extent must epistemological pursuits of experience (its knowability) and ontological accounts of experience (its being) give way to considerations of how experience is (de)constructed within discourse and circulated within a given language-game? If ineluctably given in, and given over to, language and idiom, is experience therefore confined to its significations or does it evade deterministic referential capture within any given signified? If "language" is itself not a monolithic entity or a stable, self-subsistent system of structures and signs (a structuralist and logocentric conceit if there ever was one), by what means must this conceit be critically re-signified and re-worked, opened up not to another version of language but to the other of language?[44] In what ways must "language" be given over to *text,* an array of relations interweaving the linguistic and the nonlinguistic?

Chapter One, "I do not desire nor demand," elaborates further on the questions posed in this opening prelude, but it pursues them now in the context of literary history: the rise of the romance/novel (*roman*) in early modern France (ca. 1500-1800). In moving from the history of philosophy in the Prelude

to literary history and the argument proper, it will be revealed that the aforementioned philosophical quandaries surrounding (in)experience are not recent, but a cluster of paradoxes and problems inherited from the early modern era, a time during which writers and philosophers were confronting the limits of the concept of experience/experiment (Bacon, Locke Hume), as well as questioning who could and could not have experience depending on gender norms (Gournay, Wollstonecraft). Formulations such as "being experienced" or "having experience" carry ambivalent connotations in early modern vocabularies, implying not only erudition and enlightenment but also carnal knowledge and sexual sophistication. Experience was thus not only a philosophical concept, scientific methodology, or literary trope, but also a regulatory gender norm circumscribing who qualified as a subject of experience, who could and could not have experience, as well as what would and would not count as experience. Experience was not simply something one had, a knowledge one gained, a scientific method one practiced, or an event one underwent, but part of a set of discursive strategies operating in the service of regulating conduct according to (hetero)sexual differentials, delimiting who the very "one" could be in the first place, producing who could be a subject of experience, and thus producing who could be a subject *tout court* (generating in turn a corollary sphere of non-subjects, a constitutive outside of those not admitted into the discursive terms of recognizable subjectivity and subjecthood). It is thus intriguing, but perhaps not surprising, that when it comes to the education of young women in early modern France, it will not be experience but *in*experience that becomes the regulatory ideal advanced in *ancien régime* educational treatises and didactic tracts.

This movement from the history of philosophy (in the Prelude) into literary history (in Chapter One), from the philosophy of experience to the fiction of inexperience, is not meant to imply that there would be a strict division or dehiscence between philosophy and literature, experience and inexperience. Rather, the reframing of the history of philosophy within literary history aims to underline the extent to which experience cannot be presumed to be a presocial facticity governing all persons, nor inexperience an innocent prelapsarian state before the fall into knowledge, as if both were merely "state of nature"

hypotheses, *à la Rousseau*, regarding human existence. Drawing philosophy into literature is meant to force a reimagning of experience and inexperience as, in Nietzsche's terms, a "regulative fiction [*regulative Fiktion*]" always operative within a given language-game (Wittgenstein) and within the strategic relations of power/discourse (Foucault)—and thus never "outside the text" (Derrida).[45] Put another way, the critical perspective regarding the category of inexperience must shift from "metaphysics to politics," as Monique Wittig would say, or "from philosophy to culture," as Nietzsche would have it, since the so-called metaphysical is in fact always already political, insofar as those philosophical discourses which pretend to transcend social and political life —claiming that truth exceeds cultural contingency and failing to remember that the subject of experience comes in genders— are themselves political claims.[46] In Wittig's view, the claim that the metaphysical is non-political or surpasses the political is itself a political move seeking to secure the boundaries of what will and not be political. If inexperience is taken to be not only a philosophical problem but also one entangled in the political, the social, and the literary precisely *because* it is philosophical, then the question becomes: To what extent does inexperience, neither a timeless metaphysical abstraction nor an inborn psychological flaw, operate as a contingent cultural norm bound up with an array of other discourses defining what counts as experience, what can be said in the name of experience, and what cannot? When the developments of the novel in France are scrutinized, for example, it can be seen that theorizations of (in)experience will have always been bound up with gender/genre. Although many historians rightly emphasize that erudition was allowed to those taken to be men and ignorance accorded to those taken to be women, in terms of literary history a more complex situation presents itself, one that resists the binary disjunction that would oppose womanly unknowingness to manly knowledge.[47] For while it is undeniable that one prevailing cultural attitude and intellectual discourse of the early modern epoch, as aired in educational tracts and treatises, advise women to know little and to experience nearly nothing, in literary-historical terms it is important to note that romance and sentimental literatures in France, which is to say the literary experimentation and experimental literary forms associated

with the development of the novel, were chiefly associated with and attributed to "women."

Recall that long before *roman* meant "novel," in early modern France *roman* meant "romance," a fluid and contested term referring to a narrative of chivalry, a courtly fiction, a lyrical form, and an amorous or "romantic" intrigue (to name but a few). Genre and gender become intimately intertwined, not only because "romance" brought together literary forms and erotic plots, but also because romance reading and writing came to be associated with women and with vulgar or "popular" fiction, all of which led to lively debates about virtue, morality, genre, and gender roles. How did the "romance" (*roman*) become the "novel" (*roman*)? And what role did gender play in the development of the novel? From the Renaissance up until the ends of the Revolution, innumerable transformations of gender and genre categories were underway during a time of enormous cultural and literary upheaval: the development of various imperialisms and colonialisms, the changing meaning of literary authorship and political authority, the proliferation of class disputes, the increasingly explicit participation of women in literary production, and the rise of the novel as a so-called "genre."[48] As literary historians underscore, what is now in retrospect called the "novel" in fact represents a convergence and collage of other, older literary forms which included historical romances, pseudo-memoires, letters, "secret histories," fairy tales, and novellas—most of which were associated with, if not authored by, women.[49] The rise of the novel in France was thus implicated in a history of debates regarding gender and genre, the rules and ruses of romance, virtue and sexuality, where crucial social questions revolved around the problem of amorous experience: what kinds of "experiences" could be represented, and by whom? What experiences could be publicly *counted* and, in terms of fiction, *recounted*?

If those taken to be women ostensibly did not have the right to experience or to experiment, in other words, then why are literary historians also compelled to acknowledge the proliferation of romance and sentimental fictions, ascribed to or affiliated with women, whose ostensible subject is amorous experience?[50] As various contemporary literary histories argue, when the mass of novels produced from the

early modern period up until the beginning of the nineteenth-century is surveyed, many of which now remain enclosed in special collection libraries and relegated to dusty archives as *hors d'usage* artifacts, it turns out that some of the most popular works of the early modern and old regime period are so-called sentimental novels —that is, novels dealing with matters of love, feeling, and sexuality— attributed to or written by women and that, furthermore, a great deal of them address taboo topics like incest, adultery, interracial couples, homosexuality, infanticide. According to this literary-historical paradox, "women" —a mobile social, political, and discursive category— are not supposed to experiment and yet are responsible for literary works whose precise theme would appear to be the problems of amorous experience as such.

The intent here is not so much to disprove canonical literary history or to establish a counter-history of specifically "feminine" writing as it is to read these underrepresented texts for the particular philosophical problems they present and the various rhetorical idioms they elaborate.[51] The literary-historical issues at stake thus return to philosophical questions regarding the problem of amorous inexperience and literary language. If to be "experienced" connotes both scholastic and carnal pursuits, then how much or how little one ought to experience becomes an insistent question in fictions involving romance. Although inexperience and its adjectival correlates ("without experience") had long been operative in literary and other discourses prior to entering the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française,* it is there that the most canonical —and, indeed, the most paradoxical— definition of inexperience is offered: as a "lack of experience," sexual and otherwise, inexperience would seem to mean less the contrary of experience than that which falls short of or has not yet become experience. Many early modern romance fictions, particularly those attributed to women's signatures, dwell within this paradox and open up its possibilities: if heroines in these fictions are counseled not to gain experience but to remain virtuously inviolate of it, then amorous experience comes to be contoured by the ways it is not experienced in presence or in person. In this sense, these works negotiate early modern ideals of virtue and chastity by appropriating and resignifying the normative discourse of inexperience—to ambivalent rather than purely

liberatory effect. In so doing, they complicate the representation of amorous experience by elaborating a paradoxical idiom of inexperience, a literature of unlived love: although heroines are advised to avoid rather than acquire experience, to obviate rather than obtain it, their amorous experience is not so much denied categorically as defined paradoxically by the ways in which it is *not* or *not yet* experienced, by the ways in which it is left unlived and unembraced. How do gender politics define what will and will not count as an experience? What segregates experience from inexperience and when do such conceptual distinctions fall apart?

Such idioms of inexperience differ radically, of course, from the predominant image of the *Bildungsroman*, in which the hero's formation is emblematized by the cultural capital of experience, amorous and otherwise, that he is said to gain. The gendering of this distinction of genre, according to which the *Bildungsroman* has often been associated with heroes of fiction rather than heroines, has not passed unnoticed in contemporary commentaries on fiction in early modern and old regime France. It remains to be explored how norms associated with sexual difference delimit and define what can and cannot count as experience, as well as who is or is not allowed to claim experience, in regard to the categories of gender, sexuality, and other differentials. If "women" are not supposed to publicly and empirically have amorous experience, how do these texts, authored by or attributed to women, nevertheless tell stories of loves that dare not speak their name? And if amorous experience cannot be publicly counted is it nonetheless recounted in and as fiction? If experience has long served as an important concept and methodological tool in various philosophical discourses, from Hume's eighteenth-century empiricism to Husserl's twentieth-century phenomenology, can experience no longer be understood simply as a metaphysical, empirical, or phenomenological mode of sensation and reflection, but as a discursive formation and regulative fiction inextricable from the historical and political question of gender norms?[52]

It is also in this introductory chapter that the presumption according to which French women's fiction, so-called, has primarily been sentimental prior to the nineteenth century comes under criticism.

Although innumerable literary works by women taking part in the early origins of the novel have traditionally been designated as "romance novels" belonging to a transhistorical genealogy of specifically "sentimental" literature, might this reigning assumption, predominant in most literary histories, come under challenge when a more extensive corpus of "women's fictions" is taken into account? If read carefully, might early French women's fictions, so-called, resist the categories of sentimentality that have commonly been ascribed to them, complicating not only the representation of amorous experience but the linguistic limits of representation itself? And what of the category of "French women's fiction," long susceptible to dispute and debate? Might its presumed fixity and referential identity, especially the essentialism of gender and genre it seems to invite, be subject not just to interrogation but also, perhaps, reinvention? While traditional literary histories of the rise of the novel conventionally presume that Richardson and Rousseau were the prime originators and innovators of sentimental fiction in Europe, does this presupposition come under question, as well as that of the presumed identity and integrity of the generic concept of "sentimentality," when a more diverse range of non-canonical fictions responding to and embroidering upon sentimental conventions is considered?

In this context it will become crucial to take leave from a consideration of "man" and "woman" as simply extradiscursive entities, empirical embodiments, or reified referents that would preexist their figuration in language/discourse or abide independently of it in some sort of extratextual outside, especially if these terms refer not to a pre-defined ontology of persons but to a dense discursive matrix of contradictory social significations.[53] At issue in these discussions is not so much the being or identity of "man" and "woman," as if it were known what that was, than that of the gendered *signatures*[54] discursively associated with or ascribed to certain works and the compulsory norms —a "heterosexual matrix," as Wittig or Butler would say— under which they labor and by means of which contingent conventions are implanted and naturalized.[55] Since many of the works populating these pages are signed by feminine signatures, but signatures whose writer's biography have never been ratified nor refuted, the question is not

whether a "real" woman or man authored such and such a text (what would that mean?) nor whether a presumed gender ought to be tethered to a supposed genre of *écriture féminine* (how would that be done?), but what a literary text is enacting in *the rhetorical gesture of attempting to pass itself off as authored by a "woman,"* with all of these terms importantly held in suspension and under erasure.[56]

The questions to be asked thus do not center on whether or not one can identify a "real" woman as author of the text —which not only presupposes a strict realist/idealist ontological dualism between life and work, reality and fiction, but also a presumptively essentialist understanding of gender and sexuality— than on what the text is trying to rhetorically disclose or disguise, emphasize or eliminate, by virtue of adopting this gendered posture. What is at stake, rhetorically and politically, in a text attempting to offer itself as a piece of woman's writing? To what audience is such a fiction addressed, and in what way does this postulated signature both direct its address to certain implied readers and withdraw it from others? What is enabled and exposed —as well as dissimulated and displaced— by the assumption and postulation of a woman's signature? And to what extent does the discursive mutability and malleability of signatures —their circulation, iteration, and multiplication amongst various texts and contexts—denaturalize presumptive understandings of gender and experience?

This first chapter, then, not only furthers the interrogation of the problematic of (in)experience begun in the Prelude, but it also attempts to address the historical difficulties involved in gathering together an expansive range of mostly non-canonical French fictions in pursuit of that interrogation: Why explore this particular collection—or perhaps, *constellation*— of texts attributed to women's signatures and associated with the flourishing of so-called sentimental "romance literature," and in what way do they bear contemporary philosophical relevance for the problems of "experience" and "inexperience" outlined above? Is much of the enduring intellectual interest of these virtually untouched writings to be found in their discussions and depictions of the figure of inexperience itself, especially as it reflects the twin concerns of gender and genre, sexuality and writing? In exposing and exploring these questions, numerous non-

canonical French fictions, spanning from the Renaissance romance to the sentimental novels of the early Romantic period, will be unearthed and their complex rhetorical strategies examined in relation to gender/genre. Focus will be given to the paradoxical figures of inexperience these fictions rehearse, and they will be read for the paradoxes they elaborate rather than in terms of the sentimental aesthetics they have long been said to apotheosize.

Chapter Two, "I must endure without being able to," continues this exploration by drawing its inspiration and example from the Renaissance romance *Les Angoysses douloureuses qui procèdent d'amours* (1538), attributed to Marguerite Briet, alias Hélisenne de Crenne. Therein it is argued that the aporetic rhetoric of this early modern text, heir to the literary legacies of courtly love, both devises and dismantles the conceit of amorous experience. On the one hand, the heroine Hélisenne, a wed woman who has fallen prey to an extramarital amour, is presented as one who speaks "not as an ignorant woman, but as one who has experienced it all." On the other hand, however, she expires without ever having experienced her adulterous ardor in any explicitly material manner: the lovers in the novel decline immediate action and substantial interaction, ultimately forgoing the experience of one another. Might the paradoxical discourse of love in the *Angoysses* expose the constitutive instabilities and ambiguities of experience itself?

In Chapter Three, "I love you despite you & despite myself," Du Plaisir's *La Duchesse d'Estramène* (1682), the story of a man who gives in to his love by giving his beloved to another man, is read alongside passages from Bernard's *Le Comte d'Ambosie* (1689) and various non-canonical seventeenth-century intertexts. The apparent inaction, selfless passivity, and enervated enterprise that the personages of this novel seem to display in regard to amorous experience is analyzed in terms of *repos* —"repose"; "calm." For this narrative, *not* consummating or concretizing love constitutes a modality of loving. This raises the question of whether certain seventeenth-century fictions constitute neither the frigid foil of eighteenth-century sensationalism and sentiment nor the prudish antecedent of nineteenth-century romance novels, as has sometimes been presumed, but, rather, an incisive interrogation of received notions of amorous

experience. What to make of a relationship, if it is one, that subsists only by virtue of the fact that it is left unrealized and untouched? Even the actions of the lovers who do seem actively involved with one another in *Estramène* appear anemic, their participation only passive, such that their love leaves them perennially inexperienced.

Chapter Four, "I love you too much to be able to love you," appraises the ways in which Angélique Ducos' epistolary novel *Marie de Sinclair* (1799) significantly departs from the sentimental plots and pathos with which eighteenth-century women's fiction is typically identified. The narrative, related by the young widow Adèle de N… to a nameless confidante, tells the story of Marie's unbridled passion for a man betrothed to another and the eventual demise of her beloved friend, ostensibly caused by unrequited passion. But while the unconsummated passion of the novel's eponymous heroine forms one plot line of *Marie de Sinclair* and emblematizes its explicit predicament, another implicit love story is divulged only to be silenced: the love of Adèle for Marie. As Adèle says quite simply, Marie becomes "more than [her] friend." If Marie finds her passion for the hero Fernance ultimately fruitless and foreclosed, might the same be said of Adèle's ardor for Marie? If Fernance's love is not possible or realizable, is Adèle's homoerotic love *doubly* impossible, not only impossible because it cannot be realized but impossible because it is foreclosed from the start as that which could never be socially recognized as possible, as that which could never enter the domain of possibility to begin with? It's one thing to be rejected, which requires first an acknowledgement of what is to be rejected as existing or possible before its repudiation, but it is quite another to never be admitted into the sphere of acknowledgability at all.[57] If in Fernance's case his love is seemingly intelligible and recognizable as love because presumably heterosexual would a homoerotic love —because not admitted into the terms of recognizable and intelligible love— become a spectral and shadowy love that is no love, a love that never could enter into the domain of love or be thought of as love because it is already preemptively considered unthinkable and illegitimate? Is it important to distinguish between forms of socially unacceptable loves (like Fernance's adulterous desires) and those loves which cannot even be

considered acceptable or unacceptable because they are not even considered possible, recognizable, or realizable as love at all (like Adèle's homoerotic ardor)?

Though the love letters Marie composes expatiate upon her quenchless passion for Fernance, they are nonetheless *addressed to* Adèle: erotic epistles written *about* a man are nevertheless written *to* a woman. The very fact that the text of the *Marie* and the story it tells exists is itself already a testament bearing witness to a sort of relationship between the women, even if this relation proves ultimately impossible to sustain and realize explicitly within the narrative of the novel. That is, even if nearly nought comes to pass between the lovers in the story, there nonetheless remains *this* story, their story, describing all that has not happened, and so even though narrative experience might well be frustrated within the terms of the text, there nonetheless remains *this* text which details that frustration of narrative. Far from exonerated, any reading of this text becomes obligated to follow after the traces of a love that has only taken place, if it has, in writing, a love for which the only testamentary remainder is the writing left in its wake.[58] Of interest in this chapter, then, are those moments wherein the presumed meanings of amity and amour, gender and sexuality, become tenuous and undecidable, moments wherein amorous possibility finds no consummation and amative endeavor bears no fruit because it can only take place in, and take place *as,* fiction.

In the coda that ensues, "I am my relation to you," the provocative philosophical questions concerning the limits of the metaphysical conceit of "experience" that have emerged in the wake of twentieth-century continental philosophy are brought to bear on the figure of inexperience and the contradictory predicates it presumes: what does it mean to *have* a "lack of experience"? What does it mean to *be* "inexperienced" or without experience? If these fictions furnish an opportunity for the critical discussion of gender, genre, and canon-formation in early modern and old regime France, do they also provide the literary occasion for the broader philosophical interrogation of both "experience," a term long prized in phenomenological parlance, and the metaphysics of presence which is said to underlie it? Such questions take their bearing in a larger interrogation of phenomenology, what Husserl once called "the

science of the essence of consciousness," and according to which consciousness would be perlustrated in terms of lived experience and the constitution of meaning as it is perceived in suspending the so-called external, "natural" world. If ontology concerns being, epistemology knowledge, logic reason, and ethics acts, then phenomenology's presupposed domain is experience studied in *epoché*: conscious experience, analyzed in first-person perspective and in suspension, bracketed from exterior considerations and distilled to its noema, is scrutinized in relation to the presupposed intentionality it fulfills in presence. In a certain sense, those twentieth-century philosophers associated with the renovation and innovation of phenomenological insights —amongst whom Heidegger, Sartre, Beauvoir, Merleau-Ponty— are sometimes faulted in contemporary critical accounts, poststructuralist and postfoundational alike, for having presumed a phenomenological "subject" of experience, a prelinguistic and precultural identity that would seem to exist prior to cultural discourse and to abide independently beyond it.

In criticisms waged against this presupposition, the question is raised as to whether the presupposed agent of existential and phenomenological accounts is in fact an effect of signifying practices rather than a transcendent, extradiscursive, or preformed subject. De Man's pithy phrase —"instead of containing or reflecting experience, language constitutes it"— highlights the ontological and existential presumptions that abet the "notion that language, poetic or otherwise, can *say* any experience, of whatever kind, even a simple perception," and counters these very presuppositions with the suggestion that the seeming givenness of experience is itself already infused with and interrupted by a language that no one subject controls.[59] In these terms, the further query arises as to whether the so-called "undergoer" of experience, usually thought to exist "behind" the experience it is said to both animate and collect, might expose itself to be a grammatical and figural fiction, a fiction that has nonetheless been mistaken for an existential agent and metaphysical subject/substance who orchestrates experience and in whom experience is thought to originate.[60] If experience is inevitably textual —not communicated through discourse but constituted by it, not reflected by a text but given as one— then does this philosophical concept's truth-effects turn out to be

implicated in cultural discourse rather than expressive of a prelinguistic, intuitive content? Might the conceit of a sovereign, self-present subject —a phenomenological *ego,* prediscursive *cogito*, or existential agent that would predate its entry into the social text and who would simply lay beyond it— be the effect of a retroactive positing of this subject as the illusory origin and end-point of experience?[61] What happens when the putative subject that is supposed to willfully undertake and garner experiences is dethroned from its place of epistemological authority and mastery, the founding coordinates of its presumptive identity dislocated and decentered, precisely because it might be no more than a textual effect of the language that both theorizes and thwarts, develops and decomposes, the concept of experience?[62]

An opportunity for pursuing these questions, it will be suggested, is provided by "inexperience," for inexperience's paradoxical status as an experience wanting of itself suggests that it is not simply the conceptual contrary to experience but, rather, the excluded term upon which experience itself depends in order to ground its own definitional coherence. If inexperience is most traditionally cast as an absence of experience —a state of ignorance in which one dwells prior to the undertaking of experience; a state of not yet having experience or not having it at all— then the conceptual integrity of "experience" is in fact contingent upon the production of that which is *before* experience and that which is *not* experience: namely, *in*experience. The domain of experience is constituted by means of the excluded exterior it presupposes, the "constitutive outside" that must be foreclosed in order for experience to maintain its theoretical intactness.[63] If beholden to inexperience in order to discursively define itself relationally and differentially, then is the foundational and primary status of experience undermined and exposed in all its contingency, precisely because it depends upon and cannot be imagined without inexperience? If the categorial identity of "experience" is not grounded in a putative essence or pregiven ideality that it simply expresses, but only comes to be in disavowing that to which it is opposed and against which it must continually differentiate itself —namely, inexperience—, then does inexperience not merely pose the limit to experience but also, it would seem, delimit its very contours?[64]

Furthermore, if experience and inexperience turn out to be interdependently and chiasmatically enfolded into one another, to what extent are the purported fault lines segregating "experience" from its "inexperience" more porous and permeable than often presumed? Indeed, if the boundaries distinguishing experience from its non-happening, its non-occurrence, or its non-being were to become shoreless, then would experience *in and of itself* —and not merely when contraposed to some supposed alternative— stand irresolvable? Might inexperience's seeming resistance *to* experience, in other words, end up being none other than the resistance *of* experience to its own inexperience, the very resistance, that is, of experience to itself?[65] In posing and pursuing these questions, the point will not be to oppose experience and inexperience side by side, as if each were juxtaposable to one other and knowable in and of itself, but to reveal that indelible paradoxes nest within the very concept of experience itself. Close examination of inexperience from a philosophical perspective shows not that there would be a division between inexperience as a contradictory or self-cancelling notion and experience as a stable or knowable phenomenon, but that it is *experience* which turns out to have been the unknown and contradictory concept all along, although one that has been taken for granted as self-evident. The main paradox presented throughout these pages could be summarized thus: there can be no positing of the concept of experience without simultaneously presupposing that which is anterior to it or that which it isn't —namely, inexperience— at the same time that, as Hume and others will make plain, inexperience as such cannot exist, insofar as inexperience can only be understood through experience and thus, cannot *stricto sensu* there cannot ever be "no experience." In this way, the grounds upon which experience is founded —inexperience— might well give way to the foundering of that very foundation and the ungrounding of that very ground.

In summa, the motives and motifs of this work aim not only to intervene in debates taking place in the history of philosophy —regarding the theorization of experience throughout the early modern era— and in literary history —regarding the putative rise and demise of romance fiction in France during the so-called "long eighteenth century"—, but to also diversify and deconstruct the terms of these debates by

pursuing questions of gender and genre in a mostly non-canonical "corpus." And as a work taking its bearings within the inherited idioms of the history of philosophy and continental philosophy, it additionally contributes to contemporary conversations between poststructuralism and postphenomenology by examining texts that unsettle, if not dismantle, the metaphysical conceit of "experience," a term long cherished in phenomenological parlance, and mining the implications of that interrogation for further inquiry. Although figures of vapory, phantasmal, and virginal romantic rencounters crystallize in these fictions, none present a romanticized vision of amour or subscribe to a platonized ideal of love. Each attests, rather, to the failure and frustration of the heteronormative marriage plot most commonly associated with romance literature and its representation of amorous experience: in the *Angoysses,* a wed woman becomes enraptured with an extramarital amour she neither fulfills nor forswears; in *Amboise*, a young man's only mark of love is that he abstain from his beloved altogether; in *Sinclair*, a widow's burgeoning ardor for her female friend makes for a love that dare not speak its name. To be in love is, in these stories, to be caught in a scene of rhetorical address where that which passes between interlocutors is never fully in their control and where amatory relationships persist in discourse as that which they never actually become. For, in the last instance, it will be the unviability of these amorous encounters that suggests how much loving and losing inevitably intermesh: to lose oneself in one's love is, perhaps by virtue of being "in love," to lose one's self altogether.

"I can't love you unless I give you up"
prelude

i. velvet valedictions

> The play was "The Shaughraun," with Dion Bouiault in the title role and Harry Montague and Ada Dyas as the lovers. The popularity of the admirable English company was at its height, and the Shaughraun always packed the house. […] There was one episode, in particular, that held the house from floor to ceiling. It was that in which Harry Montague, after a sad, almost monosyllabic scene of parting with Miss Dyas, bade her good-bye, and turned to go. The actress, who was standing near the mantelpiece and looking down into the fire, wore a gray cashmere dress without fashionable loopings or trimmings, moulded to her tall figure and flowing in long lines about her feet. Around her neck was a narrow black velvet ribbon with ends falling down her back. When her wooer turned from her she rested her arms against the mantel-shelf and bowed her face in her hands. On the threshold he paused to look at her; then he stole back, lifted one of the ends of velvet ribbon, kissed it, and left the room without her hearing him or changing her attitude. And on this silent parting the curtain fell.[1]

With a kiss bestowed upon black velvet the lover takes leave of the woman who had once inspired his passion, she who had once been his all. He busses not her flesh, however, but the cascading ribbon she bears, and he does this so lightsomely that his touch passes unobserved and unclaimed, "without her hearing him or changing her attitude," as if he had acted not in the slightest —as if he had not acted, indeed, at all. This quiet, clandestine osculation of which the woman is unaware spares her not only from the sorrow of her lover's desertion but also, it would seem, from the ardor of his desire. For the dulcetness of this gesture leaves the beloved woman oblivious not only to the anguish of the lover's departure but also to the raptures of his passion: embowed on the mantel-piece and covering her face, she will remain forever unenlightened of the twin experiences denied her, innocent of the lover's retreat that she cannot see and inviolate of the caress that she will never feel.[2] In this sense, the woman's "experience" of her lover's endearment, if it is one, would appear to be no less than its very inexperience, insofar as the only experience to which she will ever have any claim is one she will never have consciously lived, one of which she will stay everlastingly ignorant even as it involves, it would seem, her alone.

This scene from Edith Wharton's *The Age of Innocence* (1920) would appear to dramatize what does *not* happen in presence —what does *not* take place and what does *not* transpire—more than what does, as if the only thing that the lovers shared was the near "nothing" that came to pass between them. But if the

woman may have had neither the active awareness nor the attentive observation of her lover's passing, does this negate her beloved's act entirely? Although she has been grazed —or perhaps, *graced*— by a kiss so inconspicuous to her discernment that she will never have self-presently perceived it, does this mean that its occurrence should be categorically invalidated or its happening resolutely disaffirmed? Is it as though, in other words, "nothing" has happened? Or would this be too unequivocal a conclusion? Consider that, even if the woman will remain quite literally "unmoved" by her lover's gentle, gentlemanly adieu this does not entail that she was simply in absentia at the moment of its passing or never in attendance at the instant of its occasion. The woman's self-present participation may have been unnecessary to this scene's unfolding, but she still finds herself implicated, albeit despite herself, in that which she will never even know she disregards: a lover's farewell that appears to take place irrespective of her but which nonetheless concerns only her; a lover's leave-taking that can only happen with the woman because, to a degree, it must happen without her.

To characterize what happens to the woman —or, perhaps, what doesn't— merely by its eventfulness on the one hand, or as something devoid of eventuation altogether, on the other, seems to miss the point, precisely because this (non)event cannot be captured within presence or in the present.[3] While such a self-cancelling moment, wispily weightless, cannot simply be qualified an eventful "experience," in other words, nor can it be considered to have completely eluded the binds and bounds of experience either. For one of the difficulties of interpretation that emerges here is that the woman's "experience," if it is one, is largely left without literal requital and untouched by the fruit of consequence, left chaste of action and empty-handed of deserts, such that it would appear to be indistinguishable from its very non-happening and non-being. If hers is an "experience" it would have to be one so inseparable from its decrease in self-presence and from its decease in eventfulness that, paradoxically, it would not have much to it of an experience at all—at least not as this concept-metaphor has been customarily understood in the wake of

phenomenology, namely, a kind of self-present consciousness, a knowledge gained in the light of past events that have been lived through and viewed from —if not oriented in view of— the present. Experience would be an event undergone in presence at the outcome of which self-conscious knowledge from that experimentation is gained as proof of having traversed through a trial of some sort.[4]

This casual allusion to how "experience is customarily understood" requires further qualification before moving on, for there has never been *one* customary way that experience has been, or can be, conceived.[5] Has not experience been taken to embody differing and contradictory predicates in the history of Western philosophy, depending on the text and context in which it is being interpreted? Has not experience been said to be internal and external, individual and collective, reflective and unreflective, subjective and objective, what one does and what one has, that which is actively undertaken and that which is passively undergone? While some historical accounts suggest that throughout the discontinuous linguistic histories and translations of this figure —perhaps itself always and only given in translation— "experience" has been championed in some quarters and come under contest in others, it seems misleading to speak of experience in this universalizing way, as though it were a transhistorical theme or a transcendental signified following a singular trajectory across time, especially if experience is never received apart from a particular idiom or medium that frames how it is (mis)represented and (mis)recognized.[6] Can there be no one experience if there is no one discourse in which experience is discursively constituted and no one language-game in which it is used?

The philosopher Edmund Husserl, key innovator of twentieth-century phenomenology, the science of the "essence of consciousness" and experience, sought to dismount customary conceptions of experience, be they "natural" or "metaphysical" in attitude, in order to establish the logical conditions of pure objects as they appear to consciousness. It is worth mentioning Husserl's understanding of the customary conception of experience, given that phenomenology continues to influence contemporary thinking of experience. In

his *Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie* (Winter semester, 1910-11) Husserl outlines the naïve, natural attitude that his transcendental phenomenology will aim to supersede:

> *Each of us says* "I" and knows himself speaking in this way as an I. It is as such that he *finds* himself, and he finds himself at all times as a center of a surrounding [*Umgebung*]…the I asserts that he is the person designated in such and such a way, the one who *has* these personal properties, such and such actual experiences, opinions, aims, etc. Although the I finds itself as the one having, in various ways, all those stated predicates, *the I does not find itself as of the same kind as that which is had*. The I itself is not an experience, but the one experiencing, not an act but that which performs the act, not a character-trait but the one having the character-trait as a property etc. Further, the I finds itself and its I-experiences and dispositions *in time*. And thereby it knows itself, not only as a being at the present time which has this and that, but also as having memories, and it finds itself in remembering as the same one which "just before" and at an earlier time had such and such determinate experiences. Everything had and what had been had as well occupies its temporal place, and the I itself is something identical in time.[7]

According to Husserl's depiction of the presumptive perspective taken toward experience, "experiencing" (*erfahren*) is first of all a finding (*vorfinden*) of objects in the world against which the I differentiates and designates itself as a being bearing certain properties: it is that which finds but is itself not found. Husserl describes the natural attitude of experience as one whereby the I simply happens upon a world of pre-given things (*Vorfindlichkeiten*), but bears no particular mode of scientific thinking toward those objects. The I is that which *has* predicates but which is itself no predicate, that which has opinions but is not one itself, that which experiences but is not itself the experience it has. Significantly, the I is taken to be that which acts in the world but cannot be considered as an act itself, a self-identical being that lasts throughout the various experiences it has in time, but does not fundamentally succumb to the flux of diverse experiences it encounters. I posit myself in presence, as being here and now, though I do not simply discover myself as I discover other things or other I's.[8] As Husserl adds in *Die Idee der Phänomenologie* (1902-3), the natural attitude of experience is thus the perception of objects as though they are immediately given, just there to be found as "this-there" rather than in their ideal objectivity, and experience is only understood psychologistically in terms of the perceiving subject's particular mental operations.[9]

One of the motifs orienting Husserl's transcendental phenomenology, which was to be the corrective to the natural attitude, is the attempt to describe things (*Sache*) as they are, be they sensible or

intelligible, in their essence (*eidos*) and as they are given to consciousness "in person" (*leibhaft*) by reconstructing, in *epoché,* the logical conditions of possibility of objectivity or objecthood in general as phenomena for consciousness.[10] It is not a question of how objects are presentified as an idea but how objects of perception are self-giving or given as self-evident —as "itself-there" or "it itself"— to consciousness: "As '*self-evident,*' then, we designate *consciousness of any kind which is characterized relative to its object as self-giving this object in itself*, without asking whether this self-giving is adequate or not…This mode of givenness, too, is to be characterized as self-giving, i.e., of idealities and of general truths. But *every kind of object has its own mode of self-giving,* i.e., *self-evidence*."[11] These essences are not products of mental processes (a psychologistic argument) nor are they factually/actually existent (a platonic realist argument), for at issue is "eidetic necessity" rather than "empirical factuality."[12] So, for example, no body can be considered without extension, since extension would constitute the essence of any body whatsoever (no body cannot be thought without its extension in space), but likewise, because essence does not simply exist, no extension can be thought without reference to a particular body either (even if extension and body cannot be confounded together). It is not that there is an existent thing that comes to appear to consciousness, since the ontological existence and objective reality of an outside world are bracketed, but that one can only take into account the *appearing* of things as phenomena: phenomenology concerns itself with the "being-perceived"[13] of the object in lived experience, not with the object itself as existing factually apart from its being-perceived in its mundanity or facticity. In this way, Husserl's famous motto "To the things themselves [*Zu den Sachen selbst*]," in advocating for the analysis of objects as they disclose themselves, is meant to avoid the metaphysical materialism that there is an ontological order of physical objects which would exist apart from experience, and the solipsistic psychologism of reducing experience to the mental operations of sense-perception and impression.

Although one of phenomenology's greatest contributions was to dispute the natural attitude concerning how experience was conceived and to situate consciousness in relation to otherness —an intentionality directed toward objects that are up-built and constituted through acts— some have argued that Husserl's discourse remains caught within an epistemological framework privileging a self-subsisting subject's encounter with the world (even if, to his credit, this subject's consciousness remains *of* the world in which it partakes but does not unilaterally found or create).[14] The critique is not necessarily that Husserl's effort to theorize consciousness' grasp of a world outside itself falls into an inadvertent solipsism. After all, according to Sartre, Husserl's contribution was to privilege neither consciousness nor the world but to give them together "in one stroke": although the world is "external to" consciousness it is always "relative to" consciousness.[15] In this rendition, consciousness is neither a transparent medium that directly delivers the world as it is (a realist argument) nor the unilateral imposition of a mental representation (an idealist argument). The world discloses itself to consciousness, rather, through the intentional acts of consciousness that build it up and contextualize it through memory, imagination, and anticipation; this world is not simply pre-given or ready-made, in other words—it as it once discovered and created. To cite Husserl's formulation: "We then understand ourselves, *not as subjectivity which finds itself in a world ready-made, as in simple psychological reflection, but as a subjectivity bearing within itself, and achieving, all the possible operations to which the world owes its becoming*."[16] While the object-pole or intended object is interdependently related to the intentional act, it is not reducible to consciousness.

But where Husserl is seen to err, in Sartre's view at least, is in the postulation of an *ego* that would exist prior to and apart from its intentionalities.[17] In this regard, Sartre's existentialist critique contravenes Husserl's claim in *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie, Erstes Buch: Allegmeine Einfuhrung in die riene Phänomenologie* (1913) that, after the transcendental reduction is performed

and the empirical ego set aside, there stands an irremovable *Ego* (*Ich*), in contrast to the *cogito,* or acts of consciousness, which might fluctuate in the course of mental life:

> [W]e shall not encounter the pure Ego anywhere in the flux of manifold mental process which remains as a transcendental residuum—neither as one mental process among others, nor as strictly a part of a mental process, arising and then disappearing with the mental process of which it is a part. The Ego seems to be there continually, indeed, necessarily, and this continualness is obviously not that of a stupidly persistent mental process, a "fixed idea." Instead, the Ego belongs to each coming and going mental process; its "regard" is directed "through" each actional cogito to the objective something. This ray of regard changes from one cogito to the next, shooting forth anew with each new cogito and vanishing with it. The Ego, however, is something identical. At least, considered edietically, any cogito *can* change, come and go, even though one may doubt that every cogito is *necessarily* something transitory and not simply, as we find it, something *in fact* transitory. In contradistinction, the pure Ego would, however, seem to be something essentially *necessary;* and, as something absolutely identical throughout every actual or possible change in mental processes, it *cannot in any sense be a really inherent part or moment* of the mental processes themselves […] In every actional cogito the ego lives out its life in a special sense. But all mental processes in the background likewise belong to it; and it belongs to them. All of them, as belonging to the *one* stream of mental processes which is mine, *must* admit of becoming converted into actional cogitations or incorporated into actional cogitations as immanental constituents. In Kant's words, "The '*I think*' must be capable of accompanying all my presentations."[18]

Here the self-identical ego is considered to be *necessary,* which does not mean it necessarily exists (from a metaphysical point of view) but only that it is necessary as a condition of possibility for objects to be given to experience: experience can only happen to an I, to a someone who would own it or would have it.[19] In this sense, the language of this passage is important because it bespeaks Husserl's twin debts to Cartesian and Kantian precepts, revealing an intricate textual imbrication of conceptual complicities amongst early modern philosophy and phenomenology with regard to experience—namely the supposition of an irreducible substance/subject. In a Cartesian vein, phenomenology concerns itself with first-person singular experience and with securing knowledge on indubitable, foundational certainties; in its Kantian mode, phenomenology is preoccupied by the question of the nonempirical, *a priori* conditions of possibility of experience through recourse to the transcendental structures of consciousness. The explicitly Cartesian dimension of Husserl's argument is brought to the fore by his usage of the *cogito*, referring to Descartes' famous proposition "*I think therefore I am* [*je pense donc je suis*]" (*Discours de la Méthode* [1637]),[20] "*I am, I exist* [*ego sum, ego existo*]" (in the second meditation of *Meditationes de Prima Philosophia* [1641]),[21] and "*I am*

thinking, therefore I exist [*Ego cogito, ergo sum*]" (*Principia Philosophiae* [1644]), according to which even if everything can be doubted, there can be no doubt that there is someone/something doing the doubting.[22]

In other words, even Husserl's proposed phenomenology which consisted in bracketing the presumptions of the natural attitude, a suspension of common assumptions in order to analyze experience in its essential purity, did not escape from the metaphysical presuppositions that it sought to overcome insofar as it supposed a stable ego who would subsist beneath or beyond experience. As Jacques Derrida would later come to argue, the phenomenological conceit of conscious experience's essences also remains laden with a metaphysics of presence inherited from the history of Western philosophy, finding its culmination in Husserl's doctrine of self-present experience. Experience, in Derrida's rendition, will have always been yoked to the *living present*, as if it were no more than a *living through in presence* or a *having-been-lived-through in view of the present,* and Husserl's phenomenology becomes the avatar of this tendency. "[T]he value of originary presence to intuition as the source of sense and evidence," so goes the argument in *La voix et le phénomène*, institutes the metaphysics of presence as the *a priori* principle of phenomenology and ontology: "the universal form of all experience (*Erlebnis*) and therefore of all life, has always been and always will be the *present*. There is and there will have never been anything but the present."[23] This assertion that experience will have always been corseted within presence —between what *has been,* a past-present, and what *will be,* a future-present— is voiced with more vehemence in *De la grammatologie* and *L'écriture et la différence*: "'Experience' has always designated the relationship with a presence, whether that relationship has the form of consciousness or not";[24] "can one speak of an *experience* of the other or of difference? Has not the concept of experience always been determined by the metaphysics of presence? Is not experience always the encounter of an irreducible presence, a perception of a phenomenality?"[25] From the vantage of deconstruction, Husserl's critique of the natural attitude remains wed to a metaphysical argument constructing experience as a self-evident event or an encounter with the pregiven which would be

orchestrated in relation to the present. Derrida's critique of Husserl's critique holds that phenomenology limits itself to what can appear to consciousness in and as presence, whether it be a past now considered in retrospect from the present (and thus a past present) or as a future only on its way to becoming present (and thus a future present), all of which would originate in and as a self-present subject, the *Ich*.

The constrictions of customary conceptions of experience, as criticized in phenomenology and deconstruction, finds its literary corollary in the woman of the "Shaughraun," mentioned above, since her "experience" of her lover's parting would seem to defy the phenomenological and metaphysical predicates of self-present subjectivity, insofar as her experience, if it is one, is not an event that has been lived through in presence. If anything, it would seem that experience has not been lived through at all, precisely because the priority of presence has been ceded. If hers is an experience, in other words, would it only be one because, strangely, it is *not* an experience? An experience that also is not one, an experience, even more simply formulated, that *isn't*? Elizabeth Barrett Browning's verse-novel *Aurora Leigh* (1856) throws into sharp relief such an experience which is not one in a scene that mirrors the "Shaughraun." At a crucial moment in the novel, the eponymous heroine hovers between speculation and confirmation, wondering whether she was ever physically touched by her beloved at all. Her questionable experience leads to a series of questions about experience: "Did he touch my hand,/Or but my sleeve? I trembled, hand and foot,—/He must have touched me."[26] Whether or not Aurora has been *physically* touched by her lover matters little for, as her troubled diction suggests, she has felt touched by her beloved's company in a broader sense, much in the same way that the woman in the "Shaughraun" is kissed by her paramour without experiencing it in self-presence. The expression "to be touched" shoulders this ambiguous meaning, enwreathing together as it does physicality and intangibility —though without necessarily confounding them— to the extent that, as some would argue, it appears to suggest that one can be moved (emotionally) without ever having moved

(literally). On this view, Aurora would be touched by her beloved without being touched by him, where the senses of *being touched* are at once confused and suspended, united and untied.

The point is not whether being emotionally touched is less real than being physically touched or whether this has been an active or a passive experience. That formulation is not quite right, for these polarities between inside feeling and outside expression, between the mental and the physical, surely break down upon closer inspection. Are not emotional responses also physical ones? Is it not the case that some so-called emotional responses not only take exterior forms of expression but also require that exteriorization in order to be readable as emotions at all? Are not emotions inevitably intersubjective or transsubjective, to the extent that emotions refer and signify *for* or *to* others, within a larger social context that far exceeds the confines of a self-contained, auto-affectionate "self"? And are outward emotive gestures, however baldly material they may seem, not simply brute or natural facticties insofar as they must be *interpreted,* insofar as they are perhaps no more than these interpretations themselves? Likewise, is it not the case that emotions are only discursively legible as emotive through the cultural significations they seem to carry and which, in the last analysis, they "are"? It could even be argued that a chiasmus, rather than a chasm, binds together body and language: the emoting body bears significations at the same time that it bears on signification; brute emotion is only legible through discourse at the same time that it cannot be made fully legible through, nor fully appear within, that discourse. Language delineates, but does not determine, the body at the same time that the body, given in language, is not reducible to it.

More to the point, if Aurora's experience of being or not being touched, much like the woman in the "Shaughran," is not absolutely eventless and void, it has nonetheless been contoured by the ways in which it has not occurred in presence and by the ways in which it cannot be counted in retrospect, an experience shaped by the manner in which it will have eluded both her cognizance and comprehension.[27] The problem is not that there is an undecidability between a determinable concept of self-present

experience on the one hand, and a determinable concept of absent or unconscious non-experience, on the other, but that the undecidability emerges *in the very attempt to delimit and define what experience "is."* This is not just a difficulty of distinguishing between experience and inexperience —as if both were knowable and determinable in and of themselves and thus opposable or juxtaposable to one another— but, prior to that distinction, a difficulty of distinguishing the very concept of experience in and of itself; in short, this is not a difference *between* experience and inexperience, as if they were each self-identical and thus divided from one another, but a difference *within* experience, a difference that dirempts the very identity of experience itself, dividing experience from itself. In this context, the relevance of Derrida's questions regarding the possibility —indeed, the speakability— of an experience of the other is accentuated: for not only is the question whether one can speak of an experience of the other but, more strikingly, whether one can speak of the other of experience, the *other to experience*. Clearly, the goal would not be to classify that which exceeds self-present experience as *absent* experience —or, in the case of the woman in the "Shaughraun," *absent-minded* experience— insofar as absence is itself another form of presence: as the determinate negation of presence, a negative reflection of presence, absence is always an absent presence waiting to appear, and become, presence. [28] If the dialectic of presence and absence is no more than the recuperation of the latter by the former, then to trace that which would frustrate presence and exceed this dialectic would be to follow after that which is continually on its way to being erased because it never *was* (present). How might experience be read other than in terms of presence, if it can be? Does experience ever offer itself other than in the form of presence? Or would an experience without presence, an experience losing the very parameter that has framed it as experience in the history of metaphysics, desist from being experience altogether?

Take into account, once again, the plight of the woman in the "Shaughraun," whose lover kisses her clothes only to quit her. Unapprised as she is of her lover's self-abnegating acts, the woman will have

encountered her swain's love to the precise extent that she ostensibly has not —innocent of even the fact that she is innocent, chaste of her own chastity of experience, ignorant of her very ignorance— because unbeknownst to its very happening. She will remain shielded from both the comfortless consciousness that her lover has left *and* from the reassuring regardlessness that has prevented her from witnessing his *congé* in the first place, rescued not only from the dreadful revelation that he is gone but also from the virgin benightedness that she does not know he has.[29] If for Keats "Nothing ever becomes real till it is experienced," then it becomes uncertain whether anything has been realized or experienced in this scene, even if it is not the case that *nothing* happened, unless the accent were placed on the "happening": not "*nothing* happens" but rather "nothing *happens*."[30] Grammar falters here, for rather than saying that the woman experiences or remains inexperienced, would it perhaps be more precise, though surely impossible grammatically, to say that she *inexperiences* her beloved, a formulation that preserves the ambiguities of intransitivity and transitivity —inaction and action, inexperience and experience—without resolving them? But how does it make sense to speak of inexperience this way, as that which one does rather than what one is?

Now, there is also another reason why it is difficult to determine whether anything has been realized through experience or "become real," as Keats would say, and that is because this scene itself is not simply "real" but a play, even if very real effects are in play. Wittgenstein formulates this important scene-change of context quite simply when he remarks that experience/experiment are irrevocably altered depending on the language-game in which it appears: "[Suppose] I describe a psychological experiment [*Experiment*]: the apparatus, the questions of the experimenter, the actions and replies of the subject—and then I say that it is a scene in a play [*eine Szene in enieme Theaterstück*].—Now everything is different."[31] So if this scene of the lovers, which began this prelude as a sort of thought-experiment, is revealed to be a scene in a play, how is everything now different? It would seem crucial to recall that this scene, though dependent

upon a certain silence and distance on the part of the lovers, is nonetheless framed within a rhetorical scene of address and, no less importantly, staged within literary language (as a play within a novel) to an audience (of onlookers and readers).[32] There is not simply an intersubjective duality between two co-present participants here, for a third term ruptures that dualism: the lovers may not see each other, but the audience does; the lovers may be blind to each other but they are exposed to the gaze, and the readership, of others. In this sense, whatever amorous "experience" this may or may not be, it cannot be considered apart from the medium in which it is given and the text that it becomes, or rather, the text it always was.[33] The lover's parting "gesture" and the woman's "experience" of it, if either can be called that, would seem to be inescapably textual, not simply in the sense that the signification of experience is only "legible" (or, in this instance, "illegible") within the inexhaustibly shifting contexts of the figural idiom that depicts them and the literary language which limns them,[34] but in the more unusual and much broader sense "text" has adopted in the wake of deconstruction: a differential web of referrals and relata, a weave of differences, deferrals, and delays.[35] For this scene is caught up in a vortex of relations and references amongst genres (the play is performed in fiction), genders (the lovers are actors), performances (the amorous act is play-acting), and viewers (the scene is seen by Newland and read by the perusers of the novel), to name but a few, a *mise en abyme* that opens up this text to a limitless play of self-differing and self-deferring significations, endlessly displacing the arrival at a final signified and preventing any facile dualism between the real and the feigned.

But if this is the case, then how does the lover's gesture, his kiss, signify (a question which differs from the logocentric query "*what* does his kiss *mean*")?[36] Or, better, how does this gesture *fail* to signify? Discounted and unhearkened by the woman who fails to recognize it, the kiss ministered by the lover would seem to abide as a token of adulation tendered forth solely to her, but the gift this token embodies is excruciatingly paradoxical, for it can only be received if she does not discern that it has been conferred to

her. Indeed, the only approbation of the kiss that she can give in response, it would seem, is that she cannot give any. She can only reciprocate its favor and return its guerdon by doing neither, since a part of this gift's reception entails never certifying its receipt. But if this gift is defined by the condition that it cannot be recognized by the receptor to whom it is addressed, then can it only be taken up to the degree that it is left behind, to the degree, that is, that it is neither counted nor accounted for?[37] Does the woman stand vestal of what she has undergone even as she undergoes it, having encountered her lover's advances only to the extent that she has neglected them? If, again, this in no way annuls the woman's experience *in toto* or reduces it to a mere determinate negation, were this to be designated an "experience" would it have to be, oxymoronically, *an experience without a self* or, more radically construed, *an experience without itself*; an experience without experience or an *in*-experience that the woman cannot simply proclaim her own?[38]

This scene from Wharton's *The Age of Innocence,* itself allegorical for the rest of the literary fictions and philosophical works that constellate these pages, pithily portrays how giving in to amorous experience can sometimes appear indistinguishable from giving it up, a paradox wherein experience can be no more willfully accepted than it can be voluntarily abandoned in that those involved would seem to never actively participate in it, by their will or in full, at all. In this example, as for those that follow, the experience of becoming undone becomes the undoing of experience. This is not to say, of course, that physical consummation is itself the apotheosis of amorous experience and that affective states are only actualized when they assume material embodiment in physical acts (a materialist argument). Nor is this to suggest that immaterial and insubstantial interaction amounts to a conceit of platonic or courtly love, according to which bodiless, spiritual, and feather-light loves would be elevated and privileged over crudely "material" and erotic conquests (an idealist perspective). In some platonic and courtly conceptions of love, desire is sublimated and passion sublated: the seeming lack of tangible experience and concrete consequence is converted into a form of transitive activity, a practice of repression and sublimation whereby the annulment

of amorous experience becomes a sort of experience itself: the experience of having no "material" experience at all. Whereas the materialist viewpoint would assume that amorous experience can only be verified and validated as "real" and "actual" by empiricist standards of eventuation in the form of material consequence, the idealist perspective presumes that intangible modes of loving constitute a more authentic version of amorous endeavor which cannot be evaluated by purely positivist means. Instead of valorizing realized consequence and fulfilled action, the idealist position settles for dialectical resolution and determinate negation: the inefficacy of amorous experience on a material plane would *itself* be an experience, the experience of not having any material experience whatsoever.

Despite the seeming disparity of these views, both presuppose the very "idealist/realist" ontological dualism that the fictions of this study call into question. Their rhetorics of thwarted amorous action threaten the presumed dyadic distinction between reality and the imaginary, actuality and virtuality, which both materialist and idealist perspectives appear to take for granted. To be more precise, the question becomes whether these texts portray, impossibly, *experience in spite of experience*, which is different from saying that they simply deny experience or that they merely experience denial, in that the very opposition between denial and affirmation itself comes under contest. This would be an aporetic experience that cannot be experienced by a self or suffered by a subject in presence; an experience contoured by the ways in which it is *not* or *not yet* experienced in the present, by the ways in which it is left unlived and unembraced. Neither the conceptual contrary to experience, nor its dialectical negation, this would be an experience that does not quite become itself or come into its "own" and thus one that cannot, strictly speaking, be "owned" at all.[39]

Language already strains here, for to speak of an amorous experience circumscribed by the ways it cannot be experienced, an experience which is no experience because it cannot be embraced as one, is to push the limits of received grammar and predicative syntax, most especially the ontological and existential

pretensions of the copula ("is").[40] The constraints of customary syntax, what Nietzsche once termed the "seduction of grammar," fall into question when addressing the aporetic rhetoric rehearsed in these fictions, a rhetoric which, in its very formulation, resists the very grammar through which it is issued, if not challenges the propositional form of subject and predicate itself.[41] If Nietzsche's infamous formulation that "there is no 'being' behind the doing, the acting, the becoming: 'the doer' is merely a fiction added to the doing" were reprised in the case of this questionable experience, would it follow that there is no "being" behind the experiencing, the "experiencer" merely a fiction added to the experiencing?[42] Furthermore, if "experiencing" turns out not to be a deed *per se*—not an ontological thing, a static object, a stable process with fixed origin and end— might the Nietzschean formulation itself need to be pressed further? Might even the static grammar of substantives need to yield to a language of present participles? If the conceit of "doing" or "experiencing," like the illusory notion of the doer, has no ultimate being, essence, or substance, then is it equally as fictional as the concept of the doer produced and posited by the belief in grammar?[43] Why, and in what way, might such a self-cancelling experience still be called "amorous"?

At issue is the very question of idiom and medium, for if experience is inevitably enmeshed in textuality, not simply delivered through language but delimited by it, then the very conceit of an originary subject who acts upon experience and in whom experience originates may well turn out to be, as Nietzsche compellingly claims, in part the discursive effect of the "metaphysical language" in which experience is given (to recite the plaint of *Twilight of the Idols*: "I am afraid we are not rid of God because we still have faith in grammar").[44] Indeed, the foregoing formulations about the paradoxes of amorous experience would betray the very aporia they purported to describe if they followed a grammar of the subject ("*those who experience* love in spite of experience"). The subject-predicate propositional form is not quite felicitous for the paradox it is meant to portray insofar as its syntax, by dint of custom and constraint, remains lodged in a grammar of the subject, a grammar that privileges an agent, an acting "I," who would bring about predicative action and

who would stand "before" or "behind" the predicative deed it initiates, as if it were a substance to which the attribute of experience would be wed. "The 'subject' is not something given," reports Nietzsche's notes,

> it is something added and invented and projected behind what there is.—Finally, is it necessary to posit an interpreter behind interpretation? Even this is invention [...] We set up a word at the point at which our ignorance begins, at which we can see no further, e.g., the word 'I,' the word 'do,' the word 'suffer':—these are perhaps the horizon of our knowledge, but not 'truths.'[45]

If, for Nietzsche, metaphors and metonymies have ossified over time into concepts, a reification of figure into conceptual form that has subsequently been concealed and forgotten —"[metaphor] is captured and fenced in by means of concepts, then killed, skinned, mummified, and preserved as a concept"—,[46] then so too has the received grammar of the subject/substantive been mistaken for a metaphysics of substances.[47] Linguistic conventions (subject and predicate) are erroneously thought to mime or mirror what is presumed to be a corresponding and preexisting ontological order (substance and attribute). Through the pretensions of the "metaphysics of language," as Nietzsche terms it in *Twilight of the Idols* (1885), the grammar of substantives and verbs has occasioned a belief in being and substance, of an acting ego which stands behind its deeds:

> [W]e realize that precisely as far as the rational bias forces us to postulate unity, identity, permanence, substance, cause materiality, and being, we are in a measure involved in error, driven necessarily to error; however certain we may feel, as the result of a strict examination of the matter, that the error lies here. It is just the same here as with the motion of the sun: in its case it was our eyes that were wrong; in the matter of the concepts above-mentioned it is our language itself that pleads most constantly in their favor. In its origin language belongs to an age of the most rudimentary forms of psychology: if we try to conceive of the first conditions of the metaphysics of language, i.e., in plain talk, of reason, we immediately find ourselves in the midst of a system of fetishism. For here, the doer and his deed are seen in all circumstances, will is believed in as a cause in general the ego is taken for granted, the ego as Being, and as substance, and the faith in the ego as substance is projected into all things—in this way, alone, the concept 'thing' is created. Being is thought into and insinuated into everything as cause; from the concept 'ego,' alone, can the concept 'Being' proceed. At the beginning stands the tremendously fatal error of supposing the will to be something that actuates—a faculty. Now we know that it is only a word.[48]

It is certainly not coincidental that the Greek term for "substance" (*ousia*) —a crucial term in Aristotle's categories of primary substances (*protai ousiai*) standing for "substance," "essence," or for Heidegger, "being"— is related to the concept of *presence* (*parousia*), since presence becomes that which *subsists or persists*

in permanence as would a substance.[49] As will soon become clear, experience has traditionally been conceptualized in terms of substance metaphysics —*ousia* and *parousia*: being and presence, being-as-presence— and Nietzsche is quick to seize upon and criticize the substance metaphysics undergirding the language of experience and subjectivity when he suggests that a substantive model of being and language ramifies from the presupposition of a self-grounding subject, a presupposition motivated by a grammar of the subject which subsequently produces the belief in a substantial identity or unified substratum undergirding language. The belief in a subject beneath or behind experience has led to the belief in a substance underlying all experience:

> The concept of substance is a consequence of the concept of the subject: not the reverse! […] The subject: this is the term for our belief in a unity underlying all the different impulses of the highest feeling of reality: we understand this belief as the *effect* of one cause—we believe so firmly in our belief that for its sake we imagine 'truth,' reality,' 'substantiality' in general. 'The subject' is the fiction that many similar states in us are the effect of one substratum.[50]

To what extent, asks Nietzsche's genealogical critique, might the very notion of a prelinguistic reality, a causal substratum subtending all claims or a first principle underlying all conceptual thinking —in short, a presumption of substance and subject— be no more than a discursive fiction produced by the apparatus of grammar that it is mistakenly thought to predate? Might the conceit of a prediscursive reality or a noumenal referent that language would simply represent and reflect turn out to be a fiction retroactively posited by language itself? What follows for the presumptive subject of experience if this mimetic and metaphysical model of linguistic representation, according to which language either faithfully reflects or deceptively deflects a prior ontological order and prelinguistic reality, is thrown into question? In other words, is it possible to "get away from this contract between the grammar of the subject or substantive and the ontology of substance or subject" when speaking of experience?[51]

Although the mirages of grammar and the metaphysics of substance it seems to further come under more thorough criticism in the coda to this inquiry —as will the priority of the subject that this grammar of substantives implicitly, and illusorily, presupposes— it bears mentioning in these prelusive pages how this

substance metaphysics/substantive grammar has been bound up with conceptions of experience in the history of Western philosophy.[52] For one of the tasks of the following pages is to dislocate the presuppositional place and presumptive priority accorded to the metaphysical subject/substance in some phenomenological discourses of experience by examining a constellation of literary works whose ambiguous and aporetic renditions of amorous *in*experience undermine the ultra-transcendental and idealist thesis that there is a self-present "subject" —a phenomenological ego or psychological cogito— who willfully orchestrates experience and in whom experience originates. The point is to examine how the early modern writings reviewed in these pages —by Hélisenne de Crenne, Du Plaisir, Catherine Bernard, Angélique Ducos, to name but a few—*take up the question of inexperience in order to show that it is in fact the conceit of experience that was always questionable in and of itself*. They do so by fashioning an aporetic rhetoric of (in)experience: experience is not so much denied as defined, paradoxically, by the ways in which it cannot be experienced in presence or in person, such that it becomes indistinguishable in the last instance from its very inexperience: in short, the experience of becoming undone becomes the undoing of experience. And it is in intimating the possibility of "a grammar that would no longer be subjected to the subject"[53] that these writings dispute the metaphysical thesis of a self-subsisting, self-present subject and of a causal substance residing behind experience as a doer behind its deed. According to the argument defended here, then, several early modern texts effectuate interrogations of self-present experience, resonant with the questioning incited by Derrida, insofar as they lay into the grammars of the subject and the metaphysics of substance that have long structured philosophical conceits of "experience," from rationalism, through empiricism, all the way through phenomenology and existentialism.

But in order to get there, it is crucial to first outline what these metaphysical and phenomenological presuppositions are which will be thrown into question. That is, in order to understand how a sustained examination of inexperience —to the extent that this is possible, for it will become uncertain whether

inexperience can ever be raised to the level of a concept or reduced to a literary figure, indeed, uncertain whether inexperience as such can even exist at all— leads to the undoing of experience, it makes sense to ask what historical and philosophical versions of "experience" are under consideration in the first place. For if the argument will be that, in these literary texts, experience comes to be suspended of its usual ontological and existential predicates, suspended of those tacit presuppositions that are often associated and equated with this most unruly concept-metaphor, then it becomes necessary to ask: what are some these "usual predicates" and "tacit presuppositions" that have been associated with experience and which will come to be suspended? A brief glimpse at the grammars of experience —how it has been formulated in the history of philosophy— reveals a particular knot of collusions between the metaphysics of subject/substance and phenomenological conceptions of experience as self-presence —each of which has been thought in and through the other in the history of Western philosophy.

ii. ousia/parousia

Present experience has, I am afraid, always found us "absent-minded": we cannot give our hearts to it—not even our ears! Rather, as one divinely preoccupied and immersed in himself into whose ear the bell has just boomed with all its strength the twelve beats of noon suddenly starts up and asks himself: "what really was that which just struck?" so we sometimes rub our ears afterward *and ask, utterly surprised and disconcerted, "what really was that which we have just experienced?" and moreover: "who* are *we really?" and, afterward as aforesaid, count the twelve trembling bell-strokes of our experience, our life, our* being *—and alas! miscount them.—So we are necessarily strangers to ourselves, we do not comprehend ourselves…*
—Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals* (1887)

Even in language we have not yet established a style, *but only carried out experiments.*
—Nietzsche, *Unpublished Writings* (Spring-Autumn, 1873)

when we ask the question: "Who has been the subject of this experience?" this question is perhaps already an answer
—Blanchot, *L'amitié*

experimenting, as its name indicates, always consists in journeying beyond limits
— Derrida, *Mémoires d'aveugle*

In *Zur Genealogie der Moral* (1887) Nietzsche warns that no concept is ever transparently delivered through the idiom or medium that partially figures it because caught up in the figurality and metaphoricity of that language's rhetoric. Concepts cannot be simply transposed or easily transferred from one language to another, precisely because they do not represent some sort of extradiscursive truth or prior reality that

language simply reflects. What if, Nietzsche queries, language does not act as an instrument or a medium through which concepts are delivered, but is formative of those very concepts themselves? In Nietzsche's account, metaphors and metonymies have calcified into concepts, a rigidification and reification of figures into conceptual form that has subsequently been masked and disremembered: "*Metaphor* means: to treat as *identical* things that one has recognized to be *similar* in one respect…Concepts come about through the identification of the non-identical: that is, by means of the illusion that there is something identical, by means of the presupposition of *identities*: in other words, by means of false perceptions."[54] One prominent example of this, the *Genealogie* insists, can be seen in the ruses of the rules of grammar which have misleadingly encouraged the belief that the linguistic structures of subject and predicate mimetically represent a prior ontological reality:

> We believe in reason: this, however, is the philosophy of gray *concepts.* Language depends on the most naïve prejudices.
>
> Now we read disharmonies and problems into things because we think *only* in the form of language—and thus believe in the 'eternal truth' of 'reason' (e.g. subject, attribute, etc.).
>
> *We cease to think when we refuse to do so under the constraint of language;* we barely reach the doubt that sees this limitation as a limitation.
>
> *Rational thought is interpretation according to a scheme that we cannot throw off.*[55]

The received grammar of the subject has been mistaken to reflect a substance metaphysics insofar as discursive conventions for grammar and logic (subject and predicate) are presumed to mime a preexisting ontological order (substance and attribute).[56] "[O]ur belief in the 'ego' as a substance, as the sole reality from which we ascribe reality to things in general," Nietzsche urges, has become a precondition for thought: "Here we come to a limit: our thinking itself involves this belief (with its distinction of substance, accident; deed, doer, etc.); to let it go means: being no longer able to think."[57] Nietzsche will refuse to concede that substance/being is the substratum of perception. It is for this reason that the fiction of the subject as self-grounding substance ought to be dispensed with:

> What separates me most deeply from the metaphysicians is I don't concede that the 'I' is what thinks. Instead, I take the *I itself to be a construction of thinking,* of the same rank as 'matter,' thing,' 'substance,'

> 'individual,' 'purpose,' 'number': in other words to be only a *regulative fiction* [*regulative Fiktion*] with the help of which a kind of constancy and thus 'knowability' is inserted into, *invented into,* a world of becoming. Up to now belief in grammar, in the linguistic subject, object, in verbs has subjugated the metaphysicians: I teach the renunciation of this belief. It is only thinking that posits the I: but up to now philosophers have believed, like the 'common people,' that in '*I* think' there lay something or other of unmediated certainty and that this 'I' was the given cause of thinking, in analogy with which we 'understood' all other causal relations. However habituated and indispensable this fiction may now be, that in no way disproves its having been invented: something can be a condition of life and *nevertheless be false*.[58]

If the requirements and restrictions of grammar often succeed in insidiously passing off grammatical fictions as conceptual truths, subjugating the metaphysicians and subjecting thought to the conceit of the Subject, then it becomes necessary to consider whether the received grammar by means of which "experience" is conceptualized similarly places a subject at the origin and end of experience because of linguistic limitations.[59] To what extent does a belief in substantive grammar encourage the supposition that in experience there lies an "unmediated certainty" that there is an I is the given cause of experience? Consider that "experience" is sometimes spoken of as a substantive bearing ("to have experience"), an identitarian trait ("to be experienced"), an action and event wherefrom self-present knowledge is derived ("to experience something"), or sexual sophistication ("to be experienced" can mean "to be *sexually* experienced").[60] This in itself displays the degree to which uninterrogated metaphysical and philosophical presumptions regarding ontology, identity, and epistemology continue to haunt the very grammar by means of which "experience" is delineated: experience is supposed to be "what" one has, "who" one is, "how" one knows, and even that which forms the "one" who has experience or who experiences; it is supposed to be both process and product, event and outcome, subject and attribute, sensation and reflection.

The tacit metaphysical and phenomenological presumptions that indwell the conceptual grammars of experience are not recent, but a cluster of presuppositions inherited from the history of Western philosophy. Casting a cursory glance at this history, spanning from Plato to poststructuralism, will show that the discursive life of experience has taken, and continues to take, varies in shape and signification. Indeed, the Latinate etymologies of experience conjure forth this aspect of survival and living through,

insofar as *experientia* betokens an "emerging forth" (*ex*) from experiment or trail (*expereri;* "to attempt"), with the latter sharing a common radical with pitfall and peril (*periculum*; "danger"), hinting that experience will have always been associated with a certain boundary-crossing, traversal, or survival— *a living on* or a *living after*.[61] Has experience lived on throughout its travels? Has it the promise of a conceptual afterlife? The diversity and variability that goes under the sign of "experience" in the history of philosophy will, in the course of the selective readings that follow, suggest that experience cannot be taken for granted as a universal "given" if it is inevitably given in, if not *as*, a culturally context-dependent "text."[62] Which is another way of saying that "experience" is never quite given at all, or at least never given *as such*, precisely because bound up in a particular textuality, a particular idiom or medium whose referential and representational unreliability puts into question the very idea of givenness itself. Will it be possible to speak of the textuality of experience without recourse to a structuralist and logocentric conceit of "Language" as a self-grounding and totalizing system of signs that colonizes conceptual explanation within a closed epistemic regime of pre-formatted linguistic rules and functions? [63] How are the charged conceptual terms of "language," "discourse," and "textuality" being used in this context and what vexed significations do they continue to carry?

If Nietzsche is right to submit that no philosophical concept can be divorced from the figural —and in his view, *metaphysical*— language by which it is framed, then it makes sense to ask whether these conceptual predicates of "being" (experienced) and "having" (experience) are descriptive truths of the formal features of "experience," or whether they are, rather, the textual effects of the grammar in which experience is partially given. In the genealogical critique of experience that ensues, with "genealogy" taken in its most Nietzschean and deconstructive sense,[64] the question will be whether experience has been associated with a certain substance metaphysics in the history of philosophy, and whether that metaphysics ought to come under criticism when the conceptual language organizing those metaphysical theories is

closely examined: Does language postdate experience, coming after the fact in order to give narrative dress to a prior event, or is language itself constitutive of experience such that language and experience remain inescapably entangled? If experience is given in language, although neither simply commensurate nor miscible to it, to what extent might the very notion of subjective experience preexisting language be no more than a discursive fiction produced by the very apparatus of grammar that is thought to succeed it? Might the conceit of a prediscursive experience —one orchestrated by and originating in a subject, one that language would simply represent and reflect— turn out to be not only a fiction retroactively posited by language itself, but one that never emerged from, nor could ever be governed by, a self-present subject? Might experience always bleed into inexperience, the one evermore interlaced with the other?

Nietzsche's mistrust of the "philosopher caught in the webs of *language*," what Hume calls the "grammatical [rather] than philosophical difficulties" that the philosopher encounters, echoes a long-entrenched philosophical suspicion toward language.[65] John Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690), for example, judiciously mentions that activity and passivity are confused and conflated because of transitive and intransitive verbs: "[Let us preserve ourselves from] mistakes about powers and actions, which grammar, and the common frame of languages, may be apt to lead us into. Since what is signified by verbs that grammarians call active, does not always signify action: v.g. this proposition: I *see* the moon…though expressed by a verb active, does not signify an action in me, whereby I operate on those substances."[66] And even prior to that, the wariness over language is reflected in a series of persistent problems concerning the (in)distinctions between experience and language that hark all the way back to Plato's *Gorgias* (380 BC), wherein Socrates likens experience (*empeiria*) to a "knack" of rhetorical sophistry that would be opposed to craft. Whereas Polus, one of Socrates interlocutors, presumes that "experience…causes our times to march along the way of craft" while "inexperience causes them to march along the way of chance," thus degrading inexperience and elevating experience, Socrates will seek to show

that it is in fact *experience* which is no craft at all but, like sophistical rhetorical oratory, an ingenious stratagem and device that wins the audience over by pleasing persuasion rather than truthful knowledge (*G* 794). At issue is whether rhetoric can teach virtue and what is just, or whether it merely persuades by pleasure, and one of Socrates' contention will be that experience's conflation with art and knowledge, as Polus had presumed, is in fact lacking both, leading to the unforeseen (and certainly uncondoned) consequence that perhaps experience was inexperience all along. For the experience of oratory, Socrates argues, "produces the persuasion that comes from being convinced, and not the persuasion that comes from teaching, what's just and unjust" (*G* 800). Like pastry baking, which is pleasing in taste but not healthful in diet, oratory is an *empeiria* that produces pleasure but does not offer theoretical learning of what is just. Whereas practices such as medicine are crafts because they investigates "both the nature of the object it serves and the cause of the thing it does," *empeiria* seeks to gratify without asking after what causes gratification and why (*G* 845). Craft accounts for the nature of things and causes; *empeiria,* only serving pleasure, cannot account for or be grounded in causality, even if it seeks to conceal its groundlessness under the mask of craft. Thus cosmetics masquerades as gymnastics, sophistry as legislation, pastry baking as medicine, and oratory as justice (*G* 809).[67] This verdict resounds with more force in the fourth book of the *Laws,* when Socrates' contrasts slave-doctors as those who only act "in light of experience," aiming to alleviate illness without knowing its causes, with the "free doctor" who attempts to construct a theoretical knowledge asking after the etiology of the patient's disease (1406).[68]

Socrates' dismissal of *empeiria,* although not consistent throughout Plato's writings, would seem to lead to the unexpected possibility that experience, lacking the knowledge of craft, was no more than inexperience all the while. Following suit, Aristotle's *Metaphysics* (350 BC), while not dispraising experience with the same vigor as Plato's *Gorgias,* nonetheless also considers experience as a somewhat secondary, derived, or degraded form of knowledge when compared to wisdom (*sophia*), namely, the

science of principles and causes.[69] In book A, the comment is made that experience emerges from memory, "for many memories of the same thing produce finally the capacity for a single experience," and that experience in turn allows for science and art: "art arises when from many notions gained by experience one universal judgment about similar objects is produced" (*M* 1552).[70] Multiple memories of the same object produce experience, just as multiple notions gained by experience produce art. Individual judgments for particular cases are thus a matter of experience, whereas universal judgments applying to all cases are a matter of art. Although experience only handles particulars, and art universals, experience is not simply inferior to art, for theory without experience would lead to little success: to only focus on universals would lead to the neglect of the particulars subsumed within them. At the same time, Aristotle hastens to note that art includes knowledge and understanding to the extent that it can account for causes, while experience does not, for "men of experience know that the thing is so, but do not know why" (*M* 1553). Aristotle's examples of the man of experience who knows that a thing is but not "the 'why' and the cause" (*Ibid*) reprises Plato's observation in *Laws* that the slave doctor can only treat illness without being able to account for its causality. Men of experience might be able to act but they have no theory as to why and know no causes for their acts, and thus the man who knows can teach his art, having knowledge of it, while "men of mere experience," having no such knowledge, cannot (*Ibid*). Aristotle's conclusion is that the sense perception and memories that make up experience enables knowledge of particulars but cannot explain the "why," cannot explain the first principles of cause as a man of wisdom might. Experience, entrenched in the particular, cannot reach the universal and, most strikingly of all, cannot be passed on. Experience is not science or craft: it cannot be taught.

In these twin contexts, *empeiria* refers to the unmediated and unreflected: as bald observation and prereflective sensation, *empeiria* is contrasted with the theoretical speculation of *sophia*. Or to borrow the theoretical terminology associated with Immanuel Kant and Walter Benjamin, *empeiria* would seem to

cross-reference with *Erlebnis*, the livedness of experience and *sophia* with *Erfahurng,* the "integration of discrete moments of experience into a narrative whole or an adventure."[71] It was the rationalist bias against the supposed unreflective character of experience in the classical tradition that would lead the American philosopher John Dewey to claim that prior to the empiricists, *theoria*, or the contemplative relation to the world, would have been valued more than *phronesis,* or practical knowledge, *Erfahurng* more valuable than *Erlebnis*.[72] To be sure, it was not only the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century empiricists who would overturn the rationalist emphasis on reason and intellect, for centuries earlier Michel de Montaigne had opened up and fanned out the multiple meanings of experience in the essay "De l'experience" (1578-88), offering a sympathetic reflection on experience's multidinous forms and uses when reason no longer holds sway. Not only the subject of the essay, experience embodies its very literary form itself: as an *essai* Montaigne's essay is a work in experiment, a trial or attempt that essays to offer thought-experiments in the mode of experimental writing: "The wise speak and deliver their fancies more specifically, and piece by piece," Montaigne affirms, "[while] I…present mine generally without rule [*sans regle*] and experimentally [*à tastons*]."[73]

How does Montaigne's rendition of experience depart from the classical denigration of experience? "When reason fails us," begins the essay, "we employ experience in its place [*Quand la raison nous faut, nous y employons l'experience*]" (*E* 275). If the Aristotelian account had argued that experience was hopelessly bound up in the contingency and changeability of particulars rather than concerned with the timeless and stable features of the universal, Montaigne would counter that this was perhaps experience's virtue, for the only universal aspect of life was that it was so infinitely diverse and variable that it could have no uniform universality; the only thing everywhere universal is that there is no universality anywhere: "there is no quality so universal in this image of things than diversity and variety" (*E* 273). The only similarity binding events and objects together is that they are fundamentally dissimilar—their only sameness is that they are all

different and thus this sameness, differing from itself, is not selfsame at all. Montaigne conjectures, for example, that if all men were alike they could not be distinguished, but that if all men were indistinguishable they could not be told apart: "If our faces were not alike, we could not distinguish man from beast; if they were not unlike, we could not distinguish one man from another" (*E* 280). In this sense, similitude is always dirempted apart by its difference from itself and from others but, likewise, the fact that all similarity is fraught with dissimilarity allows a point of comparison amongst these differences: all elements are not the same as one another, and thusly different, but in all being different they share this same trait of being different from one another. Montaigne adds: "Dissimilitude intrudes itself of itself in our works [*s'ingere d'elle mesme en nos ouvrages*]; no art can arrive at perfect similitude….Resemblance does not so much make one, as difference makes another. Nature has obliged herself to make nothing other that was not dissimilar" (*Ibid*).

In this sense, experience's implication in the particular and the diversity of details nominates it as an apt candidate for engaging with the inevitable variegation of situations offered in life. Montaigne's case in point will be the impossibility of legislating universal and rigid laws, since the latter can in no way apply to the mutability and mobility of instances which such laws must confront: "There is little relation between our actions, which are in perpetual mutation, and fixed and immobile laws" (*E* 276). But if laws must be general and at the same time apply to a multiplicity of instances and variations which it surely cannot all anticipate, then how will the law be able to address particular instances that do not conform to that law's generality? If the law cannot know in advance all particular cases to which it will be applied, nor prefigure the diverse and variable outcomes of its application, then how to treat specific cases without having to generate a new law to address each newly appearing case *ad infinitum*? In order to avoid a situation in which an infinite series of interpretations and a cascade of commentaries would be piled upon one another in the attempt to decipher law upon law and instance upon instance, Montaigne will venture that "it is made

manifest by experience [*il se sent par experience*] that so many interpretations dissipate truth and fracture it," interrupting the law's logocentric obsession with endlessly determining the meaning of its own meaning (*E* 277). For in commenting upon commentaries and interpreting interpretations in an infinite regress, the law loses sight of the particular instance it seeks to address, focusing more on confirming or refuting the textual legacies of its interpretation rather than on its future applicability to specific contexts, an applicability assisted by the precisions of experience rather than by the generalities of reason: "There is more ado about interpreting interpretations than interpreting things, and more ado about books on books than on any other subject: we do no more than gloss one another" (*E* 279).

Montaigne's contention will be that experience can intervene and interrupt the infinite self-glossings of the law by being able to address singularity and exception without having recourse to exempla foreign to the instance at hand: "Whatever fruit, then, that we may extract from experience will hardly serve our institution much, which we draw from foreign examples, if we make so little profit of those that we have of ourselves, which are more familiar to us, and, doubtless, sufficient to instruct us in that whereof we have need" (*E* 283). On this view, then, experience is not rhetorical sophistry, as it was for Plato, or the unteachable, as it was for Aristotle, but on the contrary one of the best resources for instruction. But what does experience teach? "I had rather better understand myself in myself, than in Cicero," quips Montaigne,

> Of the experience I have of myself, I find enough to make me wise, if I were but a good scholar: whoever will call to mind the excess of his past anger, and to what a degree that fever transported him, will see the deformity of this passion better than in Aristotle, and conceive a more just hatred against it; whoever will remember the ills he has undergone, those that have threatened him, and the light occasions that have removed him from one state to another, will by that prepare himself for future changes, and the knowledge of his condition. (*E* 284)

Experience is not exactly depicted as positive knowledge here. Montaigne withholds ever specifying what experience "is" or "means" and prefers to describe what experience *does*, how it acts and through what effects, and one of the things experience does is reveal the extent of the experiencer's ignorance. According to this socratic perspective, experience is not simply the wisdom earned after making a mistake for, as

Montaigne contends, whenever one is misled into falsehood and comes to discover that he has been misled, what one learns is not that he has found the right answer but that he will have always been susceptible to error: "To learn that one has said or done a foolish thing [*sottise*] is nothing; it is necessary to learn that one is nothing but a fool [*sot*]" (*E* 283). Error does not lead to any understanding other than the inevitability that error will always haunt understanding; in falling prey to error, one only learns that one will have always been prone to it. "It is by my own experience [*par mon experience*] that I accuse human ignorance," Montaigne consequently affirms, for knowledge by experience reveals itself to be partial and perspectival, failing and fallible (*E* 286).[74]

If Montaigne found in experience not the seat of knowledge but the contingency and fragility of knowledge, Francis Bacon and René Descartes would by the seventeenth century seek to replace this skepticism with a methodology grounded in the testing of doubt. Bacon's *Novum Organum* (1620) in particular sought to inaugurate the "great renewal," that is, a new scientific methodology and procedure of verification.[75] Although Bacon's text often seems to employ the terms "experience" (*experientia*) and "experiment" (*experimentum*) interchangeably, by no means was Bacon's purpose to dignify experience in the same manner that Montaigne had sought to do centuries earlier. For Bacon, the "foundations of experience…have been non-existent or very weak" (*N* 80), and the proposed remedy to the foundationalessness of experience is to ground it in the "form of demonstration" of induction which would conduct the analysis of experience as experiment: "What the sciences need is a form of induction which takes experience apart and analyses it, and forms necessary conclusions on the basis of appropriate exclusions and rejections" (*N* 17). Whereas Montaigne proposed that experience might remedy those instances where the law pretentiously sought to universally amplify itself, extending its jurisdiction to instances that could not be subsumed within it, Bacon's project will be to instaurate sure rules and laws to anchor experience in scientific experiment. Through means of carefully crafted instruments, Bacon

explains, experiments can be designed to correct the defects of sense-experience: "We…need first to elicit the discovery of true causes and axioms from every kind of experience: and we must look for illuminating, not profitable, experiments" (*N* 58). Echoing Polus' declamation in Plato's *Gorgias* that experience produces art and inexperience chance, Bacon will come to assert that experience, understood as *experientia*, was contingent and chanceful, while experiment was assisted by art:

> There remains mere experience: which is chance, if it comes by itself; experiment, if sought. This kind of experience is like a brush without a head (as they say), mere groping, such as men use in the dark, trying everything in case they may be lucky enough to stumble into the right path. It would be much better and more sensible to wait for day or light a lamp, and then to start the journey. The true order of experience, on the other hand, first lights the lamp, then shows the way by its light, beginning with experience digested and ordered, not backwards or random, and from that it infers axioms, and then new experiments on the basis of the axioms so formed. (*N* 67)

Now it is "mere experience" which has taken the place of "inexperience" mentioned in *Gorgias* as the source of impressionistic knowledge led by chance and groping in the dark; now the true order of experience, understood as *experimentum*, orders experience and analyses it with the aim of drafting a set of axioms upon which further experiments can be founded: "casual experience which follows only itself…rather bemuses men than informs them. But when experience shall proceed by sure rules [*lege certa*], serially and continuously, something better may be expected from the sciences" (*N* 81-2). Mere experience's evolution through experiment, when recorded and inventoried, would become "*written experience* [*experientia literata*]," a major contribution to the growing repertory of scientific knowledge (*N* 87). In this sense, Bacon's mere experience repeats Aristotle's criticism of men of "mere experience" and anticipates Spinoza's condemnation in his *Ethics* (1661-75) of the flawed perception of "random experience [*experientia vaga*]."[76] The particularity and singularity of experience so enthusiastically applauded by Montaigne comes to be supplanted in Bacon's version with the replaceability and substitutability of singularity by the generalizability of axioms of experiment. And while Montaigne's essay supported the claim that past experience aided present example, Bacon's efforts to uncover a scientific method that could validate and confirm experience through inductive experiment sought to efface the *idola* or illusory ideas maintained by

past thinkers. No less importantly, the physical and bodily emphasis placed on experience in Montaigne's account, its so-called humanist perspective, is displaced in Bacon's proposal to an emphasis on impersonal instruments and objective tools.[77] Montaigne's socratic skepticism toward the possibility of obtaining knowledge is thus fundamentally displaced, with Bacon, by the search for scientific certainties.

Montaigne's insight that experience's particularity ought to be preserved, coupled with Bacon's claim that experience ought to be closely scrutated, would inaugurate the empiricist project in John Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690) and David Hume's *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (1748), both of whom suppose experience to be the *medium* and *surface* upon which sensation is inscribed. Locke's quarrel in the *Essay* is against the hypothesis that inborn or innate ideas are lodged in the mind prior to experience, a thesis he more or less associates with Descartes' rationalism. For Locke, all ideas emerge from sensation or reflection, from what is encountered externally or processed internally, by means of experience: "Let us then suppose the mind to be, as we say, white paper void of all characters, without any *ideas.* How comes it to be furnished?…Whence has it all the *materials* of reason and knowledge? To this I answer, in one word, from EXPERIENCE. In that all our knowledge if founded; and from that it ultimately derives itself."[78] The mind, initially a *tabula rasa,* comes to be imprinted with ideas —understood as "the *object* of the understanding when a man thinks…[a] *phantasm, notion, species* or *whatever it is which the mind can be employed about in thinking*" (*EM* 9)— through experience. Locke's account is far from clear, however, and critics continue to pinpoint those textual instances where Locke's language vacillates between phenomenalism and realism —insofar as these "ideas" seem to refer to both the objects as they indirectly appear to the mind *and* as the more immediate representations of objects in themselves— as well as active and passive perception. While sensation, for example, is a passive mode of experience that cannot be avoided —perception is not under one's control—the operations of reflection, on the other hand, seem to

converge with a voluntarist account of *willing* thoughts. Reflection takes up the "simple ideas" provisioned by the senses and then goes on to combine, compare, and abstract them into "complex" formations.

The difficulty that then emerges, of course, is that if the mind is no more than its operations of experience, then experience explains no more than what occurs in the mind, and seems to fall into the sort of caricature of Cartesian idealism that it originally sought to contest. George Berkeley succumbs to this exact idealist impulse in *A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge* (1740), when he propounds that it makes little sense to speak of anything existing apart from the mind who perceives and experiences it. In Berkeley's famous dictum "*esse* is *percipi*," nothing can be presumed to exist apart from what he calls a "*mind, spirit, soul,* or *myself*" that would experience it by sensation, reflection, or memory (*EM* 152, 151). The only objects that it makes sense to say exist are those that are perceived: "the *being* of a sensible thing" is no more than its "*being* perceived" (*EM* 153). Berkeley's main target here is that strain of materialist and atomist philosophy which would argue that there exists beyond and beneath experience an "unthinking substance" or "corporeal substance" called *matter,* "an inert, senseless substance, in which extension, figure, and motion do actually subsist" (*EM* 154). The argument is not that physical reality ought to be denied but that the "philosophic sense" of substance, understood as "the support of accidents or qualities without the mind," ought to be dispensed with (*EM* 165). Berkeley seeks to quell the ambiguities inherent in the uncritical deployment by materialist philosophers of "an incomprehensible somewhat," an indefinable something that that would everywhere be presumed but nowhere defined: substance (*EM* 168).

The quarrel over Aristotelian *materia prima* and substance within which Berkeley formulates his critique of materialism is important and worth careful consideration before moving on, for it reflects a major early modern debate in metaphysics. Aristotle had defined primary substances (*protai ousia*) in the *Categories* (350 BCE) as "that which is neither said of a subject nor in a subject"; that is, that of which other things are predicated but which itself is not predicated of any other thing.[79] Aristotle's reflections on

substance are, however, far from consistent. In the *Categories* Aristotle addresses being —*ta onta*, "the things that there are"—, wherein being is declined into ten categories, amongst which substance (*ousia*). Substance maintains a central position in this work to the extent that it is considered apart from the other categories and to the extent that the latter all rely upon substances. The various categories —such as quantity, quality, and relation— only are to the extent that they are attributable to, and exist "in," a substance. They have no independent ontological existence apart from the substances in which they inhere, just as attributes would have no function if separated from the subjects they modify. Non-substances are only *said of* another subject without being definable as a subject itself. Primary substances are thus that which neither inheres or indwells a subject, nor that which can be said of another subject (2a10).

These subjects of predication —that which is spoken about and to which properties are attributed—concern that which endures in spite of change and that which can take on various attributes at varying times without themselves undergoing alteration. While other properties and things exist in them, substances do not exist in other properties or things, for they have definite essences: "A substance, one and the same in number, can receive contraries. An individual man, for example, being one and the same, becomes now pale and now dark, now hot and now cold, now bad and now good" (4a17–20). While a man can be pale or dark, hot or cold, the fundamental substance *man* does not change, only his features (the predicates of pale, dark etc.), and Aristotle goes on to make the further distinction between primary substances —"this man, Socrates"— and substantial kinds, or secondary substances—"mankind" in general.[80] The individual object "Socrates" is primary because it is upon him that mankind in general is predicated (Socrates is a man), and not the case that all of mankind is predicated on Socrates (all men are not Socrates).[81] Man is "said of" Socrates because it defines his entire being, while pale or dark are said to "be in" him because they constitute his logical features. In this sense, every secondary substance is predicated of some primary substance, and everything which is not a primary substance is either said of or

inheres in primary substances. Section 5 of the *Categories* resumes all of these features thus: substances are neither said of or in another subject; they are a certain "this"; they are not predicated of or in another subjection, while everything is predicated of/in them; there is nothing contrary to them even if they can receive contrary predicates; there is not more or less than that which a substance is; they are numerically one and the same, receiving contraries without being changed by them; name and definitions are predicated of them.

Without primary substances, then, nothing else could viably exist in any other category. The question that then emerges, of course, is what the being of being a "man" is, and what is its essence that allows it remain self-identical through time. Book Z of the *Metaphysics,* while elaborating upon the premises of the *Categories*, also marks a shift from the category of substance as hitherto defined. There, Aristotle seems to repudiate the premise that substance would be the fundamental ground or ultimate foundation that would remain once all attributes are prescinded, since a substrate with no properties would be no definable substrate at all. According to Aristotle's argument, beings are substances, or rather, it is the case that in asking what being is it must be asked what substance is (1028b4). Substance comes to be conjugated in four possibilities, as essence (*to ti ên einai*), universal, genus, or subject (*hypokeimenon*) with book *Z* giving particular focus to the last possibility, namely, that substance is a subject/substratum of which something is predicated: "the substratum is that of which other things are predicated, while it is itself not predicated of anything else" (1028b36). Substance/subject here refers not simply to what underlies things but to what the substance of something is: its matter and form. Matters are not so simple, however, indeed matter itself is difficult to specify, for one of the persistent interpretative problems plaguing contemporary criticism of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* is the question of the work's subject matter. For the very terms of "subject" and "matter," as they are deployed in the work, would appear nearly unrecognizable when compared to modern philosophical terminologies, at least insofar as they are used (and undone) in current discussions.

On the one hand, the text explains itself to be a "first philosophy" claiming to study "being qua being," namely the "first causes [*aitia*]" as well as the first "principles [*archai*]" of things (981b28), and the causes and principles of *ousiai, or "substances*." As commentators point out, the work's purpose, coming after the study of nature in the *Physics,* is to move from that which is known by the observer, what Aristotle refers to as the "better known," to that which is known in and of itself (1029b).[82] This "study of being qua being" is not meant to imply that the mode of inquiry stands apart from a clearly delimited subject matter which would be "being qua being," but that the subject matter of being is going to be studied *in terms of its* being or to the extent that it is being.[83] Thomas Aquinas' gloss of the *Metaphysics* in "On Being and Essence" (1252-56), states as much: Aristotle would have pointed out that essence constitutes the "*whatness*" or the "*that-which-it-was-to-be*" of a thing, namely "*that through which and in which the thing has existence*."[84] In this sense, the *Metaphysics* is an investigation of beings that can be said to be beings, that is, beings studied insofar as they can be said to be diurnal, changeless, and irreducible substances. Substances in the *Metaphysics* are now defined in terms of form (*morphe*) and matter (*hyle*), or "what kind of" and "what it is made of." Understood as *beings* and *kinds of beings,* then, substances seem to be not only made of form and matter but also the matter through which forms are individualized and realized. Aristotle explains that hylomorphic compounds lead to a certain problem: matter cannot be considered without the form of which it is predicated (a bronze statue is not a statue because it is bronze), and it is always possible to disassemble hylomorphic compounds into its subjects and its predicates, but to consider a subject without its properties is to consider a subject that no longer remains—for how could there be matter without form that would still be a subject?

Aristotle eventually moves away from subject towards essence, "the what it is," as a possible candidate, given that subject no longer offers a viable possibility, which is another translation for the form (*eidos*) that matter takes: "by form I mean the essence of each thing, and its primary substance" (1032b1). Aristotle likens this to the soul as primary substance in man and body his matter (1037a5): "Socrates and

Callias are different because of their matter … but they are the same in form" (1034a6–8). It is important to recall that the *Metaphysics* is not a theory of substances, but a tangle of aporias (*aporiai*) concerning substances. It is never fully decided whether there might be substances that are not sensible, and whether or not being is itself a substance or possibly an attribute of another substance. In Z.13, for example, Aristotle infamously makes the contentious claim that substances cannot be considered universals, seemingly leading his argument into inconsistency. For if substance is *eidos*, and *eidos* is seemingly universal, how can it be that the universal is no substance? Are substantial forms not universals but only particulars, according to which there would be multiple substantial forms, or only one substantial form under which could be herded its particular instantiations? Are substances said of many things (*ta katholou*) or not said of many things (*ta kath' hekasta*)? This contention, which seems to be polemic against Plato's universal forms, would seem to suggest that it makes no sense to speak of substances apart from their instantiations in particulars, their thisness.

Without entering into the intricacies of the critical literature on this subject, at the very least it is possible to deduce from Aristotle's accounts that substances are subjects of predication that carry attributes; they compose things and allow them to subsist; they are durable throughout change and stable throughout time as a kind of underlying substratum of definite identity; they are not simply stuff or matter but compounds of form and matter, and they are not universals. It is important to emphasize the tentative character of these deductions and the provisionality of their definition. For not only does the conceptualization of substance fluctuate between the *Categories* and the *Metaphysics*, but so too do the terms used to refer to substance, vacillating between *hypokeimenon* and *ousia*. This has led some commentators to affirm that the *Categories* is an "ontology of substance" while the *Metaphysics* is "an ontology of ousia,"[85] that is, that substance in the first work refers to that which lies under as the ultimate fundament or substrate (closer to *hypokeimenon*), whereas the second would elaborate a more general and inclusive notion (closer to *ousia*) of being "some this" (*tode ti*) which is the form of things, while still others argue that this tension

inhabits substance itself, insofar as substance must not only bear difference (as properties and contraries) but also remain selfsame (as itself). The ambiguity persists still, as Heidegger is quick to note in *Sein und Zeit* (1927): "The being of a 'substance' is characterized by not needing anything…[but] *substantia* functions sometimes in an ontological [i.e., in terms of theories of being], sometimes in an ontic meaning [i.e., in terms of physical existence and 'what is'], but mostly in a meaning which shifts about in a hazy mixture of the two."[86]

Ever since medieval commentaries of Aristotle, the Latin *subjectum* ("what is lying below") and *substantia* ("something that stands under") have often been used to translate *hypokeimenon* and *ousia* interchangeably as subject and substance, to designate that substratum which endures beneath change and throughout time, much in the same way that "one still speaks of a subject matter (*e hypokeime hule, subject amateria*) as that which thought deals, the matter of a discussion or the subject of a book or a painting."[87] In its metaphysical formulation, the subject of philosophy as a self which has representations or to which representations return retains the sense of the subject as an underlying substratum, but departs from the strict Aristotelian definition of substance as that which is composed of form, matter, and a compound of the two (hylomorphism). Descartes' notion of *substance* in his *Principia Philosophiae* (1644), for example, follows the premise that the subject/substance is a foundational ground, but does not locate this ground in a Platonic form beyond the intellect. Although at first glance Descartes' terminology seems thoroughly Aristotelian —substance assumes the meaning of "a thing which exists in such a way as to depend on no other thing for its existence"[88] and "qualities" or "attributes" are that which cannot exist without depending on other things— he also introduces a typology of substances that Aristotle could not anticipate: there would be the uncreated substance of God, derived from itself, and created substances like corporeal substance (*res extensa*) and thinking substance (*res cogitans*), which derive from nothing save God.[89] It is when Descartes formulates the argument for how substance *comes to be known* that it becomes apparent why it

might be presumed that there is a thinking substance behind such impersonal formulations as "there is thinking":

> [W]e cannot initially become aware of a substance merely through its being an existing thing, since this alone does not of itself have any effect on us. *We can, however, easily come to know a substance by one of its attributes, in virtue of the common notion that nothingness possesses no attributes, that is to say, no properties or qualities. Thus, if we perceive the presence of some attribute, we can infer that there must also be present an existing thing or substance to which it maybe attributed.*[90]

On this view, substance comes to be known by virtue of its attributes; the presence of qualities or attributes leads to the retrospective inference and subsequent positing of the prior existence of a substance to which those attributes attach. Thus, corporeal substance is known by extension, thinking substance by thought. The following examples are provided: "shape is unintelligible except in an extended thing; and motion is unintelligible except as motion in an extended space; while imagination, sensation and will are intelligible only in a thinking thing."[91] At this particular moment substance is subject, as Hegel would say, or to cite Heidegger: "Man has become the *subjectum* [*Der Mensch ist das* subiectum *geworden*]," for the subject's self-perception has become the fundament upon which modern philosophy will ground itself—even if, as some twentieth-century commentators would come to argue, Descartes' "subject" is no substance/*subjectum* but, rather, a reference to *subjectus/subditus,* a subject in the sense of being subject to sovereign laws, political and divine.[92]

The continental rationalism exemplified in the metaphysical doctrines of Malebranche, Spinoza, and Leibniz would come to complicate and refine the notion of substance, whether it be Spinoza's "God" or Leibniz's "monads," but rather than pursue those interesting ramifications of substance metaphysics in the rationalist tradition, it seems important to return to radical challenge posed to "substance" that comes from the empiricists.[93] Locke's *Essay,* for example, notes that, as regards the metaphysical conceit substance "we have no idea of what it is, but only a confused, obscure one of what it does."[94] Although various rationalist philosophies have sought to posit a buttress upon which all accidents could be founded —and thus united and explained— Locke sought to undermine the belief in this mere "*sticking on* and *under-propping*" of a

substantial cause to accidental effects (*EU* 231). Because it is difficult to imagine ideas as subsisting "by themselves," Locke writes, "we accustom ourselves to suppose some *substratum* wherein they do subsist, and from which they do result, which therefore we call *substance"* (*EU* 391). On this view, substance "is" not something that really exists but remains an heuristic for argument's sake: since it is repugnant to thought that there would be free-floating qualities and modes —attributes and accidents— that attached to no underlying ground, it has become necessary to presuppose a support beneath them: "if any one will examine himself concerning his notion of pure substance in general, he will find he has no other idea of it at all, but only a supposition of he knows not what *support* of such qualities which are capable of producing simple ideas in us; which qualities are commonly called accidents" (*Ibid*). For instance, to imagine a pure notion of extension existing without a body is to belie experience, insofar as it would require a conception of a quality not based upon anything identifiable via experience, and thus only the supposition that such a support existed: "*because we cannot conceive how they should subsist alone, nor one in another,* we suppose them existing in and supported by some common subject; which support we denote by the name substance, though it be certain we have no clear or distinct idea of that thing we suppose support" (*EU* 395). In a sense, Montaigne's critique of logocentrism years earlier prefigured Locke's criticism of substance metaphysics. Arguing that substance was no more than a verbal joust, Montaigne's assertion was that substance remained an empty signifier, an unspecified placeholder used everywhere but defined nowhere: "Our Contest is verbal. I ask what nature is, what pleasure, circle and substitute are? The question is about words, and is answered accordingly. A stone is a body; but if one should press further: 'And what is a body?'— 'Substance.' 'And what is substance?' and so on, it would drive the respondent to the end of his Calepin. One exchanges one word for another, and often for one less understood" (*E* 280). Although substance is supposed to supply the irremovable ground and unshakeable fundament, Montaigne points out that substance in fact is highly substitutable: to presuppose a substance inevitably requires explication of what

substance presupposes; to ask what depends upon substance demands an explanation of what substance depends upon. Substance, the so-called "what is" of metaphysics, leads to an infinite regress of "what is?" questions: What is the substance of substance? etc.

Not far from this reasoning, Locke famously likens this subject-as-substratum argument to the difficulty encountered by the "Indian philosopher" who plummets into infinite regression:

> Saying that the world was supported by a great elephant, was asked what the elephant rested on; to which his answer was—a great tortoise: but being again pressed to now what gave support to the broad-backed tortoise, replied—*something, he knew not what*. And thus here, as in all other cases where we use words without having clear and distinct ideas, we talk like children: who, being questioned what such a thing is, which they know not, readily give this satisfactory answer, that it is *something*: which in truth signifies no more, when so used, either by children or men, but that they know not what; and that the thing they pretend to know, and talk of, is what they have no distinct idea of at all, and so are perfectly ignorant of it, and in the dark. The idea then we have, to which we give the general name substance, being nothing but the supposed, but unknown, support of those qualities we find existing, which we imagine cannot subsist *sine re substante,* without something to support them, we call that support *substantia*; which, according to the true import of the word, is, in plain English, standing under or upholding. (*EU* 392)

According to Locke, it makes no sense to speak of subjects without their attributes, as if there were a "something" standing behind those attributes. But if a subject has no other attribute than the fact that it can receive attributes and relieve itself of those attributes, then the argument leads into an infinite regression: the something could only be defined by virtue of another something upon which it depends (the world on the elephant on the tortoise on the…etc.). Furthermore, the complex ideas of substances that a thinker may have —such as "diamond" or "iron"— are not known through some pure substantial form or innate idea, but only through the simple ideas of them obtained through experience that are then fused together: "when we speak of any sort of substance, we say it is a thing having such or such qualities; as body is a thing that is extended, figured, and capable of motion; spirit, a thing capable of thinking; and so hardness, friability, and power to draw iron" (*EU* 394). In this sense, it is unreasonable to furthermore suppose that there is a "*something besides*" which lies beyond the qualities that a substance bears. It is clear that Locke is not leveling a charge against metaphysics from an idealist standpoint, denying the materiality of substance. As he makes clear in a letter to Stillingfleet, Locke's argument aims to counter "not the *being* but the *idea* of substance,"

namely the tendency of "accustoming ourselves to suppose some *substratum*" of which there is only an obscure understanding (*Ibid*).

Locke is not consistent on this point, however, as he comes to argue that the notion of spiritual substance, while remaining somewhat dubious, nonetheless cannot simply be refused:

> The same thing happens concerning the operations of the mind, viz. thinking, reasoning, fearing, &c., which we concluding not to subsist of themselves, nor apprehending how they can belong to body, or be produced by it, we are apt think these the actions of some other *substance,* which we call *spirit*; whereby yet it is evident that, having no other sensible qualities which affect our senses do subsist; by supposing a substance wherein thinking, knowing, doubting, and a power of moving, &c., do subsist, we have as clear a notion of the substance of spirit as we have of body: the one being supposed to be (without knowing what it is) the *substratum* to those simple ideas we have from without; and the other supposed (with a like ignorance of what it is) to be the *substratum* to those operations which we experiment in ourselves within. It is plain then, that the idea of corporeal *substance* in matter, is as remote from our conceptions, and apprehensions, as that of spiritual *substance*, or spirit: and therefore, from our not having any notion of the substance of spirit, we can no more conclude its non-existence, than we can, for the same reason, deny the existence of body; it being as rational to affirm there is no body, because we have no clear and distinct idea of the substance of matter, as to say there is no spirit, because we have no clear and distinct idea of the substance of a spirit. (*EU* 395-6)

Like corporeal substance, spiritual substance cannot be known through experience but only surmised, "it is but a supposed I know not what, to support those ideas we call accidents" (*EU* 406). What holds everything together, Locke asks, and answers: surely nothing that could fall within the understanding, even if it is supposed that everything adheres to "an unknown common subject," which would be substance. Locke will eventually take leave of the ontological question concerning what substance *is* —which, for him, cannot be verified through experience but only conjectured—to what it *does*, entering a prolonged discussion of the "powers" that substances have on the senses ("yellowness is not actually in gold, but is a power in gold to produce that idea in us by our eyes, when placed in a due light" [*EU* 400]). While sensation permits comprehension that solid substances exist and reflection permits comprehension that thinking substances exist, beyond this the understanding cannot conceive of an underlying substance to experience: "in short, the idea that we have of spirit, compared with the idea we have of body, stands thus: the substance of spirits is unknown to us; and so is the substance of body equally unknown to us" (*EU* 415).

Locke's deconstruction of the substance/subject of experience was only partially followed through in Berkeley's *Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge* (1710), before being thoroughly radicalized in Hume's *Treatise of Human Nature* (1739-40). In Berkeley's criticism of substance, partially reviewed earlier, it is not spiritual substance that comes under fire, but the notion that there would be a substantive materiality or prime matter subtending existence. Matter cannot abide independently of the spirit's consciousness of it, making the reasoner aware that spiritual substance (the thinker thinking) can stand independently of matter while matter cannot stand apart from thought. The argument is not that the sensible world has no existence, nor that substance ought to be denied, but that philosophically there can be no unthinking substances, only thinking substances. As Philonous remarks in Berkeley's "Three Dialogues Between Hylas and Philonous, In Opposition to Sceptics and Atheists" (1713), "there can be no *substratum* of those qualities but spirit…I deny therefore that there is any unthinking *substratum*" (*EM* 280), since only thinking things perceive and can be aware of their self-perceiving, while unthinking things cannot. Berkeley's major claim, in other words, is that bodies can only be known either by sense or reason, both of which not only require the mind but ontologically cannot subsist without it. While Berkeley contests the claim that sensible objects would stand apart from the perceiving mind, as if there would exist a material substance that would subsist independently of the spirit and upon which everything would depend, he is not against the notion of substance completely. The cause of ideas is no longer located in unthinking, corporeal substance but in the "incorporeal active substance or Spirit" (*EM* 161), as Berkeley expresses in a formulation that prefigures Husserl's definition of the transcendental ego of experience as the I who acts but is not included in any of its acts: "[Spirit] cannot be of itself perceived, but only by the effects which it produceth," for it reveals that all things are in fact ideas, insofar as they cannot exist without the mind (*Ibid*).

Over and against Berkeley's idealistic enthusiasm for experience, however, Hume's *A Treatise of Human Nature* exercised more restraint and expressed less optimism about the bounds of experience. While

he agreed with Locke that " 'tis still certain we cannot go beyond experience," nor "establish any principles which are not founded on that authority," Hume was nonetheless wary of following the path of his predecessor due to the latter's catchall use of "ideas" (*T* 44). Similar to the Lockean distinction between sensation and reflection, Hume instates a difference between two sorts of perceptions, impressions and ideas, with the former indicating a lively and forceful violence impressed upon sensation and the latter referring to the fainter images of impression involved in thinking (*T* 49).[95] Unlike Locke, however, Hume does not wish to generalize the notion of "idea" to extend to any perceived object, in order to avoid the form of Berkeleyan idealism that would consider things as no more than ideas themselves and thus confer an overwhelming power to the operations of the perceiving mind.[96] Even if Hume will mirror Locke's and Berkeley's argument that it is from simple impressions that simple ideas are derived —"We cannot form to ourselves a just idea of the taste of a pineapple, without having actually tasted it" (*T* 53)—he places logical limits on what the perceiving mind is capable of performing. In a move that Kant's critical philosophy would later reaffirm, Hume limits the claims of reason and the gains of experience, asking after what it is possible to analyze within the limitations of experience's processes (the difference, however, is that Hume refuses the possibility of any *a priori* reasoning whatsoever outside experience, whereas Kant's critique of pure reason seeks to delineate those *a priori* conditions that allow for experience). For Hume, any and every idea ineluctably leads to a prior perception gained via experience, which is then reorganized and associated with other ideas by memory and imagination through relations of resemblance, contiguity in time and place, and cause and effect (*T* 58).

Hume's insistence that the custom of conjoining objects by their resemblance and association in experience produces the effect of causation, a move that intriguingly reverses the logic of cause and effect by showing that cause is itself an effect, commits him to the view that it is not by reason and demonstrative argument that the future (of which there has been no experience) can be said to resemble the past (of which

experience is had), but by the probability presumed to inhere between past and future experience by resemblance: "there can be no *demonstrative* arguments to prove, *that those instance, of which we have had no experience, resemble those, of which we have had experience,*" precisely because the "idea of cause and effect is deriv'd from experience, which presenting us with certain objects constantly conjoin'd with each other, produces such a habit of surveying them in that relation, that we cannot without a sensible violence survey them in any other" (*T* 137, 175). Nietzsche's criticism of causality is not far off —"*Abstractions* are *metonymies*, that is, confusions of cause and effect…every concept is a metonymy, and knowledge occurs by means of concepts"—,[97] for causality in Hume's account similarly falls from its metaphysical pedestal and is reduced to the contingent contiguity of association; by a metonymic slide objects that seem to precede and to be contiguous to one another are considered to be the causes of effects, and thereafter all objects which seem to resemble this configuration of alike objects are arranged by relations of precedence and contiguity to establish the principle of causality (*T* 220).[98] As Hume concludes: "*all our reasonings concerning causes and effects are deriv'd form nothing but custom; and that belief is more properly an act of the sensitive, than of the cogitative part of our natures,*" because of the contiguity of two objects and the placing of one in priority to the other by the presumption of their constant conjunction (*T* 234), a claim reprised in Nietzsche's notebooks that causality is not logical because linguistic: "Logic is merely slavey in the fetters of language. But language contains an illogical element, metaphor, etc. The first powers of an identification of the nonidentical and is hence a produce of the imagination."[99] By endlessly repeating this procedure, experience establishes its notion of causation.[100]

Hume's dismantlement of causality by contiguity importantly accentuates not only the contingency but also the *repeatability* of experience and its status as customary rather than logical. In this, his rendition of causality prefigures Nietzsche's critique of causality as no more than metaphor and metonymy generated by imaginative analogization and comparison: "a comparison, the discovery of some analogy or another takes

place. Then a process of *amplification* sets in. The power of imagination consists in the *quick recognition of similarities.* Subsequently, reflection measures one concept by another and performs tests. *Similarity* is supposed to be replaced by *causality*."[101] For the contention Hume advances, like that of Nietzsche, insists that it is only after a series of repetitions that the mind, once exposed to certain events, comes by habit to expect and believe that similar events will be realized in the future:

> Suppose a person…to be brought on a sudden into this world; he would, indeed, immediately observe a continual succession of objects, and one event following another; but he would not be able to discover anything farther. He would not, at first, by any reasoning, be able to reach the idea of cause and effect…Suppose, again, that he has acquired more experience, and has lived so long in the world as to have observed familiar objects or events to be constantly conjoined together; what is the consequence of this experience?…This principle is *custom* or habit. For wherever the repetition of any particular act or operation produces a propensity to renews the same act or operation, without being impelled by any reasoning or process of the understanding, we always say, that this propensity is the effect of *custom*. By employing that word, we pretend not to have given the ultimate reason of such a propensity. We only point out a principle of human nature, which is universally acknowledged, and which is well known by its effects. Perhaps we can push our inquiries no farther, or pretend to give the cause of this cause; but must rest contented with it as the ultimate principle, which we can assign, of all our conclusion from experience. (*EM* 335-6)

In this rendition, inferences from experience are not the effects of reasoning but of custom. The rationalist argument for *a priori* principles and innate ideas seems to have no proper place here, since it is only the repetition of custom rather than the bounds of reason that allow for inferences to occur: "Custom, then, is the great guide of human life. It is that principle alone which renders our experience useful to us, and makes us expect, for the future, a similar train of events with those which have appeared in the past" (*EM* 338), a maxim that Nietzsche upholds in his late notebooks: "Individuals are the bridges upon which becoming is founded. All qualities are originally only *unique actions* that, when frequently repeated in identical situations, ultimately become habits."[102] If custom, and not reason, is what allows the mind to take objects in causal rather than casual relation to each other, then the corollary question arises concerning the differences between reason and experience. Kant's critical philosophy, of course, would drift away from the *a posteriori* knowledge of experience to the *a priori* or transcendental conditions that allow for experience and knowledge, according to which experience would no longer be the passive medium of reception as it was

for Locke but actively involved in forming that to which it is exposed by means of time, space, and causality. For Kant, pure sensibility sees things as time and space, and pure understanding in terms of causation and inertia.

Hume's preoccupation would seem to be of another order: while reason is often considered to be the effect of intellectual faculties analyzing the "*a priori* nature of things" and experience is usually said to solely derive from "sense and observation, by which we learn what has actually resulted from the operation of particular objects, and are thence able to infer, what will, for the future, result from them," Hume will seek to disrupt and revise this binary in proffering the interesting point that those who are "experienced" are generally trusted more than the "unpracticed novice," no matter how gifted this inexperienced novice may be (*EM* 337). Reason, unassisted by experience, is supposed faulty precisely because, Hume avers, reason was always experience all along. On this view, the polarity between reason and experience cannot hold because reason itself, when examined, is exposed to originate in "observation and experience" (*Ibid*). Vague metaphysical maxims concerning human nature still refer to examples taken from experience but only less familiar. For example, the history of "Nero" might well seem frightening in that it shows the general cruelty of human nature, but "cruelty in private life is sufficient, with the aid of a little thought, to give us the same apprehension"—both instances are based in and inferred from experience (*EM* 338). This argument brings to pass the conclusion that experience will have always been operative in any thinker, and no thought can be thought prior to experience's arrival on the scene:

> There is no man so young and unexperienced, as not to have formed, from observation, many general and just maxims concerning human affairs and the conduct of life; but it must be confessed, that, when a man comes to put these in practice, he will be extremely liable to error, till time and farther experience both enlarge these maxims, and teach him their proper use and application…to a young beginner, the general observations and maxims occur not always on the proper occasions, nor can be immediately applied with due calmness and distinction. The truth is, an unexperienced reasoner could be no reasoner at all, were he absolutely unexperienced; and when we assign that character to anyone, we mean it only in a comparative sense, and suppose him possessed of experience, in a smaller and more imperfect degree. (*EM* 338)

Here Hume argues that it is strictly speaking impossible that there be *no* experience. Inexperience must be understood in relative rather than absolute terms, as there are degrees of being unexperienced, but no possibility of being completely unexperienced. While the unexperienced learner is liable to misapply the principles learned through experience in practice, it is nonetheless the case that experience has furnished those principles by experience. There can be no reasoner not in some way experienced if reason arises from the gains of experience. *But if Hume seemed to advance that a subject of inexperience was a logical contradiction*, *he likewise conceded that a subject of experience was an unviable conceit*. For the succession of impression that are undergone in experience are not undergone by a selfsame subject. Although metaphysicians had long presumed that behind experiences there stood a unified self, Hume points out that every impression changes from moment to moment, so how could a stable and self-subsistent self who would be perceiving these impressions itself remain unchanging? How could a substantial self be derived from impressions that are themselves never stable but always in flux?

Section VI, "Of Personal Identity," rejects the substantialist presumption that there would be a sort of immaterial substance subtending experience, whether it be the Cartesian *cogito* or Berkeley's Spirit, and Hume castigates those philosophies committed to a conception of the perceiving self as an immaterial and immortal thinking substance which would be ontologically distinct from the phenomenalities of experience. Such a conceit is a presuppositional belief rather than the outcome of the trials of experience. For the self only exists in and as its perceptions, and thus when those perceptions alter or fade away so too does the self attached to those perceptions: "when I enter most intimately into what I call *myself,* I always stumble on some particular perception or other, of heat or cold, light or shade, love or hatred, pain or pleasure. I never catch *myself* at any time without a perception, and never can observe anything but the perception. When my perceptions are remov'd for any time, as by sound-sleep; so long am I insensible of *myself,* and may truly be said not to exist" (*T* 300). If Hume's conception of mental life holds that the mind's functioning cannot be

considered separable from the world in which it partakes, then it would make little sense to posit a unified self standing behind the mind's operations since those operations are themselves engaged elsewhere, involved as they are in the world without, rather than emanating from a uniform self within. Comparing the mind to a theatre, "where several perceptions successively make their appearance; pass, re-pass, glide away, and mingle in an infinite variety of postures and situations," Hume concludes that identity itself is no more than an imposutre, pretending *as if* there were an actor who stood behind the various scene-changes of perception (*T* 301). In an eloquent dismantlement of substance/subject that even Nietzsche would admire, Hume reasons at the end of the *Treatise* that the tendency to presume that the experiencer is always the same person in spite of the vicissitudes it endures, as if the self today were consistent with the self of yesterday, presupposes that there would be an underlying substratum abiding behind and beneath all of these scene-changes, one distinct from the various attributes it holds and the various accidents which befall it. But this fiction of "*identity* or *sameness*" ignores that the self is different at every moment of impression because it is no more than the "bundle" of its impressions, an aggregate of sensations that belong to no self because they *are* that very self: "mankind [is] nothing but a bundle or collection of different perceptions, which succeed each other with an inconceivable rapidity, and are in a perpetual flux and movement" (*T* 301, 300). If there is an experiencer, a soul or self, it is one without identity and consistency because it is no more than the bundle of impressions subject to fluidity and fluctuation. Somewhat like Heraclitus' flux — "You cannot step twice into the same river, for other waters and yet others go ever flowing on"— the experiencer never experiences the same river twice and thus is never twice the same experiencer.[103] The imagination supposes that successive impressions refer to the same object, as if it contemplated a self-identical object, and fuels the mistaken conceit that identity rather than a relation of impressions lies beneath experience:

> However at one instant we may consider the related succession as variable or interrupted, we are sure the next to ascribe to it a perfect identity, and regard it as invariable and uninterrupted. Our propensity to this

> mistake is so great from the resemblance above-mention'd, that we fall into it before we are aware;…Our last resort is to yield to it, and boldly assert that these different related objects are in effect the same, however interrupted and variable. In order to justify to ourselves this absurdity, we often feign some new and unintelligible principle, that connects the objects together, and prevents their interruption or variation. Thus we feign the continu'd existence of the perceptions of our senses, to remove the interruption, and run into the notion of a *soul*, and *self*, and *substance*, to disguise the variation. (*T* 302)

The succession of variable and interrupted objects encountered in experience are only connected together by the resemblance, contiguity, and causality conferred by perception and not from a self-identical self or substance who remains the same throughout time and in spite of the diversity of experience. From this perceptive, identity is mistakenly ascribed to a mutable succession of interrupted objects, smoothing over fissures and inconsistencies in order to anchor these perceptions in an illusory foundational ground: self and/as substance. In this sense, the self is always "attended with a fiction," be it the postulation of a continuous and invariable object or a mysterious subtending subject: "identity is nothing really belonging to these different perceptions, and uniting them together; but is merely a quality, which we attribute to them, because of the union of their ideas in the imagination, when we reflect upon them" (*T* 303, 307). Thus will memory, for example, not simply happen upon identity when it links past and present perceptions but itself *produce* identity insofar as it allows for links to be made between past and present perceptions (*T* 308). At the end of Book I, Hume leaves identity destabilized and groundless, stating only that any postulation of the self refers to a provisional congregation of multiplicities that have no substance or essence because in ceaseless transformation, culminating not in a determination of personal identity but in the deferral of all identity:

> all the nice and subtle questions concerning personal identity can never possibly be decided, and are to be regarded rather as grammatical than as philosophical difficulties. Identity depends on the relations of ideas; and these relations produce identity by means of that easy transition they occasion. But as the relations, and the easiness of the transition may diminish by insensible degrees, we have no just standard, by which we can decide any dispute concerning the time, when they acquire or lose a title to the name of identity. All the dispute concerning the identity of connected objects are merely verbal, except so far as the relation of parts gives rise to some fiction or imaginary principle of union, as we have already observ'd. (*T* 310)

For Hume, then, it would be an illusion to posit "an unknown *something*" which would be substance that composes identity if identity turns out to be no more than a bundle of loosely assembled sensations ever on the way to becoming undone (*T* 63). If ideas are furnished by perception, and substance is not a perception, than there can be no idea of substance (*T* 282).[104]

Kant takes up Hume's criticism of substance in the *Critique of Pure Reason,* but reorients the empirical argument concerning the mind's customs and habits in experience toward a transcendental one concerning the *a priori* conditions necessary for experience. Revising the Cartesian dictum of *cogito ergo sum,* Kant submits that it must be possible that an "*I think*" affixes to mental representations (importantly, Kant does not say that it always or actually does, just that it must *be able to*). In the opening paragraph of "Transcendental Deduction of the Categories" (B edition), Kant proposes that one of the formal conditions of possibility of experience is the transcendental unity of apperception (*transzendentale Einheit der Apperzeption*): "The *I think* must *be able to* accompany all my representations; for otherwise something would be represented in me, which could not at all be thought—which is the same as saying that the representation would be impossible, or that at least it would be nothing for me" (B131-2).[105] There must be a certain reflexivity of self-consciousness if a thought is to be claimed as one's own, which is not to say that every time a thought occurs it *is* self-conscious. Some would argue that this is not a claim about the ontological integrity of the self but about the possible ownness of experience.[106] The unity of apperception is not, however, a psychologistic claim—it is not a pre-reflexive empirical consciousness, since for Kant what cannot be experienced cannot be thought, and a pre-reflexive empirical consciousness would in fact escape empirical claims— it is, rather, a part of the *a priori* conditions of possibility for self-conscious experience. The further query could be raised that if consciousness is unified by the I, is not the I itself also a product of a synthetic unification? And if the I is itself a product or effect of synthesis, then is it not the case that the I cannot be the foundation of synthesizing acts insofar as it itself is a synthesis?[107] Kant is careful

to demarcate this "I" from *substance* insofar as it is a formal condition rather than a being that is: "That I, I that thinks, must always have the value of *subject* in thought, of something that cannot be considered simply as a predicate attached to thought, is an apodictic proposition and even *identical*; but it does not signify that I am, as *object*, a being *subsisting* by myself or a *substance*" (B407, 1052). He goes on to insist that the I of apperception even though singular and following all thought, "does not signify that the thinking I is a simple *substance*" (B408, 1053).[108]

And it is this contention that there would be a formal requirement that an "I think" accompany experience which would come to influence Husserl's phenomenology: the science of the essence of consciousness, the analysis of experience in *epoché.* Since Husserl's phenomenology has constituted a major influence on twentieth-century and contemporary conceptualizations of experience, it is fitting to end this brief genealogy of experience with the problems that phenomenology continues to pose for current thought. Both descriptivist (describing what the phenomena which appear to consciousness are like) and essentialist (seeking the essence of consciousness and the pure *eidos* of objects as seized upon in eidetic intuition), transcendental phenomenology postulates a triad according to which consciousness is essentially *intentional* (directed to, of, or about something other) and that for every *noesis*, or intending act of consciousness, and its *noema,* the ideal content — with noema's content being its sense (*Sinn*) as meaning (*Bedeutung*) such that, as later commentators would go on to remark, experience for Husserl is the experience of meaning— there remains a "contentless subjective pole" which is the pure ego.[109] In the *Cartesian Meditations* Husserl will go on to write that once the ego is placed under *epoché,* the I conscious of the I purely as ego and suspended of its natural attitude toward itself and its body, then the transcendental ego emerges "related to the stream of lived experiences" (*Ideas* II, 22).[110] As Husserl contends, there abides a self-same something, a self-same something that would seem to be the "I" as subject and substance (that which underlies or subtends experiences), despite the fluctuations and flux of experiences: "I find myself

thereby as that which is one and the same in the changing of these lived experiences, as 'subject' of the acts and states [*ich…finde mich dabei als den einen und selben im Wechsel dieser Erlebnisse, als 'Subjekt' der Akte und Zustände*]" (*Ibid*).[111] Interestingly, this image of a doer behind the deed or an agent standing apart from the various acts it effectuates, what in Husserlian parlance might be called a "substrate category," also characterizes the natural attitude of the I —that is, prior to applying the *epoché*— as Husserl outlines it in *Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie* (Winter semester, 1910-11).[112] Although the natural attitude is posed as one of the basic problems which phenomenology will seek to overcome, it is noteworthy that the transcendental ego seems to mime the very structure of the natural attitude that Husserl condemns:

> [According to the natural attitude,] the I asserts that he is the person designated in such and such a way, the one who *has* these personal properties, such and such actual experiences…Although the I finds itself as the one having, in various ways, all those stated predicates, *the I does not find itself as one of the same kind as that which is had.* The I itself is not an experience, but the one experiencing, not an act but that which performs the act, not a character-trait but the one having the character-trait as property etc.[113]

Although in the natural attitude what is at stake is the empirical I and not the transcendental ego, the structure of an I that is experiencing but not itself the experience seems to mirror the "*pure I*" which stands behind the perpetual flux of streams of consciousness: in both cases, the I enacts but is not the act it performs; the I has experience as a property but in no way can be considered itself a property. The point is clearly not that transcendental subjectivity and the empirical I are one and the same for Husserl—they are not, insofar as the former is only possible in bracketing the latter. This is duly noted in *The Crisis of European sciences and transcendental phenomenology: An introduction to phenomenological philosophy*: "The 'I' that I attain in the epoché…is actually called 'I' only by equivocation—though it is an essential equivocation since, when I name it in reflection, I can say nothing other than: it is I who practice the epoché, I who interrogate, as phenomenon, the world."[114] The phenomenological ego is a pre-personal, transcendental structure that serves as a condition of possibility for any consciousness whatsoever. But, as Sartre's critique of Husserl in *La Transcendance de l'ego* would have it, to the extent that both the transcendental ego and the empirical ego

are situated as *residing behind* the acts they perform, as an irreducible or irremovable substance which depends upon nothing else but upon which other acts depend, then the metaphysics of substance would seem to be operative in both cases: although wishing to bracket ontological considerations, Husserl has mistakenly substantialized Kant's "I think" when the latter ought to be construed as merely a formal possibility. "This I," writes Sartre, "would be as if behind each consciousness [*comme en arrière*], a necessary structure of consciousness whose rays would light upon each phenomenon presenting itself on the field of attention."[115] Even if this transcendental ego is supposed to figure a reflexive attitude taken by consciousness rather than as a substance/subject, if the empirical I performs experience but is not experience, and the transcendental ego performs the reduction but is not itself that reduction, then Sartre's critique still holds: transcendental subjectivity appears to be self-grounding—it founds the world but is itself unfounded, or not dependent, upon that world.

Implicit to this discussion is yet another question, posed once again by Sartre, centering on the interpretation of Kant's synthetic unity of apperception: "Is the I that we encounter in our consciousness [*Le Je que nous rencontrons dans notre conscience*] made possible by the synthetic unity of our representations, or is it the I which in fact unites the representations to each other?"[116] Is the I constituted by the formal conditions of consciousness (synthesis), or do these acts emanate from a constituting I who performs this synthesis? If there is an I as subject who stands behind experiences, how is this different from the I taken as an object of experience? How does the subject consider itself as a subject without objectifying itself, becoming the very object it seeks to know? Whereas Husserl construes the I as the necessary prerequisite for consciousness, for Sartre the I is not a requirement for consciousness but an objectification of consciousness: insofar as the I can be encountered, for Sartre "the I is something we are conscious of rather than something which is conscious."[117] While one might then seek to discover who is doing the encountering here, that line of inquiry would still remain beholden to a metaphysics of the subject. For

Sartre's claim is that consciousness only finds itself to be an ego when pre-reflective consciousness, becoming reflected consciousness, recognizes itself, leading to the *post facto* extrapolation that an ego had been there all along. In the words of one critical account: "This 'I' which consciousness discovers reflectively is not a ready-made 'I,' but an'I' that is constituted through the acknowledgment rendered by a reflective consciousness which takes its own spontaneity as its object."[118] That is, it is not the I that is conscious because the I is bound up with that of which it is conscious. In these terms, it makes little sense to resort to the *epoché* in order to dissociate consciousness from the natural attitude if consciousness is always already dissociated from itself, divided into pre-reflective ("consciousness of consciousness") and reflective ("consciousness of self") modes.[119]

For the purposes of this discussion, Sartre's claim is relevant because it points to an added difficulty implicit in the positing of a transcendental ego: namely, determining whether the *I* who experiences can ever become an object of experience without losing its subjectivity in the process and, if it does, whether the reigning subject-object dualism structuring Husserl's account comes apart. Put another way, if the transcendental *Ich* is always standing behind consciousness can it ever appear to consciousness? If it did, would it not then be subjected to the flux of lived experiences? And in that case, how would this *Ich* be determined to be the selfsame one standing behind experience? Even if for Husserl an experience is of an I, how can the I be a subject of experience without falling into objectivity?[120] Is Husserl's *Ich* just another name for Schelling's "absolute identity"?[121] It might be argued that these questions are resolved because Husserl is concerned not with empirical experience but with the *a priori,* logical conditions for experiencing. The *ego* is a transcendental *I,* not simply a metaphysical form to be compared to the empirically incarnated *I,* but a doubling (*Verdoppelung*) of that very I. In this sense, after the *epoché* is applied the problems that a empirical, psychological, or natural "I" encountered when considering its lived experience would be absolved because what would be disclosed is a transcendental ego (much like the Cartesian argument that even if I doubt I

cannot doubt that there is an I who is doing the doubting) which, although inseparable from lived experience is also distinguishable from it. And yet, even after the *epoché* is administered, the question still remains: how does a transcendent ego, which is not presentable to consciousness, come to be immanent to consciousness, presentable within the terms of consciousness' immanence? In the *Cartesian Meditations,* Husserl will argue that even though not directly (re)presented to consciousness, the ego is self-constituting: "The ego is himself *existent for himself* in continuous evidence; thus in himself, he is *continuously constituting himself as existing*."[122] So even when it appears as though the *Ich* is immanent as a subject of experience, it is transcendent within that very immanence.

Sartre's riposte in *Transcendance* is to extend Husserl's application of the *epoché* to its breaking point, forcing the consequences of Husserl's procedure to the point where the transcendental I as self-grounding gives way to an impersonal consciousness, an experience with no subject. For if consciousness is exposed through the *epoché,* it need not be tethered to a subject who would own this consciousness: this might even result in an impersonal consciousness and experience, since consciousness can appear to consciousness in *epoché* without there being an attendant I which would also appear, without there being, in other words, an I who would be the ground of that consciousness or experience. If the I appears in consciousness as a me, it is not appearing to a transcendental I who peers down upon this me. The me remains an object of consciousness even if it can be experienced as a subject; the subject participates in consciousness as its object but is not a subject which grounds consciousness. For Sartre, the transcendental ego needn't be postulated prior to the intentional relationships which constitute it: it is the objects of consciousness —what consciousness is conscious *of*— which allows for a unity of consciousness rather than the assumption of a synthesizing consciousness which exists before any synthesis: "[the] ego is not the owner of consciousness; it is the object of consciousness."[123] The I cannot be the fount of consciousness, its actual source, for in Sartre's view only consciousness can engender consciousness. Furthermore, consciousness is arranged in the

very act of thinking its object, and thus cannot be a substance which would ground but which would itself be ungrounded.

In submitting the possibility of consciousness without an I, namely pre-reflective consciousness, Sartre's critique opens up a further question, one that temporarily aligns his criticism, albeit in spite of himself, with the Freudian query concerning the unconscious: namely, is the world always experienced as an *I,* or are there experiences that undo the I (such as love or anguish), experiences that defy self-present perception and intuition?[124] Are there experiences, as Freud's discussion of trauma posits, that are not experienced as an I in presence but only in their temporal belatedness and through displacement, distortion, and dream-work? In *L'assassinat de l'expérience par la peinture,* Jean-Francois Lyotard, convinced of the inescapable metaphysical trappings that ensnare experience, pursues such a possibility. *L'assassinat* begins by impugning experience as invariably requiring a self-present subject, suggesting that prior to its displacement by psychoanalytic and Marxist rearticulations, experience was spoken of as irrevocably subject-determined:

> Experience is a modern figure. It needs a subject first of all, the instance of an 'I,' someone who speaks in the first person. It needs a temporal arrangement…where the view of the past, the present and the future is always taken from the point of an ungraspable present consciousness, with these two axioms, one can already engender the essential form of experience: I am no longer what I am, and I am not yet what I am.[125]

Lyotard's point is that experience has long been structured according to the "I" as self-present bearer crosschecks with the forenamed ontology of substances. For the very grammar of Lyotard's postulation exposes the persistence of substance metaphysics undergirding even those theorizations which seek to debunk experience. In order to describe how experience is temporally oriented in view of an "ungraspable present" a formulation must be used which seems to imply the I's self-identical status —indeed, to speak of an I subject to temporal shifts requires use of the logic of identity, A=A, insofar as the I must last as self-identical ideality through its temporal becomings in order to be classified as an I at all. This is clearly not Lyotard's express purpose, nor the lasting impression of his claim, but it demonstrates the difficulty attendant to any description of experience that seeks to overcome the grammar of the subject. In the

formulation at hand, the I, situated between no longer being and not yet becoming what it will be, must remain the same throughout the temporal shifts of experience in order to identified as the subject of experience. In this rendition, the becomings of the I do not fundamentally displace or transmogrify its abiding integrity and subtantiality, if anything they are eventually all subsumed under an overarching unity, as if this were a multiple subject whose variegated components were all incorporated within an overriding identity (the I, as substance, would be modified by its various experiences, or attributes, but in and of itself it would continue to subsist in self-sufficiency).

At the same time, however, the very paradigm which would seem to found experience upon substance provides the very means of dismantling its own premises. For if the I is both no longer what it was (hurled towards its futural becoming) and yet to become what it will have been (in an ever vanishing present), then the I cannot simply be a self-subsistent or consistent substance which underlies experience and maintains its self-identity throughout. Indeed, if the I must be repeated or re-presented through time, and if the I thus cannot remain in the standstill of unchanging presence (precisely because it must submit to temporal repetition in order to even be considered an ideality at all), then it would seem that the I was never an originary presence upon which time supervened but, crucially, was from the start a re-presentation: the I will never have been *present to itself and thus never have been self-identical*. A similar argument is marshaled in Derrida's *La voix et le phénomène* against Husserl's supposition in *Zur Phänomenologie des inneren Zeitbewusstseins* (1893-1917), that experience is confined to the living present: "Each lived-experience in general (each lived-experience actually alive if we can say that) is a lived-experience according to the mode of 'being present.' Belonging to its essence is the possibility of reflection on the same essence in which it is necessarily characterized as *being* certain and present."[126] According to this metaphysical schema, language and representation befall an already self-present consciousness, a lived-experience of presence where beings appear in closeness and immediacy to consciousness and the temporality structuring

this relation depends upon a *stigme*, or indivisible starting-point in the living present, the *now* or *what is*: "The self-presence of lived-experience has to be produced in the present as now."[127] Husserl would thus have followed metaphysics in privileging sense as prior to and superior to the sign, defining the essence of language as a logic whose telos is "being as presence,"[128] presence here referring to "the proximity of what is set out as an object of an intuition and the proximity of the temporal present which gives its form to the clear and actual intuition of the object."[129] Because phenomenology is preoccupied by essence and not existence, it can take up a notion of internal discourse according to which idealities, by virtue of the fact that they do not empirically exist, are presented to a transcendental consciousness in full, self-present plenitude.[130]

And yet, as Derrida remarks, any ideality, just like any sign, could not work if it only occurred once and could not break from its context to be repeated elsewhere. For the very ideality of ideality comes from its capacity to be repeated while maintaining an ideal form or an identifiable "sameness"; it must be recognizable as itself despite its various reissuings and reiterations (much in the same way a signature must indicate the irreplaceable singularity of the signer while *still* being able to be iterated across a variety of contexts, all the while remaining recognizable as bearing the original signatory). Ideality, then, is no more than "the name of the permanence of the same and the possibility of its repetition, [it] does not *exist* in the world and it does not come from another world. It depends entirely on the possibility of acts of repetition. It is constituted by the possibility of acts of repetition."[131] Just as for Plato *ontos on* was *eidos*,[132] the being of ideality derives not from its empirical or sensible existence, but from its repetition and presumed presence, not only because it must be an "'ob-ject,' standing over and against, being pre-sent in front of, the act of repetition," but also because only a notion of "temporality, determined on the basis of the living present as its source, determined on the basis of the now as 'source-point,' can secure the purity of ideality, that is, the openness of the repetition of the same to infinity."[133]

"I can't love you unless I give you up"
prelude

While the sign, in Husserl's discourse, is relegated to a secondary and derived status, merely reproducing or re-presenting an already prior presence —as if repetition merely happened upon an already established presence and subsequently came to re-present it— for Derrida the question becomes whether the value and privilege placed upon pure presentation or originary perception (*Präsentation, Gegenwärtigung*) realized in presence not only reveals a complicity between phenomenology and the metaphysical tradition it seeks to overthrow, but also the eventuality of its deconstruction. For if every ideality (like presence) must needs be *re-presented* in order to be, then the very conceit of presence, far from being extricable from repetition, is no more than repetition itself. In this sense, there would be no primary or originary perception of presence that is not always already a re-presentation, the very distinction between reality and representation foundering on the substitutive repetitions of signification (every repetition of a sign a substitute of and supplement for the next). The impossibility of distinguishing representation from reality is not merely "produced *in* language"—no, in a trenchant sense "language in general *is* that impossibility."[134] This leads to the provocative proposition that "*perception does not exist,*" insofar as "what we call perception is not originary and that in a certain way everything 'begins' by means of 'representation,'" a move that can only be made if both "beginning" and "representation" no longer signify in their usual way.[135] For to begin with a re-presentation is not to begin from the beginning (but to repeat that which was already a prior repetition). Likewise, to represent a representation is not the re-presentation of an originary presence or original presentation (but to represent that which was already a prior representation). Re-presentation represents something already re-presented, and so on *ad infinitum*, unmasking a constitutive difference and deferral at the very heart of the so-called originary.[136]

If this finding were brought to bear on Lyotard's example of the metaphysical gradmmar orienting the experiencing I, then it would follow that the identity of the I in experience seems to have been no more than a trace of what came before (memory) and what is yet to come (anticipation), or in the language of

phenomenology, retention and protention.[137] There can be no primary or originary presence in lived-experience if the presence of perception, the *what is,* only exists in the midst of the "non-presences" and "non-perceptions," the "non-nows" of what *has been* and what *will be*, that grant its very possibility. Such retentive and protentive traces do not simply come down upon an already established, self-present perception in lived-experience but, in constituting the precarious possibility of the now, reveal that there will have only been relations amongst non-presences all along, namely "re-tention" and "re-presentation," and thus no presence ever self-identical to itself.[138] It is not enough to say that difference founds the origin, insofar as difference would itself be reinstated as another origin. Rather, the workings of *différance*, in Derridean idiom, supply no origin, for the origin can never be originary or original if fractured from the start by its differences and deferrals from itself: "différance does not supervene upon a transcendental subject. The movement of différance produces the transcendental subject. Auto-affection is not a modality of experience that characterizes a being that would already be itself (*autos*). Auto-affection produces the same as the self-relation in the difference with itself, the same as the non-identical."[139] In these terms, the I of experience is not only, always and already, exposed to the variability and iterability of re-presentation, it is no more than this very variability and iterability itself, and thus is, strictly speaking, no more—no more because it never even was a self-identical I to begin with. In this sense, does *experience not exist,* if experience can no longer be understood as only originating in a self-present self?[140] In what ways might the constitutive non-identity fissuring originary presence from the start entail the deconstruction of experience?

These questions are accented even more dramatically when the phenomenologically impossible, logically untenable—but as will be seen, figurally imagined and rhetorically enacted— case of *in*experience is investigated. Examined further, the idea of inexperience betrays several contradictions, not only when considered in its more mundane meanings, but also when taken in the more general, paradoxical sense that this term will gain in the course of these readings: an experience delineated by the ways in which it cannot

be experienced in person or in presence. Such a paradox, "experience without something or someone that experiences" is, as philosopher Stephen Priest emphasizes, "nearly unthinkable for those who subscribe to the logic of noncontradiction." To them, "there is something incoherent about the idea of an unowned or, more strangely, unhad experience. An experience is necessarily undergone, enjoyed, or 'had' and if so, then it is had, undergone or enjoyed by someone or something or other."[141] Note that in the framework subscribing to the logic of noncontradiction experience is construed as that which is *had, enjoyed,* or *undergone*, as if experience could only be specified in terms of its eventfulness ("have"), its fulfillment ("enjoy"), its happening or passing ("undergo"). But by what criteria would the eventuation or materialization of experience be determined? The more interesting point, one Priest in fact proffers, is that "the appearance of incoherence [in the idea of an unhad experience] is generated by the subject-verb-object form of our grammar. It does not make sense perhaps to speak of experience but no experiencer in our language."[142] For what would it mean for the *Ich* to not yet have experience, if experience has always been, by dint of grammatical constraint, tethered to its *Ich*?

As will be argued in the chapters that ensue, it will become necessary to visit violence upon grammar in order to come to terms with the philosophical implications of inexperience. Consider, for example, that even the most mundane understanding of inexperience yields interpretative difficulty: to not yet have experience would mean to not yet have become a subject, already suggesting that *to have no experience or to be lacking in experience* is a continual threat to the subject and poses the persistent possibility of its dissolution. To be continually in need of gaining more experience/becoming more experienced, implies that one is never quite experienced enough, that in a sense experience is never fully or finally had. Not only this, but the very effort to narrate the speculative state of not yet having experience (of being inexperienced) requires a recourse to fiction: in order to imagine one awaiting experience yet to gain — although this "one" would not yet be possible, given that it is only made possible by the experiences which it

will have and which it will be—is to imagine a time before that "one" was even thinkable at all. For, despite the substantializing grammars of "having" experience, experience is, perhaps, not a contingent attribute that can be taken on or cast off by a subject who would exist apart from it—experience is that through which subjects come to "be" in the first place. It is not as though there is already an ontologically ready-made and existentially intact subject that subsequently comes to take on experience or comes to be situated within experience, for experience would seem to have always already been operative from the start, the unstable mode by which the subject comes to be at all, one that is effectively occulted by any interpretation that would maintain that an already pre-fabricated or pre-given subject is merely placed within a process (experience) that would remain fundamentally exterior to it. Indeed, the substance model of a self-subsisting subject or substantive person ("that which experiences") bearing essential and accidental attributes ("what experience is experience of"),[143] and according to which a pre-experienced (in-experienced?) "person" would stand before and external to experience, does not hold if experience is the means by which personhood itself becomes socially intelligible. And, as will be contended further on, nor is it the case that experience can be taken to be a self-identical substance to which subjecthood would be attached as its attribute, especially if experience turns out to be not a substantive or a noun but, rather, a doing, although a doing with no doer, no subject, who would operate behind it or who would exist prior to it. For subjects who experience are, of course, already the effects of previous experiences, experiences that are not, for their part, external to the wider social "text" or context in which they take place and within which they are constituted. In what ways do the interpretative frames or horizons within which experiences take place delineate how experiences can be experienced? To what extent does the intelligibility of experience —what counts as experience— depend on the operation of regulatory norms?

iii. the love that isn't

The best that happens between two people, always, escapes them, as interlocutors.
—Stéphane Mallarmé, *Divagations*

"I can't love you unless I give you up"
prelude

a love that has no place in the name of love
—Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender*

This preliminary discussion of the grammars of experience and the metaphysics of substance reveal some of the philosophical questions addressed by the fictions that line these chapters, for in them amorous involvement, contoured and conditioned in language by the ways in which it resists the bounds of self-present experience, becomes indistinguishable, in the last instance, from its very inexperience. A heroine of the Renaissance romance *Les Angoysses douloureuses qui procedènt d'amours* (1538), a fiction analyzed in Chapter Two, says as much when, in a pithy phrase, she coins a paradox of amorous experience that proliferates throughout these pages. Her passion, she says, is an "unbearable burden of love [*insupportable charge d'amour*]," and it is unbearable not simply because she suffers a passion that subjectively seems insufferable in its experience, like a bodily injury that could be felt or a tangible hurt that could be sustained. *A contrario,* her love would seem unbearable in the sense that it cannot be borne by experience at all, unbearable because it cannot be experienced in person or in presence. In the novel, her love is depicted as quite literally un-bearable, incapable of being borne by a subject or a self; unbearable not only because it cannot be willfully undertaken in person but also because no subject could ever coincide with its occasion in presence at all: a suffering caused by the inability to experience suffering, a torment which is unendurable because if it could actually be endured, its insupportability might be lessened and its anguish alleviated.[144]

The other chapters that compose this inquiry also sketch the various "unbearabilities" of amorous experience in the early modern and old regime era, particularly those experiences which cannot be *actively accepted or abandoned, not willfully retained or renounced*. Can amorous experience be spoken of when the latter remains so estranged from the realm of concretization and materialization that the possibility of either voluntarily receiving or rejecting the beloved by will or in full never becomes realizable? If this love is neither strictly ideal nor immaterial, and if it does not merely oscillate between ideal and material states, then "is" it, in a sense, no more than this very oscillation itself? Would this be an experience of suspense or,

more radically, a suspension of experience itself? Why even call this love, and how can it be qualified so? What is an experience, if experience it may be, that seems to entail no more, or nothing more, than the nothing that it already is —or, as one might be tempted to say, is not?[145] A heroine of Catherine Bernard's *Le Comte d'Amboise* (1689), one of the texts considered in Chapter Three, formulates the stakes of this paradox with precision: her love, she affirms, is "hors l'amour," an expression that remains nearly untranslatable in its idiom.[146] The preposition "hors" implies separation and exception —except for, save for, outside of, without, beyond— and leaves undecidable the exact status of the love she confers. Her expression keeps inseparable mutually exclusive terms and leaves uncertain the relation between them. What would be a love without love, or a love beyond love? In English, this ambiguity might be rendered by the idiom "out of love," an expression which hangs suspended between love's exhilaration—to do something *out of love*— and its exhaustion—to fall *out of love*. And this is the precise ambiguity, an ambivalence even, which marks the idiom of this novel's heroine, as it will for the other fictions in the pages to come, a love figured outside the polarity of inside and outside, if not *as* the very outside of this opposition itself. For this idiom, "out of love," unsettles the topography of interiority and exteriority, undoing the implicit axiological values assigned to falling "in" love and falling "out" of it: for what would be a love that could be neither inhabited nor avoided, neither fully internalized nor fully expulsed? Out of love: an idiom that holds inseparable, though not identical, loving and losing, giving in and giving up.

What are the aesthetic and ethical valences, if there are any, which emerge when experience loses hold of its predicates of presence, when nothing seems to be done voluntarily for it or against it, because, when judged by empiricist expectations, it never even "was"? Are there times when the only thing lovers share is the near nought that has happened betwixt them, brought together by all that has failed to transpire between them? If there are no discrete divisions between the parties involved, nor any distinct idea of what —if anything— is going on, does it even make sense to speak of "lovers" at all? Or does the very language

of subject and object, subjectivity and subject-position meet its necessary limits here? According to the fictions surveyed in this study eros seems no different from its erosion when measured by positivist standards of material actualization, knowable eventuation, or visible consequence. For the lovers these narratives depicture will not simply seek to create or change the status quo of their inexperience of one another but will come to find, rather, that this status quo of their mutual inviolability is itself the only love seemingly available to them—so best left alone and unaltered, so best left as it is and "as is"— and this because it was never even had, in presence, to begin with. To let "be," in these narratives, is to let experience come to nothing or become nothing, to let experience persist by its very absence, nullity, or irreality because leaving it be seems nearly equivalent to leaving it behind.[147]

Consider, in closing, the scene of the two lovers in the "Shaughraun" who meet only to miss one another, a scene which has guided these prelusive reflections all along. As he watches the scene of the lover's occulted kiss quietly unfold, Newland Archer —a protagonist of *The Age of Innocence*— finds himself moved by the play's "reticence, its dumb sorrow," insofar as it eschews the "histrionic outpourings" of other romantic works, inasmuch as the seemingly gestureless love it depicts appears so mild and muffled as to pass away with the same quietude that its personage, played by Harry Montague, has exited from the stage. One finds faint echo in the microcosm of this play's *mise en scène* to Newland's own fruitless fervor for Madame Olenska in the novel, a woman he will only come to possess to the extent that he does not and, indeed, never will. At the story's end, with his wife having long since passed away, the now middle-aged Newland will nevertheless forsake the consummation of his passion despite the ostensive lack of obstacle debarring him from it. Defaulting on active pursuit, he instead decides to let lie in airy indefiniteness —in an amaranthine "age of innocence"— a desire he will never act upon: "'It's more real to me here then if I went up,' he suddenly heard himself say; and the fear lest that last shadow of reality should lose its edge kept him rooted to his seat as the minutes succeeded each other" (235). The only trammel thwarting him from

obtaining his beloved, it turns out, is none other than Newland himself. His perennial passivity toward his beloved which had allowed her to remain at an unbroachable remove and in an unbreachable distance —as if the "reality" of his fascination for her were no more than mere "shadow" to begin with— proves, even in a seasoned age, to be insurmountable.

That this ethos of inexperience has characterized the uneventfulness of the lovers' bond from the very beginning of their "affair" becomes evident in retrospectively glancing at the development of their relationship, for it would seem that Newland and Madame Olenska will always have been paradoxically entwined together by the very impediments that should have obstructed their encounter all along. "[N]ow that she was beside him," thus another instance of the novel will describe, "they seemed to have reached the kind of deeper nearness that a touch may sunder" (153).[148] This affinity, which is not quite an affinity, is wrought of division and distance, of partition and parting, and it is framed by Madame Olenska as the double impossibility of their "being together—and not together," as if she and Newland would have no part in a durable relationship at the same time, strangely, that they could never be fully apart (186).[149] "We're near each other only if we stay far from each other," so she says, "Then we can be ourselves" (188),[150] as if the interruption of their rapport were no different from a rapport of interruption.[151] Close when distant and distant when close, to materially alter the paradoxical nearness from afar shared between Madame Olenska and Newland by the taint of touch would be to falter on their promise: to be close *to* one another, but to never close *in* on one another.[152] "Her choice would be to stay near him as long as he did not ask her to come nearer," so reports the narrative, "and it depended on himself to keep her just there, safe but secluded" (159). To love Madame Olenska is not to advance upon her; it is, rather, to remain evermore on the verge of an approach that will in fact never —nor can ever— be made because it is both too close and, quite simply, not close enough. This does not so much deny as define their approach: the obstacle to love becomes a love of the obstacle itself, as if the lovers could only meet, oddly, in a place where neither of

them was, failing to meet in unison and by assent at the very instance that their encounter seems most possible.

Caught in an embrace maintained by the very emptiness that separates them from one another, and so left for the most part unembraced, the lovers' impossibility of having a relationship brings them toward each other but also thwarts that very effort; the fact that they cannot be together becomes the condition of their being together just as it does the obstruction to their meeting, as if brought in consort only because, paradoxically, they could never be together at all.[153] Or rather, it is not so much that the lovers gain mutual intimacy and ultimately find, by means of a determinate negation, that they can both share and enjoy the "nothing" that "is" their relationship together. For this perspective would import an uncritical voluntarism and neoplatonic immaterialism to the narrative, as if the lovers accessed their passion precisely in the deferral of all possible actualization and as the annulment of this passion itself. According to this view, which is itself a dialectical argument, leaving carnal desire inexperienced and incorporeal is *itself* an experience—the experience of suffering the fact that one cannot suffer an experience. While this perspective aptly characterizes the strain of neo-platonism frequently reprised in courtly, Christian, and Renaissance literature, whether or not it holds for the particular paradox pursued in these pages is less certain.[154] Such interpretations take hold because the figure of sublimated, sublated, or spiritualized experience which this aforementioned perspective supposes, and which will not defended here, has something of a history in literature and philosophy: it will receive from Nietzsche the disdainful term *ressentiment*, Hegel will call this figure a "beautiful soul," and Kierkegaard will title it a "knight of resignation." Lacanian psychoanalysis, for its part, will name this the "the Lady-Thing of Courtly love," an exemplary instance of sadistically deferred experience because the object is inherently inaccessible and evermore empty. Revising dicta from Plotinus and Heidegger, the Lacanian account suggest that love becomes an act of giving what one does *not* have to a beloved that does *not* exist.

And yet the particular paradox that the *Age of Innocence* presents, and one that will return in the texts analyzed throughout these chapters, seems too ambivalent to close with these dialectical resolutions. For a perspective arguing that the lovers of this scene merely wallow in their non-experience or in-experience *as* a sublimated experience too easily assumes that one knows how to define what experience "is" or "does." Indeed, to say simply that experience "*is* what it is not," and to end matters there, would be to maintain a mere determinate negation and to ignore the considerable challenge to ontological predicates that this text submits: although experience would be defined negatively, it would still be accorded a definition and anchored in an identity nonetheless, the ontological weight of the predicative copula "is" still held intact. Such dialectical arguments no longer seem sufficient, mainly because such ways of thinking, especially their deterministic and formalist strains, assume that the limits of experience are invariably metaphysical and structural rather than political and social. That is, these formalisms presume that the limits of experience are timeless formal or structural features inherent and internal to any ideal concept of experience in and of itself rather than the effects of historically contingent social and political norms that govern what can and cannot be recognized or claimed as "legitimate" experience.

In contrast, it might be proposed that it is precisely because some "experiences" cannot be recognized as such within certain social norms of recognizability and acceptability —for example, adulterous love — that a paradox such as an "experience which is not one" comes about, precisely because it cannot be recognized as one at all.[155] The question cannot be whether or not an amorous experience could be phenomenologically conceptualized *en soi* or determined *as such* —indeed, as Derrida would say, it is important to interrogate the "as such" of phenomenology's "experience as such"— if experience is both inaugurated and impelled by dispersed and disseminated norms that scaffold and schematize what can and cannot be claimed as intelligible or publicly "acceptable" experience. Indeed, prior to the question of whether or not experience *exists* is the question of what social norms of intelligibility and what schemas of

interpretation are ingrained and entrenched that, delimiting what counts as a socially recognizable experience, will allow it to be *recognized as existing*.[156] This comes to the fore in Angélique Ducos' *Marie de Sinclair* (1799), the focus of Chapter Four, wherein a love that dare not speaks its name between two "women" delineates an experience that never was "one," if only because such non-heteronormative experiences cannot be counted publicly or recounted explicitly in that text. What of those loves that do not conform to normative standards of acceptable kinship and romance? Would this be "a shadowy realm of love, a love that persists in spite of its foreclosure in an ontologically suspended mode," where "living and loving" take place "outside the livable and outside the field of love,"[157] "a love that breaks the boundaries of what will and should be livable social relations, and yet continues to live"?[158]

The larger questions that arise here concern how heteronormative gender norms associated with sexual difference circumscribe "who" can and cannot have an experience as well as "what" will and will not count as an experience (in so doing, circumscribing the domain of experience in the metaphysical terms of "who" and "what"). To what extent do sexual norms delimit and bound experience by foreclosing those "experiences" which cannot be assimilated into their hegemonic terms, foreclosed experiences that nonetheless persist as inassimilable remainders (the remains of experience as it were) which become both the enabling condition for the constitution of normative experiences (they are the outside against which normativity is defined) and the specter of their dissolution (they haunt these normative boundaries and threaten their integrity)? For even if certain experiences do not fit governing norms of recognition and cannot be counted publicly or recounted explicitly as such, do they nevertheless persist —spectral and wraith-like, in a mode of suspended being— *at* the limits of these norms if not *as* the limits of these norms?[159] And what of these spectral and suspended experiences, what logical problems do they pose for contemporary reading?

These scenes from *The Age of Innocence* call forth several questions about these ontologically suspended experiences, questions that will reverberate all throughout these chapters: Does the sempiternal safekeeping of the beloved beyond the lover's reach —a paradoxical keeping of "nothing," and thus no keeping at all— emblematize a love *by* detachment and, ultimately, a love *of* detachment, as if the only thing the lovers attained were the loss of attaining anything in the least? Are they left with nothing they can claim their own at all? Does this tenuous affiliation between lovers, woven together by that which also unravels it, make for a rapport sculpted by the "inexperience" of those bound in its self-effacing embrace, a rapport that is not one because it subsists by the very powerlessness, the very incapacity or weariness, of its participants to do anything other than to leave it "be" in all of its ineffectualness and irreality? Does such a relationship, hemmed together by that which also unlaces it, delineate an experience of love that, simply put, cannot be one?[160] Comprised not of straightforward communication and community but of distance and dehiscence, this depiction of seemingly unlived, virgin, or destitute experience typifies not only this American text but also the others of French provenance that will bespeckle the pages to come. Their collective emphasis on amorous relationships that are never materially consummated will make for a constellation of works which, when read in concert, open up the possibility of a form of loving, if it is one, whose perseverant modality would be that of refrain, abstention, and dedition.

"I can't love you unless I give you up": as the words of Madame Olenska would have it, loving Newland is made possible by the condition that she *cannot have him*; to possess him would, so she says, cancel out her love, for her precise stipulation is that loving and losing be indistinguishable.[161] Might the elusive clemency of her love —if, indeed, there is any to be had— be said to come not from the possibility that she may be content to adulate Newland from afar —a topos of courtly love— but from the possibility that her joy, if she was to have had any, needed nothing substantial of the beloved himself in order for it to be sustained in the first place?[162] If her joy might endure by his having no part in it —and by his not even

wanting to take part in or willingly participate in it— does this make for a softly velveteen adoration, one whose accostment and approach, like that of Harry's character in the "Shaughraun," is inseparable from its eventual valediction and exit? For Madame Olenska, as for the other heroines reviewed in these pages, the desire to forge amatory relationships converges, ultimately, with a desire to forget them.

"I do not hope, desire, nor demand"
introduction

i. premises, promises

Lithe, lightly clad, lissome, weaponless, I renounce everything. I own nothing, I wish to own nothing, I love nothing, I have nothing to lose [...]
—Soren Kierkegaard, *Diary of a Seducer* in *Either/Or* (1843)

I must love being nothing. How it would be horrible if I were something. Love my nothingness, love being nothingness.
—Simone Weil, "Celui qu'il faut aimer est absent," *La pesanteur et la grâce*

I never sought anything in you [...] *I wanted simply you, nothing of yours.*
—Heloise, *Letters of Abelard and Heloise* (c.1132 – 1138).

"For me, I do not hope, do not desire, nor demand; my passion is not supported by anything, it is supported by nothing: it subsists, is nourished, and accrues all by itself."[1] Thus speaks a heroine of the Marquise de Lambert's eighteenth-century novelette *La femme hermite* (1747), well aware that her passion will find no support, her desire no object, her demand no effect. Hers is a love that will ultimately come to nought. But in a departure from the familiar figure of the "hopeless romantic," one who ever anticipates amorous opportunity even when faced with unanswered endearment, the woman who utters these words is not so much hopelessly in love as she is in love with hopelessness itself. For her attachment, she says, depends upon the futility of her endeavors just as it is defined by its lack of eventual gain. She ostensibly expects nothing of her paramour other than for him to leave her adulation unrequited of response and untouched by his action, for the only way the speaker's swain can reciprocate her love, it would seem, is precisely by having no part in it. Making no demand upon the beloved and having no expectation of his return, the woman's affection appears to float airy and unanchored, as if unavailed of the very man who has inspired it.

Without any support from her suitor, in other words, the speaker's passion would seem so foundationless that its only flotation becomes nothingness itself. But if her ardor needs neither a straightforward avowal of adoration from the beloved, nor concrete proof of his devotion, then did it have any material need of him to begin with? Is hers an amour sustained not by anything the beloved could say or do but, paradoxically, by the very atrophy and eventual eclipse of his participation altogether, an ardency

that can only subsist in the void which his absence creates and which his abstention from action makes possible? If the woman beseeches her beau to do nothing for her affection other than to refrain from it, then, in a certain sense, her love might just as well have never been, precisely because it is not to be acted upon with materially visible consequence by either party, explicitly or definitively, at all. Although amorous exploit is sometimes evaluated in terms of possession and experience —Petrarch's first plea in the medieval *Rime sparse* is addressed, after all, to "anyone who understands love through experience [*ove sia chi per prova intenda amore*]"—, for *La femme hermite*, as for the other fictions that will constellate these pages, some of the most trenchant loves turn out to be those seemingly dispossessed of experience itself.[2]

The chapters that follow touch upon such instances of self-cancelling amorous address and nearly experienceless encounter in select French fictions of early modern France: a modality of passive parlance and airy appeal in lovers' speech; a manner of entreaty so wilted of assertion it can only ask that its query be left without suite and its plaint without reply; a defeasance of action and a defeatism of attitude according to which the constraints of circumstance are passionately suffered rather than actively experienced; an approach toward the beloved so lightfooted in step and retiring in method that its only form of acting seems like endless waiting.[3] For the novels collected herein it matters little, ultimately, whether lovers ever apprise each other of how they feel by explicit verbalization or robust exertion, by active aggression or puissant possession, for amorous experience comes to be defined, paradoxically, by the ways in which it cannot be experienced in presence or in person. As a passion in perpetual dissolution, one that no self-present "subject" could ever willfully undertake, amatory experience in these fictions becomes indistinguishable from an idiom of *inexperience*: a lover's susceptibility to remaining innocent of consummation and ignorant of confirmation within a rhetorical scene of amative address; a romantic relationship discursively constituted by the ways in which it is left nearly unlived and well-nigh unclaimed in language; an enamored encounter bounded by discourse but not fully disclosed within its terms; an amatory experience which is a "text" only written, as it were, in its very erasure.[4]

If amorous experience is inevitably enmeshed in language, as these fictions will suggest it is, then to speak of an amorous experience paradoxically contoured by the ways it is *not* experienced, an "inexperience" of sorts, is to push the limits of received grammar and propositional syntax, most especially the predicative pretensions of the copula ("is").[5] Indeed, the constraints of customary syntax, what Nietzsche once called "a deception on the part of grammar," will become an insistent problem when reading the idiom of inexperience rehearsed in these fictions, an idiom which, in its literary instantiations and discursive depictions, would seem to resist the very grammar through which it is delivered, if not contest the propositional form of subject and predicate itself.[6] For lovers in these stories petition their beloveds for nothing less than that which is less than nothing: to leave their love untainted of literal requital and untouched by the fruit of consequence, to leave it chaste of action and empty-handed of harvests. Like the heroine of *La femme hermite*, lovers will often supply no indication of what their beloveds could possibly do or say that would allow them to act, for nothing is asked of them or, if they are asked, they are asked to do nothing. This courtly ethos of weaponless deference and weightless demand so eloquently christened as "that timidity peculiar to lovers" in Marie de Gournay's *Le Proumenoir de Monsieur de Montaigne* (1594),[7] is exemplified by such phrases as "love me always, tell me never"—as remarks the heroine of Catherine Durand's *La Comtesse de Mortane* (1699)— or "I love you too much to be able to love you" —a line from Mademoiselle Motte's *Histoire de Zulmie Warthei* (1776)— where a speaker tells her beloved no more than he may already know —that he loves her or that he is loved by her— but at the same time abjures the possibility of that love by disallowing its suite in speech and its sequel in action, a rhetorical move which seems to say "I give myself to you by pulling away."[8] In this sense, might the experience of amorousness, as portrayed in the fictions brought together here, be no more than the lover's very inexperience of it, an inexperience *of* the beloved that is nevertheless shared *with* him? Were this to be called an "experience" would it have to be, paradoxically, *an experience without a self* or, more radically construed, *an experience without itself?*[9]

Recall that, in what passes for common parlance, "experience" is spoken of *as if* it were "what" one has ("to *have* an experience"), "who" one is ("to *be* experienced"), "how" one knows ("to *experience* something") and even that which forms the "one" who experiences (there would be no "one" without the presumed experiences that precede and constitute it, no "one" who has not undergone experience in some way, and something gained from it); it is presumed to be both process and product, event and outcome, subject and attribute, sensation and reflection.[10] The question then becomes whether the predicates of "being" (experienced) and "having" (experience) are descriptive truths of the formal features of "experience," or whether they are, rather, the textual effects of the grammar in which "experience" is given and the language-game in which it is used. If experience can refer at once to a grammatical substantive and to an attribute, to both noun and adjective, yet is neither fully one nor the other, then are the very predicates of being and having already held in suspension? If experience is said to form the ontology of subjects, but itself turns out to be organized and orchestrated by no evident subject (no one cause, being, entity, or substance), then does the experience that seemingly forms subjects itself belong to no subject that could posture as its cause and origin?[11] Have the figural effects of rhetoric been mistaken for a logical conceit and a phenomenological concept? Indeed, with its flux of significations, what does "experience" name —or rather, *how* does "experience" name— and, if it is itself a name, to what extent is "experience" discursively delimited? Might "experience" be a text, writing in its most general sense, and its presumed "undergoer" —the so-called "subject"— a grammatical fiction?[12] And what of the paradoxical and contradictory concept of "inexperience"? What does it mean to *have* a "lack of experience"? What does it mean to *be* "inexperienced" or without experience? By what means is "inexperience" distinguished from "experience," and when do such distinctions founder?

These are some of the questions raised by the early modern works perused here, for in them, amorous involvement, shaped by the ways in which it resists the bounds of "experience," becomes indistinguishable, in the last instance, from its very "inexperience": an experience paradoxically delineated

by the effacement of experience itself. For although heroines are advised to avoid rather than to acquire experience, their amorous experience is not so much denied as defined by the ways in which it cannot be experienced in presence or in person, by the ways in which it left unlived and unembraced. Here "unembraced" connotes not simply the physical state of remaining outside a beloved's embrace but the refusal to embrace —to adopt or avail oneself of— the very notion of amorous experience itself. Already this term, hovering between transitivity and intransitivity, underlines the undecidability between materiality and ideality, physicality and incorporeality, that these fictions emphasize: insofar as the act of "embracing" can refer to both the material act of being clasped in a lover's embrace *and* to the mental act of embracing an idea (although even this provisional opposition between "materiality" and "mentality" will eventually founder in the course of these readings), to leave experience "unembraced" is to be neither taken in the beloved's arms nor taken with the notion of amorous fulfillment through experience.[13] In these terms, unembraced experience intimates that experience is not received nor rejected *by will,* nor an experience that originates in or belongs to a self-present subject, precisely because love in this idiom is figured by its frustration rather than its fruition, by the way it escapes egological mastery rather than confirms it.

But lest this should all seem to veer toward an atemporal and abstract romanticization of embraceless encounters, empyreal ethereality, or eidolic eros, it would appear important to underline the historical tensions and dimensions these questions embody and whose traces they bear.[14] Indeed, were the purport of this inquiry to "historicize" these literary figurations of amorous acedia and inexperience, then it would have to address the oft-voiced contention that the conceit of inexperience has long been associated with certain pre-revolutionary ideologies of feminine education in what has come to be called, however much a misnomer it may be, "Western Europe," and according to which modesty means a desistance from knowing, propriety a demurral from seeing, and chastity an abstention from acting.[15] While historical and sociological considerations are not of ultimate interest here, the particular textual entanglement of these

concerns, especially as they are figured in fiction and philosophy, cannot be ignored and it makes sense to lightly historicize these figures of inexperienced love. For, as recent critical histories of the early modern period attest, in educational treatises, didactic conduct-books, and various literatures of early modern France, figures of men are frequently described, tacitly or explicitly, as having the right to experiment and to have experience—whether it be in science, in literature, or in the bedroom— whereas figures of women are instructed to preserve their innocence and inexperience, most especially the sexual kind (this seeming binary is not, however, fully secure, and it will become increasingly unstable the course of these readings).[16]

Thus Marie de Gournay's early polemical treatise *Égalité des hommes et des femmes* (1622) will proclaim that the so-called "prudence" of women cannot be considered apart from "the ignorance and inexperience [*l'ignorance et l'inexpérience*] in which they are nurtured."[17] As Gournay's tract maintains, hegemonic discourses of virtuous conduct and custom dictate that "young girls" are not to participate in amorous experimentation nor act upon their desires except through virginity and virtuality, disavowal and distance—"inexperience," in short.[18] Here, enlightenment and experience, touted terms in early modern vocabulary, become converted into "ignorance" and "inexperience" depending on the gender in question. Like the pseudo-pedagogue of Molière's *L'Ecole des femmes* (1662), for whom instruction meant keeping his female apprentice ignorant, Gournay's *Égalité des hommes et des femmes* propounds that a young girl's traditional tutelage has usually required that she know little and that she experience nothing.[19] Who is allowed access to knowledge, intellectual and otherwise, and who is precluded from such epistemic acquisitions altogether? Who is permitted to proclaim an experience their own, and who must remain eternally dispossessed thereof? Or rather, in what ways and by what strategies is the "who" *constituted* by the discursive delimitation and limitation of access to what counts as knowledge?

But even the grammar of these last queries is not quite fitting for the radicality of Gournay's claim, for such formulations presuppose that there is first a pregiven "who" that then comes to be denied access to knowledge rather than pursuing the possibility that it is in the very *denying of access to knowledge that the "who"*

comes to be viable as a "who" in the first place. In Gournay's formulation, it is a figure called "woman" that is disseized of the key elements defining an individual's formative upbringing, deprived of the educative supports by means of which her epistemic and erotic agency might have burgeoned.[20] Knowledge, in the case of "woman," is not so much transmitted as it is closeted. For it is not that young girls are ignorant or inexperienced —as if there were first a preconstituted entity or identifiable group of young girls that subsequently comes to be denied knowledge— but that, as Mary Wollstonecraft would also come to argue, ignorance and inexperience *engender* the category of "young girls," a category constructed by its subjection to a certain matrix of gender norms and by its exclusion from what counts as "knowing" and "knowledge." In this sense, it is not that there is originally a "who," a preformed subject, that comes be prohibited from knowledge, as if this subject were exterior to an external web of relations of power/discourse or outside the text, but that it is in the very prohibition of knowledge that a "who" comes to be delimited in the first place.

In what ways and by what discursive means does the restriction of education, its partial and uneven distribution amongst a population, delineate the "who" of the young girl? Departing from the presumption that there is a ready-made, pre-defined subject such as the "young girl" who is subsequently deprived knowledge because of her ostensible gender, in other words, the question becomes: how do a certain set of political strategies produce a situation in which some knowledge practices are confined to certain members of a social body and not to others, constituting in this way the category of the gender of the "young girl" as one deprived of knowledge? It remains crucial to move away from a conceit that begins with a taken-for-granted subject with a self-evident gender that is subsequently discriminated against and then deprived of education and experience, to the discursive and political strategies bound up with regulatory gender norms that, ordaining that education and experience be deprived, effectively construct a subject by defining its gender through what it cannot know and should not experience. The point is that there is not an already formed subject or a preconstituted person with a given gender who, upon being taken for this or that

gender, is denied knowledge, but that genders themselves are constituted in the very act of allocating the access to knowledge, such that the social category or subject-position of "young girl" becomes defined as *one who needs to know little and experience nearly nothing*. It is not as though there are already preconstituted individuals, some of whom are discriminated against and others not, but that discrimination comes to form that very domain of intelligibility in which subjects can appear, or disappear, as subjects. In this sense, and to recast philosopher Simone de Beauvoir's famous formulation in the radical terms of theorist Monique Wittig, one is not born a woman but becomes one by virtue of the hegemonic categories of language orchestrating what the who can "be," a discourse that bounds a domain of acceptable "beings" at the cost of those who are not considered eligible to enter into the field of intelligible being and who are consigned to live at its limits —at the limits of the livable— which is to say, in its abject margins.[21]

The expression "young girls are inexperienced" will, by a twist of grammar, no longer be understandable in terms of substance/attribute —a young girl who has inexperience as her attribute— but as a political set of socially repeated acts behind and before which there exists no prior, acting subject: young girls are *inexperienced* by inexperience in the sense that they are made inexperienced by inexperience and thus made to *be* "young girls." To extend and rework Wittig's position regarding the ways discourses construct and circumscribe what is to taken to be the factic, natural, or the given, it might be said that: "young girls are *seen* as inexperienced, therefore they *are* inexperienced. But before being seen that way, they first had to be *made* that way."[22] For Wittig, it is not that a social discourse intervenes or supervenes upon a preexisting ontological reality making it be seen in a particular way, but that "discourse *is* reality" by making certain socially contingent practices seem like an unquestionable and irremovable reality;[23] political and social categories discursively delimit the field of intelligible life by posturing as presocial and precultural facts. In these terms, the subject "young girls" would not preexist an inexperience they come to have. On the contrary, it would be through the very restrictions placed on knowledge and experience that the subject-effect of "young girl" comes to be at all: prohibiting knowledge and inhibiting experience effects and

enables the category "young girls," rather than the category predating or abiding independently of those inhibitions and prohibitions—similar to Mary Wollstonecraft's argument in the *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) that the misogynist logic used to justify the oppression of women is one that excludes them from having the right to reason through education before claiming, subsequently, that women can have no reason; the denial of access to reason becomes the means of proclaiming that reason was never there to begin with: "Women are in this deplorable state everywhere, because truth is hidden from them so as to preserve their 'innocence' (the polite name for ignorance), and they are made to take on an artificial character before their faculties have acquired any strength…Thus **understanding** strictly so-called has been denied to woman; and **instinct**…has been put in its place."[24] In these terms, gender norms *inexperience* young girls in acting upon them through discourse, which is another way of saying that inexperience inexperiences them as young girls.

This last formulation tellingly vexes received grammar. For if "experience" is spoken of transitively ("one experiences such and such") inexperience is not ("one inexperiences such and such" is not usually accepted as a turn of phrase). Indeed, it is unclear if inexperience ought to be construed as a transitive activity at all —still less, as a subject which acts— since it is uncertain what inexperience does, or can do, other than generate further inexperience. After all, how does one inexperience, if inexperience is not itself an act but a refrain from acting, not itself knowledge but a demurral from knowing? Would inexperiencing something only lead to further inexperience, in the same way that experiencing many things is said to increase experience? If inexperience is usually understood as a lack and in the negative, how does one add to a lack? How is it viable to *inexperience something*, to collect that which is not or not yet (insofar as to have inexperience is to have nearly no experience at all) and to undergo that which will not happen (insofar as to inexperience something is not to gain experience or learn from it, but to maintain the inexperience with which one began)? How is it possible, in other words, to enlarge ignorance and expand innocence, to

accumulate inexperiences in the same fashion one does experiences, if inexperience is taken to be a lack of and a limit to experience?

If it appears grammatically unsound and conceptually unimaginable to say "one inexperiences" but semantically acceptable and philosophically thinkable to say "one experiences," this intimates that there is a sedimented political and social history at work in language: *inexperience, placed against experience, has linguistically and conceptually been constructed to have no subject*. That is, if inexperience is defined as a not having (experience) and a not-yet being (experienced), describing what one lacks and what one isn't, it is neither a subject nor an attribute. And it is precisely because experience has been associated with the identity of a subject, as the one who underlies and undergoes experience, and inexperience has not, that the grammar of subjects and substances cannot apply to inexperience, insofar as the latter is a case where experience, and thus the subject, is said to be lacking. At the same time, however, if inexperience cannot be established as an attribute or act of a subject, as something one has or does, is it still possible to explore how the normative conceit of inexperience acts, how it both *enacts* subjects and *acts upon* them within a discursive and social field? In other words, if inexperience is not the act *of a subject,* the critical question remains as to whether inexperience, as a mobile set of discursive and social norms, nonetheless *enacts subjects*, circumscribing and constraining the field of intelligible subjectivity and experience. If inexperience is not itself an act governed by a subject, has it nonetheless acted upon the intellectual scenes of early modern France as a powerful set of norms to enforce what counts as a subject and what does not?

Consider the gendering of categories at work here: experience, which takes a subject, is associated with "men," who maintain a subject-position in social and political life; inexperience, which takes no subject, is associated with "women," who are denied the position of subject in social and political life. Inexperience, a concept with no subject, is allotted to those who are not recognized as subjects. As Gournay and Wollstonecraft both suggest, inexperience is at once gendered and engendering: it is not only assigned according to gender, it *engenders* those to whom it is assigned. Thus will the educational treatises of

the early modern and old regime period, from Fénélon's *Traité de l'éducation des filles* (1687) to Rousseau's "Sophie" (1762) and Laclos' *De l'éducation des femmes* (1785), generate various syllogisms and paralogisms when trying to instruct young girls to remain ignorant and inexperienced, for they encounter a common contradiction: how should a teacher instruct a student on what she *ought not to know* without simultaneously apprising her of the very thing of which she should remain unknowing? As one critical account formulates this seemingly impossible task: "how can a teacher teach a student not to know, without at the same time informing her of what it is she is supposed to be ignorant of?"[25] How is the pupil to learn what she is supposed to remain ignorant of without at one and the same time coming to know what she is not supposed to know? How does one teach and learn ignorance?[26] Diderot's famous eighteenth-century fiction *La Religieuse* (1796), as will be discussed in Chapter Four, plays precisely with this idea in that its heroine Suzanne will innocently pretend not to know what she is talking about when she recounts in explicit detail scenes of sadism and lesbianism in a convent, claiming only to know that she does not know what she describes so well.

These claims find recent resonance in scholarship of early modern Europe as well, especially those contemporary historical accounts which proclaim —by virtue of the multifarious cultural institutions, didactic treatises, and literary media governing feminine education in early modern and Enlightenment France— that a normative correlation subsists between representations of womanly "virtue" and the exclusion of amorous experience.[27] While historical claims of the latter sort might seem so general in reach and so wide in wing-span as to appear falsely universalizing —and indeed they sometimes are— the conflictual dynamics between the discourses of "virtue" and amorous "experience" that historicist perspectives have long emphasized is certainly suggestive,[28] especially since this particular entanglement of virtue, inexperience, and language is not a predicament peculiar to early modern thought but also a set of concerns that extends all the way to Pausanias' speech in Plato's *Symposium* (c.385-380 BC), resurfacing in a discussion regarding the virtues of boy-love and the problem of inexperience. When Pausanias' describes

those who "turn to the male, and delight in him" because "they love not boys, but [the] intelligent beings" these boys represent, a question emerges regarding *how* one ought to love virtuously.[29] For while Pausanias decrees that to love these beings is not "to take them in their *inexperience*, and deceive them" his speech will ask what consequences emerge when such an occasion arises in relation to the lawfulness of this love and the virtues it incarnates (*S,* 9; emphasis added). While in Elis and Boeotia such "connections" are appreciated, in Ionia and elsewhere, the love of youths (boy-love) is associated with the love of wisdom (philosophy) and thus adverse to the tyranny that reigns in these countries "subject to the barbarians" and inimical to philosophy (*S,* 9-10). As Pausanias notes: "the ill-repute into which these attachments have fallen is to be ascribed to the evil condition of those who make them to be ill-reputed" (S, 10). A unique link is discursively forged, then, between love, virtue, and knowledge: evil or vulgar love is the fleeting love of the body while the love of the mind and virtue is "everlasting" (*S,* 11); the beloved youth should only yield to the lover after time and in pursuit of wisdom, while the lover should seek to confer education and virtue through instruction upon his beloved (*S,* 12). And here this speech presents a curious dilemma, for if a beloved boy seeks virtue and wisdom in his lover, but nonetheless finds himself deceived by his inexperience and falls into the hands of a villainous lover, is his virtue compromised?

For Pausanias, it matters little whether the lover that the beloved seeks eventually turns out to be corrupt, for the beloved remains untainted if he has pursued this love on behalf of virtue: "he who lives for the sake of virtue, and in the hope that he will be improved by his lover's company, shows himself to be virtuous, even though the object of his affection to be proved to be a villain, and to have no virtue; and if he is deceived he has committed a noble error" (*S,* 12). In a provocative turn of phrase, this beloved "has proved that for his part he will do anything for anybody for the sake of virtue" and this eagerness to do *anything* for virtue trumps the potentially corrupt consequences that might arise (*Ibid*). In a sense, the youth's inexperience does not corrupt his virtue if, despite the outcomes of his amorous pursuits, he remains faithful to virtue all along. The Aristotlean reformulation of virtue, for its part, will come to take

phronesis (alternatively translated as "practical wisdom" or "prudence") as noncoincident with inexperience. In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, practical wisdom is described as temporalized process in the service of acquiring experience: "it is thought that a young man of practical wisdom cannot be found. The cause is that such wisdom is concerned not only with universals but with particulars, which become framiliar from experience, but a young man has no experience, for it is length of time that gives experience."[30] *Phronesis* has for its correlate the question of acting within particular contexts: althought one might have a theoretical understanding of a universal whether or not that universal can be applied to multiple situations is not knowable without various experiences of its application.

In a certain sense, and without simply collapsing the historical and philosophical particularities of Plato's dialogues with the early modern concern for women's education, there is in both contexts an entanglement of virtue and inexperience—even if there are also, to be sure, significant divergences between them, given that Pausanias is speaking of the rituals of boy-love and not of sexual relations as they would have been understood in an early modern context.[31] And yet the question remains, if the beloved youth in the *Symposium* might still be considered virtuous *despite* his experience, despite anything he may do, as long as his acts are performed in the name of virtue —and Pausanias' discourse leaves uncertain whether this includes "vulgar" or bodily love— is the discourse of transgression in early modern and old regime France far less forgiving when a *woman's* virtue is at stake? Not only historical differences must be taken into account in order to pursue such a question, but so too must linguistic differences be acknowledged. For the lexicon of virtue is not univocal precisely because it is historical and literary, subject to conceptual transformations and linguistic shifts in the changing temporal contexts of genre/gender relations. Virtue in French not only differs from Greek acceptations, but it differs within the very national language traditions of French itself. In the words of one scholarly account:

> [A]s confirmed by dictionaries of sixteenth-century French language, *vertu* is a word of multiple resonances, and in conventional practice is often attributed along gender lines, such that "virtue" for women is typically associated with moral goodness, especially chastity, whereas for men it more often carries the connotations

> of strength, courage, and power, stemming etymologically from the Italian *virtù* and, by extension, from the Latin *virtus*.[32]

According to this view, regulatory ideals of virtue in early modern Europe would have discursively instituted and maintained divergent cultural practices: virtue is alternatively gendered, at times denoting courage and puissance —for example, Machiavelli's *virtù* in *Il Pincipe* (1532), variously refers to "ability," "fortitude," and "virtuosity"— at other times, designating a good not so much sought as defended, not so much gained as protected—for example, the claim that womanly "virtue" amounts to purity and virginity.[33] Well into the eighteenth-century, Mary Wollstonecraft's *Vindication* would observe that virtue in the former sense, when it came to woman's education, often amounted to the latter: "To explain and excuse the tyranny of man, many ingenious arguments have been presented to prove that in the acquiring of virtue the two sexes out to have different aims…women aren't thought to have enough strength of mind to acquire virtue properly so-called… [But] why should they be kept in ignorance under the pretty label 'innocence'?"[34]

It is important not to generalize too hastily, of course, for there is no one discourse of virtue in the early modern and old regime period in Europe, nor do the terms "men" and "women" signify stable referents or static ontological unities that would exist outside the "text," that is, beyond the language-games of cultural discourse.[35] Some medieval conceptions of feminine sexuality, for example, portray women as deceitful and voracious nymphomaniacs, an image which contrasts with the development of early modern renditions of virtue and with Victorian conceptions of the "angel in the house."[36] Nor is it the case that virtue was unilaterally received, univocally interpreted, and universally accepted either. In the salon philosophies of Mesdames de Sablé, Deshoulières, de la Sablière, de la Vallière, de Maintenon, and others in Neoclassical France, for example, serious suspicions are expressed about the claims of virtue for, as these salon-philosophers argue, pretensions to high-minded virtue often served to mask deceitful, hypocritical, or vice-ridden conduct (to cite Mme de la Sablière's maxim: "Virtue: All dazzling [*éclatantes*] virtues should

always be suspect to us").[37] It is likewise important to note that some European writers do not shy away from proposing a practical and hands-on ethics of experience —whether it be a distaff discourse of "practical virtue" based on charity and work (Sophie von La Roche's *Geschichte des Fräuleins von Sternheim* [1771]), or a philosophical defense of the gains of experience for women's education (Mary Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* [1792])— and thus, far from defining virtue in strictly defensive terms, would have attempted to contrive a form of practical ethics.

Further complications come to the fore as soon as the history of philosophy in the West is taken into account. Has not the history of philosophy in the West not long been accused, at least since Aristotle, to accord materiality, sexuality, and brute facticity to "women," and disembodied, intellectual, or soulful spirit to "men," a division which would be read along post-Cartesian and existential lines in de Beauvoir's *Le Seconde Sexe* as man's presumed "transcendence" of the body compared to woman's postulated "immanence" in the body?[38] If this perspective is borne in mind, then it would be difficult to rest with the conclusion that women were reserved to inexperience and men to experience in the history of the West if, simultaneously, "woman" served as a figure of embodiment and eroticism, not only in the history of philosophy but also in religious and medieval conceptions of lascivious feminine sexuality.[39]Added to this, Foucault's famous dismantlement of the "repressive hypothesis" in *L'Histoire de la sexualité,* a part of which argues that power is not simply juridical but productive, points out that the liberationist narrative of a prediscursive desire or sexuality that would exist before the law ignores the generative quality of discourse to engender that very sexuality. In Foucault's argument, the precultural libidinal sexuality that is said to be subsequently suppressed and contravened by cultural laws is in fact generated by a set of strategies immersed in power/discourse, a contention which would seem to belie the claim that early modern discourses of virtue bridle and contain an explosive feminine sexuality rather than produce this conception of explosive feminine sexuality as their effect. In this context, it makes sense to ask whether the language of virtue and experience recurrent in early modern novels can be construed in the absolute terms and determined by the

totalizing conclusions of those historicist accounts that seek to draft an overarching metanarrative describing early modern theories of sexuality in terms of repressed feminine experience. The novels anthologized here, for example, could be shown to suspend the usual meanings of "woman," "virtue," and "experience" in the course of their narrations, such that these concept-metaphors, far from representing empirical entities and reified referents, would come to hold no stable reference, univocal meaning, or pregiven attribute.[40] Are not these terms textual figures of complex referentiality, ones that do not easily lend themselves to historiographical generalities or to metaphysical pretensions, to predicative propositions or categorical proclamations?

At the same time, if Gournay's affirmation that *young women come to be such by virtue of ignorance and inexperience* is taken seriously, then it would seem that in the case of young women, virtue is not based on the knowledge or wisdom gained through experience and trial but in the maintenance of her inexperience. To transgress upon this mandate, even in the name of virtue, is to fall into vulgarity and ill repute.[41] For the heroines of French fiction in the early modern era virtue, once deceived or transgressed, leads to irreversible consequences for their social standing and personal welfare. This is not to say, of course, that the dictates of virtue were not continually transgressed in fiction and other discursive practices (indeed, one of Du Plaisir's recommendations in his guide *Sentiments sur les lettres et sur l'histoire* [1683] relays that, when writing fiction, the heroine's virtue should not be overly tested lest the believability of her chastity become questionable and improbable). Likewise, the proliferation of libertine erotica and pornography, such as the Marquis de Sade's *Les infortunes de la vertu* (1787), constitutes a ruthless decimation of the dictates of virtuous chastity by parodying the heroine's attempts to maintain her purity despite the pornographic ravages and ravishments she undergoes, exposing with obscene clarity the instability and variability at the heart of early modern discursive regimes and ideologies of virtue. To these examples could be added various fictions ascribed to and authored by women of the early modern and old regime period, many of

which take up and resignify the normative discourse of virtue by means of an aporetic idiom of inexperienced love, as will be discussed in the sections that follow.

ii. genre, gender

I will not dispute whether the novel makes the woman, or the woman makes the novel.
—William Hill Brown, *The Power of Sympathy*; *or, The Triumph of Nature* (1789)

In order to enrich this discussion of the historical and discursive context in which discussions of inexperience take place, it is equally important to emphasize that, in literary-historical terms, depictions of immaterial amorous rapports, impossible loves, and thwarted erotic conquests are themselves not uncommon literary topoi in Western medieval and premodern representations of romance, perhaps another one of the literary legacies of Plato's *Symposium,* according to which, in the words of one speaker, "every one who desires, desires that which he has not already, and which is future and not present, and which he has not, and is not, and of which he is in want."[42] This is clearly not the only claim of the *Symposium,* or its most compelling, but the terms of unrequited desire and deferred experience within which love is framed have arguably had a lasting effect in various literary and philosophical discourses.[43] As one critical account notes, "[t]he aesthetic tendency to overvalue the nonattainment of literal sexual goals has a long and impressive history in Western literature," and this is especially acute in the case of allegorical romance, of which the medieval text *Le Roman de la Rose* can be taken as an outstanding example, the famous figure of the rose's deflowering vacillating between spiritual transfiguration and delightful consummation, depending on how it is read.[44] The heterogeneous courtly lyrics issued from "troubadour" literary production, none of which can be treated as a discrete monolith, also seem to oscillate between the deferral of sensuous fulfillment and the poetic song as erotic act, with the positions of lover and beloved never fully secured or clarified in the rhetorical scene of address (the same might be said of Marie de France's twelfth-century *lais*, an innovative romance-lyric genre where love carries ambivalent connotations, never appearing apart from suffering, and where it remains impossible to stabilize the subject-positions of those involved in relation to

the conventions of marriage and fidelity). Myriad Renaissance conceptions of amorous involvement also equivocate on the question of physical contact and concrete consummation, such as the notion of *parfaicte amitié*, according to which a relationship could be virtuously enjoyed without materially being acted upon (not to mention the notable ambiguity in the controversial word *ami*, an early modern term which could refer to both amity and amour, friend and lover).[45] These medieval allegories and early modern idioms of love are themselves already complex constellations of terms with flexible and fluid meanings, a dense matrix and discursive formation where classical and medieval notions of *caritas, fin'amor, eros, agape*, and *philia* intersect with courtly, neo-platonic, Arthurian, and Christian understandings of amorous interaction, all of which complicates the boundaries between material and ideal modes of loving.[46]

In the legacies of courtly and Renaissance traditions, seventeenth-century second-wave salon-writing would also devise ambiguously "spiritual" modalities of love not always in favor of marriage, modes of neo-Petrarchan courtship and *galanterie* singularly embodied in Mlle de Scudéry's "the map of Tender" and implicitly theorized in the romances of Mme de Lafayette, Catherine Bernard, Du Plaisir, and others.[47] Eighteenth-century conceits of feminine virtue, sentiment, sensibility, and "the man of feeling," would equally come to problematize the distinctions between internal and external modes of relating —pointedly underscored by the notion of sentiment, conceived both as an interior or private sensation and as a publicly circulated literary cliché— as would early nineteenth-century concepts of "social sentiment" developed in the popular sentimental social novels of the July Monarchy, many of which dramatize the extent to which the seemingly personal is inevitably political in the conflict between desire and social duty, *amour et devoir*. What is more, the descriptive and generic term "romance" (*roman*), a label frequently attached to the fictional pieces in verse or prose associated with themes of love from the medieval era onward, is a contested category throughout the early modern and old regime period which, long before it came to signify "novel," referred *inter alia* to a narrative of chivalry or a novelistic fiction, a lyrical form, an epic, and/or an amorous ("romantic") intrigue. Genre and gender become closely linked here, not only because

"romance" could refer to both narrative form and erotic relationships but also because romance reading and writing was associated with femininity by both detractors and supporters alike.[48] All of these various literary-historical facets, and many more besides, need to be taken into consideration when discussing amorous inexperience.

Discursive portrayals of amorous experience and inexperience in the rhetorics of ancien régime romances, and for some of those following in the immediate wake of the Revolution, are acutely ambiguous.[49] It remains particularly unclear the extent to which the lover is to act upon her desire or, conversely, to remain entirely experienceless of it. Consider, for example, a narrator's averment in Du plaisir's nouvelle *La Duchesse d'Estramène* (1682): "[a] reasonable woman, when she loves, should always fear being observed."[50] Why should she fear this? What would be observed? Is it because she is supposed to shirk from both openly encountering and materially fulfilling her love? Or is it that this woman can love, but that the observation of this love by others is to be dreaded? "Madame***," a personage in Dorat's epistolary novel *Les sacrifices de l'amour* (1771) following nearly a century afterward, will likewise counsel, if only in appearance, that when it comes to love, "woman" must forbear succumbing to her arduous inclinations in public purview: "it is necessary to love [men], if it is possible," she writes, "without them knowing anything about it."[51] According to this counsel, it is not so much that one should remain in a state of perpetually unblemished chastity but that, *if possible,* one's love should transpire without anyone's awareness—perhaps not even one's own. The speculative "if it is possible," carries all the ambiguous weight of the amorous endeavor: if it is never to be known, to what extent can this love be considered "possible," and by what means? And what might make such unknown love impossible? This admonition's ambivalence is echoed into the ensuing epoch with the novella *Mademoiselle de Clermont* (1802), by the famed didactician Madame de Genlis, wherein it is said that, "[w]omen alone possess the secret of learning perfectly all that they dare not demand, by the art of knowing how to make indirect questions with an inimitable skill."[52] Under such conditions, would it seem that *eros* is neither fully disclosed to possibility nor fully foreclosed from it? Given

the ambiguous imperatives of these antecedent quotations —contradictions embedded within these narratives themselves— is the heroine recommended *not* to act or, if she does, is she to act only insofar as she cannot do so directly and forthrightly?

In other words, when it comes to love, is the lot of "women," understood here as a literary and rhetorical figuration, that of abstention, precaution, and circumlocution?[53] Shyly sidestepping from affirmation and averment, resisting and desisting from romantic advances, skirting the beloved's confrontation and confession: would the experience of love for these "women," discursive depictions all, be nothing more than its very inexperience—an experience that is never meant to occur empirically and, if it ever does, is not to be talked of explicitly? Such questions take particular precedence in prose fictions of roughly sixteenth- to early nineteenth-century composition whose main authorship and readership have historically been attributed to "women," fictions of that nebulous literary cast called the *roman*. The word evokes both "romance" and "novel," already suggesting that, whatever differences there may be between them, the writing of romance has always been historically coincident to, if not convergent with, the development of the novel.[54] Of supposed medieval ancestry, and subsequently resurrected in literary form during the *ancien régime* period in France, the chivalric conventions, phantasmagoric settings, and amative plot-lines which comprise the Old French and Occitan "romance" were, as has often been remarked, revived by some and reviled by others in the course of the long eighteenth-century, competing with the novel or even, some might say, becoming it.[55] At all events, for many *romans* of the "Renaissance" up until the end of the French Revolution, associated with and authored by women, amorous experience becomes a vital question continually posed and pursued in their stories, as it will be in the pages to come.

But first a word of caution on literary-historical terminology. The "romance" remains a volatile and contested "genre" —if, indeed, it can even be labeled one— never fully distinguishable from the "novel" — for its part an equally shapeless and ultimately indefinable literary "form."[56] It bears emphasizing above all that the word *roman* in French, historically and presently, signifies both "novel" and "romance," indicating

already in its very semantic ambiguity that any effort to establish clear-cut contours and explicit fault-lines distinguishing the one from the other will ultimately prove impossible.[57] Indeed, when modern and contemporary scholars of the novel's so-called "evolution" in Europe attempt to enforce stable definitions of the infamously indistinct "novel" over and against the other narrative traditions from which it is said to draw —for example, the "romance," letters, scandal sheets, travelogues, diaries— they are in fact resuscitating a centuries-old scholastic and literary dispute that would seem to have accompanied the putative "rise" of prose fiction all along its fractured and inchoate history. For eighteenth-century theorists the matter was far from certain: while some posited that the romance lacked the realism, plot, and accessible writing native to the novel, others saw the romance as providing an aesthetic opportunity to rewrite other discourses, notably that of history.[58] This polemic, while quite compelling, will not be rekindled here—at least not yet.

More importantly, the disquiet that surrounds the definitional status of the "romance" and the "novel" would seem to bespeak an anxiety concerning genre itself. For the problem of distinction emerges, on the one hand, from the fact that throughout the long eighteenth century generic labels were administered indiscriminately and inconsistently to a variety of discursive practices and, on the other, from the fact that the novel and the romance are often not defined as literary forms in and of themselves but only in terms of how they are opposed to one another: the one is determined by *not* being the other, and so far from existing like a pure entity the "novel" or the "romance" is only determinable, as it were, in its difference from what it is not.[59] If only determined in relation to that which it denies or departs from, the novel's generic identity, as well as that of the romance, is rendered fundamentally contingent. The "novel," it turns out, is intimately dependent upon the contrary term through whose negation its own conceptual integrity is provisionally secured. In this sense, it is perhaps misleading to even speak of the two as if they were conceptually distinguishable in and of themselves; mistaken to act as though there were "two" when it is so uncertain that there is even "one." For if the romance and the novel are chiastically enmeshed — neither fully distinct nor fully merged, neither completely isomorphic to nor completely different from one

another— then it cannot be said that something like the "novel" or the "romance" simply exists *as such* without also conceding, in the same breath, that it might always be its opposite.

If there is undecidability here, it is not betwixt two conceptually secure and knowably determinate items —"novel" on the one hand, and "romance" on the other— but an undecidability that indwells the very notion of "genre" itself.[60] For if the initial problem was that the novel and the romance were indistinguishable from each other —only definable in their dependence— a second one arises from the fact that the term which refers to them, *roman,* keeps the two inseparable. To see *roman* inscribed on a cover is, depending on context, to be confronted with the possibility that the work to which this title is affixed is a novel or a romance, a novel and a romance, neither a novel nor a romance—or all of this at once. Neither distinguishable from one another nor simply determinable in and of themselves, the seeming difference between the novel and the romance turns out to be, in fact, a difference, one might even say a *différance,* within each, for whilst these terms cannot be conflated and collapsed together, neither can each term *en soi* be determined as knowably decidable in and of itself. [61]

If this is right, then it would seem of little interest, if not ultimately futile purpose, to instate deterministic taxonomic categories, whether it be "novel" or "romance," in retrospective reference to fictions of so vast a temporal expanse as the early modern era or the long eighteenth century. Such rigid and predetermined categories will not be used in relation to the fictions congressed here, not because the distinctions between "romance" and "novel" are irrelevant, but because the fictions analyzed herein would seem *not* to belong exclusively to one or the other generic category: if qualifiable by both they are nonetheless reducible to neither. For whether it be the so-called sixteenth-century "Renaissance romance tale,"[62] the seventeenth-century "roman d'analyse,"[63] the eighteenth-century "roman épistolaire,"[64] or the nineteenth-century "roman sentimental,"[65] numbrous literary works taking part in the early origins of the novel, oft attributed to women's signatures, have been designated at one time or another, and however unbeseeming it may appear, as constituting "romance novels." This is not inaccurate *per se*, as the term

"romance," when considered in its twin senses, does indeed bountifully allude to both the flexuous prose format employed by these fictions —a romance "genre" of narrative written in the vernacular and of plastic form— as well as to the figurative plots of love recounted therein —a theme of romance ostensibly involving the rules and ruses of courtship, the gallantry and gullibility of innocence, the conflicts of virtue and vice.[66] But, better still, perhaps it ought to be said that these novels, at least those gathered in these pages, mobilize *fictions of romance* addressing the mesh of discursive problems associated with representations of romantic experience and inexperience, especially, as will be discussed, representations of experiences *as* inexperiences. For in these fictions, an heroine's only "experience" becomes the one she never "actually" possesses in presence nor ever "truly" actualizes in the present, an "experience" upon which she will ultimately have no firmly self-conscious claim: a discursive experience so shorn of visible event and devoid of material consequence that it seems to have never even happened at all when judged by positivist standards or empirical expectations of evident fulfillment.

This latter formulation concerning romance literature reprises Clara Reeve's notorious declaration in *The Progress of Romance* (1785) that the romance "describes what never happened nor is likely to happen"[67] but constitutes a significant departure from its critical conclusion. Reeve's seemingly denigrating proclamation, according to which the fantastical plot lines of romance would lack the referential realism exemplified by the novel, could be read more affirmatively as the romance's exploration of the relations intertwining the "virtual" with the "actual" in terms of discursive experience.[68] If French fictions of romance do wrestle with the non-eventfulness of narrative experience —whether it be the unlikelihood of realizing certain romantic scenarios, the impossibility of certain material occurrences coming to fruition, or the fact that often characters' actions seem to lack concrete consequence— might this in itself bear intriguing implications, both thematically and rhetorically, for philosophical inquiry and literary history? Indeed, might these *romans* be said to examine the very limits of experience, those moments where "what happens" is eclipsed by "what does not" those instances where something is left, as one would have said in early

modern diction, "unexperienced"?[69] Do such texts, as if echoing the ethos of feminine chastity and modesty traditionally allotted to their heroines —according to which one should never see too clearly nor know too fully— outline an aesthetic of narrating scenes of not seeing and not knowing, a rhetorical praxis of describing settings where nothing seems to have transpired and eventuation seems to never have occurred in presence?

Once again, it becomes important to emphasize that the act of telling stories of amorous experiences that do not happen (or cannot happen), stories that speak of what was never (or what will never be), is not simply an aesthetic trait or a philosophical principle. It also reflects the vestiges of an historical debate regarding the referential and evidential claims of literature in general, and that of "women writers" in particular: Is history different from story? To what extent is history no more than the story through means of which it is told? Who gets to tell history, and by what measure? What counts as public record? This early modern quarrel, now called in literary-historical terms "The Ancients versus The Moderns," involved the increasing participation of a contingent of "women writers" embattled in the discussion and development of their prose fiction against the backdrop of a classical tradition that had largely excluded them.[70] Whereas discourses of "history" in early modern Europe were touted for their solemnity and seeming truthfulness, the self-proclaimed *histoires*[71] of Lafayette, Madame de Villedieu, and others —works now commonly denominated as "novels"— deliberately contaminated the formal and aesthetic differences separating so-called factual historiography from fanciful fiction.[72] Likewise, in the self-styled "Histoires secrètes" of Anne de La Roche-Guilhen, Mme d'Aulnoy, Mme de Villedieu, Louise Saintonge, and others, history is retold in the name of those written out of —or simply written off by— the public record.[73] While a vague historical framework is put into place, with allusions to famous figures and personages, the secret history seeks to describe the underside to canonical history. By taking into account those lives and loves that failed to be registered —those that failed to "make history" or who made little mark upon it— many fictions of the early modern period attributed to women weld conventions of romance with those of historiography,[74] a

convergence conveyed by the very terms used to label their tales (*histoire*, meaning both "history" and "story,"; *roman,* meaning both "romance" and "novel").[75]

These hybrid prose fictions, at once romantic and historical, would thus seem to have devised a unique style of rendering the limits of narrative experience or, indeed, "inexperience": that which never seemed to have happened because it lacks the concrete credentials and documentary demonstration to confirm that it has; that which has elapsed in the absence of the apodictic attestation and endeictic evidence to prove that it did; that which has betided without the factual verification and validation which might supply warrant that it could.[76] In so doing, they supplement the grand narratives of the public domain from a reactive, responsive vantage by providing the negative outlines to accepted historic discourse (what was not known or could not have been seen) and by privileging experiences that never ended with eventful outcome rather than those that did (that which did not come to pass or did not happen to make it into public view).[77] Hence one will find Lafayatte's princess, a fictional character, suddenly appear in Henri II's court surrounded by noted historical figures as if she were too a part of that history, only uncounted by historians, and one will see that the "favorites" or favored women of La Roche-Guilhen's novels, historical personages, are now taking on a new fictional life in the La Roche-Guilhen's textual elaborations. There is not so much a collapse of history and story than it is their collage: we find that history is not simply enmeshed in fiction, as if it were itself nonfictional or opposed to fiction, but that history itself can only take place *as* fiction. If construed thus, would fictions of romance, bereft of any unequivocal proof validating the narrative's reliability, seem to represent that which is not provable by external evidence nor made possible by verifiable proof?

Consider, in this vein, Françoise Dalibard's *Le Portefeuille rendu ou les lettres historiques* (1749), a work that intertwines epistolary and romance conventions at the same time that it situates itself in ambiguous relation toward the twin demands of historiography and vraisemblance. Although famed as a "true" story and history—the novel begins with the stock-framing device of a narrator haphazardly discovering a collection of personal letters and editing them for publication— the novel nevertheless makes no claims to

historiography through a disavowal of the novel. Rather, one of the narrators admits that in this fiction history and fable meet, without resolution, for the act of *recounting* an event and *counting* that event are caught in a curious chiasmus:

> It is true that this story [*histoire*] resembles a romance-novel [*Roman*], but this should not banish your credulity; for finally I knew the actors [*acteurs*]: these are facts of which I was witness. And how [often] do not stories come to pass which one ignores, that are nonetheless true, & to which one would have trouble considering credible [*ajouter foi*] by the dearth of vraisemblance?"[78]

In claiming to have personally known the "actors" of the story (already a significantly ambiguous term, flirting between acting and play-acting), the narrator asserts that this accredits her story. Even stories which do not *seem* true may always be. Subverting the distinction between historiographical factualism and the early modern trope of *vraisemblance* —the seemingly or plausibly true—,[79] fictions of romance like Dalibard's would seem to "claim the *implausibility* of the facts related as *evidence* of their truth,"[80] offering in the process a version of romance —and perhaps, history— that needs no substantiation by the authority of empirical corroboration, probability, or positivist plausibility.

While the foregoing discussion of the romance/novel may seem to have sketched the *roman* as so indistinct in definition and free-floating in form as to elude referential capture and constraint —whether it be within the strictures of an historiographical period or within the corset of generic category— all those variegated texts that have been denominated *romans* throughout the years cannot therefore simply be collated and conflated together. Nor is it enough to settle with the simple historical conclusion and philosophical determinate negation that the sole definition and condition of the novel was simply that there was none —a well-worn eighteenth-century trope deftly popularized by Diderot's *Ceci n'est pas un conte* (1772-3). For it remains important to underscore that the compass of works harvested here, themselves of dissonant provenance, by no means constitute a durable, transhistorical genre or even a sub-genre; they establish no fundamentally common aesthetic nor foundationally uniform group of literature; their assembly here is thus more of a fiction than a family. It should be noted, in this vein, that to ask whether the texts

convened here all "mobilize *fictions of romance,*" as was mentioned a few pages afore, is different from the structuralist conclusion that they can all be identified as *romance fictions*. The genitive —"fictions *of*"— cuts both ways: it intimates not only that these texts seemingly speak of, if only to problematize, those topoi commonly called "romantic," but it also indicates how much of a fictive construal it is to categorize these works together as romances to begin with. Likewise, the generic tags which these prose fictions wear and the literary-historical categories within which they have been cloistered —the "epistolary novel," the "psychological novel," the "sentimental novel" etc.— are themselves not only open-ended, they are also open to contest, and have been for quite some time.[81] In a certain sense, then, the strategic terminology employed herein, itself ineluctably self-deconstructing and endlessly self-undoing, can promise no abiding longevity or enduring legitimacy beyond the evanescent convergences to which it gives rise within the circumscribed purview of this inquiry. This congregation of texts, under the auspices of a consolidating epithet ("fictions of romance"), may allow for provisional parallels amongst narratives sometimes seldom brought together but, inevitably, it will also thwart the fictitious unity it simultaneously compels, for its namesake —"*fictions* of romance"— already exposes the illusoriness of this phantasmatic construct and the foundationlessness of its inclusiveness.

While ultimately the divergences amongst the narratives gathered here will undercut any postulation of a univocal conception of narrative form —as well as the attendant structuralist presumption of a unified entity of texts such a conceit unwittingly upholds— there is, perhaps, a case to be made for reading them together, even if only to show the extent to which they cannot, in fact, be read together; even if only to better avoid considering them "unreadable" in and of themselves because they are often non-canonical. Indeed, some might even argue that, from a certain vantage, what does confederate these *soi-disant* French romances together is the literary-historical prejudice, itself ostensibly reprised and redeployed century after century in some traditions of scholarship, that they are, in fact, "romance novels": womanly stories of romantic ventures, delicate accounts of emotion, subjective outpourings of experience. If literary-historical

accounts of British and Spanish romance fiction cultivated by women writers have traced the construction of the so-called "courtship novel" —in a British context— and the *novela de cortejo* —in a Spanish one— by examining how these novels reworked Renaissance chivalric romances from the early modern epoch well into the early nineteenth century, then could the corpus of texts collocated here —extending roughly from the early modern period up until the end of the revolution, or from the mid- Renaissance to the early Romantic period— inflect these literary histories of romance canon formation and convention from the vantage of a specifically French context?[82]

Such a question will surely not be resolved in these pages, for the task here is less the establishment of a transhistorical genre of women's romance fiction in France than an interrogation of that very gesture itself. More to the point, it seems significant that many early modern French novels, when attributed to "women writers," have for the most part been subsumed in a trans-historical and cross-cultural genealogy of specifically *sentimental* literature, even if "men" have also been crowned as its more numerous, or at least most famous, creators.[83] This in itself gives rise to a fresh series of questions: Have certain presumptions regarding sentimentalism been taken as foundational premises when considering French fiction attributed to women's signatures?[84] Has *ancien régime* French literature associated with women frequently been equated with saccharine styles, sensational performance, and hyperbolic dramatization because it has been thought to fully capture "emotion" or, when unable to communicate it, been said to resort to tawdry clichés to approximate its expression?[85] Has fiction ascribed to women habitually been interpreted as bathetic biography indulging in intuition, first-degree experience, and solipsistic subjectivity?[86] In other words, have hegemonic gender norms associated with generic categories of literature been reified and naturalized as literary-historical "facts"?

At issue are these very terms themselves ("sentiment," "women's fiction," "experience"), and it would seem crucial at this juncture to interrogate the traditional presupposition that there is such a thing as a "sentimental text" naively striving to express some sort of intuitional content called "sentiment" —an

unmediated emotion, subjective impression, or first-hand perception— and to investigate the tacit assumptions about language which undergird such arguments. It also becomes necessary to ask whether the common claim that the literary representation of emotive experience persists in a coherent body of "sentimental" literature, believed to dawn with the advent of "women's writing," ought to come under question. Might there be collusions between those perspectives that characterize sentimental writing as the expression of first-degree experience and classical clichés regarding early fiction ascribed to women, itself often conflated with sentimentalism and representational mimeticism?[87]

The conclusion has often been drawn that those texts which are associated with or authored by women's signatures constitute a specific or exclusive domain of "women's writing," and that a historical continuity can be found extending from the Renaissance to romanticism by virtue of the common link of gender and genre. This argument has in fact been made so many times under the title of "sentimentalism" that it has nearly become received *doxa*. One often hears tell of this common literary-historical narrative: Throughout the development of the novel in France early women writers cultivated a sentimental tradition of writing before male authors in the nineteenth-century overtook these traditions, reappropriating and dismissing them in order to scaffold a realist aesthetic.[88] All too often the *soi-disant* sentimental French "romance novel" is taken to be an easily discernable object solely fixated on the vicissitudes of expressing "feeling" (itself a concept-metaphor perhaps too often presumed to have a facilely detectable signified or substantial content). A common caricature of sentimental writing has been that its style is hyperbolic because naively trying to express, if not authenticate, emotion. The "sentimental novel," so one often reads, "will work hard at representing sentiment convincingly through expressions of immediacy and authenticity,"[89] a presupposition which assumes that sentimental texts are only concerned with mimetically and uncritically representing pure subjectivity and sensation.[90] This has contributed to a notion of sentimental writing as a dramatic, emotive style tirelessly striving to articulate *prima facie* sensation and authentic subjectivity, a caricature that collaborates closely with classical conceptions of women's writing.

For when "sentimentality" is reduced *grosso modo* to such characterizations, it becomes all the more easy to presume the simple, trans-historical existence of something like a "sentimental novel" under the rubric of which various fictions, usually ascribed to women, could categorically be harbored.[91]

This is not, of course, simply a prejudice generated by modern literary history, though sometimes abetted by it. Old regime stereotypes, as has often been noted, would have long associated vernacular prose narratives with femininity, novels with women, and women with sentimentality. This has been the subject of critique from various quarters of literary history for quite some time now.[92] It is thus somewhat ominous that, even into the twentieth- and twenty-first centuries, certain critical accounts, unwittingly reigniting prejudices inherited from classical scholarship, continue to entwine a certain notion of "woman's writing" with over-wrought emotion and first-degree experience.[93] Witness, in this regard, a contemporary scholarly note in reference to the eighteenth-century French novelette *Les Prétendus* (1771), signed by the enigmatic signature "Madame B. D'arras"—an author whose biography, lacking any empirical verity whatsoever, has never been ratified nor refuted. While the writer of the work entertained is unknown, a situation not uncommon for the epoch, this commentary nonetheless contends that one can infer a woman's authorship based on its stylistic flourishes:

> [The author] must really be a woman, as testifies not only the fact that she speaks in her own name in the feminine (which could be a ruse, [as] many male authors wanted to simulate that such or such of their writings were that of a woman's), but above all the tone of these intrusions of the author, which is that of sensibility, of indulgence, of a wisdom due to the experience of the author.[94]

The passage skips past the observation that in fiction "male authors" —whatever such a category might mean— have oft guised their texts through fictive feminine voices and signatures. This crucial point is corseted within a parenthesis —"(which could be a ruse, [as] many male authors wanted to simulate that such or such of their writings were that of a woman's)"— soon bypassed and subsequently neglected. An odd omission given that some of the most lionized examples of sentimental literature synecdochically conflated with women's writing in France bear signatories of "men"! Routinely, "men's signatures" have

been attached to fictions thought during their time to have been redacted by "women," like the *Lettres portugaises* accredited to Guilleragues (1669) or *La Duchesse d'Estramène* (1682) attributed to Du plaisir. The latter, in fact, begins with the author's plea to the printer that he not "put her name" on the work, as this is, apparently, a modest woman's first attempt: "However flattered that she may be by her friends that her opuscule will have a grand success," writes the supposed demoiselle, "she would be gladdened that those to whom [the work] is imputed doth not deny it, in order that one doth not set out to search for the real author of it."[95] The gesture is not exceptional for its time, a typical trope of feminine modesty that flowers in the prefatory notes of numerous novels thought to bear women's signatories. When dubbed the author of *La Princesse de Clèves* (1678), for example, Marie-Madeleine de Lafayette, not unlike the narrator of *La Duchesse d'Estramène*, prefers to leave shadowy whether its authorship is really hers. While she does not disaffirm the possibility, neither does she claim responsibility: "As for myself, I am flattered that I am suspected of it, and I think that I would admit to the book, if I were assured that the author would not come to me and ask it back."[96]

This notwithstanding, in the scholarly citation mentioned above the author of *Les Prétendus* is assumed to be a woman, even if there is no historical or textual proof that this so —nor indeed, any evidence that the novel in question has been devised by one rather than multiple writers. And yet, in the quotation under review here, the style of the *Les Prétendus* supposedly fortifies the impression that it is of a feminine hand because of its "sensibility" and "indulgence," its references to personalized biography, as if a woman's writing could not have recourse to fictional ploys or pretexts but only derive from literalized life and empirical "experience." Ignoring the contextual cloudiness surrounding the compositional conditions of the work, this account thus endorses the contention that its "psychology" and "tone" would afford just testimony of the author's sex. This misogynist caricature of woman's writing is familiar to feminist debates; it is perhaps most aptly summarized as a presumptuousness exercised when reading rhetoric. "When men employ [rhetoric,] it is *read* as rhetoric," thus avers one feminist critique, "When women employ it, it is

confession. Men are read rhetorically; women literally."[97] Whereas "men's writing" is understood as fecund with rhetorical ruses —capable of adopting polyphonic and polymorphous figurations— "women's writing," oppositely, is taken to be the uncosmetic, if not entirely mimetic, representation of her lived experience.[98]

Clearly, the antecedent "example" should not be taken to represent some sort of generalizable and homogenous patriarchal episteme. And yet the question remains: is it possible that the discourse of first-hand experience and pathos imputed to sentimental aesthetics in the foregoing caricature of *Les Prétendus* still perdures, if not prevails, when describing old regime *romans* thought to be redacted by women? As one critical account of sentimental fiction concedes: "twentieth-century critics have taught generations of students to equate popularity with debasement, emotionality with ineffectiveness, religiosity with fakery, domesticity with triviality, and all of these, implicitly, with womanly inferiority."[99] Presumptions concerning aesthetic sentimental aesthetics, in other words, not only yield problematic philosophical implications but, when construed in more historical terms, reveal themselves to be implicated in literary-historical prejudices regarding women's literature, prejudices which warrant more sustained scrutiny. For the moment, it can be said that when viewed from an historical perspective, the aforementioned conceits of sentimental language prove disputable because enmeshed, explicitly or not, in stereotypes involving women's literature.[100] When aesthetic theories of sentimentality propose a vision and a version of sentimental writing as no more than the literal, first-hand embodiment of feeling, the attendant ideologies which underlie such speculations —specifically, that emotion might be taken for granted as an empirical given unbegotten by the craft of writing, something not forged by fiction but baldly reproduced and mimetically represented— all too easily cross-reference the misogynist naturalization of women's writing as the re-telling of experience rather than the fabrication of fable, the literary-historical prejudice that woman's writing enacts literalized autobiography rather than engenders literary rhetoric.[101]

This particular convention, according to which women would only be capable of composing memoires and using mimesis because the artlessness —in the sense of "lack of skill"— of their writing concords with their supposedly artless nature —in the sense of "innocent" and "undesigning"— harks back at least until to the seventeenth-century,[102] if not before, with La Bruyère's comments on epistolarity in *Les Caractères, ou les moeurs de ce siècle* (1688) epitomizing, in a certain way, this zeitgeist:

> This sex goes farther than ours in this genre of writing; they find under their pen turns [of phrase] and expressions that often are in us the effect of long work and painful research; they are happy in the choice of terms, that they place so justly, that well known as they are, they have the charm of novelty, and seem to be made only for the usage that they put them to; it only belongs to those [women] to make readable in a sole word all of a sentiment, and to render delicately a thought which is delicate.[103]

This imputation of "delicately rendered" thought and word as "belonging" to the fair sex recurs well into the ensuing epoch, where the gossameriness and featheriness of the feminine pen is taken as the surest token of womanly composition. Consider in this vein a phrase from a "man of merit" cited in the editorial introduction to Mademoiselle Milly's eighteenth-century novella *Histoire du Coeur* (1768): "It only belongs to this lovable sex" to put in "their productions those graces, that ingenuous finesse and touching pathos that does not act upon us with the violence and enthusiasm of ours; but it moves us by degrees, makes our tears flow, and subjugates us."[104] "[I]l n'appartient qu'à celles" says La Bruyère's *Les caractères*, "il n'appartient qu'à ce Sexe aimable" reports the man of merit in *Histoire du coeur*. Both works reprise nearly verbatim the contention that "[i]t only belongs to" the fair sex to write entrancing works less violent than their masculine homologues. Where *Les Caractères* says "delicacy" the man of merit says "grace," and what the former celebrates in womanly "sentiment" the latter does in "touching pathos."

Twentieth-century historical exegeses which discuss the ideological conflation of writing and womanliness have, for their part, argued that the augmented production of *romans épistolaires*, *romans sentimentaux*, and *pseudo-mémoires* by French women writers during the *ancien régime* would have stemmed from the fact that the novel —which had no stylistic constraints or formal training required like that of the

classical, regularized rules of poetry, dramaturgy, or the epic— was a reviled, unworthy, or vulgar genre available for recuperation by those denied equal social and scholastic opportunity.[105] By a metonymic confusion, ontological presumptions regarding "woman's being" —considered closer to matters of the heart, domestic preoccupations, provisions of the private— would have conspired with a related conceit of writing style, particularly feminine, whose content and form was to be administered by the sensitive traits of the womanly pen.[106] A twining together of gender and genre: on the one hand, the genre of the novel, considered vulgar in relation to tragedy and poetry becomes a genre "made" for women; women, considered inferior by the status allotted to them à propos masculine rationality and scholarly ability become a gender "made" for the novel.[107]

iv. signs and signatures

It stands to reason that, at this point, the following question might emerge: if "romance novels" have often been said to bear feminine signatures and to participate in a lineage of sentimental writing extending from the Renaissance to Romanticism, then might this serve as a diachronic commonality around which to rally diverse novels and by which to ally them? Does the gender associated with this genre justify the inclusion of disparate texts together, simply because they have been attributed to women? Is this what coalesces together the texts of the following chapters? Tempting though it may be to agglomerate together various "sentimental" or "romantic" narratives simply because they have been historically consigned to notions of "woman," and even not without merit from a certain literary-historical perspective, in the case of "sentimentalism" it also seems pertinent to question whether this risks the reinstatement of a deterministic conception of genre as no more than its presupposed gender (ironically reiterating the misogynist premises a feminist inquiry would surely dispute). In what service is "gender" being invoked here, by what criteria and according to what assumptions? If "sentimental literature" is indubitably an historically "gendered" genre, and if gender and genre must be considered as evermore interfused and coevally implicated when examining "sentimentality," then does this warrant an uncritical conflation of the

two, or does it require an interrogation of that conflation itself?

In the context of this inquiry, it proves important to speak of fictions "ascribed to feminine signatures" rather than novels "written by women," not because this latter category ought to be dispensed with altogether (it can't, it mustn't), but because many of the narratives included herein have been imputed to authors whose biographies have never been certified. Or perhaps it would be better to say that rather than merely opt for one or the other, what might instead be preserved, even if only tentatively, is the indeterminate vacillation or uncertain tension between these categories that such cases of authorial ambiguity inspire. It is equally important to recall, as theorizations of the "death of the author" have underscored,[108] that any signatory affixed to a work, whether it be read as belonging to that of a man or a woman (or indeed something totally other to either), becomes a part of that work's construction and fictive performance of an authorial persona rather than a simple expression and confirmation of a pre-existing empirical referent.[109] Instead of having recourse to crude biographism and empiricist foundationalism — which would presume that a "real" author simply subtends a given text's authorship and whose "true" identity can be derived therefrom— or to idealist linguistic constructivism —the author is nothing but a signifier and composed of signs alone— would it seem necessary to resist any polemic that would reduce these questions to a binaric debate between so-called essentialist empiricism on the one hand, and so-called linguistic constructivism on the other? Indeed, is to speak of authorial figures as constituted by the discourse which depicts them to disaffirm and discredit them as not having real effects? Or is it, rather, to make plain their contrived, discursive status; is it to refrain from hastily ontologizing literary figures?[110]

It becomes crucial at this juncture to move from a consideration of "man" and "woman" as extratextual or empirical referents to the question of the discursive circulation of gendered signatures in early modern France. For some of the most famous texts of early modern and old regime French literature were thought to be written by women due to presumptions regarding style and convention when, in fact, their attributed authors were Guilleragues, Du Plaisir, Marivaux, Rousseau— none of whom were taken to

be "women" in the social and political sense with which this category is often freighted. And yet, if these authors followed conventions and clichés that were thought to cohere with femininity, does this make them "women writers"? By the same token, would nineteenth-century texts which adopted masculine pseudonyms, most famously George Sand and Daniel Stern, be said to have been composed by "men writers"? Or is there a far more radical displacement of this binary framework at work, one that undoes the mere reversal of positions within this fixed frame of normative identifications of masculine/feminine? How are these gendered distinctions being drawn and upon what tacit presumptions regarding gender and genre do these distinctions rely? Furthermore, what of those rhetorical acts of self-effacement by which writers disclaimed responsibility for the works attributed to them, either cloaking authorship under the veil of feminine modesty or laying claim to an unidentifiable anonymity?

If a given text is ostensibly mimicking a fictive feminine or masculine signature or style, then this mimicry is not a mere masquerade underneath which there would subsist a "real" authorial and stylistic identity. While signature and authorship were not simply disposable throughout the *ancien régime*, they were to a certain degree quite fungible (whence the play of authorial personae and celebrity in the seventeenth- and eighteenth- centuries).[111] Indeed, the faultlines segregating reality from fiction are far from secure in the early modern period, and often the personages of these novels were themselves thought to be real life persons rather than literary personages, for example the "Mariane" of *Les lettres portugaises* (1669) and the "Marianne" of *La Vie de Marianne* (1731-45), to the point that authorial personae sometimes enjoyed more celebrity than the "authors" themselves. In this sense, when a writing poses or postures through its signature that it has "really" been written by a "man," or "authentically" produced by a "woman," what rhetorical and political operations are at work? Is the fictive status of the idea that such a thing as feminine or masculine writing could actually exist exposed and is the gendered signature shown to be impersonating not an original gender but the idealized notion of an original gender, a notion just as fictitious as the purported authenticity of the signature that attempts to embody it? Or might such strategies of signature lead to the

re-idealization and naturalization of gender norms by perpetuating the myth that a given gender writes according to a given genre (like La Bruyère's promulgation that the "fair sex" far exceeds men in the composition of epistles and other "delicate" forms of writing)?

Contemporary philosophical considerations of the "signature," largely indebted to Derrida's essay "Signature, événement, contexte," underline the "graphematic" or iterable character of signatures, a point which takes on added significance in the context of the early modern and old regime period when the discursive proliferation of texts unmoored from specified authors left many literary works signed by pseudonyms, or not signed at all, and markedly put into question the relationship between gender and genre. The deconstructive reading of signature suggests that the authority and credibility of the signature does not emanate from a sovereign subject who signs, but derives its force and efficacy from the citation of conventions that are implicitly reinvoked with each act of signature. In order for a signature to operate in discourse it must be iterable —repeatable in other contexts and in the absence of the signer— and citational —capable of being grafted and quoted elsewhere and anew. The concept of the signature meets a double-bind at this juncture: while its putative function would seem to be that of a mark of singularity and specificity (this signature identifies so-and-so as "having-been-present" at the time of the signature), at the same time the necessity that the signature be indefinitely repeatable introduces a rupture in the signature's identity in presence: it must be able to be repeated and reproduced, and thus far from hypostasing the signer's presence and identity, must operate in spite of both. In this sense, every iteration of the signature is not simply a selfsame, internally continuous moment that takes place *in* time but is itself *of* time, a temporal and spatial process of repetition wherein lie traces of different contexts which the terms reinvokes but does not fully reveal (indeed, far from discrete, each "moment" condenses both a prior historicity and the futural temporalities to which it gestures, as well as the remainders of all that is wholly other to such moments, in that every "moment" is marked by *différance,* the nonthematizable relations of spacing, interval, deferral, and

difference marking how any temporal moment is constituted by that which cannot be included or must be excluded in order for it to provisionally "be").[112]

On this view, every instance of iteration is only provisional, and never outside a context, but it has no anchor in an originary context or an original intention, nor can it be reduced to an originary referent, signified, or consciousness from which it breaks away. With each repetition is introduced an interval, another *différance*, dividing and spacing the identity of the signature from itself, in that the signature, although expected to yield the presence and singularity of the signer, must yield to an indefinite iterability and graphematic generalizability beyond every instance of its inscription. In this sense, the signature is not a discrete, selfsame, or internally homogeneous moment, but the juncture of multiple temporalities: it carries the traces of its prior instances of invocation, those prior contexts from which it is broken away from in order to continue to persist elsewhere, as well as the futural possibilities of invocation to which it may yield. Better still, it is not some site, exterior to time, in which multiple temporalities converge, for it is not so much that the signature houses traces of different temporalities but that it *is* these very temporalities. Here language is not under a subject's control or subject to closure, precisely because the citationality of discursive forms like the signature requires a rupture from former contexts and the forming of new ones. For there is no signature without context, even if contexts are not stable unities but are themselves subject to temporal transformation and rupture: contemporary contexts can only become readable in conjunction with the past contexts from which they rupture as well as those futural contexts that are yet-to-be, and so not yet contexts *per se* because still yet to become them, evermore caught in a "sign-chain [*Zeichen-Kette*] of ever new interpretations and adaptations whose causes do not even have to be related to one another" to borrow Nietzsche's famous phrase from the *Genealogy of Morals.*

This *Zeichen-Kette* of citations within which an act of signing is implicated is an heritage of echoes that has no fixed *arche* or *telos* in that every signing act brings together those retentive and protentive temporalities, traces of past contexts and projections of future ones, all of which exceeds every occasion of

signing and is irreducible to the present or to presence. The iterability of the signature, its rupture from any given context and any postulation of intention, bespeaks an irreducibility between the intention of the signer and the effects the signature carries, insofar as the one who signs is also instituted within and constituted by language (the signature's putative purpose being to identify and mark the one who signs it both in and by language). Indeed, the "one" who signs a signature is subject to a linguistic set of rules this "one" did not create nor can fully control, not only because the signature does not exist in a single moment but must be endlessly reiterated beyond the speaker's presence in order to gain efficacy, but also because the language this "one" employs both preexists and far exceeds its user: language is not merely used but, in a significant sense, uses the very "one" who is thought to use it in that language signifies in spite of its author's intentions. In the words of one critical account: "The ritual dimension of convention implies that the moment of utterance is informed by the prior and, indeed, future moments that are occluded by the moment itself. Who speaks when convention speaks? In what time does convention speak? In some sense, it is an inherited set of voices, an echo of others who speak as the 'I.'"[113]

If the signature takes part in a textual web or citational chain of significations, echoing former contexts and conventions in every instantiation as well as gesturing towards new ones, then the credibility and authority the signature bears draws no other authority than from the citational reiterations and reinvocations of preexisting conventions within which the act of signature is situated. The signature in this way conjures forth the grammatical fiction of a signer who bears the authority and singularity to sign its specific identity, when in fact, by virtue of its necessary citation, the signer is not the bearer or the authority who confers the signature its authoritative force, but only cites an illimitable context of conventions which preexists him. On this reading, the greatest performative ruse of the signature is that it produces the fiction that a signatory, a ready-made subject with an already established identity, preexisted the act of that signature when in fact this subject is no more than a grammatical fiction induced by the act of signing itself. While it might be assumed at first that a full-fledged or already existing subject predates the signature it

signs, a signature which is supposed to descriptively reflect its bearer and remain self-identical through time in every subsequent enactment (for a signature must be able to be repeated), in Nietzsche's genealogy there is no subject that precedes and effectuates an act of signature but only one which is inaugurated by the very performative gesture of signing and retroactively installed in the grammatical site of the subject. [114]

Construed thus, the signatory only comes about as a viable subject by virtue of the act of signing, for without a signature there would be no need to attach a signer to it, and yet this very operation is also occulted and concealed in order for the signatory to be presumed to precede the signature that it in fact follows. This was in part what Nietzsche implied by the conceit of the "seduction of grammar," and signatures might well take part in the ruses of grammar that Nietzsche so vehemently deplored. For signatures are not merely the attributes that an already existing subject bears as the linguistic paraphernalia it can take up or off at will; a signature is not merely representative of its bearer's identity but *constitutive* of the very subject that is thought to stand before it: the signature is supposed to convey the singularity of the signer, its distinguishability from other signatures, and yet, at the same time, this signature needs to be repeatable and resignifiable, not only written down once but cited and recited indefinitely, both in other contexts and in the absence of its signer, at least if it is to become operative as a signature. In this sense, signature is not merely the result of an act by a pre-defined subject who signs to the extent that signature, in order to operate as a signature, depends upon its "graphematic" generalizability and expropriability, its ability to be grafted, reiterated, recited, or transferred beyond the initial context of its signing and in the absence of the presumed signatory.[115]

The prevalent point to insist upon here, and which will be emphasized throughout ensuant chapters, is that linguistic impersonations of a gendered signature, by a sort of rhetorical ruse, become a mimesis for which there is in fact no original, a mimesis founded upon no prior origin, but this foundationlessness is covered over and concealed by the very act of mimesis itself.[116] This would be a paradoxical mimesis of nothing that nonetheless elicits as its effect the illusion that there was an original to

which this mimesis aspires. Might the original turn out to be no more than a fictive phantasm produced by the very procedure of imitation itself only to be subsequently postulated as its origin and cause? Does the very act of affixing a feminine or masculine signature (or sometimes none at all) perpetuate the very myth that there could be such a thing as an original feminine or masculine signature, fictitiously lending credence to the belief that, if indeed a text is posing as a given gender in its style or in its signature, then there must in fact be a prior reality to which it is referring? What if this presumed prior reality of a given gender were itself exposed to be a fictive construct bearing no necessary or natural status? In a sense, the problem is far more serious: this would be a rhetorical performance whose imposture aims to naturalize itself and pass for the real, but whose imitative gesture mimics no original real at all.

This extended discussion of the problem of the signature might seem to be heading toward a crescendo of theoretical abstraction and hyper-reflexivity, but the precise point is that these philosophical considerations are inextricable from the historical problem of signature, especially as it concerns that complex couplet of "gender and genre." Consider, for example, the circulability and iterability of signatures in the early modern period —where the theoretical and juridical status of the author, the person, and intellectual property was subject to dispute— made for a certain radical detachability and transposability of signature: far from simply marking the singularity of an identity, the signature becomes the paradoxical inflation and deregulation of identity-claims: the proliferation of texts unmoored from authors or signed by fictional ones, a multiplication literary works were sometimes signed by many authors, by pseudonyms, or often not signed at all.[117] Some critical accounts argue that in *ancien régime* France "Epistolary Woman" becomes a significant trope that writers, men and women alike, not only sought to write *of* but to write *as*, while other scholars suggest that women writers elaborated discursive strategies of "nobodiness": fictional selves, figural abstractions, and authorial personae that resisted direct or literal representation as persons, let alone as women.[118] What to make of a particular historical and social situation in literary history where the literary fad is to not to simply speak "of" woman but to write "like" one?[119] Where the aim is not always

to approximate personhood and embody authorship, but to write as "nobody"? When a text's signature attempts to posture as having been authored by a given gender or a presumed sex, does this necessarily mean that there in fact exists an authentic or original form of feminine writing or masculine writing that the text is trying to approximate or imitate, as if there were a putatively original and natural standard of "femininity" and "masculinity" against which a text's rhetorical posturings could be adjuged? Or, on the contrary, if there is mimicry here, is it one for which, paradoxically, there was never a true original, a mimicry not of an origin but of a culturally instituted *fantasy* that there was an origin, a mimicry which nonetheless produces the reality-effect that there might be such a thing as original "feminine" or "masculine" styles that could be copied and imitated in writing?[120]

The answer is not, clearly, to treat the complex question of gender and authorship as no more than a mere rhetorical ruse and linguistic lure: social and historical considerations of gender and sexuality cannot be reduced to signature, nor should the signature itself be understood as a self-identical or a single founding act. Indeed, as many are quick to note, the signature itself has no stable identity or guarantee: although it attempts to aggrandize its own legitimacy by posturing as a definitive name that purveys the pure and irreducible identity of the bearer, in order to subsist and persist as a signature it must be detachable from any given context and must be subject to infinite iterations—which is another way of saying it must be able to be cited and recited. The effects of this iteration introduce division and alteration into the identity of the signature that far exceed the purposes for which it was originally intended insofar as an interval is produced with each repetition from context to context, dividing the very identity of the signature from itself.[121]

At the same time, however, the powerful effect of discursive fictions and the considerable social, regulatory, and normative force they exercise cannot be underestimated (a point powerfully exemplified in writings coming from various theoretical quarters, be they feminist, poststructuralist, or postmarxist). Important debates in feminist literary theory have concerned precisely this, with some critics asking whether it is important to retain the notion of an empirical referent of "woman" behind a text, or whether

this very empiricist conceit risks accusations of essentialist foundationalism.[122] Others argue that there is a difference between writing "*like* a woman" and politically identifying "*as* a woman," and that the question is not whether woman is discursively constructed or not but, if she is, how the political consequences differ when one is taken to be sexed as "woman" rather than sexed as "man."[123] In the words of one critical account: "A man does not 'become woman' in the same way, for the same reasons, and with the same consequences as women do in their practice of their culture's tropes of femininity."[124] These debates are far from resolved, and the purpose here will not be to settle them but, rather, to unsettle the terms of the debate themselves, for one of the insistent problem that continues to haunt these debates is the implicit realist/idealist dualism framing these discussions, as if the only choice were between a naively empiricist position championing a "real" woman author on the one hand and, on the other, a hyperbolically constructivist position privileging the fictional status of the woman writer, a problematic dualism which restricts these crucial conversations to a mere staking out of pre-defined theoretical positions rather than an interrogation of the dualistic framing of the discussion and the tacit requirement that position-taking be the only form of engagement from the start. What possibilities are opened up when the gender and genre are considered chiasmatically bound but not reducible to one another? If anything, it would seem important to abstain from accepting the terms of this debate itself, especially when framed as a choice between two alternatives ("essentialist empiricism" on the one hand and "idealist constructivism" on the other).[125] For to argue that authors are either totally unconstructed, pre-given persons or, oppositely, to claim that they are no more than beings of paper, still operates within a dyadic structure which is itself left uninterrogated, a structure that presupposes that there lies the empiric "world" on one shore and the linguistic "word" on the other.[126] But what if the frontiers which seemingly separate these dichotomous oppositions were allowed to founder? What if it were imperative to side with neither of these totalizing versions of anti-construction or construction, which are in fact mirror reflections of the same binary, but to *de*construct the faultlines according to which matters could be reduced to these alternatives in the first place?

To ask such questions is not to deny the pertinence and importance of extant critical literature on French women's fiction —much of which has documented the historical relationship between gender and genre in sentimental writing— nor to ignore the crucial feminist contributions to the interrogation of a "gender-blind" literary canon for its exclusions of "women writers," and it is certainly not meant to suggest that gender and genre ought to be considered as separable analytic categories, still less that they should be abandoned altogether —as if they could be.[127] The point, rather, is to query whether shepherding together fictions into a given genre ("sentimental") *simply* because they have all been ascribed to a given gender ("women") —and even with an affirmative feminist intent— still bring with it possibilities of essentialist pretension and literary formalism, insofar as it presupposes trans-historical categories —whether it be gender ("woman") or genre ("sentimental")— that would be fadelessly existent and ontologically secure in their identity across cultures and throughout time. Moreover, to enclose disparate, heterogeneous texts ascribed to women's signatures within the constraints of a common category, and simply because they are attributed to women, repeats the ideological move of associating sentimentality with women, as if this were a natural given, and fails to ask what political interests were, and are, secured in *feminizing* sentimental literature and *sentimentalizing* women's fiction. By a certain *post hoc ergo propter hoc* logic modern literary criticism claims that "women" would have always written "sentimental" literature when, in fact, it might be the *a priori* supposition that early women's fiction is sentimental which has mobilized such a conflation. With self-confirming circularity, the tacit prejudice and implicit presupposition that early women's fiction is "sentimental" has lead, it seems, to the tautological conclusion that sentimental literature, for the most part, been redacted by "women."[128]

If "early French women's fiction" and "sentimentality" are to endure as critical categories (and why should they not?), then the questions that would need to be pursued in regard to "sentimentalism" and "signature" would have to be recast in a different form: why has genre, in the case of "sentimentalism," been treated as an expressive category, one which transparently reflects an abiding generic identity and

simplistically represents an author's gender? If the rhetoric of first-hand experience and first-degree expression imputed to early women's fiction were problematized, then would the regnant presumptions sometimes made under the name of "sentimentalism" in literary criticism no longer be viable? Perhaps the long-standing literary-historical presumption that French fictions of romance belong to a lineage of sentimentalism and indulge in ostentation, bathos, or melodrama might erode when the rhetoricity of these texts is more closely canvassed. Perhaps the subjective idealism of exaggerated, personalized experience and overwrought oration imputed to old regime fictions most often carrying a feminine signature demands further inspection.[129] Although literature, when associated with women, has oft been romanticized or sentimentalized, in what ways do certain French literary fictions that have sometimes been categorized as belonging to a "sentimental" tradition, far from reinforcing a common genre or a monolithic idea of what "sentiment" and "sensibility" "are" or "do," imply that the language of sensibility cannot be, and has never been, one?

While numerous recuperative efforts may have attempted to restore and redescribe in more affirmative terms the sentimentalist pathos, so-called, that early novels by women are said to exhibit, even these attempts seem to predestine a diversity of texts to a circumscribed aesthetics of emotion to the extent that they still presume that sentimentalism remains the most apt, accurate, or unquestionable concept-metaphor within which to impound these novels and by which to define their contours. It might be important, perhaps, not to simply contend that there is an aesthetic of sentimentalism, inherited from the *ancien régime* and perfected by its women writers, but to which certain texts by women do not entirely comply. For even in this formulation there resides a presupposition that there would be a fixed referent such as "sentimental writing," a stylistic preserve for women alone, that texts simply reflected or deflected. The point is not to repudiate "sentimentality" as a category, as if that were possible, nor is it to make the untenable argument that figures of "sentimentality" did not preoccupy writings of the long eighteenth-century and were not associated with femininity. It is to ask, rather, whether "sentimentalism" has been

taken for granted as tacit *referent* in discussions of early women's fiction and whether this ought to come under question. The issue is not that "sentimentalism" by definition is wrong or incorrect (there is no such thing as "sentimentalism as such"), but that under certain conditions a particular formulation or concept of sentimentalism, when claiming to be universal and representative of women's literature, can in fact fail to be sensitive to the diversity and difference of various texts ascribed to women. To reprise an oft-repeated deconstructive caution, "sentimentalism" will have its place, though whether this place will be that of a foundational ground, a presumptive referent, or the sole aesthetic measure for early French women's fiction is no longer certain. Might the variety and diversity of early "women's fiction" resist confinement within the terms of "sentimentalism"? And might the conflation of "sentimentalism" and "women's fiction" expose itself to be a discursive and cultural fiction that has postured as an abiding and unquestionable literary-historical truth?

The critical point is not to merely expand the scope of an unchanging canon to include non-canonical sentimental works, nor even to argue that sentimentalism is merely a complex, differential aesthetic structure that needs to be redescribed in more encompassing terms, but to ask how and why sentiment has been instituted as the referent of early women's fiction. To say that a text is sentimental is to instate a contingent claim as if it were an essential element or an aesthetic fact, mistaking a normative claim for a descriptive one, a move which only fortifies the limits of the genre and precludes this genre, now established as a foundational given, from further questioning. It would be fallacious, of course, to argue that these texts ought to be read without reference to their historical context and outside of sentimental literary conventions —as if escape from categories and conventions were possible. So sentimentality too will have a place in discussions of early modern, old regime, and early romantic women's fiction, but whether or not it ought to serve as the sole *referent* for considering women's fiction, or as the only aesthetic framework by which to judge such fiction, will come under criticism. Indeed, to instate taxonomic categories and typologies for classifying fiction implicitly draws boundaries and jettisons from consideration those texts

which cannot conform to the taxonomy or typology that is being established. Perhaps the very categories used ought to be undermined even as they are being used, even as they must, inevitably, be used; perhaps the "sentimental" should not be grounded in a fixed set of characteristics but given over to the possibility of various interpretations. Suspending these categories of their foundational weight—not presupposing that the signified coheres with a referent— would lead the careful consideration of the "sentimental" without determining in advance what this might be.

This is not to suggest, then, that modern literary history and contemporary criticism have retroactively applied to these fictions an illusory category ("sentimentalism") with no warrant. But at the same time it is important to recall that those texts called "sentimental" express no structural, inborn, or essential trait that allows them to be classified as such: they are caught in a chain of inherited names, names carrying with them the residues of prior contexts. Every naming of a text as "sentimental" is not an objective report or an innocent description of that text but a performative act of naming which itself posits such a text as "sentimental." The literary-historical and generic names that thus seem to only "represent" the texts they designate in fact constitute and contrive the very "genre" that they purport to merely describe. In a certain sense, no text *is* truly "sentimental," representing a referent, but is only *said* to be "sentimental," approximating a fictive ideal (the same could be said of "realism" and other literary-historical designations). The act of naming a given work as belonging to an aesthetic tradition is to institute a genre that is then claimed to only be discovered after the fact when it is precisely the act of naming that has constituted a given work as a genre in the first place. If the structuralist presupposition that sentimentalism designates a fixed referent reflected or deflected in its representation is refused, then it would appear that both sentimentality and sentimental writing are imaginary ideals and fictive constructs which, while certainly remaining referential, do not merely make a report on a preexisting referent. Would scores of supposed "sentimentally" inflected novels, upon closer reading, offer a counterpoint to the exaggerated passions and purple prose traditionally imputed to romance or "sentimental" fiction?

The conclusion is not to establish some sort of counter-current or anti-sentimental stylistic tradition that was sustained alongside a sentimental one, precisely because the very notion of a sentimental tradition, its propriety and coherence, is at issue. Reading literature as *sentimental* is not to read it *as is* but *as if* it were sentimental, for to say certain texts are sentimental, is not to report on what they are or on what is already there but to *claim* that they are sentimental, in so doing performatively making them so. Sentimentality is ultimately an unrealizable ideal that no text can fully approximate.[130] In other words, though literatures of sentiment might always have been considered as the wellspring of emotion (and indeed, many sentimental texts often rhetorically attempt to represent themselves as so), the very act of rhetorically trying to persuade the reader that the work is "real" or "authentic" feeling itself refers to an already artificial and contrived discursive convention (the convention of a "real" emotion) and thus far from eluding linguistic modes in the service of precultural or prediscursive "emotion" is in fact bound to it.

As will have become clear by now, this inquiry does not culminate in a deliberately historical study of "sentimentality," "the romance," or "women's fiction in France," even if it covers a chronology usually associated with the advent and flourishing of romantic "sentimentalism" in French literature: it traces no overarching pedigree nor does it pinpoint parentages, breaks, and permutations in the vocabulary of sentiment and experience. The pursuits of these pages are thus beholden neither to the search of an overarching meaning to the words "sentiment" or "experience," nor to an investigation of the origins, formal or generic, of the "romance," and still less to the establishment of a transhistorical category of "women's fiction."[131] For the question of the "genre" and "gender" of the texts under consideration should be taken as just that, a *question* precisely because gender and genre are not only in question but questionable, that is to say, continually called *into question*: do certain works, which might be denominated as "sentimental" by some, notwithstanding evade full capture within such generic tags? What literary oeuvres, attributed to feminine signatures, do not assist in the writing of teleological literary history—according to which "feminine" sentimental literature would have been gradually replaced by "masculine" realist aesthetics

in the nineteenth-century— but, strikingly, assail some of its grounding tenets? At stake is not whether the texts arrayed here absolutely defy or resolutely define sentimental tropes, for the relationship these fictions could be said to entertain with sentimental categories is too tenuous and ambiguous to make such declarative conclusions viable. Indeed, to only consider how these texts deviate from or confirm pre-established sentimental tropes is still to reduce their variety and diversity to a hegemonic interpretative framework of sentimentalism without putting that very framework itself into question.

But if the texts read throughout these pages are not pigeonholed within predetermined hermeneutic and generic frameworks, if they are not confined within the categorical narrative genres and strict literary-historical paradigms sometimes employed in discussions of canon-formation and genre theory, then why interlace them as though they could be analyzed with each other? If the generic contours of the texts selected here cannot be assumed in advance, then what justifies their assemblage together? And if they hold no natural, causal, or originary resemblance with each other, then why group them in a fictive ensemble? In response to these concerns, an alternative set of counter-queries could be posed: What might be wrought from suspending the imperative to keep texts bounden within the strictures of received narratological and generic constraints? Even if no literary text can be said to ever transcendentally elude the categories and conventions by which it will, inevitably, be interpellated as a genre or a form —and, indeed, even if no literary "text" ever exists in some prediscursive innocence prior to its entry into convention and nomination as a given genre or form—then in what lies the importance of unclasping the referential hold and dismantling the seeming fixity of the labels traditionally attached to them?[132]

It is not just the fact that a great deal of scholarship has assumed a sentimental genealogy amongst early modern, Enlightenment, and July-Monarchy romance genres attributed to women's signatures —because most seemingly concern "love" and are supposedly written in an affected, affective style— which will interweave the novels assembled here. Though there may well be this literary-historical prejudice and precedent, what convokes these texts together is, above all, the ways in which they convolute and

complicate rhetorical representations of amorous experience. In so doing these texts, each in their own way, insist upon the aporias of inexperience in the context of amorous involvement. This is not to say, however, that these fictions all present, as a structuralist literary history might forward, an overbroad theme, overriding leitmotiv, or overarching plot whose subject, transhistorically consistent, would be "inexperience."[133] Rather, it needs to be asked: if the rhetorical complexity of these texts is returned to them —precisely *by not* confining them in advance to preconceived criteria, clichés, and commonplaces of sentimentalist aesthetics— would a sustained problematization of those categories most often associated with early women's fiction be witnessed within the terms of these texts themselves? As will be specified in the remainder of this introduction, what provisionally affiliates these narratives together, within the bounds of this study at least, is their idioms of inexperience, their languages of unlived love, which come to bear on them all, albeit never in the same way, and which subsequent chapters unearth in each. Might those rhetorical and thematic instances where narrative "experience" is seemingly constituted by its very "inexperience" —those moments when love is not acknowledged or acted upon in a consequential, direct, or materially effective manner because it eludes self-presence— denude the subjectivism thought to characterize the romance novel of the mystifications which have been associated with it, whether it be the solipsistic introspection prized in the *roman d'analyse* or the rhetoric of ineffable emotion celebrated in the *roman sentimental*? What implications ensue for the study of "literatures of sentiment," broadly construed, when such a possibility is explored?

v. innocence, inexperience

According to what I know about love, I would not want to experience it at all.
—Catherine Bernard, *Fédéric de Sicile* (1680)

It was my inexperience that was blinding me.
—Madame de Boisgiron, *Les Suites d'un moment d'erreur* (1775)

your senses have betrayed you, your inexperience has ruined you
—Joséphine de Monbart, *Lettres tahitiennes* (1784)

I pity your inexperience

"I do not hope, desire, nor demand"
introduction

—Mme Blesinska, *Belfond et Sophie, ou les suites de l'inexpérience* (1813)

"Inexpérience" appears in the fourth edition of the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française* (1762), with an intriguingly self-abolishing definition: as a "manque d'expérience," inexperience would signify that which falls short of or has not yet become experience.[134] The adjectival permutations of the term —"inexpérimenté" ("inexperienced") and "sans experience" ("experienceless")— equally testify to the antimony with which this concept-metaphor is endowed. For the pseudo-negation implied in the word's prefix ("in-" or "sans") augurs that inexperience, while not itself an experience, cannot be considered its contrary: neither commensurate with experience nor completely opposable to it as its adverse, inexperience would seem to constitute, strangely, an experience which is lacking in and of itself. This subtle, paradoxical state of not having experience —but nor for that matter transcending the bounds of experience altogether— is highly gendered with normative significance in *ancien régime* literatures, usually associated with sexual and intellectual ignorance.[135] Thus will a character in Mme de Coteneuve's *La Confiance Trahie ou Lettres du Chevalier de Murcy* (1777), be characterized as having "too much sincerity, as well as too little experience,"[136] and in Anne-Hyacinthe de Saint-Léger Colleville's *Lettres du Chevalier de Saint-Alme et de Mademoiselle de Melcourt* (1781) one finds a young woman described as having "a pure heart […] without experience" because she only "sees virtue in love."[137] While most commonly denoting (sexual) naiveté and innocence —"I was simple, *ingénue*, experienceless [*sans experience*]" says Sophie, the heroine of Léonard's *Lettres de Sainville et de Sophie* (1771), for example—[138] inexperience can also be read as an allusion to experiences that simply cannot be counted or claimed, experiences that are lacking because of the normative expectation that they *should* be lacking.[139] Not only indicating a social or moral prescription to be sexually innocent, in other words, inexperience would also seem to instate a sort of negative jussive, an imperative according to which those experiences that should not be had or that should never happen

cannot be acknowledged and still less acted upon; experiences that, if they ever do happen, "never have" to the extent that they must be ignored, discounted, or slighted in their re-telling.[140]

Thus when Illyrine, eponymous narrator of Suzanne de Morency's *Illyrine ou L'Écueil de l'inexpérience* (1799-1800), will recount her amatory adventures to her confidant, her style replaces the diction of exposure and explication with that of ellipsis and elision: "I always had the habit of loving and being loved; and then, you know…, you're acquainted with…, the only confidant of my most secret thoughts, but shush! Nonetheless, I always begin."[141] Here Ilyrine's "inexperience" is not that she has not had any experiences, but that she *fails to mention* she has, intimating by omission an implied possibility —"you know…, you're acquainted with…,"— she never actually assures is her own. Though hushed —"but shush!"— this interdiction not to speak cannot help but belie the very prohibition against articulation to which it appeals, for the narrator will "nevertheless […] always begin," in spite of the silence her command calls for. If only accounted for by what its rhetoric reports rather than by what it intimates, then the narrator's experience would seem to be none at all. For an experience of what never happened or of what was never supposed to have happened —precisely because it is not to be spoken of candidly nor mentioned temerariously— makes for an experience that, *stricto sensu*, is not one—or at least not one to which any reputable woman would wish to lay conscious claim. The plethora of "seduction novels," cautionary tales depicting fallen women and misled demoiselles in Europe and America, testify to a complex gendered matrix of discursive norms, according to which inexperience becomes a preserve and experience a pitfall depending on the sex one is socially assigned. In the words of one heroine to a friend in Mme Dalibard's *Porte-Feuille Rendu* (1749): "Your lover could not disguise himself any longer: then you knew by a sad experience [*une triste expérience*], that he was only a seducer, & that you were not the first victim immolated to his self-love & perfidy."[142]

The figure of inexperience thus yields a double-valence upon which fictions of romance focus. On the one hand, it designates the conventional bathos of the untutored, guileless "man of feeling" who knows

not how to conform to culture's constrictions or the artless *ingénue* who knows not how to comport herself when faced with the customs of the social institutions she inhabits, both of whom are figures familiar to literary criticism of old regime fiction.[143] On the other, however, "inexperience" would seem to serve as a rhetorical occasion for discussions, however *sotto voce* they may be, of discursive experiences that "mustn't," "shouldn't," or "couldn't" have happened. Even if they "do happen," they seemingly "have not," for they are not to be spoken of directly or made mention of explicitly; they become stories narrating what never happens or what should never happen but which notwithstanding are incessantly told.[144] Hark in this vein the cautionary language of Cornélie Vasse's *Les Aveux d'une femme galante* (1782), wherein one of the personages avows that "Like all young people without experience, I took simple *gallantries d'usage* for so many homages [...] Men are only dangerous when we are experienceless [*sans expérience*]."[145] The danger supposed here is neither fully reproduced nor fully repudiated in its textual depiction, neither completely discovered nor completely disowned by the character's confession, a rhetorical praxis carried all the way into the nineteenth century with Mme Blesinska's *Belfond et Sophie, ou les suites de l'inexpérience* (1813): "Flee," orders a friend of the heroine in regard to two suitors, "these two dangerous men, of which the one deceives you and compromises you and the other wishes to take advantage of your inexperience."[146] In Blesinska's novel, the heroine is not advised to affront experience —conceived as a danger never fully articulated or specified— but, on the contrary, to flee from it altogether.

Indeed, to the famous injunction of Mary Wollstonecraft's *Maria or the Wrongs of Women* (1798) — "Gain experience—ah! gain it" —the heroines of French fictions of romance would seem to have little recourse, seeking as they do less the acquisition of experience than its avoidance.[147] If the discourse of feminine virtue obligates one not to obtain experience but, rather, to remain completely virgin of it, then the ambiguous didactic message fictions of romance supply can appear as both preservative and protective: a negative instruction not to become experienced, a defensive caution to stay completely inviolate of it.[148] "Youthful reflections cannot take the place of experience [*tenir le lieu de l'expérience*]" says the heroine of

Madame de Boisgiron's *Les suites d'un moment d'erreur* (1775), "I feel what I am missing; but it does not depend upon me to acquire it."[149] Indeed, amorous experience shoulders the burden of contradiction —a contradiction in terms— for amorous experience is not considered to be commensurate with experience itself, as if it were at once an *other experience,* an experience of otherness, if not *other to experience*. In the words of a character from Marie Montalembert's *Elise Dumenil* (1798): "my love would have taken the place of experience [*mon amour m'eût tenu lieu d'expérience*]"[150] and from Sophie Cottin's *Claire d'Albe* (1799): "I have not yet wanted to have the experience of [love]."[151] These heroines are left, so it may seem, with a fundamentally fruitless and ultimately blank education, taught as they are not to garner experience but, oppositely, to resist its dangers: to deny ever having experience —even if they have; to speak of experience as though it never happened —even if it has. Thus will the guardian of Claire de Tott's *Pauline de Vergies, ou Lettres de Mme. De Staincis* (1799) tell the heroine in no uncertain terms: "when you are my age, you will be convinced of [what I say]; may you never experience it! [*puissiez-vous n'en faire jamais l'expérience*]."[152] If in the *Bildungsroman* the hero is said to gradually accumulate the cultural capital of "experience" by worldly education through the feats and defeats he encounters, the "inexperience" of heroines in fictions of romance, on the contrary, admits no ostensible *bildung* and suspend the teleological progression toward knowledge that such a conceit implies.[153] The victims rather than the vanquishers of their ignorance, many heroines might appear, from a contemporary vantage at least, to increase their innocence rather than lessen their ingenuousness, vying as they are not for experience's gains but for the very relinquishment of its promises.

It is important not to make universalizing claims here, since what is often called romance and sentimental fiction, whatever that may mean, is no closed and stable generic form, and there is no one literary representation of "inexperience." Consider that the moralizing strains of sentimental fiction in the nineteenth century, such as Sophie de Reneville's *Palymre ou L'Éducation de l'expérience* (1823), would paradoxically attempt to instrumentalize the heroine's "experience" as a way of advising feminine readers to

keep their "inexperience" (or non-experience) intact, as if one were to acquire the education of experience only to become the more ignorant of it. Likewise, a purely victimizing view of inexperience minimizes the rhetorical finesse of these fictions, a delicate tactic of speaking without speaking that does not amount to mere denegation or denial.[154] The apparent chasteness of experience depicted in romance fiction is more a reflection of a lightness of touch in narration than a continence of content. Recourse to descriptions of inexperienced love permits romance fictions to negotiate with the harsh iniquities of gallantry —like violence and violation— by exploiting rhetorical understatement: a style of linguistic delivery which underwhelms rather than underscores sensational experience by letting hover declarations often unattributable to a character or narrator; a deployment of impersonal language —proverbs, maxims, the faceless pronoun "on"— rather than subjective statements in order to convey observations. This style of abstention —ellipsis and elision— should not be confused with abstinence, for romance fictions did not prudishly refrain from attempts at narrating moments were virtue was overcome or undone. Such experiences that mustn't, shouldn't, or couldn't have happened —because they are not to be talked of directly or explicitly— is not only a concept-metaphor: it also becomes a rhetorical praxis in these texts.[155] The strategic usefulness of *delicatezza* allows for the mentioning of the unmentionable while appearing not to do so, unveiling unladylike "realities" even when seeming to have modestly avoided recounting them.[156]

Hence when Mme de Chartres tells her daughter, the eponymous heroine of Mme de Lafayette's *La Princesse de Clèves* (1678), the historical tale of Diane de Poitier —who brokered for her father's life by prostituting herself to the king— she leaves sexual details to parenthesis and periphrasis: "[She] did so well (I do not know by what means) that she obtained the life of her father."[157] The adumbration to what Diane may have done "so well" and how she may done it is never explained nor made explicit because to do so would breach a propriety that Mme de Chartres dares not transgress. Her effort to prettify the spoils of sexual exploitation by rhetorically downplaying them makes for a manner of delivery so understated and unamplified that it holds in endless waiting a divulgation it never fully yields. At the same time, however,

this lessening and de-emphasizing does not simply withhold in abeyance or absolutely cloak in mystery the untoward details to which it intimates.[158] For Mme de Chartres, Diane de Poitier's story is an experience that cannot be recounted by straightforwardly explicit means or by a nudity of depiction because it is a story that should not be related with frank factuality at all.

Keeping with this, the famous "…" or "—" that appears in romances as a euphemistic placeholder for sexual consummation —or violation, as in Pigault-Lebrun's *Adélaïde de Méran* (1815)— is another testament to the rhetorical ploys for the writing of inexperience, one that privileges elision over exclamation. Thus will the heroine of Madame de Gercy's *Marguerite D'Alby* (1821) recount her ravishment by evasion rather than averment: "the moment of my ruin had arrived, neither my prayers, nor my tears, nor my cries, could save me….I was his….."[159] These ellipses testify to a depiction of sexual violence that takes place not only through explicit renderings, but also to a degree in textual lapses and litotes, in typographic occultations and omissions. The heroine's swooning, seemingly on the verge of losing self-present cognition at the moment of the encounter, presages that the experiences one should not have, cannot remember, or that have been forcibly repressed haunt, ineluctably, those who underwent them like the advent of a trauma that one cannot affront in presence but only re-encounter in its belated aftermath. It is hard to say what takes place in this interval ("…") and, indeed, the story's agon and plot will be engineered around this apparently illegible, seemingly "pregnant" silence.[160] This tactical tact, this poetics of preterition, enshrouds sexual violence in textual blankness. Its rhetorical feints account for that which the heroine's faints cannot recount—precisely because she is not to have consciousness at the moment of their telling or cannot muster the declarative forthrightness to openly describe what has happened.[161]

Do such pseudo-, non-, or in- experiences —like the one the heroine attended to only by having fainted during its occurrence or by having been blind to its passing— desist from self-present perception and immediate phenomenality insofar as their representation must be reconstituted, and this only partially, *ex post facto*?[162]And from this perspective, would inexperience become less a thematic topos of virtuous

conduct in these novels than a rhetorical exploration of the limits of experience, not an experience uncountable because it never took place but uncountable because it is best *to say* it never took place?[163] That feminine experience should be no more than a "non-event" —one that is to never "really" happen and of which one is supposed to remain undressed even if it does— is made evident by the preoccupation in romance fiction for reputation and rumor, repute and report: a heroine's honor is at the mercy of malediction and material action, of malediction *as* material action—at the mercy, that is, of discourse. For the heroine's empirical experience —what she may or may not have done— is largely shaped by what is broadcast about it, such that what she "really" did becomes less crucial than what is *said* about what she did. Here, what "actually" happened is overpowered by what "allegedly" happened, the distinction itself no longer secure, as act and speech become confused, but not conflated, in the speech-acts of rumor. In the words of Hélisenne, one of the narrators of the Renaissance romance *Les Angoysses douloureuses qui procèdent d'amours* (1538): "a good reputation is easily tarnished, and especially that of noble ladies when they are not modest, as their decency demands […] in such matters in which there is so much peril and danger of dishonor, keeping silent is much more decent and suitable than speaking."[164] Madeliene de Scudéry's *Mathilde* (1667) knells a resonant warning in the following century: "women cannot be able to have too much care to prevent that the clever *bagatelles* that one writes or one says do not circulate; for it takes nothing to make things that are only half-understood badly explained."[165] Gabrielle Villeneuve's *La jardinière de Vincennes* (1753) will add that this problematic is inevitably gendered when a mother remarks to a young man that "the depravity of mores makes it so that the same honor which obliges women to virtue, carries your sex to miss it with scandal, without the reputation of men stained from it,"[166] while elsewhere, into another epoch, a solicitous character in Augustine Dégotty's epistolary novel *Marie de Valmont* (1817) will reaffirm the advertence that a mere "bagatelle" can ruin everything when she writes to the eponymous heroine of the novel, her friend, on the subject of reputation:

> Believe me, the reputation of a woman resembles a polished sheet of glass, a polished sheet of ice, a polished mirror [*une glace polie*]- the lightest breath, the slightest blow, can tarnish it: it does not suffice that we be sure of ourselves, of our conscience to comport ourselves well, it is necessary that *le monde* puts the stamp, seals, our reputation so that it is stainless, and the lightest inconsequence often destroys it without return.[167]

Its crystalline fragility susceptible to nothing other than its very own vulnerable lightness, reputation, likened to shatterable glass, can be injured by the slightest, lightest "breath" ("le plus léger souffle"), by the slightest, lightest inconsequence ("la plus légère inconséquence"). As this epistle suggests, less crucial is the surety of conscience with which a young woman acts —her "experience"— than the eventual stamp of approval which *le monde* provides for that conduct and the narrative it devises in relation to it. So laments a personage in Désirée de Castéra's *Armand et Angéla* (1821): "It is not enough that you be pure, it is still necessary to appear so to the eyes of those who surround you."[168] It is for this reason that even supposedly light-hearted speech acts like air-headed calumny or giddy-minded gossip can have deathly performative effects. As Madame Beccary's *Les Dangers de la calomnie, ou Mémoires de Fanny Spingler, histoire angloise* (1770; 1781) and Sophie d'Epinay's later *Valida, ou la réputation d'une femme* (1835) emphasize all too well, without the stamp and seal of approval from *le monde*, lives can easily be stamped out and fates sealed: in both novels, the heroines perish because of a few misplaced words.[169]

To the extent that the paranoia surrounding feminine fidelity is based upon and bound to its discursive formulation —inasmuch as the *ipse dixits* that are reported about a given event often prevail over that which may or may not have occurred— does amorous experience outside of wedlock —or any experience that fringes on non-normativity— become once again the experience that "isn't," the experience that never was or, if it has been, must be passed over in silence and narrated by ellipsis?[170] When a heroine of Caroline Maurer's *La rencontre au Luxembourg* (1817) —"fooled, victimized by her inexperience"— surrenders to extramarital extravagances, she resolves to persist in a certain dumbness —both quiescently mute and serenely innocent— to downplay the eventfulness of her misdeed: "A more reserved, more

sedentary conduct —and above all a profound silence for all that had happened— were the only means dictated by prudence, the only ones that were in her power to forgive herself for irreparable faults."[171] The question, then, becomes how these fictions seek to narrate experiences that are never to happen even if they do, experiences —like that of the heroine in *La Rencontre*— which are not to be spoken of even as they are being told.[172] If these experiences are not defined by empirical measures but by their discursive effects — defined not simply by what occurred or did not occur but by what is said and left unsaid— to what extent are they contoured by the language that narrates, and fails to narrate, them?

vi. elision, elusion

for my words have no weight, and fall for naught.
—Ovid, "III Briseis to Achilles," *Heroides* (c. 25-16 BC)

Originally, a rumor, a "one said," "one said that it would have been said. One is always ignorant of the origin of a rumor. It is precisely with this that one identifies a rumor. To say "one does not know, one will never know the origin," is always, let us not doubt this considerable risk, to open the space of rumor and to give license to the "one said," to chatter and to myth.
—Derrida, *Politiques de l'amitié*

Nobody [...] *at once names and effaces himself: like nobody, like nobody else*
—Derrida, *Mémoires d'aveugle*

If fictions of romance privilege intimation and insinuation over unambiguous demonstration and boldfaced presentation, then to read them in terms of narrative experience is to confront a certain illegibility. On the one hand, it becomes difficult to ascertain whether or not an experience can be definitively claimed to have been "had" in presence —let alone been had by someone willing to own up to it. On the other, however, the occurrence or eventuation of experience is itself never simply denied. Experience, always shadowed by its inexperience, becomes bound up with the difficult task of reading for traces, of reading for that which discloses itself only in its effacement. For if an unseemly experience —one that was never supposed to happen— is never to be vocalized explicitly and surely never to be subscribed to openly, then how is this to be discursively accounted for? Moreover, if the ideology of feminine modesty enforces, in part, that one not be "experienced" but innocent of experience altogether, then is there an

important narrative strategy at work in allowing voluptuous, wanton, or unconventional experiences to waver as neither denied nor affirmed, as if they might be just as easily ignored as attended to depending on the reader's discretion?[173]

By innuendo and inference, experiences are described in fictions of romance that are never simply "present" even as they seem to occur, experiences void of any enunciating voice that would assume accountability for them; an experience seemingly of no one or even, some might say, someone's (but whose?) inexperience.[174] This rhetorical mode takes on omnifarious forms: at times, it seems to offer no self-present agent, narrator, or personage who would claim such and such experience; at other times, it is not the bearer of the experience that is unclear but the relationship a personage or narrator entertains toward its experience that is left indistinct. In keeping with this, when it comes time to describe how characters "feel" or "think," —or indeed, what they "experience"— the indefinite pronoun "on" is frequently used. The "on" —vague and imprecise, unlike the deictic personal pronoun "I"— is a curious counter to the grammar of the subject, as well as to the "fictive sex" of grammatical gender, in that its syntax is active but its meaning potentially passive.[175] When the "on" is thus inserted into narration, the putative boundaries between objectivity and subjectivity, exteriority and interiority, neutrality and personality, become permeable: impersonal and personal pronouns cohabit the same psychic space, as it were, that the narrative is rendering.[176] So will LaFayette's *La comtesse de Tende* (1664) apply to this floatily imprecise "on" to render her heroine's imprudent lapse in conduct: "One cedes easily to that which pleases."[177] The maxim-like indefiniteness of the pronouncement steers focus away from the heroine's unvirtuous conduct —why *she* ceded— by speaking from the viewless vantage of someone, no one, "on." "That which pleases," a syntagm also disembodied of a precise sensuality, likewise makes a generic reference —here, to pleasure— rather than pinpointing the specific sexual transgression the heroine performs.[178] These linguistic effects make for a style that seems to blank out interiority and whiten out ardency,

presenting experiences, if this they are, that seem to belong to anyone, to everyone—to a visageless no one.[179]

In these terms, narrative disclosure is often stricken with erasure. Madame B…d'Arras' *Les Prétendus* (1777), for example, only recounts the heroine Lucinde's sudden change of heart from one lover to another by refraining from yielding insight into her presumed "psychology." Says the narrator of Lucinde's new lover: "How could have a being of this sort moved a person as solid as I said Lucinde was? I do not know."[180] Here the window into Lucinde's mind is foreclosed by the narrator's disclamation of responsibility to bring to view any inner reflections she might have had. If narrators are reticent as to the inner thoughts of the personages they surveil —like in *Les Prétendus*— they likewise entertain a rapport of distance relative to the reports they proffer, as in Germaine de Staël's famous *Corinne ou l'Italie* (1807), the final line of which includes the narrator's abandonment of moralizing judgment. Of the protagonist Oswald's fate, the narration will query: "But did he pardon himself for his past conduct? […] I do not know, and do not want, in this regard, either to blame, or to absolve him."[181] Similarly, a narrator of Praskovia Golitsyna's *Mélise* (1813) will remark: "I even think that a reasonable love is not love," before adding, "but I am a woman, and my opinion does not count."[182] One does not find otherwise in Madame de Tercy's lesser-known *Cécile de Renneville* (1816). "I do not search to establish this opinion," vociferates the narrator in reference to a mawkish theory of love, "it was that of M. Vernet."[183] If the opinion is not one that the narrator wishes to prove nor attest ownership for —because only that of a personage in the story it recounts— then the relation this narrator shares with such an opinion is held suspended, for its narration alone has been responsible for recounting that opinion in the first place.[184]

But if this is right, then in what service do these narratives deploy seemingly subjectless statements? What strategy is this that entails an evasion of declarative determinacy and elusive elocution? From one perspective, the deployment of agentless avowals leaves the writer whose signature is appended to the work importantly unsullied —to a degree protected and blameless— for having composed such stories, as if the

work was not generated by an author but merely recounted by rumor and report (whence the spate of exculpatory and explanatory prefaces so often appended to works of feminine signatures, aptly summarized by the title of Adelaïde Dufrenoy's *La Femme Auteur, ou Les Inconvéniens de La célébrité* [1812]). It could be claimed, as did Catherine Bernard's "Avertissement" to *Les Malheurs de l'amour* (1687), that the experiences colligated therein were not the writer's own but, rather, that of a fiction, that of no one: "The few novels that I have read," so states the preface, "gave me a general idea of the sentiments of the heart."[185] Literature, like rumor and report, becomes the curious forum in the circulation of these words of no one —a language issued from some unidentifiable elsewhere, a discourse that persists in the absence of any particular claimant— and thus words not simply reducible to the authorial signature affixed to its covers.[186] It is for this reason, so some have professed, that recourse is often made to names of nobody in works signed by *ancien régime* writers in general, women writers in particular, in order to disguise authorship in plain sight through anonymity and aliases, pseudonyms and silence.[187]

In a certain sense, then, the ghostliness of tone in these fictions and the anonymity of their textual ploys make for a narration that neither simply abdicates nor definitively accepts that which it portrays.[188] In a rhetorical mode where actions seem unmoored from agents and statements appear unhinged from subjects, narrative strategy in these fictions amounts to bearing witness to experience, as it were, only by having demurely turned away from it. This refusal to either assume or abandon responsibility for figures of experience licenses these fictions to discuss the aberrancies of heteronormative courtship —whether it be its failure, its transgression, or the very aberrancy of the idea that successful heterosexual consummation could even be feasible and felicitous in the first place— by exploiting the virtuality of their exempla. The endlessly vulnerable virtue of the heroine in some of these stories illustrates this point. In Princess Praskovia Golitsyna's *Mélise* (1813), for instance, the young eponymous protagonist is preyed upon by a conniving scapegrace Dorval who, for his part, finds it "piquant to reign over a novice heart and commodious to dominate a being without experience."[189] Confronted with the agonizing dangers of profligate seduction she

barely escapes or nearly succumbs to —"[Dorval's] conduct would perhaps not have be exempt from blame in a woman with more experience," the narrative reports—[190] the virtuous Mélise's "inexperience" leads her into compromising situations, situations whose full horror the narrative neither explicitly discloses nor, for that matter, entirely dissembles: "Frightened by what she has heard, reddening from all that she herself has shown of sensibility, ashamed of confessions that she has heard and innocent caresses she has suffered, [Mélise] raises herself up brusquely, […] hides her face between her two hands and flees with the rapidity of lightening."[191] Here, the narrative compels the heroine to affront an erotic danger she almost undergoes but narrowly escapes, having "suffered" caresses and "heard" confessions she ought to have avoided—and which she ostensibly does, precisely by fleeing from them.

In teasing fashion, then, fictions of romance such as this one adumbrate to suggestive possibilities and erotic dangers to which the heroine is liable without, however, fully realizing and representing them (Sade's *Justine, ou Les Malheurs de la vertu* [1791], and other libertine genres notwithstanding). To the reader's delight or disappointment, the heroine comes to avert corrupting experiences even while encountering them, her virtue untainted —or virtually untainted— by the unfortunate scenarios she unknowingly participates in or willingly pretends to ignore.[192] Consider in this vein the words of Madame Brunel, the caretaker to a suggestible heroine of Mademoiselle Haudry's epistolary novel *Tout s'arrange à la fin* (1796): "Mademoiselle, it is you who, without knowing it, risked the most horrible danger."[193] Witlessly unaware of a threat she has faced precisely by not knowing that she has, the heroine that Madame Brunel counsels can only be forewarned of a danger that she has in fact already endured; and she has endured this peril to the very extent that she has remained unbeknownst of its passing and untouched by its consequence. Unsuspecting of a danger that involved only her, the danger itself passes away unseen and inexperienced, even as it remains the only unlived experience to which she will be able to have any claim.[194]

Although tropes of authenticity and realism were certainly in vogue for some literary strains of the *ancien régime* and post-revolutionary epoch, was there also something rhetorically expeditious in allowing

personages to remain anything but real-seeming, hollow vectors traversed by the novel's narrations, empty effigies whose experience and speech seemed anything but their own?[195] Could blank-slated characters in this way become accessible to a diverse audience but at the same time be held at a remove from it? Conceivably, a narrative experience that was not just tethered to the protagonist could be generalized to a wide readership and in the same stroke discounted altogether: the experience could be anyone's —yours, for example— or no one's. Narrated in a language that evasively prettifies and pretermits rather than explicitly demonstrates and describes, fictions of romance paint seemingly eventless, skirted experiences — those that should not be had, those that are to only be mentioned by their very omission— and, in this sense, the ownership of such narrative experience —"who" has it— is ultimately waived in its telling, just as the predicates of possession associated with experience —who "has" it— are suspended. For the wanton experiences that a virtuous heroine evades —or even sometimes endures— are not those necessarily ascribable to and appropriable by her even if she confronts them, even as she undergoes them, due to a nebulosity of narration.

vii. loving, losing

I love you and I lose you.
—Catherine Bernard, *Le Comte d'Ambosie* (1689)

I see thee not, I touch thee not; but when I hast with transport to imbrace thee, 'tis shadow all, and my poor Arms return empty to my Bosome.
—Aphra Behn, *Letters Between a Nobleman and his Sister* (1684-7)

All the texts that bespangle these pages portray, in some way or another, the paradoxes of "inexperience," where the latter designates those experiences, ineluctably given in language, that never fully take place in presence, experiences that are discursively constituted by the ways in which they deflect self-cognizant comprehension and bare-faced representation, experiences that do not seem to qualify as experiences at all. Likewise, the chapters of this inquiry, akin to the fictions discussed therein, enwreathe together the varying senses of "inexperience" that has been hitherto outlined, extending from its most mundane nuances —not being "experienced" sexually or otherwise— to its more complex connotations —

a relation to experience so disseized of self-presence and deprived of the usual correlates of sense-perception that it seems to figure an experience without itself.[196]

Of particular interest, however, will be only a partial aspect of this ever-elastic and always elusive figure of inexperience, namely the barely-sustained relationships these fictions of romance depict, those moments where the experience of becoming undone becomes the undoing of experience; those times when the only discursive experience "shared" between lovers is the fact that they have none to share. The mutuality or reciprocity implied by such a "sharing" is, however, somewhat misleading, insofar as the dynamics of the amorous liaison in these narratives —inevitably gendered and infused with *rapports de force* of various kinds— disallow a commensurate meeting ground and mutual accord between two "equals" who would wield free choice or willful decision.[197] Because inescapably caught within a circumscribed scene of social and discursive possibilities, lovers in these stories never hold common ground, and it is even less clear that they speak in a mutually comprehensible language (indeed, it is already a ruse to speak of "lovers" at all, as if there were coherent and stable subject-positions that could be identified from the start). While certain conceptions of amorous endeavor frame the amative rapport as a possession of an "object" and the experience gained, sexual and otherwise, from it —or contrarily, as the intangible yearning for the nonpossessed object and an immurement within innocent inexperience— discursive portrayals of love in these stories emphasize ambivalence over alternative: what if the beloved were neither experienced nor left inexperienced, because the very distinctions separating these alternatives were no longer distinguishable?

This gives way to several questions: is it possible to have contact with a beloved to the precise extent that one hasn't, to be caught by a sort of touchless embrace that neither enthralls the beloved within a fully formalized relationship nor leaves him completely inviolable of it? Can some romances be said to obtain precisely because lovers do *not* fully know each another's thoughts and feelings and because they do *not* make good on the possibility of direct asseveration or robust exertion toward their beloved? What if defaulting on the opportunity to act and being epistemologically benighted of the beloved's intentions were

not just obstacles to love or the mere disavowal of them as forms of loving themselves, as if amorous experience were contoured by the very moments when it drifted into the inexperience it always was and when the distinction between these two conceits became indeterminate?[198] If amorous experience were no longer separable from its inexperience, if its ontological predicates were suspended and its "being" unknown, who could be said to weather such an experience, much less "have" it? In such a case, is to speak of "lovers" already misleading in that there is no longer, or never was, a subject to voluntarily initiate and undertake such an "experience," since this would be an "experience" for which there is no self-present subject?[199]

In these fictions, not consummating love by explicit declaration and fruitful outcome —not doing anything that seems material at all— may not necessarily constitute a modality of loving but nor does it completely foreclose its possibility, just as abstinent verbalization or reticent interaction need not mean that the gossamer-thin bonds lovers may share are merely latent because unrealized or lacking because minimal.[200] However, the purport would not be to specify whether there exists in these texts an experience of inexperience when one loves —that is, the experience of not experiencing one's beloved in any tangible way or form— nor to propound that amorous experiences reduce to the unearthliness of immaterialized quests and conquests. This has become near commonplace, indeed, in discussions of lover's discourse. In the words of Roland Barthes' famous account of amorous speech: "*Reasonable* sentiment: everything is arranged—but nothing endures. *Amorous* sentiment: nothing is arranged—and yet that endures."[201] Rather than valorizing either the experience of inexperience or the inexperience of experience, both of which are dialectical conceits, the question might well become: how do the very conceptual frontiers delineating "experience" from its "inexperience" begin to tremble and taper, no longer reducible to dialectical synthesis at all? When does it become difficult to differentiate the one as necessarily different from the other, and nearly impossible to identify the positive features, if any, either might have been thought to have had? And, in keeping with this, when do the definitional silhouettes outlining the difference between "lover" from

"beloved" fade? In what ways do the differences separating "loving" from "being loved" collapse?

The "romances" congregated here raise the question as to whether not knowing one is loved —not knowing in any effectual, concrete, or epistemologically certain way— necessarily amounts to a lamentable loss and near-miss of experience.[202] Might the loss of love be a love of loss or, better still, *love as loss*? What ensues from letting something lie, letting it hover as no more than a wraithlike virtuality, or simply letting it die out? Language only can betray here, for "letting something lie" implies a self-willed action by an agent and a substantial thing that is acted upon, in this way consolidating a metaphysics of subject and substance by the sheer constraints of grammar. The paradox that announces itself here cannot be confined within a grammar of the subject (this "letting" is not willed or wielded by a subject) or within the phenomenological paradigm of intentional experience (this "letting lie" would not be an invariant structural feature of relationships to objects as they appear to consciousness). Indeed, a *willingness* to renounce action is itself an action, counteracting the very selflessness and inaction that the act of renunciation is supposed to embody, just as willfully enacting a renunciation initiates an action that only amplifies the very activeness that it is meant to deny. To choose not to do anything is still to *do* something in the same way that the decision to bring about nothing is still to have brought something —this "no-thing"— about. In these terms, the will of a liberal individual, an inherently choice-wielding agent would remain secure, deflecting the precise paradox that remains to be examined and which the fictions of this study present: the redundant gesture of giving up that which was already given up.[203]

This scenario, continually replayed in the fictions of this study, finds its more modern reformulation in a philosophical fragment from Simone Weil, wherein a lover writes to a beloved being, a being whose reply can only but be extraneous because his love is never to be experienced: "A beloved being who disappoints. I have written to him. Impossible that he should not reply [with] what I have said to myself in his name."[204] Kindred to the paradoxical plaint with which this chapter began, in the words of this excerpt anything the beloved being ("un être aimé") might say can never truly disappoint in reply, for his antiphon, his response,

was never needed in the first place. The lover —which one might be tempted to call "she" though the fragment leaves the speaker's gender unidentified— does not anticipate any response not already underwritten by what she has anticipated of him under the aegis of her own address; she exempts him from response by expecting nothing of him, or at least nothing he could give that wasn't already said in her name, and so nothing of his at all. She thus acquits the beloved being from having to respond by the very fruitlessness of her asking, as her supplication beckons for a rejoinder it does not actually expect and thus never fully sought. Hers is an impossible exigency, one continually reprised in these fictions: to ask someone to give what they cannot, namely to give nothing of themselves, to give anything but themselves, as a mark of their love.[205]

But what sort of relationship, if it is one, would be formed by its very forfeiture? Would this mean that it is simply "unreal" or would this complicate the very relation between the real and the phantasmatic? Are some rapports "real" by virtue of their very insubstantiality and incompletion, "real" insofar as they are not yet, or will never be, "real"? In other words, can nonpossessive relations toward another take the attenuated form of allowing him no concrete part or participation in a relationship that, nonetheless, involves only him? And instead of reaching intimacy by showing and telling someone they are loved, can intimacy be borne by the (in)experience of almost never showing and telling this at all? Hypothetical and subjunctive exclamations of the sort, "Would that it were possible that he might love me!" —as the heroine of Marie-Algaé Cubières' *Marguerite Aimond* (1822) proclaims— would seem to evoke the ephemeral, phantasmal imagining of a love that draws another into its orbit though without cloistering this other in a definitive romance.[206] Suspended between fantasy and fruition as such proclamations are, phrases like those of Cubières' heroine conjure up an imaginative possibility that, by virtue of its insubstantiality, leaves the beloved at once unfettered of the responsibility to (re)act *and* inescapably addressed by, and bound to, an other that cannot be willed away. As a prospect that certainly involves another, even if this other is only imagined, this love nevertheless trembles as no more than a ghostly, already fading spectrality. But what

experience is this, if it is one, that requires neither the direct contact nor the explicit avowal of those involved, as if despite themselves, in a rapport they can neither accept nor abrogate because seemingly unclaimable or uncountable by any party?

A concise example of such a seemingly agentless attitude and rapport figures at the end of the aforementioned eighteenth-century novelette *Les Prétendus*. There one of the protagonists, Valmont, settles with leaving his passion for Lucinde, his beloved, as no more than a close shave that barely grazed him but which nevertheless left him almost virginally untouched, an amorous possibility he refrains from fulfilling but which he does not regret losing. Letting his love remain no more than an evaporated memory of an affection he will never act upon, Valmont's fruitless adulation is sustained by his doing nothing more than withdrawing a love that he was never even to able to give: "His desires were limited [*se bornaient*] to wishing her with ardor a felicity that it was not in his power to give to her."[207] Valmont has not missed his coup or suppressed his desire because, it would seem, he never had to do anything about that desire in the first place. He simply gives up, or is given up to, the love he cannot give and never could, the one "not in his power to give," by allowing his beloved to enjoy a felicity from which he will be nearly absent. Because Lucinde does not ultimately return his passion, and because her happiness can never involve an ardor he could inspire, Valmont can only ply as a token of his adoration an abdication of his amorous pretensions and an abstention from gallant action. He can only offer, in other words, to do what he has already been doing —which is nothing at all— and thus can only give back to Lucinde that which she never even had.[208] Contented with a love not his to give, Valmont finds his desire precisely where it never was and will never be, for if what he cannot procure is all that he could ever supply —that is, his love— then his selfless well-wishing for the happiness of his beloved amounts to giving no more than he was ever capable of giving: namely, nothing.[209] Giving into his desires does not only mean giving them up but, it would seem, giving nothing in the least that he could or would have.[210] By giving up that which was never his to give, does

Valmont vouchsafe this "not-giving" —his not being there and his not loving—as a testament of his affections? Can he give, in other words, everything but himself, and so nothing of his at all?

This donation of a love that is unable to be given —a giving up of that which was already given up— might be said to constitute an act of love insofar as it can only give this very willingness not to give as a mark of affection, can only grant as a gift the very act of renouncing the possibility of giving anything. It gives by giving nothing, just as Valmont has found his desires by doing nothing about them. Grammar already strains here, for this is not an act of giving orchestrated by a volitional subject or effected by a masterful agent. As the ambiguous reflexive verb *se borner* ("to limit, to limit itself, to be limited") presages, this donation flirts with transitivity and intransitivity, with activity ("limited themselves") and passivity ("were limited"). Regardless of either translation, however, in both cases Valmont's desires are never in his possession, since they limit themselves or are simply limited irrespective of his participation and agential action. Valmont's inaction, in short, is neither simply unethical nor unloving, not sublimated nor sublated, because it evades concrete instantiation or material realization in self-presence. Put another way, it would seem that the "subject" can no longer serve as the operative seat of "action," its originator and actor, for "giving" in to one's love —even giving it up or giving it away— is not something that can be given since it was never owned by a subject at all. How to give that which was already given up, or given over, to that which exceeds the self, that which was never owned and, more importantly, never one's own? A paradox captured in the Comtesse de Fontaines' *Histoire de la Comtesse de Savoye* (1726) who renounces her love as an act of love: "It is in refusing myself to you that I want to prove to you that I love you more than I have ever loved you."[211]

Is the apparent passivity of character, anemia of action, and chasteness of experience betimes depicted in these romances not merely reducible to the figures of immaterial love familiar to contemporary readers —whether it be the neo-platonic ideal of amour, the medieval courtly conception of *l'amour de loin*, or the German romantic trope of the bodiless "beautiful soul"— even if to a good degree informed by

them?[212] If in fictions of romance lovers seem sustained by the very futility of their enterprise and by the distance that separates them from one another —rather than by the concrete fruition of their desire—might this be because this paradoxical intimacy by inexperience —a regardless attention, a partnership in partition, a closeness by separation— is also implicated in the novel's speech: the one they speak and, as personages of a fiction, the one that speaks them? Or, less coyly phrased, are the demurrals of expression and enterprise in the personae of these fictions not merely thematic but also the effects of the idiom that tells their story—also the effects, in other words, of rhetoric? Is the trope of inexperience involved in an idiomatic style that, through the *délicatesse* of its linguistic feints, portrays amorous experiences by not fully taking responsibility for them —and this because of the equivocalities and elisions of its own modalities of story-telling? If there is a lightness of touch in narration, however, need this mean that these novels are simply bland and blank —too white to be read, too neutered to be gendered, too flat to be interpreted? Or do they raise questions about those contemporary modes and expectations of reading which would characterize them so? For if a text seems to be most silent on the subject of amorous interaction, most asexual in its style or neutral in tone, might it be implicitly forwarding a critique, not only of the tacit expectations regarding what amatory experience "is," but of the presumption that it is merely representable and identifiable by a familiar assortment of explicit themes or predicates?[213] In other words, if throughout the textual portrayals of these fictions amorous experience seems to be obviated rather than encountered, avoided rather than confronted, has it been negated altogether? Or is there a more complex figuration at work here, the theorization of an amorous experience which could only take its bearing, as it were, in the very exclusion of this experience itself? Might giving in to love be no different than giving it up? As these stories of disclaimed, unlived, or unembraced experience will have it, loving with abandon might sometimes mean abandoning love, but just as well this (non)act of giving away might always become, as it did for Valmont, a way of giving.

"I must endure without being able to"
renaissance

i. woundless

I want not to search for remedy to my torment
—Pernette du Guillet, *Rymes* (1545)

despair is the disconsolateness of not being able to die.
—Kierkegaard, *Sickness Unto Death* (1849)

"The pain that I must endure without being able to or wishing to resist it is violent and insuperable! It is a wound no medicine can close."[1] When the impassioned Guénélic speaks of an excruciation impossible to bear but which he cannot resist, his plaint can only find verse in a language of paradox. For what "pain" is this that, though overtaxing his power to endure it, does not thereby reprieve him entirely of its experience? Part of this lover's suffering, illogical as it may seem, comes not from the fact that he suffers but from the fact that he *cannot* suffer, that he is ineligible to suffer what he already did, that he has been *unable* to resist suffering what he always has. It is from this insufficiency to coincide with his experience and to be adequate to its occasion that Guénélic's malaise burgeons, for if he does suffer this amorous pang, it is only because he cannot, in fact, suffer it —even as he ostensibly does. But if Guénélic is incapable of acquiescing to his sufferance by his destitute powers, he is also incapable of repelling the ineluctability that he has already, though impossibly, capitulated to it. Whilst he has not been spared from his experience, defenseless as he is to repel it, he has nonetheless also been debarred from it in presence, since to undergo an experience one cannot —perforce one's lack of agility to do so— is to have undergone no experience at all, or at least no experience one would have the power to undergo. A lyric from Petrarch's *Rime sparse,* which Guénélic's rhetoric would seem to echo, seizes upon this contradiction: "here I am, alas, and wish I were elsewhere, and wish/I wished more, but wish no more, and, by being unable to do more, do all I can [*per più non poter fo quant' io posso*]."[2] Hence will Guénélic, like Petrarch's lyrical speaker, stand disenfranchised not only of indulging in his experience but also of avoiding having already done so, for while he cannot bear the aching ardor directed toward his beloved, the married woman Hélisenne, he also cannot forfend having already borne it.[3]

"I must endure without being able to"
renaissance

This arresting phrase of Guénélic, culled from the Renaissance romance *Les Angoysses douloureuses qui procèdent d'amours* (1538), concisely captures the aporia of amorous inexperience which this fiction depicts and which the following pages will explore.[4] For there would seem to be a certain ambiguity in Guénélic's phrase, according to which his pain is described both as that which can neither be resisted *nor* endured, an amorous pang furthermore qualified as an injury no medicine can palliate. In this paradoxical formulation, a wound never incurred is also one impossible to heal, precisely because there is no balm to mitigate a malady if it has never blighted its victim. Veritable *pharmakon,* cure and curse, what plagues Guénélic —and, as will be seen, his beloved Hélisenne as well— is that he can find no allay to the oppression which besets him, and this oppression is that, paradoxically, *he has no oppression he would ever be capable of experiencing in presence*.[5] The worst of the sufferings that crucify and crush him, it would appear, emerges not from the fact that he has self-presently experienced a grievance he is subsequently at pains to palliate, but that he cannot assuage a grievance he has not, indeed *cannot*, be exposed to because of his ineptitude to experience it in presence. If he could only be acquainted with his ill, if only he could encounter and withstand it, then the agony of having none might be mollified; if only there were a self that could be apt and able to bear this torment, if only it were he himself who could rise to the occasion, then it might be over. This woe and worry might find cessation if only it could accord with someone, anyone, who might be able to put up with its experience, someone who could live through it and thus be through with it.[6] Such is the aporia rehearsed throughout the novel and which the ensuant readings examine at length.

ii. unbearable loves

That which cannot happen, that which only happens in the sense that it could not happen
—Jacques Derrida, *Politiques de l'amitié*

experience [...] *is precisely that which has not taken place, happened, or come to pass*
—Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, *La poésie comme expérience*

The *Angoysses,* a romance depicting a wed woman's pursuit of an extramarital affair that remains largely unfulfilled, continues to puzzle modern readers with its ambiguous representations of love, most of

all because the heroine's liaison with her beloved is not conventionally or explicitly physical —a situation which not only complicates the question of the lovers' intimacy and chastity but also foreshadows the problematic of unconsummated passion thematized in seventeenth-century works such as Madame de Lafayette's *Princesse de Clèves* (1678).[7] Because this fiction has already received extensive scholarly attention, the intent of the present chapter is not to rehearse all the debates surrounding its enigmatic authorship[8] or its complicated place in the history of "sentimental literature" in France.[9] Its aim, rather, is to perlustrate this text's rhetorics of amorous suffering and to elaborate upon the philosophical implications it bears, for the *Angoysses* presents a paradoxical figuration of amorous experience as that which cannot be borne in presence or in person — an experience suffered without a self, an experience weathered without a subject, an experience that one does not possess oneself but that dispossesses the self altogether. This would be an unbearable experience, not in the sense that is first sustained and then subsequently cannot be handled but un-bearable in a more literal, paradoxical sense: an experience that cannot, nor could ever, be borne by a self-present subject and thus an experience that does not quite seem to be an experience at all.

In this sense, the reading that follows is not an historical study but a theoretical inquiry that seeks to read this early modern work alongside deconstructive and poststructuralist critiques of the subject in order to underscore its aporetic rhetoric and to ask whether it might contribute to ongoing critical conversations in continental philosophy concerning the limits of self-present experience. Although the *Angoysses* cannot be read without reference to its particular historical and cultural context, the concerns of this chapter remain for the most part rhetorical, figural, and philosophical: a rhetorical analysis of a particular figure of unbearable experience with the view of exploring the philosophical questions it raises. The purpose is to not to simply discount historical considerations but to focus on a *philosophical trope* of aporetic experience as it is portrayed in the novel —the impossibility of undergoing experience in full presence to oneself even as one undergoes it, the impossibility of experiencing experience in terms of

presence and possession—and to explore the possibility that the *Angoysses* might well anticipate, in its own way, the deconstruction of self-present and self-possessed "experience" usually attributed to the works of Nietzsche, Bataille, Blanchot, or Derrida.

It will not do, of course, to simply amalgamate the disparate historical vocabularies at issue here as though they were one and it would surely be fallacious to speak of "experience" as though it were a transhistorical and interchangeable concept native to both early modern and (post?)modern idioms. Nevertheless, it needs to be asked whether the paradoxical experience without a subject that the *Angoysses* portrays might find a provocative point of convergence with the critique of self-present experience generally credited to nineteenth- and twentieth-century continental philosophers. The point would not be to uncritically and unilaterally "apply" poststructuralist concepts to this early modern fiction, nor to suggest that the *Angoysses* offers a poststructuralist theory of experience *avant la lettre.* To argue for either is not only to presume that "poststructuralism" constitutes a monadic body of thought, rather than a provisional name given to a variety of views and practices, but also to subscribe to a questionable form of ahistorical "presentism," the belief that concepts can be applied to various historical instances with little concern for context, ironically making poststructuralism stand for the very models of unhistoricism and universalism that it has long been said to defy.

But if it is desirable to dodge that particular interpretative trap, it would also seem necessary not to treat this Renaissance romance as completely untouchable and unthinkable by contemporary perspectives, as if any attempt to reread this text in contemporary terms would inevitably fall prey to anachronism and ahistoricism. Or rather, if such attempts *do,* unavoidably, fall into a certain kind of anachronism and ahistoricism, at the very least it should be possible to interrogate the historical differences that hold early modern texts at a remove from contemporary perspectives while also, at one and the same time, rethinking that very remove and questioning its limits. Can early modern and contemporary perspectives be read as

inseparable but not identical, neither entirely distinct from one another nor completely reducible to each other? How might this Renaissance romance be opened up, and opened to a new interpretative future, when brought to bear on continental and critical theory? The introductory remarks that follow first unfold the philosophical problematic of unbearable experience through the Nietzschean critique of the grammar of the subject, after which this commentary will proceed to a rhetorical reading of select scenes of the *Angoysses*. At the close of this chapter, the paradoxical literary portrayal of experience in the *Angoysses* will briefly be brought into conversation with some poststructuralist and deconstructive writings, a contamination and clash of temporalities and perspectives, in order to see the ways in which they might illuminate one another—as well as bring each other into productive crisis. This final section will not be an exhaustive survey of contemporary debates in continental philosophy, an intellectual history, or a comparative analysis of early modern and recent philosophical theories of existence and experience but, more modestly, some speculative comments on the questions that arise when the rhetoric of the *Angoysses* is translated into the idioms of critical theory of the last few decades and read in the wake of poststructuralist and deconstructive interrogations of experience.

What is this paradoxical rhetoric of amorous experience in *Les Angoysses*? On the one hand, the heroine Hélisenne is presented at the start of the work as one who speaks "not as an ignorant woman, but as one who has experienced it all [*celle qui a le tout expérimenté*]," [10] and who consequently appears to forewarn her women readers ("*lisantes*") against the dangers of unbridled passion by offering her experiences as an cautionary example, if not a *remedium amoris*: "through the experience of my mad folly, [*par l'expérience de ma furieuse folie*] I can counsel you and offer you advice" (72). [11] On the other hand, however, Hélisenne and her beloved, Guénélic, decline immediate action and substantial interaction throughout the novel: they exchange a few looks and letters, but eventually expire without ever fully embracing. [12] If the lovers ultimately leave each other virtually unembraced and nearly inexperienced then the question left to pursue

is what, in fact, Hélisenne claims to have "experienced" or if, indeed, "experience" ought to be spoken of at all. To formulate the matter in this way is not to suggest, of course, that it would have been easy for a married woman in sixteenth-century France to act on adulterous desire and for a literary text to speak about and "represent" this transgression, especially to an audience of literate noblewomen. Nor is this to say that physical consummation is itself the apotheosis of amorous experience and that affective states are only actualized when they assume material embodiment in physical acts (a materialist argument), or that immaterial and insubstantial interaction always amounts to a conceit of platonic or courtly love, according to which bodiless, spiritual, and feather-light loves would be elevated and privileged over crudely "material" and erotic conquests (an idealist perspective).

The problem is somewhat more acute than a strictly materialist or idealist perspective would allow.[13] For while Hélisenne's adulterous attraction or affect might be considered to be a "transgressive"[14] experience in itself, and it certainly is in the eyes of her husband, the fact that her contact with her beloved remains only minimal and ineffectual problematizes the question of togetherness and amorous experience in the *Angoysses*, especially if the novel appears to underscore what does *not* happen between the lovers—what does *not* take place and what does *not* transpire— more than what does. Indeed, some might even say that the only thing that the lovers seem to share is the conspicuous failure to act upon their passion for, on the level of plot, precious little seems to happen materially between them.[15] In part one of the novel the young Hélisenne, wed to a nobleman at a young age, describes her conflicted amorous feelings for a youth she watches from her window. Falling in love, the two proceed to "exchange glances and words in semiprivate places, and in letters that the husband eventually finds."[16] Hélisenne's husband, when apprised of the affair, comes to physically assault her and burn her correspondence along with a document in which she has been noting her anguished feelings. Toward the end of the novel's first part Hélisenne is found sequestered in a castle, and she explains that the text of the *Angoysses* is a version of the document that her husband had

originally destroyed and she furthermore wishes that it might somehow reach Guénélic. In the second and third parts of the novel Guénélic, as envisioned by Hélisenne, finds and liberates her. Guénélic then describes his peregrinations, after which Hélisenne perishes from repentance, soon followed by Guénélic who, racked with chagrin, expires.

On the level of event and action, what Barthes would call the "proairetic code," the lover's physical involvement would seem abstemious and their contact only vicarious.[17] Their liaison does not appear to be conventionally physical or sensual, in the sense that the two never embrace, even if it remains necessary to ask whether glances and words carry material effects of their own and, if so, how they signify. From a literary-historical perspective this problematic physicality might not seem surprising at all: myriad Renaissance conceptions of amorous involvement equivocate on the question of physical contact and concrete consummation, such as the lyric debate concerning *parfaicte amitié*, according to which a relationship could be virtuously enjoyed without materially being acted upon (the controversial word *ami*, a term also used by Hélisenne to describe her beloved, markedly carries this ambiguity in referring to both amity and amour, friend and lover).[18] One could further argue that the seeming uneventfulness at the level of the plot in the *Angoysses* is countered by the tumultuous tones of the novel's characters (even if the narrative does not emphasize physically realized actions, it nonetheless depicts the momentous and eventful changes in the emotional states of its protagonists) and that longing, watching, and waiting are actions in and of themselves (even if little materializes, the characters perform a lot of work). And there is reason to agree with certain points of these claims: surely the medieval allegories and early modern idioms of love from which the *Angoysses* draws are complex constellations of terms with flexible and fluid meanings, a discursive matrix where classical and medieval notions of *caritas, fin'amor, eros, agape*, and *philia* intermix with courtly, neo-platonic, Arthurian, and Christian understandings of amorous interaction, all of which complicates the boundaries between material and ideal modes of loving.[19] Surely affective turmoil and

tumult is accorded more focus in the romance than the type of heroic action that might be found in the epic; and surely waiting, watching, or longing are not merely negations of action.

At the same time, however, there are certain premises implicit in these claims that give pause. In particular, it needs to be asked whether affective experience and physical actions are commensurately eventful when represented in language, whether their realization as events is knowable and identifiable — indeed, whether they ought to be evaluated only in terms of their eventfulness or eventuation— or whether these very assumptions should give way to an alternative account of the limits of narrative when addressing the *Angoysses.*[20] Why presume that a text focusing on emotional experience can only be modeled after narratological categories of action and fruition —rather than, for example, suspension or digression? Even if longing and waiting might be considered actions in and of themselves, are they nonetheless forms of doing that defer action or lie in wait for action, "non-acting actions" as philosopher Simone Weil would say, and thus not actions in any usual sense of the term?[21] If it is important to refuse to assume that a narrative which fails to recount physical acts is simply plotless, is it equally crucial to question the presupposition that plot and proairetic action are the only measures by which narrative ought to be judged? Why should narrative be evaluated solely by means of what "happens"? "Is it possible to say the event," as Derrida asks?[22] What defines an event or a happening, by what criteria and according to what assumptions? Furthermore, what kinds of narratives are foreclosed or excluded by the presupposition that narratives can only be accounted for by consequential events?

What remains especially problematic is the presumption according to which both narrative *experience* and narrative *action* would be defined solely in terms of events, that is, in terms of *what happens.* For to conclude that narrative ought only to be measured by its events and its outcomes—an Aristotelian conceit if there ever was one— would be to miss the challenge that the *Angoysses* presents: the depiction of lovers that seem to have no experience of one another or, if they do, it remains for the most part fictional,

not only because their story takes place in a fiction but because to a large degree, within the narrative diegesis itself, their story takes place *as* fiction.[23] If a relationship is in large part imagined, conjectured, fantasized, or missed, rather than instantiated and consummated in physical acts, is it therefore unreal or opposed to the real, or might the very ambiguity lie in the tension chiastically holding the real and the fictional at once together and apart, at once inseparable from and irreducible to one another? This is a crucial question to consider in the context of the *Angoysses'* paradoxical idiom, particularly because both plot progression and narrative action would seem to be continually thwarted without thereby denying narrative altogether.

Consider that, one the one hand, Hélisenne's love affair, if it is one, cannot simply be qualified an "amorous experience," insofar as it is largely left without literal requital and untouched by the fruit of consequence within the narrative, left chaste of action and empty-handed of deserts. On the other hand, however, it cannot be considered to have completely eluded the bounds of experience either, for even if the lover's relationship proves ultimately impossible to sustain and realize within the narrative of the novel the fact that there is a narrative called the *Angoysses* depicting that impossibility intimates that narrative experience has not been eradicated altogether. That is, even if nearly nought comes to pass between the lovers in the story, there nonetheless remains *this* story, their story, describing all that has not happened, and so even though experience might well be frustrated within the terms of the narrative, we must still contend with fact that there remains *this* narrative which details that frustration.

In other words, to describe what happens in the *Angoysses* —or, rather, what doesn't— solely in terms of its eventfulness or noneventfulness would be to miss the point. For if experience cannot be categorically affirmed or negated when reading this narrative of these frustrated lovers then the question of experience endures as just that, a question: Can theirs be called an experience? If it is one, it would have to be so indistinguishable from its non-happening and non-being that it would not have much to it of an

experience at all —at least not as this concept-metaphor is most commonly understood, namely, a kind of knowledge or consciousness gained from consequential action and experimentation in the light of past events.[24] Perhaps there is no cause for deciding one way or the other —indeed, perhaps there is no *way* of deciding one way or the other— because the *Angoysses* would seem to suggest that Hélisenne and Guénélic paradoxically *experience love in spite of experience*, which is different from saying that they simply deny experience, or that they merely experience denial, in that the very opposition between denial and affirmation itself falls into question: in this fiction amorous involvement, contoured and conditioned in language by the ways in which it resists the bounds of "experience," becomes indistinguishable, in the last instance, from its very inexperience.

Hélisenne says as much when, in a pithy phrase, she coins the paradox of amorous experience that constitutes the focus of this chapter. Her passion, she says, is an "unbearable burden of love [*insupportable charge d'amour*]" (79), and it is unbearable not simply because she suffers a passion that subjectively seems insufferable in its experience, like a bodily injury that could be felt or a tangible hurt that could be sustained.[25] *A contrario,* her love would seem unbearable in the sense that it cannot be borne by experience at all, unbearable because it cannot be experienced in person or in presence. In the novel, her love is depicted as quite literally un-bearable, incapable of being borne by a subject or a self; unbearable not only because it cannot be willfully undertaken in person but also because no subject could ever coincide with its occasion in presence at all: a suffering caused by the inability to experience suffering, a torment which is unendurable because if it could actually be endured, its insupportability might be lessened and its anguish alleviated.[26] If she could only encounter and withstand her passion, if she could only live through it and thus be through with it, then her torment might cease.[27] But what plagues Hélisenne is that the torment besetting her cannot, in fact, be experienced by her self or by her will, what Guénélic will call his "wound

no medicine can close," precisely because there is no balm to mitigate a malady if it has never fully blighted its victim, precisely because a wound never incurred is also one impossible to heal (95).

Such would be an "unbearable" experience of love, insufferable not only in the sense that it causes intolerable suffering, but also in the counterintuitive sense that it quite literally cannot be suffered by a subject; a suffering that comes, paradoxically, from an inability to suffer in presence, a suffering that cannot be experienced by a self or suffered as a subject. Or, phrased differently, this predicament might be described as an amorous experience contoured by the ways in which it is *not* or *not yet* experienced, and thus neither the conceptual opposite to experience nor its simple negation but, rather, an experience that does not quite become itself or come into its "own" (and thus, *stricto sensu,* one that cannot be "owned" at all).[28] Lest these arguments move too hastily, however, it should be remembered that amorous aporia and antithesis —like the image of the lover burning in ice and freezing in fire— was a popular ploy of Petrarchan poetics, much in vogue in the Renaissance,[29] and that this rhetoric of tortured suffering over love is not only inherited from diverse medieval writers like Petrarch, Dante, Boccaccio, and Heloise, but also a reprisal of the early modern medical trope of amorous melancholy or "lovesickness," itself enmired in a figural language of contradiction and confusion.[30] And perhaps more crucial still, this paradoxical portrait of suffering without a subject has something to do with the fact that early modern and pre-cartesian conceits of experience (like those of Montaigne) did not presuppose a substantial subject, psychological ego, or phenomenological cogito bearing a coherent psychic interiority, in spite of a prevailing interest in humanism and a developing genre of autobiographical confession.[31]

Consider the argument that early modern conceits of "experience" involved the discursive authority of "common sense," as Agamben avers in *Infancy and History*—Montaigne mentions, for example, that a physician must undergo every illness he seeks to treat— while science on the other hand included the "intellect" of the *subjectum* in its purview In Agamben's view, "experience" would seem to have less to do

with epistemology (what is knowable or known), still less with ontology (what is or what is predicated) than with *authority,* "the power of words and narration."[32] This authority reposes, oddly, on its very uncertainty, in that experience, according to Montaigne, differs from the domain of science with its quantification of knowledge and its displacement of experience from that of an individual to the impersonal means and measures of experiment (as in Francis Bacon's condemnation of "mere experience" in contrast to "experiment," the deduction of scientific axioms from sensory impressions). These terms cannot be confounded or compounded with modern notions of psychology or phenomenology that posit a substantial subject bearing a private, psychic interiority. Indeed, the very conceit of the subject is itself a modern phenomenon referring, variously, to a form of judgment (in relation to a predicate), a grammatical component of a sentence (in reference to a verb), or a subjective "I" counterposed to the world of objects it confronts (in response to which it acts).[33] Complicit with the elaboration of this concept is the intersecting presuppositions of the grammar of the subject and the metaphysics of substance according to which grammatical subjects and predicates are fallaciously said to correspond to a prior or preexisting ontological realm of substantives and attributes. In the words of Derrida: "How can we get away from this contract between the grammar of the subject or substantive and the ontology of substance or subject?"[34]

It could surely be argued, then, that the early modern and pre-cartesian formulation of experience does not appear to have theorized a substantial subject of experience as a repository of consciousness —that is, a subject in whom a coherent psyche dwells— and that even the Cartesian subject might conceivably be construed as less a substance-based subject than as a linguistic effect, a subject mobilized in terms of its predicates that has no substantial bearing beyond its discursive formulation as *cogito ergo sum,* as Nietzsche once famously claimed: "'There is thinking: therefore there is something that thinks': this is the upshot of all Descartes' argumentation. But that means positing as 'true *a priori*' our belief in the concept of substance—that when there is thought there has to be something 'that thinks' is simply a formulation of our

grammatical custom that adds a doer to every deed."[35] In contrast, twentieth-century phenomenology in its Husserlian instantiation would seem to have presupposed a transcendental ego operative "behind" and beyond its various acts of intentionality. Husserlian phenomenology, in its purported attempts to fuse subjective acts and the objective propositions of logic, would seem to have understood experience both as the phenomenon upon which consciousness acts (the appearance of things and how they appear as intentional objects, as well as their meaning in terms in experience") and as the subjective, intentional act through which experience is lived and performed in first-person perspective.[36] For this and other reasons, it would make little sense to tether a self-identical subject to experience in its early modern modes.[37]

But while this last is an historical point rightly insisted upon by Foucault, Agamben, Jean-Luc Marion, and others, perhaps there is also, in addition to this historical dimension, a distinctive dismantling of experience and the metaphysics of the subject in the *Angoysses* that warrants further philosophical scrutiny. Indeed, a part of the task here will be to pursue how, in the course of the *Angoysses*, "experience" is itself suspended of its usual ontological and existential predicates, suspended of those tacit presuppositions that we have come to associate with this most unruly concept-metaphor. What are these "usual predicates" and "tacit presuppositions"? The Latinate etymologies of "experience" —*experientia*— betoken an "emerging forth" (*ex*) from experiment or trail (*expereri;* "to attempt"), with the latter sharing a common radical with pitfall and peril (*periculum*; "danger").[38] In a sense, experience would seem to be conceived as a perilous traversal at the outcome of which knowledge from the experiment is gained as proof of the traversal's trajectory, a formulation which links "'trial and test'" with danger, describing in a single stroke both proof and pitfall, encounter and experiment. As some historical accounts contend, experience becomes a key concept in early modern and Enlightenment Europe where experiments in thought, science, and writing take on central importance in intellectual discourse —to this day, "expérience" in French connotes both experiment and experience— before coming to signify a type of self-consciousness or awareness in the

twentieth century.[39] Experience entertains an especially complicated relationship to reason in early modern idioms. In Montaigne's "Of Experience," for example, it is said that experience is used when reason is found wanting at the same time that no precise definition of what experience "is" is ever furnished. Instead lengthy descriptions of the "experience" of disease, defecation, and medicinal treatments, in so doing offering up experience less as a stable concept than as a figuration whose variable instantiations defy unified categorization and whose volatile effects vacillate between physicality and ideality.[40] (Not to mention that definitions of experience become all the more complicated when considering *amorous* experience, for which there are various differentiations in early modern idioms— amongst which *eros, agape*, *philia*— and whose neoplatonic connotations blur the border between material and ideal modalities of interaction.)

Some historicist accounts suggest that throughout the discontinuous linguistic histories and translations of this figure —perhaps itself always and only given in translation— "experience" has been championed in some quarters and come under contest in others.[41] From the Greeks to Montaigne and Bacon, from the quarrels between the empiricists and the idealists to Kant's critical philosophy, from the theories of religious experience in Schleiermacher, James, Otto, and Buber to Marxism, from the American pragmatism epitomized in Rorty and Dewey to the philosophies of Benjamin and Adorno, from Bataille's "inner experience" to Foucault's "experience-book" and Lyotard's "assassination of experience," experience is said to have appeared under various guises in disparate writings from the origins of philosophy to the present; it returns in mystical and religious doctrines; it recurs in aesthetic and political discourses—and it persists still. And yet, at the same time, is it not misleading to speak of experience in this universalizing way, as though it were a transhistorical theme or a transcendental signified, especially if experience is never received apart from a particular cultural idiom or medium that frames how it is (mis)represented and (mis)recognized, not simply delivered through language but constituted by it? Can there be no one experience because there is no one language in which experience might be given? Has not experience

variously been taken to be internal and external, individual and collective, reflective and unreflective, subjective and objective, that which one does and that which one has, that which one actively undertakes and that which passively undergoes? In other words, is it that experience cannot be taken for granted as an universal "given" if it is inevitably given in, if not *as*, a culturally context-dependent "text"?[42] Would this be another way of saying that "experience" is never quite given at all, or at least never given *as such*, precisely because bound up in a particular language whose referential and representational unreliability puts into question the very idea of givenness itself? Is "experience" not transparently delivered through the language that partially figures it, nor simply transposed and easily transferred from one language to another, precisely because caught up in the figurality and metaphoricity of that language's idiom?

Such queries echo one of Nietzsche's points in the *Genealogy of Morals,* according to which the ruses of the rules of grammar —which convince the unsuspecting that the linguistic structures of subject and predicate mimetically represent a prior ontological reality— should never be underestimated: "I do not inquire into the purpose of knowledge: it emerged by accident, that is, not according ot any rational design. As the extension or the rigidification of a manner of thinking and acting that was necessary in certain instances…Two characteristics necessary for different purposes—*truthfulness*—and *metaphor*—produced the inclination for truth…*The human being became a knowing being by accident,* by means of the unintentional combination of two qualities [namely, metonymy]."[43] In Nietzsche's account, metaphors and metonymies have petrified gradually into ideational notions —"Time, space, and causality are only epistemological *metaphors* with which we explain things"—[44] an ossification of figures into conceptual form that has subsequently been concealed and forgotten, just as the received grammar of the subject has been mistaken for a substance metaphysics: linguistic conventions (subject and predicate) are erroneously thought to mirror what is presumed to be a corresponding and preexisting ontological order (substance and attribute):[45]

> And just exactly as the people separate the lightning from its flash, and interpret the latter as a thing done [*Tun*], as the working [*Wirkung*] of a subject which is called lightning, so also does the popular morality separate strength from the expression of strength, as though behind the strong man there existed some indifferent neutral *substratum,* which enjoyed a *caprice and option* as to whether or not it should express strength. But there is no such *substratum,* there is no 'being' behind doing, working, becoming; the 'doer is a mere appanage to the action. The action is everything. In point of fact, the people duplicate the doing, when they make the lightning lighten, that is a 'doing-doing': they make the same phenomenon first a cause, and then, secondly the effect of that cause…Our whole science is still, in spite of all its coldness, of all its freedom from passion, a dupe of the tricks of language, and has never succeeded in getting rid of that superstitious changeling the 'subject' (the atom, to give another instance, is such a changeling, just as the Kantian 'Thing-in-itself')…This kind of [weak] man finds the belief in a natural free-choosing 'subject' *necessary* from an instinct of self-preservation, of self-assertion, in which every lie is fain to sanctify itself. The subject (or, to use popular language, the soul) has perhaps proved itself the best dogma in the world simply because it rendered possible to the horde of mortal, weak, and oppressed individuals of every kind, that most sublime specimen of self-deception, the interpretation of weakness as freedom, of being this, or being that, as *merit*.[46]

The restrictions of grammar, Nietzsche warns, often succeed in fobbing off grammatical fictions as conceptual realities: because predicates take subjects, the popular mind comes to believe in a metaphysical foundation, a substratum-subject, that exists behind and orchestrates actions. A present participle denominating an action —"lightening"— is falsely substantialized into a noun —"lightning"— signifying that which stands behind and causes action. There is the act of lightening and then, by a sleight of grammar, there will have always been a substantial subject which brought about this act, namely lightning. Applying this critique to the philosophical grammars of experience yields the following question: Has not the concept of experience also succumbed to a similar metaphysics of substance? Remember that in the received grammar by means of which talk of "experience" is frequently framed, a grammar that places a subject at the origin and end of experience, experience is spoken of *as if* it were a substantive attribute one might possess ("to *have* [an] experience"), an identitarian trait which marks who one is ("to *be* experienced"), an act or event in the aftermath of which knowledge is derived ("to *experience* something") and, in some contexts, the sophistication which comes from sundry sexual encounters ("to be *experienced*" can mean "to be *sexually* experienced").[47] As was seen earlier, these banal formulations already suggest the degree to which unspoken presumptions regarding ontology, identity, and epistemology are ingrained in the very grammar by means of which "experience" is delineated: experience is considered to be "what" one has, "who" one is, "how" one

knows, and even that which sires the "one" who has experience or who experiences; it is taken to be both process and product, event and outcome, subject and attribute, sensation and reflection.

However, if Nietzsche argues that no philosophical concept can be segregated from the figural language through which it is delivered and that, furthermore, grammatical fictions are often confused with conceptual truths, then experience is not given outside the purview of language (at the same time that it is not simply miscible with or reducible to it either). Following Nietzsche's mode of questioning, it becomes necessary to ask whether the conceptual predicates of "being" (experienced) and "having" (experience) are descriptive and analytic or whether they are, rather, the figural effects of the grammar in which "experience" is partially constructed. Does language come after experience, arriving after the fact in order to give linguistic expression to a prior event, or is language itself formative of experience such that language and experience remain inescapably intermeshed, the one never without the other? To what extent might the very notion of prelinguistic experience be no more than a discursive fiction produced by the very apparatus of grammar that is thought to follow after it? Might the conceit of a prediscursive experience that language would simply represent and reflect turn out to be a fiction retrospectively posited by language itself?

In order to get a sense of how the unbearable experience offered in *Angoysses* might be situated in relation to these questions, it is important to first attend to some of the paradoxical temporal and grammatical dimensions already at work in the received grammar of the subject that frames experience, paradoxes that Nietzsche's genealogical account of language offers up for consideration: according to a commonsensical understanding of experience, one presumably undergoes and collects many experiences through iterative practices or acts (experiences) such that one subsequently becomes experienced in that which one performs and, finally, has "experience."[48] A plurality of different experiences that are repeated over time come to cohere through the conjunction of successive moments into a monolith called experience

which becomes the identity of a subject, now considered an "experienced" being: I have many experiences (of "something") before I become experienced at it and consequently have the experience of it. Experience would thus seem to be defined in terms of a subject who appropriates its experiences, making them into experience proper and culminating in a self defined by the experience it has and the experience it is.[49] Regardless of whether experience is that which one undertakes by will or that which one undergoes without willing at all, in this account the experiences that come our way, whether with or without our knowing, make up who we are because, in possessing experience, we become self-possessed, as it were, bearers of a certain kind of knowledge and consciousness of what has happened to us.

Several problems emerge, however, with this schema upon closer scrutiny —not least of all because it is unclear whether experience culminates in a coherent self or whether there are experiences that undo or dispossess this very self (like anguish, love, or, in the case of the *Angoysses,* anguished love) and because the social dimensions of experience are occluded in this formulation (a Wittgensteinian argument might point out that whether or not I might perceive myself as experienced does not mean that others will: despite my self-proclaimed experience, some might always disagree with my self-presentation and deem me to be thoroughly inexperienced). And what of experience's etymological relationship with danger and pitfall? Is experience only defined in terms of what has been lived through and what is known in its aftermath or can there be experiences that one cannot survive, experiences that no one could undergo and emerge intact? A more trenchant bind emerges when attempting to describe the temporality by which one becomes experienced, for if the commonsensical account of subject formation must presume that the "one" who comes to acquire experience did not begin with experience at the start —but had to undergo experiences and garner them to eventually become experienced— then how is this "one" to be imagined prior to the experiences it will gain if this "one" only comes to be defined by the experiences it has gained? How to speak of this fictitious time "before" one had experience, a time before a subject comes to be, if this

"one" is only defined in terms of the subsequent experiences that will make up who it is? If we are always already experienced, made of the experiences that we are and that we have, how do we come to acquire the experience that in a sense we already are?

To speak of someone who is inexperienced is to speak of a subject hat has not yet arrived on the scene; there is talk of experience but with no identifiable subject. When will this subject arrive, if it ever does? If experience has long been metaphysically and phenomenologically tied to the ipseity of the subject and subjectivity—where, strictly speaking, there is no "one" who is not made up of experiences, no "one" who has not already undergone some sort of experience— then the very attempt to envisage a subject-to-be who is waiting to procure experience or who exists before its experience has been gained leads to an impasse: how can there be a subject who waits to gain experience, one who does not have it yet and is thus not yet a subject, if the subject has always been defined in terms of the experiences which it has or which it is? The Deleuzian postulation of "pre-individual intensities" and "impersonal singularities," a pre- or para-subjective set of forces and individualities that would precede all subject/object duality,[50] or the psychoanalytic claim, filtered through Kristeva, that there would be a precultural array of "semiotic" libidinal drives which must be repressed and regimented in order for the subject-in-process to become a subject, do not settle the matter, for both seem to posit a precultural, nondialectical field of multiplicities, ironically reifying multiplicity as a presumed precondition prior to the cultural constitution of the subject and implicitly casting that which is supposed to precede ontology —intensities, singularities, drives— in ontological terms. While a Deleuzian position would surely set itself against a psychoanalytic one, it seems that both encounter a similar quandary when attempting to posit a presocial and prelinguistic set of multiplicities: for how are these multiplicities, preexisting language and defying representation, to be verified if they are only known through their disruptions to representation and effects in language? To posit a set of pre-subjective multiplicities, whether it be in the service of overthrowing the subject or theorizing a

"subject-in-process," that is, to posit a gestating state of the pre-subject prior to its arrival on the scene, does not resolve this impasse but, indeed, only induces further problems.

While the commonsensical account of experience speaks of a subject that comes *before* experience (I do not begin with experience but come to gain it) and follows *after* experience (I come into being by virtue of the experiences I gain), at the same time that this subject stands *behind* experience (as I undergo many experiences or become experienced I, the experiencing self, "am" still there all along and throughout in the background), it is difficult to presuppose a self that would stand apart from, behind, or prior to experience if that self is simultaneously said to be no more than the experiences that it will have attained and which will make it who it is. Unless, of course, there were no ready-made or pre-constituted subject prior to experience, nor one who stood apart from it, but one only retroactively and belated ascribed to it, in which case the entire apparatus upon which the commonsensical understanding of experience relies would founder.

This instructive impasse suggests the degree to which thinking about experience is moored in a metaphysics of the subject, even if the subject which postures as the origin and end of experience might well turn out to be a fiction only belatedly affixed to experience. Grammar misleads here, as Nietzsche warned it would, for the attempt to imagine a time before a subject fully comes to "be" experienced—and thus before a subject comes to be at all—still requires the use of the grammatical category of the subject in the very narrative seeking to account for that time prior to a subject's entry into the scene. The effort to speak of a process of acquiring experience that does not begin with a ready-made subject —but that nonetheless is said to culminate in the formation of one— within a grammar that always takes a grammatical subject by requirements of syntax— even as it attempts to give an account of a state of affairs that is performed by no subject— is to be inescapably caught within a kind of aporia. For the syntax of subject and predicate, by dint of custom and constraint, stays lodged in a grammar of the subject, a grammar that privileges an acting

"I" who would bring about predicative action and who would stand "behind" the predicative deed it initiates. The explanation that seeks to narrate how a subject comes to be instituted through experience, a process that is governed by no discernable subject but which claims to result in one, must thus take on a grammar of the subject from the start, even if it is this very subject which remains to be explained; the subject which is to be described is already presupposed in the function (fiction?) of the grammatical subject which must be used to compose the description in the first place. It remains nearly inconceivable to put a subject into question without reinvoking, even in spectral form, the very subject that was to be put into question when narrating this predicament.

This particular temporal and grammatical bind reemerges with a vengeance in the *Angoysses,* precisely because this grammar of the subject strains in trying to depict the aporia of experience that the novel fashions: a suffering with no "I" who could bear it in presence or survive in its wake. For to speak of an amorous experience circumscribed by the ways it cannot be experienced by a subject, as Hélisenne does, is to push the limits of received grammar and predicative syntax, most especially the ontological and existential pretensions of the copula to declare what "is" or what exists. [51] The constraints of the grammar of the subject, what Nietzsche once termed the "seduction of grammar," will become an insistent problem when addressing the aporetic rhetoric rehearsed in the *Angoysses*, a rhetoric which resists the very grammar through which it is issued, if not challenges the propositional form of subject and predicate itself, precisely because experience is figured without a subject and unyoked of the predicates commonly associated with it. When Hélisenne describes the throes of her deadly passion, for example, the phrase she offers is grounded in no subject that would explain its cause: "And thus (because of the future hope of seeing my beloved) drove cold fear away from me, which is why I was inflamed by still more ardent desires for death [*Et donc (pour la future espérance de la vue du mien ami) chassa de moi la froide peur, parquoi je fus enflambée de plus ardents désirs à la mort*]" (31; translation modified). Who or what drives fear away from the narrator here, if no

subject in the syntax is specified? This challenge to the grammar of the subject in the *Angoysses* ought not to be construed too literally, of course, since early modern French grammar, reprising medieval diction, often elides the grammatical subject from many of its proclamations even as this subject is implied via context. The critical point comes, rather, from the predicament of reading that follows from the challenge to the representation of experience that the text provides, one which, as Hélisenne herself will say, portrays experience as a "literary exercise," an act, for which there was no originating subject, only one retroactively and belatedly imputed to it, in which case the grammar of the subject governing subjective experience collapses. And this not only raises larger philosophical questions regarding the inescapable intertwining of experience and language but also suggests that the *Angoysses* might well challenge and reshape conventional construals of the notion of experience itself by means of the paradoxical parlance it develops.

With these introductory comments in place, it is now time to turn with more sustained attention to this literary text. In sketching the various "unbearabilities" of amorous experience in the *Angoysses,* the subsequent parts of this chapter will examine those scenes in the novel where the protagonists find their love unbearable to experience, a love that they can neither *actively accept nor abandon, neither willfully retain nor renounce*, precisely because it cannot be undertaken in person or in presence. Hélisenne's adulterous love, because precluded by social mores and her husband's watchful eye, is described as so estranged from the realm of actuality that the possibility of either voluntarily receiving or rejecting her beloved never becomes realizable (in order to take up or set aside an amorous possibility it must first be recognized as possible, whereas Hélisenne's love never enters that domain of possibility because foreclosed from the start). At the same time, her love is not strictly ideal or immaterial, for the suffering she endures is also bodily (she loses sleep, feels fever, and endures physical injury from her husband). Much in the same way that the word "pain" can refer to both mental and physical afflictions, the one neither separable from nor definable without the other, the "anguishes" in the novel's title lends itself to both these valences.

But it is not just that Hélisenne's experience merely oscillates between mental and material states of anguish that she could feel but, more radically, the anguish of her love comes from not being able to experience the anguish of her love; the unbearable burden of her love is that she cannot, in fact, come to bear it, to experience it. She anguishes from being saved from anguish, suffers from being spared from suffering. Rather than achieving experience, Hélisenne's experience hangs in suspense or, as she says, "it would be better to be strangled than to be always hanging" (18), for nothing is more insufferable then being unable to either fulfill or forswear one's love, nothing more grievous than being indefinitely held, as Guénélic will say of Hélisenne, "in suspense [*en suspens*]" (73; translation modified). This is not so much an experience of suspense than a suspension of experience itself. Such an "experience," suspended of its ontological and referential predicates, might be called an experience without a self or, more radically construed, an experience without *itself*, an experience without experience even, for which there seems to be no event orchestrated by and culminating in a subject.[52] At the end of this selective reading of this romance it will be important to embroider further upon some of its broader philosophical implications.

iii. "non que par expérience je le sache"

What are our experiences then? They are more what we put into them than what they are of themselves. Or should we perhaps go so far as to say that they contain nothing? That to experience is to invent?
—Nietzsche, "Experience and Invention," *Daybreak* (1881)

At the foundation of well-founded beief lies belief that is not founded
—Wittgenstein, "On Certainty"

The *Angoysses* is a text for which the aforementioned paradox of unbearable experience takes particular precedence, all the more so when we consider that the status of authorial experience is itself explicitly under question in the novel.[53] Due to the shared pseudonym of authorial signature and fictional character the novel gives the sense that, like Marcel Proust's "Marcel" in *À la recherche du temps perdu,* Hélisenne's de Crenne's "Hélisenne" in the *Angoysses* is not the mere report of personal experience but an auto-allegorical, rhetorical depiction whose precise aim is to defy the simplistic representation of

autobiographical experience as such.[54] Still, some scholarly accounts, perhaps subscribing to a more traditional interpretation, choose to caricature the *Angoysses* as referential experience rather than rhetorical exploit, in doing so epitomizing an attitude all too often expressed in regard to the novel: "Hélisenne clearly takes her inspiration from Boccaccio's *Fiammetta* [...] But *Fiammetta* was an invention of Boccaccio whereas Hélisenne is recalling what she has experienced [*vécu*]."[55] While Giovanni Boccaccio's medieval novel *Elegia di Madonna Fiammetta* (1343-5) is applauded for its literary ingenuity, the *Angoysses,* said to draw from this historically prior Italian narrative, is valued only as the univocal testimony of self-present experience. This sexist presumption is one familiar to feminist critics; it is perhaps most aptly summarized as a prejudice exercised when reading rhetoric: "When men employ the rhetoric of self-torture, it is *read* as rhetoric," asseverates one feminist critique, "When women employ it, it is confession. Men are read rhetorically; women literally."[56] Whereas Boccaccio's oeuvre is garlanded for its linguistic feats, in other words, the *Angoysses* is evaluated only by the degree to which it is thought to faithfully reproduce unmediated experience; whereas one is interpreted rhetorically —"invented"—the other is taken literally—"based on personal memories."[57]

Even a cursory consideration of the novel's construction, however, would seem to give the lie to the supposition that the work is based solely on lived experience. For example, the second part of the romance is narrated by Hélisenne speaking *as* the voice of Guénélic and the third portion of the novel depicts Hélisenne's death before the work is even complete.[58] Indeed, narrative "experience" is not merely of questionable status in the *Angoysses*; it is also explicitly questioned in Hélisenne's later novels. In the epistolary fiction also attributed to Hélisenne de Crenne, *Epîtres familieres et invectives* (1539), the reprised character "Hélisenne" responds to the criticism that her earlier novel the *Angoysses* is the mere factual reportage of biographical experience. She writes to a character: "You believe, moreover, that such lasciviousness was experienced by my person [*en ma personne expérimentée*] [...] [N]ot because by experience I

know of this, but because in literary exercise I learned, that I will speak of it [*non que par expérience je le sache, mais comme en l'exercice littéraire j'ai compris, en parlerai*]."[59] If the *Angoysses* represented an illicit love affair this is not due to Hélisenne's first-hand experience but to a literary "exercise" —an act or doing— which allows for the portrayal of what was never experienced by her person.[60] To restore a subject to an experience devoid of one is the precise tendency against which Hélisenne argues: there is no subject to this literary doing of experience, she writes, no underlying person who has undergone the experiences described in the *Angoysses* and thus the biographical subject imputed to the novel's experience has falsely presupposed a doer behind the doing.

Such a claim dovetails with Nietzsche's infamous formulation that "there is no 'being' behind the doing, the acting, the becoming: 'the doer' is merely a fiction added to the doing,"[61] as well as his less canonical claim that "we do not comprehend a single causality [like time and space], but we have immediate experience of them. All suffering calls forth an action, every action calls forth suffering—this most universal feeling is already *metaphor*," according to which suffering, an action, first occurs, only after which a subject is presumed to be its subtending recipient all along.[62] Might suffering in the *Angoysses* be considered in similar fashion? If Nietzsche's catchphrase were reprised in the case of Hélisenne's questionable experience, then it would follow that there is no "being" behind the experiencing, the experiencer becoming merely a fiction added to the experiencing. But what would be an experience that is figured without a subject to undergo it? What is this experience that Hélisenne describes as a literary act borne by no person? When Nietzsche's phrase is placed alongside Hélisenne's, the status of the "doing" becomes just as questionable as that of the "doer." If "experiencing" is usually thought in terms of the underlying subject who undergoes it, possesses it, or becomes it, and if experiencing suddenly loses this "subject," then experiencing can no longer be considered a deed or an ontological thing, a static object, a stable process with fixed origin and end. Indeed, perhaps even the Nietzschean formulation itself need to be pressed further in the context of

Hélisenne's declaration, the static grammar of substantives yielding to a language of present participles, for if the conceit of "doing" or "experiencing," like the illusory notion of the doer, has no ultimate being, it is perhaps equally as fictional as the concept of the doer produced and posited by the belief in grammar.[63] As Wittgenstein says in his essay "On Certainty": "The difficulty is to realize the groundlessness of our believing."[64]

In other words, an implication of Hélisenne's promulgation, following Nietzsche, is that there is no doer who stands in an ontological or temporal place behind the doing of experience, only a literary doing whose effect is the fiction of a doer of experience. In Hélisenne's formulation, the subject of experience ("my person") turns out to be retroactively and belatedly attributed to "experience" —construed here as a literary and figural acting— and that this subject, itself an effect of the fictive exercise of literary language, has been mistakenly taken to be the cause, ground, and origin of experience itself. In Nietzsche's argument, a convention of grammar —the subject of a predicate— becomes confused with an ontological subject that is thought to preexist and mimetically mirror its grammatical formulation. In Hélisenne's contention, a literary figuration of experience that no person has undergone has been mistaken for an experience undergone in person. In both, a grammatical and figural subject has been confused with an ontological subject that is mistakenly thought to preexist its literary figuration, when the precise point is to envision experience *as a literary act* that originates in no prior, original subject and which persists in the potential absence of one. In this sense, the *Angoysses* lays siege to any understanding of experience as grounded in a grammatical and ontological metaphysics of the subject.

For a concrete example of this dislocation of the subject, one need only consider that if the narrator Hélisenne perishes before the novel closes, impossibly recounting her demise and its aftermath, then it ensues that she is already speaking as someone *other than* herself and *other to* herself, as if her voice were that of a woman who no longer was, a woman no longer alive, and thus the voice of someone no longer

Hélisenne. Hélisenne speaks, but it is not she who does, her voice no longer hers or no longer simply hers alone.[65] Which is another way of saying that the voice of Hélisenne's was never her own to begin with, paradoxically no longer, nor ever, hers. Witness, in this regard, the temporal quandary that emerges in the prophetic remarks of the narrator in the first part of the novel when she makes mention of "my grievous and unbearable pains which were to be my lot up until death [*qui m'étaient réservées à la mort*]" (47; translation modified).[66] This proleptic reference to her death which is *yet to come* in the novel's third part sounds odd considering that, because Hélisenne will have perished in the course of the narrative, this prophesy is emitted from a narrator who will have already died by the time she writes this, impossibly speaking of her death in proleptic fashion —but also *ex post facto*— by means of a sort of posthumous parlance. Such a jarring statement evinces a tautology of time: it not only prefigures Hélisenne's demise ("*until* death"), but it also chronologically postdates her demise insofar as the narrator is reflecting back upon a death already, impossibly, experienced and one which she now, in an orphic and adumbrative manner, forecasts will take place further on in the novel. If Hélisenne has already expired, as will be revealed in the course of the narration, then it would appear that the novel could only begin, paradoxically, because its narrating "I" was never at one with itself, or rather, was never one to begin with at all. If the story emanates from a posthumous parlance, enounced from an elsewhere never specified, then would it seem that the speech tendered forth coincides with no actual present? In this sense, the claims that could be made upon such a narrative experience —such as whose it is, or if it even is one—are significantly left undecided, if not undecidable.[67] These "unbearable pains" are unbearable precisely because there is no one, no self-identical subject, present to bear them.

While the objection might be made here that a rigorous narratological differentiation needs to be drawn between Hélisenne the "protagonist" (within the narrative) and Hélisenne the "implied author" (the signatory of the work and its dedicatory epistle), it is this precise narratological distinction that the text puts

under pressure, if not under erasure. Which is not to say, of course, that these fissured figures of Hélisenne ought to be treated as the "same" authorial entity (indeed, this would be impossible insofar as the very notion of sameness is already undercut by the novel's multiple figurations and voices). Even if the aim were to devise a firm narratological distinction between an "implied author" and the protagonist, this dichotomy would nonetheless ignore that these contradictory figures *both* participate in the text of the *Angoysses* at once and, insofar as they *both* partake in this fictional work, cannot be set apart by the logic of non-contradiction or the logic of identity. For if, on the one hand, the figures of author and narrator cannot be conflated and collapsed together, on the other hand they cannot be delimited without referring to each other (the concept of the "implied" author only gains its definitional status in relation to the fictional protagonist against which it is differentiated) and in this sense these terms are neither fully distinguishable apart from one another nor simply determinable in and of themselves. Indeed, as many critics have argued, the seeming difference between the author and the protagonist might well end up being a sort *différance* whereby author and fiction are held together as inseparable and interdependent, neither entirely distinct nor completely the same, and thus not resolved into an overarching authorial identity.[68]

iv. waiting

> The problem of those who Wait. *Happy chances are necessary, and many incalculable elements, in order that a higher man in who the solution of a problem is dormant, may yet take action, or 'break forth,' as one might say—at the right moment. On an everage it* does not *happen; and in all corners of the earth there are waiting ones sitting who hardly know to what extent they are waiting, and still less that they wait in vain.*
>
> —Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886)

Critical literature of the *Angoysses* has usefully explored the novel's conflicted authorship and contradictory narrative temporality, and it will not be to the purpose to rekindle all those rich discussions here. A different sort of query remains to be pursued in the context of the novel: If experience in the *Angoysses* might always be an act of fiction, as Hélisenne says, then to what extent is fiction itself an experience? Might the fiction of experience and the experience of fiction be inseparably bound to one another, even if irreducible to each other? Is the relationship between fiction and experience not that of a

chasm, but a chiasm? These questions take on added significance when the fictitious experience of the lovers in the *Angoysses* is taken into account, especially because the lack of direct contact between them makes for various scenes of self-cancelling accostment and nearly experienceless encounter: a modality of passive parlance and airy appeal in the lovers' speech; an approach toward the beloved so lightfooted in step and retiring in method that its only form of acting seems like endless waiting.[69] It seems to matter little, ultimately, whether the lovers ever apprise each other of how they feel by explicit verbalization or robust exertion, by active aggression or puissant possession, for much of the novel's first part might be said to sacrifice acting in favor of waiting in suspense: "I expressed grave and piteous complaints yearning for my beloved, whom I could not see," Hélisenne frequently bemoans (40). If Hélisenne spends the first part of the novel languishing for contact with a lover she never fully has, in the second part, Guénélic traverses various scenarios in pursuit of a beloved whom he finds only too late. By the time they do, finally, re-encounter one another in the last part of the novel, the time when they could act on their love has in a sense already passed, for Hélisenne perishes, soon followed by the crestfallen Guénélic. Perhaps amorous experience, according to this rendition at least, might be likened to a kind of waiting: the protagonists endlessly wait for the realization and requital of their love, but their experience turns out to never get beyond the inexperience it seeks to overcome. Hélisenne indefinitely lingers in a love that is eternally yet to be realized but that she will never have fully undertaken; Guénélic comes to find a love that is already past but that he will never have entirely undergone. And it is precisely because the lovers of the novel spend a good portion of time waiting around, or simply waiting to end having to wait, that they maintain a relationship contoured by the ways in which it does not "take place" in presence or by means of concrete consequence and material fruition in action. (This returns to the problem of waiting and experience posed earlier in the introduction of this chapter, where it was unclear whether waiting for experience was itself an

experience or whether it was a paradoxical time before experience has been procured and thus, *stricto sensu*, not yet an or no longer an experience at all).[70]

It is perhaps because of this seeming lack of action that some have spoken of the novel's deflation of chivalric tropes, as exemplified in Guénélic's knightly ineptitude.[71] To the extent that Guénélic differs from the agon-driven heroes of other European chivalric romances —like the caballeros of Beatriz Bernal's *Don Cristalián de España* (1545) or the paladins of Moderata Fonte's *Floridoro* (1581)— Guénélic seems more of a timid gentleman than an heroic horseman. When a band of vagabonds approaches him in the novel's second half, for example, he is "moved to some fear," rather than impelled to brave them (87). Likewise, his efforts at questing for Hélisenne's love in the novel's first part, generally amount to weak-kneed withdrawal from her company. In the second part, he beguiles more time in conversation with Quézinstra, his riding companion, about his thwarted love than in the performance of knightly deeds (101). "I do not want to speak very long," he tells his paramour when he finally gains her audience, "in order to avoid arousing the suspicion of people" (23). This is a faintheartedness duly noted by the narrator: "he was showing himself more modest and fearful than afore" (24; translation modified), she recalls at one point, noting that "[i]n his tender young valor there was not enough strength to allow him to say a word, but rather heaving a great many sighs, he departed; and I remained extremely irritated, fearing that by pusillanimity my husband might impose an end to his suit" (46; translation modified).

In philosophical parlance, one might even say that Guénélic is less an Aruthurian knight than a "knight of resignation." The latter phrase is associated with a parable from Soren Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling*, in which a youthful cavalier has fallen for a princess, the whole of his life devoted to her, "yet the relation is such that it cannot possibly be realized, cannot possibly be translated from ideality into reality."[72] Wedded to nothing more than the unrealizability and finitude of his desires, the knight seems to give up everything in regard to the princess he once adored, for he has abdicated all hopes for actuality (*FT* 34).

Despite the futility of the endeavor and the vanity of its enterprise, however, the knight's love persists—but it persists only in and as the very renunciation of possibility. He makes the "impossibility" of his love "possible" only by retaining something from his loss, and that which he retains is this very impossibility itself. The only thing he preserves, in other words, is that he has nothing to preserve; the only thing he keeps is the disavowed love he never had: "this possessing," affirms Kierkegaard's fable, "is also a relinquishing" (*FT* 39).

In these terms, the knight's relationship with the princess is now constituted by its very lack of relationship, a rapport that it isn't or that isn't yet, an affinity no longer developed by its action but by its arrest. "By my own strength I can give up the princess," says this knight, "and I shall not become a sulker but find joy and peace and rest in my pain. But by my own strength I cannot get her back again, for I use all my strength just for the act of resigning" (*FT* 42). To possess no more than thwarted possibility and empty-handed harvest is, of course, to have no possession at all. He thus subsists by a love that needs no opportunity for concretization and materialization and hence subsists by no love he might call his own. For how, if ever, might such a love's occurrence be determined or its occasion known, if never actualized? Rather than overcoming his loss, the knight of infinite resignation maintains his loss *as loss,* in a way anticipating Freud's melancholic, for whom loss is never fully grieved (*FT* 36-8). So too will the princess, given over to the expropriation and dispossession of her beloved, "introduce herself into the order of knighthood," becoming a knight herself by retaining only the love she never fulfills, and thus keeping the love she never had to begin with, a love that might just as well never have been one at all (*Ibid*). As a personage in *Repetition* (1843) will echo: "The moment [that possessing the beloved] becomes a matter of actuality, all is lost, then it is too late. The actuality in which she is supposed to have her meaning remains but a shadow for me, a shadow that trots alongside my essential spiritual actuality, a shadow that sometimes makes me laugh and sometimes wants to enter disturbingly into my existence [*Existens*]."[73]

Some might argue that the knight's love, though it may never have been reciprocated, still entails an experience of love insofar as the knight makes his love's impossibility into possibility. In this sense, the characters would willfully resign their love and thus have performed an act of resignation. On this reading, to give something up would still be to give something, just as to renounce acting is itself an act. The question that would then emerge is whether the loss —indeed, the self-loss— portrayed in the parable resolves into the identity of a subject —an act of volitional resignation originating in and sustained by a purposeful, transcendent subject— or whether, in fact, this ostensible subject is irretrievably expropriated and exported beyond its presumed identity altogether. If this parable is read against the totality and teleology of Kierkegaard's largely onto-theological account —if, in a sense, Kierkegaard is read against himself— might this literary fable figure a relation of amorous abnegation, one disseized of identity and selfhood, that provisionally parallels that of the *Angoysses*, and provide a useful analogy here with which to illustrate this point? Might the protagonists of the *Angoysses* be similarly characterized?

While the parallel between this parable and the *Angoysses* is certainly suggestive, especially with its Christian resonances, in many ways the characters of the novel resist the kierkegaardian caricature—and force a necessary revision of its terms. While it will be important to return to this resistance to Kierkegaard at the end of this chapter, for the moment it can be said that the dialectical resolution implied in Kierkegaard's parable—whereby loss and possession become reconciled into a figure of a possessed loss—and the implied mastery of an acting subject —whereby the knight willfully gives up his love —are disrupted by the *Angoysses'* ambiguous and ambivalent idiom of unbearable love, according to which the lovers are continually dispossessed by language, finding themselves irreversibly outside themselves because their impossible love cannot be experienced as anything short of an experience of the impossible. Unlike the implied self-sufficient status of the characters in Kierkegaard's illustration, both of whom subsist by their loss and resignation alone, the *Angoysses* portrays a trenchant aporia: a continual loss of that which was

already lost, a giving up of that which was already given up, and thus a dispossession that belongs to no self but that, irrevocably, dispossesses that very self of itself.

These comments on Guénélic's presumed passivity are not meant to imply that a young lover and a married woman in early modern France would have had sufficiently easy opportunities to develop a relationship (they would not) but that, even when those rare opportunities arise, it seems that Guénélic deflects or defers them. He leaves much to be desired in the way of gallant knight: he fears Hélisenne's husband, her servant, even Hélisenne herself, and it is eventually Hélisenne's audacity, not his own, that will allow the two to even make slight headway in their interactions. For if it were up to Guénélic alone, the couple would rely purely on "discreet and secret signs" from afar rather than straightforward or brazenly direct contact (24). Indeed, for Guénélic it is as if gaze and sight prevailed in importance over more explicitly physical acts, a curious ethos of abstention and withdrawal that becomes all the more evident when considering the lover's exchanges.

iv. beheld, but not held

Each time then, there is the ruse of an oblique or indirect gaze. A ruse that consists in sidestepping rather than meeting head-on
—Derrida, *Mémoires d'aveugle: L'autoportrait et d'autres ruines*

Because Hélisenne is under close, covetous watch by her husband, and indeed spends a lot of time enclosed or imprisoned, the interaction between Hélisenne and her beloved Guénélic is orchestrated from afar, by letter, by music, by wordless glance, or sometimes not at all—all of which echoes the ethos of the troubadour trope of *l'amour de loin*.[74] It is with gaze and glance especially that there's a glimpse of the novel's paradox of experience and its problematization of togetherness. To what extent can eye contact be said to constitute contact? Or, to cite an eloquent query from Derrida's *Le toucher*: "If two gazes look into each other's eyes, can one then say that they are touching? Are they coming into contact— the one with the other?"[75] In the *Angoysses,* the act of eyeing one another becomes for the lovers a manner of keeping in contact without actually making contact with each other.[76] Similar to the rhetoric of gaze in the lyrics of

Petrarch and Maurice Scève, the glances of the lovers in the *Angoysses* marks not only the distance that severs them but also the intimacy that binds them. As Hélisenne will say elsewhere, her view serves to discursively signify that which speech fails to render: "[I] could neither speak nor give utterance [*rendre voix*], but only signify by sight" (67); "he could see, by evident signs, [*signes évidents*] that I loved him beyond human belief" (54; translation modified). That which Guénélic is supposed to infer from his lover's leering, from these "signs" at once bodily and discursive, is that he is loved: Hélisenne's eyes have become a text to be read rather than a stare merely to be perceived. Looking takes on a displaced discursivity or a generalized textuality, a sort of signifying practice whereby the border dividing the body from language begins to founder.[77] Thus will Guénélic, in later portions of the novel, read Hélisenne's glance as a form of discursive interpellation, a rhetorical address or apostrophe, to which he must issue a response:

> When I was near the window, I saw the lady who was the unique compensation of all my travail, who made me such a salutation as was never made […] I immediately felt such excessive joy that I forgot myself, in my contemplation, love bound my heart with such force I was unable to utter a single word. But what speech denied me, feelings and exterior movements manifested. On the other hand, I had certain proof that my lady was no less affected than I, for she remained in uncertainty [*demeura en suspens*] in order to contemplate me. By some movements of colors I perceived her radiant eyes, whose pupils, errant and vagabond around the circumference, sparkled with amorous desire, like the rays of the morning sun reflected in a clear spring-pond. (73)

Here the figure of sight both draws and departs from the traditional Petrarchan scenography of an objectified woman passively espied: Hélisenne's visibility takes on both transitive and intransitive valences, as seeing and being seen are shown to be inseparably intertwined. Although Guénélic remains tongue-tied, Hélisenne's contemplative glance nevertheless addresses him rhetorically —it beckons and responds— even if what this rhetorical address enacts cannot be explicitly thematized or verbalized by either of them. Indeed, even if there is a certain silence and ineffability that punctuates this scene, this scene of silence is nonetheless staged within and described through literary language and thus, far from exceeding language, remains caught in an uneasy relation to it. Consider that Hélisenne's "salutation," a calling of sorts, is conferred with little more than Hélisenne's "uncertainty," her lingering at the window (literally "remained

in suspense [*demeura en suspens*]"). Guénélic reads into her suspense a love exhaled by a luminescent cloud: with its scintillating pupils and amorous orbs, Hélisenne's eyes are to him imbued with elemental desire. The reference to this glinting glare as "reflect[ive]" —like the sheer surface of the water of the pond— also emphasizes the specular —and spectacular—effect of glances exchanged between them. But even if Hélisenne's reflective and radiant pupils address Guénélic when speech falls and falters into silence, what her address signifies is not as crystal-clear as the specular language would seem to imply. Hélisenne's eyes are said to "sparkle with amorous desire" but what does this mean? How is it known that they are actually sparkling with desire, and that Guénélic is not simply misrecognizing her stare or projecting his own desires upon her? And how can his proclamation be trusted, given that it is Hélisenne writing in the voice of Guénélic who narrates this scene, a dizzying *mise en abyme* of recursion and reflexivity whereby Hélisenne interprets Guénélic interpreting Hélisenne such that Hélisenne is no longer quite Hélisenne, nor quite Guénélic, neither the one nor the other?

Because of these interpretative difficulties—which hold any final interpretation, much like Hélisenne's figure, "in suspense"— it would seem that Guénélic's understanding of Hélisenne's amorous address is not purely a subjective interpretation that he unilaterally imposes, nor a reciprocal recognition between them, precisely because the positions of either within this scene of address cannot be unequivocally identified. The language of dispossession in this passage emphasizes this, as Guénélic depicts Hélisenne's glance as a kind of alterity that expropriates him of his very self, carrying his self outside itself: not only does this address come to him from without, but it leads him to "forget" himself, if not his very self, in a kind of ecstasy. If Hélisenne is held in suspense at the window, Guénélic is also held in suspense watching her, just as the reader is held in suspense trying to distinguish who is speaking and thinking as well as what is real and what is imagined. For if it is the figure of Hélisenne-as-narrator describing of this scene through the figure of Guénélic-as-narrator that tells this scene, then it would seem that neither Guénélic nor Hélisenne

is distinguishable from one another, nor identical to one another, inasmuch as the one might always be mistaken for the other. As the novel passes from its first part, where Hélisenne reports her story, to the second part, where Guénélic speaks *as Hélisenne imagines he would,* it becomes less certain whether one knows who is thinking what when looking upon these various figures of uncertainty and suspense, similar to the way Guénélic eyes the uncertain figure of Hélisenne hovering at her window and can only speculate about what her eyes might be "saying." Thus when Guénélic will imagine later in the novel that Hélisenne's voice is interpellating him— "I wish my sorrowing soul could be reunited with my dear lady Hélisenne, *who seems to me* to call me in a piteous voice [...] And so it would benefit me more to die than to languish continually" (192; emphasis added)— Hélisenne is found envisioning Guénélic envisioning Hélisenne to the point that "Hélisenne" cannot be simply posited as standing behind all these authorial fictions because the subject-positions of lover and beloved, seer and seen, are held together in indefinite suspension. Inside one another, they yet remain beside each other: "I remain separate from you even as I speak in your place," they seem to be saying, "being inside *you is always simultaneously being beside you, irreducibly*."[78]

It might be tempting to suggest here that even though there is a certain suspension of contact between the lovers, the fact that they are even caught in a play of gazes means that, in the last instance, they do have contact, a contact in suspense as it were, and thus have achieved a relationship of sorts. While it is not untrue that this seeing allows for a type of contact without contact, it is also obstructed by a certain blindness, and the novel is sure to insist upon the lack of symmetry and reciprocity between the two lovers: "I looked in many different places, but I did not see the one in whom alone my eyes took pleasure," reports Hélisenne, arriving at a place where she hopes to espy her beloved. "When he arrived, he did not look at me in the usual way, but only passed in front of me" (21). The only contact shared between the lovers is that they have nearly none, given that Guénélic does not encounter her but rather passes by her. What is preserved of their meetings, and what emplots it, is the near nought that comes to pass between the two.

> One day, I saw that he was more pensive than normal, and was walking alone, holding his cap in his hand, in order to please me by showing me his beautiful, finely combed hair. When he had walked around a while, he went into a chapel where the divine service was just beginning. And so I had a plausible reason to rise and follow him. I saw he was often looking about him, and I did the same, and I think our thoughts were not different, for in our hearts we both feared my husband would arrive. (23)

The legibility of appearance and visibility depends on a latticing of regards that make up —and make up for— the interviews the lovers cannot have by more direct means. Note how the beloved passively exposes himself to Hélisenne's view by his handsome coiffure (but only from afar); Hélisenne, interpellated by Guénélic's image, keeps a watchful vigilance over him (but only because she cannot confront him outright); the two might "loo[k] about" (but they cannot simply view one another, as they are on the look-out for Hélisenne's husband). The intersubjective language of dyads and couples, mutuality and reciprocity, meets its limit here since the relationship between Hélisenne and Guénélic is shown to involve the husband, a third figure, all along. This does not necessarily resolve into a dialectic trinity or a Freudian/Girardian form of triangular desire, however, since this crisscross of sightings is subject to continual mobility and displacement, never settling within a set of fixed positions. For the husband at once enables, if not mobilizes, the lover's looks (they have to look precisely because they cannot meet by more direct means when the husband is there) at the same time that he precludes the possibility of their looking altogether (they are on the look-out for the husband, and thus cannot relish merely looking at each other). Looking amounts to looking away and, in this sense, the lovers' rapport is punctuated by division and distance rather than proximity and presence. Or rather, if there is proximity between them, it is paradoxically a partnership in partition, a closeness by separation. And it is this particular aspect of reserve and regress, retirement and retreat, which will emplot the non-happenings, missed meetings, and non-events that constitute their relationship.[79]

v. out of touch

It was the lightest touch, but it thrilled him like a caress.
—Edith Wharton, *The Age of Innocence* (1920)

Our clothing gets torn, and we do not feel anything; therefore, our clothing is not part of ourselves.
—Nicolas Malebranche, *Éclaircissements sur la Recherche de la Vérité* (1674-5)

Loving purely is to consent to love at a distance, it is to adore the difference between oneself and that which one loves.
—Simone Weil, "Amour," *La pesanteur et la grâce*

It is this abiding non-happening of experience that torments Hélisenne: unable to undergo, by will and in full, her experience of Guénélic she is, at the same time, unable to prevent having already somewhat fallen prey to it. This comes to the fore in another instance of near contact between the lovers, a "close call" as it were, according to which Guénélic is close to Hélisenne, and comes close to touching her, but remains also beyond her reach: "My beloved [...] passed near me; but to avoid his looks and in order not to arouse the ire and indignation of my husband, I was compelled to remain leaning on a bench, without daring to turn my face toward him" (43). Here Hélisenne withstands an experience of her beloved only because it remains in part unlived by her: Guénélic might be near but can only step aside from her. Hélisenne faces Guénélic, in other words, only by turning away from him, as if the lovers could only meet, strangely, in a place where neither of them presently was. Attention for the lovers amounts to leaving each other unacknowledged and unseen. But this does not so much deny as define their approach: in poststructuralist psychoanalytic parlance, it would be said that the obstacle to love becomes a love of the obstacle itself. As Guénélic says: "I am burned and consumed by an even more excessive ardor when she is absent than when she is present" (96).

The fruit of these continual glances and non-glances is little more than a brief caress of cloth. Guénélic, at pains to come into contact with Hélisenne in public, steps on the hem of her white cloak to grab her attention: "he passed so near me that he stepped on my white satin cloak [...] I should have voluntarily and wholeheartedly kissed the spot where his foot had touched my cloak" (22). Guénélic touches Hélisenne only to the extent that he does not touch her person, in that he grazes the garment that enshrouds her rather than her flesh and that while Hélisenne *would* have gladly kissed the spot where he has touched

her, she does not. The subtle boundary of Hélisenne's hemline offers a metonymic figure for the fragile frontiers that will have kept the lovers bound both in partnership to each other and in partition from each other—and thus bound to miss rather than meet one another.[80] For the question is not whether touching fabric or flesh counts as legitimate touch, nor whether fabric and flesh can be considered separable. What seems compelling, rather, is that though the two are in proximity to one another they yet remain separated, even if only by a hem line, tangential to each other without fully touching one another. This is not to say, of course, that the only "authentic love" —whatever that would mean— is consummated by the physical touch of flesh, but that the particular mode of approach between the lovers is conditioned by obstruction and resistance rather than access and availability.

The episode is reprised a short time thereafter when Hélisenne performs a similar gesture: "[S]eeing my beloved walking about, I followed him and, without deciding in advance what I should say to him, I was so bold as to pull on the hem of his robe" (53). In both of these encounters, one finds a limit to contact at the very point of contact, as if the two could only be contiguous or close to one another but never convergent, akin to a famous scene of Marie de France's twelfth-century *lai* "Yonec," wherein the young knight "lay[s] beside" his lady on the bed without caressing or embracing her, close and contiguous to, but not convergent with, the very lady he loves.[81] Similarly, the hem of the garment in the *Angoysses* allows the lovers to keep in touch, just as they had with their eyes, but without quite touching one another. Once again there is a sort of *close call* in its twin senses: something that comes close —or close enough— to happening on the one hand, but also a narrow escape and near evasion, on the other. In a similar manner, Hélisenne comes close to her beloved but just as closely misses him; the hem of his costume both discloses the beloved's body at the very instant that it retains this body from her. If a relation is being fabricated here it is held together, tenuously, by fabric alone. "Something or someone comes between us," Hélisenne seems to say, but "[t]his is how we come: together, separately. I am broken [but] you unbreak me."[82] For between

Hélisenne's grasp and Guénélic's body interposes a mediating textile (or a text, since the etymology is shared), one that affords the simulacrum of touching the beloved while, in the same stroke, withdrawing it: an experience that comes to be only to the extent that it elides itself at the very occasion of possible eventuation. In this sense, the lovers find themselves *out of touch*: losing communicative sense with each other at the moment of contact, if not losing the sense of touch altogether. Following the lyrical terms of Keats, this might even be termed "the feel of not to feel it."[83]

vi. desistances/resistances

"I renounce you, I have decided it": the most beautiful and the most inevitable of the most impossible declaration of love
—Derrida, *Politiques de l'amitié*

From this perspective, it would seem that this relation the lovers cultivate, hyperbolically construed, is not a relation or, if it is one, it is a relation without relation.[84] Neither of the two is substantively involved in a relationship that nonetheless concerns only them. They are seemingly brought together by that which disjoins them, detained together in a place where neither of them can self-presently be. This topographic aporia is also emphasized by Hélisenne's valorization of the mercies of sleep over the cruelties of waking: dreams become the only locale for sharing loving embracements but this place does not itself exist, as if the only meeting ground the lovers could find was itself groundless: "Certainly sleep was more pleasant to me than waking," she says "because it seemed to me [that] I held his hand […] Hearing his sweet and mellifluous words, it seemed to me that I interrupted his voice with frequent kisses and embraces" (56-7).[85] Both lovers will recount having dreams about finally enjoying one another in consort: only in reverie but never elsewhere, can the lovers conspire; only in the place where neither of them consciously "is" can they seemingly embrace their desire. Or rather, it is not so much that the lovers are "present" in the dream and absent in a material reality—as it is uncertain whether renaissance cultural tropes of dreams and allegorical *songes* could be considered as purveying "presence" through phantasmagoria and allegory— but that the boundaries separating the real from the phantasmal, the present from the

absent, seemingly become shoreless. In Nietzsche's words: "What we experience in dreams, provided we experience it often, pertains at last just as much to the general belongings of our soul as anything 'actually' experienced."[86]

There might be a temptation to conclude here that the lovers find themselves held together by all that keeps them separated from each other, bound in complicity by the physical obstacles that divide them and in the unrealizable dreams that unite them. As Hélisenne is quick to insist, however, this would be a somewhat hasty and far too optimistic interpretation. For this amorous rapport that cannot be willfully retained or rejected proves excruciating.[87] The double bind within which Hélisenne is caught constitutes a predicament defined by her inability to voluntarily accept or abandon a love that she cannot undertake by her powers —but which she also cannot avoid trying to undertake. There is thus frequent play between the terms of "desistance" and "resistance" in Hélisennes' speech.[88] Although love should be "resist[ed] from the outset," as Hélisenne says at the beginning of the novel, she later confesses that she will always capitulate to it, even if she cannot attain it: "although I know such pains and anguish," she says, "I cannot desist [and] scarcely resisting, I let myself go" (63). Framed in these terms, it would seem that Hélisenne is vanquished not because she *can* love but because she cannot *not* love ("I cannot desist"). She neither refuses to love nor refuses not to; she can neither accede to amorous experience nor completely cede it. "Love" is thus figured as a distress that can neither be tolerated by one's powers nor entirely obviated (the very language of dispossession in the phrase "I let myself go" points to this ambiguity in transitivity and intransitivity: is it the *I* that has let itself go, or is it the I, the self, that has been let go?). For even though her love is of "unimaginable suffering," as she declares, it is impossible for her to resist this even though it is also impossible to realize or reject it (35-6). The narrator thus makes an appeal not to what she *can do* but to what she cannot do or rather, what she cannot *but do*, namely, to persist in a love that is both impossible to sustain and irresistible to repel. What Hélisenne cannot do —desist, resist— she cannot *but* do —which is

to desist from resistance itself. This borders on the deconstructive idiom of "désistance," which connotes, in Derrida's words, "an experience of the ineluctable": "what announces itself as ineluctable seems in some way to have already happened, to have happened before happening, to be always in a past, in advance of the event," and thus an event for which the subject seems extraneous, having arrived too late to this experience to claim it as its own and to posture as its origin.[89]

And it is when faced with this love that she is impuissant to either resist or desist from, deny or defend as her own, that Hélisenne confronts a passion that she withstands only to the extent that she cannot: a dolor that abides because, paradoxically, it cannot be weathered by a subject. In this regard, there is an intriguing discrepancy between the 1538 and 1541 printed editions of the text, as has been highlighted by textual scholarship, which only revivifies and exacerbates the aporetic quality of an unbearable love that cannot be undergone in person or in presence. The fulcrum of this ambiguity pivots around the subtle differences supplied by a substituted word in the moralizing harangue with which a monk sermonizes Hélisenne: "when the violence of your passion [*ire*] begins to *diminish*," he claims in the 1538 edition, "you will recognize your madness and furious fantasies, and find them horrible" (38; emphasis added).[90] Here, it would seem that the monk portends that the descent and decrescendo of passion, its diminution, will lead to the horror of self-discovery that such ardor postponed from the start (and here this "passion" refers indirectly to Hélisenne's love for Guénélic, and more specifically to her desire for death, suicide or self-slaughter, which has arisen in consequence of this ill-famed passion). According to this argument, when passion wanes, one is no longer subject to the delusions by which one was once bewitched. A later editorial version of this same peroration, however, inverts this prior proposition: "when the violence of your passion [*ire*] begins to *dominate*," so one reads in the 1541 edition, "you will recognize your madness and furious fantasies, and find them horrible" (*ibid*). Here the monk forebodes, in contradistinction to the former version, that love's increase and increment —its totalizing domination over the victim it overwhelms—

makes love an unbearable passion that cannot be suffered. Any attempt at localizing the causality of Hélisenne's torments comes apart: is it love's infusion and intensity or its diffusion and decline that will lead to the "horrible" epiphany of the folly under which the lover has furiously labored? In both cases, and irrespective of the conduct undertaken by Hélisenne, the horrible torments she seeks to escape she will inevitably fall prey to, for whether love dominates or diminishes, prevails or ebbs, its fatal consequences can be neither avoided nor adopted.

vii. undying desires

Were you in anguish, you wouldn't be.
—Blanchot, *L'Écriture du désastre*

One of the images emblazoning the final moments of the novel draws into sharper focus this unbearable experience —or, in keeping with Derrida's idiom, this "experience of the ineluctable"— that the novel has been describing all along. Hélisenne, responding to a letter from Guénélic from her prison tower, recalls the myth of a roman mother who can neither perish from her pain nor survive her joy:

> I was in danger of succumbing to the impediment faced by the Roman matron who, because of her anxiety on learning of her only son's death, could not die. And afterward, on encountering the said son, who was not yet dead, she died from excessive joy. Likewise I, through assiduous and continual pain [*douleur*] have not been able to reach the one [*celle*] which is the end of all woes, although I have sought it by diverse means. (171; translation modified)

Here Hélisenne bemoans the agony of having no agony that she could undertake and survive. Agonized because she idles in a sort of inexperience —incapable of experiencing the pain she wishes to experience— she is compelled to await an experience held in perpetual postponement: "through assiduous and continual pain [I] have not been able to reach the one [i.e. the pain] which is the end of all woes." The figure of the Roman matron stresses the double bind of being withheld from experience even as one seems to undergo it: incapable of death when her son is apart from her, the mother is also unable to survive his eventual encounter. Hélisenne reframes this account in terms of a "pain" that she can neither sustain nor abjure. Though in "continual pain" —unable to die from it—she is nonetheless never "able to reach" pain. Held in

suspense between life and death, no longer living but unable to die, Hélisenne is, to borrow the felicitous phrase of Renaissance philosopher Tullia d'Aragona "alive while dying."[91] If for Montaigne the limit of experience is death, a limit that can be approached but itself never experienced, in the *Angoysses* Hélisenne is not so much waiting for death to arrive but, rather, waiting for death to end, insofar as she shares the predicament of the roman matron, for whom "dying does not let [her] die," to borrow from Blanchot (*L'Écriture du désastre*), and where her anguish is, to quote Kierkegaard, the "disconsolateness of not being able to die" (*Sickness Unto Death*). This becomes evident when considering that the figure of Hélisenne is reported to expire in the course of the narrative, even as Hélisenne the narrator recounts this event in a spectral and disembodied voice, a voice that, impossibly, carries on in her wake—or rather, *as* her wake: an impossible voice which is the breath of undying death.

To the extent that Hélisenne's experience would seem to be without presence —that is, with no self-present subject to undergo it— it would seem to share little with how experience is most commonly understood. This paradoxical experience which escapes the confines of experience prefigures what Blanchot calls a "suffering" without presence and without a "suffering 'I.'" Without presence, beginning, or end, this suffering compels a sort of limit-experience, holding one in suspense or making one await a suffering that cannot be foreseen nor foretold—a suffering which cannot happen in presence and yet already has come to pass— and for which there is, ultimately, no "one" that could be thought to simply predate its passing or survive in its wake:

> Suffering such that I could not suffer it, in such a way that, in this non-power, the *moi,* excluded from mastery and from its status as subject in the first-person, destitute, destitute and even disobligated, could lose itself as a *moi* capable of suffering [*subir*]; there is suffering, there would be suffering, there is no suffering "I," and the suffering does not present itself, is not borne [*portée*] (still less experienced [*vécue*]) in the present; it is without the present, as it is without beginning or end, time has radically changed meaning. Time without the present, the *moi* without *moi*, nothing of which one could say that experience —a form of knowledge— would reveal or dissimulate it.[92]

The terms and tone of this fragment would seem to reflect Hélisenne's predicament, according to which there is no suffering or "pain" she could "reach" and experience in presence. Following Blanchot's idiom, it might be proposed that if there is experience to be had in this novel, perhaps it is only one if, to a certain extent, it is *not* an experience or cannot be experienced as one. An experience that also is not one, in other words, because it has no "I" that could undergo it. In these terms, it makes sense to ask whether Hélisenne's experience becomes, paradoxically, the deferral or postponement of experience itself, an experience held in suspense from becoming experience even while it is seemingly being experienced.[93] Like the roman matron she is caught, yearningly, at the eve of an event never reached, suspended in endless wait for an occurrence only verged upon but never attained: a time when she would have experienced her passion. Given Hélisenne's vacillating rhetoric, cascading from exultation to exhaustion, one has the impression that she is still awaiting the moment when she could bear what she in a sense already has, as if she were still holding out, in other words, for her amorous experience even as it is already underway. Though anticipating an experience not yet hers, Hélisenne will never accede to it self-presently. For her experience is not that which is actively lived through by an agent but which is involuntarily suffered without a self that could have the power to sustain it in presence. Here grammar breaks down, for there is no subject which undergoes this suffering, but a suffering for which there is no subject that could undergo it by its own powers in person or in presence. For Hélisenne, the anguish of love comes from its unbearability, from the fact that it could never be borne, so much so that if it were, in fact, borne, this would not be the precise anguish she were describing, for the anguish which afflicts her cannot be sustained or survived, cannot be lived or lived through, a paradox Blanchot captures in a fragment when he writes that: "Were you in anguish, you wouldn't be [*Angoissé, tu ne le serais pas*]."[94] for a part of this anguish comes from the fact that it *cannot* be actively experienced or suffered in presence: were this anguish truly experienced, true anguish it would no longer be.

viii. loving without loving

The inexperience of dying: that would mean as well: the clumsiness to die, dying like someone whoh as not learned or has missed his classes
Blanchot, *L'écriture du désastre*

At the close of this chapter, it becomes important to pursue some of the questions that follow the unbearable experiences that the *Angoysses* describes: How can amorous experience be unlivable and yet, despite oneself and despite itself, live on? How might the rhetoric of the *Angoysses,* in its depiction an unlivable love —or an unbearable experience that can be neither taken up nor set aside by a self-present subject— yield important insights of its own to ongoing critical conversations regarding the relation of experience to narrative? One rejoinder might be that this "unlivable love" is in fact a celebration of Christian and neoplatonic virtues of unearthly and the bodiless: its protagonists would appear to access their passion precisely in the deferral of all possible actualization and as the annulment of this passion itself, reinstalling spiritual experience at the core of its story.[95] According to this view desire is only unlivable in *physical* terms, but has nonetheless been lived all the same, even if only realized in sublimated and sublated form: the seeming lack of tangible experience and concrete consequence is converted into a form of transitive activity, a practice of repression and abstention whereby the annulment of amorous experience becomes a sort of experience itself (the spiritual experience of having no "material" experience at all). [96]

Now, it is true that such neoplatonic tropes are present in the *Angoysses*, as they are in many Renaissance literatures, and that depictions of immaterial amorous rapports, impossible loves, or thwarted erotic conquests are not uncommon literary topoi in Western medieval and premodern representations of romance (as one critical account notes, "[t]he aesthetic tendency to overvalue the nonattainment of literal sexual goals has a long and impressive history in Western literature").[97] So too does the figure of sublimated, sublated, or spiritualized experience have something of a history in Western philosophy, extending from the nineteenth century to contemporary critical theory and continental philosophy (Nietzsche's man of *ressentiment,* Hegel's "beautiful soul," Kierkegaard's "knight of resignation," Freud's

"hysteric, " Lacan's "the Lady-Thing of Courtly love"). All of these tropes complicate the borders separating spiritual and physical relationships, and it would not be difficult to assimilate the *Angoysses,* in part or in parts, into any of these interpretative paradigms.

But perhaps it is also important to explore the way in which this text might resist complete cooptation by any of these schemas. Better still: even if clearly informed by neoplatonic and courtly tropes, and even if a reading of the text as sublated passion is certainly possible, the *Angoysses* is not therefore reducible to a story of sublimated desire. For a perspective arguing that the lovers merely wallow in their non-experience or in-experience *as* a sublimated experience too easily assumes that one knows how to define what experience "is" or "does." Indeed, to say simply that experience "*is* what it is not," and to end matters there, would be to maintain a mere determinate negation and to ignore the considerable challenge to ontological predicates that this text submits. That is, although experience would be defined negatively, it would still be accorded a definition and anchored in an identity nonetheless, the ontological weight of the copula "is" still held intact. It is not that the lovers gain mutual intimacy by ultimately finding, through means of a determinate negation, that they can both share and enjoy the "nothing" that "is" their relationship together—both clearly suffer for it, they suffer both because they love and because they are not allowed to love. Indeed, with a title like *Les Angoysses douloureuses,* this text would seem to be far from celebrating the near nought shared between lovers!

The argument that this text is merely subscribing to neoplatonic virtues or psychoanalytic pathologies is also problematic for another reason as well, mainly because such ways of thinking, at least in their more formalist variety, assume that the limits of experience are invariably metaphysical, psychological, or existential rather than historical, social, or political. That is, to say that "experience" in this novel is reducible to neoplatonic virtue, the beautiful soul, the lady of courtly love, or the man of ressentiment would be to exercise a kind of formalism, for this presumes that the limits of experience are timeless formal

or structural features inherent and internal to the concept of experience in and of itself rather than the effects of historically contingent social and political norms that govern what can and cannot be recognized or claimed as "legitimate" experience. It might be proposed, following Butler, that it is precisely because some "experiences" cannot be recognized as such within certain social norms of recognizability and acceptability —for example, adulterous love in sixteenth-century France— that a paradox such as an "experience which is not one" comes about, precisely because it cannot be recognized as one at all: an experience that can have no place in the name of experience.[98] The question cannot be whether or not an amorous experience could be phenomenologically construed *in itself* or conceptually determined *as such* — indeed, perhaps it is impossible to speak of "experience as such"— if experience is both conduced and constructed by diffuse social norms that frame what can and cannot count as intelligible, claimable, or publicly "acceptable" experience. Indeed, prior to the question of whether or not experience *exists* is the question of what social norms of intelligibility and what schemas of interpretation are in place that, delimiting what counts as a socially recognizable experience, will allow it to be recognized as existing.

The larger questions that arise here would concern how heteronormative gender norms associated with sexual difference circumscribe "who" can and cannot have an experience as well as "what" will and will not count as an experience (in so doing, circumscribing the domain of experience in the terms of "who" and "what"). For example, how does the question of gender/genre complicate the representation of adultery, insofar as the *Angoysses* is addressed to "women readers" of sixteenth-century France and purports to disabuse them of illicit love paradoxically by portraying it, allowing these readers to indulge in, if not virtually "experience" through their reading, the very illicit loves they are told to avoid?[99] The questions that are left to pursue might then include: To what extent do these norms delimit and bound experience by foreclosing those "experiences" which cannot be assimilated into their hegemonic terms, foreclosed experiences that nonetheless persist as inassimilable remainders, the remains of experience as it were,

which become both the enabling condition for the constitution of normative experiences (they are the outside against which normativity is defined) and the specter of their dissolution (they haunt these normative boundaries and threaten their integrity)? For even if certain experiences do not fit governing norms of recognition and cannot be counted publicly or recounted explicitly as such, do they nevertheless persist —spectral and wraith-like, in a mode of suspended being— *at* the limits of these norms if not *as* the limits of these norms?[100] And what of these spectral and suspended experiences, what logical problems do they pose for contemporary reading?

Such questions, compelling as they are, will have to be explored on another occasion, even if they have implicitly inspired these readings. For within the limits of this chapter, the intent has been to explore the implications of the figuration of Hélisenne's anguished love as that which cannot be suffered by an experience orchestrated and willed by a self-present subject who could bear it or who would "be" it. While this unbearable love does not elude the boundaries of experience pure and simple, neither can it be experienced by one's power to weather it. Indeed, if an "experience" of love were to be posited here, it could only be designated by the extent to which it defied phenomenological designation: an experience without a subject, a love experienced without a self. In this sense, the argument unfolded here has not sought to defend or deny a particular philosophical version of experience, nor to corset this figure within categorical constraints and within a static set of significations, but to pursue those literary instances when any totalizing definition of experience as a pregiven phenomenality or intuitive ideality fails, precisely because experience is inevitably enmeshed in textuality. This final section will be devoted to unpacking that particular claim through a discussion of the questions that the rhetoric of unbearable experience in the *Angoysses* raises when read against the backdrop of some of the questions that have emerged after poststructuralist and deconstructive interrogations of experience. Once again, the point is not to assimilate this literary text into some pre-established theoretical model (indeed, some would say that

"poststructualism" and "deconstruction" are not unitary, authoritative, and established theoretical models but provisional names, misnomers even, given to the critical questioning of the very means and modes by which theoretical models come to be established as unitary and authoritative). Nor is it to give an exhaustive account of what the encounter between early modern and contemporary perspectives might entail. These final reflections seek only to offer some speculative comments on the questions this fiction raises in the wake of poststructuralism and deconstruction.

If the *Angoysses* takes leave from the supposition that there would be a self-present "subject" —a phenomenological ego or transcendental cogito— who willfully orchestrates experience and in whom experience originates, as has been suggested in this chapter, then one of the indirect implications that follows from this reading is a certain decentering of the presuppositional place and presumptive priority allotted to the subject in considerations of experience, a critical point which has been emphasized in the last few decades by those working within and against the legacies of Husserlian phenomenology.[101] Some describe Husserl's "science of the essence of consciousness" as the analysis of consciousness in terms of the essence of appearance (where appearance refers to experiences of which one is conscious), lived experience, and the constitution of meaning as it is perceived in suspending the so-called external, "natural" world (or, at the very least, the everyday assumptions associated with it).[102] One of phenomenology's keenest contributions was to move away from psychologism and solipsism in order to situate consciousness in an intentional relation to an object it constitutes but does not unilaterally create, as well as to avoid the antimonies associated with both empiricist and rationalist theorizations of experience. However, some twentieth-century critiques of phenomenology fault those premises which remain caught within an epistemological framework that seems to implicitly privilege a self-sufficient subject, namely consciousness, whose encounter with the world is understood solely in terms of lived experience and self-presence, that is, solely in terms of what can appear to consciousness (thus falling prey, paradoxically, to the very

metaphysical claims phenomenology sought to avoid).[103] Others, working more closely within the principles of Husserlian phenomenology itself, seek to contest this Cartesian caricature, arguing that Husserl has been falsely identified with theorizing a disembodied and transcendental ego that he actually opposes.[104]

Rather than developing that particular quarrel, for the present purpose it seems important to insist that the *Angoysses*, when brought into contact with these debates, would appear to move away from those phenomenological accounts where a tacit subject is presupposed and to challenge the presumed givenness of experience itself, particularly the conceit that phenomena appear as given only to the extent that they become available to intuitive consciousness in presence and perceived in intentional experience in the present. Indeed, the peculiarly "postphenomenological" predicament that shadows forth in the *Angoysses* —a love unbearable by a subject or which cannot be experienced by a self in presence— not only counters the implicit metaphysics of the subject that have sometimes structured philosophical discussions of experience in the context of Husserlian phenomenology, but also exposes the constitutive contradictions that the notion of "lived experience" carries within itself, precisely because inescapably bound up with language and other signifying practices.[105]

The seeming redundancy of this last expression ("lived experience") is already significant in the context of the *Angoysses*, especially since "experience" is often taken to be the process, act, or event that one traverses or "lives through." But to say that there are *lived* experiences is to imply that there might also be experiences that are not lived, or not lived fully, experiences that are not even lived at all. Who would measure, and by what criteria, the extent to which experiences are or are not lived? And what would constitute an "unlived" experience if the very terms by which experience have usually been defined would seem to equate it with life itself? If experience is not correlated necessarily to its "having-been-lived-through" or accomplishment in presence, then does the conceptual apparatus that has long defined

experience in terms of its presence, perception, and consciousness —in short, its presumed "livedness"— founder? Is experience reflective or unreflective, sensation or interpretation, nonlinguistic or discursive? Is it all of these, none of them, both all and none at one and the same time? Is experience experienced first-hand, or is experience only registered *ex post facto*, in its retrospective reconstruction? What is the time of experience?

The theorization of trauma, fantasy, and unconscious or "unclaimed" experience in psychoanalytic theory has made crucial contributions to these discussions, and trenchant critiques of traditional conceptions of experience emerging from various theoretical and philosophical quarters—be they feminist, poststructuralist, postmarxist, postcolonial— have restaged the terms through which "experience" is conceived, accentuating the problems that occur should one seek to characterize experience solely in terms of event, consciousness, presence, or its narrativizability.[106] It is due in large part to these theoretical interventions of the last few decades that whenever "experience" is invoked, the difficulties and obscurities of translation and figuration must be taken into account, particularly if experience seems to be at once given in language and resistant to the very notion of givenness *tout court* (in historian Joan Wallach Scott's formulation, "experience is a linguistic event [it doesn't happen outside established meanings], but nor is it confined to a fixed order of meaning").[107] Some practitioners of critical theory and cultural studies center on the possibility that experience is mediated in language as a signifying social practice, and thus cannot be presumed to constitute a pre-existing referent simply conveyed through language inasmuch as it is only given in, and given over to, the labor of cultural translation.[108] How can experience be the object of language if it is also the means through which language is learned, approached, lived?[109] If experience is the means by which language is lived and learned, to what extent is experience, in turn, only possible because mediated by language? Indeed, with its flux of significations, what does "experience" name —or rather, *how* does "experience" name— and, if it is itself a name, to what extent is "experience" discursive?

It is often argued, and rightly so, that the provisional forms that the figure of experience takes, and the deformations that this figure undergoes, cannot be extricated from the particular language-game — grammars, media, idioms, and other discursive practices— within which they are continually negotiated and resignified. In these terms, any conceptual effort to abstract a self-identical concept and monadic theoretical entity from the social text in which it is given would inevitably falter insofar as experience is never received outside of a particular language nor simply delivered through the language in which it is given. In a Wittgensteinian mood, one might maintain that the local grammars of "language games" configure how "experience" is constituted, but not determined, by linguistic practices and signifying usages.[110] Others, in a more Foucaultian vein, might call experience a "discursive formation," and ask after the production of an epistemic domain of presupposed discursive forms that delimit what can appear as an intelligible object of experience in discourse and what must be relegated to its limits (madness, for example, is one such "undifferentiated experience").[111] From this vantage, discourse plays a constitutive role in the discursive construction of experience, performatively circumscribing and bounding what counts as intelligible *to* experience and available *as* experience in terms of regulatory social norms and coercive interpretative schemas.[112]

Still others might insist that the interrelations between experience and language are not just that of construction, as a constructivist perspective might urge, but also that of a certain deconstruction. For if the foregoing perspectives suggest that experience never appears apart from the discursive and social conditions that frame this appearance (and what counts as appearance), a critique informed by deconstruction might suggest not only that there is no such thing as *a* language, or language *as such*, in which experience appears but that experience cannot be considered apart from its *différance* from itself and thus never appears, nor could ever appear, as such.[113] This critique would shift considerations from the domain of appearances, a phenomenological conceit, to the deferrals, distances, and differences which mark any effort to outline and

circumscribe an epistemic field of experience as it is thought to appear in language and/or discourse, to the point where the distinction between appearance and disappearance, presence and absence, no longer holds and where that very conceptual schema comes to be displaced. For it is not enough to conclude with the constructivist postulation that experience is given into language in part and in parts, nor that discourse produces experience as its discursive effect, not least of all because such constructivist formulations unwittingly reinvoke a metaphysics of the subject by placing language/discourse in the subject-position of a personified agency that monocausally and unilaterally performs the act of producing determined effects.

While deconstruction has sometimes been accused of reducing experience to language, it could be argued that it is this precise logocentric tendency of confining experience to meaning that deconstruction seeks to question through the invocation of "mark," "trace," "text," and "writing," (non)concepts which would undo the language of structuralism as a reigning explanatory paradigm.[114] For even if it were to be contended along constructivist lines that experience is given in and by language, it still remains to be asked what is *excluded* —what is not given or could not be given— in order for a given experience to be constituted and circumscribed in the first place. In this sense, the question is not merely whether experience is inextricable from a certain grammar without which it could not appear or come to be known, but how experience does *not* merely appear as a intuitive phenomenality and is *not* simply given as a representational content in language, precisely because experience is bound up with what Derrida famously called "textuality" —an open-ended web and weave of referrals and deferrals, differences and references, a force-field of social relations that both constitute and deconstitute "experience," always already in difference from itself.[115]

In these terms, the critical point is not just that experiences are given in language and delimited by social and signifying practices which determine a domain of what can appear as "experience," but that the very conceits of givenness, appearance, and language which frame constructivist postulations are themselves

never stable, self-identical, or secure. They are already suspended in a larger web of "writing," broadly construed: a tissue of textuality that never exists or subsists in and of itself but is always caught within an illimitable context of differential referrals, textual traces, citational chains, infinite iterations. How does experience, given over to the "writing" it always "was," mark a vanishing point in language, whereby the distinction between appearance and disappearance can no longer be maintained? As Derrida queries in *L'écriture et la difference*: "can one speak of an *experience* of the other or of difference? Has not concept of experience always been determined by the metaphysics of presence? Is not experience always the encounter of an irreducible presence, a perception of a phenomenality?"[116] To speak of an experience of the other is, in Derrida's idiom, to speak of that which is other to experience altogether, for an experience of difference would become an experience without experience as it is traditionally understood, an experience without the presence and phenomenality with which it is frequently identified.[117]

An instructive predicament emerges in this context, in the wake of deconstruction, concerning the relation of experience to language. It is sometimes propounded that (a) experience transcends language while, oppositely, it is argued that (b) that the language of experience tends, inevitably, to an experience of language, if not an experience *as* language. The first argument seeks to demarcate a prelinguistic or nonlinguistic domain for experience (be it affect, trauma, emotion) that would either precede language/discourse or fully evade it, such as Julia Kristeva's (in)famous theory of the libidinal "semiotic" baffling the paternal "symbolic."[118] Problems immediately arise with such postulations, however, if Nietzsche's critique of grammar is applied, for then the possibility arises that the claim that experience is prior to signification or outside language turns out to be a rhetorical positing of experience as existing temporally and spatially "before" signification.[119] Recall that for Nietzsche, figures of speech have congealed over time into notional concepts, a reification of figure into conceptual form that has subsequently been interred and disannulled, just as the received grammar of the subject been mistaken for a substance

metaphysics: the linguistic subject is delusively assumed to mime what is presumed to be a corresponding and preexisting ontology of substances,[120] a claim which resonates with Hélisenne's affirmation that her "experience" is a literary act rather than an experience undergone by her person or in person. To what extent, might the very notion of a prelinguistic experience be no more than a discursive fiction produced by the apparatus of grammar that it is mistakenly thought to predate? Might the conceit of a prediscursive experience that language would simply represent and reflect turn out to be a fiction retroactively posited by language itself? Have the figural effects of rhetoric been mistaken for a phenomenological concept? If Nietzsche's critique were reprised in this context, it would follow that the conceit of a prelinguistic or nonlinguistic experience turns out to be an effect of this performative positing with the consequence that experience, far from predating this performative positing in a prediscursive reality, ironically ends up being produced by it. That is, the argument that experience precedes language is a fiction that retroactively instates experience as a foundation of the very rhetorical act of which it is in fact only the effect. For the syntax of subject and predicate, by dint of custom and constraint, stays lodged in a grammar of the subject, a grammar that privileges an acting "I" who would bring about predicative action and who would stand "behind" the predicative deed it initiates.

Problems also emerge with the second form of contention, one which seeks to describe experience as language itself. Giorgio Agamben, for example, is said to privilege a notion of *experimentum linguae,* a pure experience of language in its self-reference, "an experience of language as such," according to which what is experienced is the "fact" that there is language, though this exteriority is only to be understood *within* language itself.[121] Perhaps more strongly still, Peter de Bolla contends that interpretation is impelled by the power of language to adequate, to be proper or appropriate to, what one feels in an aesthetic experience.[122] This latter claim seems to suggest that language can mime and reproduce the experience it expresses, implying that, by a sort of linguistic monism, experience is simply composed of language or reducible to it

as language's determined effect and product. Indeed, such a version of linguistic determinism would presuppose a mimetic and referential conceit of language whereby a referent ("language as such") would merely be reflected or deflected by the representational functions of language.

The problem to which such perspectives give rise is that an argument presupposing that there might be such a thing, or rather "thing-in-itself," which would be language "as such" in its pure and self-referential linguisticality, an expressive language capable of capturing aesthetic experience, risks charges of linguistic idealism and structuralist formalism. Indeed, while both of these aforementioned arguments may at first glance seem to be offering opposite contentions —the first espousing the ineffable and alinguistic, the second for the all too effable and linguistic— both rely on a problematic view of language's referential functions by presuming a causal relation between language and its referents. For whether one states that language fails to adequate experience and endlessly skirts around the ineffable, or that language approximates experience to the point of mimetically representing it, in both formulations language is taken to only reflect or deflect a preexisting referent ("experience"), rather than playing a constitutive role in delimiting, though not determining, experience. The question that would then need to be asked, at least if the wish is to undo the binary terms in which these debates take place, would concern the extent to which it remains important to contest the logocentric postulate of "language as such" *and,* at one and the same time, to underscore the textual (de)constructions of experience.

This last insight is taken up by Butler in a different context when she suggests that even if bodily experience and language prove inseparable, neither completely collapsible nor fully distinct, this need not mean that they are identical.[123] It is by means of the figure of a chiasm, one Merleau-Ponty had used decades earlier, that Butler suggests that the experience of language and the language of experience remain both indissociable from one another and irreducible to each other, in the sense that experience would be both partially given in language but not for that matter simply knowable beyond it or fully expressed through it.

Although there may well be discursive norms and interpretative frames in place that oversee what counts as knowable, understandable, or recognizable experience —and what does not— this does not entail that experience is merely an effect of language or composed of language or, conversely, that experience is dialectically opposed to language and locatable beyond linguistic confines in some ineffable, separable ontological outside. The phenomenological diction here is perhaps somewhat misleading, for to say that experience is given in language, or even *as* language, is not to say that it is fully "*of* language": if experience is given in language, then perhaps it is given only in part and "in parts," or better, it is at once given and not given, there and not there, offered and withdrawn at one and the same time.[124]

Following Butler's terms, to say that experience is not merely a linguistic effect, or simply made up of language —and that it cannot be "known" without language— is to suggest that it also eludes full referential and representational capture within linguistic terms (and how "language" is being referred to in these debates needs to be rethought). It does not follow as a consequence that experience has a prelinguistic or extratextual ontology, nor that language mimetically reflects a prior reality of experience, for the very moment one attempts to dissever language from experience and interpose a disjunction between them, a certain chiasm, not a chasm, reemerges.[125] Even if experience might well evade or exceed referential capture within language, it also resists any attempt to determine and define this evasion and excess in ontological terms outside language inasmuch as the very effort to delimit an extradiscursive outside for experience, a separate ontological domain of experience before or beyond language, is itself a *signifying* act that, far from keeping experience untainted by signifying processes such as language, only produces a further discursive formation of it. To say that experience is before or beyond language is still to *say* that it is so, the ontological outside already signified as an ontological outside (even if this need not mean, once again, that experience is transparently delivered through language or fully expressed within linguistic terms).

Rather than attempting to adjudicate or equate the various philosophical differences, vocabularies, and concerns of all those just mentioned, it might be conjectured that, regardless of whether the accent is placed on construction or deconstruction, one of the crucial points these discussions emphasize is that experience remains entangled in the referentially unreliable toils of figuration and that it is not simply *outside* language—neither purveyed *through* language nor unilaterally produced *by* it— but, in a crucial sense, experience, given and not given as it is, pushes the limits of language itself.[126] For, as this chapter has suggested, in the *Angoysses* experience is inseverable from acts of literature or "exercises," to use Hélisenne's term. If Hélisenne's claim that the experience of the *Angoysses* is a literary act, a doing, is taken seriously, then it would seem that experience is "performative" rather than an "expressive" of identity —it is what is repeatedly done, undone, and redone rather than what one is or what one has. And, perhaps just as importantly, it would seem that experience does not exist apart from fiction and narrative: experience might well be the name given to the account that one offers of oneself, an account whose full accountability cannot be assured apart from the figural and narrative forms it takes, and fails to take, precisely because this account does not fully coincide with the experience it recounts and cannot fully represent in linguistic form that which it seeks to narrate.[127] As was seen when reviewing the temporal quandaries concomitant to Hélisenne's postmortem narration, the "I" which seeks to narrate its experience is consigned to tell a story that does not temporally coincide with the experience it describes, often only belatedly reporting on and retroactively reconstructing the experience which has already passed, an experience which the narrative cannot fully replace or restore.[128] The literary act of giving an account of experience cannot simply represent or reproduce exactly *what happened* in narrative form, as if experience were simply a noumenal referent to be revealed or relayed in language, even as that narrative, for all its failures and ellipses, might well seek to attest to an experience of some kind. In this way, experience resists the very language that is accorded it, even if there can be no experience without the language by which it comes to be known (or

fails to be known). For in the *Angoysses,* the narrative of experience exposes the way experience cannot be fully given in, or as, the narrative given of it, even as that narrative lives on as a persistent reminder and spectral remainder of an experience that cannot be simply negated.

Indeed, because the paradox of unbearable experience in the *Angoysses* is rhetorically rendered, there is more at stake than just the *representation* of a paradox. It would be more precise to speak of a paradoxical rhetoric, precisely because the difficulty has less to do with a representation of a paradox than a paradox in representation itself, less the representation of a problem than a problem with the form this representation takes. For if experience is inevitably enmeshed in figuration, not simply delivered through language because constituted by it, and unthinkable without it, then the very conceit of a self-possessed subject who acts upon experience and in whom experience originates turns out to be, as both Hélisenne and Nietzsche claim in different ways, in part the discursive effect of the grammar of the subject in which experience is given, a subject-predicate propositional form that is not quite felicitous for the paradox the *Angoysses* portrays and which, by dint of the novel's rendition of an experience without a subject or one not experienced in person, breaks down in the course of the narrative.

It will be remembered that one of the problems encountered early on concerned the temporal and grammatical antimonies that arises when discussing experience. In the *Angoysses,* this had to do with the status of waiting: is waiting an experience or simply in wait of experience? When Hélisenne's story is looked over, it might seem possible that experiences of various kinds have, in retrospect, been had. But is the *ex post facto* reconstruction of experience —proclaiming, only afterwards that "yes, this was an experience all along!"— the same as *experiencing* experience at the moment of its unfolding? Is there even such a moment? Or would this presume that experience could only be viewed from the present or in presence? When is it even sure, if it ever is, that experience is being undergone self-presently and consciously? Is it rather that experience was never possible in presence, precisely because only labeled and

understood as such after the fact? This problem is not particular to the novel's portrayal of experience, although greatly emphasized by it, but is found in the very conceit of experience as it is most commonly understood: on the one hand, the language of experience that has been hitherto reviewed implies that there is a self-identical subject who stands "behind" these experiences, one who maintains itself as it collects and houses many different experiences within its purview. Despite the implied transformations one would weather in passing from inexperience to experiences, there would seem to be a subject who orchestrates its experiences, one who stands before or behind the experience it collects, appropriates, and manufactures into experience.[129]

On the other hand, and contrary to this model, it would seem that experience is "performative" rather than an "expressive," that is, that there is no subject who stands before or beyond its experiences but one only produced as the retroactive effect of the experiences it undergoes.[130] The fact that experience must be obtained, the fact that it is not simply "there" from the start but must be worked toward, already belies the presumption that experience originates in and is orchestrated by a subject, precisely because experience is not simply an inborn trait but must be gradually acquired, if it ever is, through repeated acts. If experience is only gained through reiterated *doing*, a repeated series of acts, then experience is not there from the beginning and one does not start off *experienced*—indeed, experience seems to be only retrospectively reconstructed, reconstituted only *after* multiple experiences in the wake of which "experience" is said to be gained—which leaves unexplained how it is possible to speak of a subject before or behind experience if the subject is only intelligible in terms of the experience it is or has.

On one side, then, there this a temporal predicament, whereby a subject before or behind experience cannot be presumed at the same time that experience is defined in terms of an originating subject, and, on the other, there remains a the temporal problem of how and when experience is experienced. If one only comes to experience proper after the fact, in a retroactive reconstruction made

after many experiences, then is experience ever present to oneself or a self, or is it always belated, deferred, untimely (does experience always come too late)? Have phenomenological conceits of experience labored under the fiction of experience's temporal priority, as if it had been there implicitly from the start, as if it were only waiting to be found after repetitive practice when it is in fact only retrospectively considered to have been there all along, like an abiding substance or a possession that might be owned and kept? Does not the iterability of experience points to its instability, volatility, or contingency, insofar as it must be continually repeated and reinstated in order to be maintained—if it can be, for once one becomes "experienced," if one ever does, does it not remain unclear whether one stays that way insofar as experience must be continually sought after? And if a subject changes with each experience it gains in order to become experienced, and if there are many experiences one might succumb to, then would it seem that, strictly speaking, there was never a selfsame subject at all behind the experiences it suffers?

This is precisely the predicament that the *Angoysses* highlights. But to say that in the *Angoysses* experience has no self-present subject is not to say there has been no experience at all, just none that would be recognized under that name or within the usual terms by which this conceit is understood. It is not that there is categorically no experience or nothing experienced in the novel, just no experience which originates in a self-present subject or which could be experienced as a subject in presence. In sketching an experience without a self-present subject or an experience which belongs to no subject in presence, the *Angoysses* has not merely represented a paradoxical amorous experience, nor simply described love as unrepresentable, but has marked the limits of representation itself: experience in the novel is delineated in and as the very impossibility of direct representation, even if this has not obliterated representation altogether. For if the *Angoysses* has not represented experience as it might be commonsensically identified, the novel has not merely represented a denial of amorous experience or an amorous experience of denial either. The fact that the text of the *Angoysses* has been written, and remains to be read, constitutes an

experience in another sense: a literary *experiment* of sorts, similar to the way Montaigne's *essais* were "trials" or experimentations in writing.

This returns to a question posed in the introduction of this chapter: if precious little seems to come to pass materially between the lovers within the narrative does there not, nonetheless, remain *this* narrative detailing all that has not come to pass, testifying to a literary experimentation of some kind? Is there a difference between narrating a series of events and offering up a text as testimony? In these terms, when Hélisenne claims to have "experienced it all [*le tout expérimenté*]" she might well be referring to the other sense of *expérimenter,* namely, that of experiment, and offering an experimental testimony rather than a narrative sequence of events. For in having written the *Angoysses,* Hélisenne has in a way "experimented it all," fabricating a narrative in which the boundaries distinguishing experimental fiction and empirical experience fall apart. This latter formulation moves somewhat hastily, of course, since its grammar is not quite right for the predicament it is meant to describe, misleadingly implying as it does that "Hélisenne" would be the subject who masterfully governs this scene of self-making. As has been seen, it is not simply that Hélisenne has experimented it all herself by having written the *Angoysses* but that her very "self" is just as much an experimental and figural effect of the writing in question. The narrator who claims to have composed the *Angoysses* is also a fiction herself, her self a fiction: "Hélisenne" is, to a certain extent, a discursive effect of the narrative that she only alleges to have written but which has also, by virtue of the fact that she is a personage of its story, written her.

The challenge that the *Angoysses* so trenchantly poses, then, is to consider the ways in which experience is both given in language and irreducible to it; the ways in which language delimits experience but does not simply determine it; the ways in which fiction constitutes a literary "experience" unmoored from the ontological and metaphysical predicates normally tethered to this concept, and thus an experience without experience itself. In Hélisenne's literary experiment "experience" becomes a text and its presumed

"undergoer" —the so-called "subject"— a grammatical fiction, for the "experiencer," far from a causative agent or expressive self, is seen to be only belatedly and retroactively attached to an experience that it could not have originated and that it could never have undergone in presence. Besieging a mimetic model of linguistic representation which would presume that an experience "in person" precedes the literary act of figuring experience, Hélisenne's narrative demands that one ask what follows for the presumptive subject of experience when the presupposition that language either faithfully reflects or deceptively deflects a prior ontological order and prelinguistic reality is thrown into question. If the various theoretical idioms under consideration throughout these chapters are provisionally allied, though without synthesizing them as though they were one, then it would seem that if experience is always figured it is not just this figuration, but nor is it a reified referent that exists apart from its figuration. It is, as Hélisenne might say, an act of literature, a performative literary exercise which does not negate experience completely, as that which happens to no one, nor affirms it fully, as that which belongs exclusively to oneself. To speak of the (in)accessibility and (un)availability of experience in language, neither completely predetermined by it nor fully existing beyond it, is to recall the extent to which the very intelligibility and recognizability of experience, if there is any, is regulated by certain grammatical and rhetorical constraints that point to the partiality and instability of experience's seeming "givenness." Indeed, the phenomenological concerns with the givenness of experience —what is given to experience, what is given as experience, how the given is given to experience— all come under question if experience is only given, if it is, in a figural idiom or medium and as a cultural text—and thus never fully given as such.

Reading the *Angoysses* in the wake of deconstructive and poststructuralist interrogations of experience would seem to suggest that to question the givenness of experience is not to identify what would be opposed to or transcendent to experience in ontological or epistemological terms, as if one first knew what experience was in order to point to what lies beyond it, but to explore the ways in which *the concept of*

experience in and of itself resists itself, how the seeming difference between experience and its outside is in fact a difference, a *différance* even, within the very theorization of experience itself. Problems emerge not simply with the attempt to specify what seems to evade or exceed experience, as if experience were already understood as an ontological given and established as an unquestionable ground but, rather, with the very attempt to place experience *itself* within the confines of conceptual determinability. For it might well be that any endeavor to disentwine experience from its inexperience or nonexperience is prone to founder and that any attempt to identify "experience" in and of itself will always be liable to a certain faltering, precisely because experience is itself inextricable from an idiom or medium of some kind, from textuality construed in its deconstructive sense —a web of self-differing deferrals and referrals, a weave of self-deferring differences and references, a network of marks and traces— rather than language *per se*, in that the very notion of "language" still lends itself to a certain linguisticism or logocentrism. It is not enough to conclude that experience is "given in language," for a part of questioning the givenness of experience requires a vigilance attending to what remains ungiven to experience and what remains ungiven as experience: the very remains of givenness itself.

And, indeed, when the various critical conversations taking place in some quarters of continental philosophy are taken into consideration, it is easy to get the sense that, though invariably mentioned, experience is never quite given, or at least never given in full, even as it remains.[131] While Montaigne once maintained that death was the only experience that itself could not be experienced, philosophers from Benjamin to Lyotard and Agamben have suggested, in one way or another, that the death of a certain kind of experience has already come to pass, the loss of its former aura now irretrievable, and thus some of the experiences spoken of are no longer, if indeed they ever were. This is a provocative claim to make, not only because to speak in this way is to use language catachrestically and improperly—figuratively personifying experience as an entity capable of life and death— but because it remains unclear whether experience ever

"was" to begin with.[132] Given the difficulty for thinkers from Hume to Husserl to figure out just what exactly that unruly term "experience" entails, how did experience expire if it was never quite born? Does experience continue to be reborn or, having deceased, does it live on undead?

When some philosophers proclaim that experience is dead, are they categorically declaring the death of all experience or just the death of a particular version of experience, one that was never viable or livable at all because presupposing the mastery of an orchestrating and originating subject, and thus the death of what never even was? Considering that it should have perished by now, experience remains strikingly resilient and resistant: evermore declared dead, its name is continually invoked, impossibly, in its own wake. Undying, experience defies the repeated historical promulgations of its death, paradoxically living on in the various discourses which proclaim that it is no more and no longer, an experience given in death, if not given as the very death of experience itself. Such a formulation returns to the very paradox that has animated this reading of the *Angoysses* all along: an experience that cannot be lived through, even as it lives on. It is a return to that which was never left, nor could ever be, for even if "we" might not entirely live through experience, "we" certainly cannot live without it. The *Angoysses* emphasizes this bind with its portrait of two lovers who come to find that the only experience available to them is the one they will never have in presence or in person, and thus no experience they can ultimately claim their own, even as this experience endures in its very unrealizability and impossibility. If the heartache that befalls Hélisenne is not one she can actually undergo, one that dies away at the very moment she wishes to experience it, then it is because she cannot undergo such hurting that she hurts: she suffers precisely because she cannot experience her suffering. Rather than dying from a love she experiences as her own, the formulation describing her predicament would have to carry the weight of the paradox the novel has embellished all along.[133] For it is not enough to conclude that Hélisenne is merely dying *from* love. No, with greater trenchancy, and to stronger effect, perhaps one ought to say: Hélisenne is dying to love.

"I love you despite you, and despite myself"
early modern

i. airy appeals

How to tell him, "I want you to know yourself free" without the phrase trapping him between its paws of words, even to caress him and, in its desire to purvey to him its good intention, force him to hold back? [. . .] *can one give without announcing it? How to announce without speech? Silence is also of speech.*
—Hélène Cixous, *Limonade, tout était si infini*

'I give you up, I have decided it': the most beautiful and most inevitable of the most impossible declaration of love. Imagine that I must thus prescribe to the other (and it is renunciation) to be free (for I need its liberty to address myself to the other as other, in desire as in renunciation). I would prescribe to him therefore to be able to not respond—to my appeal, to my invitation, my expectation, my desire. And I have to make a sort of obligation for him to stay free, to prove in this way his liberty, which I need, precisely, to appeal, to wait, to invite. It is not only me, nor my own desire that I engage in this way in the double constraint of a double bind, it is the other [. . .] As if I called someone, for example on the telephone, in telling him in sum: I do not want that you wait for my call or ever depend upon it, go take a walk, be free to not respond. And to prove it, the next time that I will call you, do not respond, otherwise I will break up with you. If you respond to me, it's finished between us.
—Jacques Derrida, *Politiques de l'amitié*

"Love me always, tell me never" —such is the plaint issued by a heroine of Catherine Bédacier Durand's nouvelle *La Comtesse de Mortane* (1699), when she concedes, at last, to her lover's entreaties.[1] She tells her beloved no more than he already knows—that he loves her, that he should love her—but in the same breath disclaims the possibility of that love by enjoining him never to speak of it again. In this way, the speaker pre-empts the response from the beloved she does not in fact expect, consigning to quietus a rejoinder from him never actually by her besought. And yet, because the speaker *says* that her beloved is to love her without him saying so, she herself cannot help but paradoxically confirm aloud that which she had originally sought to silence.[1] Her sanction not to speak is thus fundamentally impossible to fulfill, for the interdiction not to say anything about love cannot itself be said, not without already having said it, not without already having transgressed the command of quietude it had in its first motion attempted to enforce. Enmeshed as it is in performative contradiction, the speaker's imperative can only but interfere with its own efficacy. For if this injunction says not to speak of love but does so anyhow, then when it speaks its jussive language acts against itself; it says what cannot be said, it says what it has no warrant to.[2] The heroine's adjuration might not want to speak *of* love but it is also helpless to avoid speaking *in* love or *as* a mode of love; though the injunction may wish to institute an order, failing to do so, it can only enact its

own miscarriage. Similar to the other heroines that will be mentioned in these pages, the speaker of *La Comtesse de Mortane* ultimately makes a demand that cannot be one even as it is one; a demand that defers to demand only to defer demand, a demand, in other words, that cannot but dim, diminish, all demand.

It is this modality of nearly self-cancelling amorous address—a solicitation which recedes at the very moment of its possible enactment; a verbal gift which is to be ignored by the interlocutor at the instance of its reception— which will be pursued in these pages, particularly in what has come to be called the seventeenth-century *roman d'analyse* or "psychological novel."[3] Already this statement requires further explanation, however, for although the term *roman d'analyse* is routinely used to designate those shorter novella forms that emerged in the wake of the baroque novelistic tradition and in the context of second-wave salon writing, this category —like most literary-historical categories— remains a contested and unsettled concept: what is "psychological" about the psychological novel? What definition of psychology —and whose— is being presupposed in the very definition of this literary-historical concept? Furthermore, does the very usage of the term "psychological novel" retroactively attribute modern notions of psychology and subjectivity that would have been alien to early modern theorizations and representations? Indeed, in what ways might early modern fictions resist the modern and contemporary understandings of personhood, interiority, and subject-centered emotion that are often ascribed to them? How might a reconsideration of this so-called "genre" yield a provocative questioning of some of the prevailing presumptions operative in conventional literary-historical accounts of seventeenth-century French fiction?

It would be difficult to explore all of these queries within the confines of this chapter, especially since its main purpose lies neither in the attempt to chart the development of the novel in early modern France nor in the effort to establish what the "genre" of the *roman d'analyse* might be. Suffice it to say that, in this context, the *roman d'analyse* betokens no more than a *name* given to a constellation of novels that have been labeled as such by modern literary criticism, a name that cannot fully describe or circumscribe that

which it seeks to denote. To refuse to confer a pregiven meaning to this term —to acknowledge its usage in literary criticism without thereby claiming a fully knowable and stable referent for it— is neither to do away with it completely nor to accept it uncritically. It is, rather, to signal the difficulty involved when taking into consideration this troubled term that has been leagued to contemporary criticism after many years of currency within literary studies. Although the very possibility of identifying what the "psychological novel" "is" or "does" will founder in the course of these readings —precisely because one of their implicit aims is to suspend this charged generic term of its usual associations and attributes— it is important to first survey what this category has conventionally come to mean in some quarters of literary criticism.

The "psychological novel" is often used to refer to novellas attributed to Madame de Lafayette, Du Plaisir, and Catherine Bernard (amongst others), novellas that are said to emerge at the historical point of convergence between earlier, baroque novelistic conventions —syntactically convoluted sentences, intricate plots, multi-layered narration— and the newfangled rhetorical techniques of what was to be called the *nouvelle*, or novella form —brevity, bleached style, ellipsis. These fictions are furthermore said to privilege the "interior" life of protagonists over the physical exploits emphasized in genres like the epic and are thought to prefigure both the aesthetics of sensibility and the moralizing language which was to come in eighteenth-century sentimental novels. Torn in twain between love and virtue, intimacy and chastity, the conflicted thoughts and feelings of the protagonists are described within a restrained and sober scenography where very little seems to happen materially because more time is given to the analysis of looks, letters, attitudes, and words.[4] However, even these seemingly simple postulations come under question upon further scrutiny because of the presuppositional definitions they imply (namely, what an "interior" life is, what narrative "action" entails etc.). It will not do to simply defy or defend the conventional characterization of the *roman d'analyse,* for even prior to accepting or abandoning this definition of the psychological novel, one would have to ask what tacit definitions of "psychology," "interiority" and "action"

are implicitly at work in these various theoretical demarcations and to take into account the complex and checkered history of canonization in France which was, and remains, implicated in complex gender/genre politics (for example, why are early modern and old regime literary works attributed to French women writers usually associated with conceits of "emotion," "experience," "sentimentality" and "psychology" rather than action or realism?).[5]

While it would be useful to explore the ways in which the term *roman d'analyse* fails to describe that which it names, the novels included within its purview evermore exceeding the descriptive claims of the generic label associated with them, that is not the only critical point to be made, or at least not the one that will principally be made in this chapter. For even if questions of genre/gender history remain inescapable when considering early modern French fiction the concerns of this essay are of another order than that of merely ratifying or disproving received literary-historical categories. To be more precise, the intent of this chapter is to concentrate on selected scenes from the only novella attributed to the famed early modern theoretician of the novel, "Du Plaisir" —a shadowy signature with no certain biographical background— and to unravel some of the philosophical implications of this story's paradoxical poetics of self-cancelling amorous address. This novella, *La Duchesse d'Estramène* (1682), has been placed within a lineage of psychological novels written in the wake of famous Lafayatte's *La Princesse de Clèves* (1678) and has been interpreted as the exemplification of his aesthetic theory of the novel.[6] This fiction proves instructive for the particular philosophical paradoxes it poses with regard to amorous experience and expression, paradoxes that also emerge, albeit in refracted form, in the fictions of Lafayette and Bernard. Consider that in the *Princesse de Clèves* a princess confesses to a passion she never acts upon (but which is taken to be an adulterous act by her husband all the same) and that in Bernard's *Eléonor d'Yvrée* (1687) the heroine offers up her beloved to her best friend (but which she considers to be an act of love itself). In Du Plaisir's *Duchesse d'Estramène* a wed woman gives up a passion that, she comes to realize, was already given up, redundantly

renouncing that which she never even had in presence.[7] What makes Du Plaisir's novel kindred with the works of Lafayatte and Bernard is that it exposes love's constitutive *ambivalence* rather than merely celebrating or criticizing it.[8] As will be seen —or rather, won't be, as sight will become a major question— Du Plaisir's novella challenges both received notions and modern representation of amorous experience by presenting lovers who do not act upon their passion materially but who are not, for that reason, simply practitioners of sublimated and spiritualized love (be it courtly, Christian, or platonic). In the aporetic rhetoric elaborated in *Estramène*, amorous experience is not so much *denied* as *defined* by the ways in which it cannot be experienced in person or in presence, making for a language versed in paradox and a rhetorical address self-abnegating in presentation. The section that follows will be devoted to clarifying this claim, situating Du Plaisir's novella in something like a non-exhaustive literary-historical context, and sketching the particular problematic this chapter addresses, after which a selective reading of *Estramène* can be pursued against the backdrop of other second-wave salon fiction.

ii. idioms of inexperience

my experience made me succumb
—Cotolendi, *Mademoiselle de Tournon* (1670)

experience is the very lack of what is "lived"
—Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, *La poésie comme experience*

Put one's life in that which cannot be touched at all.
—Simone Weil, "Celui qu'il faut aimer est absent," *La pesanteur et la grâce*

The modality of love elaborated by the so-called *roman d'analyse,* as exemplified in Du Plaisir's fiction, constitutes what might be called an aporetic affinity or a dispossessing passion: an amorous relationship crafted by the ways in which lovers do *not* fully know each another's thoughts and feelings, and by the ways in which they do *not* make good on the possibility of direct assertion or robust exertion toward their beloveds.[9] As a character of Madeleine de Scudéry's *Mathilde* (1667) phrases it, "It is an error introduced into *le monde* […] to believe that declarations of love are necessary."[10] In this rendition, amorous encounters

become indistinguishable from their non-happening or non-eventfulness—impossible experiences that do not seem to come to pass even as they occur; amatory experiences that only obtain to the extent that they are left nearly unlived or well-nigh unclaimed— insofar as lovers plead of their beloved for nothing less than that which is less than nothing: to leave their love untainted of literal response and untouched by the fruit of consequence; to leave it chaste of intervention and empty-handed of deserts. Lovers, as depicted in the so-called *roman d'analyse*, will often supply no indication of what their beloved could possibly do or say that would allow them to act for nothing is asked of them—or better, if they are asked, they are asked to do nothing. "I do not plead for thee to love, but to let thyself be loved," so this command, which is no command, might be paraphrased in reprising a poetic letter from Ovid, for the overture of this (non)command bears none of the ballasts of willful demand.[11]

A protagonist of Lafayette's *Princesse de Clèves*, M. de Nemours, affords an example of this when he steals the portrait of the princess he adores and asks of her that she let this pass: "If you have seen what I've dared to do," he tells her, "have the goodness […] to let me believe that you ignore it; I don't dare ask for more."[12] Here Nemour's behest is directed toward his beloved while also leaving her nearly ungrazed of its claims. As an imperative so weightless of demand it simply is no longer, his speech etherealizes into a kind of grace that beneficently renders his beloved needless, superfluous even, to an imperative that does not require her response even when it seems to most bear her address (in fact Nemours promptly "withdr[aws] and [does] not wait for her response").[13] For his command requests nothing more than that which *cannot* be done by the powers of his beloved's action or reaction inasmuch as he beckons that the *status quo* of their unconsummated desire simply be left inviolable. As an entreaty inseparable from its very self-belittlement and eventual extinguishment, the hero's imperative here, a veritable "appeal of air," shrinks from riposte because it desists from soliciting one.[14] It can only ask in abstention, for if it asks at all, and this is far from

certain, it seems to ask, whisperingly, for no reply. "Refuse me every time that I will ask you such things," beckons the princess de Clèves, "but do not be offended that I ask them of you."[15]

Narrated in a language of seeming delicacy and diaphaneity, the self-abnegating apostrophes of love in the *roman d'analyse*, similar to that of the *Princesse de Clèves*, seem to neither want nor warrant response; their language may even appear to some as too weak, too wan, to want anything at all.[16] The prefatory note to Du Plaisir's *Estramène* gives a sense of this disclaiming rhetoric when it begins with the author's plea to the printer that he not "put her name" on the work as this is, apparently, a modest woman's first attempt: "However flattered that she may be by her friends that her opuscule will have a grand success," writes the supposed demoiselle, "she would be gladdened that those to whom [the work] is imputed do not deny it, in order that one does not set out to search for the real author of it."[17] The gesture is not exceptional for its time, a typical trope of feminine modesty that flowers in the prefatory notes of numerous novels that bear women's signatures (when dubbed the author of *La Princesse de Clèves*, Lafayette declared: "As for myself, I am flattered that I am suspected of it, and I think that I would admit to the book, if I were assured that the author would not come to me and ask it back").[18] In addition to this intriguing impersonation of feminine authorship, what is striking about Du Plaisir's preface is that the impersonated woman writer prefers to leave shadowy whether its authorship is even hers (an impersonation of an impersonation, as it were). While she does not disaffirm the possibility, neither does she claim responsibility, channeling in this way the ethos of abstensive action and address elaborated within the narrative of the novella itself, according to which lovers' aerial addresses seem to proffer their beloveds a verbal gift they must not confront, not without infringing upon the entreaty to act in no way or to speak nevermore.

Such a conception of a lovingly recessive request to engage in no more than purely attritive action was not alien to philosophers of the seventeenth century. Gabrielle Suchon's *Du célibat volontaire ou La vie sans engagement* (1700), for example, describes the "neutral" condition of choosing not to choose: "[the

neutral life] is a condition without commitments, and it contains all other states potentially without actually putting them into practice."[19] A "neutralist," to use Suchon's coinage, is one for whom abstraction and abstention, rather than consummation and commitment, become paramount, in a way anticipating Simone Weil's notion of "non-acting action [*action non-agissante*]."[20] This noncommittal posture also finds its correlative in Benedict de Spinoza's "Of the Origin and the nature of the Affects" (1677): "If anyone imagines he is loved by someone and does not believe that he has given any cause for it [...] he will love this someone in return."[21] Love is first imagined rather than substantiated, illusive and phantasmatic rather than materially realized, and it is only imaginable insofar as the beloved believes he has no part in his being loved at all; the less he has to *do* with his being loved is the only way he can return love, for the only recompense he can offer is by doing nothing he *could* do, by doing, in other words, nothing in the least.[22] In light of this remark from Spinoza's *Ethics*, the experience of love, if it can be called that, would appear to be constituted by its shared inexperience inasmuch as lovers beseech each other to take no part in a relationship that nonetheless includes only them.

But lest this all seem to resemble an idealized and romanticized vision of amorous abstinence, it is important to recall that issues of class, gender, sexuality, rank, marital status, and political organization (to name but a few) interfere with the development of amatory relationships in these fictions. It is not as though there is a metaphysical, existential, or psychological impossibility that inheres as a structural or formal necessity in every relationship and which leads to that relationship's downfall (in other words, it is not as though these relationships are simply impossible in and of themselves because of structural reasons or because of the psychological failings of its participants). It becomes necessary to move from a structuralist understanding of relation and from a voluntaristic or liberal individualist conception of will (subjects freely wielding choice and unilaterally controlling the effects of their actions), to a scene of constraint where amorous relationships never exist apart from unchosen and unwilled social and political impositions.[23] For if

these loves prove impossible it is due in large part to the interference of social relations and political pressures that disrupt the amorous rapport (whence the oft-discussed entwinement of *la cour* and *le coeur,* the court and the heart, which both inter-animate and interrupt one another). In Lafayette, Du Plaisir, and Bernard amorous relationships are framed against a historical background of court-life: the (public) warring and skirmishes of courtiers serve as a metaphor for the (private) combat of the lovers trying to court one another. The political ambitions of the court —with its arranged marriages, trysts, assignations, and intrigues— is usually at odds with the desires of the lovers but not simply opposed to them, for often court life provides the only means of encountering the beloved, even if mediated and at a distance. Indeed, the *cour* and the *coeur* would seem chiasmatically bound up with one another, inseparable from —but not identical to— one another and with each serving as both a vehicle and as an obstacle —an enabling and disabling condition— for the other, such that desire is not simply standing behind the cultural life of the court, waiting to be liberated, but is at once constituted and undone *by* court life.

Consider, in this vein, that the tale *Estramène* recounts is one of frustration rather than fruition: much of the novel's plot follows how the passion of Mlle d'Hennebury and the Duc d'Oslingam, two young lovers, is sacrificed because of courtly intrigue and unfortunate circumstance. The novel is narrated against the backdrop of the wars conducted between the French and the Spanish in the Netherlands (with the English coming to the assistance of the French), and explores how a series of mishaps and courtly plots obstruct the relationship between Mlle d'Hennebury and her beloved. Mme d'Hilmorre, a friend of Mlle d'Hennebury's mother, is principally responsible for this: desiring that her son, the Duc d'Estramène, marry Mlle d'Hennebury, she does everything in her power to facilitate and maintain their betrothal (the son is only happy to comply, as he pretends to desire Mlle d'Hennebury in the hope of getting out of another arranged marriage). Mlle d'Hennebury, after finally ceding to the Duc d'Estramène and becoming his wife, passes an unhappy existence with him—he claims he cannot love her, she finds herself constrained

by virtue to love a man she does not. By a twist of fate, the Duc d'Olsingam encounters the Duc d'Estramène and convinces him to treat his wife with all the love she deserves (and which he, of course, cannot give her). He makes this recommendation prior to his death, an incident to which Mlle d'Hennebury bears witness. Her emotive response to his illness and death reveals that traces of her desire for him have not been entirely effaced. But at this point, the narrative closes with an oddly moralizing scene: Mlle d'Hennebury comes to see that the Duc d'Estramène is not as unlovable as she had presumed, and he the same. She feels ashamed that there was a time when she did not love him as she does now.

From just this cursory sketch, there might be a wish to conclude that this narrative depicts a love between Mlle d'Hennebury and the Duc d'Olsingam that could never be and, if the novel's ending is to be believed, perhaps never even was. Contemporary readers might feel a certain sense of frustration themselves with a story that tells no more than the frustration of narrative itself: why, the exasperated reader might ask, did nothing happen between the lovers? Why did they not fight harder for their love? Does this mean that their love was inauthentic or ineffective because it did not materialize in a recognizable way? Has Mlle d'Hennebury merely rationalized her marriage to the Duc d'Estramène and repressed her desire for the Duc d'Olsingam? The possible irritation a modern reader might feel when faced with a love story where nothing ostensibly happens reflects a certain set of presuppositions regarding the conception and *telos* of love, particularly that love without physical possession is not authentic or real. There are two interpretative traps that emerge here: one is to presume that physical consummation is itself the apotheosis of amorous experience and that affective states are only actualized when they assume material embodiment in physical acts (a materialist argument). The other is to conclude that immaterial and insubstantial interaction always amounts to a conceit of platonic or courtly love, according to which bodiless, spiritual, and feather-light loves would be elevated and privileged over crudely "material" and erotic conquests (an idealist perspective). In some neo-platonic and courtly conceptions of love, desire is sublimated and passion

sublated: the seeming lack of tangible experience and concrete consequence is converted into a form of transitive activity, a practice of repression and abstention whereby the annulment of amorous experience becomes a sort of experience itself: the spiritual experience of having no "material" experience at all.[24] In what ways might the *roman d'analyse*, by virtue of its ethos of self-effacing amorous address, contest the "realist/idealist" ontological dualism presupposed in both materialist and idealist arguments? If beholden to elements of both conceptions is the *roman d'analyse* nonetheless irreducible to either?

But perhaps these novels settle for neither of these alternatives; perhaps they unsettle this very binary logic of alternatives itself. For it would seem that Du plaisir's novel in particular emphasizes that the act of telling stories of amorous experiences that do not happen (or cannot happen), stories that speak of what was never (or what will never be), is not simply an aesthetic trait or philosophical principle. It also reflects the vestiges of an historical debate regarding the referential and evidential claims of literature in general, and that of "women writers" in particular: Is the personal political? Is history different from story? To what extent is history no more than the story through means of which it is told? Who gets to tell history, and by what measure? What counts as public record? Who authorizes such accounts? This early modern quarrel, now called in literary-historical terms "The Ancients versus The Moderns," involved the increasing participation of a contingent of "women writers" embattled in the discussion and development of their prose fiction against the backdrop of a classical tradition that had largely excluded them.[25] Whereas discourses of "history" in early modern Europe were touted for their solemnity and seeming truthfulness, the self-proclaimed *histoires*[26] of the likes of Lafayette, Madame de Villedieu, and others —works now commonly denominated as "novels"— deliberately contaminated the formal and aesthetic differences separating so-called factual historiography from fanciful fiction.[27] In the self-styled "Histoires secrètes" of Anne de La Roche-Guilhen, Mme d'Aulnoy, Mme de Villedieu, Louise Saintonge, and others, history is retold in the name of those written out of —or simply written off by— the public record.[28] While a vague historical

framework is put into place, with allusions to famous figures and personages, the secret history seeks to describe the underside to canonical history. By taking into account those lives and loves that failed to be registered —those that failed to "make history" or who made little mark upon it— many fictions of the early modern period attributed to women weld conventions of romance with those of historiography,[29] a convergence conveyed by the very terms used to label their tales (*histoire*, meaning both "history" and "story," and *roman,* meaning both "romance" and "novel").[30]

In this sense, these hybrid historical romances, of which of which Du Plaisir's novella is but an example, supplement the grand narratives of the public domain from a reactive and responsive vantage by providing the negative outlines to accepted historic discourse (what was not known or could not have been seen) and by privileging experiences that never ended with eventful outcome rather than those that did (that which did not come to pass or did not happen to make it into public view).[31] Hence one will find Lafayatte's princess, a fictional character, suddenly appear in Henri II's court surrounded by noted historical figures as if she were too a part of that history, only uncounted by historians, and one will see that the "favorites" or favored women of La Roche-Guilhen's novels, historical personages, are now taking on a new fictional life in the La Roche-Guilhen's textual elaborations. There is not so much a collapse of history and story than it is collage: history is not simply enmeshed in fiction, as if it were itself nonfictional or opposed to fiction, but that history itself takes place *as* fiction. Subverting the distinction between historiographical factualism and the early modern trope of *vraisemblance* —the seemingly or plausibly true—[32] these fictions "claim the *implausibility* of the facts related as *evidence* of their truth,"[33] offering in the process a version of romance —and perhaps, history— that needs no substantiation by evidential and empirical authority, that is, by what can be directly perceived, presented, seen, known, or "shown."

The abstensive agency and anemic action, seemingly present in second-wave salon writing of seventeenth-century France, has not eluded critical purview.[34] Scholarship of French literary traditions has

perlustrated literature of the classical epoch with trained focus on the apparent inaction, selfless passivity, and enervated enterprise that its personages seem to display in regard to amorous experience: an attitude apotheosized by the conceit of the heroine's *repos* —"repose"; "calm"— often emphasized in the literature of the time.[35] Recent criticism has furthermore set afloat the idea that not consummating or concretizing love may *itself* constitute a modality of loving, and that abstinent verbalization or reticent interaction in the psychological novel need not mean that the barely-sustained bonds lovers may share is merely latent because unrealized or lacking because minimal.[36] From this perspective, it makes sense to ask whether certain seventeenth-century fictions constitute neither the unsophisticated counterpart of eighteenth-century sensationalism and sentiment nor the prudish antecedent of nineteenth-century decadence, as has sometimes been presumed, but, rather, an incisive interrogation of received notions of amorous experience. What to make of relationships that subsist, if they do, only by virtue of the fact that they are left unrealized and untouched? What complicity would this be that, so fragile and featherlight, it cannot even be acknowledged directly without dissolving its precariously brittle binds?[37] If such "relationships" (if this be indeed the word) are not sustained by willful disavowal, virginity, or repression but by a complicity so gossamer-thin it might not even exist, do they thus defy the phenomenological postulates of appearance, presence, and intentionality? In other words, if the lovers seem involved at all, their actions appearing anemic and their participation only passive, is this because their love leaves them perennially inexperienced?

Such questions will be considered in scenes and citations from a diverse compass of seventeenth-century intertexts with Du Plaisir's *Estramène* receiving the most sustained attention. While not quite representative of a genre or a trend —indeed, the term *roman d'analyse* will specify no more than a misnomer, a catachresis, for a collection of novels generally shepherded into the confines of this definition— the thematic and linguistic concerns of *Estramène* can be said to bear on a wider compass of works. Focusing on an important scene of *misrecognition*[38] between the lovers at the beginning of the novel

—an instance where the lovers remain blind to each other even as they look upon one another— the following readings ask whether the conventionally accepted expectation that the telos of love is either erotic possession —in all senses of the term— or platonic immateriality and psychoanalytic sublimation meets its limit in the *roman d'analyse* in general and in this novel in particular: might some the of most trenchant loves be those that, perhaps paradoxically, were never acted upon in presence? The section that ensues dwells on a vignette from Du Plaisir that affords an illuminating example of the kind of recessive, withdrawn, or abstemious contact exemplified by two lovers who cannot see eye to eye, even when they gaze upon each other.[39] In this fiction, as for the others that will grace these pages, lovers leave each other unseen and amorous experience is framed, paradoxically, by the ways in which it is left seemingly unembraced, if not altogether unlived.[40]

iii. *unbeseen beloveds*

I write without seeing. I came. […] *I am writing that I love you, or at least I want to write this; but I do not know if my pen lends itself to my desire.* […] *The hope of seeing you for a moment holds me here, and I go on talking to you, not knowing whether I am indeed forming letters. Wherever there will be nothing, read that I love you.*
—Diderot, Letter to Sophie Volland, June 10th (1759)

Put one's life in that which cannot be touched at all.
—Simone Weil, "Celui qu'il faut aimer est absent," *La pesanteur et la grâce*

A scene from Du Plaisir's novella *La Duchesse d'Estramène* (1682) portrays, strikingly, a woman enamored of someone she's never fully seen. "She did not see his portrait […] because it was not entirely finished," so one reads of the story's heroine, but though Mlle d'Hennebury does not directly view the finished portrait of the duke d'Olsingam she has nevertheless "let her mind tilt toward a sort of esteem for him," based upon a partial sketch she espies and the fulsome stories about him she overhears (782).[41] While she might bear no witness to her beloved, Mlle d'Hennebury's rapture for Olsingam, strange as it may seem, requires of him no direct participation, or at least a participation so slight it may as well be none at all. Indeed, it would be no exaggeration to surmise that, to a certain extent, Mlle d'Hennebury's passion for the duke needs little —if anything— of the duke himself. Her love burgeons in his absence: it

commences with her having barely glimpsed his portrait and flourishes without her ever having met his person. Her admiration of the duke comes from the fact that, paradoxically, he has almost no material part in it; her ardor for the duke requires little more than that he give nothing of himself, that he be anything but himself:

> She did not know yet, she was unknowing still [*Elle ignorait encore*] of the force of inclinations and she would have been far from fearing that one might have more than esteem for a man that one had not seen. Without cease, the duke d'Olsingam appeared [*se présentait*] to her mind. She gave to him, with that imprudence of a fresh heart [*un coeur nouveau*], the traits of his portrait and she had the joy of being able to say to herself that she had never yet seen anything which might compare to him. (*ibid*)[42]

Mlle d'Hennebury regards her beloved only by remaining blind to him, indulging in her inclinations for the duke only insofar as he is withheld from her sight. "[S]he had never yet seen anything which might compare" to the duke because he himself is "a man that was not seen" ("un homme qu'on n'a point vu") : she can find no parallel, that is, to an object that itself has never been visualized since she has, one discovers, "un coeur nouveau" —literally, a "new heart" but also a "naïve" or "inexperienced heart," a heart unaccustomed to the ways of love. The heroine's inexperience in love thus intimates that she has no experience whatsoever, but this lack of experience contours and conditions, rather than simply negates, the desire she has begun to nurse for the duke. Having no previous experience in love, when Mlle d'Hennebury stumbles upon something she begins to take for a kind of love, she finds that it is itself without experience: it is a love in want of experience or, more delicately formulated, it is a love wanting experience. Because she has never undergone love's experience, for Mlle d'Hennebury love can only take place *as* the very exclusion of experience itself: *not* making the acquaintance of the duke and *not* confronting him in person become the conditions upon which her attachment depends.[43] If there is any referentiality to Mlle d'Hennebury's passion, if it refers at all, it does so in the absence of a determinable referent.

Never having seen him, it is thus significant that Mlle d'Hennebury subsequently finds nothing can be "compared" to him, for the duke has no representation (there was no such duke who was once fully

present and which would subsequently come to be re-presented) nor is he a determinable referent. But nor is he exactly figurative, in that there is no literal or real-world object, seen through her perception or seized in her mind, against which a figurative meaning could be posited. In a strange way, the duke is not quite an ontic, literalized referent but nor is he quite a figure: he would seem to constitute a sort of rhetorical *catachresis*, namely, a name for that which has no proper name. For there is an infinite iteration of blindness, as Mlle d'Hennebury passes from a man she has never seen to saying that she has never "seen anything compared to him," finding, almost redundantly, that she has never seen anything comparable to a man that she has never seen. Endlessly figuring that which has no form or figure—a beloved being that has never been encountered or fully represented— there is less a process of figuration than an insistent *disfiguration*, a positing of a figure, in language, that figures that which cannot, in fact, be figured in language.

Rather than a metaphor that would claim likeness to a knowable form, in other words, the duke would seem to have become a *catachresis*, a rhetorical term connoting a certain *dis*figurement —a figuration of that which is in fact unfigurable— and thus a disfiguration at the threshold of which the literal and the figural become undone. The problem is not that a reading of this passage hesitates between literal and figural meanings, nor that the conceit of the "literal" has itself turned out to have been figural, but that it becomes difficult to secure what the "figural" is even figuring. Of course, even the claim that something cannot be represented is itself already a discursive figure that bears the mark of this very positing and inscription *as* unrepresentable, even if the referential and representative functions of language have already been derailed.[44] In describing this blindness in such a way, one might thus be drawn to the relations between blindness and drawing,[45] a rhetorical "blindness and insight," to cite de Man, which might even be likened to what Derrida has called the *invu* —following the French phrase for *à l'insu de* ("unbeknownst") and rendered in English as the "*unbeseen*" (*MB,* 45)—to refer to the possibility that a certain hypothetical conjecturing or blind guessing persists within what Western philosophy has often taken to be its most

cherished form of immediate, unreflective intuition: *sight*.[46] In what sense is Mlle d'Hennebury's beloved unbeseen?

In Derrida's *Mémoires d'aveugle*, a work exploring the relations between blindness, drawing and self-portraiture, the counterintuitive claim is made that "drawing is blind" —an inscription without seeing, as it were— and that any drawing representing blindness is itself structured by the blindness of drawing as act of inscription (*MB,* 2). In the first instance, and in conjunction with a paradox called "transcendental," at issue is the blind, unthematizable, and unrepresentable conditions of possibility of drawing: "the drawing of drawing" (*MB,* 41). In the second, in conjunction with a paradox named "sacrificial," it is the thematic representation of blindness, a representation of the unrepresentable, which is at stake.

According to this first "transcendental" paradox, drawing is blind insofar as there remains an irreducible heterogeneity between that which is drawn and the drawing line (*trait*). When the draftsman re-presents, through drawing, his model, there is a certain non-presence that instates itself between the model and the drawing: it is not self-present perception that allows the model to mimetically be translated and transferred to page, but perception must be reconstructed through memory. Memory must reconstitute the model in order for it to be (re)drawn, in this way showing that there is a certain blindness —oblique remembrance, mnemonic repetition— (de)composing perception of the visible (one must speak of "inference and not of perception," Derrida remarks [*MB,* 64]).[47] Memory does not mimetically reconstitute or restitute a past-present, however, for if anything the portrait hints at the potential ruin of the person represented insofar as any drawing is inevitably a *re*drawing of that which it seeks to portray: "The failure to recapture the presence of the gaze outside of the abyss into which it is sinking is not an accident or weakness; it illustrates or rather figures the very chance of the work, the specter of the invisible that the work lets be seen without ever presenting" (*MB,* 68). Indeed, it is precisely because there is no *intuitive* grasp of that which is to be drawn, that gaze itself can become possible: "there is no direct intuition, only

angles and the obliqueness of the gaze" (*MB,* 73).[48] Not only in this, but insofar as many portraits or paintings refer to *ideal narratives of some kind* —be they mythical, literary, historical etc.—the graphic representation refers to an originary model which is itself not visible through self-present perception but which nonetheless lends influence to the pictorial or graphic rendering.

The essay furthermore calls attention to several of moments of blindness structuring the conditions of possibility of drawing, such as the "inappearance of the line." For there would appear to be a certain "*aperspective of the graphic act*" (*MB,* 44-5), insofar as the instance prior to which any inscription is inscribed is itself not seen: "[the act of inscription] escapes the field of vision. It precedes or follows vision. Not only because it is *not yet* visible, but because it does not belong to the realm of the spectacle, of spectacular objectivity" (45). When the tool is pressed against the paper, not only is the point not visible, but the line traced does not reproduce that which is perceived in full presence; the inscription of the (not yet) visible is itself not yet visible and, not modeled on what is presently visible, is therefore not mimetic (*MB,* 45).[49] Invoking the multiple senses of *trait,* as both the drawing of the line (*trait*) and its withdrawal (*retrait*), Derrida underlines that one does not, indeed *cannot*, see the line drawn insofar as it must give way to the form that it outlines; the line withdraws from the scene in order for the drawing to *be* seen:

> A tracing, an outline, cannot be seen. One should in fact not see it (let's not say however: "One *must* not see it") insofar as all the colored thickness that it retains tends to wear itself out so as to mark the single edge of a contour: between the inside and the outside of a figure. Once the limit is reached, there is nothing more to see, not even black and white, not even figure/form, and this is the *trait,* this is the line itself: which is thus no longer what it is, because from then on it never relates to itself without dividing itself just as soon, the divisibility of the *trait* here interrupting all pure identification […] The limit is never presently reached, but drawing always signals toward this inaccessibility, toward the threshold where only the surroundings of the *trait* appear—that which the *trait* spaces by delimiting and which thus does not belong to the *trait*. *Nothing belongs to the trait*, and thus, to drawing and to the thought of drawing, not even its own "trace." Nothing even participates in it. The *trait* joins and adjoins only in separating. (*MB,* 54)

If, on the one hand, the draft never merely represents the model through mimesis of the real, nor does it merely reflect a pre-given ideality. The line takes leave from itself at one and the same time, an ellipsis that never becomes an object insofar as it acts as an edge or a contour separating the inside and outside of a

form: it is neither inside nor outside the figure it draws but the very boundary-line itself: "The outline of tracing separates and separates itself; it retraces only borderlines, intervals, a spacing grid with no possible appropriation. The experience or experimenting of drawing (and experimenting, as its name indicates, always consists in journeying beyond limits) at once crosses and institutes these borders" (*MB,* 54).[50] Neither sensible nor intelligible, the line becomes that which is seen without being seen —and which we see without seeing ourselves seeing— as if we could only see "between the lines" rather than see the lines themselves in order to view a drawn figure. This Derrida calls "the inappearance of a *trait* that is neither sensible nor intelligible" to the extent that the differences, spacings, and separations that these lines engender do not belong to any pregiven ideal form or predelineated geometrical object at the same time that they remain irreducible to material marking (*MB,* 55).[51] In a significant sense, these lines divide and are always divided from themselves.

If Derrida is right to claim that the immediacy of intuition is in fact wrought with supposition and blindness when one considers the transcendental paradoxes of drawing, then how to make of the second, "sacrificial" paradox that Derrida mentions, that is, when blindness, the unviewable or unrepresentable, is *thematically* represented? As has been established, in the case of *La Duchesse d'Estramène,* there would seem to be a catachresis at work: the duke continues to "present himself" and "be presented" —("se présentait") to show or appear— in spite of the absence of pictorial support, or rather, fails to appear as anything other than a trace that is neither fully present or absent; he manifests himself as his very absence, but an absence for which there never was presence, appearing to her mind only because, paradoxically, he has never been fully apparent at all. In this sense, he is neither fully apparent nor fully disappeared, neither one nor the other, but marks a vanishing point: he disappears in his continual presentation, an insistent disappearance that never had a discernable appearance in presence to begin with. Importantly, this negative image of the duke, embodying the tensions between appearance and disappearance, presence and absence —neither of

which it ever actually becomes— is framed as inescapably discursive, not only in regard to the heroine's speech— "she had the joy of being able to *say* to herself"— but because this scenario is itself staged within literary language and as a rhetorical scene of address. Mlle d'Hennebury comes to know in this way the "indignity" of "loving a man that has not been seen, and loving him before being loved by him" (784), for the man she adores is, in fact, one whom she has never immediately encountered nor directly descried.[52] Her first lover is a simulacrum —a derivation with no origin, a copy with no model, an imitation with no original, a signifier with no referent— upon which she calques a hallucinatory love. In this sense, it could be argued that this catachresis of the visibly invisible Duke catches both the transcendental and sacrificial paradoxes Derrida theorizes: this thematic (or sacrificial) representation of the impossible figure of an unbeseen Duke, seen without being seen, intersects with the rhetorical (or transcendental) catachresis used to render this unrepresentable figure: a figure for the unfigurable and thus, *stricto sensu*, no figure at all.

This rhetorical and philosophical problem is by no means recent. Blind love, that sordid paradox, has become a common topos: from Shakespeare's famous coinage in *The Merchant of Venice* (1596) —"love is blind and lovers cannot see"— to Diderot's famous letter to Sophie Volland (June 10, 1759) composed in the dark —"I write without seeing […] This is the first time I have ever written in the dark […] Wherever there will be nothing, read that I love you" (*MB,* 1)— to the conflation of eyesight and romance in contemporary parlance —"to be seeing someone"— amour and (in)visibility have oft entertained a contradictory, though intimately entwined, rapport.[53] Mlle d'Hennebury's ethereal adoration, however, complicates this cliché. For when she unknowingly makes the acquaintance, in the flesh, of the duke she has long cherished, she comes to discover that, amazingly, the biggest obstacle to her love for the man she has imagined —but never beheld— is none other than this very man himself. Or, better still, it is not so much a duke that is simply met "in the flesh," but that incompatible readings —produced by and converging in the ambiguous discursive figure which the duke serves— will come to inspire a certain amorous aporia whereby

the duke appears to be the beloved after whom Mlle d'Hennebury yearns and, at one and the same time, the obstacle to her beloved. And this predicament —whereby the only man standing in the way of his love is he himself, at the same time that this very self is no longer, or was never, itself— is ultimately laced with paradox and imbued with ambivalence.

iv. More than meets the eye

experience is the very lack of what is "lived"
—Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, *La poésie comme experience*

The ruin is not in front of us; it is neither a spectacle nor a love object. It is experience itself.
—Jacques Derrida, *Mémoires d'aveugle*

The couple's first rendezvous, an accidental meeting during a garden promenade, in fact amounts to an appointment missed and a meeting avoided. Or rather, it is not so much that they miss their appointment but that their appointment can only take place *as* a sort of missing. Both Mlle d'Hennebury and the duke catch sight of each other's silhouettes from afar, but the one finds herself so troubled by the other, that she withdraws from his gaze and takes leave of his presence:

> Hardly had [the duke] made some steps into the garden, that he made out, from pretty far off, a young person walking with some ladies, and he caught sight of her by the impressions of prodigious amazement she made on those by whom she could be seen [*il l'aperçut aux marques d'un étonnement prodigieux qu'elle donnait à ceux de qui elle pouvait être vue*]. He remained himself strangely surprised. Although he saw her confusedly, that which he saw passed suddenly all the way to his heart, and he conceived, foremost, sentiments of love and esteem that one does not express, because they surpass belief. She did not believe him to be the duke d'Olsingam, and her error cost and caused her [*lui coûta*], in a short matter of time, some violent impressions [*de violentes impressions*]. The one whom she saw coming forth seemed to her to be of an appearance beyond all that advantageous rumour and a grand inclination had made her imagine to be of the most favourable [sort]. She was ashamed to have so many predispositions toward the duke d'Olsingam since he had been surpassed by another. She felt herself become embittered as well against this other, as if he had been wrong to be more worthy of being loved [*aimable*][54] than the one for whom she had such a penchant and, the more she approached, the more she saw things beyond the notion she had conceived to herself of this duke. The fear of finding in the traits of his visage new causes of chagrin and choler against herself convinced her that she should avoid seeing them distinctly. She ceased, all of a sudden, to look at him. She urged her company to continue the promenade in another direction and, filled with an impatience that this encounter had given to her, she left the garden in a state easy to imagine [*en un état aisé à se représenter*]. (785)

Outstanding here, from just a cursory scan of this passage, is the way in which the protagonists fail to see eye to eye. Mlle d'Hennebury, prepossessed in favor of the duke d'Olsingam she has hitherto imagined,

obviates confrontation with the duke d'Olsingam whom she only now begins to regard too closely. The strange "surprise" or "confusion" that marks —and mars— the vision of the two leads to a seemingly mutual misprision: the duke "confusedly" makes out the figure of Mlle d'Hennebury but does not peer at her directly,[55] just as the heroine prefers to linger in dim vision lest a too clear frontal view of the man she accosts should trouble her repose. That the two do not straightforwardly and cloudlessly apperceive one another in presence is underscored by the verb employed (*apercevoir*), a verb denoting not plain sight but a toilsome effort of vision —an effort to make out, to catch sight of, to glimpse briefly or hardly— a word, in short, for vision's strain rather than its success. The anaphoric usage of this term to depict both the duke and the heroine's acts of vision —"Il *l'aperçut* aux marques d'un étonnement prodigeux"; "Mlle d'Hennebury *l'aperçut* à des marques"— foregrounds the degree to which the lovers are not exposed to each other's sharp-eyed or self-present discernment. In a very significant sense, there would seem to be more than meets the eye in this initial encounter.

What is more, the additional modification of the verb by the expression "aux marques d'un étonnement prodigeux" — "by the marks of a prodigious amazement"— in the first instance, and by "l'aperçut à des marques" — "by marks"— in the second makes for a sort of viewless vision, emphasizing that what is perceived is not the persons themselves but the graphic impress or effects they give unto others, and thus no "perception," *stricto sensu*, at all. The duke, that is, does not see Mlle d'Hennebury head-on, but is startled *by the marks* that she leaves on those who contemplate her. In French, "marque" carries polyvalent possibilities, referring at once to traces, markers, signs, impressions, brandings, writings, inscription. The duke thus *reads*, as it were, textual marks rather than merely perceives objects; vision becomes entangled with the trace of the mark as the persons viewed expose themselves to be —indeed, to have already been— texts to be read.[56] So too does Mlle d'Hennebury, when her sight catches the duke's distant form, see him less for what he "is" than for what he leaves behind —namely the discursive impressions that he arouses in

those who gaze upon him— and even this is too much for her stare.[57] Though there might seem to be a dialectical exchange between the two developing here—who, on one reading, would both seem to share the reciprocal experience and recognition of *not seeing* one another, finding themselves beyond themselves only to recuperate their very selves in the gaze of the other— all mutuality, whether it be of regard or disregard, is denied the duke, for as he stares onward Mlle d'Hennebury finds herself obliged to look, and to walk, away: with averted gaze, Mlle d'Hennebury can only accost the duke in the very act of retreating from him.[58] The dialectic framework seemingly implied by a dualistic model of recognition does not hold for other reasons as well: the network of "marks" —a textual web and weave of referrals— through which the lovers are read, is not constrained to an intersubjective framework, but has for its linguistic occasion a dispersed audience of anonymous, unnamed onlookers, the "company" at the garden upon whom the marks and impressions of amazement are inscribed, a "writing" of differences through which Mlle de d'Hennebury and the duke become, as it were, both readable and unreadable to one another.[59] Both onlookers, Mlle d'Hennebury and the duke, thus reveal themselves to have always been texts, tissues of traces and markings, only legible in terms of the other texts to which they refer. Neither is a pre-formed subject with a pure, self-contained identity who simply encounters the other in perceptible presence, for each turns out to have always been marked by traces which exceed any given self: if each is only constituted by h/er textual legibility, only readable in terms of differences, traces, and markings that are made upon others in a social scene of address, then there would seem to have been no determinate self from the start, no self prior to the idiom or medium in which it is given. In other words, it would seem that the two would fail to *perceive* each other precisely because they are too busy trying to *read* one another, what Derrida calls in another context the "law of the chiasm in the crossing or noncrossing of looks or gazes" (*MB,* 106), a law according to which one becomes so bewitched by the gaze of another that one fails to see their eyes altogether: "Seeing the seeing and not the visible, it sees nothing. This seeing eye sees itself blind" (*MB,*

57).[60]

More crucial still is the paradox that emerges from the ignorance in which Mlle d'Hennebury dwells with regard to the duke's identity. For as she approaches the man she does not yet know is the duke d'Olsingam her heart finds conflict between the man she thought she loved and the one she now senses has taken his place— both of which, little does she know, are not entirely distinct:

> Mlle d'Hennebry quitted her company with an embittered and malcontent mind. She attempted to make herself happy with what had happened. She tried to tell herself that the shame of loving a man who didn't have all of the ultimate merit that one could have would assist her to take on anew an indifference of which the loss would give her such veritable displeasures for the interest of her glory. But, despite her wishes, she was equally attached to the duke d'Olsingam. (786)[61]

The dilemma that splices Mlle d'Hennebury's desire in twain originates from the guilt of preferring the unknown man she has just seen over the duke she has never met but nonetheless idolized heretofore. That is, the obstacle to Mlle d'Hennebury's love for the duke is none other than the beloved himself: she despises Oslingam for being what he is not —himself— since she has begun to favor him over the beloved she had preconceived, in fancy, prior to meeting him. The duke she thought she loved, he who had the ultimate merit, is now in conflict with the more striking man she has just glanced at, a man, it will turn out, who is none other than the duke himself. It might be tempting to say here that because these dukes are in truth the "same" man, unbeknownst to Mlle d'Hennebury her guilt is blameless and her crime of infidelity innocent. On this reading, the sight of the duke in person —who is, it should be remembered, more "aimable" than the image she had conceived to herself of this selfsame duke— may have gotten in the way of her love for the duke she had conjured in fancy, but this seeming disparting of her heart would actually, so it would be argued, dovetail in the same object, since the duke she cherishes in imagination and the duke she relishes in the flesh converge in an apparently identical referent: the duke d'Oslingam. Pleonastically, the heroine's devotion would not so much be divided as doubled: she would not find herself caught between two men she desires but worship the same man as if he were twice that.[62]

At the same time, however, it could be argued that Mlle d'Hennebury does not simply love the

"same," self-identical man but, more radically, one divided from himself: she adores the duke *in spite of himself*, holding in contempt the man she sees —the duke d'Olsingam— for being what he is not —namely himself. That is, Mlle d'Hennebury is angered that the man she sees, but does not recognize, should be more loveable than the "duke d'Olsingam" she does not know he already is. In this recursive aporia, *it is only the duke himself that interferes with Mlle d'Hennebury's love for the duke*: *it is he alone that impedes her attachment to him, he alone that holds her at a remove from him*. Rival only to himself, the duke causes Mlle d'Hennebury's grief because she cannot love a man she does not comprehend is in part already the man she loves. Her apprehension that the man she has witnessed in the garden promenade might be more bewitching than the duke she has envisioned as the only one worthy of love gives way to the paradox that Mlle d'Hennebury will reproach the duke (that she sees in the garden) for being so loveable that he gets in the way of her love for the duke (that she holds in mind). Added to this, of course, is that the duke Mlle d'Hennebury entertains in mind is a man she has "never seen" but one who, nevertheless, comes to compete with the man she has just witnessed in the garden. Blindness is not opposed to sight, nor hallucination to perception, for the implicit distinction that might have appeared operative here —between a "real" duke who is materially visible and another who is only imaginatively idealized— comes under question.[63] Indeed, if the duke is not considered to be an unmediated referent, ontologically coherent and simply real, and upon whom Mlle d'Hennebury has projected imagined attributes, then it would seem that he is neither fully phantasmatic or fully real but, in a significant sense, only given *as* this very tension itself.[64] Is there no real "duke," no fully formed subject prior to its phantasmatic construction, but only one constituted by and as the very vacillation of the phantasmal and the real? Is the phantasmatic an imaginary domain ontologically different from a pregiven reality or might the phantasmatic become constitutive of the very "real" from which it is said to deviate? In other words, might the presumed ontological dualism between the phantasmatic and the real ultimately founder if the phantasmatic turns out to contour the "real" which is thought to be exterior to it, as if the

very notion of the "real" were not absolutely distinguishable from the phantasmatic but, perhaps, a phantasmatic conceit in and of itself?[65]

It might be presumed here that the duke is a referent unaffected by the phantasmatic and its significations, as if his identity were first pre-established and secured and then would subsequently come to bear multiple signifieds, whether they be imagined or real, while remaining intact in his assumed being all throughout. Similar to the theatrical model of an actor who would don various disguises but who would nevertheless be presumed to exist as a stable identity behind those garments, in this view there would be a "real" duke, a single referent, who is subsequently adorned with various significations, phantasmatic and real, but who himself is assumed to have preexisted these guises and to exist still yet in his abiding identity behind them. But what if this notion of the actor or agent, a presupposed *ego* and *cogito* who lies behind its act as a sort of underlying substrate and subject, were itself, as Nietzsche once famously proclaimed, a grammatical fiction?[66] Would there then be no coherent subject that pre-existed or exceeded the complicated tension enmeshing the phantasmatic in the real, one within which the (de)formation of this subject was always already implicated? In contrast to a viewpoint which would take an already established subject as its center, and in keeping with the Nietzschean problematic, the aporia emphasized in *La Duchesse d'Estramène* would seem to suggest that the tensions between the phantasmatic and the real preclude a perspective which takes for granted a pregiven subject not already constructed in some way by or, indeed, as the phantasmatic.

For the conceptual conundrum of this scene is in part a grammatical one: giving an account of the confusion Mlle d'Hennebury undergoes when confronted with the divided "dukes" before her, must presuppose a subject (the "duke") in its grammatical formulation to explain how it came about that this confusion arose. This conundrum could be theorized thus: the tensions of the phantasmatic and the real do not confine themselves within a self-identical subject (a "real" duke) who would maintain a separate

referential and ontological status apart from the significations of these tensions, in that there would seem to be no subject with a preconstituted identity prior to its encounter with the phantasmatic, no subject with a pregiven being who would exceed its implication in the phantasmatic (it will be remembered that the duke's initial textual appearance, as it were, is not in person but one which, never having been apparent at all, is hallucinated by Mlle d'Hennebury's fancy).[67] At the same time, however, in order to address this problematic, a grammatical category of the subject must fictitiously be employed in the very narrative seeking to account for these tensions, tensions which themselves are not performed by a subject but which nonetheless would appear to produce the semblance of one as their consequence. To speak of this aporia not only redoubles logical problems, it also forces a recourse to fiction-making in order to speak of it at all: how to account for a tension between the real and the phantasmal not orchestrated by a subject but by means of which a subject (the duke) is wrought as its effect? Matters become especially difficult when a grammatical subject is (misleadingly) required in the narrative recounting of the effects of these tensions perforce syntactical formulation (grammar here, by custom and constraint, takes a subject for its predicate). In seeking to explain the tensions between the phantasmatic and the real by which the "subject-effect" of the duke comes to be, it would seem unimaginable to do so without furtively reinstalling a subject, due to the customary fictions of the grammar of the subject which order phrases.[68]

If the purport is to describe how the duke has come to be subject to both Mlle d'Hennebury's fancy and her vision, and if he is not presumed to be himself a subject already pre-formed in advance, then to attempt to depict a paradox for which there is no pregiven subject *per se*, or at least none to be presumed *a priori*, already gives the lie to the very grammar of the narrative itself, one which, by virtue of its syntactic requirements, is required to posit a grammatical subject in the course of its telling.[69] How to narrate the tensions between the real and the phantasmatic, tensions through which a subject-effect is produced but which are themselves operated by no given subject, and to do this without surreptitiously reintroducing a

subject (grammatical and otherwise)? The effort to interrogate a process instituted by no subject, but within a grammar which always takes a subject, is to be inescapably caught within an aporia. For the explanation that seeks to narrate how a subject comes to be instituted must take on a grammar of the subject from the start, even if it is this very subject which remains to be explained; the subject which is to be described is already presupposed in the function (fiction?) of the grammatical subject which must be used to compose the description in the first place. It remains nearly inconceivable to put a subject into question without already retroactively reinvoking, even in spectral form, the very subject that was to be put into question when narrating this problematic.

For it is not only that the duke is not a subject who enacts this tension between the phantasmal and the real —he does not casually perform and effectuate these tensions amongst "dukes" by his will— but that this tension which becomes constitutive of his very emergence as Mlle d'Hennbury's beloved is itself operated by no subject. Grammar misleads here yet again, for Mlle d'Hennbury's fantasy has not exhaustively and unilaterally produced the "duke" through its phantasm as if it operated like a personified agency or a sovereign subject that could fully determine his being as imaginary. If it did, then there would be no conflict between the various representations of the duke which war with one another in Mlle d'Hennebury's imagination. Indeed, Mlle d'Hennebury's fanciful image of the duke, far from remaining purely fanciful, finds itself already embattled with conflicting simulacra and phantasms of the duke, most notably the rivalry between the duke viewed in the garden and the one she has never seen. Though the duke's image is implicated in fantasy it nonetheless carries with it real effects, for it is the very undecidability between fantasy and reality, the phantasmatic and the real, which is at stake: Mlle d'Hennebury's phantasm of the duke is no less "real" than the one she espies in the garden, and it is because of this that her amorous conflict arises. No duke is more real than the other, no duke less imaginary: neither one exceeds nor reduces to the other. In other words, even if Mlle d'Hennbury's imagined, fantastical

portrait has been involved in materializing a certain version of the duke as its effect, the duke is not simply exhausted or causally determined by this phantasm any more than he is reducible to the supposed "real" duke witnessed in the garden. The duke visualized in fancy is continually disrupted by the one viewed in the garden, the competing visions never synthesized into a dialectical whole or assuming chronological and logical priority over one another. Neither the one nor the other, the "duke" would seem to be only given in and as the very tension of these simulacra, even if he ultimately eludes referential capture within any of the simulacra which portray him.[70]

It is not, then, that there is simply a "real" duke ontologically distinct from its phantasmatic formation— as if there were one the one hand, a *noumenal* duke in reality, and on the other, the *phenomenal* duke who appears in imagination, one who would be the origin and the other its simulation. But nor is it that the duke can be attributed to Mlle d'Hennebury's phantasms alone. Rather than endorsing such a Kantian distinction, it might be suggested that there is a chiasmatic enfolding of the real into the phantasmatic here that, though not conflating the two, keeps them inseparable and interdependent. If there is no ontic referent or transcendental signified (the "real" duke), no subject presumed to be ontologically secure in its identity in advance that would merely take on various attributes, real or imagined, but remain unconstructed by them, then was the duke himself never more than the interplay of these attributes and simulations to begin with? Though only made available in contradictory phantasmatic significations, would the duke also seem irreducible to them? If he is given as these tensions is he also to a certain extent dissolved in them? It is perhaps due to these conflicting simulacra that, oddly enough, what the heroine holds against the duke espied in the garden is that he is so deserving of her love that he gets in the way of Mlle d'Hennebury's love for the duke envisaged in fantasy; the duke, just by dint of being loveable, gets in the way of her love for him. Being so enchanting that he should incite her desire and curiosity, the duke in person, because he is so admirable, comes into conflict with the beloved he already is —namely, the

beloved that Mlle d'Hennebury had entertained in imagination prior to having caught sight of him— and thus comes to serve, as paradoxical as it may seem, as an obstruction to his own self, a self that never even was one to begin with because always already divided from itself.

It is only when the duke visits Mlle d'Hennebury and her mother, showing himself to be inseparable from the man spied in the garden, that the narrative reveals the full extent of the antimonies operative in this scenario:

> And what was her amazement when she saw that this man that had given her so much bitterness against the duke d'Olsingam was the duke d'Olsingam himself! Foremost she had been grieved about that which another had in the way of advantage over him. It seemed to her then that she would have wished that he be less amiable, and she had wondered, trembling, where she would find some succor to destroy in her heart an inclination so well-established. (786)[71]

Ostensibly realizing that the man she held in contempt because he superseded her beloved was in fact none other than the beloved himself, Mlle d'Hennebury appears to recognize now that she had wished to love less the man who she now sees she has always loved too well—at least this would be one possible interpretation. On this reading, the duke would come to take the place he had already occupied, becoming, almost redundantly, the beloved he always was. It might even be presumed here that, by a sort of "recessive action," he has had to do no more to gain Mlle d'Hennebury's esteem than to effortlessly assume the position she had long ago accorded to him, seizing an occasion he never even had to seek.[72] According to such an interpretation, it is because the barrier to Mlle d'Hennebury's love for the duke has never been fully realized (since the man who competes for the place of the beloved is in fact one and the same), that the revelation of the duke's identity removes an obstacle that, oddly, never even was one. The duke's disclosure thus might seem to solve nothing or to make little difference to this vignette's outcome: it provides resolution to a problem that never really was one to begin with, for Mlle d'Hennebury is apprised that the man who was more loveable than her beloved remains, in fact, the very beloved she has reverenced all along.

As felicitous as such a conclusion might appear, however, this is not the novel's close but its beginning. The story's fruit is not that love once recognized is thereby attained nor that the nonchalance with which lovers meet circumstance and accept it as given amounts to contentment, satisfaction, and fulfillment. Mlle d'Hennebury does not marry the duke d'Olsingam: as the novel's eponymous title portentously suggests, she ultimately gives her hand to another.[73] The story's convoluted plot, ill-fated encounters and psychological volte-faces which lead to the lovers' disunion need not all be detailed here, for the tale's preliminary *mise en scène* of misrecognition has accentuated one of the fundamental obstructions to the lovers' mutuality and communion—namely themselves. The obstacle to Mlle d'Hennebury's love, as hitherto elaborated, is none other than the beloved himself; she disdains the duke d'Olsingam when she first sees him for being what he isn't —himself— unenlightened as she is that he has always been, in fact, the duke d'Olsingam. It is precisely because he is beloved that this gets in the way, strikingly, of his being loved by the heroine, as if the only way he could become her beloved would be, bizarrely, by never actually having been it. Or, formulated in different terms, it could be said that Mlle d'Hennebury holds dear a man who stands as fundamentally other to himself. If she loved the duke —in fancy— before he was beloved —in person— then when she finally sees him —and begins to love him— it ensues that he is no longer the beloved she once mistook him for, no longer the prior beloved she had hitherto envisioned, because it is the exulted place of his imagined predecessor that the duke's person has now come to supplant and from which he was never even distinguishable to begin with.

In this sense, it is not so much that the duke usurps, almost redundantly, the place of the beloved he had already attained in advance, but that he can only become beloved by never having been, in actuality, this beloved she thought him to be. He is loved precisely because he is *not* that which Mlle d'Hennebury had conceived him to be, and she thus loves him for being all but himself. As soon as he becomes beloved by her —when witnessed in the park— the former beloved Mlle d'Hennebury had entertained in mind is no

longer beloved, or at least no longer loved in the same way. As soon as he finds himself loved the duke is, in other words, also no longer loved as himself. When he is thenceforth returned, as it were, to Mlle d'Hennebury as the beloved he always seemed to have been, much like an unsolicited gift for which she was obliged to do nothing save awaiting its bestowal, it becomes unclear whether the heroine has obtained that which she already had or whether the duke gives back to her that which she never actually had, giving to her not the duke she had imagined but the more loveable duke she thereafter sees before her. He will have given himself, that is, only insofar as he gives himself as annulled and cancelled, only insofar as he gives himself as *not* being the duke about whom she had up until then fantasized.[74] The duke offers himself, in other words, only to the degree that he withholds, excises, or eliminates himself in the very act of offering himself. It is not that he is loved twice as the same man, but that the conceit of sameness is itself undercut because the duke is beloved as other to himself. Unlike the Greek conventions of *anagnorisis* in tragedy, here the duke *ruins* the possibility of Mlle d'Hennebury's vision, but it is not a ruin she can see, as one would a portrait or a painting, insofar as her beloved remains unbeseen. Or to recite Derrida's pithy proclamation: "The ruin is not in front of us; it is neither a spectacle nor a love object. It is *experience* itself" (*MB,* 69; emphasis added).[75] The experience of ruin is the ruin of experience—*in*experience, in short.

La Duchesse d'Estramène, akin to novels that fall into the lineage of second-wave salon writing, focuses not on the effortless claims lovers have over one another but, oppositely, on how they can make no such demand upon each other. This vignette proves instructive for consideration of other seventeenth-century novellas in that it limns, with pithy precision, a paradox in which lovers of the psychological novel oft find themselves entangled: they are brought together, but only so that nearly nothing happens for them and all but naught comes to pass between them; they turn and walk away from opportunities given and possibility provided, for the only thing that supplies the surest barricade to the materialization of their desires is none other than they themselves. Here experience is not so much acquired and possessed as it is

left aside and abandoned. The chasteness of their non-consummation and inexperience persists inasmuch as lovers must let their beloved alone rather than confront him. To leave a beloved —to leave him be or to simply leave him alone— might also mean to simply leave him behind. Such a form of attenuated interaction, as it is adopted here, may appear to a contemporary readership as curiously bereft of just deserts and concrete consequence because these lovers do not grant each other the positive confirmation of a recognizable outcome to their love. To the contrary, these personages, by dint of their seeming inaction, present the status of the relationships they never fully take on as a sort of question: what follows from taking an amorous experience as its very negation, as its very nullification and neutralization, as precious little short of nothing?[76]

v. narrations of no one

The voice is ghostly, impossible, disembodied, and yet it persists, living on.
—Judith Butler, *Giving an Account of Oneself*

It might be argued that the ethos of attritive action that has been underscored in *Estramène* — according to which lovers, hanging on their beloved's every word, ultimately let everything hang in words—is not merely represented in a theme or topos but is, it would seem, carried through in rhetorical praxis.[77] While some might rightly identify the demurrals of expression and enterprise in the *roman d'analyse* as overlain by historical influence —like the religious refrain, "feminine" virtue of self-sacrifice, or conduct-book *pudeur* celebrated in the cultural epistemes of the classical period—[78] others would contend that the passivity betimes ascribed to seventeenth-century characterization is also to a good measure the effects of an *écriture blanche*, one bleached of both personality and emotion: a linguistic style that seems to blank out interiority and whiten out ardency, presenting experiences that seem to belong to anyone, to everyone—to no one.[79]

A scene of *Histoire d'Hypolite* (1690), a lesser-known romance of Madame D'Aulnoy's hand, offers an example of this white writing, seemingly bleached of both personality and emotion, when it conjures forth a

moment of panic. After a boat carrying Julie and Hypolite, the novel's protagonists, submerges, the young hero jumps in to rescue his beloved. The narration, however, repairs to the exteriorizing, anonymous grammatical form of the "on" to depict his feelings, emitting what could have been an emotional statement or a subjective thought by a linguistic form more often used for statements that belong to no one —like rumor or proverb— or to everyone: "One is always in danger when that which we love runs somesuch risk [*l'on est toûjours en danger quand ce que nous aimons court quelque risque*]" (16).[80] The objective-sounding impassivity of the statement is detached from any personalized subjective state —like that of Hypolite, or of Julie— since its pronouncement emanates from no identifiable agent and specifies no precise object ("ce que nous aimons"). Who says this? Neither Julie nor Hypolite is totally characterized by this faintly apathetic dictum, for the "*on*" is a grammatical nobody, a non-person, just as the "*ce que*" abrogates personhood. If "*on*" is one who is not anyone, or everyone, disembodied of subjecthood, then equally the "ce que" betokens "*that* which we love" and not "*who* we love," a hypostatization of some*thing*.[81] What is put in danger, then, is the intentionless "one" ("on"), the "on" which is no one, as if the beloved being were a thing unfleshed of humanhood. The adage-like decisiveness of this phrase, emitted at such a tense moment in the scene, deflates narrative suspense and lets the proclamation hang alone, as if in empty space, for the closest approximation to an avowal of love ("ce que nous aimons") appears neutered of a distinct subject of desire, as if the sentence made a simple report of generic, axiomatic value that could apply to anyone —to you, for example— or to no one.[82] "We" who love and that which is loved are given over, in this wisped phrase, to the anonymity of an "on," as if the emotive and subjective states of the characters belonged to everyone —like a general maxim— or to no one, no one at all.[83] What the language of *Hypolite* seems to impart, in this instance at least, is a certain impartiality.

This becomes evident when one considers, in a return to the boat-scene of Mme d'Aulnoy's *Hypolite,* the speech acts Hypolite emits upon recovering Julie from the water, a moment in which the novel's

narration ends up speaking in his place. At first blush, one might assume that the *act* of rescuing Julie from drowning already spoke more about his love for Julie than a verbal announcement of love, as if his act "spoke for itself" more than a speech act ever could or as if his "actions spoke louder than words," as the old-fashioned maxim would have it.[84] However, in the case of *Hypolite*'s narration, it becomes impossible to distinguish a simple "action" from the words that are associated with them, words that not only interfere with but which can almost appear to substitute for these acts themselves. Hypolite's act of passionate salvation, in a certain sense, cannot merely speak for itself as *his* declaration of love since it is already "spoken for," as it were, by the dispassionate language of the novel that describes this act. If indeed an act of love, it is not one that he can claim as his alone. For the seeming tenderness of his helpful act is inextricable from the mode of narration that reports it and which, to a certain degree, interferes with the personality and affection his action is thought to express. Hypolite's acts or actions, in other words, cannot merely speak for themselves because the novel's agentless, impersonal narration already speaks in their place, not only depicting its characters' acts and speech acts, but also overtaking them,[85] as the entire scene of Julie's perseveration testifies:

> In [this] encounter [Hypolite] only thought of *his dear Julie*: and indeed, the tenderness which he had for her gave him so much force and address that, having grabbed her by her clothes, he did not leaver her, did not let go of her, until he had placed her on the Isle. […] Ah! Wretch, he cried, I am the cause of the loss of my sister, she was in the depths of the water before I could pull her out, Julie, *my dear Julie*, what will become of me? (16; emphasis added)[86]

Here Hypolite's *chère et tendre*, Julie, is portrayed first by a vantageless and abstract averment emitted by the novel's narration —"his dear Julie" ("sa chere Julie")— and is then reprised by Hypolite's seemingly personalized, perhaps even slenderly performative, "my dear Julie" ("ma chere Julie"), an enunciation that makes Julie, as it were, *his* dear. Reinvoking the novel's description of "chere Julie," Hypolite does not originate a personal statement *ex nihilo* but echoes an impersonal phrase that predates his usage of it. For who says that Julie is his dear, before he says so? Is it announced by no one, as if the phrase were trembling between having already been stated —by no one— and not yet affirmed by Hypolite? Therein intervenes a

moment of temporal trouble: for a voice emanating from a viewless vantage has already said Julie is his dear and yet this is not yet fully said, not yet to the extent that Hypolite must readminister it a moment afterwards. His phrase that Julie is tender to him has, in fact, been tendered to him by the novel's language alone, a language that pretends to have a vantageless viewpoint, simply speaking from "nowhere," with "no one" in particular as its author. And it is, perhaps, this lightfooted movement from a subjectlessly stated constation that she is dear ("sa chere"), to its seemingly subjective recitation by Hypolite that she is dear *to him* ("ma chere"), that lets inhere a lapse in narration and a lag in time.[87]

In other words, at the very moment where Hypolite rescues Julie out of his proclaimed tenderness for her, the novel gives way to the impersonality that indwells the language of his passion. While the *passé simple* and third-person narration are sometimes cast in literary theory as a stylistic system evincing "a neutral novel narrator [who] recounts the sentiments of a personage without sharing them"[88] —as if the narration were tenseless, taking place by itself as each narrative event is simply posited and bypassed—would it seem in the present case that when Hypolite rescues Julie a "neutral narrator" not only seems to share those sentiments but even pretends to claim responsibility for them?[89] Or would such a formulation misleadingly accord a personified and divine agency to narrative speech, as if it simply had the power to posit and bestow voices?[90] Is it not so much that an omniscient, or ubiquitous voice narrates in the *passé simple*, but that *no one* seems to relate the story, irradiating its voiceless voice, its unlocatable agentlessness, through characters that are only the mouthpiece of the novel's speech, a speech devoid of agent and origin, a no one that is not someone?

It would seem that at his seemingly most heightened exclamation Hypolite's words are not in fact a subjective expression but, rather, a sort of ventriloquism: no one's constation —the narration's?— speaks as if it were someone's performative —Hypolite's— but that someone's voice is borrowed, lent, from a textual elsewhere.[91] How does one get from one to the other, from a disinterested, perspectiveless, or

impartial constative to an apparently personal testimony of tenderness, especially if there is no "I love you" or "Do you love me?" here, no obvious unbosoming profession of affection from Hypolite and glowing assent to its admission by Julie? And is Hypolite not so much the doer of an act or the enunciator of a speech act, but, rather, the instrument of the novel's language that precedes and mobilizes him, as if the prior occasion of constation —"sa chere"— meant that the phrase Hypolite uttered —"ma chere"— was not one he generated, but one that he merely reiterated? Is his seeming internal *state*, in other words, indistinguishable from the exteriorized *statement* describing it, as if the passion he seems to display had only been conferred by the passage from an impersonal constation that describes his tenderness to the performative declaration of that tenderness? Is to speak of Hypolite acting at all a grammatical fiction?

If his action has only been bestowed by the novel's speech and has no existence beyond the seemingly disinvested language that details it, then Hypolite's actions, or indeed narrative action in general, cannot simply constitute a straightforward declaration of love that speaks "for itself" to the extent that it is enmeshed in the apparently impartial language that documents it, even if it is not therefore simply reducible to it. Hypolite's utterance is, in a certain sense, neither fully constative nor fully performative, for the narration's plain observation that Julie is tender to him and his speech act that she is tender to him expropriates and usurps his words. The language he employs he has not chosen and cannot chose for it is the novel's language, one he cannot willfully engender but simply reiterate. In this sense the character of Hypolite seems peculiarly disincarnated, as his seemingly emotive paroxysm is revealed to be, at least partially, impersonal language in the dress of personal utterance. Does the language of the novel revoke carnality and rescinds humanity by conceding that Hypolite is nothing other than an impersonation of its language? Does it lays bare that personality is, in this case, personation in words? The novel's language may be parroted and pantomimed by its characters but the personality they seem to invest it with is only a fiction, for they do not so much speak through the novel so much as the novel speaks through them. Even if

these characters posture as the authors of their statements, they are, nonetheless, no more than the personifications of the novel's language through which they appear to speak. In this way, the characters are not the authors, but the imposters, of origination, as the novel redistributes its own utterances through a series of stylized iterations that only *seem* to radiate from the personages who mime and recite them.[92]

Hypolite is also an interesting text for its closing passages. For while the novel seems to end on the happy note of reuniting the lovers Julie and Hypolite after a series of trails and adventures, there remains one character whose love finds no recompense: the Marquise de Becarelly. Julie has, for a good portion of the novel, spent time transvesting as a man under the assumed name Silvio and it is with Silvio that the Marquise has become smitten. After having fallen for Julie's drag persona, at the novel's end the Marquise finds no remedy to her disappointment upon learning that Silvio will never appear to her in the same light. The narrator writes:

> And what will I say at present of the beautiful Marquise de Becarelly? It would be difficult to express what was her trouble and confusion when she would see Julie, and when she would remember her weakness for Silvio: she could not cease to still be in love with this lovable Silvio; the idea remained so vivid in her heard that she was worthy of pity; "I confess to you," she would say to Julie, "that I felt the loss of Silvio with more pain than all the other incidents that have befallen me and although I was resolved never to see him again, and to die rather than to seek to relieve my pain; it was sufficient to me to think that he was in the world, and that I could perhaps find him again one day, but at present my ill [*mal*] is without remedy: I love still and I love but a chimera" [*j'aime encore & je n'aime plus qu'une chimere*] […] but as soon as she saw [Julie] she fell into such a great weakness, that it seemed that she was going to die; "ah!," she cried, "I find my ill there where I seek my remedy."[93]

This scene remains compelling for several reasons: on the one hand, the rhetoric of irremediable love reprises Hélisenne's idiom of lovesickness reviewed in the previous chapter. The Marquise is heartbroken not only because Silvio is no longer existent but also because, paradoxically, he has not ceased existing: upon seeing Julie, who remains Silvio (at least partially), the Marquise cannot bear the resemblance and the reminder of her past love. Even though the Marquise's love is only chimerical, as she says, it persists still in the figure of Julie. Indeed, it would seem that rather than purely chimerical to be chiasmatic: it is not that her love for Silvio is purely illusory (implying there would be a real person, "Julie," behind Silvio's impersonation) insofar as this love still subsists even after Silvio has been exposed to have been Julie's drag

persona. Consider that the Marquise explains that she would be less distraught if she knew that one day she might find Silvio one day, and yet she is also miserable because she *does* find him, almost everyday, in the figure of Julie. For it is seeing Julie, whose very presence should have been the cure to the Marquise's malady, that the Marquise's pain is only reinforced. In this sense, the Marquise is not at pain because she has lost Silvio, but because *she cannot lose him enough*—he is almost too "present," as it were, because Julie remains— and thus it is not a loss that she mourns but a loss that she can never quite lose.

In this sense, *Hypolite* joins Du Plaisir's depictions of thwarted and impossible love stories, but it queers the trope of impossible love by portraying the pleasures and predicaments, the loves and losses, of drag performance. This is not a hyperbolic instance of the impossibilities of love, however, just because Julie is in drag, for the failure of heterosexual coupling in all of these stories might be read as the hyperbolic frustration and effective displacement of the typical trope of the heteronormative marriage plot. The important point to emphasize here is the *figuration* or the *idiom* involved which portrays this failure of romantic consummation. Does *Estramène,* like *Hypolite* and those novels of its kind, forge a language of descriptive pallor and etiolated expression, one that deconstructively "supplements" the seemingly weariness and inaction of the personages it paints?[94] Far from indulging in the surfeits of sentiment or in-depth psychological reflections often ascribed to it, does the rhetoric of the *roman d'analyse* neutralize exclamation and evacuate introspection? Is love, in many of these novels, a matter of words, emotion not extralinguistic, nor reducible to language, but caught in the toils of textuality? As one critic proclaims: "It's neither that affect may be 'conveyed in' words nor that in a coldly reductive manner it is 'really only' words— but that in a full and exuberant sense, sensibility is words," even as it is not therefore reducible to them.[95] It is because of this that the infamous *aveu* of the heroine in *La Princesse de Clèves* (1687) has the performative force to condemn her virtue in the eyes of her husband when she has done nothing more than speak of a passion she promises never to materially gratify. And it is also because of this that, as will be seen,

the eponymous hero's reading of a letter at the end of *Le Comte d'Ambosie* has the perlocutionary force to bring about his death. Would it seem as if representations of amour and affect, in these novels, were anything but personal and private, precisely because circulated and cited like literary quotation?[96]

If there is indeed passion here, it is certainly not passion in the contemporary sense of possession and experience, but, rather, passion in terms of the seventeenth-century diction of submission from which the word's etymology is derived: *passus,* past participle of "to submit" or to "suffer," *pati*. As Descartes' famous treatise, *Les Passions de l'âme* (1649) would propose, the vocable "passion" accounts for that which happens beyond the voluntarist control of a subject even as it happens to this subject. In contradistinction to action willed by an agent, only a "patient" surrenders passively to passion, whether understood as unwilled event or nonvolitional perception: "whatever takes place or occurs is generally called by philosophers a 'passion' with regard to the subject to which it happens and an 'action' with regard to that which makes it happen."[97] Rather than depicting inner depth or internal psychology, then, do thoughts and emotions in certain seventeenth-century fictions seem intriguingly convex —suspended and exposed—in language rather than ensconced in ineffable depths? Would personages seem to guard no internality, as if they were superficial rather than profound, hollowed out of substance rather than truffled with plummetlessly deep interiority? The "Carte de Tendre" of Madame Scudéry's *Clélie* (1654-1660) is perhaps the most famous example of this, insofar as its geography of gallantry represents emotions as a flat surface, where physiological and psychical states —tenderness, jealousy, ennui— are not figured as personal, internal, or innermost attributes but exteriorized and leveled down to depthless veneer (similar to medieval personifications of allegorical figures of passion, which portray the passions as mobile, external, or extrapersonal figures): passion and friendship, rivalry and love, all find themselves to be pictured as no more than the shimmering surface of oceans and water, the level spreads of region and land. The emotional

intestines of characters are, in this rendition at least, turned inside out, unfurled and unfolded in an expanse of surface as exposed as it is flat.[98]

If this is right, then instead of indulging in the unstable crestings of passion, prolonged internal monologues or impactful plot-reversals, would the *roman d'analyse* often seem to proceed with unmoved poise, gently passing by its characters rather than focusing intensely on their presumed internal lives?[99] Lafayette's *Comtesse de Tende* (1718; posthumous), perhaps taking part in this tendency, sketches the attraction between the Chevalier de Navarre and the eponymous heroine of the novel in a successive suite of correlatives that implies relation but not subordination to a cause, as if falling in love passed by, and passed away, without need of toilsome explication: "He could not entirely hide his passion; she noticed; her *amour-propre* was flattered by it; she felt a violent inclination for him."[100] There is no fixation on a particular object or an inference of correlation; elements are lined up together but no causal inference that would comprehend their relation in an explanation is drawn. The glossily smooth glissade of clauses in this parataxis deflates the crescendos of heightened, overplayed pathos by lightly grazing the two personages rather than plumbing their thoughts, by approaching them from without rather than explaining them from within, by threading together linguistic clauses, in other words, rather than psychological causes.[101] This intriguing delicacy and deceptive economy of expression —which gracefully touches upon the characters they describe rather than exhuming their internal lives— emphasizes the deflective, leveling poetics of understatement that these novels employ. While it may always be possible to spelunk for interred traumas or unspoken wants, unrealized fantasies and unbidden symptoms, is there also a curious resistance in this eloquently sparse, ultimately heftless language to such efforts, as if to weight it with psychologistic symbols or trenchant ontological claims would be to miss something crucial about its seeming lightness of style and its sheerness of expression?

Consider that narration in these fictions, like *Estramène*, at times seems to act as if it were a passive attendant that observed its protagonists but which made no attempt to absolutely explain them or obtrusively interfere with what befalls them; as if it made little effort to disinter the "internal" subjectivities of its personages or to deliver to view their innermost psychologies; as if it quietly passed by its characters instead of trying to penetrate their psyches or mine their interiors for evidence of personal insight. "Though there might have been a hundred gallant things to say", reports the narrator of Madame de Scudéry's *Mathilde* (1667) in reference to the eponymous heroine's experiences, "I will lightly pass over them, pass by them," gently glossing the heroine in the very act of glissing away.[102] What these less considerable "hundred gallant things" might be are not harvested, for the point would not be to quarry into characters as if they had depth to be dredged out but, on the contrary, to glide lightly by them, as if they had none. Is it perhaps for this reason that the style of writing in *Amboise* and its literary cohort has often been said, mistakenly or not, to be so crystalline and pristine that it seems to evacuate the interiority of the novel's personages by immaterializing their form and desubstantializing their personhood? Do they become less characters who speak through the novel than character's traversed by the novel's speech—compelled to recite and instantiate a language that is not theirs, a language that is no one's even when it seems someone's? If their speech seem nixed of personality and self-recanting in style, is this because it is neither fully theirs nor totally disowned by them, not one or the either, not neither— some might even say "neuter"? Is subjective expression gentled into quiet extinction, into a narration of nobody? While provocative, these formulations misplace the question in presupposing that interiority has simply been evacuated or exteriorized, for even this formulation implicitly presupposes a stable distinction between a prior interiority opposed to a contrary exteriority when, as the concluding section of this chapter will suggest, it is the very distinction between inside and outside —as well as the whole metaphorics of internalization and externalization, surface and depth, inside and outside— that needs to be interrogated.

"I love you despite you, and despite myself"
early modern

vi. Out of love

(and do not ask it of me, it would be violence)
—Derrida, *Demeure*

I do not demand to be loved, [...] *but to be suffered.*
—Madeleine de Scudéry, *Mathilde* (1667)

May happiness come to all, on the condition that, by this wish, I be excluded from it.
—Blanchot, *L'Écriture du désastre*

Love [...] *is to be fulfilled by the simple knowledge that the beloved is in joy, without taking part in this joy, not even desiring to take part in it.*
—Simone Weil, *La pesanteur et la grâce*

The stylistic techniques sketched above, coupled with a discussion of the thematic interest in abstensive, deflective, or reactive amorous endeavor, would come to the fore in Catherine Bernard's *Le Comte* d'*Amboise* (1689) when the amative dynamics between its three main characters are closely perused. In the final movements of this chapter, the self-cancelling and paradoxical rhetoric of Amboise's amorous address will be studied in relation to his beloved Mlle de Roye's response. For the self-rescinding and aporetic conceit of amorous interaction the novel describes is informed by the rhetorical catachreses and asubjective stylistic feats that have hitherto been outlined. *Amboise*, second in Catherine Bernard's novel-cycle *Les Malheurs de l'amour* —of which *Eléonor d'Yvrée* (1687) remains its more famous predecessor— emplots the non-events, missed happenings, and fruitless ends of a desire never concretely actualized between lovers.[103] The novelette unfolds in the fall-out of the reign of François II —that is, sixteenth-century France— and some claim that *La Princesse de Clèves* (1678) would have plied the model upon which Bernard's story is calqued.[104] It is crucial, however, not to forget that the figure of missed amorous achievement preoccupies Bernard's oeuvre from the first novel attributed to her authorship —*Fédéric de Sicile* (1680), the story of love's mishaps when a woman passes herself off as a man— to the final prosaic output ascribed to her name —*Inès de Cordoue* (1696), a tale of a woman who convinces her beloved to marry another; *Histoire de la Rupture d'Abénamar et de Fatime* (1696), a narrative which details the failure of a relationship and the exodus of its heroine— and so is thus a topos not simply ascribable to *La Princesse de*

Clèves alone.[105] The question of literary influence and inheritance on second-wave salon writers such as Bernard surely cannot be answered with recourse to a single origin or author—indeed, it cannot be fully "answered" at all.[106] *Amboise* meets at the point of convergence between earlier, baroque novelistic conventions —with their syntactic involutions and intricacies of plot— but also coupled with the new-fangled rhetorical techniques of brevity, bleached style, and ellipsis— what was to be called the *nouvelle*, or novella form. Far from having a sole intertextual influence, it has multiple,[107] and the more important point would seem to be that if Bernard's *oeuvre* can be said to share anything with LaFayette and her literary cohort, this would have to do with an apparently kindred interest in exposing love's constitutive ambivalence rather than celebrating or criticizing it.[108]

In what ways does *Amboise* reprise and further the idioms of inexperience and inaction already analyzed? "[F]ollowing the custom of unhappy lovers," Amboise apprehends that he is not loved by Mlle de Roye and, misdoubting its source, seeks to clarify "more particularly what he did not know enough to be absolutely miserable" (248-9). This pursuit of "that which he does not know enough of in order to be consummately crestfallen" leads him to confront his rival Sansac during a court promenade. He approaches Sansac to make mention of their mutual beloved, but "while both equally wished to speak of her, neither of them could resolve to begin [*aucun d'eux ne pouvait se résoudre à commencer*]" (249). Though brought together to speak of a common subject, speech is ironically quelled by their meeting, for while Amboise will go on to say much, Sansac will only say little: "[Amboise] praised her a lot, but Sansac praised her little, as much perhaps to not be in accord with his rival as from fear of revealing himself" (*Ibid*). Amboise misgives the breviloquence of his rival, his fears only fuelled by the *non-dits* of Sansac's silence: "he would have been worried if the marquis de Sansac had admired Mademoiselle de Roye too much, and he was still more [worried] that he did not want to admire her enough" (*Ibid*).[109] The count is thus poised in a curiously experienceless and epistemologically empty position: he wishes to know more of that which he already half-

divines at the same time that no corroboration can satisfy his suspicions.[110] Amboise can neither fully indulge in his anxiety nor completely confirm its reality, for he is positioned in an asymptotic relation to knowledge according to which he cannot know enough, nor know any more, of that which he has already, inevitably, begun to know. He can only know that which excludes knowledge itself.

What brings forth the mutual acknowledgement that they are both paramours of the same woman is, once again, the indefinite and atmospheric diction that has configured the narration of this story all along (and which has been discussed at length in the novellas of Du Plaisir, d'Aulnoy, Lafayette, and Scudéry). During a conversation at the King's quarters, Sansac glowingly acclaims the beatific features of Mademoiselle de Roye, unaware that Amboise will soon chance upon the party. The king, catching sight of Amboise's incoming arrival, punningly declares that Sansac "says more mirific things apropos the beauty of Mademoiselle de Roye" than Amboise ever has. To this witticism the two men respond by blushing, in this way exposing their common competition. The text, however, leaves importantly unidentified *who* recognizes and orchestrates this revelation: "These two rivals blushed at this word [of the King]; this redness was noticed [*cette rougeur fut remarquée*]" (*Ibid*). Puzzling here is the inexistence of a grammatical actor in the second clause: the rivals both flush crimson, and it is noted—but by whom? If this attracts attention, whose attention is it? It is of interest that the epiphanic revelation that they are rivals, something which Amboise could only doubt and Sansac only deny, is made possible by a phrase whose deed is devoid of a doer.

Further conflict comes to pass. The wish of Sansac's father is that he marry a certain Mlle d'Annebault.[111] As for Mlle de Roye, she encounters the news of this prearranged matrimony, and her feelings concerning it, with bewilderment: "she was surprised by this news [*nouvelle*], and all the more to find herself so sensitive [*sensible*] to it" (250). Like the other linguistic tactics waged by the narratives studied earlier, Mlle de Roye is rendered as being held at a remove from her "sensibility." In this context, emotions might even seem like an exterior object —rather than an internal affect— which can be happened upon as

one would a piece of news.[112] Better still, what might have been a discursive account of "feeling" gives way to an account of feeling as itself discursive: Mlle de Roye's emotion is conveyed in and as a rhetorical figure, as that which can be apprehended and analyzed as if it were news.

Disheartened by this report, Mlle de Roye tries, "despite herself," to oppugn Sansac and oppose herself to him—but to no avail. Fortunately for her, "therein supervened difficulties [in regard to her marriage with Amboise] that had not been foreseen" (*Ibid*): Amboise is implicated in a court scandal requiring the prorogration of their nuptials.[113] Meanwhile, Sansac confides in his sister, Mlle de Sansac, with the hope that she might intercede on his behalf. According to the projected plan he nurtures, Mlle de Sansac is to befriend his beloved and, when in commerce with her, to dispraise his antagonist: Amboise.[114] Mlle de Roye willingly accepts this newfound confidante and takes the occasion to lament her situation.[115] Being one of the queen's favorites, Mlle de Sansac offers to consult her patroness to interpose a possible resolution, a proposition to which Mlle de Roye, wary of her mother's wroth, "was opposed to it at first" but "nevertheless, she hinted [*laissa entrevoir*] that if the thing had been able to be done without her participation, she would have been joyful of it" (252). This concession on the part of Mlle de Roye, by means of which "not more was needed to oblige Mademoiselle de Sansac to serve her," effectively makes it such that she can only partake in her pleasure to the precise extent that she is absent from it. That is, Mlle de Roye gives a glimpse, an intimation, that should she have no involvement in the favourable arrangement of her affair she would consider herself gratified. Indeed, it is her acedia of action and aphasia of speech which becomes the token of her admiration: "Although Mademoiselle de Roye was very far from avowing to [Mlle de Sansac] the inclination that she had for her brother, it was a lot that she avoided speaking about him [*c'était beaucoup qu'elle évitât de parler de lui*]" (252). Inversely proportionate, what counts for a lot in the way of exposing her desire is not how much she says but how little, just as her refusal to participate in her affair becomes her

only manner of enjoying it. But what is it to be happy for a love that happens without the lover? What is this *happiness without happening?*[116]

Mlle de Sansac's efforts to assist Mlle de Roye ultimately prove fruitless.[117] Madame de Roye, for her part, learns of this inopportune situation, does not wish to tell her daughter what has transpired lest Mlle de Roye should be detoured away from the "sentiments she was supposed to have for the count d'Amboise" (254-5). She decides to take her daughter to a distant estate in the countryside, telling Amboise that though he might be enmired in court scandal, this would not occasion any alteration in the sentiments she has for him. At this point, a rhetorical question, flitting between free indirect discourse and some other unidentifiable narrating voice, is posed: "But of what use were these sentiments for the count d'Amboise? [*Mais que servaient ces sentiments au comte d'Amboise?*]" (255). In asking how these sentiments might serve Amboise, the implication follows that the reader might well ask the same of the novel itself: what or whom do sentiments serve in this nouvelle? As already seen, sentiments are conveyed by a language whose opacity is only furthered by the negative linguistic agency structuring its syntax. If the text refrains from a simple, explicit, or univocal representation of "sentiments" in the novel —where sentiments refer, *inter alia,* to judgment and emotion— then this is also the predicament befalling the personages of its story.

Witness, for example, the particular quandary in which Amboise finds himself. On the one hand, it is upon hearing of Mlle de Roye's abscondment that he is "almost sure that [the sentiments] of his mistress were contrary to his" and decides to elucidate the matter in such a way that his betrothed should be constrained to confess that whereof he already has a suspicion (255). Indeed, the "suspicion was already so fatal to him that certainty couldn't be any more so" (*Ibid*), whereby the ignorance within which he dwells proves less painful than the certitude that would release him from it. At the same time, however, it is reported —again, by what voice and whence what perspective?— that "[i]f Mademoiselle de Roye was predisposed toward another inclination, it was better that he be at once persuaded of it than to always dread

it" (*Ibid*). According to this conditional phrase, if it is the case that Mlle de Roye should be inclined toward another then it ensues that being informed of this might spare Amboise a certain amount of pain. And yet, because this phrase is conditional —because already the prior condition that Mlle de Roye be inclined toward another for the rest to follow has itself never been ratified or verified— it becomes impossible to resolve the undecidability of this insufferable situation. This is only further compounded by the fact that even when Amboise "had occasions to inform himself of this" he "did not have the force to profit from it" for "when he was on the point of learning it, he no longer wanted to know it [*quand il était sur le point de l'apprendre, il ne voulait plus le savoir*]" (*Ibid*). If not knowing proved insufferable to Amboise, the dissipation of that ignorance by the confirmation of his fears would seem equally unbearable. Like Hélisenne of the preceding chapter, Amboise is asymptotically suspended twixt two alternatives neither of which he ultimately achieves, unable to bear either his ignorance or his enlightenment.

In the meantime, Mlle de Roye has soon inferred that "perhaps Madame de Roye had discovered her sentiments for [Sansac]" for not only have they precipitously changed manors, but now Mme de Roye refuses all of Sansac's visits by means of various pretexts.[118] With Sansac provisionally removed, the narrative begins to embroider upon the increasing intricacies of the rapport between Mlle de Roye and Amboise. The binds of their relationship entwine them in an ambivalent dependency: "Amboise signaled to [Mlle de Roye] how much it afflicted him to see this melancholy in her, without, however, complaining about it and without signaling to her that he could in part fathom it [*la pénétrer*]" (257). Here the beneficence of Amboise's behavior upwells from the silence that he maintains —or the ignorance he feigns— in regard to the open secret of Mlle de Roye's love of another. Mlle de Roye extends the ruse by acknowledging his "respectful conduct," though even this cannot conduce her to a change of heart: "[her] pity followed after her hatred, but love did not follow pity" (257). As Amboise's court affairs begin to resolve themselves, and as Mlle de Roye realizes her conjugal contract will soon be cemented, the question becomes how well

"duty" will be able to supplement that which "feeling" cannot. This is dramatized with particular force one day when Mlle de Roye "[says] to him more obliging things than she had ever said," something which only mortifies his pride. "'Do not force yourself,'" he tells her,

> These studied duties do not make me any less pitiable [*à plaindre*]. You feign to show [*marquer*] goodness, and that I would be happy if you had had enough to try to hide it from me!' This speech embarrassed Mademoiselle de Roye: it was founded enough to cause her a little disorder; she went a long while without responding and Monsieur d'Amboise, becoming bold [*s'enhardissant*] by this silence or rather being confirmed [*se confirmant*] in his suspicions, no longer had the force to impede them from appearing: 'Mademoiselle, he said to her, I only see but too much that I am indifferent to you; why do you not wish that I see it? At least have sincerity, if you do not have tenderness. I am reduced to the point of being obliged to you if you avow to me that you do not love me' [*je suis réduit au point de vous être obligé si vous m'avouez que vous ne m'aimez pas*]. (257-8)

In the unfolding of this scene, where the interlocution of the characters is punctuated by silence and reserve, Amboise finds himself in the curious situation of asking for his beloved's pointed confirmation and refusal of his advances as the surest mark of her tenderness. "I am reduced to the point of being obliged to you if you avow to me that you do not love me" or, reformulated otherwise: "If you loved me, you would confess to me that you do not love me." Such is the antimonious demand Amboise makes upon Mlle de Roye, requesting as he does that she divulge her dispassion and admit her apathy.[119] At the same time, however, any possible admission that Mlle de Roye could have afforded is never fully granted because Amboise never brooks it: " 'If the greatest esteem that ever was…'" she begins, before being brusquely interrupted by Amboise's interjection: " 'No,'" he says, "all of your esteem would not be able to console me of your indifference" (*Ibid*). Pressed by jealousy, he is compelled to add: "if anything could dulcify this, it would be a confidence without reserve; it is well due to me in order to recompense me for all that you do not give me'" (258). Mlle de Roye is to give all that she precisely *cannot give* in that she is impelled to offer, by way of confession, a confidence that hers is a love she cannot, in fact, offer. "What is this confidence that you demand of me still?" asks Mlle de Roye, "It seems to me that I show you much [*je vous en marque beaucoup*]," to which Amboise ripostes: "the favor [*grâce*] that I ask of you, is that you tell me of my

misfortune in all its entirety" (258). What begins to emerge from this dialogue is a meeting of impossible demands: Mlle de Roye is to confide, as a mark of her tenderness, that she cannot, in fact, provide tenderness, while Amboise ardently wishes to learn of his ill-fortune to better demonstrate his attachment to his betrothed.

The conversation revolves, as it had at the novel's beginning, around matters of blindness, sight, and the discursive reading vision requires: Mlle de Roye never verbally confesses her love of Sansac, but Amboise will continually claim that what he sees betray her infidelity ("Admit to me you love my rival," he will say, "I know it, I see it despite you" [275]). In an attempt to defend herself against Amboise's accusation that her heart is already "predisposed" ("*prévenu*") for another, Mlle de Roye asks: " 'Predisposed? […] Did I know someone prior to being engaged to you?'" Amboise is quick to retaliate: "You saw no one before me? It only takes a moment to arouse [*faire naître*] love" (258). For Amboise "sight" is to be the guarantor of love —he says, after all, that seeing someone can engender desire in a brief moment— and he finds corroboration for this in what is inscribed upon Mlle de Roye's visage when she reacts to this censure: "To this word [*à ce mot*], which marked [*marquait*] so precisely what had happened in the heart of Mademoiselle de Roye, such a great redness covered her face [*visage*] that Monsieur d'Amboise no longer doubted his disgrace" (258). It will be noted that at stake for the two here is not so much subjective states as discursive marks: it is not in Mlle de Roye herself, but in the detached entity of her "heart," where things have happened and which has become prepossessed in favor of another; it is not Sansac's actions which has inspired her love but the "sight" of him which has enabled it. And it is these dispossessed operations of the heart and of the eyes which premise Amboise's belief that his reading of these signs —or better, these "marks"— is not without foundation: "What do you make me envisage [*envisage*], Mademoiselle? […] in discovering that you have for another the sentiments that were due to me by the violent passion that I have

for you!" (*Ibid*). For Amboise Mlle de Roye's "visage" has made him "envisage" that which he had most feared, the vision of her blush, and that which he reads through it, the surest attestation of all that he fears.

Mlle de Roye cannot hold back her tears, "showing [*marquait*]" such pain that, "despite his despair," he is "touched by the state in which he had put her" and he falls into silence, as if to make reparations for having "spoken too much" (259). The sight of her tears, just like the sight of her blush, become the means through which dialogue between the two is both sustained and broken: "Finally, he asked pardon for what he had said, or rather what he had seen" (*Ibid*). If it was not explicit verbalization that yielded her avowal, neither does Mlle de Roye abnegate it by means of speech. Rather than ratifying or refuting Amboise, in other words, Mlle de Roye never explicitly declares or denies that Amboise is correct. Instead, it is said that "[h]er trouble and her blush had betrayed her so cruelly that she did not dare to look at Monsieur de'Amboise" such that "not knowing what to respond to him," she retires to her room "in beseeching him to leave her in peace and to forget her" (259). Where Amboise seeks to forge a relationship, Mlle de Roye seeks to forget it, despite the fact that she has never openly addressed the secret of which "she had discovered a part and which she had let him fathom in all its entirety" (*Ibid*).[120]

The two do not see each other for some time. Amboise does not dare show himself "before her eyes" when he reminds himself of "the tears" he had earlier occasioned (259). Madame de Roye, however, noticing Amboise's evident removal from her daughter's presence, enforces a different rule: they are to receive his visits with alacrity and with frequency. Amboise accedes to the proposition, and one day he happens upon Mlle de Roye, lost in a profound reverie. His unwelcome arrival spurs a dispute between them, Amboise's chagrin only intensified: "it is not my hate which you fear," he tells her, "you only fear my love" (260). If his love becomes an imposition and an unwanted burthen, then his only recourse, so he says, is to release her therefrom altogether. In a moment of self-cancelling accostment, similar to the self-abnegating address with which this chapter began ("love me always, tell me never"), Monsieur d'Amboise

avers: "I will flee you, since it is the only mark [*marque*] of passion which might be agreeable to you. I will always love you with a violent amour, and I will never see you" (*Ibid*).

This line encapsulates the regressive and retreatful ethos that have informed the dynamics between the two all along and which has marked the language of the novel throughout. The conjunction in Amboise's averment ("I will always love you […] *and* I will never see you"), brings the acts of loving and of withdrawing into contact without subordinating the one to the other by means of a logical relation. Is the rapport between them metonymic, not dyadic, in that they are figured as adjacent to each other? That loving and losing are conjoined, but by means of a frail conjunction, makes for a relationship that is defined by its ontological instability and indeterminacy, if not impossibility, for the surest "mark" of love —note again the recurrence of "marking" in this text— is defined by the lover's absence therefrom. The oblation of love, in this account, requires the ablation of the lover from it. Is this, however, a voluntaristic act of a subject who, by its will, is allowed to freely chose this renunciation? Or would it seem, oppositely, to depend upon a displacement and dismantlement of this conception of willful subjecthood altogether? As Amboise formulates it: "Judge the excess of my tenderness by that which it makes me do against myself [*contre moi*]" (*Ibid*). The tenderness to which Ambosie testifies is not one reducible to himself, or to a self, because its operation would seem to rest upon the refusal of volition altogether. In these terms, it is not a subject who acts or an agent who enacts this forswearing, but the notion of an acting subject that is itself forsworn.

Because Amboise's concession is neither a demand to know whether he *is* loved nor a demand that he *be* loved, his behest reprieves Mlle de Roye from having to react at all, insofar as he awaits no immediate or actual deserts from her, insofar as she entertains no prospect of her possible response, as he says elsewhere: "I don't ask for passion […] leave me my own, that is all that I ask of you" (279).[121] The probability of her silence does not hinder him from speaking but in fact compels it. Faced with her tongue-

tied obstinancy Amboise does not withhold his beseechment and his entreaty, lightsome and imponderous as it is, disclaims any right it might have to supplicate for a response.[122] It gingerly forfeits this right to make claim on its addressee, for it asks nothing of her, or better, it asks for nothing other than to leave unrequited and unheeded the recompense from her that it never truly requested. For any response Mlle de Roye could give would fall to naught; Amboise's statement abjures in advance the riposte it never actually sought to obtain from Mlle de Roye by making an assertion that ultimately courts no answer. His inquisition thus paradoxically solicits Mlle de Roye's response and nonsuits the possibility of her reply altogether.

Amboise's self-recusing stipulation —that he will love Mlle de Roye, and see her nevermore— is only the first instance of what Bernard's preface to the work refers to as his "genero[sity]" (239). It arrives throughout the novel and furnishes yet more compelling examples of the kind of amorous acedia and abstensive address at issue in this chapter. Mme de Tournon, the disloyal countess from which Sansac had mistakenly sought aid, attempts to orchestrate a marriage between Mlle de Roye and another suitor, the viscount de Tavanes, with the hope of frustrating Sansac's happiness. Mlle de Roye becomes inconsolable at the prospect: "she thought that the perfect esteem that she had for the count d'Amboise, could take the place of love and that it would have been more sufferable to her to be his [...] At last, the past evil [*mal*] didn't seem to her an evil and she didn't give that name but to the present [situation]" (266). Amboise, for his part, is no less surprised by the news —"But what did this news not produce in the mind of Monsieur d'Amboise? [*Mais que ne produisit point cette nouvelle dans l'esprit de Monsieur d'Amboise?*]" (*Ibid*), quizzes the text—and he decides to visit Mlle de Roye in her quarters. Witness to her despair, he offers his aid: he will wed Mlle de Roye in order to save her from the disgrace of a marriage with the viscount, a prospect to which the desperate woman readily accedes.

But upon reflection, Mlle de Roye, after already having given her consent, sees that "she had only changed [one] misfortune" for another, and Amboise's suspicions are once again renewed when faced with

the tristful sight of his betrothed (268).[123] Mlle de Roye falls ill from her chagrin, and despite the pains she causes him, Amboise only "esteemed her more, and didn't love her less" (*Ibid*).[124]As her malady intensifies, Amboise sees that he must unbind her from their marriage contract, even if it means placing her "in the hands of his rival." Hereupon emerges a second sacrifice on Amboise's part. He realizes that "it [is] necessary to cede her to his rival" because she would only be unhappy with anyone else (269). The only love he can vouchsafe is the obliteration of his claims to love and the removal of his person:

> He noticed that she was crying, though she essayed to hide her tears and show an open and tranquil face. It is difficult to imagine the state in which he found himself [*Il est difficile de se représenter l'était où il se trouva*]. The effort that was made for him carried him to the one he had a duty to make [*L'effort qu'on se faisait pour lui le portrait à celui qu'il se devait faire*]. […] He remained a long while without speaking; but finally, looking at Mademoiselle de Roye with eyes bathed in tears, […] he said to her, "you have had up until now more strength than I. I tremble at my project, but perhaps I will execute it. You give me the example of dying, if necessary, in forcing oneself [*Vous me donnez l'exemple de mourir, s'il le faut, en se contraignant*]. Well, it's done for [*c'en est fait*], it is necessary to tear myself away from myself [*il faut m'arracher à moi-même*]. Don't hide from me your sentiments for Sansac. I want to undertake everything to make him obtain a happiness for which you judge him more worthy than me […] I will please you at least in giving you to a rival." (270)[125]

Amboise's departure, occasioned by Mlle de Roye's sadness, is organized around a series of ambiguous avowals. In an impersonal turn of phrase, what is recounted is how the effort made in his regard (presumably by Mlle de Roye, although the "on" leaves this imprecise), inspires in him an equal effort to withdraw not only from her presence but also, it would seem from his own. As Amboise has it, he must "tear" himself away from himself: his decision is not one he makes himself, or if he makes it he does only insofar as he is other to himself. To borrow a line from Charlotte Rose de Caumont De La Force's novel, *Histoire Secrete de Marie de Bourgogne* (1694), Amboise's aporia might be described thus: "I love you despite you, & if I dare say it, despite myself"—a love in spite of self, a love in spite of itself.[126] Equally interesting here is how the rhetoricity of Amboise's affirmation denies his interlocutor's rejoinder and treats her as earless to its call. For his words are not importunate, not suing to determine whether he himself is loved or that he be loved. Amboise's speech, that is, adjourns the reaction and realizable gain of Mlle de Roye's reciprocal response ("c'en est fait," he says). He almost becomes no more than a passive, abeyant witness to

a love in which he is no longer to actively take part, for he will love her only by allowing her to adore another. Amboise's proclamation repeals any efforts his beloved might exercise in his regard other than to hibernate in heedlessness, other than to leave his act unslaked of her reply and untouched by his love. And insofar as he anticipates no salvation, Amboise's speech would seem idle in address and innocent of expectation: to leave its parlance without suite and its plaint without reply, such would seem to be his only request, for the most graceful of his abdications is that of consequence itself.

This is not the last of it. After already disengaging himself twice before, when marriage plans with Sansac eventually fall through again, Amboise finds himself poised yet a third time to save Mlle de Roye from marriage to a marechal de Cossé. He goes to her and throws himself at her feet:

> you see the most loving of all men; you know that your rigors have not impeded me from being so […] I should have, despite them, been sure that you will never love and, yet, they make me hope, or they took the place of happiness for me, as long as you were no one's; but you could not evade being someone's any longer (306).[127]

In a departure from the familiar topos of unrequited love, Ambosie turns out to not be hopeless because he is unloved, nor even hopeless that his attempts to arouse his beloved's interests will ultimately come to naught. No, his love would seem constituted, rather, by this hopelessness: in a crucial sense, his love *is* this very hopelessness: "they make me hope, or *they took the place* of happiness for me." With a rhetorical gesture that at once poses a hypothesis, and then goes on to dispose of it, Amboise alludes to imaginative possibilities he never ultimately accepts or admits as its own. Receding at the moment of its statement, in a crucial sense, Amboise's avowal renounces the redemptive response from Mlle de Roye it only pretends to beseech but actually abstains from explicitly claiming. At the same time, however, even if Amboise's words attempt to unfetter Mlle de Roye from the yoke of obligation —by not heeding or asking her to respond at all—they also ensnare her within a scene of address from which there is no elusion. His speech, thirstless of a desire to know he is loved, wards off any reply Mlle de Roye could give at the same time that it remains a speech addressed only to her, a speech to which Mlle de Roye cannot simply forbear reply.

For if Mlle de Roye is powerless to reply she also cannot *not* reply, cannot but find herself entrapped by a rhetorical address from which there is no absolute refuge. Amboise's confession suggests, in turn, that matters are not so simple for Mlle de Roye: her predicament, and the possibility of voluntary choice, is constrained in advance precisely because it is sexed. It should be noted that, in Amboise's formulation, it becomes clear that Mlle de Roye cannot, as a young woman, choose independence: she must be someone's. Amboise's plaint thus almost has nothing to do with Mlle de Roye's choice because there is nothing she can do for it that would involve her decision. It is a speech that, to a certain degree, must endure without her even as it heralds her, for it abides in the annulment of the answer from Mlle de Roye it does not summon and that she cannot give.[128] Said otherwise, Mlle de Roye's possible reply is peremptorily despoiled. By asking that Mlle de Roye do nothing that she can, to do what is beyond her abilities and power, Amboise's speech also implicates her in a prison of address where she is helplessly unable to reply and, in the same stroke, haplessly incapable of *not* responding by virtue of being hailed by Amboise's imploration.

Amboise's speech henceforth renders any possible reply Mlle de Roye could furnish redundant even as it remains a question that appears directed only to her. She cannot respond with love but nor can she avoid having already been addressed by a speech mercilessly unresponsive to whatever it is she might say—given that she must be someone's. She thenceforth bears the burden of being addressed by a speech that has no need *of* her response, even as it is been tendered forth *to* her; it asks that she do nothing with what she has been affronted by: a speech that retreats from a dialogue it also pretends to solicit, an accostment of weaponless deference that absolves its addressee of the responsibility to retort. As the beloved of Amboise's claim, Mlle de Roye rejoinder is pre-empted even as she is enticed to retaliate, for she is enthralled by a speech that promises no evasion from its solicitation even as it treats her as irrelevant to its query. This is not a romantic quandary for Mlle de Roye, even if it may be for Amboise, for laden with the social burdens of a gender associated with the restriction of mobility and agency, she can only concede, finally, an answer

of ambiguous import: "since I cannot dispense with entering into some sort of liaison, I would be upset that it might not be with you" (306).[129]Amboise seems to ignore the incisive ambivalence of this phrase, preferring to discount Mlle de Roye's intimation that she only chooses him because she must choose someone.[130]

Mlle de Roye's ambivalence will, however, become Amboise's when, the day after their matrimony, he receives a letter of unknown hand, telling him that Mlle de Roye is still in love with Sansac and that Amboise should avoid marriage with her at all costs. Appended to this note is a letter written by Sansac himself, addressed to Mlle de Roye, wherein he details how their marriage plans had been thwarted due to myriad circumstances and wrongdoings of which they were both dupes. The letter has been sent, in fact, by Mlle de Sansac, on commission by her brother, both of whom are unaware that Amboise had already married. The narrative reports on the emotional turmoil this foments: "What effect the reading of these letters produced in the heart of Monsieur d'Amboise! He saw himself forced to doubt if he was loved at the time [*dans le temps*] that he was possessor of the person that he loved. What horror presented itself [*se présentait*] to his mind!" (310-11). In tune with the prior exempla, according to which emotion is portrayed as abstract entities without agent and without interior substance, discursive "effects" are "produced" in the "heart" of "Amboise" rather than an intuitively emotive experience by his person undergone, just as horror presents itself to his mind rather than him "being" horrified.[131] The performative and perlocutionary effect of the letter, much like the Princess' "aveu" in *La Princesse de Clèves*, amounts to a forceful killing by means of words or, as the text has it, "des lettres qui lui donnaient la mort" (312).[132]

Struck ill by the discovery, Ambosie begins to suffer in silence lest he should once again confront a certainty he has feared all along and, worse still, lest he should come across as jealous, and in so doing "perhaps remove from her the liberty of following her inclination when he would be no more" (312). He shares the letters with her, explaining that her sentiments for Sansac will soon be revived after his death,

and allowing her to pursue them after he perishes.[133] Following Amboise's decease, Sansac hastens to the widowed Mlle de Roye in the hope of marrying her, but it is now for her to relinquish Sansac: "You would not be able to make [*vous ne sauriez faire*] an effort to leave me to myself," asks Mlle de Roye, "as Monsieur d'Amboise did to leave me to you?" (320). Baffled by her virtuous obstinacy and commitment, he makes, in the name of love, an ultimatum: marry or he'll expose himself to death. Mlle de Roye, tears in her eyes, bemoans his conduct, so unlike that of Monsieur d'Amboise: " Why do you want that I be resolved, that I resolve myself [*que je me détermine*]? Leave me at least indecisive [*irrésolute*], since you already weaken my resolve.'" (320-1). Rather than resolution, Mlle de Roye asks to be left irresolute (similar to Amboise's resolution, already discussed, to remain unresolved about discovering his beloved's attraction to another). Her requisition that that no decision be made for her love echoes the heroine Bernard's later novel *Inès de Cordoue* (1696), where the wed woman, Inès, tells her lover, Lermes, to marry another, as a mark of her love:

> I know that it requires more passion of you to obey me in this occasion than to stay mine; but, at last, I will flee you as long as you will not be engaged; I swear to you, and I will come here no more. Whatever harm your absence might do to me, your presence would do to me still more. Make everyone believe that you are detached from me; make me believe it, if it is possible, myself [*faites-le-moi croire, s'il se peut, à moi-même*].[134]

The rhetoric of self-abnegation which had marked Amboise and Mlle de Roye's speech is here reprised with Inès' request that Lermes not only demonstrate his passion by renouncing it but that, above all, he should make the world, and even she herself, believe this. In the case of Mlle de Roye, this rhetoric takes on a somewhat different cast. For she now seems to be devoted to Ambosie wholeheartedly—but only when he is no longer there to enjoy the fruit of her devotion. If, during life, he could never secure her fidelity, now it comes to pass that, after his perishment, she finds herself beholden to him. The experience of their love never quite happens in presence or, if it does happen, it takes place without the participation of either party and in a time whether neither of them can presently be. And the same could be said of Sansac, in a way, as neither Mlle de Roye nor he ever consummates their initial amour. Killed in a military campaign shortly

after his interview with Mlle de Roye, she returns to the countryside, passing "the rest of her days filled with diverse afflictions and without daring to sort them out [*sans oser les démêler*], for fear of recognizing the strongest" (321). What could not be disentangled from the very beginning —Mlle de Roye's sentiments— is left, at the novel's close, unraveled.

If the story leaves an open question in regard to *whom* Mlle de Roye has loved, this is perhaps due to the undecidability between giving into love and giving it up that has preoccupied the novel throughout, an indeterminacy between losing oneself in one's love and losing one's self altogether. Consider, in closing, a dialogue between Mlle de Roye and Amboise that occurs midway through the love story, but which has marked their own continually: "I love you, I will love you all my life," he says to her, "but I will not speak of him [i.e. Sansac] any more. I respect you enough to even respect your passion. I will constrain myself without cease and I will never speak of my own. But the only grace I ask of you is that you see me as something more than a friend [*comme quelque chose de plus qu'un ami*]" (376). Unable to assume the place of lover, Amboise asks only that he be considered as other to that dualism altogether: more than a friend though not a lover, neither one nor the other. What would he become, if neither fully a friend, yet not quite a lover? Could this be called "love," or would it be a love so other to itself that the word would fail in its referentiality? Mlle de Roye's response is, and will have always been, caught in an amorous discourse at pains to avoid the paradoxes of its formulation: "save for love, [*hors l'amour*]" she says "you have had all my other sentiments" (289).[135]

"Hors" is a preposition which carries multiple valences, amongst which "outside, except, beyond, without, save for." It is a preposition that disseminates all the semantic possibilities it evokes beyond and outside unified meaning, similar to the way love, in Mlle de Roye's formulation, is disseminated beyond recoverable reference.[136] Interestingly, Mlle de Roye does not assume personal responsibility for either granting or withholding love from Amboise—she does not decree that she has bestowed sentiments upon

him, but that he "ha[s] had" them, the precise agent of this giving itself never specified—and if love is taken to be the referent of her declaration, it endures as one about which nothing is declared in her statement. For what would be a love beyond love, as Amboise asks, a love without itself? And to what extent does this differ from a total negation of love? Indeed, what sentiments are those that are left behind, as it were, when love is defined as its own exception to itself? The "hors" would seem to leave undecidable the exact status of the love Mlle de Roye confers. Her expression keeps inseparable mutually exclusive terms without reconciling them by the logic of non-contradiction or identity. For what would be a love without love, a love beyond the bounds love, whereby one loves "with a love that [is] more than love," to cite Edgar Allan Poe's famous *Annabel Lee* (1849)? In English, this ambiguity might be rendered by the idiom "out of love," an expression which hangs suspended between love's exhilaration—to do something *out of love*— and its exhaustion—to run *out of love*. And this is the precise ambiguity, an ambivalence even, which marks the idiom of this novel's heroine, as it will for the other fictions in the pages to come, a love figured outside the polarity of inside and outside, if not *as* the very outside of this opposition itself. For this idiom, "out of love," unsettles the topography of interiority and exteriority, undoing the implicit axiological values assigned to falling "in" love and falling "out" of it: for what would be a love that could be neither inhabited nor avoided, neither fully internalized nor fully expulsed? Out of love: an idiom that holds inseparable, though not identical, loving and losing, giving in and giving up. When Mlle de Roye says that Amboise has been accorded anything but love, everything save for love, she has not therefore completely eradicated the possibility that love has in some sense been saved (for this has been Amboise's precise demand, that he be considered outside of the bounds of friendship and lover). Might this gesture of withdrawal of love, she seems to ask, be itself a loving one? Is to be saved from love also, in some sense, to be saved by it? Such an amorous possibility, if it is one, could only be staged in terms of its impossibility, for a love that is administered only in its withholding cannot be retroactively verified or presently preserved. The fault lines

distinguishing conservation from destruction no longer hold, the boundary keeping them at a remove from one another in irrevocable deconstruction: to safeguard only loss is to save nothing at all, unless this were not a love of loss but, rather, loss *as* love, akin to a paradox brought to bear by the chorus of Euripides' tragicomic play *Alcestis* (438 B.C.), which describes the self-sacrificing heroine as acting "Not for love,/but something more than love."[137] This "something more than love" would not be the work of an *Aufhebung,* the reconciliation and resolution of opposites into dialectical unity, for a love *as* loss bodies forth an unsublatable remainder, that which never appears or presents itself as such because always already and irrecoverably lost. In a certain sense, Mlle de Roye suggests as much when she says that what is saved for Amboise is everything save love, even though this need not mean that he has not been saved, in some way, by love. For hers would be, paradoxically, a love outside itself, and thus no longer itself: a love outside of love.

"I love you too much to be able to love you"
old regime

i. amnesties

A Testimony of love.—*Somebody said: "About two persons I have never reflected very thoroughly: that is the testimony of my love for them."*
—Nietzsche, *The Wanderer and His Shadow* (1880)

But we loved with a love that was more than love—
—Edgar Allen Poe, *Annabel Lee* (1849)

"I love you too much to be able to love you"—the words are Zulmie's, the addressee her suitor, and she has just stayed his hand from committing self-slaughter.[1] The Chevalier d'Ulny, her prodigal lover, has returned after a good many infidelities, begging for pardon. Zulmie refuses to grant his wish, but not because she willfully withholds pardon for wrongs he has executed and which she cannot forgive. No, matters prove somewhat more complex: it is because Zulmie has never thought herself wronged that she finds herself incapable of granting him a favor not in her power to accord. "What would I pardon you for?" she asks, "I have not received any offense from you that might merit either hatred, or choler" (*Z,* 208).[2] She goes on to explain that she cannot blame Ulny for not having loved her, and thus cannot excuse a malfeasance for which he cannot be considered responsible. Zulmie's attitude, versed in a language of antimony and aporia, already reflects a certain paradox: insofar as she does not construe any misconduct on Ulny's part, she exempts him in advance, giving forgiveness without it even being solicited, exonerating her paramour prior to any particular exculpation he could beseech in his own name. How to absolve an offense that never was one? In a certain sense, Ulny has already been acquitted even before he asks to deserve it, for Zulmie's pardon is vouchsafed, impossibly, prior to his demand. If he is pardoned, then he is pardoned for what remains unpardonable, preemptively forgiven for a crime he has not enacted and receiving a pardon that seems all but gratuitous because never warranted. Zulmie's forgiveness, bestowed even before it is requested, appears to have no specific origin and, in being unconditionally granted to Ulny, no definitive end, for a misdeed never accomplished, and thus one in no need of a pardon, never actually becomes a misdeed at all. If the crime can never be one because it is already pardoned without condition and in advance —and hence no longer a crime because it has been forgiven— then this crime is never embodied in

the present but endures indefinitely in non-coincidence with itself —not a crime, or not yet a crime— forever straining to become the crime it never does. Likewise, a pardon for a crime that never becomes one makes the pardon not only chargeless but, in a crucial sense, *impossible*, to the extent that forgiving a crime never wrought is to forgive that which required no forgiveness at all.

In this scene from Mademoiselle Motte's *Histoire de Zulmie Warthei* (1776), then, the crime and its pardon never coincide in the present, subject as they are to an endless deferral and displacement of one another, all of which culminates in the heroine's paradoxical pronouncement that she loves Ulny too much to be able to love him. But in order to get to this paradox, one that this chapter will unpack at length, it is necessary to linger for a moment longer on the scene of address between these two lovers. Recall that Zulmie's forgiveness applies to a crime that will never be one, having always been forgiven, and is hence a forgiveness that proves impossible because, ultimately, it has nothing to forgive.[3] And it is because Unly is condoned prior to his behest for atonement that Zulmie's pardon can never quite pass into the present, for at the very instance he petitions Zulmie, her exculpation has in fact already come to pass: he has already been forgiven, and hence the pardon he requisitions is already past by the time he seeks it, past even though it has never really been present. If Zulmie forgives what remains unforgivable then, to a certain extent, when Ulny solicits her forgiveness he cannot attain her pardon, at least not on his own terms, since it has already been bequeathed to him. This would be an impossible forgiving of a crime that does not need to be forgiven because it has already been preemptively forgiven.[4] Granted the favor of her forgiveness and conferred the donation of her amnesty, Unly ends up with a gift he has never earned, but one which he also cannot obtain when he requires it, precisely because it was never his to ask for.[5] In this sense, Zulmie's forgiveness not only exceeds his command, it also exceeds her own: this forgiveness she gives is not, nor was ever, hers to give, for it was not one she actually possessed or had the power to grant. This amnesty and acquittal emerges from no self-present or sovereign self —importantly, Zulmie has not said: "*I* forgive you"— insofar as it is issued, and received, beyond the will or mastery of either lover.[6] Forgiveness passes

as if without their control and decision, its status ontologically uncertain and epistemologically unknowable—a forgiveness that may as well never have happened because it is does not originate in, nor is orchestrated by, a subject.

It is perhaps for this reason that Ulny goes on to remonstrate that he has been forgiven too much, suggesting in kind that he has not been given enough from Zulmie herself.[7] He accuses his erstwhile beloved of exercising a certain indifference and impersonality toward him, implying that in overly forgiving him she has somehow gives nothing of her own. If she had truly loved him, he queries, would she not be exasperated now when confronted with his rascalities rather than complacent toward them? "If you loved me," he cries, "you would tell me that I am the object of your hate," colliding in one phrase self-cancelling conditions: if she loves him, he decrees, she would hate him (*Z,* 211).[8] Strangely, the pardon he craves is one he also expects to be denied, for the proof that Zulmie adores him would only be displayed in her unwillingness to pardon him, her odium for him counterintuitively exposing the extent of her affections. Desperate, he reaches for his sword in an attempt to suicide himself, at which point Zulmie, in dire straits, impedes what would have been a fatal blow, and utters a plaint no less contradictory than the one rehearsed by her swain and with which this chapter began: "You would like that I wanted your death, because you have ceased to love me? ah! if it is in effect necessary to know how to love as one makes hate [*fait haïr*]: yes, I admit it, I do not love; I abhor you even; I love you too much to be able to love you [*je vous aime trop pour pouvoir vous aimer*]" (*Ibid*).

Zulmie's paradoxical phrase seeks to disarm Ulny from murderous intent, reversing the conditions of his claim to opposite effect. If loving him is to lose him and despising him to conserve him, then she is eager to concede that she will have detested him all along in order to preserve his livelihood. In this sense, Zulmie loves Ulny too much to be able to love him, for knowing full well that, in Ulny's view, to hate is to love and to love hate, she adores him so much that she decides to forgo her adoration altogether. Her self-cancelling announcement, specific as it is to the particular scene of address this novel describes, also delivers

an interesting paradox that is not unique to this novella alone: *is it possible to love too much to be able to love?* This question, immortalized in Eliza Haywood's famous novel *Love in Excess* (1719-20), finds resonance in myriad eighteenth-century works, only one of which will retain the focus of this chapter: Angélique Ducos' epistolary fiction *Marie de Sinclair* (1799). The narrative, related by the young widow Adèle de N… to a nameless confidante, tells the story of Marie's unbridled passion for a man betrothed to another and the eventual demise of her "friend," ostensibly caused by unrequited passion. Adèle reflects on the paradoxical attachment Marie sustains, one that perdures in its very impossibility and, in so doing, questions whether love's excess can be forgiven. In the first motions of this chapter, the novel and the problematic of disappointed desire will be introduced. In reading *Marie de Sinclair* in terms of "love's excess," it will be asked whether the boundaries separating amity from amour come into crisis in this fiction's portrayal of friendship and whether, indeed, the referential status of "friendship" comes to be complicated, if not forfeited, when considering the ineffectual amatory endeavors the novel depicts and the seemingly homoerotic dynamics it describes.

ii. Amities

friendship is like love
—Joséphine de Montbart, *Lettres tahitiennes* (1784)

Friendship does not keep silent, it is kept by silence.
—Jacques Derrida, *Politiques de l'amitié*

To desire friendship is a great fault. Friendship should be a gratuitous joy like those which art, or life, gives. It is necessary to refuse it in order to be worthy of receiving it: it is of the order of grace
—Simone Weil, "Amour," *La pesanteur et la grâce*

Friendship is a serious affection; the most sublime of all affections, because it is based on principle and cemented by time. The very reverse may be said of love. In a great degree, love and friendship can't exist together in the same heart: even when it's love for one person and friendship for someone else, they weaken or destroy each other; and for just one person you can't have love and friendship at the same time—they have to take turns.
—Mary Wollstonecraft, *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792)

At first glance, *Marie de Sinclair* (1799), an epistolary fiction of Angélique Case de La Bove Ducos, would seem to belong to the literary tradition of unclaimed and unlived loves characteristic of sentimental epistolary fiction of early modern and old regime France: from the *Lettres portugaises* (1669) to Rousseau's

Julie (1762), modern readers have learned to associate the *roman épistolaire* with impossible desires, exaggerated sensibilities, and hyperbolic endings—all told in love letters.[9] In this sense Ducos' novel does not disappoint, and indeed disappointment remains one of its principal themes. Related by the young widow Adèle de N… to a nameless confidante and supplemented with letters written by the eponymous heroine herself, the novel recounts Marie's unbridled passion for a man betrothed to another, her adoration for her friend Adèle, and her eventual demise, ostensibly caused by frustrated desire. Adèle bewails Marie's loss and, as the reader comes to find out, has reconstructed Marie love story *ex post facto*. From this cursory sketch, Ducos' novel would thus seem to stay beholden to the epistolary and sentimental literary legacy as it is commonly construed: Marie's unslaked desire for Fernance, a youth engaged to her cousin, Hortense, would appear to echo both the thwarted love stories and epistolary format of her literary predecessors as well as confirm the commonplaces associated with old regime women's fiction (hyperbole and heart-break; love letters and longing etc.).[10]

This rhetoric of absent amorous address in the epistolary form has something of a literary history to it. Ovid's *Heroides* (c. 25-16 BC) had already preconized the example of this epistolary vocative, an elegiac address that subsists by its very regardlessness toward its interlocutor. Therein heroines compose hortatory epistles that paradoxically apostrophize their lovers while addressed to no one in particular insofar as their lovers are no longer there to read or receive their plaints, insofar as they write in the void left behind by their beloved's departure. Says Ariadne to Theseus upon calling out for him when she realized he had abandoned her: "[only] the hollow rocks sent back your name to me."[11] Even if their lovers were physically present this would not change the tenor of their letters, for often these missals have less to do with soliciting a beloved's reaction, than with repudiating his feedback. "Not because I hope you may be moved by prayer of mine do I address you," tells Dido to Aneaeus in another missive,[12] at once apostrophizing her beloved and relieving him of the responsibility to riposte, her rightfully angry plea accepting neither response nor recompense from the beloved it nevertheless interpellates.[13]

At the same time it could be argued, as this chapter shall, that *Marie* significantly departs from the sentimental plot and pathos with which eighteenth-century women's fiction is typically identified.[14] Not only does the novel's style lack the bathetic exclamation that has commonly been attributed to fiction deemed sentimental but, and perhaps more importantly, the amorous tale the novel relates also runs counter to the heteronormative marriage plot generally associated with the sentimental tradition. While the unconsummated amative interaction between Marie and Fernance forms one plot-line of *Marie de Sinclair* and emblematizes its explicit predicament, another implicit amative story is divulged only to be silenced: the love of Adèle for Marie. As Adèle says quite simply, Marie becomes "more than [her] friend."[15] If Marie finds her passion for Fernance ultimately fruitless and foreclosed, might the same be said of Adèle's ardor for Marie? Is it not significant that the novel's letters, composed by Marie and expatiating upon her quenchless passion for Fernance, are nonetheless *addressed to* Adèle? That is, does not the tenor of the letters, which speaks *of* Fernance, differ from its form, which speaks *to* Adèle? Is not the meaning of Marie's letters counteracted by its mode of delivery insofar as these erotic epistles, written *about* a "man," are nevertheless written *to* a "woman"?[16]

The aim of this chapter is twofold: to ask whether the boundaries separating amity from amour come into crisis in this fiction's portrayal of friendship and to suggest that the referential status of "friendship" comes to be complicated, if not forfeited, when considering the ineffectual amatory endeavors the novel depicts and the queer dynamics it describes. The readings that follow will chart the disappointed desires this novel portrays—and there are many, whether it be Marie's unconsummated passion for Fernance, Fernance's failed marriage with Hortense, or Adèle's unrequited affection for Marie— but they do not purport to identify a homoerotic poetics or expose a hidden homosexuality in this text. What will be of interest, rather, are those moments where the presumed meanings of amity and amour become tenuous and undecidable precisely because the terms of gender and sexuality have been irretrievably queered.

In what way might this novel be said to queer the categories of sex and gender as well as love and friendship? It should be emphasized at the outset that the aborted amour between Fernance and Marie is in no way equivalent to that of Marie and Adèle, for matters become quite complex when both lover and beloved are said to be similarly sexed (that is, both taken to be "women" regardless of whether they identify as such).[17] The matter of homoeroticism and homosociality is a particularly delicate matter to address in this context,[18] for if it would be a mistake to uncritically graft modern sexual categories, norms, practices, and labels — "lesbianism"; "gay"; "straight" etc.— onto the ambiguous discourse of feminine friendship elaborated in French fictions of women's correspondence of the eighteenth-century,[19] it would perhaps be a worse interpretive violence still to argue that the novel is completely cleansed of homoeroticism and composed uniquely of a heterosexual amorous affair, especially since "heterosexuality" is itself a relatively recent, which is to say "modern," category.[20]

The task here is to avoid adjudicating between homosexuality and heterosexuality as if those were self-evident givens and to attend, rather, to those instances where the distinctions differentiating the one from the other are irrecuperably queered and the assumed fixity of both thrown into question.[21] For the novel's ambiguous depiction of Adèle's attachment indicates neither that her friendship for Marie is free of amative intent, nor entirely defined by it, but irreducibly queer to categorization. This is different from saying that this novel depicts a *queer sexuality*, for while queer" has sometimes been taken on as a new identity in contemporary political discourse, the use of "queer" here is not meant to designate an identity or a sexual ontology but to gesture toward that which is *other* to identitarian and ontological definitions of sexuality, that which rifts identity and propels ontology into crisis (indeed, how has a term that was supposed to destabilize identitarian categories become an identity category itself?). In terms of *Marie,* it will become apparent that this story's ambivalent figurations of disappointed love refuse domestication within the binaric terms of hetero- and homosexuality inasmuch as they resist assimilation and co-optation within normative paradigms of sexuality. Indeed, the very conceits of heterosexual *and* homosexual desire, when construed as

dualistically opposed and individually self-enclosed concepts, will find themselves unsettled and displaced when faced with the particular portrait of disappointed desire the novel portrays.

More to the point, it will be seen that it is not just Adèle's amorous rhetoric which queers the fault-lines segregating amity from amour, but that the very signifier of "friendship" in the novel itself carries ambiguous import throughout. Indeed, this questioning of sexuality, kinship, and filiation is not a feature peculiar to this novel but one which abounds in early modern French writing, from Montaigne and La Boétie's passionate friendship in letters to Mme de Souza's *Adèle de Sénange* (1794), wherein it is asked: "this very tender word, this word *I love you,* does it not belong as much to friendship as to love?"[22] Years later, in Madame de Genlis' *Mademoiselle de Clermont* (1802), the heroine comes to discover that, "thereafter experience taught her that, for honest and sensible women, veritable love is nothing other than exalted friendship, and this only is durable."[23] In similar fashion, Marie not only appeals to both Fernance and Adèle as her "friend" but, in the unfolding of the novel, the term comes to lose its referential status, if it indeed ever had one, in that its reference finds itself ceaselessly suspended: the nexus of indefinable relationships amongst the novel's personages are continually designated by the vocabulary of friendship, even if the rapports so designated cannot be fully qualified by the vocabulary which claims to describe them.[24] "Friend" appears to name that for which there is no name, or for which there is no proper name, and thus fails to fully denominate what it names in the very act of naming.[25] If there is referential bearing to "friendship" in this text, is its reference only to that which does not presently exist or has ever existed, a reference to that which has no ontological status, essence or existence in presence— namely those desires and affiliations considered unspeakable and unpresentable because they cannot be explicitly theorized nor conferred intelligibility within the hegemonic terms of sexual heteronormativity infusing old regime conceptions of sexuality?[26]

Consider, for a moment, Denis Diderot's infamous *La Religieuse* (1796), a novel which offers an incisive instance of the difficulties of acknowledging and affirming nonheteronormative practices: witness,

most particularly, how the heroine Suzanne seems to understand the homoerotic encounters she undergoes only to the extent she does not. If in old regime France there are few venues by means of which non-heterosexual desire might be openly acknowledged —Sade's writings notwithstanding—then to pay heed in language to such sex acts in a convent is, paradoxically, to pretend not to know them or feign not see them. Thus will Suzanne, when accused of "queer desires" ("désirs bizarres") and "actions" she "dare[s] not name" ("actions que je n'ose nommer") by her fellow nuns, allege to know only that she does not know. By appealing to her undefiled guiltlessness and unimpeachable spotlessness of mind, Suzanne paradoxically licenses herself to endlessly expatiate on the prurience of her consoeurs, tirelessly descanting about all that which she dares not comprehend: "I am not a man," writes she, "I do not know what one imagines of a woman and another woman, still less of a woman alone [...] thus I never quite understood that of which they accused me of, and they expressed themselves in such obscure terms, that I never knew what to respond to them."[27] So unimaginable are these vulgar things which are never to happen or should not happen, that when they nonetheless do happen, they do so only because they have not, because they never should have happened, because no virtuous woman would ever openly approbate that they had.[28] It is for this reason that, when recounting *ex post facto* the advances of the Mother Superior, Suzanne's language flickers between unknowingness and recognition: "She lowered her eyes, reddened and sighed; in truth, it was as if [she] were like a lover. She then told me, nonchalantly throwing herself upon me as if she might have fainted: 'Bring your forehead closer, so that I may kiss it'" (*R* 192).[29] The account continues:

> She invited me to kiss her forehead, cheeks, eyes and mouth- and I obeyed her: I do not think there is anything wrong with that. However her pleasure grew, and as I asked for nothing more than to add to her pleasure in such an innocent way, I again kissed her forehead, cheeks, eyes, and mouth. The hand that she had placed on my knew wandered over all of my garments, from the extremity of my feet up to my belt, pressing against sometimes in one area, sometimes in another; she exhorted me in stammering, and with an altered and low voice, to redouble my caresses: I redoubled them; I don't know if it was pleasure or pain, but finally there came a moment where she became deathly pale; her eyes closed, all her body spread out with violence, her lips shut first, they were humectant with a light foam; then her mouth opened slightly, and she seemed to me to die in giving a large sigh. I brusquely rose, I thought she wasn't feeling well, I wanted to leave, [and] call [someone]. She weakly opened her eyes, slightly, and told me with a faint voice: "Innocent one! It's nothing; what are you going to do? Stop..." (*R* 198- 9)

"I do not think there is anything wrong with that." And indeed nothing can be wrong if, as the Mother Superior says, "nothing" has even happened to begin with. Suzanne's account might know nothing—or better, *claim* to know nothing—of what has just occurred but the narrative also admits more than it announces.[30] While Suzanne's confession seems to abnegate sexual portent and avouch her innocence, the passage also redounds with erotic details; while abjuring the amative and venereal import of what she says, Suzanne's discourse cannot help but reiterate the very eroticism it seeks to repress. For the narrator openly concedes that she has given pleasure, at the same time that she countervails this avowal with the qualification that she was not aware that she has: "I asked for nothing more than to add to her pleasure in such an *innocent* way." In other words, the same ignorance exercised by the heroine during the sexual scene is echoed rhetorically in its written reviewal. Suzanne's account of what has transpired is framed, aporetically, by the way that it has *not* transpired.[31] Just as the enactment of these sexual experiences have elapsed without the heroine's consciousness that they may have been sexual, so too is this experience's eroticism—when retold by Suzanne— eclipsed even as it is being exposed. What her story relates is that which it should not (but which it nevertheless does), acknowledging the experiences it portends only to the extent that it disavows them. This narration of what was never —this "narration of never"— leaves shadowy whether something has or has not happened; it augurs that what supposedly did not happen nonetheless did, and it happened to the precise extent that it "did not."[32]

In light of this example, it becomes evident that if Adèle's desire "dare not speak its name" this is because —neither fully gay nor fully straight, neither exhaustively the one or the other— it is has no proper name, at least not within the constricting terms of this late eighteenth-century novelette. Indeed, it is not only Adèle's amour, but that of Marie and Fernance as well, which cannot be situated within normative sexual understandings or within the platonic terms of friendship. For is it telling that Marie will be accused by Fernance's fiancée, Hortense, of having a "too tender amity [*une amitié trop tender*]" for Marie (*M,* 67), a

designation which might well apply to the "more than friend[ship]" which subsists between Marie and Adèle. If a woman is said to love another of her sex "too tenderly" —as more than a *soi-disant* friend or in terms other to friendship altogether— is this woman ultimately considered to be unable to love, not because she is inherently incapable nor simply unwilling to love, but because her passion, exceeding the dialectic of hetero/homo definition and falling outside the purview of marriage, cannot be imagined, let alone recognized *as such,* within prevailing heterosexist schemas of sexual norms? In this sense, might a woman love too much to be able to love, if only because this love cannot be easily acknowledged or affirmed as such? And what of the gendered categories of "woman" and "man," do their referential identity and presumed fixity come under challenge in such instances? It remains to be seen whether this novel's complex dynamics underscore how loving too tenderly can become an impossibility of loving, precisely because it cannot be determined by those categories of friendship, heterosexuality, and marriage which have long delimited and circumscribed what counts as "love" in the eighteenth-century French novel. Ducos' fiction importantly suspends what it means to be a "friend," upending —or just ending— its platonic connotations, if not accenting the "-end" in "friend" entirely.

While the frustrated loves of this fiction might be read in terms of platonic sublation or psychoanalytic sublimation, it would seem too facile to conclude that Marie's affections for Fernance, and that of Adèle for Marie, are no more than spoiled conquests. For it is not as though Marie or Adèle consciously renounce a passion or willfully resign a relationship that has been confirmed and concretized, recognized and acknowledged, only to be subsequently lost. Is it the case, rather, that this love, if it is love, has never seemingly crossed the threshold into actuality and materiality — constituted as it is by its own impossibility and virtuality— and thus amounts to a love that cannot be conceived in terms of either its perceived presence or absence, its apparent conservation or loss, because it is no more than this very tension itself? Oscillating between virtuality and actuality, but never quite becoming one or the other, would love in this fiction seem to take place only *as* its own loss, if not a loss that comes to take the place of

love itself? Does the fundamental impossibility of which their love is wrought come to condition (and undo) the form their love takes: an amorous experience defined by the ways in which it is not or not yet experienced; a love in the name of a beloved who will never return the favor or reciprocate the feeling, precisely because this beloved being never could in the first place? If this impossibility is not simply structural, metaphysical, psychological, or phenomenological —if it is not, in other words, a problem inherent to the relationship and experience as if they existed apart from a larger social context— then is this impossibility above all *politically and discursively instituted,* an impossibility induced by governing schemes of gender and sexual norms which render certain loves unintelligible by according them no place in the realm of possible or intelligible love, jettisoning them from the domain of the livable altogether?

iii. closet confessions

for so long you have been near me and my ungrateful heart did not recognize you
—Mme de Tencin, *Mémoires du Comte de Comminge* (1735)

in order to keep silent, it is necessary to speak. But of which kinds of words?
—Maurice Blanchot, *La communauté inavouable*

The letter dates 1788 and Adèle is writing to a certain Madame de ***: "I cede at last, madame, to your entreaties [*instances*]. You are going to know the cause of my aversion for love. If I have long hidden my secret, it is because it did not concern me alone; to tell it to you, is to apprise you of the misfortunes of the women that I have loved the most [*la femme que j'ai la plus aimée*], and of whom I was the best friend [*amie*]" (*M*, 7).[33] In this initial address Adèle's tone appears to mime the rhetoric of confession: a "long hidden secret" is to be divulgated, an inexplicable "aversion" finally clarified. This tonality almost resembles that of a "coming out of the closet," as if the speaker were on the point of disclosing a secret long ago sensed by her interlocutor but never named by either.[34] These lines do not simply avow an amour, however, but seek to explain the speaker's aversion for it.

With marked ambivalence, then, Adèle unbosoms herself to a confidante about whom nothing is known, and in the name of a woman she has most loved, a cherished "friend" on whose behalf amorous

possibility has been abandoned. However, "amie" is a particularly ambiguous vocable in old regime French fiction. As the first edition of the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française* (1694) avers, the appellation denotes those who amiably share sympathies but also, significantly, to lovers ("It is sometimes said of a married woman, that *she has a friend* [*ami*], to suggest [*faire entendre*] that she has a lover [*amant*]") and, far before that, medieval and early modern literatures employ the namesake for both platonic amities and passionate amours.[35] Hélisenne de Crenne's *Les Angoysses douloureuses* (1538), perused a few chapters prior, provisions an example of this. The wed woman's adulterous affection is enjoyed by her "ami," Guénélic, in a way quite different to how this denomination might be construed in a current context. Adèle's opening address in *Marie* no less exploits the rhetorical polyvalence to which this amphibolous designation tends. By entitling herself Marie's best "friend," and also the woman most beloved by her, Adèle's letter mimics the hortatory diction of amorous epistolarity common to Rousseau's Saint-Preux and others. "I speak to you of her with too much emotion," Adèle goes on to write, emphasizing the extent to which her own discourse verges on an amative declaration it never outright announces (*M,* 7).

The tension implicit in the very title of "friend" is made plain in Adèle's subsequent affirmations. "It is in reading [these letters]…that you will be able to know the nuances, the diverse torments, and the excess of a sentiment always feebly expressed by those who have not experienced it [*par ceux qui ne l'ont pas éprouvé*]" (*Ibid*). Resonant with the former discussion of "amie," it is crucial to reinforce that "sentiment," like "friend," is a term that maintains an ambiguous position between amity and amour, beholden to both yet reducible to neither. In other words, Adèle's allusion to "sentiment" is just as equivocal as her adumbration to "friendship," insofar as both lend themselves to multivalent possibilities none of which are ever fully determined: a sentiment might be amicable and not necessarily amorous, just as a friend might be platonic rather than passionate, but what permits these distinctions to be drawn in the first place, and can they be? (It is telling that, later on in the novel, Marie will describe how she utters to Fernance, "with excessive tremor," "this word friendship [*ce mot d'amitié*]" [*M,* 62], indicating that the word is freighted with

multiple meanings that exceed purely platonic connotations). Also worthy of note, in addition to the imprecision of Adèle's language, is the impersonality of its grammar. For as this passage would have it, the ensuant letters which compose the novel will showcase a sentiment that knows no bounds and exceeds all restraints, one punctuated by both affliction and affection. A close inspection of the language reveals, however, that what this passage refuses to specify is the *subject* of this sentiment, as if, indeed, it had none that could be specified. Is it Marie's? Adèle's? Importantly, the reader of these letters will be exposed to a sentiment that has no bearer and an experience that has no claimant, for even if this sentiment might well be Adèle's own it is not one to which she ever concedes ownership. The experience of this sentiment is also, significantly, tethered to language: it is one feebly expressed by those who have never undergone it, though in this passage who experiences this sentiment, and who does not, itself never finds expression in the sentence. Who, if anyone, has weathered this sentiment and survived to speak of it?

The obscurity and obliquity of these former descriptions are only compounded when Adèle, in further mention of Marie, confides: "She became more than my friend [*Elle devint plus que mon amie*]" (*M,* 8). She annotates this avowal with further detail: the rapprochement between them stems from earliest infancy, when they would call each other "sisters," and later on they are wed the same day and, some years afterward, they both find themselves widowed "without having had children," Adèle at twenty-one and Marie at twenty-three (*Ibid*). The epithet of "sister" already demands a certain exegesis. While it might be tempting to conclude that when Adèle asserts that Marie was "more than [her] friend," that this would signify, simply, that they were as intimate as sisters. But "sister" is itself no innocent word, especially given the mobility and fluidity of kinship terminology in *Ancien Régime* France. Consider that in early modern and old regime fictions, the imbrication of kinship, bloodlines, and marriage beclouds the ostensibly "natural" boundaries dividing family from lover, incest from inamorato—and this well before Freud's "Oedipus." An array of examples could be marshaled here: Madame d'Aulnoy's novella *Hypolite* (1690), depicts two lovers enamored of each other despite the fact that they think they are brother and sister; Jean-Jacques Rousseau's

adoration for his mistress, Madame de Warens, does not prevent him from calling her "Maman" in his *Confessions* (1769-1782); Madame de Boisgiron's *Les suites d'un moment d'erreur* (1775) recounts a tale of a woman who realizes only too late that she has actually fallen in love with her father; the Marquis de Sade's *La Philosophie dans le boudoir* (1795) includes a brother and sister who vaunt their sexual exploits; Marguerite Desbrosses' *Mathilde de Puiseley* (1803) portrays a young heroine who expires upon learning that she has been lovesick for her own brother. These fictions, and many more besides, indicate the extent to which conventional notions of kinship, and the names by which such relations are characterized, continually come under challenge in eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century French fiction.

This is not to say, of course, that Adèle's ambiguous discourse amounts to incest or that the various "taboos" of *ancien régime* mores —amongst which adultery, sodomy, homosexuality— ought to be conflated together. Rather, it would seem that Adèle's figural language, itself already prevaricating and peculiar, allows for the possibility that "sister" refers to a rapprochement with Marie that exceeds the received meanings with which this word is generally freighted. To say that Marie is at once "more than [her] friend" and her "sister" is to unmoor these names from their traditional meanings and to suspend their usual reference. If these words betoken neither a biological relationship nor a platonic intimacy, then Marie's and Adèle's rapport would seem to persist in spite of referential suspension, as if the words chronicling their relation referred to that which did not ontologically exist: the relationship they share can only be designated by a name for that which has no name, or which dares not speak its name, because there is no vocabulary within the received diction of heterosexual norms which might actually designate it. The strain on the heteronormative language of convention can be heard when Marie says to Adèle: "very often I think of you, and I love you as much as I can love someone other than [Fernance]" (*M,* 59); "I know that you are devoted to me, and as much as I can at present love a friend, I love you" (*M,* 83). Given societal strictures and the mores of modesty, Adèle's recourse to the language of sisterhood ultimately leaves uncertain not only the relationship so described but also the very meaning of the epithet "sister" itself.

This is also the case with the term "friend." If "amie" was already seen to be an indefinite and indeterminate word, then what follows from Adèle's asseveration that Marie becomes *more than a friend*? It is not insignificant, surely, that Adèle will go on to affirm of Marie that "she would have seduced you, madame, and I would not need to tell you how much she knew how to please [*combien elle savait plaire*]" (*M,* 9). Does this proclamation situate a discourse of desire primarily amongst women? Notice how Marie has been positioned as an object of seduction that would have beguiled the confidante ("madame") to whom Adèle redacts her missive and not some presumed male audience. Marie "would have seduced *you,*" insists Adèle, rather than, for example, Marie "would have seduced any man." Marie's seduction is thus staged outside of a strictly heterosexual economy, though it is not simply reducible to a homosexual one, at the same time that Adèle betrays her own fantasy of Marie as someone who "knows how to please." Standing alone, the phrase leans toward suggestive erotic tonalities that, never directly expressed, are nevertheless left to subsist as penumbral possibilities.

Added to this is the fact that, in a certain sense, both Adèle and Marie are sexual and social minorities in that, widowed and childless, they would be considered materially "independent" and thus already in excess of *ancien régime* marriage mores.[36] But there is also another reason why the two are seemingly sexual minorities, namely the implicit homoeroticism that has been emerging in these depictions all along. Hearken, for example, Adèle's unapologetic caricature of her erstwhile husband as someone who was "an excellent and correctly loved man [*justement aimé*]," the technical "justement" here indicating the somewhat detached, if not disaffected, consideration she holds for him: a man loved fittingly, precisely, justly—but not lovingly (*M,* 8). (Indeed, later on Adèle's brother will remark that she "does not care at all about men" [*M,* 13]). This is subsequently contrasted with Marie, who is said to have admired her husband with care: "My sister loved hers with love [*avec amour*]," says Adèle, implying by contrast that she herself did not do so (*Ibid*). Adèle's dearth of adoration for her husband is not only compared to Marie's intensive ardor, but more importantly, it would seem telling that Adèle spends far more time detailing her love for Marie then

she does for her former husband, himself relegated to a brief parenthesis. In this context, the foregoing discussions regarding the latent homoeroticism of this text take on added significance.

After this brief beginning, Marie's character is described by Adèle with foreboding augur, at which point the seeming homoeroticism shared between the women is complicated by the intimate indistinguishability of the one from the other:

> [T]he accuracy [*justesse*] of her reason committed on every occasion [*engageaient en toute occasion*] to give the most judicious counsel, was never able to make use of it herself. Truth be told, she could not when her sensibility was strongly excited; nothing then would stop her: it would be necessary that she continued, madly, to fix her thoughts on the same object, and this is the veritable cause of all her misfortunes. (*M,* 9)

In dispassionate prose and impersonal grammar, perhaps unexpected for a novel that seemingly finds its place in a lineage of sentimental fiction, Marie's reason is depicted as a sagacious faculty that administers advice to others but is woefully bereft of the very counsel it dispenses. Her sensibility, whenever excited, becomes fixated on an object it cathects with obsessive ardor. In the terms of poststructuralist psychoanalysis, Marie's sensibility might even be termed "melancholic," an introjection of an object — better, a figural process of objectification that configures the edges and perimeters between interiority and exteriority— that cannot be mourned because it subsists in and as its very negation.[37] But this account of Marie, and her melancholia, would also seem to apply to that of Adèle as well: Has not she, like Marie, allowed for her sensibility to concentrate on and cathect an object with a certain possession? Have not the preliminary declarations of Adèle, quoted above, attested to the melancholic and elegiac purchase Marie has on her? Indeed, might the novel itself symbolize not only the inability of loving Marie, openly or concretely, but also the inability to fully grieve her? It will be remembered that, in Chapter Two, Hélisenne was not capable of either abandoning or accepting her unrealized and unlived passion for Guénélic. Here this particular paradox recurs: Adèle has not ostensibly fulfilled or actualized her love for Marie (unless her writing might serve as the only testament she can indirectly offer in the name of her love) but nor is she able to mourn it (precisely because she must, it would seem, write insistently about it). As Adèle will say

elsewhere that Marie's precluded passion is routinely rehearsed and recounted both directly and obliquely: "I have heard it said that nothing is more liable to keep up a nascent love than to speak of it, or only to speak in an indirect manner of the day it commenced" (*M,* 17). The same might be said of Adèle, for the document of letters of which the novel is comprised bespeaks at once a passion impossible to materialize and, equally, a passion impossible to mourn—a passion that may well be not Marie's alone but that of her "friend" as well.

The possible kinship and likeness that might seem to emerge betwixt the two is, however, travailed by alterity and difference. Indeed, it is significant that Adèle does not commence her story with the unity of their characters but begins with an eventful party the two "friends" attend and the eventual parting to which it leads. During a dizzying soirée, Marie starts to feel faint and, "letting her head fall unto [Adèle's] breast," loses consciousness (*M,* 10). "Imagine, madame, my fright and my extreme embarrassment [*mon extrême embarras*]," Adèle apostrophizes, with words that portend both the surprise of her friend's faint and the discomfort (of desire?) that she has fallen into her embrace. A young man, called upon for some water by a desperate Adèle, manages to awaken Marie: "I braced her in my arms. She did not catch sight of me at first; she only saw him [...] I pressed her tightly against my heart, and she managed to regain her senses" (*M,* 11). At the moment when Marie is closest to Adèle in proximity and person, she is also irretrievably beyond her grasp, in that she has eyes only for the man she sees than for the woman who holds her. Though enfolded in Adèle's embrace, Marie is not quite enclosed and contained: she is not appropriated and absorbed in her friend's touch, because her attentions, and her vision, opens up unto a new sight: the swain she now finds before her. At the precise instance when Marie should be closest to her friend and closed to anyone but her, a youthful stranger comes to displace the dynamic of dualism between the friends, diverging and diverting their complicity.[38]

Adèle attempts to dispel the claim this young man has upon Marie's heart, warning the latter that her "reputation" might well be at risk should she carelessly fall for a stranger (*M,* 16). Thus, "after a half-

confidence let out in in the abandon of love and friendship [*dans l'abandon de l'amour et de l'amitié*], my sister wished that I make the commitment to never return to this subject" (*Ibid*). The genitive of the adverbial phrase "dans l'abandon de" concedes a most provocative ambiguity: are these half-confidences admitted with abandon, an abandon measured between amour and amity, or are they given *in the abandonment of amity and amour altogether*? Is this love and friendship given with abandon or, rather, love and friendship given over to abandonment? Irrespective of either reading, this phrase gives way to a crucial constellation of amour, amity, and abdication without reducing any of these terms to a monolithic entity and without resolving their differences within a dialectical *Aufhebung*. Marie's desire, if indeed desire it be, would seem to pivot on its very preclusion: it is pictured as a divided attraction, split asunder between amicable and amorous affections, and it is shadowed by the possibility of its eventual abandonment. Significantly, Marie only asserts her burgeoning affection at the same instance that she commits it to quietus, confessing this confidence to Adèle at the very moment she entrusts it to silence.

iv. "lovence"

desire must experience itself as a futile enterprise, [. . .] *as a vacuity in search of an impossible fulfillment*
—Judith Butler, "Recovery and Invention"

the one that it is necessary to love is absent [. . .] *It is thus necessary to love that which does not exist*
—Simone Weil, "Celui qu'il fault aimer est absent," *La pesanteur et la grâce*

Although Marie supplicates that Adèle not return to "this subject," in the epistles she subsequently writes, letters which comprise a great portion of the narrative, the embargo on mentioning this man is not simply violated—it is eroticized. Marie takes the occasion of speaking incessantly about her beloved by recounting to Adèle all that she does not say this to him; the amorous speech that ostensibly should have been addressed to the beloved man is thus offered up to Adèle in his stead. Yet, it is not so much that Adèle is a mere figurehead —a counterfeit copy or spurious substitute—for Marie's misplaced heterosexual desire. For it is significant that Marie's diction is contoured by its *non-dits*, what cannot or should not be said

to Fernance, and that that these unsaid admissions and unclaimed confessions are dispatched to, perhaps even *for*, Adèle. "Henceforth," writes Marie, "I will admit to you up until the point of my most secret thoughts; you will have my entire confidence, as you have all of my tenderness. —And you as well, love your sister very much, never has she needed a friend as much. Be, Adèle, all that I want to love in the world [*tout ce que je veux aimer au monde*]" (*M,* 19). If Marie requires Adèle in order to ventilate her unexpressed longings for Fernance, then to a certain extent her desire depends upon Adèle's address, attention, and affection as its precondition just as much as it does upon his. In this ambiguous scene of address, it becomes unclear whether there can be a rightful recipient for Marie's passionate parlance, insofar as her apostrophe is bound up with *both* Adèle and Fernance as potential addressees.

Indeed, even if Adèle is considered to be a placeholder or a proxy for displaced desire, her relationship to Marie is also vested with a desire of its own. If Marie cannot do without Adèle in order to speak about Fernance, then her desire for the one relies upon the desire for the other, inasmuch as it is the young women's devotion to each other that allows for Fernance to even be spoken of as an object of desire in the first place. Thus Marie will write to Adèle, for example that, "before you I durst not explain myself with frankness; I sought to cover my resistance with some excuse; but in a letter, when you do not see my blush, I avow to you" all that she otherwise dare not name (*M,* 47-8). Another instance would seem even more pressing: "Why can I not fall asleep on your breast?" Marie asks in a valediction to Adèle as she quits her pen (*M,* 69), the question oscillating between a rhetorical and literal meaning without deciding in favor of either. In a certain sense, it omens an intimacy it neither fully embraces nor fully repudiates, one that is produced only as it is prohibited: for, in a certain sense, Marie *cannot* sleep upon her friend's breast, if presumptive heterosexuality is taken as the social norm and the prevailing standard. In another sense as well, the desire of Adèle (for Marie?) is implicated in Marie's desire (for Fernance?), and it might well be that Adèle is not merely the pretext for Marie to discuss her love for Fernance but that Fernance himself becomes the pretext by means of which the two women can address one another. On this reading, Fernance

would not be the focus of Marie's amorous yearnings, but the means to another—Adèle—in a homosocial discourse kept "between women" (though, clearly, these designators of gender and sex come under question throughout the narrative and are far from self-evident, transparent, or given).[39] Not merely the conduit of Marie's desire for another, Adèle becomes another desire, one who has "all of [Marie's] tenderness," a "sister" and "friend" but also all that Marie has ever wanted to love. At the same time, it would appear impossible to anchor this movement of desire in any of its supposed moments, in that this movement —neither a static object, a stationary being, or a immobile substance— never fully realizes itself, precisely because it does not fully coincide with the instances it seems to occasion. That is, Marie's ambivalent desire depictured here is predicated on an alterity, an otherness, that it can neither completely surpass nor sustain: Marie's love for Fernance only persists by virtue of her love for Adèle and, more importantly, it is because the passion for the one remains unactualized and intangible that the other can also remain a potential prospect. Because Marie seemingly loves in retreat, never fully acting on her passions, she can maintain these spectral bonds with multiple beloveds, for it is the reigning ambiguity with regard to whom she loves that allows for several possibilities to seem viable. Should either of these amours be concretized or materialized, the entire framework would crumble, dependent as it is both on Marie's seeming striving to overcome the distance from her beloved(s) but also on the preservation of their otherness and difference. It is in this sense that the alterity of Marie's desire is both unsustainable and unsurpassable: unsustainable because it proves painful for her to linger in inaction and silence; unsurpassable because her desire comes to be defined precisely by the actions she cannot take and the words she will not say.

Marie's desire, if indeed it can be denominated such, never quite reaches the amorous rapport it seeks to become, for in Adèle there converges, and diverges, not only the vectors of kinship and fellowship, but also that which exceeds these categories altogether: "all that I want to love." The encompassing "all" here subsumes so much that its inclusive reach no longer holds; the girdling grasp of this qualifier incorporates so

many possibilities that it cannot envelop them all. To be all that Marie wishes to love (this "all" itself never explicitly determined) is to become that which cannot be confined within the purview of family or friend. At the same time, however, just because the reference of Marie's claim is suffused with multiple erotic eventualities, this does not mean that Adèle has suddenly been transfigured into her ersatz lover. If Marie's words adumbrate to passionate possibilities they never fully specify, then there is no univocal undertone or straightforward subtext to be read in her pronouncements, for all that is left unsaid cannot be arbitrated in terms of the sayable or the knowable, or rather, within the terms of what has been culturally constituted to counts as sayable and knowable.

From another perspective, Adèle cannot take the place of the man Marie adores because, as it turns out, he himself is already taken. As Marie comes to discover, her cousin Hortense has been betrothed to a man named Fernance—the very youth she had encountered a short while before. But even if already taken by Hortense, as it were, Fernance remains to some extent quite taken with Marie. He asks if she remembers him from the party and she, unable to think of anything else, simply assents to his declaration (*M,* 23). Hearing Fernance happily report on his espousal to Hortense leads Marie to reflect upon her own conflicting sentiments. "[T]here is nothing […] that resembles love [*qui ressemble à de l'amour*] in what I experienced [*éprouvé*] since that fatal time," she writes to Adèle, "My imagination, at length saddened, sought for a time to attach itself to a hope. This hope is necessarily destroyed, absolutely and without turning back. Almost immediately, an extraordinary revolution set about in me. I am wholly other [*tout autre*] than the last times I have spent beside you" (*M,* 27).

If before Marie's sentiments were sundered between amity and amour —situated ambivalently in relation to both, though ultimately beholden to neither— the confrontation with Fernance culminates in an aporia of experience. For what Marie "experiences" is that which eludes the very categories of experience: she feels that which does not resemble something like love, even though her imagination has attempted to affix itself to a hope which may itself be love. Much like the aforesaid examples —and, beyond this, in the

works of Du Plaisir and Bernard analyzed in Chapter Three—the grammar orienting this passage is conceptually "subjectless" and impersonal to the extent that it is *imagination*, an abstraction, and not Marie as grammatical subject, which longs after hopeful expectations. Likewise, the paragraph describes how hope has been decimated without ever specifying the agent of this destruction, just as it evokes a revolution produced within Marie's "moi" without indicating what has initiated it. Her experience and her selfhood become "wholly other" to the economy of fellowship and kinship, amity and amour, for what she feels has no precise referent, originating cause, or active agent.[40] Similar to the sentiment that Adèle depicted as having no subject, in Marie's portrayal of her passion, her experience does not resemble love —though it is not quite friendship. It is entirely other to the normative and restrictive logics that organize the conceptual framework upon which the oppositions between "love" and "friendship" are founded.[41] As Marie's felicitous formulation has it, her amorous experience, if it is one, is wholly other to the logic of love itself —"hors l'amour," as a heroine of Bernard's fiction might say— though not simply transcendent to it. This might even be termed, following deconstructive idiom, "lovence" (*aimance*), a neologism for the Greek *phileîn* designating those relations —neither active nor passive, neither subject nor object— which cannot be accommodated by either *philía* or *eros* because they diffuse the very distinctions between the love of amity and the love of amour.[42]

Marie's amorous experience, then, is in a way inaccessible to experience as it is most commonly conceived (the traversal or crossing over of danger in light of which knowledge is gained and the proof of this earning, this learning, certified). There is thus more than an intimation of irony when Marie rebukes Adèle for not understanding her obsessive ardor because she has not undergone a similar experience — "You have had this experience, Adele, you who have never risked anything [*Vous n'avez pas fait cette expérience, vous, Adèle qui n'avez jamais rien risqué*]" (*M,* 29)— a bewildering reproach, figuring that the same could be said to apply to Marie herself. This very formulation prefigures Marie's own account of her amorous longing, scripted less on earning experience than yearning for its unrealizability. "What would be a

sentiment without any hope? It is assured that [*on assure que*] there has never been one" (*M,* 29).[43] It is unclear how this particular query might be situated in terms of the aporetic rhetoric that the story has heretofore deployed. Who assures this sentiment, and is it even Marie's? This question —possibly rhetorical, possibly not— is animated by incredulity and endowed with skepticism. Marie has been explaining to Adèle that her particular affection for Fernance cannot be framed within the common love-stories of her peers, namely women who attempt to convince each and themselves of a love that might be inexistent (*Ibid*). Thus, when she asks whether it might well be possible for a sentiment to perdure in the very absence of its precondition and possibility —hope— it is unclear whether she is dispelling the presumption that the feeling she entertains toward Fernance is amorous or whether she is essaying to circumvent the commonplace precepts and presuppositions associated with the conceit of amorousness in order to fashion an alternative version and vision of amour. For Marie condemns certain demoiselles for hallucinating a love that has no actual bearing and, in the same stroke, she defends her own "hopeless" love as one that needs no embodiment or existence. This love that has "never been one"—in the sense, that it cannot be encapsulated or enclosed within the categories of expectation and expression, possession and realization— is the only one she "has" and is thus, *stricto sensu*, a love suspended of ontological commitments: it has no being and it does not exist. In these terms, are Marie's reflections waging a criticism against the conceit of love *tout court*, or against the ontological predicates associated with this conceit? Is this a contestation of love *en soi* or a challenge posed to a particular rendition of it?

Butler offers a compelling formulation of this particular bind in the discussion of those loves deemed socially impossible —those that are not recognized as love or are not deemed admissible within the norms of what counts as love— and the subsequent quandaries which follow from this love that is not love:

> "I couldn't possibly love such a person." The utterance concedes the possibility it denies, establishing the "I" as predicated upon that foreclosure, grounded in and by that firmly imagined impossibility. The "I" is thus fundamentally threatened by the specter of this (impossible) love's reappearance and remains condemned to reenact that love unconsciously, repeatedly reliving and displacing that scandal, that impossibility, orchestrating that threat to one's sense of "I." " 'I' could not be who I am if I were to love in the way that I

> apparently did, which I must, to persist as myself, continue to deny and yet unconsciously reenact in contemporary life with the most terrible suffering as its consequence.[44]

In these terms, a constitutive loss or dispossession frames the initial scene of desire. For even those loves that are thought to be "possible" —socially acceptable, intelligible, recognizable— depend upon a disavowal of those loves that are not admitted into the domain of possibility. When certain loves —homosexual, for example— are not even *thinkable* —"I could never love such and such"— that denial has nonetheless conferred a certain recognition unto that love which is subsequently denied recognition (in a paradoxical manner, such a love is only recognized as unrecognizable, and it becomes clear that even "recognition" is not a simple or transparent acknowledgment, but an act of power). At the same time, possible and thinkable love is only viable *because* its definition is secured through the simultaneous differentiation from and exclusion of those loves against which it is defined: "The formula 'I have never loved' someone of similar gender and 'I have never lost' any such person predicate the 'I' on the 'never-never' of that love and loss. Indeed, the ontological accomplishment of heterosexual 'being' is traced to this double negation, which forms its constitutive melancholia, an emphatic and irreversible loss that forms the tenuous basis of that 'being.'"[45] In order to preserve possible love, the loss of those loves that were never deemed possible must be continually restaged, even as they inevitably haunt the borders of acceptable love with the menace of their potential dissolution. If possible love is maintained by repeated enactment, concomitant to this gesture will be the simultaneous foreclosure of those loves that cannot be recognized as loves and which, were they recognized, would allow for the entire edifice to founder. Marie formulates her love in strikingly resonant terms: "still more than I dared to tell you or to admit to myself," she writes to Adèle, "my sad secret was not far from escaping from me [*n'était pas loin de m'échapper*]" (*M,* 75).

v. "the evaporated life"

he does not respond, but perhaps he hears me
— Mme de Souza, *Adèle de Sénange* (1794)

It is thus necessary to love that which does not exist
—Simone Weil, *La pesanteur et la grâce*

"I love you too much to be able to love you"
old regime

I have learnt to love you late! You were within me, and I was in the world outside myself
—Augustine, *Confessions* X (397-8 AD)

Nowhere in Marie's initial letters, it would seem, are direct proclamations or univocal postulations to be found. When she muses upon love, Fernance is not himself named as the precise referent of her meditations, even though this unspoken possibility is continually hovering near (as is Adèle, to whom Marie often exclaims: "you would never find another [*une autre*] who loved you as much as I" [41]*)*. If her love had formerly been framed in terms of denegation and desistance —nothing that which resembles love, that which has no expectation of love etc.— this particular portrait reappears when she alludes to other characters' conceptions of amour. Hence, in reference to Hortense, Fernance's fiancée, Marie exclaims: "—love! She does not know it, and it would be a consoling idea for me, if I yet loved Fernance, to believe that this woman who has acquired the right to cherish him with passion, is not capable of exercising it" (*M,* 34). Worthy of note is both the speculative tone —"*if* I yet loved Fernance"— and the negative timbre— "it would be a consoling idea…to believe that this woman…is *not* capable." If Marie's own adoration is one she is not capable of exercising, precisely because Fernance is married, then it becomes a mark of consolation that Hortense is not either. Unable to act upon her attraction Marie reflects that if neither she nor Hortense can concretize their amour, she at least will not become susceptible to the love of others: "[I]f I must no longer ween of Fernance, [and] essay to no longer ween of it, to ken him, with indifference, bequeath all his tenderness to the woman he has elected, I will never consent that he trow myself sensible for another" (*M,* 35). If she must no longer think of Fernance, still less bear watching him with indifference shower affections unto another, Marie will also refuse *not* to do this. The paradox is trenchant: unable to suffer the fact that she cannot actualize her love, Marie would also not have it any other way. Though her ardor cannot be manifested or substantiated, evinced or exemplified, nor will she permit herself to overcome this unsustainable state, this inadmissible attitude, of intangible desire. "I must defend myself

against the attraction that I perhaps would find there. Moreover, would I dare? I would be excessively discountenanced" (*M,* 36).

Marie's passion, contoured and conditioned by its impossibility, resists both realization in actuality and reification as a substance. It is neither what "is" nor what she "has."[46] Evanescent and evasive, her love abides in its very indeterminacy, both imponderable and impalpable but not for that matter transcendent to "love" —whatever such a name might signify— altogether. In a series of self-recusing statements, Marie portrays her passion as chimerical and phantasmagorical (because it is vain); immaterial and impractical (because she is unloved); fanciful and fantastic (because her efforts are fruitless); vague and visionary (because this is all unbeknown to her beloved). If her rhetoric is "amorous," it is so because the very proper name of "amour" no longer refers to that which exists but signifies *in* the suspension of ontological expectations if not *as* a suspension of ontology itself:

> When I remember all that I had to endure, and whereof I essayed vainly not to apperceive, I do not surprise myself to have only spoken to you of myself [...] for if I finally durst to carry in my heart an assured regard, would I not recognize that I am far from having become indifferent? I even ween that I would do well to cease such unfruitful endeavors, and whereof the success would not be of a grand utility. Fernance beloves me not [*ne m'aime point*]. What peril could there be that I take care of him as much as I am naturally drawn to it [?] My sentiments, no longer being frustrated, would perchance become more peaceful, would change into amity; and I could at last let him know that he is dear to my heart. He shall perchance one day need the cares of a friend [*des soins d'une amie*] if his helpmate doth not render him fain. I shall be this *amie*. He shall accord me his confidence. He shall tell me his painful subjects; and if it is possible, I shall camouflage them from his eyes. I shall proffer him counsel that will have no other goal than his happiness. (*M,* 36-7)

Several questions emerge upon perusal of this passage: if Marie projects to become an "amie" —which, as already discussed, is a polyvalent vocable shading into amity and amour, trembling in lasting "lovence"— what kind of "amie" is this? To what extent is this amity different from the "amie," Adèle? While not homologous or symmetrical, in both instances, the "amity" of Marie for Fernance and for Adèle are motivated not by confirmation and consummation of a reciprocal, well-established concord ("Fernance beloves me not," Marie intones, but this does not hinder or extirpate her own amorous involvement). No, in both instances friendship occupies the precarious realm of unexplored potentiality and untried possibility.

Ever held in reserve, its only expression is its withholding of expression and thus, expressing nothing, it seemingly does not express at all, a self-effacing ethos that finds resonance in a philosophical paradox unfolded in Derrida's *Politiques de l'amitié*:

> "I give you up, I have decided it": the most beautiful and most inevitable of the most impossible declaration of love. Imagine that I must thus prescribe to the other (and it is renunciation) to be free (for I need its liberty to address myself to the other as other, in desire as in renunciation). I would prescribe to him therefore to be able to not respond—to my appeal, to my invitation, my expectation, my desire. And I have to make a sort of obligation for him to stay free, to prove in this way his liberty, which I need, precisely, to appeal, to wait, to invite. It is not only me, nor my own desire that I engage in this way in the double constraint of a double bind, it is the other [...] As if I called someone, for example on the telephone, in telling him in sum: I do not want that you wait for my call or ever depend upon it, go take a walk, be free to not respond. And to prove it, the next time that I will call you, do not respond, otherwise I will break up with you. If you respond to me, it's finished between us.[47]

In the imaginary scenario this passage conjures forth, a speaker —whose grammatical gender is never identified even if, for provisional purposes of clarity, it will be labeled a "he"— only feigns to solicit a rejoinder from his interlocutor when in fact he can bear none. With generous abandon he asks, and movingly so, that his appeal be left unheard and his inquest rest without reply. There is a vacancy of hope for any real riposte in his demand, a certain limpness of affirmation in its tone, as if the speaker's words were more of an afterthought muttered in soliloquy rather than an insistent inquiry demanding response. His solicitation anticipates no salvation and his demand's seemingly idle address, innocent of expectation, reflects this: to leave his appeal without answer and his entreaty without acknowledgement, such would seem to be his only request, for the most moving of his abdications is that of consequence itself. But what is a demand that deflects manifest result, one that adjourns both the reaction of the addressee and realizable gain that it never even craved? Does this render the beloved to whom such a weightless demand is transmitted —here, the unnamed addressee— as no more than the passive, abeyant object of a love he is no longer to actively take part in? "I do not plead for thee to love, but to let thyself be loved," so the speaker's words might be paraphrased in reprising a poetic letter from Ovid, for his overture seemingly bears none of the heavy ballasts of demand and desire.[48] To beckon that the addressee do no more than suffer a love that

barely requires him would risk imposing too much on him, would risk freighting him with obligation and adjuration— would risk, indeed, pulverizing the very solicitation offered up.

There is something importantly hurtless —delicate, noncommittal, unpunishing— to the language of this self-abnegating accostment: "do not respond." For unlike a literal order this disarming supplication anticipates no actual retort, as it has no genuine enquiry, but unlike a predicative assertion, the pitch of its phrase remains almost interrogative, not imperative. The speaker's words mercifully lay bare that there is no authoritative declaration secretly camouflaged by this promulgation or a hidden thesis masquerading in the guise of imploration. No occulted or ulterior statement, in other words, lies dormant here, waiting to groundswell at any moment. But nor is there here *just* a virgin appeal; it would be too facile to say that there is a declarative affirmation enrobed in an imperative form, and likewise too simplistic to presume that this phrase is vested with no other purport than that of a literal injunction. Neither a naïve imperative nor a robust proposition authoritatively asseverating a truth-claim, this claimless claim tends toward various rhetorical possibilities but embraces none. Not mere command nor disguised declaration —not one or the either— the speaker's phrase is not for that matter "neither," the synthesis of these opposing contrasts seamlessly laced together in a dialectic unity. No, his is a demand *that is not one* insofar as its formulation pursues its own atrophy: a demand so weightless of demand it is no longer one; a revelation indistinguishable from its very attenuation and abstinence, so much is it on the verge of attrition.

Derrida's fable intermeshes with the scenario represented in Ducos' fiction, most especially when the deflective and retractive gait of its heroine is more closely scrutinized. Much like the derridean speaker, whose only demand is that there be no demand upon the beloved, Marie not only refrains from acting upon her desire, she also refuses to court its possibility. Thus, when Fernance suggestively engages her in conversation she desists from responding: "I made no reply. I feigned to not have heard him" (*M,* 35). But if she does not forthrightly speak to him, nor pretend to listen, it is not because Fernance is not addressed at all. As Marie elsewhere observes:

> I see that everything is in concert to excite me to reveal my sentiment. Ah! I would consent perhaps if one could know it in all of its purity, if one could wit that I love Fernance for himself, that I do not form any other wishes than those of his happiness, although I wot that it is not I who should render him happy. Cherish him, prefer him, consecrate my life to the pleasure of thinking of it without cease, that is all that I wish, that which I must order of myself to want forever. In the silence of my heart will my love exist; there, I will make up for [*dédommagerai*] Fernance's only being loved by Marie; I will address in secret to this celestial being, adorations that I would like, alas, to have the right to express to the eyes of the whole world. (*M*, 44-5)

With its language of spatial confinement and speechless devotion — a "celestial being" indwells Marie's heart and becomes the addressee of her unstated sentiments — Fernance has not just become enshrined in secret and enveloped in silence, he has also become a rhetorical instance of absent apostrophe. Indeed, some might even conclude that a classical metaphysical and phenomenological scene is being portrayed here: self-present speech immured in silence and soliloquy, a seemingly muffled voice only by the heart heard, Marie's adorative voice would, according to this reading, be encased in self-sufficient rapture and enwrapped in its own auto-affectionate resonance, while Fernance would have become a pure ideality that could be spoken to within her consciousness, and this without a detour through the sensible, material signifiers of language (coupled with all of the non-presence, the non-properness or the inappropriableness, that the latter implies).[49] But is it the case that this figuration is merely phono- and logocentric? Or is this very model of enclosed self-presence —the essence (*eidos*) and sense of being, its existence, substance (*ousia*), and stance in presence (*parousia*), conveyed by the idealism of a voice cloistered and closed within an ideality needing no exteriority, no irruption, or interruption from alterity— itself unsettled, if not dismantled, by the ambiguous scene conjured forth in the above passage? For hasn't Marie spoken of her love not as silent in and of itself but as *silenced,* that is not as an essential feature of her love but as a social restriction? Likewise, does not the adoration she tenders toward Fernance depend upon the very tension between exposure and concealment, expression and quiescence, rather than full solitude and silence? In other words, is it not the very trace of the absence of explicit amorous expression and the alterity of the beloved being (an absence that was never even present or a past present, given that Marie's love has never

been outwardly understood and received by Fernance, at least ostensibly), contoured and conditioned by non-presence and non-appropriation, the mark of the inassimilable beloved who, even in the seemingly quiet communion of Marie's prayer, cannot be fully spoken to?

At the same time, however, for those who would suggest a phono- and logocentric vestige in this scene, the point is well taken, most especially if it is right to recall that in some variations of so-called "Enlightenment" thought, sometimes referred to as the "epoch of Rousseau," there would have been a widespread complicity with and critique of the logocentric metaphysics undergirding certain philosophical doctrines.[50] Indeed, this scene of seemingly speechless and soundless devotion, of reserved and reticent admiration, would appear to echo another eighteenth-century trope in addition to its apparently logocentric one, namely that of the "beautiful soul." This is not to say, of course, that the figuration mentioned above in *Marie* is merely precipitated and produced by a unified and coherent aesthetics of the beautiful soul that was rampantly "present" in literatures of the epoch, whatever that would mean, but that in this scene there converges an entire textual network of allusions and adumbrations to the ambient literary modes of the time, a part of which might well be said to include the important figuration of the beautiful soul. One famous literary appearance of this figure and this fiction graces the pages of the sixth book of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* (1795-6), tellingly entitled "Confessions of a Beautiful Soul" (*Bekenntnisse einer schönen Seele*), a narrative in which an unnamed woman withdraws from the mondanity of worldly commerce and material love.[51] Of the beloved that she abdicates she confesses: "The thought of losing him terrified me, and the prospect of a closer relationship made me tremble" (*W,* 224). Not unlike Marie, the protagonist of "Confessions" apparently demits declaration and apostatizes her amour at the same time that she fears this very denial of love and desertion of her beloved.

This paradox is only redoubled when the woman of "Confessions," realizing that the "bond" that holds her to her beloved is not only shatterable but that it *must* be shattered: "I realized that it was a glass cover enclosing me in an airless space, and if only I could summon up enough strength to shatter it, then I

could be free" (*W*, 230). This is indeed a compelling image —one that prefigures the social pressures and limits allegorized by the metaphor of the "bell jar" in Sylvia Plath's book of the same name— but the escape from enclosure the heroine seemingly seeks finds no ultimate emblem or embodiment in freedom; she remains evermore on the verge of becoming that which she never quite does: "I knew I had gained by my loss" (*W,* 232), she says after immolating her love affair, but is at pains to describe what she has gained; "I felt that I was doing right by being prepared to suffer the loss of my beloved" (*W,* 231) she proclaims, but cannot articulate what is right about it. Indeed, much of the narration forbids divulging the heroine's apparently inexplicable tergiversation of her life and her loves, and the narrator frequently disclaims epistemological explanations and ethical grounds for her seclusion from society: "Nobody really knew what I was about— not even I myself" (*W,* 237); "my exercise of virtue had been far more than outward actions" (*W,* 239). In other words, the figuration of this beautiful soul would seem to resist figuration itself. Neither disembodied nor embodied, neither fully free-floating nor absolutely incarnated in a static representation, this figure would seem to point to the limits of representation itself.[52] Some would argue that the heroine of the "Confessions" reflects Augustine's *Confessions* and the high-minded self-justification of Rousseau's *Confessions*, as if the speaker's attitudes only typified the sanctimonious moralism of German pietism. And surely elements of such claims ought not to be denied. But there is also something more curious at work. For the heroine not only abstains from acting, she abstains from justification and acquits herself from explication, leaving her own narrative irrecuperable from either a reading that would claim to find a subversive agency in her withdrawal or from one that would propose that she has none at all. And it is this inability to be substantiated in a static symbol and hypostasized in a fixed form, this resistance to realization and reification in a given representation as well as to exemplification and exhibition in an ossified embodiment, which accounts for the peculiarity of the "beautiful soul" and indicates its complicity with the ethos of abnegated address in *Marie* in that its only confession is that it will thwart the truth-claims and the aletheia of confession itself by confessing only that it has nothing, in fact, to explicitly confess.

It is with this figure —or rather, this disfiguration of figure— that Hegel's *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (1807) will come to take exception.[53] The criticism waged against the "beautiful soul" is the unaccountability and disengagement toward which it seemingly strives, that is, the mistaken belief that it is somehow unimplicated within the world from which it attempts to recoil. In Hegel's words, this would be a figure which "places so-called pure morality outside of itself into another, holy being and takes itself to be unholy, but then again places so-called pure morality within itself" (*P,* 386; ¶636), absorbing and imbibing in itself a moral purity it has invested in a transcendent, holy being. Duty and deontology do not correspond here, in that the beautiful soul refuses to act, lest it should disgrace the moral pristineness it claims to safekeep: "I act morally when I am *conscious* of performing only pure duty and nothing else but that," ventriloquizes Hegel, "this means, in fact, when I do *not* act" (*P,* 386; ¶637). As the *Phenomenology* goes on to recount, this interiorization of morality amounts to an impuissance to externalize itself in being:

> Just as little has consciousness an *outer existence*, for the objective aspect does not get as far as being a negative of the actual self, in the same way that this self does not attain to an actual existence. It lacks the power to externalize itself, the power to make itself into a Thing, and to endure [mere] being. [*sic*] It lives in dread of besmirching the splendor of its inner being by action and an existence; and, in order to preserve the purity of its heart, it flees from contact with the actual world, and persists in its self-willed importance to renounce its self which is reduced to the extreme of ultimate abstraction, and to give itself a substantial existence, or to transform its thought into being and put its trust in the absolute difference [between thought and being]. [*sic*] The hollow object which it has produced for itself now fills it, therefore, with a sense of emptiness. Its activity is a yearning which merely loses itself as consciousness becomes an object devoid of substance, and, rising above this loss, and falling back on itself, finds itself only as a lost soul. In this transparent purity of its moments, an unhappy, so-called "beautiful soul," its light dies away within it, and it vanishes like a shapeless vapor that dissolves into thin air. (P, 399-400; ¶ 658)

Here consciousness does not materialize itself into an ontological substance, lacking the force to "endure" embodiment, and thus forfeits itself as consciousness altogether. Indeed, the only "being" it ostensibly bears is no being, in that it is an "inner being" without action and without existence, and thus no being that "is" or that "does." Abstract rather than actual, it fears the pollution and profanation of ontology (being) as well as the tarnishment and taint of deontology (doing). Vanquished and vanishing, this vaporous (non)being, in its efforts to avoid becoming sullied by action and stained by actuality, produces a void and ends up filling the

vacuity which it has become with only more emptiness. Vaporizing into aery sublimity, the abstention of the beautiful soul amounts to a "fluctuating attitude" of an "Unhappy Consciousness," a "sound that dies away" in a "created world [of] its *speech*" and an "objectification of its being-for-self" (*P,* 399), one which whiles away in the "silent fusion of the pithless essentialities of the evaporated life" (*P,* 400).[54] In this sense, it is because the beautiful soul, now a lost soul, preserves its purity over moral intervention, in that duty has become "a mere matter of words" (*P,* 403; ¶664).[55] For in attempting to strictly adhere to the idealized notion of duty, the soul becomes enamored not with deeds but with the "unreality" of "pure purpose," (*P,* 404; ¶665). This sanctimonious soul considers itself superior to the deeds it only describes but never enacts: "seeing itself up in this unreality and conceit of knowing well and better above the deeds it discredits, and wanting its words without deeds to be taken for a superior kind of *reality*," but this reality is only unreality (*P,* 405; ¶666). Thus deprived of identity and "devoid of Spirit, "lacking an *actual* existence [and] entangled in the contradiction between its pure self and the necessity of that self to externalize itself and change itself into an actual existence," the beautiful soul "wastes itself in yearning and pines away in consumption" (*P,* 406-7; ¶668).[56]

To return to the discussion of the critique of substance metaphysics continually reprised throughout these pages, it is important to emphasize that if, on the one hand, relying upon *ousia* as an explanatory metaphysical principle when speaking about experience is problematic, the opposite contention, to deny being altogether, as though this history of metaphysics could simply be eschewed in one stroke, is equally susceptible to criticism, insofar as it leads to the postulation of another variation of metaphysics: pure, immaterial, and bodiless ideality. From a certain perspective, Hegel's condemnation of the beautiful soul in this chapter on "Morality" might seem to apply to Marie's character, especially if she is interpreted as one who desiderates rather than declares her love, one who envies it from afar rather than enjoys it in immediacy. Indeed, so insistently reneged is her claim to Fernance's attentions that Marie takes it upon herself to become the counselor and the intermediary between Hortense and Fernance, whose relationship

is anything but unwavering. With every movement toward repairing the relationship that simultaneously thwarts her own romantic hopes, Marie's interest in survival is weakened: "[A]fter a love necessarily destroyed, only an unbearable void can remain and which makes [one] wish to die…But is existence necessary to me? Although at moments, it is very dear to me, I cannot count enough on happiness to look to count on life" (*M,* 40-1). When Marie queries whether "existence" is necessary, the question concedes two divergent interpretative possibilities: Is her inquest that life is not necessary, or that the very concept of "existence" is not necessary?[57] Might the conceit of "existence" itself —ontology, being, predication, and position— come under question in Marie's inquisition? Has Marie metamorphosed into a beautiful soul, content with her own pristine probity and unspoiled rectitude? Has her amour, lacking any "actual existence," become evacuated of content and untested by action, her love liquesced into nothing, her envy evanesced away?

The portrait of Marie, as discursively portrayed in the novel, would seem too ambivalent to either adhere fully to or negate completely the figure of the beautiful soul that Hegel decries and with which she may initially appear to share some traits. Indeed, the novel does not so much take a position on the issue — either adopting it or abrogating it— as interrogate this very notion of "taking position" itself, insofar as its figuration of Marie's attenuating action and dissipating desire dramatizes the impossibility of deciding whether a predicative position or a totalizing negation can be made in the name of her love. Here the question of position, and especially that of subject-position, comes under challenge. Hearken Marie's remark, for example that, "[a]t moments I do not recognize myself. I would love to need neither Fernance nor you [Adèle], that I have ceased to love you both" (*M,* 53), as if her love persisted in and as the very absent of a recipient for it, or the averment that "I want that Fernance be happy […] it cannot be [done] by me" (*M,* 56), as if this love were detached not only from claim, but from its claimant as well. "I would love to need neither," "it cannot be done by me"—such phrases lean toward the figure of the beautiful soul, and perhaps remain within its orbit, but are not finally reducible to it, precisely because Marie cannot remain in

self-sufficiency and isolation. "I did not dare to say anything," she writes, "and yet the silence was tormenting me," offering a compelling reformulation of the Hegelian beautiful soul within gendered and social terms: it is not simply that Marie has moralized her withdrawal and silence as holy and enlightened, but that certain *loves are not allowed to be directly acknowledged, or openly addressed no matter how much one may which to speak of them* (*M,* 75). Hegel's metaphysical account must give way to social critique, for those who are constrained to silence and who must resist physical enactment are forced into that position (which is no position) by social constraint rather than personal will or individual desire. In this sense, Marie is not held captured in the self-sufficient preserve of interiority that marks the beautiful but is continually brought outside herself ("I am not carried toward him by my will; it is despite it" [*M,* 65]), called into a world of others that require that she be evermore implicated in a social set of norms that extends well beyond exclusively private concerns (there can be no mention of what Marie wants or refuses without prior reference to Fernance and Adèle and the various taboos associated with affirming "too tender amity" for either). Is it not that Marie simply desires to do nothing for her love due to religious or metaphysical reasons but that social and political norms enforce inaction when certain types of love are at issue?

vi. love without love

I return broken: I come back to myself, or I come out of it, broken
—Jean-Luc Nancy, "Shattered Love"

When Marie's pseudo-confession of her love to Fernance — an oblique and indirect avowal rather than purely withdrawn and self-enclosed silence— is considered closely, it becomes evident that her love requires exterior or external supports, an alterity of a certain kind, and so differs from the figure of the beautiful soul recoiling from the world and trapped within its unsurpassable interiority. The two have been walking, and Marie leans against Fernance for support ("to preserve me from missteps [*faux pas*]," she says in a nicely polyvalent phrase, "faux pas" signifying both social and physical missteps [51]). The vacillation between mental and material acts, further complicating the figure of the beautiful soul, comes through in

the way that Marie deflects confession: "everything came together to make it impossible for me to hide from Fernance my violent emotion. […] and I even had let him question me many times without responding to him […] Availing myself of all that was outside me [*hors de moi*], to separate myself from him, I managed to tell him indifferent things" (*M,* 51). The phrase oscillates between material and mental valences: grasping at everything around and outside her —whether it be a topic of conversation or a surrounding physical object— to avoid confessing her feelings for Fernance, Marie separates herself both physically and mentally by reaching out to all those vain and indifferent objects of which she can speak (or against which she can lean) without leaning on Fernance (in any sense of the term). Her admission takes the form, then, of its own negation: "You ask me […] if I can let you know my sentiments? Alas, no. I should not even admit them to myself: and yet, far from reproaching myself for them, I cherish them" (*M,* 78). Marie's confession of her feelings, a confession which is not one, both intimates her sentiments at the same time that it resists full disclosure: she admits only that she should not admit anything at all.

Fernance does not "approve" of Marie's confession of her sentiments, but not does he wish to repudiate their relationship as it stands. In Marie's words: "Fernance does not approbate my sentiments. With difficulty [*avec peine*] I obtained that he would not search to immediately destroy them. He wanted to even try absence; fortunately, he has not maintained this wish" (*M,* 74). Marie's depiction of Fernance's response is speculative and ambiguous. Indeed, prior to her confession, it was particularly unclear whether or not Fernance was aware of Marie's sentiments or entertained similar thoughts. "[H]e did not search in [my stare] to clarify any suspicion" Marie says at one point (*M,* 46), only to reverse this statement later on: "I well believe that his suspicions have not ceased; but certainly he has some" (*M,* 53). In this sense, if Marie is held in suspension between action and inaction, confession and silence, it is not because of she embodies a moralizing beautiful soul (indeed, the beautiful soul could never be embodied), but because Fernance remains perpetually playful and ambiguous: "He makes me believe that I am loved," Marie says to Adèle, "as one teases feeble children in promising them the impossible things that they ask for [*ce qu'ils demandent*

d'impossible]" (*M*, 73). She goes on to add: "You, my sister, you well accord me that which you promised me since the moment that you made the commitment to be my friend [...] How many times have you been necessary to me, you have consoled me!" (*Ibid*). While Fernance promises that which is impossible, Adèle provides that which is necessary but, if Marie has also been describing both of their love as necessary to her, then it follows that love in both cases entwines necessity and impossibility at once: necessary, but impossible, impossible because necessary.[58]

Fernance's response only exacerbates and intensifies this ambiguity when he concedes that, although Marie's sentiments are impossible, he also requires them of her: "I am very happy to have a friend such as you. So you like me a lot [*m'aimez donc beaucoup*]! It's true? I need for you to repeat it to me again" (*M,* 77). "Aimer" is yet another one of those tricky words in the French lexicon that, depending on its usage, vacillates between friendship and romance. To love someone (*aimer*) does not signify the same thing when modified by *bien* or *beaucoup*, which changes the register from loving to liking. And yet the word for love is still conserved, even in refracted form, in that expression of liking, so that even when one might read *aimer beaucoup* as "like a lot" love has not been entirely renounced —it remains there, hidden in plain sight. Or rather, an expression that would seem to oppose or replace love with liking continues to carry the valence of love it opposes, a love that was never fully opposed, since it remains legible in the very expression that would erase it; it remains in its *différance* from itself. Marie suffers precisely from this ambiguity, for love is not completely effaced or affirmed but as, as it were, affirmed in effacement and effaced in its affirmation: "What do you mean, in asking me if I love you [*si je vous aime*]?" she queries, in a sort of stupor. Fernance responds: "I sought to assure myself of your friendship [*amitié*] [...] How have I frightened you? In what way have I gone too far? Would you like me to restrain my confidence in your friendship?" (*Ibid*). While Marie hears all the dimensions of love in the terms of friendship, Fernance is not forthcoming with his own interpretation of what friendship entails in terms of love. "I would not respond; I could not respond" she declares, baffled by the confusing demands of friendship that Fernance makes upon her.

Fernance attempts to assuage her, not by clarifying his terminology but by deferring it: "beneficent friendship will give you over to friendship [*l'amitié bienfiasante vous rendra à l'amitié*]," he says and, upon noting that she trembles at the word friendship, remarks: "You do not like this word friendship, Marie. I sense that it can afflict you today […] let us not pronounce it anymore for a while; but the opinion that I have of you assures me that all that Marie will undertake, […] will not be impossible for her" (*M,* 78). The pronominal shift in Fernance's language from the second person (*vous*) address to third-person narration (*Marie*), is remarkable. As he essays to distance himself from Marie's feelings —or rather, distance herself from her own feelings— so too does his language commute from a personal apostrophe to an impersonal declaration: his language of address becomes a language of description, a performative command to use the word friendship becomes a constative declaration of the friend that Marie will become. But at the same time, there is a curious redundancy or tautology at work here—by declaring that friendship will give Marie over to friendship, it seems that Fernance wishes to preserve the amity of Marie he already has. In other words, in saying that the tender friendship they already share (but which Marie experiences differently) will eventually return her to friendship, Fernance seems to ask that the status quo of their relation remain as it is. For how will this friendship, already ambiguous and unbearable, return to —or turn into— the friendship it already is?

Marie will have none of this ambiguity and attempts to become more explicit: "Fernance, I will always love you. Do not expect anything from the future. It's decided for me. It is in vain that you tear my heart apart. Ah! do not be without pity: let me suffer and love you [*laissez-moi souffrir et vous aimer*]" (*M,* 78-9). The language of suffering returns to and repeats that of Hélisenne's lovesickness and Bernard's unfortunate love, as both of these prior texts, as has been seen in the previous chapters, form a mode of self-abnegating amorous address and accostment whereby a lover asks only that the beloved do nothing in the name of their love. Marie continues in this vein: "Do not hope for anything; my illness cannot be healed. It is well enough; oh yes, it is a lot that I promise to never speak to you of it again" (*M,* 79).

It seems important, at this juncture, to concentrate on the paradoxical idiom of letting oneself and suffer and love without return, rejoinder, or recompense. For there is something importantly hurtless — delicate, unpunishing— to Marie's language: "let me suffer and love you." This disarming supplication anticipates no actual retort from Fernance, as it has no genuine enquiry, but unlike a predicative assertion, the pitch of its phrase remains somewhat interrogative and supplicative rather than fully declarative (the phrase is not "suffer *that* I love you"). It would be too facile to say that there is a declarative affirmation enrobed in Marie's words and likewise too simplistic to presume that this phrase is vested with no feeling of love whatsoever. Neither a declaration nor a robust proposition authoritatively asseverating a truth-claim Marie's ambiguous language tends toward multiple possibilities but embraces none. Not mere command nor disguised declaration —not one or the either— this phrase is not simply "neither," the synthesis of these opposing contrasts seamlessly laced together in a dialectic unity. No, hers is a confession *that is not one* insofar as its formulation pursues its own atrophy: a demand so weightless of demand it simply is no longer; a revelation indistinguishable from its very attenuation and abstinence, so much is it on the verge of absolute attrition.

In this sense, *Marie's* language resonates with the rhetoric weaponlessness, the airy appeals and idioms of inexperience of its renaissance and early modern predecessors. And, once again, the self-nullifying, weightless effect of Marie's vocative is not simply metaphysical or psychological but to a large degree social and political. If Fernance were to return a response of love, a love in which he is to take no part, then this would be no less than to suffer the possibility of her social death: Fernance is engaged to her cousin, and should they consummate their passion this would lead to censure and condemnation. And yet, one gets the sense that Marie's intimations of love, no matter how self-effacing, get across. Though the rhetoricity of her (non)demand belies its interlocutor's rejoinder and treats him as earless to its call, no less is it evident that Marie's command bespeaks love. If her words are not importunate, not suing to determine whether she herself is loved or that she be loved, it is because her language strategically, weightlessly, deflects manifest

result; it adjourns the reaction and realizable gain from Fernance it cannot crave. While this does not abort the faintly voiceless voicing of her love, it renders the beloved —here, Fernance— as no more than the passive, abeyant object of a love he is no longer to actively take part in. "I do not plead for thee to love, but to let thyself be loved," so Marie's words might be paraphrased in reprising a poetic letter from Ovid, for Marie's overture bears none of the heavy ballasts of direct admission and robust asseveration.[59] To beckon that Fernance do any more than suffer a love that barely requires him would risk imposing too much on him, would risk freighting Fernance with obligation and adjuration—would risk, indeed, both of their lives. Therein lies one aporia of Marie's confession: If Fernance loves her, her social life is reneged; if he lets her live, he cannot love her (which would be its own form of death for Marie), but in no case is approval made or censure passed within the terms of Marie's supplication that could evaluate whether Marie's life preserved —without love— or lost —having been loved— is determinably better or justifiable. This paradox can shoulder nothing more, it would seem, as if no positive or negative assessment could be made available within its terms or beyond its statement. Marie's words bear no indication of what Fernance could do or say that might safeguard her livelihood; her words repeal any efforts her beloved might exercise in her regard other than to hibernate in heedlessness, other than to leave her query quenchless of reply.

It is perhaps for this reason that she prefers to speak of love in the absence of any guarantee that such love might be reciprocated ("I will never speak to you of it again"); she intones, nearly voicelessly, her requisition by way of unconditional hypothesis rather than by thesis ("if I could let you know my sentiments"). With a rhetorical idiom that poses and disposes of amorous confession in one stroke, Marie words gesture at imaginative possibilities she never ultimately accepts or admits as her own. In other words, she does not ask a question to seek answer but merely asks that there *be* a question, a possibility, for her bidding asks only to be taken for what it is and nothing more, namely, a gainless, groundless supplication that does not really ask and so therefore, perhaps, truly isn't a supplication at all, at least not a question that could brook an answer. Receding at the moment of its statement, elided by a language of friability and

vaporousness, Marie's words renounce the redemptive response from Fernance it only pretends to beseech but actually abstains from claiming.

And yet, even if Marie's words attempt to unfetter Fernance from the yoke of response —by not heeding it or asking he not respond at all— they also ensnare him within a scene of address from which there is no elusion. Indeed, an antimony arises precisely because Marie's words bear an address and because they are not claustrated in self-sufficient intimacy: her query at once apostrophizes Fernance —even when it seems incapable of doing so, self-cancelling and forceless as its rhetoric appears— and relieves him from being necessary for the supplication to exist at all —even when he seems defenselessly interpellated by a call, an address, from which he cannot turn away.[60] Marie's supplication, thirstless of all rejoinder, wards off any reply Fernance could give at the same time that it remains a question addressed only to him, a question to which Fernance cannot simply forbear reply.[61] He cannot reply to a supplication that appears to stand alone, indifferent and removed from the speech of his response. But if he is powerless to reply he also cannot *not* reply, cannot but find himself entrapped by a rhetorical address from which there is no refuge. Marie's (non)command almost has nothing to do with him because there is nothing he can do for it, even as it calls, paradoxically, for him to do what he cannot: respond by not responding in any way he can. It is an inquiry that, to a certain degree, must endure without him for if it abides at all, it does so in the annulment of the answer from Fernance it does not summon and that he cannot give. Fernance's possible reply is peremptorily despoiled, despite the fact that Marie's request appeals only to him. By asking that Fernance do nothing he or she can, to do what is beyond their abilities and power, Marie's words implicates Fernance in a prison of address where he is helplessly unable to reply and, in the same stroke, haplessly incapable of *not* responding by virtue of being hailed by Marie's imploration.

Thus will Marie come to remark that Fernance "employed once again cold reasoning [...] I responded in apprising him, with confidence, all of the combats I had vainly sustained against myself. It is then that the wanted to point out to me the necessity of some time of absence; but I forbade him from continuing to give

advice filled with cold indifference [*froideur*], that made me suffer horribly" (*M,* 79). While Marie had asked of Fernance that he "let [her] suffer," she now supplements this by adding that his reply, and especially its coldness, makes her "suffer" unbearably. The paradox of this idiom finds its sharpest example here: Marie wishes to suffer in inexperience (to just love, even with no return or fulfillment), and yet, at the same time, she suffers precisely because she is left to her inexperience by a beloved whose only response is that he can given none at all, or at least none that she would accept. Marie desires no response in order to suffer but, upon receiving no response to love, suffers all the more. Marie's supplication henceforth renders any possible reply Fernance could furnish redundant even as it remains a question that appears directed only to him. He cannot respond with love if he wishes to save her from suffering, nor can he avoid having already been addressed by a question mercilessly unresponsive to whatever it is he might say. Thus he bears the paradoxically lightweight burden of being addressed by a supplication that ostensibly has no need *of* him, even as it is been tendered forth *to* him; it asks that he do nothing with what he has been affronted by: a solicitation that retreats from a dialogue it also pretends to solicit, an accostment of weaponless deference that absolves its addressee of the responsibility to retort. As the beloved of Marie's minimal claim, Fernance's rejoinder is pre-empted even as he is enticed to retaliate, for he is enthralled by a supplication that promises no evasion from its solicitation even as it treats him as irrelevant to its query.

Marie's vaporous vocative, a prayer unharnessed by hopes of gain, allows for no decision other than to leave the *status quo* untouched, to act in no way, for it protests nothing more than what cannot be done by the powers of Fernance's action or reaction. Whether or not she suffers can have no response and no recompense from him, a kind of grace which makes Fernance needless and superfluous to the question that does not need his reply, even as it bears his address and, paradoxically, requires him in the first place (there would be supplication if there were not, first of all, a scene of address, of addressing and being addressed). It can only proffer him a gift he must not confront, not without imperiling the safety of his beloved (she suffers, it would seem, either way).[62] But, as has been seen, it is also not in Fernance's power to avoid

taking up this gift "without recognition, without possible restitution"[63] that endangers Marie's life; it is not in the power of Fernance *not* to violate this sanction, for when accosted by a supplication that is so bare, so barren it seems to renounce the snares of demand and recompense, he cannot, ultimately, spare the immolation of his beloved's life by spurning its irresistible address, its siren's song.

What kind of a supplication is Marie's, then, which though not pronounced in a self-referential vacuum nevertheless remains mindless to antiphon and heedless of rejoinder? And how to contend with Fernance's ambiguous (non)response? As Marie tells it, Fernance throws her a glance that yields a response he cannot give but also one he cannot *but* give, even though he is not supposed to, even though he is only asked to let her suffer in silence:

> I saw, I believed to see in his [eyes], amidst the serious thoughts that remained in him, some that were favorable to me […] And what kind of man comes to receive the admission of a passionate love from a sensible woman, and which does not consider it, by a movement of involuntary approbation, by the pleasure that the sweet persuasion of being loved gives him despite himself, even though duty and reason prevented him from responding to the sentiment of which he is the object, and which command him to destroy it? (*M,* 80)

Following the volutes of this hypotactic rhetorical query, it would appear that Marie believes that she sees a responsive (thought not exactly reciprocal) regard of love from Fernance since, in her interpretation, it is impossible to resist the love of a sensible woman, even if one is not solicited to respond to it. The double-bind that festers here might appear as passive in action and impassive in language: *passive*, perhaps, in the very specific sense that there is nothing Fernance can do, no more or no less, that could secure Marie's safety when faced with her supplication, for there seems an insistence on the nullity of his powers to do anything but pass over in silence or avert restitution to a supplication he cannot reply to (he only confers a parting glance). There is nothing he *can* do, nothing within his capabilities or capacities, besides fain attend as impotent witness to the nihility of his powers, for whether he admits to love —which he is not simply asked *not* to do, though neither is he encouraged not to— the surety of her livelihood cannot be safeguarded from injury. In this sense, passivity would not be merely opposed to activity, it would be a passivity more passive than passivity itself because elusive to that very distinction.

Impassive because to a certain degree Marie's words seem to continue, to perdure, heedless and nonchalant as to whether Fernances' response is made or not, as if the supplication —which does not ask— had no speaker abaft its words, and as if the rejoinder it staves off implied that it beckons for no answer because it spoke in the very absence of an addressee, as if it irradiated from nowhere and were asked by no one. This also comes to the fore in the particular language guiding the formulation of Marie's long-winded rhetorical question ("what kind of man…does not consider etc."). Rather than declaring what she thinks or claims to know about Fernance's state of mind, Marie offers a speculative question, posed at a level of high abstraction, that seems to gesture to a general example rather than her own particular case. And, as already mentioned, Marie's original plaint to be left to "suffer" subsists in spite of and without Fernance at the same time that it endures as a supplication that is addressed to him alone (and thus requires a "you," an addressee—before asking, Marie is already an askable being, one capable of receiving and giving address).[64] Just as her supplication seems forceless to assert without surrendering at once its declarative aims and claims, so too does it appear unmindful of any possible reply, as if its status as a thoroughly rhetorical supplication rendered response itself nugatory and inessential at the same time that it ceaselessly beckoned for it.[65]

To contemporary readers, the amorous supplication shared between Marie and Fernance might seem oddly ineffectual, without their willing and unbeknownst to them, as if this love were needless of both their assent and their action in order to subsist at all. And this might well be because, as an epistolary novel, it is only the words that they share from afar which sustains the slightest bond that can endure between them, a crumbly, shatterable link that abides by nothing more than their writing, similar to the non-supplication that Marie emits without asking and which Fernance must encounter without responding to, a non-supplication blanched of demand and drained of desire that holds them both in a state of mutual inexperience of each other's love.[66] And despite the avowed passion the novel thematizes, and analyzes, the

words these lovers exchange seem to stand impassively between them, as if the speakers were no more than the passive witnesses of a speech they had no part in controlling and had no right to answer to.

For so alienated from demand, so disinterested in execution and decathected of desire does Marie's non-supplication appear, that it seems relentlessly impersonal, as if emanating from nowhere, as if to a good degree irrelevant to its speaker —for it is vocalized in the very act of abrogating her powers to beseech— and its addressee —for it renders Fernance irrelevant to its inquiry. It would be as if Marie's supplication had no enunciator and were purely personless: the statement of nobody. While this implication might appear dramatically nihilistic, a nonlieu, it is in fact more subtle: it is precisely by leaving their love nearly disarticulated and almost unannounced, untouched of action and chaste of consequence, that Marie and Fernance are here intertwined. The words that hang at an impersonal remove from them are paradoxically that which delays their sundering from one another, for the relation between the two lovers is shared not by what they can do for or say to one another but by what they cannot do and should not say, by a question that holds them in an embrace of distance, by a language that binds them together in the very partition that irrevocably divides them from one another —and from themselves.

This paradoxical closeness without closure, intimacy by distance, is akin to what has been called "linguistic love" or an "impersonal passion," namely, "a love sparked and sustained by the appeal of another's spoken or written words –that is, by something in the loved person which is also not of her and which lies largely beyond her control— her language."[67] Unlike the Christian imperative to "not love in word or speech but in deed and truth," (I John 3:18), it might be surmised that Marie's love is not known by its fruits or by her action but by its words alone, as if the only personal attestation Marie could give was not hers to give at all, because it could never be possessed or be personal: her words.[68] For language is not to be owned at all, it is irreducibly impersonal even at its most seemingly personalized proclamations to the extent that it must subsist immotivated and indifferent to the speakers who employ it. The language employed by a speaker is never the one he or she elects but, rather, one that is foisted on them by a primary

vulnerability to linguistic impress; language predates its usage by the speaker and abides after their death. In the words of one philosophical account: "[T]he moment I realize that the terms [of language…] are not mine alone, that I did not single-handedly devise or craft them, I am, as it were, dispossessed by the language that I offer."[69] Because language precedes and exceeds those that speak and are spoken by it, there is, ineluctably, an "impersonal perspective" which interferes with the "personal encounter" of linguistic occasion: the fact that is language is not merely one generated *ex nihilo* by the speaker.[70] It is to this eventuality that the following chapter will persistently tend: the counterintuitive ineluctability that the experience of love, because a love in and of words, is not one attributable to a subject who undergoes a self-evident experience. For if Marie's offering to Fernance can be nothing more than her language —the one both she speaks and which speaks her— it is not an offering he can take up for it is not one she can offer; it cannot be *his* language, any more than it can be *hers* insofar language is no ontological substance or reified entity that can merely be handed off. It is not even an offering, for if it does offer, it can offer nothing, or at least nothing that Marie could give.[71]

In other words, the fact that the words that stand between Marie and Fernance leave the two lovers in a state of nonaddress and innocence does not thereby exterminate their love, if love it can be called, for not acknowledging or acting upon love in a consequential, direct, or effective manner may itself be a form of loving. Not realizing an amorous possibility or remaining careless of its materialization, so the novel *Marie* suggests, does not mean it was never there nor had never been, only that it has never been fully undergone in person or in presence. Which is another way of saying that even if Marie and Fernance seem incapable of addressing one another, or seem bound to one another by the ways in which they leave each other unaddressed, this distance in proximity is not merely the sublimation or sublation of love but, perhaps, a modality of love itself.[72] In lieu of personal contact and physical action, love in words permits a sort of touchless embrace —a handless, dis-armed hug of equivocal value. While the novel can seem like a lament of inconsequence —a record of failure, of untouch, of inexperience— it also teaches that words are

not merely to behold but to be held. It speaks, importantly, of an untouchable love, a love that is breathless and empty. Empty of touch but filled with words.[73]

Although following centuries later, Kierkegaard's *Diary of a Seducer* in *Either/Or* (1843), offers an illustrative example of the epistolary love theorized in *Marie*, for when the narrator writes to the young girl he is attempting to seduce he describes their intimacy in terms of the emptiness and separation maintained by their words, a vacuity and distance that paradoxically fosters their intimacy. "*My Cordelia!*" he writes, "'My-Your'—these words enclose the meager content of my letters like a parenthesis. Have you noticed that the space between its arms is growing shorter? Oh, my Cordelia! It is beautiful indeed that the emptier the parenthesis becomes, the more significant it becomes. Your Johannes."[74] Here, Johannes hypothesizes that if he wrote less in his letter the more the intimate terms of "My/Your" that mark the salutation and valediction portions of the page would brush up against each other in closeness and embrace each other in contact; that which holds the "My Cordelia" from the "Your Johannes" is nothing other than the words of the letter which fill up the page. But it is also these words, *this letter* he writes to her, which endures as a token of his love and without which giving her his heartfelt thoughts would be impossible.[75] Johannes' words thus keep his Cordelia at a remove from him but in an entwinement that is sustained, paradoxically, by the unbreachable interval that separates them, as if this would be Johannes' most seductive claim: keep me by keeping me from you.

vii. "having no love to respond to love"

The only reproach that I can give myself is to have loved you too much.
—Madame d'Antraigues, *Ernesta, nouvelle allemande* (1800)

In focusing so extensively on Marie, Fernance, and their Kierkegaardian form of seduction— "keep us together by all that keeps us apart," as it were— one loses sight of Adèle's crucial implication in their couple, which was thus never really a couple at all. This last section must be devoted to Adèle's words, much in the same way that her own words frame the final passages of the novel: Because Fernance does not

want to lose Marie's "friendship," but senses that she suffers, he tries to convince her of spending time away from one another, much to Marie's chagrin. Adèle returns to Marie and hopes that she can convalesce in Fernance's absence. Here the narration shifts from Marie's letters back to Adèle's correspondence. Adèle's return, as she describes it, is marked by her passionate attempt to retrieve Marie from the hold Fernance's influence has exercised on her: "I threw myself at her knees. —'I come to you, dear sister, I told her; I come to search for you, to lead you all alone with me. Give yourself up [*Abandonnez-vous*] to your Adèle, she will care for you better than they have here" (*M,* 84-5). While one might interpret this passionate avowal as partaking in the eighteenth-century trope of "feminine friendship," there is something to the language here that exceeds purely platonic intent: Adèle has thrown herself at Marie's feet, a lover's supplicative posture that one might have expected from Fernance but which he has himself failed to offer. Without concluding that Adèle is a mere *Ersatz* lover to Marie, or that the dynamics here are reducible to Freudian triads or Girardian triangular desires, it would not be impossible to argue that Adèle is rivaling Fernance in the quest for Marie's confidence. Adèle's speech resembles that of a lover, or at least of a "too tender" friend, in that she not only wishes to separate Marie from Fernance, but she furthermore begs that Marie *give herself up* to "her Adèle." Adèle also instates a marked contrast between how Marie has been treated in Fernance's company and how she will be treated in Adèle's ("she will care for you better"). This becomes more explicit as Adèle reports on her efforts to wean Marie from her amorous bewitchment with Fernance: "I did not want that the man who could not adore Marie" to remain with her, Adèle writes, and "I armed myself with all the pride that I would have desired to inspire in her heart, in this submissive and abandoned heart that I nonetheless pitied with all the tenderness of my own" (*M,* 85).

Despite Marie's insistence that she ought to be left in Fernance's company and to suffer her love in silence, Adèle refuses to grant her this wish, fearing that Fernance's reappearance might imperil Marie's health. Like an addict suffering from withdrawal symptoms, Marie antagonizes Adèle for inflicting her with this separation: "I rejected all of the most persuasive means that she used, her threats to distance me from

her heart, her anger, her caresses, her tears and all of the sophisms that love furnishes to desperation [*désespoir*]" (*M,* 85); "She became as if crazed by pain and fright, by this separation that I requested. She did not have the strength any longer to say that she was opposed to it. I believed I had to profit from this moment of abandon" (*M*, 87). Judging from Adèle's earlier statements, it is also clear that her desire to keep Marie away from Fernance is not purely for Marie's sake, although her actions are ostensibly dictated by her concern for her friend, but also for her own, since the less attention that Marie devotes to Fernance the more she can provide to Adèle. "We held each other for a long time, closely embraced," Adèle writes, for in losing Fernance's embrace, Marie gains Adèle's (*M,* 84), a point that becomes all the more clear when they depart: "'Ah, Fernance!' she cried. But he could not hear her, I pressed her against my breast" (*M,* 88). Adèle's eager embrace seems to take up, and take over, Marie's attentions and affections.

This plan backfires, however, as Marie's condition worsens in the two months that follow, despite Adèle's fervent attempts to distract Marie and to remind her that she is loved if not by Fernance, than at least by herself: "I slept in her room. She did not sleep an instant. I spent the night consoling her, promising her that she would return soon" (*M,* 87). Adèle eventually falls into frustration, however, when she sees that all of her affections come to nought, and that Marie refuses to move on, or move away from, the man who has come to engross her attention. "I went just so far as to reproach her in the name of her tenderness for me, of the little control [*empire*] which she took over herself, in order to gratify me, I who did not love anything in the world like my sister, and who had abandoned everything because of her [*pour me satisfaire, moi qui n'aimais rien au monde comme ma soeur, et qui avait tout abandonné à cause d'elle*]" (*M,* 89). This admission is striking for several reasons: firstly, it reprises the language of giving up and giving over that Adèle had employed when she asked that Marie "give herself up" to "her Adèle" prior to their departure. Secondly, it rehearses in refracted form the impersonal or impassive language that has been recurring throughout these exempla in the various figures of speech used by the principal personages of this story (note, in particular, how the disjunctive pronoun "moi" takes the place of the personal pronoun "je"). And thirdly, this language

exposes the queer love Adèle holds for Marie, a love for a sister who is more than a sister, and thus a love that disrupts and inverts the usual terms of kinship and friendship. Lastly, Adèle has abandoned everything for Marie, a confession that borders upon Marie's own claim that she has abandoned everything for Fernance, leaving us to ask what has been given, and given up, in the course of these amorous exchanges? What has Adèle given up in asking that Marie give herself up to Adèle? And what has Adèle lost when she senses that Marie cannot reciprocate the all-encompassing love that she feels for Marie?

In reflecting on her forcible withdrawal of Marie from Fernance's presence, Adèle wonders aloud if she has been mistaken in calling for their separation: "Alas! What got into me to have been so severe, so barbarous toward my sister? I tore apart her heart so uselessly. […] What is up to me to judge arrangements [*ménagements*] that required a sentiment of which I have never had the experience [*dont je n'ai jamais eu l'expérience*]?" (*M,*85). Adèle blames herself here for not being gentle and understanding enough to realize that she ought to have left Marie suffer in silence beside her beloved rather than die in absence away from him. But her question remains a curious one, for what is the sentiment that Adèle claims to have never experienced? Earlier, Marie was seen to have accused Adèle for not comprehending the intricacies and delicacies of love, proclaiming that Adèle had never undergone any such experience, and here Adèle recites that claim. To claim that Adèle has never experienced love would seem to imply that Marie has, but this returns, once again, to the very quandary at hand: to what extent can Marie's interactions and exchanges with Fernance be considered an amorous experience if it is left for the most part unembraced and unlived? Furthermore, to what extent is Adèle's claim never to have experienced love rhetorically undercut by the narrative itself, one which details her insistent love for Marie, a woman in whose name she has abandoned everything? Although Adèle declares that she has never experienced love, does not the entire collection of letters detailing her devotion to Marie counteract that prior declaration, exposing that what the narrative says and what it enacts are not commensurate? Even if nothing materially comes to pass between the two, is not the narrative reconstruction and retrospection of Adèle left? One which, in framing the story of her

interactions with Marie, might be considered a sort of (fictional) experience? It will be important to return to these questions at the end of this chapter, but to get there, Marie's final hours must first be traced.

During Marie's convalescence, she and Fernance have maintained a correspondence (at her request) and, as Adèle notes, "he did not speak to her of the sentiment that she felt; but, pitying her state, nor did he speak to her either of reason or friendship" (*M,* 91). If friendship has remained an indefinable and unstable term all throughout these pages, it is all the more confounded when it becomes taboo. What is the status of Marie's relationship with Fernance, what kind of experience would it be, if the very "friendship" which has long defined, and defied, their interactions is suspended from use and done away with from conversation? Fearing for Marie's life, Adèle eventually convinces to come visit, at which time she asks to leave with him and to "live near to him as if she had been his sister [*comme si elle avait été sa soeur*]. She believed that it was no longer love that she felt" (*M,* 93). If formerly the language of friendship met its limit in the text, it is now the terms of kinship that have lost their mooring. For if Marie asks to be the *sister* to Fernance, a man for whom she had earlier declared to have a "too tender friendship," how is the term "sister" to be understood, a term which has been exchanged so frequently between Marie and Adèle? One might even advance the possibility that if Marie, finding her love not returned, settles on becoming Fernance's sister than perhaps so too has Adèle, in finding her particular love for Marie not reciprocated, settled on becoming a sister of sorts. In this case, the term sister would not imply a biological or blood-relation, nor even a sisterly relationship of kinship, but a catachresis, an improper figure, to designate amorous relations that defy the terms of both kinship and friendship ("lovence," in Derridean terminology).

This interpretation becomes all the more viable when considering Marie's final moments in the novel. On her deathbed, Marie thanks Adèle for having introduced her to Fernance: "She drew me to her bed so that I could embrace, kiss her [*pour que je l'embrassasse*]. I held her in my arms.—'This is the first time, she added, that you have heard me say how much I love him. It seems to me that my tenderness is the most pure since the moment that I have expressed it in front of you. Fernance, it is at this moment that I am truly

[*véritablement*] your friend. Keep your friendship for me [*Conserve-moi ton amitié*]. This divine sentiment still fills and warms my weakened heart" (*M,* 95). While it might be tempting to conclude that Marie's feelings have merely been sublimated into friendship, there is nonetheless an ambiguous usage of the term friendship all throughout the text, most especially with regard to Marie and Adèle's relationship (it is perhaps significant that the stock phrase "keep your friendship for me" also appears in the famous eighteenth-century homoerotic correspondence of Isabelle de Bourbon-Parme to the archduchess Marie-Christine both of whom also refer to each other as sisters).[76] Note the ambiguity in Marie's dying words: "From now on even Hortense will be able to allow me to love you. My sister that I cherish, Fernance, receive my pledges of friendship in expiation of my love" (*M,* 95). In the first part of this declaration, Marie seems to be speaking to Fernance (Hortense being his fiancée), but in the second phrase, Adèle and Fernance become less distinguishable. She says to her "sister" *and* to Fernance (to whom she has become, in turn, a "sister") that she gives them both her friendship *in forgiveness* for her love without specifying to whom this love applies nor for what it must be pardoned.

This returns to the question with which this chapter began, namely whether love's excess, and its transgression, can be forgiven. The question of forgiveness and the unforgivable also emerges in the final parts of the novel. Consider, in this regard, Adèle's harsh judgment of Fernance, one that reveals her own sentiments for Marie's welfare: "I saw in him all that characterizes a true and perfect friendship [*parfaite amitié*], an excessive interest," but she cannot forgive him for not "having no love to respond to love" [*n'avoir point d'amour pour répondre à l'amour*]" (*M,* 86). She continues:

> To anyone but me, Fernance will be able to, It is certain that he should have been appear excusable for not having loved Marie the first day that he saw her [...] For me, less just than devoted to my dear Marie, I do not forgive [*je ne pardonne pas*] I am revolted at the very idea [*à la seule idée*] that Fernance could prefer even the most perfect beauty to the so touching charmings of an angelic creature. [...] The event had made my indignation against Fernance justifiable (*M,* 86-7).

Just as Marie had conceded her love for Fernance only be rhetorically deflecting it, one wonders whether Adèle's spirited defense of Marie as *so loveable* does not in turn concede, only to deflect, her own admission

of ardor for Marie. In this "lady doth protest too much" moment, Adèle's indignation that this man could *not* love Marie —an "angelic creature" of "touching charms"— and that he should not be forgive for it seems to position Adèle in the place that Marie had formerly occupied, the quasi-silent lover who is content to watch the beloved from afar, to "suffer" just as long as she can suffer beside her beloved. For has not Adèle done the same all throughout the narrative? If Marie has accompanied Fernance, standing reservedly and quietly next to him but never fully exposing her love for him, has not Adèle similarly stood alongside Marie all throughout this time? Although one should be careful not to draw strict parallels, for clearly these representations of thwarted amative conquest take leave from a conception of love as a mutual, symmetrical, or reciprocal exchange between two knowing parties. In other words, if the love between Marie and Fernance has not been reciprocal or symmetrical, then it would be mistaken to simply draw a relation of concordance between the thwarted relationship of Marie and Fernance and that of Adèle and Marie (if one merely treated the two cases as inverted examples of one another, the dissymmetry and difference of each would be reduced to the homology and similarity both would seem to resist!).

Indeed, it is precisely because Adèle refuses to forgive Fernance that marks a distinction between their impossible loves for Marie: for while Fernance's love for Marie might be recognized as love because heterosexual (even if not socially acceptable because adulterous), it is unclear whether non-heterosexual love can be admitted into the terms of recognizability and possibility at all. This becomes evident at the scene of Marie's death, where Marie expires, tellingly, in the arms of Adèle, not of Fernance: "She let her head fall lightly unto me. Fernance thought that she had fainted. He hastened near her. But this time, it was not up to him to give my sister to me [*il ne lui apparenait pas de me rendre ma soeur*]. He called her by her name; she trembled, pressed our hands against her breast," and perished (*M,* 96). It is interesting to note Adèle's vehemence in declaring that it did was not Fernance's right to return Marie to her, now that Marie is clasped, fatally, in her embrace. For, in a certain sense, although Marie has never fully been clasped within Adèle's love (at last not in unambiguous terms), nor has she ever quite left Adèle's embrace, so

when Adèle claims that it is not up to Fernance to return Marie to her, her words are not entirely mistaken. But if Marie has never quite left Adèle's embrace —indeed, as has been seen all throughout the narrative, it is Adèle, and not Fernance, who engages with Marie physically the most— nor has she ever fully been enclosed within it. It is perhaps for this reason that Adèle is so heartbroken upon the death of her "friend" and "sister" (which at this point come to seem like code words, similar to the ones used in some contemporary LGBT subcultures to denominate friends, partners, lovers, and other kinship relations that do not receive legal or state-derived recognition), for if Adèle has never been able to openly love Marie without the interference of Fernance, she finds that she cannot fully grieve Marie's death either. And how could she? If one lives and loves outside the field of intelligible, recognizable, or socially acceptable modes of loving, how does one grieve the loss of a love that was never even considered one? Is Adèle not only mourning her friend, but also the mourning the love that she was never able to affirm? Is it possible to love someone too much to be able to love her, to borrow Zulmie's phrase, not because this love is too excessive in and of itself, but because it is considered to exceed the normative boundaries of acceptable and recognizable forms of love? Hearken Adèle's final words, a testament to her love for Marie:

> I will not try, madame, to depict to you my state for several days. One has never loved more than I loved Marie [*On n'aima jamais plus que je n'ai aimé Marie*]. That is to tell you enough of what my despair was. Fernance, as afflicted as me perhaps, but having more strength to require of himself a tranquil exterior, begged me to not give myself over to the excesses of an affliction that could become fatal for me. Sometimes, I felt a sort of horror in his presence; but more often the view of the one that my sister had so much loved, did me well. […] Six years have passed since the death of my sister. But it is always recent for me. I do not know what has become of Fernance. It was said that he was outside of France. He has been forced to separate himself from his wife. Perhaps he must not be loved any longer [*Peut-être ne doit-il plus être aimé*]? Alas, if he still is, he will not be happy, for where will he find a heart like the one that he has so pitilessly left behind [*délaissé*]? (*M,* 96)

To say that one has never loved as much as Adèle as loved Marie is to place love outside or in excess of the terms through which love is traditionally understood, inasmuch as this love cannot be compared to other forms of love nor comprehended by them. Adèle's ambivalence is evident: she fells horrified confronted with the man who left Marie behind and also feels comforted that Fernance remains a sort of token, a reminder or a remainder, that Marie has left *something* behind in her wake. But there is no full mourning for

Adèle, not absolute forgetting of the one that she has loved more than anyone and more than anyone could love. The death remains recent, never fully grieved, given over to endless melancholia: for how can one grieve a love that could never be openly acknowledged, how can one suffer a loss that was never even considered one to begin with?[77] It would seem that Adèle *loves Marie too much to be able to love her,* not only because this love exceeds the heteronormative framework through which desire is sometimes conceived and presumed in eighteenth-century ideals of marriage, but because it cannot be recognized exclusively within the terms of friendship, homosexuality, or heterosexuality and thus constitutes an excess, a "too muchness," that is refused full recognition even as it persists, one that is denied complete disclosure even as it is being written. And yet Adèle's words —both the narrative and her closing comments— remain as a sort of testament bearing witness to her impossible love, one that is exposed but never fully expressed, as if her final rejoinder to Fernance would be: You never loved Marie, not like me, for I have loved her more than love itself.

"I am my relation to you"
coda

i. subjects of experience?

the concept of experience is one of the most confusing
—Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*

"'Thinking,' as epistemologists define it, is a thing that never happens: it is an arbitrary fiction, which one arrives at by emphasizing one element from the process and ignoring all the others; it is an artificial arrangement for the purpose of rendering facts intelligible—'Spirit,' the thing that thinks*: if possible, even absolute, immaculate pure, spirit—this conception is a second consequence derived from a false self-observation, which believes in 'thinking'; here only, one imagines an act that never takes place, the act of 'thinking' and, second, one imagines a subject-substratum in which each of the acts of this thinking, and these acts only, take their origin: this is to say that* the deed and the doer are fictive*."*
—Nietzsche, *Will to Power*[1]

According to the now famous arguments unfolded in Derrida's *De la grammatologie* (1967), it is the phonocentric and logocentric presumptions governing the metaphysics of Western philosophy that have subordinated speech to writing. Central to this privileging of speech over writing —understood in a general sense as self-differing and self-deferring relations and not simply as material inscriptions upon paper— has been the assumption that the *phonè* as voice communes with the *logos* as meaning and signified sense —as though there would exist a pre-expressive layer of meaning or pre-linguistic stratum of sense which, prior to its expression and passage through the exteriority of the signifier, could be heard/understood as if spoken to the self (*s'entendre parler*) in the living present: a plenitude of self-present meaning would be revealed when the stratum of language is simply removed, or in phenomenological parlance, "reduced." Logocentrism and phonocentrism are thus terms meant to convoke the following complicitous conceptual hegemonies: "absolute proximity of voice and being, of voice and the meaning of being, of voice and the ideality of meaning"; [2] "the originary giving evidentness, the *present* or the *presence* of sense in a full and originary intuition";[3] "the restoration, in the form of presence, of the totality of a sense actually given to intuition";[4] "being as *pre-sence,* then of presence as the proximity of the entity to itself, as self-consciousness"[5]—in short, the subordination of "the sign to truth, language to being, speech to thought, and writing to speech."[6]

Most compelling amongst the collusions Derrida emphasizes is the one shared between experience, subject (*hypokeimenon*), substance (*ousia*), and presence (*parousia*). For the presupposition that "the subject

affects itself and is related to itself in the element of ideality"[7] in self-present experience is produced precisely because of the interweaving of *ousia* and *parousia*:

> The voice is *heard* (understood)—that undoubtedly is what is called conscience—closest to the self as the absolute effacement of the signifier: pure auto-affection that necessarily has the form of time and which does not borrow from outside of itself, in the world or in 'reality,' any accessory signifier, any substance of expression foreign to its own spontaneity. It is the unique experience of the signified producing itself spontaneously, from within the self, and nevertheless, as signified concept, in the element of ideality or universality, the unworldly character of this substance of expression is constitutive of this ideality. This experience of the effacement of the signifier in the voice is not merely one illusion among many—since it is the condition of the very idea of truth…This illusion is the history of truth and it cannot be dissipated so quickly. Within the closure of this experience, the word is lived as the elementary and indecomposable unity of the signified and the voice, of the concept and a transparent substance of expression. This experience is considered in its greatest purity—and at the same time in the condition of its possibility—as the experience of 'being.'[8]

The conception of voice being closest to the signified, and being itself determined by its relation to presence, would have consolidated a certain history of metaphysics as reflected in Husserlian phenomenology and Heideggerian ontology. In this rendition, the voice being heard/understood, in auto-affectionate self-presence, is generated *sui generis*: it never passes through an exteriority or accessory signifier, never passes through a "substance of expression" outside itself. The imbrication of concepts in this passage leads to an intriguing repetition of "experience," for it is the *experience* of the self-generating spontaneity of the signified within consciousness ("It is the unique experience of the signified producing itself…"), this *experience* of the signifier being erased to allow an ideal meaning to shine through ("Within the closure of this experience, the word is lived as the…unity of the signified and the voice, of the concept and a transparent substance of expression"), which amounts to the *experience* of being ("This experience is considered in its greatest purity…as the experience of 'being'"). Interestingly, the self-present ideality of voice has not eliminated the substance of expression,[9] but is itself that substance, albeit a diaphanous one, and this is because presence colludes with substance: "To participate in beingness, in *ousia,* therefore is to participate in being-present, in the presence of the present, or, if you will, in presentness. Beings are what *is*. *Ousia* therefore is thought on the basis of *esti*…Beings, the present, the now, substance, essence, are all linked in their meaning."[10]

The target of attack here is the conceit of a self-present identity of a pre-expressive sense contained in lived-experience and the postulation that there would be a seat or substratum, an absolute subjectivity that would exist behind or beyond experience. Take *La voix et le phénomène* (1967), for example:

> [When Husserl speaks of the spontaneity of the originary generation of impression, Husserl says its unnamable but] it is no accident if he still designates this unnamable as 'absolute subjectivity,' that is, as a being thought by starting from presence as substance, *ousia hypokeimenon*: a self-identical being in self-presence, the self-presence making a subject out of the substance. What is said to be unnamable in this section is not literally something about which we know that it is a being that is *present* in the form of self-presence, a substance modified into a subject, into the absolute subject, whose self-presence is pure and depend on no external affection, on no outside. *All of that is present and we can name it; its proof is that we cannot put into question the being possessed by absolute subjectivity.* What are unnamable…are only the 'absolute properties' of this subject, which is therefore indeed designated according to the classical metaphysical schema that distinguishes the substance (the present being) from its attributes. Another schema that keeps the incomparable depth of analysis within the closure of the metaphysics of presence is the subject-object opposition. This being for whom the 'absolute properties' are indescribable is present as *absolute* subjectivity, is a being that is *absolutely* present and *absolutely* present to itself, only in its opposition to the object. The object is relative; the subject is absolute.[11]

In Husserl's schema, all of meaning and impression are reduced to variable properties of a self-same substance who would maintain experience in self-presence. What remains unnamable in experience is not the experiencing subject itself, only the attributes it encounters in presence. This subject stands subjacent experience in absolute presence, not only present before the object but present to itself. The question that then emerges, then, is whether subjectivity can simply be presupposed as a substantial substrate or ultimate foundation, or whether it might well be constituted, built-up, the same way that experience builds-up the objects it confronts. Much in the way that Hegel's *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (1807) figured intersubjective experience as a dialectical movement of confronting alterity, Derrida points out that Husserl's interest in intersubjectivity, when one absolute subjectivity meets another, opens up *analogical appresentation*, the encounter with alterity which requires that the absolute subject come outside itself to imagine and analogize what another is experiencing.[12] In Hegel's narrative, the self finds itself comported outside itself, in *ecstasy* or *ek-stasis,* upon its encounter with another. Spirit only comes to itself in becoming other to itself, only to affirm this "becoming-other-to-itself" as its very self—it is not just that the self has incorporated and interiorized otherness into itself, but that the self can never fully coincide with itself because in continual

displacement from itself.[13] Self-consciousness, for example, discovers itself to be outside itself when encountering another self-consciousness, for self-consciousness realizes that it requires the recognition of another self-consciousness, and only comes to be by virtue of another not itself. Somewhat similarly, Derrida, following Husserl in a direction he could not anticipate, the encounter with another is not the meeting of two presences but, rather, a scene of referral and relation, a "being-for-something" or being-for-another, that requires a movement that carries the subject outside its selfsame self-presence and which cannot be phenomenologically reduced. There is an interval introduced between the self and this other self —for the one must be separated from the other in order for there to even be a relation between them—, but his very interval which holds these items separate also divides each self, not only between themselves, but within each self itself. An other subjectivity cannot be "bracketed" the same way that objects are. In this sense, subjectivity is not constituting, it does not make the other subjectivity it encounters, but is constituted by this other. This loss of the self-present self cannot, however, be experienced in presence or as a subject.[14]

For Derrida, then, it is not a question of what in questioning presence simply remains unexperienced, but what *cannot* be experienced within the metaphysical framework organizing experience: the issue is not what is simply left unthought, only to be discovered and then thought, but "that-which-cannot-be-thought," the limits of the thinkable.[15] This excluded or remaindered question which cannot be thought within the logocentric confines of modern metaphysics concerns thinking experience otherwise than in self-presence: "How could one think Being and time *otherwise* than on the basis of the present, in the form of the present, to wit a certain *now in general* from which no *experience*, by definition can ever depart? The experience of thought and the thought of experience have never dealt with anything but presence."[16] Perhaps the early modern literature of unlived love —the works of Hélisenne de Crenne, Du Plaisir, Angélique Ducos, and others— contributes to the disassembly of the conceits of presence and subjectivity with which experience has long been identified by portraying experiences paradoxically delimited by the

ways in which they are not experienced in presence or in person. Have their writings not presented amorous experience as that which is passionately suffer rather than actively lived through, that which is not so much enacted as endured, with the experiencing self not such much at home with itself but outside and other to itself? Have not these figurations of amorous experience as inexperience refused the predicates of completion, closure, and self-present selfhood? Have these works not simply represented experiences of loss but, more radically, the loss of experience? Continuing in this vein it needs to be asked: Might these works undermine the unexamined presumptions that metaphysical conceits of experience at times unwittingly uphold —whether it be the grammar of the subject, the metaphysics of substance, the dialectic of consciousness, or the phenomenology of self-presence— and which various non-foundationalist philosophical writings, particularly those of Derrida, have long assailed. In what ways does the study of inexperience undermine the subject of experience in its grammatical, logical, psychological, and metaphysical formulations? How does the uncanny figure of *inexperience* contest the self-identical subject or ego —presupposed by Husserlian phenomenology and inherited from early modern substance metaphysics— that is said to accompany and irradiate through all mental processes (processes to which it belongs but from which it must remain intact and unaffected), challenging the presumed givenness of experience itself (particularly the conceit that phenomena appear as given only to the extent that they become available to intuitive consciousness and perceived in self-present experience)?

These closing considerations will suggest that the peculiarly "post-phenomenological" predicament that has shadowed forth throughout these early modern texts —an experience without a self in presence, and thus an experience without experience itself— counters the implicit metaphysics of the subject that have long structured philosophical discussions of experience in the context of Husserlian phenomenology and exposes the constitutive contradictions that the notion of "lived experience" carries.[17] As explained in Chapter Two, the seeming redundancy of this last expression ("lived experience") is already significant, especially since "experience" is often taken to be the process, act, or event that one traverses or "lives

through" in presence.[18] But to say that there are *lived* experiences is to imply that there might also be experiences that are not lived, or not lived fully— experiences that perhaps are not even lived at all.[19] Who would measure, and by what criteria, the extent to which experiences are or are not lived? And what would constitute an "unlived" experience if the very terms by which experience have usually been defined would seem to equate it with life itself? If experience is not correlated necessarily to its "having-been-lived-through" or accomplishment in presence, then does the conceptual apparatus that has long defined experience in terms of its presence, perception, and consciousness —in short, its presumed "livedness"— founder?[20] The psychoanalytic pursuit of trauma, fantasy, and unconscious/"unclaimed" experience have criticized those conceptualizations which define experience in terms of self-presence, and various theorizations from twentieth-century and contemporary critics have importantly restaged the terms wherewith "experience" is framed.[21] So too have the early modern texts considered in these pages yielded important insights to these ongoing critical conversations. At the close of this inquiry, it is important to unfold from a philosophical vantage how the trope of "inexperience" does not merely deconstruct experience, as if it supervened upon experience from without, but that inexperience reveals the extent to which the concept of experience was always already in deconstruction from the start.

ii. engendering experience

Poets act shamelessly towards their experiences: they exploit them.
—Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886)

you should not let yourself be misled by the grammar of the words 'know' and 'mean.'
—Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations,* paragraph 187

one must have the right out of one's own experience*—experience, as it seems to me, always implies unfortunate experience?*
—Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886)

A strong and well-constituted man digests his experiences (deeds and misdeeds all included) just as he digests his meats, even when he has some tough morsels to swallow. If he fails to 'relieve himself' of an experience, this kind of indigestion is quite as much physiological as the other indigestion—and indeed, in more ways than one, simply one of the results of the other. You can adopt such a theory, and yet entre nous *be nevertheless the strongest opponent of all materialism.*
—Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals* (1887)

In order to get a sense of how the texts collected herein have, in imagining inexperience, fomented

the deconstruction of experience, it is important to attend to some of the paradoxical temporal and grammatical dimensions already at work in the received grammar of the subject that frames experience: according to a commonsensical understanding of experience, what Husserl would have called the "natural attitude," one presumably undergoes and collects many experiences through iterative practices or acts (experiences) such that one subsequently becomes experienced in that which one performs and, finally, has "experience." Experience is that in which I take part and, eventually, that which I come to possess, even as I stand apart from them. A plurality of different experiences that are repeated over time somehow come to cohere into a monolith called experience which becomes the identity of a subject, now considered an "experienced" being: I have many experiences (of "something") before I become experienced at it and consequently have the experience of it. Experience would thus seem to be defined in terms of a subject who appropriates its experiences, making them into experience proper and culminating in a self defined by the experience it has and the experience it is.[22] Wittgenstein states this point orphically but succinctly: "*Doing* itself seems not occupy any volume of experience. It seems like an extenstionless point, the point of a needle [*die SPitze einer Nadel*]. This point seems to be the real agent. And the phenomenal happenings only to be consequences of this acting. 'I *do*…' seems to have a definite sense, separate from all experience" (*PI* 136e). Regardless of whether experience is that which one undertakes by will or that which one undergoes without willing at all, in this account the experiences that come our way, whether with or without our knowing, make up who we are because, in possessing experience, we become self-possessed, as it were, bearers of a certain kind of knowledge and consciousness of what has happened to us.

A problems emerges with this schema, of course, as soon as an attempt is made to trace the temporality by which one becomes experienced, for the fact that experience is often described as the end-result of a series of acts, as "something" that must be obtained, the fact that it is not simply "there" from the start but must be worked toward, already belies the presumption that experience originates in and is orchestrated by an originating I, precisely because experience is not simply an inborn trait but must be

gradually acquired, if it ever is, through repeated acts. If experience is only gained through reiterated *doing*, a repeated series of acts, then experience is not there from the beginning and one does not start off *experienced*—indeed, experience seems to be only retrospectively reconstructed, reconstituted only *after* multiple experiences in the wake of which "experience" is said to be gained—which leaves unexplained how a subject before or behind experience is to be spoken of, especially if that subject is only intelligible in terms of the experience it comes to be or to have. Is this pre-experiential before and this subject-before-experience no more than a fictive fabrication produced by the very schema which then claims them to be foundational in order to rationalize and justify its own legitimacy? Is this "before" of experience, in other words, a fictive construction produced and then invoked by this schema in the service of legitimating itself?

Another predicament comes to the fore when analyzing what follows from the premise that the "one" who comes to acquire experience did not begin with experience at the start (but had to undergo experiences and garner them to eventually become experienced), for how is this "one" to be imagined prior to the experiences it will gain if this "one" only comes to be defined by the experiences it has gained? How is this fictitious time "before" one had experience, a time before a subject comes to be, to be envisioned if this "one" is only defined in terms of the subsequent experiences that will make up who it is? If we are always already experienced, made of the experiences that we are and that we have, how do we come to acquire the experience which in a sense we already are? In other words, if experience has long been the foundations of subject and subjectivity—where there is no "one" who is not made up of experiences, no "one" who has not already undergone some sort of experience— then the very attempt to envisage a subject-to-be who is waiting to procure experience or who exists before its experience has been gained leads to an aporia: how can there be a subject who awaits experience, one who does not have it yet and is thus not yet a subject, if the subject has always been founded in terms of the experiences which it has or which it is? While the commonsensical account of experience speaks of a subject that comes *before* experience (I do not begin with experience but come to gain it) and follows *after* experience (I come into being by virtue of the experiences

I gain), at the same time that this subject stands *behind* experience (as I undergo many experiences or become experienced I, the experiencing self, "am" still there all along and throughout in the background), it is difficult to presuppose a self that would stand apart from, behind, or prior to experience if that self is simultaneously said to be no more than the experiences that it will have attained and which will make it who it is. Unless, of course, there were no ready-made or pre-constituted subject prior to experience, no one who stood apart from it, but one only retroactively and belated ascribed to it, in which case the entire apparatus upon which the commonsensical understanding of experience relies would founder. Nietzsche's *Genealogie* depicts this temporal tautology of experience thus:

> As far as the rest of life with its so-called 'experiences' is concerned, with of us has even sufficient serious interest? Or sufficient time? In our dealings with such points of life, we are, I fear, never properly to the point; to be precise, our heart is not there, and certainly not our ear. Rather like one who, delighting in a divine distraction, or sunken in the ease of his own soul in whose ear the clock has just thundered with all its force its twelve strokes of noon, suddenly wakes up, and asks himself, 'What has in point of fact just struck?' so we do at times rub afterwards, as I were, our puzzled ears, and ask in complete astonishment and compete embarrassment, 'Through what have we in point of fact just lived?' further, 'Who are we in point of fact?' and count, *after they have struck*, as I have explained, all the twelve throbbing beats of the clock of our experience, of our life, of our being—ah! And count wrong in the endeavor.[23]

One arrives only belatedly to experience for, like the clock which strikes only to awaken the experiencer to the realization that he has missed what he's lived through, experience has already passed by the time the subject arrives at the scene. After experience's passing, the experiencer essays to count backwards, wrongly, seeking to recreate and reconstruct that which is already foregone. In this sense, only a commonsensical or customary understanding of experience could ignore these temporal tautologies, for it would presuppose that there is a self-identical subject who stands "behind" the various experiences it endures, one who maintains itself as it collects and houses various experiences within its being —as I undergo many experiences or become experienced, I "am" still there all along— and thus leaves unquestioned the conceit of a selfsame subject who stands logically and chronologically before the different experiences that it weathers. There is an already established "I" who underlies both instances of not having experience and having it, as well as the temporal transition from the one state to the other. It is stable

substrate and self-subsistent substance, a subject for which having and not having experience are but mere attributes: I can have experience, and not have it, but I "am" still there. But if experience makes a subject what it is (and what it has), then how is a subject that remains intact prior to and despite the variances and vicissitudes of the experiences it encounters to become a plausible conceit (was "I" there prior to the experiences that I underwent)? If "experience" is the name given to a temporal process marking a passage from *not* having experience to gaining it in order to become who I am, and if the subject is unimaginable without the experiences that make up who it is, then how is a subject who would *precede* the experience that it acquires and *exceed* every instance of experience a viable presupposition, unless this subject were no more than a fiction retroactively attributed to and belatedly attached to experience?[24] If the "I" only comes to be through its experiences then it becomes difficult to narrate how there would be a self-sustaining "I" that would exist in a state of inexperience prior to passing to experience. Indeed, to suppose that there was an "I" prior to experience is to implicitly reintroduce the notion of experience at the very moment that one seeks to explain what comes before it, for in posing the "I" at the origin and end of experience, as that which was there before it and that which remains beneath it, experience has been reinvoked by virtue of the fact that the "I" only exists thanks to the experiences that constitute who it is. An "I" that has not yet gained experience, an "I" that is still yet to be, cannot be conceived, it would seem, without having already presupposed the very notion of experience that was supposed to come afterwards.

The grammar of the subject, this *metaphysics of the subject*, underwriting the language of experience would thus seem to entertain contradictory premises: it presumes that there is a pre-formed subject already ready-made in its identity who subsequently embarks upon experience and who stands behind the various experiences it sustains but, precisely because it also assumes that the category of the subject can only be understood as the sum total of the experiences that it has collected, the latter premise belies the former, insofar as the assumption that there is a preconstituted subject which already exists prior to experience would be to preemptively define this subject in terms of experiences it has yet to gain. Paradoxically, one

ends up defining the subject in terms of the experiences it has not yet undergone. Such an impasse suggests the degree to which thinking about experience is moored in a metaphysics of the subject, even if the subject which postures as the origin and end of experience might well turn out to be a fiction only belatedly affixed to experience. Grammar misleads here, as Nietzsche prophesied it would, for the attempt to imagine a time before a subject fully comes to "be" experienced—and thus before a subject comes to be at all—still requires use of the grammatical category of the subject in the very narrative seeking to account for that time prior to a subject's entry into the scene. The effort to speak of a process of acquiring experience that does not begin with a ready-made subject —but that nonetheless is said to culminate in the formation of one— within a grammar that always takes a grammatical subject by requirements of syntax— even as it attempts to give an account of a state of affairs that is performed by no subject— is to be inescapably caught within a kind of aporia. For the syntax of subject and predicate, by dint of custom and constraint, stays lodged in a grammar of the subject, a grammar that privileges an acting "I" who would bring about predicative action and who would stand "behind" the predicative deed it initiates. The explanation that seeks to narrate how a subject comes to be instituted through experience, a process that is governed by no discernable subject but which claims to result in one, must thus take on a grammar of the subject from the start, even if it is this very subject which remains to be explained; the subject which is to be described is already presupposed in the function (fiction?) of the grammatical subject which must be used to compose the description in the first place. It remains nearly inconceivable to put a subject into question without reinvoking, even in spectral form, the very subject that was to be put into question when narrating this predicament.

How has a metaphysics of the subject conceptualized experience in this way, not only in phenomenological discourse but also in everyday speech? Nietzsche's genealogical argument, it will be remembered, argued that philosophical concepts, here "experience," are not transparently delivered through the idiom or medium that partially figures it —because caught up in the figurality and metaphoricity of that language's rhetoric— and cannot be simply translated from one language to another.

Grammar here is the prime suspect: "The interpretations we give to their evidence is what first introduces falsehood into it; for instance the lie of unity, the lie of matter, of substance and of permanence"; "'Reason' in language! Oh what a deceptive old witch it has been! I fear we shall never be rid of God, so long as we still believe in grammar."[25] Nietzsche launches an attack against this grammatical subject, the Cartesian "I think," in *Jenseits von Gut und Böse: Vorspiel einer Philosophie der Zukunft* (1886) by claiming that metaphysical substance has, inflected by "popular prejudice," infected philosophical thought and been raised to the level of an overarching principle:

> Formerly, in effect, one believed in 'the soul' as one believed in grammar and the grammatical subject: one said, 'I' is the condition, 'think' is the predicate and is conditioned—to think is an activity for which one *must* suppose a subject as cause. The attempt was then made….to see if one could not get out of this net—to see if the opposite was not perhaps true: 'think' the condition, and 'I' the conditioned; 'I,' therefore, only a synthesis which has been *made* by thinking itself. *Kant* really wished to prove that, starting from the subject, the subject could not be proved—nor the object either."[26]

In a rare moment of praise for Kant, Nietzsche argues that the shift from a metaphysical conception of the grammatical subject as the condition of thought to the grammatical subject as itself conditioned was one of the attempts—using French, Nietzsche calls it an *attentat* in order to emphasize its violence— made by modern philosophy. But philosophy has not gone far enough, Nietzsche laments, in unselfing itself, as it were, of the various anthropomorphisms that have applied all too human conventions upon perceptions of the world. By subsuming multiple predicates together under the umbrella of a presupposed *bearer* of those predicates, the rhetorical work of condensing and categorizing nonidentical attributes as a unity has generated the belief that beneath action there subsists a subject:[27]

> Strictly speaking, knowledge takes only the form of tautology and is *empty* every piece of knowledge that is beneficial to us involves an *identification of nonidentical things,* of things that are similar, which means that it is essentially illogical. Only in this way do we arrive at a concept, and afterward we behave as though the concept 'human being' were something factual, whereas it is actually only a construction we create by jettisoning all individual traits. We presume that nature operates in accordance with such a concept: but in this both nature and the concept are anthropomorphic. By *omitting* the individual we arrive at the concept, and with this our knowledge beings: in *categorizing*, in the creation of *classes*. But the essence of things does not correspond to this: it is an epistemological process that does not capture the essence of things. Many individual traits, but not all of them, define a thing for us: the uniformity of these traits causes us to subsume many things under a single concept. We produce beings as the *bearers of characteristics* and abstractions as the causes of these c characteristics. That a unity, a tree, for example, appears to us as a multitude of

> characteristics, of relations, is anthropomorphic in a twofold sense: first, this delimited unity 'tree' does not exist; it is arbitrary to carve something out in this way…every relation is not the absolute, true relation, but rather is once again anthropomorphically tinged. The philosopher does not seek truth, but rather that metamorphosis of the world into human beings: he struggles to understand the world by means of self-consciousness. He struggles for an assimilation: he is satisfied when he has explained something anthropomorphically.[28]

On this view, metaphors and metonymies, tropes and anthropomorphisms, have been solidified into concepts and mistakenly substantialized: the figural identification of nonidentical objects as one becomes a conceptual truth, a cementation and hypostatization of figures into conceptual form that has subsequently been consigned to oblivion, just as the received grammar of the subject been conflated with a substance metaphysics. The discursive conventions for grammar and logic (subject and predicate) are presumed to mimetically reflect a preexisting ontological order (substance and attribute); the grammatical subject has been lapidified into metaphysical substance, metaphor has been frozen and fossilized into concept. What will be required then, is a questioning of the metaphysical conceit of experience and not only this, indeed, but grammar itself. If, by dint of grammatical requirements, a substantive subject seems posed as the origin of a predicate's activity and an ontological claim seems posited as the result of its existential copula ("is"), then to what extent must the deceits of grammar themselves be interrogated when dealing with "experiences" that, while not outside language, are not domesticated and assimilated into propositional form? What to make of experiences not orchestrated by a willful subject nor defined in terms of transitive action? How to approach that which is not reducible to a substance that simply "exists" or to subject who voluntarily "enacts" them, "experiences" that seem void of event and vacant of an agent? Do the subject-predicate requirements of grammar illusorily imply that they are mere mirrorings and reflections of a preceding reality, an ontological order of substance-attribute? Or is this relationship itself questionable and tenuous insofar as constraints of signification, discourse, and language, are never separable from this supposed "reality," and that this reality, far from existing in some sort of prediscursive or presocial order, is always given in, if not given over to, language? Might the subject most often presupposed to predate its

experience be shown to be an effect, a discursive fiction, of the language that signifies it? Is there no subject that should be presupposed here, it identity secured and intact in advance, that undergoes some sort of process called experience and ends up with knowledge? Must the terms "experience" and the subject said to undergo them be held suspended of their usual ontological freighting, insofar as there can be no subject which can be said to preexist this experience nor retain it as its identitarian attribute? Rather than having experience, does experience become the discursive means through which subjects are constituted?

In the *Götzen-Dämmerung, oder, Wie man mit dem Hammer philosophier* (1889), Nietzsche bridges his critique of metaphysical language to a critique of metaphysical substance, focusing specifically on how the presumption that all predicates must be borne by a subject, as seen above, vitiates conceptions of causality, whereby all actions are reduced to an underlying actor:

> We believed ourselves to be causes even in the action of the will…No one doubted that all the *antecendentia* of an action were to be sought in consciousness, and could be discovered there—as 'motive'—if only they were sough. Otherwise we should not be free to perform them, we should not have been responsible for them. Finally who would have questioned that a thought is caused? That the ego causes the thought? Of these three 'facts of inner consciousness' by means of which causality seemed to be guaranteed, the first and most convincing is that of the will as cause; the conception of consciousness ('spirit') as a cause, and subsequently that of the ego (the 'subject') as a cause, were merely born afterwards, once the causality of the will stood established as 'given,' as a fact of experience…Today we no longer believe a world of all this. The 'inner world' is full of phantoms and will-o'-the-wisps: the will is one of these. The will no longer actuates, consequently it no longer explains anything—all it does is to accompany processes; it may even be absent…And as for the ego— It has become legendary, fictional, a play upon words: it has ceased utterly and completely from thinking, feeling, and willing— What is the result of it all? There are no such things as spiritual causes. The whole of popular experience on this subject went to the devil— That is the result of it all. For we had blissfully abused that experience, we had built the world upon it as a world of causes, as a world of will, as a world of spirit, the most antiquated and most traditional psychology has been at work here, it has done nothing else: all phenomena were deeds in the light of this psychology, and all deeds were the result of will; according to it the world was a complex mechanism of agents, an agent (a 'subject') lay at the root of all things. Man projected his three 'inner facts of consciousness,' the will, the spirit, and the ego in which h believed most firmly, outside himself. He first deduced the concept Being out of the concept Ego, he supposed 'things' to exist as he did himself, according to his notion of the ego as cause. Was it to be wondered at that later on he always found in things only that which had laid in them?[29]

The old metaphysical belief in a subject who would cause or will experience, Nietzsche writes, can longer serve as an explanatory principle as it once had, precisely because being and Ego have been exposed to be the regulative fictions they always were. At the root of all things, Nietzsche contends, an anthropomorphic

figure of an underlying agent has been implanted. This indurate and hardened substance must be liquefied, if not liquidated altogether, but how is this to be done? Nietzsche seems to offer repeated invectives against the postulations and prejudices of popular thought, but his own writing seems hard-pressed to deliver itself of these postulations and prejudices, insofar as he embeds metaphor and metonymy in the place of the Subject, a personified agency which goes about proliferating and perpetuating ill-founded premises. That is, although Nietzsche claims to resist the temptations of the subject, his own conceptual apparatus is not, and cannot be, cleansed of the impulse to reinstall and inaugurate a new Subject, agency, or deity whether it be in the form of the enemy (the "herd" of the *Genealogie*) or the overman (Dionysus or Zarathurstra).

In other words, it would seem that, even in Nietzsche's own effort to displace the congealed metaphysical language of substance/subject, there would still domicile a sort of subject: for to say that "language has no subject" still leaves unanswered who or what is doing the saying, and by what authority. If the subject has lost credibility as a starting-point for philosophy, then why is Nietzsche's own account littered with subjects of every kind, for example, metaphor or metonymy which have taken a causal place in Nietzsche's explanations and come to occupy a masterful subject-position, as that which brings about sensation, thought, and mistaken belief in causality? The subject, so deeply ingrained and infixed as it is, is not so easily uprooted. The ruses and rules of grammar continue to deceptively foster the belief that the linguistic structures of subject and predicate mimetically emulate a prior ontological truth and metaphysical causality, even in those accounts, which seek to dismount the metaphysics of the subject. In this sense, Nietzsche's criticism that subject and object have become the only measures of knowledge, and the various effects encountered in experience are actually tied to other effects which are then mistaken for causes by relations of metaphor and metonymy rather than by structures of reason and logic, might equally apply to his own genealogical account as well:[30]

> There are still harmless self-observers who believe that there are 'immediate certainties'; for instance, 'I think,' or as the superstition of Schopenhauer puts it, 'I will'; as though cognition here got hold of its object purely and simply as 'the thing in itself,' without any falsification taking place either on the part of the

> subject or the object. I would repeat it, however, a hundred times, that 'immediate certainty,' as well as 'absolute knowledge' and the 'thing in itself,' involve a *contradictio in adjecto;* we really ought to free ourselves from the misleading significance of words! The people on their part may think that cognition is knowing all about things, but the philosopher must say to himself: When I analyze the process that is expressed in the sentence, 'I think,' I find a whole series of daring assertions, the argumentative proof of which would be difficult, perhaps impossible: for instance, that it is *I* who think, that there must necessarily be something that thinks, that thinking is an activity and operation on the part of a being who is thought of as a cause, that there is an 'ego,' and finally, that it is already determined what is to be designated by thinking—that I *know* what thinking is. For if I had not already decided within myself what it is, by what standard could I determine whether that which is happening is not perhaps 'willing' or 'feeling?' In short, the assertion 'I think,' assumes that I *compare* my state at the present moment with other states of myself which I know, in order to determine what it is; on account of this retrospective connexion with further 'knowledge,' it has at any rate no immediate certainty for me… "From whence did I get the notion of 'thinking'? Why do I believe in cause and effect? What gives me the right to speak of an 'ego,' and even of an 'ego' as cause, and finally of an 'ego' as cause of thought?"[31]

According to Nietzsche's argument, cause and effect, whether interpreted as ego and will or subject and predicate, are no more than "conventional fictions" that are used to designate and facilitate an argument rather than to explain a metaphysical reality. The conception that there exists a "being-in-itself," a world out there and as is, is to act in myth of metaphysics: "one should use 'cause ' and 'effect' only as pure *conceptions*, that is to say, as conventional fictions for the purpose of designation and mutual understanding—*not* for explanation. It is *we* alone who has devised cause, sequence, reciprocity, relativity, constraint, number, law freedom, motive, and purpose; and when we interpret and intermix this symbol-world, as 'being in itself,' with things, we act once more as we have always acted—*mythologically*."[32] The requirements and restrictions of grammar, Nietzsche cautions, often succeed in insidiously passing off grammatical fictions as conceptual truths, a contention that will be seized upon and marshaled in order to finish off the conceit of Cartesian substance: "If one reduces the proposition to 'There is thinking, therefore there are thoughts,' one had produced a mere tautology."[33] Nietzsche will go on to propound that the entirety of Descartes' reasoning relies on a metaphysics of substances supported by no more than a grammar of substantives: " 'There is thought,' therefore 'there is a thinking subject': this is the upshot of all Descartes's argumentation. But this amounts to positing as true, a priori, our belief in the concept of *substance*; to say that if there is thought there must also be 'something that thinks' is a formulation of our

grammatical habits that presupposes an acting subject behind every act. In short, here already one *constructs* a logical and metaphysical postulate, *one does not simply record it*…"[34] For Nietzsche, the reliance on substance/substantives produces the mystification whereby "a logical-metaphysical postulate" is confused with a "substantiation of a fact"—which in this context might be rephrased thus: what provides Descartes with the Archimedean point from which to conclude that thought inevitably tends towards the first-person perspective or to a subject whatsoever? Apart from the belief, as Nietzsche calls it, in an underlying substance exists and subsists beneath the proposition "I think"/"there is thought," and that the truth of this subtending subject is confirmed by the fact that it is thought, there is only a recording of metaphysical postulate, not a report or reflection of a metaphysical reality:

> Let us be more prudent than Descartes, who remained caught in the trap [*Fallstrick*] of words. *Cogito,* to tell the truth, is only a single word, but its meaning is complex. (there is no lack of complex things that we seize brutally, believing in good faith that they are simple.) In this famous *cogito* there is: (1) it thinks; (2) I believe that it is I who thinks; (3) but even admitting that this second point is uncertain, being a matter of belief, the first point 'it thinks'— also contains a belief: that 'thinking' is an activity for which one must imagine a *subject,* if only 'it'; and the *ergo sum* signifies nothing more. But this is a belief in grammar: one supposes 'things' and their 'activities,' and this puts us far from immediate certainty. Let us therefore set aside this problematic 'it' and say *cogitator,* in order to record a state of fact free from articles of faith —and not only 'states of fact'; *when all is said and done,* it is precisely the state of fact that does not let itself be laid bare' 'belief' and 'opinion' are found in *cogito* or *cogitat* or *cogitatur.* Who guarantees us that thanks to the *ergo* we will not gain something from this belief and this opinion, such that there remains something more than this: 'Something is believed, therefore something is believed' vicious circle! Finally, one would have to know what 'being' is in order to get the *sum* from the *cogito*; one would also have to know what 'knowing' is: one starts from belief in logic in the *ergo* before all else and not uniquely from the position of a fact! Is 'certainty' possible in knowledge? Isn't immediate certainty perhaps a *contradictio in adjecto*? What is knowing in relation to being? For whoever brings to all these points a ready made belief, Cartesian prudence no longer has meaning; it comes too late. Before coming to the problem of 'being,' one would have to have resolved the problem of the value of logic.[35]

Although Nietzsche's contention that *understanding* is no more than a ruse of a subject *standing under* remains a compelling one, it nonetheless leaves unanswered a certain number of questions. For example, why does thought remain subjected to the metaphysics of substance and the grammars of the substantive? Clearly such metaphysical language cannot be as enslaving and enfettering as Nietzsche claims if his analysis has been able to mark off distance from this language in order to criticize it. Nietzsche seems to suggest that one of the continuing allures of this seductive grammar is by its continual perpetuation in popular prejudice, a "firm

agreement" that is both amongst members of a given political and social formation on the meanings of metaphors that have generated the false truth of concepts.[36] But what motivates this agreement and what enforces its continuation? Is this accord tacit, unconscious, explicit? Most of all, is it not bizarre to invoke the notion of agreement between subjects, a type of "social contract" theory, if a moment earlier Nietzsche has gone to great lengths to undercut the conceit of an acting agent or causal subject who would stand behind its acts? Here Nietzsche's account once again reaches its limits and must be moved in directions his theories could not anticipate and would certainly never accept.

iii. Wittig & Wittgenstein

Whenever we are reading, I think there is a sense of something being unearthed within us —dislocation in time and space is not enough to account for it completely, I suspect, for it is not merely the dislocation of a given self, but a dislocation of its very givenness — a suspension or surrender of the seeming ineluctability of the self we seemed to be, a disorientation of that inner instinct by which we recognize ourselves, a dissolution or dispersal of that inner disposition by which we discern ourselves within ourselves as something separate from experience and separate from other things, not merely a bafflement or bewilderment of the inner disposition by which we differentiate an I *from all that is* not me*, nor even a disorientation of that inner compass by which we locate ourselves in time and space, but a falling away of that first necessity: the habitual mirroring of the self we thought we were or seemed to be, whose life to us seemed so inevitable and whose boundaries seemed our own – a dissolution of the seeming indestructibility of the self we seemed to be, a covert disclosure of the accident and impermanence of existing as who we are, a surreptitious dissolution of the illusory inescapability and inevitability (not to say its own illusiveness) of that customary consciousness (so particular, so lived-in, so domesticated and familiar) we so recently might have claimed as ours or called our own, a dispossession of that existence customarily demarcated as a kind of property of our own, a disappearance of the conviction that our experience is ours alone – or that our inner life (or inner being) is something inner after all – something private, remote, solitary, and undisturbed by other things – the displacement of all the most familiar senses of the self by the recognition of the indescribability of the self which we purport to be, the elusive disappearance of a self we had so often slipped into without thinking like a familiar pair of shoes.*

—Carolyn Sinsky, "The Muse of Influence: British Modernism and the Russian Novel"[37]

"Inner experience" enters our consciousness only after it has found a language the individual understands--i.e., a translation of a condition into conditions familiar to him--; "to understand" means merely: to be able to express something new in the language of something old and familiar.

—Nietzsche, *Will to Power*

The writings of both Ludwig Wittgenstein and Monique Wittig, bracketing for a moment the evident philosophical and political divergences that separate this philosopher of language from this theorist of historical materialism, appear to converge in regard to the ways in which language, governed by rules and bound by convention, is utilized to speak of experience and acts materially to contour and color experience itself, offering a way to reformulate Nietzsche's critique of metaphysical language in terms of social and political practice. For both, language not only constitutes a form of life but also, it would seem, takes on a

life of its own. In Wittig's idiom, language constitutes an "order of materiality" (*SM* 30), that is to say, a "network of relationships in which [bodies] are perceived" and through which linguistic categories materially "mark" bodies, marks that have become so naturalized as to pass unremarked (*SM* 11). To cite Wittig's famous proclamation: "Language casts sheaves of reality upon the social body, stamping it and violently shaping it" (*SM* 42-4); "the bodies of social actors are fashioned by abstract language as well as by nonabstract language. For there is a plasticity of the real to language: language has a plastic action upon the real…social gestures are the result of this phenomenon" (*SM* 78). Language does not merely cast sheaves upon a preexisting body, however, for no body comes to be without already bearing the mark of the category of sex as it is instituted, and inflicted by, language: "Alas for us, the symbolic order partakes of the same reality as the political and economic order. There is a continuum in their reality, a continuum where abstraction is imposed upon materiality and can shape the body as well as the mind of those it oppresses" (*SM* 58).

In Wittig's view, "discourse *is* reality," insofar as the power it exerts and the oppression it exercises operates in collusion with a web of other social and economic relations, what might be called "text" in Derrida's idiom: "discourse covers our world with its signs…signs whose function is not to signify and which have no *raison d'être* except to be elements of a certain system or disposition. But for us this discourse is not divorced from the real as it is for semioticians. Not only does it maintain very close relations with the social reality which his our oppression (economically and politically), but also it is in itself real since it is one of the aspects of oppression, since it exerts a precise power over us" (*SM* 25-6). This remark aligns with an argument Wittgenstein will repeat, although in a different context, when he claims that the images which a language-bearer holds in fact holds that language-bearer captive: "A *picture* held us captive. And we could not get outside it, for it lay in our language and language seemed to repeat it to us inexorably" (*PI* 41e). Wittig recalls that the opposition between language/discourse and the real, between the word and the world, is a false opposition in that language is itself, in its signifiers and its signifieds, thoroughly material. In

fact, Wittig will replace signifier and signified with "letter" and "meaning" in order to avoid replacing the question of the referent prior to the question of the referencings of language. That is, what is refused is the premature presupposition of the referent prior to the referrals and referential effects of language, for there is an insistent dialectic of vanishing between letter and meaning: when meaning is focused on, the material supports upon which meaning rests are effaced, whereas the writer, if transforming the letters of language and reworking them beyond their received structures, can bring that materiality to the fore and, concentrating on it, thus let meaning vanish. This is not an abstract claim, but one that signals, as Wittgenstein will, that the "meanings" that words have been invested with have no pregiven ideality, but are the consequences of their material actions and uses. The concrete example Wittig consults to bolster her claim is how "gender works in language, how gender works upon language," and thus "how it works…upon its users" (*SM* 78).

> Language…is a special material….It is used by everybody all the time, it is used for speaking and communicating. It is a special material because it is the place, the means, the medium for bringing meaning to light. But meaning hides language from sight. For language, like the purloined letter of Poe's tale, is constantly there, although totally invisible. For one sees, one hears only the meaning. Then isn't meaning language? Yes, it is language but in its visible and material form, language is form, language is letter. Meaning is not visible, and as such appears to be outside of language. (It is sometimes confused with the referent when one speaks of the "content.") Indeed, meaning is language, but being its abstraction it cannot be seen. Despite this, in the current use of language one sees and hears *only* meaning. It is because the use of language is a very abstract operation, in which at every turn in the production of meaning its form disappears. For when language takes form, it is lost in the literal meaning. It can only reappear abstractly as language while redoubling itself, while forming a figurative meaning, a figure of speech. This, then, is writers' work—to concern themselves with the letter, the concrete, the visibility of language, that is, its material form. (*SM* 66-7)

Wittig's view of language reflects her vision of political hegemony as one of false substantiation, even transubstantiation: the making of linguistic categories, "fictive sex," into physical ones.[38] Wittig thus seeks, as Nietzsche did, to dissolve the inflexibility and immobility of reified substances, only her method is dialectics rather than genealogy. Regardless, the intent resonates with Nietzsche: to contest a vision of "human beings [as] given as invariants, untouched by history and unworked by class conflicts" (*SM* 22). How have human beings been taken to be givens? Wittig argues that it is the forced entry in to the social contract

of language, a language into which one is contracted but which one never actually chooses, which allows subjects to be: "the first, the permanent, and the final social contract is language. The basic agreement between human beings, indeed what makes them human and makes them social, is language" (*SM* 34). Reworking the foundationalist fable of the social order being enabled by certain conventions made between consenting individuals —a concept that appears in Hobbes' *Leviathan,* Locke's *Treatise of Government,* and Rousseau's *Du contrat social*— Wittig contends that political categories of language have implicitly furthered certain kinds of contractual binds: "precisely the rules and conventions that have never been formally enunciated, the rules and conventions that go without saying for the scientific mind as well as for the common people, that which for them obviously makes life possible" (*SM* 40). And this contract is above all compulsory heterosexuality,

> a nonexistent object, a fetish, an ideological form which cannot be grasped in reality, except through tis effects, whose existence lies in the mind of people, but in a way that affects their whole life, the way they act, the way they love, the way they think. So we are dealing with an object both imaginary and real. If I try to look at the dotted line that delineates the bulk of the social contract, it moves, it shifts, and sometimes it produces something visible and sometimes it disappears altogether. It looks like the Möbius strip. Now I see this, now I see something quite different" (*SM* 41).

Wittig's project is to unveil the extent to which discourses posture as merely descriptive rather than normative, actively constructing that which it later claims to be the pregiven and the unquestionable.[39] This is not a vitalist view of language, as it were a personified entity acting without speakers, or a structuralist contention that experience is no more than language; it is, rather, a view of convention as bearing a linguistic life that no one speaker can ultimately control. As Wittig puts it, "categories act upon the real as social" (*SM* 43).[40] Common parlance and quotidian signifying acts reify and naturalize contingent conventions into abiding truths or prediscursive facts, as if what was being spoken about referred to and reflected a prior reality outside or beyond the matrix of cultural significations and cultural conventions being used at that very instance. In this sense, language is not the effect of a subject, but the subject the effect of language, insofar as no subject can be without submitting to the rules, prescriptions, and norms of

a given language-game. Wittgenstein's *Sprachspiel* or language-game, "consisting of language and the actions into which it is woven,"[41] notably refuses the distinction between discursive and non-discursive practices: "A is building with building-stones: there are blocks, pillars, slabs, and beams. B has to pass the stones, and that in the order in which A needs them. For this purpose they use a language consisting of the words 'block,' 'pillar,' 'slab,' 'beam.' A calls them out;—B brings the stone which eh has learnt to bring at such-and-such a call" (*PI* 3e). The material objects and actions of building are not opposed to or separable from the language-game into which they are woven, nor has their materiality been idealized into abstraction. Rather, they only exist in differential relation to the language of which they are a part. For meanings only take hold, and lose that hold, within the contexts of their use amongst a "network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing," what Wittgenstein will call "family resemblances [*Familienähnlichkeiten*]" (*PI* 27e). Language does not merely represent but is the means by which representation takes place, an insight with cross-references Wittig's contention that language, similarly described as a "network," comes to apply the misnomer of "fictive sex" (grammatical gender) under bodies: "there is nothing natural about this notion [gender], as sexes have been artificially constructed into political categories—categories of oppression. They have extrapolated the term *gender* from grammar and they tend to superimpose it on the notion of sex" (*SM* 77).

Language-games are not, in Wittgenstein's investigations, an object that is represented but a form of representation itself (*PI* 21e), and indeed a great deal of the *Philosophical Investigations* is devoted to defeating the notion that language-acquisition and usage is merely ostensive, names affixed to things, in order to explore how "in the *technique of using the language* certain elements correspond to the signs" (*PI* 22e): "Instead of producing something common to all that we call language, I am saying that these phenomena have no one thing in common which makes us use the same word for all,—but that they are *related* to one another in many different ways. And it is because of this relationship, or these relationships, that we call them all 'language'" (27e). This becomes clear when attempting to address *private languages,* or the conceit that it would be possible to properly designate interior experiences and inner processes. For

Wittgenstein will seek to assail the premise that such ostensive relationship of inner, mental process or interior sensation and a language enfolded privately unto-itself would be possible:

> Now, what about the language which describes my inner experiences and which only I myself can understand? *How* do I use words to stand for my sensations?—As we ordinarily do? Then are my words for senstations tied up with my natural expressions of sensation? In that case my language is not a 'private' one. Someone else might understand it as well as I.—But suppose I didn't have any natural expression for the sensation, but only had the sensation? And now I simply *associate* names with sensations and use these names in descriptions…And when we speak of someone's having given a name to pain, what is presupposed is the existence of the grammar of the word 'pain'; it shews the post where the new word is stationed. (*PI* 78e)

When someone is in pain, Wittgenstein argues, others cannot "know" they are in pain, except through exterior signs shared within a larger context of discursive practice. To tack on a symbol or title to inner experience which then would only be understood by the speaker of that symbol, or to use no such term but merely say that "one has a sensation," still requires an intersubjective and extended frame of intelligibility in order to be interpreted in language as a bearer of a private sensation: " 'sensation' is a word of our common language, not of one intelligible to me alone. So the use of this word stands in need of a justification which everybody understands.—And it would not help either to say that it need not be a *sensation*; that when he writes 'S,' he has *something*—and that is all that can be said. 'Has' and 'something' also belong to our common language" (*PI* 79e). Language does not simply bear out pain, especially unbearable pain, but pain can indeed bear upon language. This is not so much a behaviorist argument that telltale comportmental and corporeal behaviors are the only indexes of mental processes but the provocative hypothesis that private sensations are not simply objects to be labeled by, and then delivered through, language, as if language were the external instrument or medium apart from which an acting subject could stand: "You learned the *concept* 'pain' when you learned language" (*PI* 100e). For it is not that each language-speaker contains his own private set of prepredicative meanings in "private experience" that would only be expressed through a common language but that "nobody knows whether other people also have *this* [private experience] or something else" (*PI* 81e).

Far from behavioral determinism, Wittgenstein preconizes a form of skepticism toward the consistency of private experience, insofar as it is undecidable what content such an experience would safeguard, for talk of private experience can still make a certain sense regardless of whether there is any content in it at all (the famous beetle-in-the-box example of paragraph 293): "if we construe the grammar of the expression of sensation on the model of 'object and designation' the object drops out of consideration as irrelevant" (*PI* 85e). Wittgenstein is sure to emphasize that this not a claim that sensation is *nothing* only that grammar has engendered the problematic premise that it is simply conveyed and properly purveyed through language, since language can be used without exact or precise definitions of words being operative and without their being justification for how words ought to be correctly used:

> [sensation] is not a *something*, but not a *nothing* either! The conclusion was only that a nothing would serve just as well as something about which nothing could be said. We have only rejected the grammar which tries to force itself on us here. The paradox disappears only if we make a radical break with the idea that language always functions in one way, always serves the same purpose: to convey thoughts—which may be about houses, pains, good and evil, or anything else you please." (*PI* 87e)[42]

Wittgenstein's account acknowledges the forceful imposition of grammar like Wittig and also aims, like Nietzsche, to disorient the received grammars through which experience is spoken. And resonant with Derrida's critique of auto-affectionate, self-enclosed presence Wittgenstein's claim that inner experience is not merely an inner process reflected or reported through linguistic usage, as if the former dictated the latter, for the supposition of an internal mental process that would correspond exactly with linguistic use is a fiction: "If I do speak of a fiction, then it is of a *grammatical fiction*…We talk of processes and states and leave their nature undecided" (*PI* 87e).

iv. De Man & Derrida

Philosophy may in no way interfere wit h the actual use of language; it can in the end only describe it. For it cannot give it any foundation either. It leaves everything as it is.
—Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*

'But being guided is surely a particular experience!'—The answer to this is: you are now thinking *of a particular experience of being guided.*
—Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*

When read together, Wittig and Wittgenstein's respective reflections would seem to suggest that language does not simply explain and describe a pregiven reality, it also constitutes and prescribes a particular version of reality as the only version available. It is crucial, however, not to assume too hastily what is meant by language in these discussions for, as Paul de Man insists, "we seem to assume all too readily that, when we refer to something called 'language,' we know what it is we are talking about, although there is probably no word to be found in the language that is as overdetermined, self-evasive, disfigured and disfiguring as 'language.'"[43] In de Man's formulation, the very attempt to define, denominate, or account for what language "is" is itself an effort already complicit with and produced by language, in that the endeavor to speak of language is inevitably enmired *in* language— if not of language itself— because it must seek recourse *to* language in order to narrate its account. If one undertakes to define language as an object, but must do so by means of the very object one seeks to account for (i.e. language), then the venture to fully describe and delimit language's operations is prone to err. For the figural and rhetorical tendencies of language, which put into question that very language's descriptive and referential reliability, are themselves already at work in any theoretical account that seeks to describe and define language. Insofar as any account on language is related through a language —and thus subject to the referential aberrancies of figures, literary tropes, and metaphors in which language consists— there can be no neutral "metalanguage" or set of concepts not already implicated in, and undermined by, the figural and rhetorical operations of language.[44]Nietzsche summarizes this point quite strongly: "What is usually called language is actually all figuration."[45]

That language is not merely grammatical but also figural undercuts any account that would seek to corset "language" in conceptual constraints or categorical confines, in that the very language employed to investigate the figures of language is itself susceptible to the referential instability of language's figures. "As such," continues de Man, "it is bound to consist of the very figural structures that can only be put in

question by means of the language that produces them. What is then called 'language' clearly has to extend well beyond what is empirically understood as articulated verbal utterance and subsumes, for instance, what is traditionally referred to as perception."[46] De Man's claim that language ought no longer to be construed as a system of exclusively verbal signs but as an open network of textual relations resonates with Derrida's call for a broader understanding of "writing" and "text" to include relations extending beyond strictly linguistic ones and leaves open the possibility that experience, similar to the case of "perception," does not simply reside within language or abide beyond it, but "is" no more than these very relations of tension to language itself. In *L'écriture et la différence* the suggestion is made that the very terminology of "discourse" ought to be opened up, once the commitment to a view of signification as governed by a structure whose presumed center would be presence is dispensed with, especially since this central presence "has never been itself," because always already comported outside itself in its substitute": "in the absence of a center or origin, everything becomes *discourse*—provided that this word is agreed upon—that is to say, a system in which the central, original, or transcendental signified is never absolutely present outside a system of differences. The absence of the transcendental signified extends the domain and the play of signification infinitely."[47] Discourse, thus opened up, becomes text, a net and network of self-differing relations and referrals, which is to say the context of social, political, and material relations in which discursive practices, such as the discussion of experience, take hold.

Resonant with this broad construal of discourse, in Laclau and Mouffe's *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* discourse takes on, in addition to its Derridean, Foucaultian and Lacanian variations, a Wittgensteinian connotation of "language-game" as a system of differential relations amongst linguistic and nonlinguistic factors (the relations between these elements rendering them discursive): "What is denied is not that such objects exist externally to thought, but the rather different assertion that they could constitute themselves as objects outside any discursive condition of emergence."[48] This particular formulation emphasizes that discourse is not simply *mental*, as if the so-called "external" world were merely an idealist effect, but also

material (a postulation defended, in disparate guises, by Deleuze and Foucault) and that no object is nondiscursive (which is not to say that everything is, by a sort of linguistic monism, reducible to language). If discourse is irreducible to the binaric realist/idealist opposition, it is not therefore the result of a monadic experience or the product of a transcendental ego, for the very notion and category of the "subject," in all the various senses this philosophical conceit is invested with, comes under question: "the material character of discourse cannot be unified in the experience of consciousness of a founding subject; on the contrary, diverse *subject positions* appear dispersed within a discursive formation."[49] Here experience would not be presumed to completely indwell discourse or to fully transcend it but to remain in chiasmatic relation with it, for even if some experiences come to "be" through discourse, broadly construed, it is not therefore commensurate with the discourse by which they are constituted: "Subjects cannot…be the origin of social relations—not even in the limited sense of being endowed with powers that render an experience possible—as all 'experience' depends on precise discursive conditions of possibility."[50]

The point is not, clearly, to construct an overarching and totalizing linguistic framework according to which "Language" would infiltrate everything and imprint itself everywhere, cannibalizing all alterity and annexing it within linguistic terms. It is precisely that *logocentric* desire to construe and determine the world through a perspective of linguistic monism, where everything is nothing more than language, which deconstruction sought to contest. Derrida's question, for example, was whether there might be a "site or non-site [*non-lieu*]"[51] within metaphysical language, a site situated by but irreducible to it, by means of which this language could become other to itself and thus allow for the other of language. While deconstruction sought to challenge the structures and habits of *reference* —sought to put into question the conceit that language's referentiality was by no means an accomplished feat— by no means was the conclusion that everything was language. Just because language does not cohere with its referent does not mean this referent exists in an ontological realm absolutely external to its signification. Though the signifier is fundamentally arbitrary, a well-known contention of Saussurian linguistics, this does not mean that what it

signifies is "already there," a precultural and prediscursive given simply awaiting to be retrieved and expressed. If it remains crucial to affirm that the referential functions of language never adequate that which they indicate and the referents they contrive —the opposite of which would constitute a Cratylistic view of language— then that which is described as experience is not commensurate to, mimetically reproduced by, or reducible to the discourse that depictures it. While experience might evermore resist being pigeonholed by or as a given referent, in other words, it does not thereby elude the fictionalizing figurations on which its discursive representation depends.

In these terms, it would appear that the supposed phenomenological outlines of experience are only made accessible, if indeed they ever are, not between the ideal and the material or between language and its outside, but constitutes this very boundary and oscillation itself. Language would not be merely a sort of veil covering a prediscursive ideality, an already given set of logical forms which would emerge through experience, if language is itself formative of that which it describes, though this need not mean that it fully captures that which it speaks (between the referent and the signified there is never a simple correspondence, even if this does not entail that the referent is separable from language as some sort of noumenon, or thing-in-itself). The manner and mode by which experience is shaped in and by language is not merely the end result or totalized effect of language —simply made of it— but how these terms are defined, by what discursive and cultural means, implies that there was a necessary boundary-line demarcated and set of exclusions effectuated.

This supposed ineffable outside to language (which some call experience) might in fact be an exigency formulated by and within (and for) linguistic occasion itself, for no referent is ever fully identical to its signified; there is always a difference and non-commensuration between signified and referent, so that what language speaks of it never fully captures, even if that which is not fully contained or reducible to language is not thereby separable from it. Indeed, let it be remembered that language itself requires both material and ideal forms on the level of the signifier: to access the supposedly material and alinguistic requires means

that themselves are already material (signifiers are visual and aural in their phenomenality –that is, how they appear— but they also depend on relations which themselves are ideal— non-apparent, not purely phenomenal).[52] One does not merely go externally beyond language to access materiality for language is itself already material: this materiality is itself already a composite of material and ideal elements –signs become apparent through their materiality but this materiality itself depends on a wider system/series of contextual marks and relata that are not simply material, but inapparent (ideal, nonphenomenal). The materiality of the signified and its separation from the referent cannot be ignored here either—though bound to the signified the referent is not therefore commensurable to it. The two are interlaced in a chiastic enfoldment whereby neither is fully isomorphic to nor entirely independent of one another.[53]

Some accounts have problematically envisioned experience in terms of innately pre-linguistic, asignifying, and visceral intensities, a theoretical move which has led, in turn, to charges that these naturalistic conceptions reinstate false universalisms and materialist essentialisms.[54] The controversies that theories of aesthetic experience have generated, perhaps a vestige of the debates regarding "sensibility" in early modern and old regime Europe, require a closing consideration here. One particular question that reemerges in discussions of the experience and language is whether those theories that invoke a presocial ontology of affects and intensities, frequently popular in those accounts following Deleuze's renditions of Spinoza's *affectus* and *affectio*, are in fact reifying a historically variable and contingent construction of "affect" as a set of prediscursive drives, insidiously naturalizing its contestable theoretical mandates and trying to pass off contingent fictions as foundational premises.[55] Are those intensive "affects" which are thought to precede discourse and to abide beyond language themselves the effect of a given discursive formation and historical situation rather than a description of innate bodily features, a tautological move whereby a theory seeks to ground its claim-making efficacy in taking as a prior premise and foundational ground the very object of analysis its own conceptual apparatus has produced?[56] Though some contemporary accounts of affect presume a distinction between "feeling" (that which is supposedly

personal), emotion (that which is putatively social), and affect (that which is apparently presubjective and innately unconscious),[57] others suggest that affect itself is never disjoined from its social interpretation, and that interpretation alters affect itself. In what ways are "affects" not immediate sense-data, *prima facie* givens, or an ontology of prepersonal intensities but discursive fabrications of the very intellectual discourse which seeks to locate these affects prior to and outside signification?

While Deleuzian accounts of "asignifying affect" usefully interrogate the logocentric and structuralist premise that some overarching and totalizing system of language fully captures "affect" and realizes it within linguistic terms, a criticism of these accounts would take exception with the postulation that affects are an *inherently* instinctive or alinguistic intensity rather than the effect of a given discursive formation that seeks to endow this concept with prediscursive purity in order to ground its own legitimacy.[58] A critique of the concept of an inherently "nonsignifying" affect would challenge the circumscribed and impoverished notion of textuality and signification that such a concept supposes, particularly the tacit mind/body dualism at work according to which signification would faithfully reproduce consciousness, intention, univocal meaning, unified psychological categories, or a transcendental speaking subject on the one hand, while affects would unconsciously persist in their intensive magnitude and multiplicitous plenitude, on the other. If Derrida's suggestion that there is "nothing outside the text" were heeded or if Foucault's genealogical critique of naturalized and sedimented cultural forms were applied, then the claim that affective experience is a pregiven sensation or ideational content which is at the start "pure" or "innate" before coming to take on social significations and interpretations becomes increasingly suspect. Indeed, a critique of asignifying affect theory might counter that affects never "appear," if they do, without a contextual framing by the various social significations that it *is*.[59]

In other words, if affect is not a merely materially sensible sensation or a passive surface upon which social meanings are subsequently inscribed —if it is not merely a site wherein multiple meanings converge—then in a radical sense "is" it no more than its very relations to these social significations

themselves? This quarrel with those affective theories which propose an alinguistic, asignifying, "materialist" version of affects does not lead to the conclusion that affect should be reduced to self-present subjectivity language, cognition, or intention, nor does it entail a return to subject-centered phenomenology caught within a dialectic of consciousness. Rather, the critiques of contemporary theories of nonsignifying "affect" suggest that the latter is infused with unacknowledged social and discursive norms from the start and that it is inevitably enmeshed in, but not reducible to, an idiom, medium, or language of some sort—"text" in its most vast, robust sense. If inevitably framed by social norms and given in language, then affect, on this reading, would not emanate from private, personal, or subjective resources but issue from a *nonsubjective* and *impersonal* elsewhere, precisely because the norms and terms by which affect is framed do not simply originate *sui generis* in the bearer of affect (the language used to speak of affect is lent from an elsewhere of imprecise origin and belongs to no one speaking subject in particular; the linguistic and cultural conventions by which one describes their feelings are never just one's own but exceed the very self who lays claim to them). Likewise, if the solicitation of affective response is not self-willed, in that one does not always choose or know that which elicits an affective response, then the question of affect, mediated by language and framed by other media, does not return to the metaphysics of the subject or the dialectic of consciousness.[60]

If language/discourse is not considered a self-identical concept or system of exclusively verbal signs, nor reducible to the activities of a speaking subject, than it might argued that affective experience is never just private, personal, subjective, or asignifying but always already a *political interpretation*. As Butler suggests, affects are circulated within a social field of constraints as interpretations, affects that are not generated by or orchestrated by an easily identifiable subject but which can even be aroused "in spite of oneself." When one is in the grip of affect, or when affect lays claim upon one, one is already at a remove from oneself, outside oneself or beside oneself, for the is not issued from purely personal resources but from a discourse —terms, discursive forms, concepts—which are not entirely of one's own making (or not

one's alone) and thus not a self-enclosed subjective sensation (called "autoaffection" in postdeconstructive parlance).[61] The point here is that affective experience is not simply an immediate, *prima facie*, or inherently asignifying experience, but that affect is an act of interpretation where this interpretation is not the *ex nihilo,* simply subjective creation of one mind. Affect, in this account, becomes the effect of a sphere of intelligibility that frames the perception of the world.

In Butler's terms, affective responses are regulated and framed by political frames/schemas which are themselves already interpretations and thus feelings are bound up with interpretation. How feeling is interpreted can change or affect that very feeling, and affective response is not just a primal or primary affect but mediated by what is available before us and to us. If this is right, then we are always already socialized, affect never a privately owned thing, for it always comes from elsewhere in response to an elsewhere. A related question that arises at this juncture would concern why some aspects of affective experience become perceivable and other not (that is, deemed "asignifying" or asocial)? If feeling is orchestrated in conjunction to what is perceived as perceivable experience and mediated by frameworks of perception (themselves politically regulated), then we would seem to be "inscribed in a circuit of social affect."[62] At stake is not whether affects exceed representation but what are the political effects of representability, what lives become perceivable as lives, and by what socially constituted evaluative frameworks which deem that it is perceivable. If affect cannot be conceived of outside power and interpretation, if affect is not a spontaneous sensation or intuitive idea that comes to us *sui generis*, we ought to question how interpretations assume affective forms or act as affects.

It is not, then, that affects carry a preformatted interpretation within themselves (a new critical assumption), but that media —linguistic and nonlinguistic—act upon its audience by framing what can be counted within representable terms. This framing implements and structures what it claims to contain, and the critical point would thus be to examine not simply what this framing shows, and how.[63] These interpretations must be interpreted as they are being framed; these very frames must be called into

question, rather than accepting their representations as the mere mimetic reflection of the pregiven. In these terms, affective experience, like Wittgenstein's contention, would not reside outside social signification, even if not commensurate with it or with the one who claims to be seized by their affects. Which is not to say that simply because affect is constituted in and by language —rather than merely reflected or deflected by it— that affect is thereby reducible to linguistic representation and meaning constitution. To the extent that affect is limned by language, its fraught representations at once conveyed by and caught within linguistic devices, it is ineluctably discursive. It would seem important here to avoid those perspectives which postulate that affect is deposited into the bounds of discourse from without — constituted in advance as a pre-given referent, a noumenal entity— an ontic thing which language would subsequently attempt to express but whose supposed essence it would never alter.[64]

Does affect endure as a hypostasized category? Does it abide as a referent extricable from and existent before the discourse that depicts it? Or, on the contrary, is it that affect cannot be said to reside beyond its signification?[65] And if affect does not persist in some ontological outside or exterior elsewhere to language, does that make it reducible to the language by means of which it is constituted, as if it would be, by a sort of linguistic monism, no more than that? But it seems almost dated to speak of language in this way as the primary medium and means through which affect is carried or distorted. As this coda has emphasized multiple times, it would seem necessary to shift theorizations on affective experience to a consideration of *rhetorical —which is to say poetical and political—modes of address*, for there is no affect that is not already a response, no affect not already audience to an address. Butler provides, once again, a telling formulation in *Giving an Account of Oneself*, wherein we read that there can be no "I" who speaks of itself, or what it feels, if it weren't already tied in a crucial way to a "you" to whom it addresses its account and by whom it has been addressed from the very start. Called upon from the start —despite myself, no, even before I can consider myself a self— I find that I can only respond because I was always responsive to and responsible for another. "I am my relation to you," she says, for without you I could never be.

v. in/experience

> *I prefer the word* épreuve *to* expérience *because in the word expérience a knowing of which the self is master is always said. In the word épreuve there is at once the idea of life and of a critical 'verification' which overflows the self of which it is only the 'scene.'*
> —Levinas, *Lire Lévinas*

> *What is the experience of stupidity in experience? Is experience possible without the experience of stupidity?*
> —Avital Ronnell, *Stupidity*

The wager of these early modern literatures of unlived love has been that experience is both given in language and irreducible to it; discourse delimits experience but does not simply determine it; and fiction constitutes a literary "experience" unmoored from the ontological and metaphysical predicates normally tethered to it, and thus an experience without experience itself. In the course of these readings "experience," it has been seen, becomes a text and its presumed "undergoer" —the so-called "subject"— a grammatical fiction, for the "experiencer," far from a causative agent or expressive self, is seen to be only belatedly and retroactively attached to an experience that it could not have originated and that it could never have undergone in presence. Besieging a mimetic model of linguistic representation which would presume that an experience "in person" precedes the literary act of figuring experience, these narratives ask what follows for the presumptive subject of experience when the presupposition that language either faithfully reflects or deceptively deflects a prior ontological order and prelinguistic reality is thrown into question. In this sense, the fictions perused in these pages have afforded the rhetorical occasion for the broader philosophical investigation of the fault lines of discursive experience itself, for "experience" turns out to be inescapably textual, never to be considered apart from the idiom or medium in which it is given and by which it is produced—but also within which it is perpetually dissolved and undone. In the remaining sections of this coda, some of the questions and quandaries provoked by "inexperience" will be elaborated upon in the service of elucidating the philosophical and rhetorical concerns that have preoccupied these chapters throughout.[66]

Recall that Nietzsche had argued that grammar posits posit ontological substance (what "is") and by its propositional form imply a subject orchestrating a verbal action (who "does" it), with experience these traits

seem misplaced. Can experience, partially bounden by the language through which its discursive outlines are made available, be said to purvey a substance and to have a subject?[67] It is especially unclear, when investigating the chiasmic relationship interlacing language and experience, that experience is *stricto sensu* anything substantial at all, though in mundane speech it is referred to as a substantive bearing one might collect ("to have an experience"), an identitarian attribute which describes who one is ("to be experienced"), or an incident whence knowledge is subsequently gained ("to have experienced some such thing"). If foundationalist postulates of ontological substance, subjective identity, and epistemological truth seem operative in the very grammar through which experience is limned, this might be because the logic of such postulates is bound up with, if not an effect of, the grammar in which it is given, a grammar that, through the ruses and constraints of its syntax, obligates that "experience" be spoken of as that which one "has" or that which one "is."[68] But can experience be said to return to a self ("being"), one who could accumulate and maintain several of them ("having")? Or is this model complicated when "inexperience" is at stake? Might there be no *cogito*, no pre-experiential person who precedes its discursive constitution within the discourse of experience, no ontological entity or substantial identity already formed prior to its inauguration in language?

Consider the particular quandary "inexperience" elicits when measured alongside "experience": Can one *have* a lack of experience or be without experience? Indeed, is inexperience something one can have —as one would, presumably, "have" an experience— or something one can only be? What does it mean to *be* inexperienced, to "be" something that is, as it were, already a negation of being (i.e. "not-experience")? If inexperience is that which is *not* or *not yet* experience, then can the predicates of "being" and "having" even apply to it? (Already the metaphysics of substance implied by the very grammar of these questions ["something," "what," "is"], belies the very *nonsubstantiality, provisionality,* and *nonfoundationality* of inexperience that this grammar seeks to depict). If experience has traditionally been taken as a ground upon which knowledge and identity is predicated —insofar as the experiences one has lived through or the

experiences one has gained are considered to found who one "is"— then it is especially unclear if inexperience would have a self-identical "subject," let alone a self-present one, who could undergo it. The problem is not only logical and chronological but to a good degree grammatical: in order to speak of one who is inexperienced, it is necessary to employ a subject and predicate —"one" who "is" "inexperienced"— which, in complicity with a metaphysics of substance, might seem to refer to a pre-existing ontological order of substance and trait that this grammar merely reflects (rather than performatively instituting and mobilizing this representation by virtue of its constitutive restraints). In such a grammar of the subject, the linguistic posture of substantives becomes confounded with an ontology of substances that this grammar purports to merely "describe" but which, in fact, it may well have partially produced as its discursive effect.[69] For, in this context, "one who is experienced" would mean "one who waits to gain experience" or "one who exists prior to the acquisition of experience."

But how can a subject who awaits experience or who exists temporally prior to the procurement of experience be imagined if the very definition of the subject has always been predicated by the experiences that make up who it "is"?[70] To speak of this fictitious time when one would have no experience or would be inexperienced turns out to be impossible, for how could this "one" be before experience or without experience, if this "one" is itself always constituted by experience? The "experience" that is thought to be subsequent and temporally posterior to the state of "inexperience" turns out to be its precondition: to imagine someone who has yet to gain experience is to already presuppose the experience which has constituted this "someone" in the first place. Likewise, however, if experience reveals itself to be implicated in inexperience, then the very definition of inexperience —as that which lacks experience, which precedes it or which it is not— is seemingly cancelled out. If inexperience is to be the contrary of experience, but experience must be presupposed to even speak of inexperience, then to speak of inexperience is, it would seem, to speak of none at all. For how can there be a subject who waits to gain experience, one who does not have it yet, if the subject has always been defined in terms of the experiences which it has and which it

is? Might the notion that there is a "before" experience be no more than a fiction of that discourse itself, as if there were no temporally or logically "beyond" or "outside" to the discourse of experience? If to speak of "someone" that is "inexperienced" is to in fact surreptitiously reinstall experience, by virtue of the fact that experience and all of its metaphysical trappings are conserved in the notion of this "someone," then to what extent is "inexperience" a grammatical fiction? If inexperience is demarcated against experience, and if it is that which has none of experience's traits, then inexperience is not a process one could undertake, an event one could withstand, or a knowledge one could acquire for, strictly speaking, it is that for which there is no "one," no self-present subject. Could the same be said of experience? Might the presumed "subject" of experience also be the discursive effect, rather than the originator, of the discourse of experience, one who would never predate or pre-exist this discourse, passively waiting for it in a prior state of inexperience, but who would always already be constituted, as it were, by means of it?

"Inexperience" poses something of a puzzle, for it is clearly not merely a determinate negation of experience, as if its sole definition were "that which is not experience": its identity would be a negated identity, but still an identity after all. For the odd thing about inexperience is that is "something" that cannot be determined or imagined by means of experience. Inexperience is a figure that eludes experience, insofar as it cannot be perceive or seen by reflection and sensation—it is only contrasted *to* experience, a contrast that becomes problematic as soon as experience falls into question. For inexperience is not merely stupidity or ignorance. As Descartes mentions at the start of *Discours de la méthode* (1637) that the more he learned the "the more [he] discovered [his] ignorance."[71] Inexperience's paradoxical status as an experience wanting of itself suggests that it is not simply the conceptual contrary to experience but, rather, the excluded term upon which experience itself depends in order to ground its own definitional coherence. If inexperience is most traditionally cast as an absence of experience —a state of ignorance in which one dwells prior to the undertaking of experience; a state of not yet having experience or not having it at all— then the conceptual integrity of "experience" is in fact contingent upon the production of that which is *before* experience and that

which is *not* experience: namely, *in*experience. The domain of experience is constituted by means of the excluded exterior it presupposes, the "constitutive outside" that must be foreclosed in order for experience to maintain its theoretical intactness.[72] If beholden to inexperience in order to discursively define itself relationally and differentially, then is the foundational and primary status of experience undermined and exposed in all its contingency, precisely because it depends upon and cannot be imagined without inexperience? If the categorial identity of "experience" is not grounded in a putative essence or pregiven ideality that it simply expresses, but only comes to be in disavowing that to which it is opposed and against which it must continually differentiate itself —namely, inexperience—, then does inexperience not merely pose the limit to experience but also, it would seem, delimit its very contours?[73]

From this perspective, experience is seen to be intimately bound up with inexperience. The related question that then emerges concerns the extent to which the concept of inexperience is also reliant upon experience in order to be defined. Consider that inexperience, as a *lack* of experience, implies that it is deprived of experience, but not completely devoid of it: there is no inexperience without the implied trace of the experience that is assumed to eventually take its place. Decades earlier, Hume had forwarded precisely this point in *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (1748), suggesting that the claim that one is "unexperienced" is in fact a contradiction in terms: "The truth is, an unexperienced reasoner could be no reasoner at all, were he absolutely unexperienced; and when we assign that character to anyone, we mean it only in a comparative sense, and suppose him possessed of experience, in a smaller and more imperfect degree" (*EM* 338). For Hume, it is important to speak of degrees of inexperience but not of inexperience in and of itself; it is possible to have less or more experience, but it is not possible to have no experience. In this sense, the very concept of inexperience is fraught in and of itself, insofar as the conceptual definition of inexperience is predicated upon the possibility that it will eventually be negated (one is only inexperienced to the extent that one will acquire the experience that sublates one's inexperience), at the same time that the only way to conceive of a state of "inexperience" is to envisage it in terms of experience (one is

inexperienced to the extent that one lacks, but is not therefore completely deprived of, experience).

If experience and inexperience are thus interdependent and chiasmatically enfolded into one another, to what extent are the purported fault lines segregating "experience" from its "inexperience" more porous and permeable than often presumed? Indeed, if the boundaries distinguishing experience from its non-happening, its non-occurrence, or its non-being were to become shoreless, then would experience *in and of itself* —and not merely when contraposed to some supposed alternative— stand irresolvable? Might inexperience's seeming resistance *to* experience, in other words, end up being none other than the resistance *of* experience to its own inexperience, the very resistance, that is, of experience to itself?[74] In posing and pursuing these questions, the point will not be to oppose experience and inexperience side by side, as if each were juxtaposable to one other and knowable in and of itself, but to reveal that indelible paradoxes nest within the very concept of experience itself. Close examination of inexperience from a philosophical perspective shows not that there would be a division between inexperience as a contradictory or self-cancelling notion and experience as a stable or knowable phenomenon, but that it is *experience* which turns out to have been the unknown and contradictory concept all along, although one that has been taken for granted as self-evident. The main paradox presented throughout pages could be summarized thus: there can be no positing of the concept of experience without simultaneously presupposing that which is anterior to it or that which it isn't —namely, inexperience— at the same time that, as Hume makes plain, inexperience cannot exist, as inexperience can only be understood through experience and thus, cannot *stricto sensu* there cannot ever be "no experience." In this way, the grounds upon which experience is founded —inexperience— leads to the foundering of that very foundation and the ungrounding of that very ground.

In other words, it is not just that "inexperience" is a grammatical fiction, and that "experience" is not. Far from opposing "experience" to its adverse —"inexperience" ; "non-experience" — as if the one stood for a "real" entity and the other for its antithesis, these investigations into the conceit of experience imply

that "inexperience" —that is, any faltering of "experience" into that which it is not— might well be the constitutive condition by which the notion of experience is itself delimited, the contrastive "outside" it needed in order to secure a minimal conceptual coherence notwithstanding continually besieged. Both are implicated in the same conundra, both fictions of a certain cultural discourse: "experience" is never prediscursive, never prior to signification or outside context, but only becomes readable, when it is, through the language in which it is given and as the text which it "is."[75] Far from a simple vehicle, medium, or instrument, into which an already established self and its experience is merely deposited, language proves formative, if not performatively constitutive, of that which it seems only to "represent": the form experience takes might well be the discursive effect of the text which frames it or, rather, the text it already is. In the words of one critical account, "experience is the very lack [*le défaut*] of the 'lived' [*'vécu'*]," in that experience fails to coincide with lived experience —understood as self-presence— altogether, inevitably mediated as it is by language and as the text it always was.[76] In these terms, if there is an undecidability of (in)experience in these fictions, it is not because of a vacillation between experience and inexperience —as if these were concept-metaphors somehow dualistically opposed and each conceptually secure. Rather, it becomes uncertain how to denote what experience "is" *tout court* and equally difficult to determine whether it is ever distinguishable from its very inexperience.[77]

For when is experience itself decidable, to what interpretations is it subject, and by what criteria could such a decision be justified—a query Wittgenstein poses with pithy precision: "how do we *compare* these experiences; what criterion of identity *do we fix* for their occurrence" (*PI* 89e)? Consider, once again, Wittgenstein's argument that private languages— the argument that "I have got THIS" all to myself, that when I imagine and see "I have *got* something which my neighbor has not"— are ultimately untenable:

> When one claims to have experienced something only understandable by oneself, then doubt immediately arises: " May one not add: 'There is here no question of a 'seeing'—and therefore none of a 'having'—nor of a subject, nor therefore of 'I' either'? Might I not ask: in what sense have you *got* what you are talking about and saying that only you have got it? Do you possess it?…Must you not really say that no one has got it? And this too is clear: If as a matter of logic you exclude other people's having something, it loses its sense to say you have it (*PI* 102e).

The question here is how one can claim experience is solely one's own, possessed or owned by a self, on logical terms of exclusion ("I have it they do not"). When can experienced be said to be "had" by someone and not by another? If it is possible to claim that others *do not* have this something which would be experience, is it not also likely then that the one claiming to have it likewise does not? Rather than specifying who does or does not "have" experience, is it possible that *no one can*, leaving experience and inexperience indistinguishable? If experience, in other words, only comes to be known —or rather, only comes to be— in language, although not therefore commensurate with it, does this not already bespeak its fundamental *expropriability*, its status not as a property that a subject has or gets, but as infinitely transferable, removable, losable? In lieu of trying to secure and fix down experience, is it not the case that experience is susceptible to continual loss and thus self-loss as well? Perhaps to speak of either such term— experience or inexperience— is to have a necessary, endlessly faltering, return to catachresis: to speak improperly of that which would seem to be neither simply metaphorical nor literal, but irreducibly fictional, in that this speech must proceed in the absence of ontological guarantees and with its reference suspended.[78] The allure of grammar, which implies through its existential copula a certain positing of being and the existence of that which "is," would become once again misleading here, for to make mention of experiences wholly lacking of themselves is to speak, impossibly, of that for which there is no proper name.

In a certain sense, it would be hasty to ask what or comes after the subject of experience, as if the subject were no more or experience finally lost. Although there have been valiant efforts to theorize an experience prior to the experience of subject/object, an experience with no subject —such as Nishida Kitaro's attempt to move beyond the *ousia/hypokeimenon* of experience by transcendentalizing *predicates* rather than subjects (a "seeing without a seer" and a "hearing without a hearer")—such efforts imply that it is already known what the subject and its experience are, after whose destruction or deconstruction something would follow.[79] To identify the various critiques of subject/substance in Nietzsche, Freud,

Heidegger, Lacan, Derrida, Foucault and others as one liquidating the subject, then, would be to misread their aims and falsify their claims. That has not been the contention here. The decentering and displacement of the subject did not come to pass with the advent of psychoanalysis and poststructuralism: the very conceit of the subject was, from its first flickerings in the history of philosophy, always already in displacement. This project has thus not sought to reconstruct the trajectory of the subject of experience in order to witness its gradual downfall, for that story of the fall overlooks how the subject —"the sub-jective structure as the being-thrown—or under-lying—of the substance or of the *substratum,* of the *hypokeimenon*, with its qualities of stance or stability, of permanent presence, of sustained relation to self, everything that links the 'subject' to conscience, to humanity, to history…and above all to the law, as subject subjected to the law"— was always on its way to its own deconstitution and deconstruction from the start.[80] Inexperience, as disseminated throughout these texts, turns experience into "the finite experience of non-identity to self," that is, the experience of coming outside the self or no longer being a self who would own its experience in presence.[81] It is unclear whether from this instance it would be possible to conjure a "post-deconstructive determination," as Simon Critchley has hypothesized, but it seems that in any case, as Derrida conjectures, the subject has become not that whereof one speaks but that which is being continually rewritten: the subject is no longer a subject of *logos* but a "subjectile," as one says in painting, upon which and through which a future writing will be inscribed.[82] In Derrida's words:

> I have never said that the subject should be dispensed with. Only that it should be deconstructed. To deconstruct the subject does not mean to deny its existence. There are subjects, "operations" or "effects" (*effets*) of subjectivity. This is an incontrovertible fact. To acknowledge this does not mean, however, that the subject is what it says it is. The subject is not some meta-linguistic substance or identity, some pure *cogito* of self-presence; it is always inscribed in language. My work does not, therefore, destroy the subject; it simply tries to resituate it.[83]

For the effects of subjectivity, or subject-effects, are not merely what a human becomes or bears—before deciding whether or not animals and nonhuman life can be "subjects," the more pertinent question is: by what means, and under what discursive conditions, has it been claimed that there are humans who are subjects? To what extent is experience not undergone by a subject but delimits the subject itself, not I who

stands behind or before, as if experience were not reducible to a subject and its act, but an acting that produces the subject? The worrisome fact remains that not all those are considered subjects of experience, let alone subjects, most especially in terms of gender. When read in concert, these various philosophers and theorists unyoke the predicates that have conventionally been tethered to experience, but they also point out that experience is differentially distributed within the social field. Whether it be Wittgenstein's rules, Nietzsche's grammar, or Wittig's discourse, these philosophers all imply that any given subject of experience is always given over to the norms that organize and delimit —which does not mean *determine*— experience. It is not that there is first experience which then comes to bear social significations, as if it were first unsocial and then came to assume a social form, but that experience is always already social. This is not an existential argument, but an acknowledgement that norms produce what counts as experience, according to which certain experiences will be counted and recognized epistemologically, whereas others will be relegated to the unrecognizable, the non-experience or the not-yet-experience—in short, inexperience. Experience is thus not a quality or attribute belonging universally to all humans, as if it were decided in advance what the human was, but also a normative ideal framing what can and cannot be experience.[84]

Reprising Blanchot's description of the experience of disaster, it would seem that inexperience is the disaster of experience: inexperience is not an event one lives through in presence or a state of self-consciousness and thus, as a "non-experience," is already a limit to experience, if not a limit-experience, the destitution of all experience by undercutting its fundamental predicates, an experience "outside experience [*hors expérience*],"[85] and thus outside of phenomenalism because only disclosed in its disappearance. At the same time, since inexperience is only defined in terms of the experience it will eventually become, it has in a sense always already passed on or passed away, insofar as it is already on its way to passing into experience. For inexperience would be experience non-coincident with itself, an experience already gone without yet having arrived. The question of will and voluntarism cannot quite enter into this conversation: for how can one willfully *inexperience* or *be inexperienced* if inexperience is not that which has happened and

thus not that which one can have? Can inexperience be owned in the same way it is said that experience can? If inexperience cannot be confined to a self as its property or its trait, since inexperience is not fully an experience? Grammar already points to the limitations to the way inexperience is thought: one cannot "have inexperience," as one can experience, one can only "be" it, be it without knowing it. In a way inexperience not only eludes the discourse on it (what is said about it), but also eludes the experience of it: how is inexperience inexperienced? How can one know what one has never experienced, unless in fiction, unless as fiction?

In this sense, it is not enough to say that *I* experience something, for that familiar grammar belies the very paradox of inexperience that inhabits the concept of experience all along, dismantling it from within. If there is no subject who enacts experience, if experience is precisely that over which one has no control, then this forces a change in the very conception of narratives of experience, like the *Bildungsroman*, insofar as experience is always and only reconstructed and retold. If experience, as Freud long ago asserted, can never be construed as such and in itself, only belatedly and retrospectively reconstituted in relation to the past and to the future, and thus never in presence, then is experience never itself experienced? In this sense, experience never coincides with itself, just the same way that inexperience never is (because already on its way to experience) and that which it will never be (because it will become experience), and thus that which never was. If experience is only possible because of the inexperience against which it is defined, by the same token it can never fully be itself, because divided from itself by the inexperience upon which it depends. Inexperience is an experience that is not one and not one's own. Experience remains undone — undone not simply because it has not yet been done but because when it is, if it is, it will still be undone. For experience, let alone amorous experience, is no object, event, act, or gain that can be easily identified. In this sense, if experience seems forever out of reach, is it perhaps impossible to not fall back into inexperience, into that which is, to reprise Blanchot, *hors expérience*? The question, then, is not when experience will eventually be gained but whether, if ever, this age of inexperience will come to an end.

Notes

All translations from French are original unless stated otherwise. Modifications to existing English translations of Greek, Latin, German, French, and Japanese texts will be duly noted.

FOREWORD

[1] Plato, *Complete Works,* ed. John M. Cooper (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company), 828-9. Cited in text as *G*.

[2] *Unpublished Writings from the Period of Unfashionable Observations,* trans. Richard T. Gray (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995), 185.

[3] *Selected Dialogues of Plato,* trans. Benjamin Jowett (New York: The Modern Library, 2000), 147.

[4] Oddly, this prompts the editor of the *Selected Dialogues* to remark in a footnote, "Much of the rest of the speech is given over to explaining this startling [!] change of subject to 'the love of boys'" (147 n.27), when the dialogue has been holding forth on this matter all along.

[5] *Selected Dialogues of Plato,* trans. Benjamin Jowett (New York: Modern Library, 2001), 217. Hereafter cited in text as *S.*

[6] As Pausanias insists: "the love of little boys [rather than young men] should be forbidden by law, because their future is uncertain; they may turn out good or bad, either in body or soul" (*S* 218).

[7] Pausanias argument is not simply legal or metaphysical, it is also national. He insists that in those countries that have no "gifts of eloquence," such as parts of Ionia, boy-love is not practices because under the influence of the "barbarians" (*S* 218).

[8] The very attempt to provide a univocal definition for experience is itself not without a certain danger, namely that of "premature semantic closure," for a signifier whose diverse linguistic histories and cultural translations defy totalizing meaning as pointed out in Martin Jay *Songs of Experience: Modern American and European Variations on a Universal Theme* (Ewing, NJ: University of California Press, 2004), 9.

[9] In French, the relationship between experience and experiment connoted by the term "expérience" is even stronger. Despite evident differences from English, certain French expressions seem to allude to these aforementioned presuppositions: "*avoir* de l'expérience"; "*être* expérimenté"; "*faire* l'expérience de."

[10] Hans-Johann Glock, *Wittgenstein Dictionary* (Cambridge, MA: Basil Blackwell, 1996), 153.

[11] *On certainty,* ed. G.E.M. Anscombe and G.H. von Wright (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), paragraphs, 94, 105.

[12] *On certainty,* paragraph 599.

[13] For an example of such generalizing claims, see Raymond Williams, *Keywords: a vocabulary of culture and society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 127-8. For two critical accounts of enlightenment experimentation in philosophy and literature which problematize these historical caricatures, see Claudia Brodsky, "Whatever Moves You: 'Experimental Philosophy' and the Literature of Experience in Diderot and Kleist," in *Traditions of Experiment from the Enlightenment to the Present: Essays in Honor of Peter Demetz,* eds. Nancy Kaiser and David E. Wellbery (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1992) and Francisco Rodriguez "La Cage de Gaze: Lectures de Madame d'Épinay" (MA Thesis, Columbia University, 2007).

[14] Marie le Jars de Gournay, *Apology for the Woman Writing and other works,* trans. Richard Hillman et al. (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 80. Such hegemonic ideals of feminine conduct and capacity, it has been argued, will have been constituted by the heterogeneous and gendered ideologies most frequently associated with the conduct and education of women. As Deborah Lesko Baker suggests in her scholarly edition of the *Complete poetry and prose: : a bilingual edition. Louise Labé,* trans. Annie Finch (Chicago : University of Chicago Press, 2006): "Cotgraves 1611 *Dictionarie of the French and English Tongues* offers the following range of definitions for the term *vertu*: "Virtue, goodnesse, honestie, sinceritie, integritie, worth, perfection, desert, merit; also valour, prowess, manhood, also energie, efficacie, force, power, might. Huguet's seven-volume 1950 dictionary of sixteenth-century French language presents similar threads of meaning: *force, courage, vaillance* (valor), *talent, propriété* (propriety), *pouvoir* (power), *qualité* (upstanding character)," (222 n.6). See also Chapter 3 of Cathy Yandell's *Carpe Corpus: Time and Gender in Early Modern Europe* (Newark : University of Delaware Press ; London : Associated University Presses, c2000). For a more general history of these questions, see Olwen Hufton, *The Prospect before Her: A History of Women in Western Europe,* vol I: *1500-1800* (London : HarperCollins, 1995). On the ideology of this Western education of chaste continence where to not see, to not act, and to remain ignorant of what a decent woman should not know are paramount, see Ruth Bernard Yeazell, *Fictions of Modesty* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991), Sarah Kofman, *Le respect des femmes (kant et rousseau)* (Paris: Galilée, 1982), Hanne Blank, *Virgin: The Untouched History* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2007), Shoshana Felman, *What does a woman want? reading and sexual difference* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993).

[15] *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding, Vol I.,* ed. Alexander Fraser (New York: Dover Publications, 1959), 448-9.

[16] Judith Butler, *Gender Toruble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 22. As Hume would himself admit: "'Tis certain there is no question in philosophy more abstruse than that concerning identity, and the nature of the

uniting principle, which constitutes a person. So far from being able by our sense merely to determine this question, we must have recourse to the most profound metaphysics to give a satisfactory answer to it; and in common life 'tis evident these ideas of self and person are never very fix'd nor determinate." In *A Treatise of Human Nature,* (New York: Penguin Books 1984), 240.

[17] *Ibid*, 23.

[18] Butler, *Undoing Gender* (Routledge: New York, 2004), 41. Butler points out that norms cannot be reduced to the empirical instances of their operations, insofar as they also seem to maintain a status independent of that which they govern, exceeding every instantiation (*U* 40, 41-2). A norm "is a form of social power that produces the intelligible field of subjects….As a norm that appears independent of the practices that it governs, its ideality is the reinstituted effect of those very practices" (*U* 48). While the norm might seem to exceed every instance of its operation, it cannot be considered apart from the practices through which it is repeateadly re-instituted: "The norm has no independent ontological status, yet it cannot be easily reduced to its instatiations; it is itself (re)produced through its emobdoiment, through the acts that strive to approximate it, through the idealizations reproduced in an by those acts" (*Ibid*). In this sense, the norm "is not exterior to its field of application. Not only is the norm responsible for producing its field of application…but *the norm produces itself in the production of that field.* The norm is actively conferring reality; indeed, only by virtue of its repeated power to confer reality is the norm constituted as a norm" (52).

[19] Consider in this regard Butler's comments in "Imitation and Gender Insubordination" in *The Judith Butler Reader,* ed. Sarah Salih (New York: Blackwell Publishing, 2004): "oppression works not merely through acts of overt prohibition, but covertly, through the constitution of viable subjects and through the corollary constitution of a domain of unviable (un)subjects—*abjects,* we might call them— who are neither named nor prohibited within the economy of the law. Here oppression works through the production of a domain of unthinkability and unnameability. Lesbianism [for example] is not explicitly prohibited in part because ti has not even made its way into the thinkable, the imaginable, that grid of cultural intelligibility that regulates the real and the nameable…To be prohibited explicitly is to occupy a discursive site from which something like a reverse-discourse can be articulated; to be implicitly proscribed is not even to qualify as an object of prohibition" (126-7).

[20] As François Ewald notes in "Norms, Discipline, and the Law" in *Law and the Order of Culture,* ed. Robert Post (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991): "normative individualization is not exterior. The abnormal does not have a nature which is different from that of the normal. The norm, or normative space, knows no outside. The norm integrates anything which might attempt to go beyond it—nothing, nobody, whatever difference it might display, can ever claim to be exterior, or claim to possess an otherness which would actually make it other" (173).

[21] Those to whom experience is forestalled but who nonetheless seek to gain experience are then accused of being aberrations of nature and outsiders of culture: "To that general condemnation of intellectual women, a particular point is added in my case," laments Marie de Gournay in *Apologie de celle qui écrit* (1641), "—that is, my practice of alchemy, which they deem absolute folly in itself," precisely because scientific experiment/experience was not considered accessible to women. *Apology,* 127.

[22] *Émile ou de l'éducation*, in *Œuvres completes* (Paris: Édition Gallimard, 1969), 737.

[23] Wollstonecraft, *Vindication* in the version by Jonathan Bennett presented at www.earlymoderntexts.com, 49.

[24] Wollstonecraft, 45.

[25] Wollstonecraft, 30 and 37 respectively.

[26] Mary Wollstonecraft, *Maria or the Wrongs of Women* in *Mary; Maria; Matilda*, ed. Janet Todd (New York: Penguin Books), 95.

[27] See Ewald, "Norms": "what precisely is the norm? It is the measure which simultaneously individualizes, makes ceaseless individualization possible and creates comparability. The norm makes it possible to locate spaces, indefinitely, which become more and more discrete, minute, and at the same time makes sure that these spaces never enclose anyone in such a way as to create a nature for them, since these individualizing spaces are never more than the expression of a relationship, of a relationship which has to be seen indefinitely in the context of others. What is a norm? A principle of comparison, of comparability, a common measure, which is instituted in the pure reference of one group to itself, when the group has no relationship other than to itself, without external reference and without verticality" (173).

[28] *L'espace littéraire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1955): "Le poème ——la littérature— semble lié à une parole qui ne peut s'interrompre, car elle ne parle pas, elle est" (35).

[29] Lucia Omancini, *Le roman épistolaire français au tournant des Lumières* (Paris: Honoré Champion Éditeur, 2003), 12.

[30] See Joan DeJean, "Classical Reeducation: Decanonizing the Feminine," in *Yale French Studies* 75 (1988).

[31] The paraphrase of Blanchot's "Lire" in *l'espace* (251-61) comes from Smock's *Double dealing* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1985), 5. Referring to Blanchot's *Folie du jour* and its "impulse" *Double dealing* adds: "It is a story in the course of which the story is repeatedly summoned to give an explanation of itself. To answer or account for itself. To tell itself, that is—or to be. To be the story it is. But it *is*: it is nothing *but* the account demanded of it. Yet for this being it can offer no account: it cannot, for the words of the account are exhausted already in its being. It has thus always yet to be the story that it is- or rather, that it has been: it is through and through exposure to the demand that it be what it is, no longer and not yet" (3-4).

[32] Blanchot, *l'espace*: "la lecture ne fait rien, n'ajoute rien; elle laisse être ce qui est; elle est liberté, non pas liberté qui donne l'être ou le saisit, mais liberté qui accueille, consent, dit oui, ne peut que dire oui et, dans l'espace ouvert par ce oui, laisse s'affirmer la décision bouleversante de l'oeuvre, l'affirmation qu'elle est- et rien de plus" (255).

[33] See Peggy Kamuf, "To give Place" in *Book of Addresses* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2005).

[34] See Catherine Gallagher *Nobody's story: the vanishing acts of women writers in the marketplace, 1670-1820* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995). The "Introduction" speaks of the rhetorics of dispossession, disembodiment, and debt in the terms of "marketplace," "woman," and "author" in English literature: "To concentrate on the elusiveness of these authors, instead of bemoaning it and searching for their positive identities, is to practice a different sort of literary history […]The author-selves […] are also partial Nobodies, but their nobodiness differs from that of fictional characters. There is understood to be no particular, embodied, referent in the material world for the proper name of a fictional character; but the names of these author-selves refer to entities that are neither identical to the writers nor wholly distinct from them. They are rhetorical constructions, but constructions that playfully point to their role of keeping the physical writers alive" (vviii-xix).

[35] Consider aphorism 380 of Nietzsche's *Le Gai Savoir,* trans. Henri Albert (Paris: Librairie Générale Française, 1993): Des 'pensées sur les prejudges moraux,' si l'on veut qu'elles ne soinet pas des prejudges sur les prejudges, supposent une position *en dehors* de la morale, quelque par-delà le bien et le mal vers quoi il faudrait monter, grimper, voler,— et, dans ce cas, un par-delà *notre* bien et *notre* mal…la question est de savoir si l'on *peut* véritablement monter là-haut. Cela dépend de beaucoup de choses. Dans l'ensemble, il s'agit de savoir si nous sommes lourds ou légers, 'est le problem de notre 'poids spécifique.' Il faut être très léger pour pousser sa volonté de connaître aussi loin et en quelque sorte au-delà de son temps, pour se créer des yeux qui puissant embrasser des milliers d'annés et que l'azur s'y reflète" (417).

[36] See for example, Versini, *Laclos et la tradition: essai sur les sources et la technique des Liaisons dangereuses* (Paris, Klincksieck, 1968). Twenty-first century criticism sought a corrective to this tendency. For an expansion of the epistolary canon see Lucia Omacini's *le roman épistoliare français au tournant des lumières* and *passim*.

[37] From a perspective informed by feminism and Lacanian psychoanalysis, Peggy Phelan's *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (London ; New York : Routledge, 1993) examines the political consequences of a belief that visibility is coterminous with progressivism, rather than the blindness and unremarked dynamics which break solitary, symmetrical visions of the self. "[N]otre language," claims a voice in an essay of Blanchot's, "est devenu abusivement –nécessairement- un système optique qui ne parle bien qu'à notre vue." "Parler, ce n'est pas voir" in *L'Entretien infini*, 43. The polylogue continues: "La parole…met à nu, sans même retirer le voile et parfois au contraire (dangereusement) en revoilant –d'une manière qui ne couvre ni ne découvre" (41;) "Voir, c'est donc saisir *immédiatement à distance*," that is, "c'est se servir de la separation, non pas comme médiatrice, mais comme un moyen d'immédiation, comme im-médiatrice. En ce sense aussi, voir, c'est faire l'expérience du continu, et célébrer le soleil, c'est-à-dire, par-delà le soleil: l'Un," (39). Derrida's and Cixous' discussion in *Lectures de la différence sexuelle* —on *voir* having pretensions to *savoir*— is also carried forth in *Voiles* and Derrida's *Mémoires d'aveugle*.

[38] Paul de Man, *Blindness and Insight* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1971) and *Aesthetic Ideology* (Minneapolis : University of Minnesota Press, 1997). These works both interrogate the phenomenalism implicit in certain modes and models of language.

[39] Cf. Paul de Man *Aesthetic Ideology* and Claudia Brodsky *The Imposition of Form: studies in narrative representation and knowledge* (Princeton : Princeton University Press, c1987), on the problems with such understandings of literary history's perception-based modalities of regarding narrative.

[40] In a related, but different, reflection, Edmund Burke's considerations of "Obscurity" in the second part of his *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757), elaborates on the "terrible" implications of an eye unaccustomed to the dark.

[41] Cf. Derrida, *De la grammatologie*.

[42] *Limonade, tout était si infini* (Paris: Édition des femmes, 1982): "La légèreté aussi pèse. Ce que j'ai à dire est plus léger que la légèreté ou n'est pas. Le mot 'légèrté' est déjà un poids. Il n'y a pas de mot assez léger pour ne pas alourdir la légèrté de la légèrté" (17).

[43] "je veux que tu te saches libre." *Limonade,* 18.

[44] See Derrida's discussion with Richard Kearney in *Dialogues with Contemporary Continental Thinkers* (New Hampshire: Manchester University Press, 1984): "There have been several misinterpretations of what I and other deconstructionists are trying to do. It is totally false to suggest that deconstruction is a suspension of reference. Deconstruction is always deeply concerned with the "other" of language. I never cease to be surprised by critics who see my work as a declaration that there is nothing beyond language, that we are imprisoned in language; it is, in fact, saying the exact opposite. The critique of logocentrism is above all else the search for the "other" and the "other of language." Every week I receive critical commentaries and studies on deconstruction which operate on the assumption that what they call "post-structuralism" amounts to saying that there is nothing beyond language, that we are submerged in words—and other stupidities of that sort. Certainly, deconstruction tries to show that the question of reference is much more complex and problematic than traditional theories supposed. It even

asks whether our term "reference" is entirely adequate for designating the "other." The other, which is beyond language and which summons language, is perhaps not a "referent" in the normal sense which linguists have attached to this term. But to distance oneself thus from the habitual structure of reference, to challenge or complicate our common assumptions about it, does not amount to saying that there is *nothing* beyond language" (123-4). As Paul de Man's "The Resistance to Theory" in *The Resistance to Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002) remarks: "we seem to assume all too readily that, when we refer to something called 'language,' we know what it is we are talking about, although there is probably no word to be found in the language that is as overdetermined, self-evasive, disfigured and disfiguring as 'language'" (13). In this rendition, already elaborated in *Allegories of Reading: figural language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke, and Proust* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1979), to attempt to define, denominate, or account for what language "is" is itself an effort also complicit with and produced by language, in that in order to speak of language, recourse to language must inevitably be made. "As such, it is bound to consist of the very figural structures that can only be put in question by means of the language that produces them. What is then called 'language' clearly has to extend well beyond what is empirically understood as articulated verbal utterance and subsumes, for instance, what is traditionally referred to as perception" (234). Might the epistemic and the ontologic always be fraught with the linguistic?

[45] On regulative fictions, see Nietzsche, *Le Gai Savoir*, 345.

[46] Wittig, *The Straight Mind and Other Essays* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992), 47. Hereafter cited in text as *SM.* The quote from Nietzsche comes from *Unpublisehd Writings from the period of* Unfashionable Observations, trans. Richard T. Gray (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1995), 23. The translation is from Nietzsche, *Sämtliche Werke, Kritische Studienausgabe,* ed. Giorgio Colli And Mazzino Montinari, Vol 7, pp. 417-837; Vol. 14; 529-54.

[47] For a refutation of this strict binary and an historical overview of the intellectual networks amongst woman scholars see Carol Pal, *Republic of women: rethinking the Republic of Letters in the seventeenth century* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

[48] This description cites April Alliston's "Gender and the Rise of the Novel in Europe," (manuscript on file with the author).

[49] *Ibid.*

[50] It is perhaps significant that, in literary-historical terms, the *Bildungsroman,* whose hallmark is the protagonist's accumulation of the cultural capital of "experience," had more often been associated with heroes than heroines in French fiction until the mid-nineteenth-century. By extension, how much (or how little) one ought to experience becomes an insistent question not only in treatises but also in fictions involving romance. In myriad educational treatises, political tracts, and various literary depictions, this is one conventional discourse we find: men are to go out and experience the world, while women ought to remain in ignorance and inexperience in order to preserve their virtue. Literary historians have thus argued for example that the popular 18th c. genre of the *Bildungsroman,* or novel of development, in which a hero gains the cultural capital of experience and education, is most often identified with heroes, rather than with heroines. Likewise, it has been said by some that in the 18th c. no woman ever wrote a libertine novel (a somewhat contestable idea).

[51] For a thoughtful consideration of offering "serious and sympathetic" readings to non-canonical texts on their own terms rather than as failed imitations and simulacra of canonical works, see April Alliston, *Virtue's Faults: Correspondences in eighteenth century British and French Women's fictions* (Stanford California: Stanford University press, 1996).

[52] The use of "discursive formation" draws from Michel Foucault's *L'archéologie du savoir* (Paris: Gallimard, 1969).

[53] "Woman" and "man" refer not to social beings *per se* but to a discursive matrix of social significations: the terms of "man" and "woman" only signify by virtue of their difference from one another and in relation to the matrix of meanings in the midst of which they drift, and, as contested concepts and sinuous signifiers, their meanings cannot be considered apart from their figuration. A mimetic model of linguistic reference and representation —language merely reflecting or deflecting a static referent and ontological object— will certainly not do here, for "woman" and "man" are not simply re-presented in these texts or by their signatures as ready-made referents and pre-existing objects but in a sense are at once performatively produced and undone, figured and disfigured, constituted and dissolved, as the discursive effects of the language in which they are given. Though these texts might offer figures of "woman" this is not to say that this all it is, that "woman" is nothing but figure —even if not therefore easily construed as an essentialist entity or an ontological identity, a subject or a substance— for such figurations are simultaneously referential even as they suspend the pretensions of the existential copula "is." This does not mean a prediscursive referent or extra-discursive monolith like "real woman" or "real man" can merely be siphoned out of text, unimplicated from this discursive and figural positing. If such figurations can be said to be formative of the entity they constitute, this does not mean they unilaterally posit and engender it fully, as if what the word designates rendered whereof it spoke as nothing but a signifier. So too must it be conceded that every attempt to refer to some extratextual or prediscursive outside, always requires a prior positing and construction of this supposed outside, and thus far from eluding discursive formativeness falls prey to it.

[54] See Peggy Kamuf, *Signature Pieces: On the Institution of Authorship* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1988): "A signature is not a name; at most it is a piece of a name, its citation according to certain rules…As a piece of a proper name, the

signature points, at one extremity, to a properly unnamable singularity; as a piece of language, the signature touches, at its other extremity, on the space of free substitution without proper reference. At the edge of the work, the dividing trait of the signature pulls in both direction at once: appropriating the text under the sign of the name, expropriating the name into the play of the text. The undecidable trait of the signature must fall into the crack of the historicist/formalist opposition organizing most discourses about literature. Its case is that of the rest, which remains unclassified by either determinations of agency (biographical, historical, political, economical) or determinations of formal, arbitrary structures of language" (12-3). On this reading, the signature cannot be reduced to a self but is always differing from itself and authorial intention.

[55] On the "heterosexual matrix" see Butler, *Gender Trouble:* "I use the term *heterosexual matrix*…to designate that grid of cultural intelligibility through which bodies, genders, and desires are naturalized. I am drawing from Monique Wittig's notion of the 'heterosexual contract' and, to a lesser extent, on Adrienne Rich's notion of 'compulsory heterosexuality' to characterize a hegemonic discursive/epistemic model of gender intelligibility that assumes that for bodies to cohere and make sense there must be a stable sex expressed through a stable gender (masculine expresses male, feminine expresses female) that is oppositionally and hierarchically defined through the compulsory practice of heterosexuality" (194, n.6).

[56] If the representative and referential propriety of the discursive name of "woman," always an elusive and elastic category, has come under contest in recent years, so too have the limits of the essentialist conceit of "women's writing," an *eidos* of feminine authorship or an ipseity to womanly style, been exposed. In terms of the present inquiry, it is perhaps more germane to speak of fictions "ascribed to feminine signatures" rather than novels "written by women," not because one ought to dispense with this latter category altogether, but because many of the narratives included herein have been imputed to authors whose biographies have never been certified. Or perhaps it would be better to say that rather than merely opt for one or the other, what might instead be preserved, even if only tentatively, is the indeterminate vacillation or uncertain tension between these categories that such cases of authorial ambiguity inspire.

[57] Consider Butler's remarks in "The Force of Fantasy" in *Reader*: "In a sense, lesbian sexuality is not even thought of as the forbidden, for to be forbidden is still to be produced as a prohibited or censored object; whereas male homosexuality is thought as the forbidden, lesbian sexuality cannot even enter into the parameters of thought itself; lesbianism is here the phantasm of the phantasm" (197).

[58] To cite a heroine from Riccoboni's *Lettres de Mistriss Fanni Butlerd* (1757) in *Romans de femmes du XVIIIe siècle*, ed. Raymond Trousson (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1996): "Ah! how I love you! Why can I only but write it [*Ah! que je t'aime! Pourquoi ne puis-je que l'écrire*]?" (221). This nicely ambiguous phrases captures the double sense of "can only"– the speaker is frustrated that she can only write to her beloved (because he is absent) and, perhaps more compelling, finds that this love can only taken place in, and as, writing itself.

[59] "The Dead-End of Formalist Criticism," in *Blindness and Insight*, 232. On "givenness" and the problematics of phenomenological donation see Jean-Luc Marion, "The Other First Philosophy and the Question of Givenness" trans. Jeffrey L. Kosky, *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 25, No. 4 (Summer, 1999): 784-800. Foucault also offers a critique of the transcendental and anthropological conceit of a human constructor of language who creates meanings constituted prior to the discursive practices of signification (themselves wielded by no subject proper). See *The Archaeology of Knowledge and The Discourse on Language,* trans. A.M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), 112-3.

[60] What are limits to the classical liberal, existential, humanist, and "original state of nature" models of subjectivity — especially those according to which individuals, presumed in these accounts to begin as precultural beings that eventually taken on cultural attributes, express an inborn will, maintain a pre-endowed or pregiven agency, and exercise free voluntarist choice, prior to the constraints of social relations and signification? Might the subject or individual presupposed to express a preconstituted identity (fully formed and ready-made) be the effect of the figural language by means of which experience is constituted, as if the conceit of the subject were only retroactively inferred and re-applied? Here the question of the structural unconscious posed by Lacanian psychoanalysis, and revised by deconstructive re-readings, comes to the fore insofar as it has been suggested that intentionality, while possibly operative in the scene of experience, is not therefore the controlling force or self-present agent of operation (its intention coincident with its meaning and effect). This implies that the presumed *ego* (whether phenomenological or psychoanalytic) never, in fact, coincides with itself —never was itself— and thus was never a coherent and pregiven self to which experience happens or in whom experiences is simply gathered. Post-marxist viewpoints influenced by Lacanian psychoanalysis and poststructuralist perspectives, such as Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe's *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: towards a radical democratic politics* (London and New York: Verso, 1985), might well contend that whether or not experience is located in an "individual" or whether, in fact, the contingencies and temporalities of articulations amongst differing social categories disallows an easy division between "individual" and "collective" experiences.

[61] This relates to the early work of *la voix et le phénomène* by Jacques Derrida, which notably criticizes the phenomenological conceit of Husserl that prior to signification there would be a pre-expressive and self-present ideality, fully formed and intact, that would be awaiting ex-pression or dis-closure outward through a sensible signifier. Experience cannot be understood in its empirical instantiations because the ideality presupposed for it goes beyond every such instantiations, though at

the same time, that ideality cannot be separated from its instantiations; if experiences have to be repeated; then their iteratbility makes the ideality of experience possible but, because it is repeated (different from itself) pure ideality is no longer possible because non-self-identical.

[62] "Discourse" here carries with it both its deconstructive and foucaultian connotations. In *L'écriture et la différence* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1967), Derrida comments: "en l'absence de centre ou d'origine, tout devient *discours*—à condition de s'entendre sur ce mot— c'est-à-dire système dans lequel le signifié central, originaire ou transcendantal, n'est jamais absoluement présent hors d'un système de différences. L'absence de signifié transcendental étend à l'infini le champ et le jeu de la signification" (411; emphasis added). Here discourse seems to shade into "text" as elaborated upon in later writings. In Laclau and Mouffe's *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, discourse takes on, in addition to its derridean valences, specific foucaultian variations, a wittgensteinian connotation of "language-game" a system of differential relations amongst linguistic and nonlinguistic factors (the relations between these elements rendering them discursive): "What is denied is not that such objects exist externally to thought, but the rather different assertion that they could constitute themselves as objects outside any discursive condition of emergence" (108). This particular formulation emphasizes that discourse is not merely *mental*, as is often presumed, but also *material* (a postulation defended, in disparate guises, by Deleuze and Foucault) and that no object is nondiscursive (which is not to say that everything is, by a sort of linguistic monism, reducible to language) or that the so-called "external" world is merely an idealist effect. If "discourse is irreducible to the binaric realist/idealist opposition, it is not therefore the result of a unified experience or the product of a transcendental ego, for the very notion and category of the "subject" (in all the various senses this philosophical conceit is invested with) comes under question. According to this view, "the material character of discourse cannot be unified in the experience of consciousness of a founding subject; on the contrary, diverse *subject positions* appear dispersed within a discursive formation" (109).

[63] In deconstructive idiom, the "constitutive outside" is the excluded contingent ostracized by the postulation of identity. If experience has long been placed in "presence," then inexperience constitutes the "absence" to it. As Derrida's "ouisa et grammè: note sur une note de Sein und Zeit" in *Marges— de la philosophie* (Paris: Les éditions de Minuit, 1972), asks in relation to this metaphysical tradition of presence and experience: " Comment aurait-on pu penser l'être et le temps *autrement* qu'à partir du présent, dans la forme du présent, à savoir d'un certain *maintenant en général* qu'aucune *expérience,* par définition, jamais ne pourra quitter? L'expérience de la pensée et la pensée de l'expérience n'ont jamais affaire qu'à de la présence" (41). In these terms, the parameters by which "experiences" become recognizable as such are delimited by a metaphysics of presence, which becomes an interpretative norm governing an experience's recognisability.

[64] Foucault's remarks on the limits of experience in *Remarks on Marx, Conversations with Duccio Trombadori* (New York : Semiotext(e), c1991), as limit-experience are suggestive in this context: "The phenomenologist's experience is basically a way orf organizing the conscious perception (*regard réflexif*) of any aspect of daily, lived experience in its transitory form, in order to grasp its meaning. Nietzsche, Bataille, and Blanchot, on the contrary try through experience to reach that point of life which lies as close as possible to the impossibility of living, which lies at the limit or extreme [...] The work of the phenomenologist, however, essentially consists of unfolding the entire field of possibilities connected to daily experience. Moreover, phenomenology tries to grasp the significance of daily experience in order to reaffirm the fundamental character of the subject, of the self, of its transcendental functions" (30-1). This is reposed elsewhere as the question: "Can't there be experiences in which the subject, in its constitutive relations, in its self-identity, isn't given any more? And thus wouldn't experiences be given in which the subject could dissociate itself, break its relationship with itself, lose its identity?" (49).

[65] On the fraught concept-metaphor of the resistance to resistance see Derrida, *"Résistances"— de la psychoanalyse* (Paris : Galilée, 1996), de Man, *The Resistance to Theory*, and Kamuf, "Pieces of Resistance" in *Signature Pieces*.

PRELUDE

[1] (New York: Dover Publications, inc: Mineola, 1997),74. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text. This scene might well be summarized as "Ada silently bows down as Harry muffledly bows out." The passage continues: "It was always for the sake of that particular scene that Newland Archer went to see 'The Shaughraun.' He thought the adieux of Montague and Ada Dyas as fine as anything he had ever seen Croisette and Bressant do in Paris, or Madge Robertson and Kendal in London; in its reticence, its dumb sorrow, it moved him more than the most famous histrionic outpourings."

[2] This scene of untouching would seem to recall that of Elizabeth Barrett Browning's novel in verse *Aurora Leigh* (1856) (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1996), where the heroine is grazed by a beloved's timid touch: "But he touched, just touched/My hatstrings tied for going" (l. 970-1).

[3] More attuned to this predicament would be the paradoxical language of the "event without event" which figures in Derrida's essay "Préjugés. Devant la loi" in *La Faculté de Juger,* ed. Derrida et al. (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1985): "Evénement sans événement, événement pur où rien n'arrive, événementialité d'un événement qui requiert et annule le récit dans sa fiction…le récit deviant le révit impossible de l'impossible" (117-8), namely "un récit d'un événement qui arrive *à* ne pas

arriver" (128). See also the language of "what happens—or *fails to happen*" in " 'This Strange Institution Called Literature': An Interview with Jacques Derrida" from *Acts of Literature*, ed. Derek Attridge (New York: Routledge, 1992), 34.

[4] As some historical accounts contend, experience becomes a key concept in early modern and Enlightenment Europe where experimentation takes on central importance in intellectual discourse in philosophy, science, and literature (to this day, "expérience" in French connotes both experiment and experience), before coming to signify a type of self-consciousness or awareness in the twentieth century. Consider for example Raymond Williams' *Keywords: a vocabulary of culture and society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985) which defines experience as "(i) knowledge gathered from past events, whether by conscious observation or by consideration and reflection; and (ii) a particular kind of consciousness, which can in some contexts be distinguished from 'reason' or 'knowledge'" (126).

[5] For a nuanced criticism of customary conceptions of experience, see John Russon's reevaluation of experience in *Human Experience. Philosophy, Neurosis, and the Elements of Everyday Life* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2003).

[6] The concept-metaphor of experience, as Jay claims in *Songs of Experience*, stems from the Greeks to modernity and beyond, filtering through Montaigne's "Of Experience" in his essays, Francis Bacon's *experiential literata* in the *Novum organum* to Lockean empiricism, Berkeley's immaterialism (the nonexperience of materiality), Kant's transcendentalism, Hume's empiricism, and Husserl's phenomenology, while undergoing radical paradigm shifts all throughout its long, discontinuous history. However, while "experience" might well have a historicity (never simply emerging *ex nihilo*), whether or not it can be said to constitute a universal and self-identical theme is far less certain.

[7] *The basic problems of phenomenology : from the lectures, winter semester, 1910-1911* (Dordrecht, The Netherlands : Springer, c2006), 2. The natural attitude, for Husserl, could never reliably reveal the logical relations of experience: "Everyone knows that 'experience can deceive.' Everyone knows, indeed, everyone has the right, upon pursuing the evidence, to assert what is experienced. Nevertheless, everyone knows that what is experienced 'may not really be the case'" (11).

[8] Husserl adds: "Each of us knows himself as an I. Now, being in the attitude where each of us finds himself present as an I, what does each of us find present in himself and in connection with himself? [It is that] everyone had to say "I,"…I posit myself as being and as being this here, as being with this and that determinate content. I posit me as experiencing this and that; I have such and such disposition and acts. But I do not posit me as a disposition or an act; I do not come upon me as a disposition or an act. Further, I posit me and find me not only present as an experiencing subject but also as a subject of personal properties, as a person with a certain character, as having certain intellectual and moral dispositions, etc. This I find to be present, of course, in a completely different way than I find my experiences to be present" (8-9).

[9] *The Idea of Phenomenology ,* trans. Lee Hardy (Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers,1999): "In perception, the perceived object is supposed to be immediately given. There stands the thing before my perceiving eyes. I see it, I grasp it. But the perception is nothing more than an experience that belongs to me, the perceiving subject…How do I, the knowing subject, know —and how can I know for sure—that not only my experiences these acts of knowing, exist, but also what they know exists? Indeed, how do I know that there is anything at all that can be set over against knowledge as an object?" (17); "*every experience whatsoever, can be made into an object of pure seeing and apprehension* while it is occurring. *And in this act of seeing it is an absolute givenness.* It is given as an existing entity, as a 'this-here.' To be sure, I can wonder what sort of being this is, and how this mode of being is related to other modes. Furthermore, I can wonder what givennes means here, and can, upon a further act of reflection, see this act of seeing itself, the act in which this givenness, or this mode of being, constitutes itself" (24).

[10] As Derrida comments in "Closure": "The essence…is that which makes a thing what it is, the attribute or the bundle of attributes without which it would not be what it is nor appear as what it is. For example, it belongs to the essence of every body to be extended; one could not remove extension from a body without doing away with it as body,..This is something I can know and assert *a priori*, universally and necessarily, therefore apodictically, without referring to any particular experience" (111).

[11] Husserl, *Experience and Judgment: Investigations in a Genealogy of Logic,* trans. James S. Churchill et al. (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), 20. "Judgment" refers to both "*prepredicative, objectifying turning-toward an existent*" as well as predicative modes, in short it refers to "*the totality of objectivating* (objectifying) *ego-acts*" (61).

[12] "Closure," 113. Derrida adds, importantly: "this independence of the essence in regard to factual existence and this freedom form the intuition to which it gives rise risk being interpreted as metaphysical hypotheses. Is this not a hypostasizing of essences, a Platonic realism of essences, a new substantialism? Right when he resorts the language of Plato—eidos—*or of Aristotle*—ousia, *quidditas*— Husserl vigorously rejects Platonism or substantialism. The essence *does not exist*. It *is nothing* beyond the *fact*, from which nonetheless one can separate it in eidetic intuition. It is an original and irreducible non-existence" (112).

[13] "Closure," 113.

[14] With the advent of phenomenology, which some define as "the study of how one experiences," and most especially in Husserl's *Logical Investigations* (1900-01), "experience" took on a different form: no longer the endurance of a trial and an eventful fruition in epistemological sagacity"experience" came to be considered as a transcendental, idealist structure of consciousness, if not subjective self-presence (Cf. Heidegger, in *Being and Time* [1927), which is said to depart from the so-called "Cartesian" consciousness of Husserl in emphasizing the ontological question). Experience has thus sometimes been understood (in some

phenomenological accounts) terms of first-person intuition, subjective self-presence and intentional consciousness or (in some empiricist doctrines) as the ground of conceptualization and knowledge.

[15] "Intentionality: A Fundamental Idea in Husserl's Phenomenology," trans. Joseph Fell *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* (May, 1970), 1 (2), 4. Husserl makes this point in *Phenomenology and the Foundations of the Sciences,* trans. Ted E. Klein and William E. Pohl (Boston: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1980): "The cognition of causal relationships is not something secondary to the cognition of the real, as if the real were first of all in and for itself, and then only incidentally, as something extra-essential to its being, acme into relation with other realities, having an effect upon them and being affected by them (undergoing effects), as if, accordingly, cognition could bring out and determine an essence proper to the real that would be independent of the cognition of its causal relations. The point, rather, is precisely that it is fundamentally essential to *reality* as such not to have a proper essence *of that sort* at all; rather, it is what it is only in its causal relations. It is something *fundamentally relative,* which demands its corresponding members, and only in this connection of member and corresponding member is each a "*substance*' of real properties. A *substance* that would be *alone* (in the sense that every Objective real thing is a substance) is *nonsense*. A substance in the sense of the well-known definitions of Descartes and Spinoza is therefore something fundamentally different from an Objective reality in the sense of our delimitations. On the other hand, causality is not so readily given in the context of experience, just as, in another manner, the real itself that stands in causal relations is also not readily given. To be sure, one can, in a certain manner, always say: where there has been experience, *something* has been experienced, is thereby given, and given without further ado…And it is given in its circumstances. But as for these latter, they lie in the total surroundings viewed along with it, and that in it which is actually a causally determining circumstance remains vague" (3-4).

[16] Husserl, *Experience* 49. Emphasis in the original. Husserl adds that "it is not mere particular objects, isolated by themselves, which hare thus pregiven but always a *field* of pregivenness" (72).

[17] See Judith Butler, "Sartre: The Imaginary Pursuit of Being," *Subjects of Desire: Hegelian Reflections in Twentieth-Century France* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 101-138.

[18] *The Ideas Pertaining to A Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy. First Book: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology*, trans. F. Kersten (Boston: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1982), 132-3 (paragraph 57). As Derrida would argue in *Voice and* Phenomenon, part of what is at stake is how objects are constituted temporally in presence (how does retention become representation?) and of conceiving intersubjective life (the appresentation of ego in relation to another ego). Just as the sign cannot be singular and idiomatic but repeatable over time, (it must be recognizable as the same, as the ideality which keeps it recognizable and repeatable must be distinguished from empirical instantiations, while also being repeatable and thus never fully the same), every presence is in fact a re-presentation for the "presence-of-the-present" is made possible by its repetition. Here ideality has converged with being as presence. But this requirement of presence requires that we acknowledge our own death, that is, that before and after us the "*the present is*" (46), regardless of whether we are empirically there or not: "If the possibility of my disappearance in general must be in a certain way experientially lived so that a relation to presence in general can be instituted, we can no longer say that the experience of the possibility of my absolute disappearance (of my death) comes to affect me, supervenes over an *I am* and modifies a subject, the *I am,* being experientially lived only as an *I am present,* presuppose in itself the relation to presence in general, to being as presence. The appearing of the *I* to itself in the *I am* is therefore originarily the relation to its own possible disappearance. *I am* means therefore *I am mortal*." (46). In this sense, Derrida recalls the conditions of non-presence and non-perception which accompany necessarily any possible perceived present (for example, the conception of ideality as "a medium that preserves at once the *present of the object* in front of the intuition and the *presence to oneself,* the absolute proximity of the acts to themselves" [65]), going on to focus on the retentive and protentive traces in any act of perception which undoes the self-identity of any posited present: "Without this non-identity ot oneself of so-called originary presence, how are we to explain that the possibility of reflection and of re-presentation belongs to the essence of every lived experience?" (58).

[19] This rendition of a self-grounding self recurs in *Phenomenology and the Foundations of the Sciences* when Husserl speaks of Phenomenology as "the science of 'origins,' of the 'mothers' of all cognition; and it is the maternal-ground of all philosophical method: to this ground and to the work in it, everything leads back" (69).

[20] (Paris: Flammarion, 2000), 66.

[21] *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes, vol II.,* trans. John Cottingham et al. (Cambridge University Press, 1984), 17.

[22] *Philosophical Writings*, 195.

[23] *Voice and Phenomenon,* trans. Leonard Lawlor (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2011), 46. The passage continues: "Being is presence or the modification of presence. The relation fo the presence of the present as the ultimate form of being and ideality…To think presence as the universal form of transcendental life is to open me to the knowledge that in my absence, beyond my empirical existence." This insight is reprised later on: "consciousness [for Husserl[is the self-presence of the living, of the *Erleben*, of experience." (49). In this sense the living present paradoxically requires the death of the subject, insofar as it must be presumed that the ideality of presence must persist and endure in the potential absence of the subject's empirical finitude. For the present must be *what is,* and this *what is* must be infinitely repeatable, before I was and after I will be

no longer, in order to persist as presence, thus implicating death in life. In this sense, the *living present* is always to an extent a *survival* or *living on*.

[24] *De la grammatologie* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1967): "'*Expérience' a toujours désigné le rapport à une presence, que ce rapport ait ou non la forme de la conscience*" (89). *Of grammatology,* trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univeristy press, 1997), 27. Translation modified.

[25] (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1967), 225. The French gives: "Mais peut-on parler d'une *expérience* de l'autre ou de la difference?le concept d'expérience n'a-t-il pas toujours été déterminé par la métaphysique de la presence? L'expérience n'est-elle pas toujours rencontre d'une présence irreductible, perception d'une phénomenalité."

[26] Ed. Margaret Reynolds (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1996), 255. Aurora's clothes come to take on a life of their own, rendering the distinction between touching/being touched even more uncertain: ""While we two sate together, leaned that night/So close my very garments crept and thrilled/With strange electric life, and both my cheeks/Grew red, then pale, with touches from my hair/In which his breath was" (308).

[27] Unsettlingly, such a self-effacing moment cannot simply be qualified an "experience," but nor can its experiential effects be tared or preterited. Hearken, in this context, the formulation in Smock's *What is there to say?* (Lincoln : University of Nebraska Press, 2003) : "innocence [is] the incompetence with which people bear guilt for which they haven't the qualifications […]they go out of their way to exonerate themselves by measuring up to it after all: by incurring the guilt that illegitimately they'd been bearing with their harmlessness," (58-9). And on Melville: "Innocence is regularly a synonym of inexperience […]" (59).

[28] To cite Derrida's essay "*Ousia* and *Gramme*" in *Margins—of Philosophy,* trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982): how could experience, eluding presence, be conceived if it "can never offer itself in order to be read in the form of presence, supposing that anything ever can offer itself in order to be *read* in such a form. And yet, that which gives us to think beyond the closure cannot be simply absent. Absent, either it would give us nothing to think or it still would be a negative mode of presence. Therefore the sign of this excess must be absolutely excessive as concerns all possible presence-absence, all possible production or disappearance of beings in general, and yet, *in some manner* it must still signify, in a manner unthinkable by metaphysics as such. In order to exceed metaphysics it is necessary that a trace be inscribed within the text of metaphysics, a trace that continues to signal not in the direction of another presence, or another form of presence, but in the direction of an entirely other text. Such a trace cannot be thought *more metaphysico*. No philosopheme is prepared to master it and it (is) that which must elude mastery. Only presence is mastered. The mode of inscription of such a trace in the text of metpahysics is so unthinkable that it must be described as an erasure of the trace itself, to elude that which might maintain it in presence. The trace is neither perceptible nor imperceptible…this difference is so buried that there is no longer any trace of it. The trace of difference is erased. If one recalls that difference (is) itself other than absence and presence, (is) (itself) trace, it is indeed the trace of the trace that has disappeared" (65-66).

[29] What to make of this travesty that the woman will stay mindless not only of what has transpired but, moreover, mindless of the fact that she has even been mindless of it; that she misses not only the loss of her lover and the valedictory kiss he affords her but also, and perhaps more trenchantly, she misses that she has even missed out on this loving leave-taking; that she will thus not only never realize his affectionate quitting of her but also never realize that she will never realize this, for she will have been preserved by her inconsideration not only from knowing the punishing fact that he has withdrawn but also, and no less plangently, preserved from knowing the salvation that she has remained pristinely heedless of it? If there is *contretemps* and mishap here, it is not merely because the woman does not know what has elapsed but, more recursively, because she does not know that she does not know this. If the woman has been protected from knowledge – and from all forms of knowledge, including the knowledge of the fact that she does not know- she will also have been safeguarded from ignorance –and from all forms of ignorance, including the ignorance that keeps her from not knowing the fact that she does not know.

[30] "Nothing ever becomes real till it is experienced—Even a proverb is no proverb to you till your Life has illustrated it." Letter to George and Georgiana Keats dates from February 14-May3, 1819.

[31] *Philosophische Untersuchungen,* bilingual edition trans. G.E.M. Anscombe (Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishing, 2001), 153.

[32] Here a play is performatively translated into fiction— the genre of play itself already being a play of literary language— as "The Shaughraun" is redescribed as fictional sequence in *The Age of Innocence*.

[33] Consider the pithy formulation in Paul de Man's *Blindness and Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983): "instead of containing or reflecting experience, language constitutes it" (232).

[34] Which is not to say, however, that these literary discourses fully and deterministically represent that which they purport to describe, for, as will become evident throughout these pages, the figural and rhetorical tendencies of language, its infinite textualities and linguistic mobilities, inevitably undercut its own pretensions to representational mimeticism and predicative proposition).

[35] See Derrida *Limited Inc* (Paris: Galilée, 1990): "ce que j'appelle 'texte' implique toutes les structures dites 'réelles,' 'economiques,' 'historiques,' socio-institutionnelles, bref tous les référents possibles [...] tout référent, toute réalité a la structure d'une trace différantielle, et qu'on ne peut se rapporter à ce réel que dans une expérience interprétative. Celle-ci ne donne ou ne prend sens que dans un movement de renvoi différantiel" (273). This trace-structure is elucidated in "*Ousia*": The passage continues: "But at the same time, this erasure of the trace must have been traced in the metaphysical text. Presence, then, far from being, as is commonly thought, *what* the sign signifies, what a trace refers to, presence, then, is the trace of the trace, the trace of the erasure of the trace. Such is, for us, the text of metaphysics, and such is, for us, the language which we speak. Only on this condition can metaphysics and our language signal in the direction of their own transgression. And this is why it is not contradictory to think *together* the *erased* and the *traced* of the trace. And also why there is no contradiction between the absolute erasure of the 'early trace' of difference and which maintains it as trace, sheltered and visible in presence...Henceforth it must be recognized that all the determinations of such a trace—all the names it is given—belong as such to the text of metaphysics that shelters the trace, and not ot the trace itself. There is not trace *itself,* no *proper* trace...The trace of the trace which (is) difference above all could not appear or be named *as such*, that is, in its presence. It is the *as such* which precisely, and as such, evades us forever" (66).

[36] For a discussion on the significant differences between "how does this signify?" and "what does this mean?" see Barbara Johnson, *The Wake of Deconstruction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994). Another question to be asked here would be: If this figure of the kiss is discursively constituted, does this mean it is reducible to language, or would it, rather, elude full referential capture within the very terms of the rhetoric that nonetheless mobilizes it?

[37] For a related, though differing, account of uncounting experiences (somewhat at odds with this account of the woman's lampless lack of awareness that she has averted both knowing and not knowing what she does not, indeed *cannot*, experience self-presently –namely, the impalpable, impactless caress of her lover) one might consult the formulations in Anne-Lise François, *Open Secrets: the literature of uncounted experience* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008): "I am putting this information into your hands so that you may do nothing with it" (76); "a decision to let pass, to do nothing, to chose what already is" (87); "I am putting this information into your hands so that you may do nothing with it [...] I am trusting you with the secret of my illict feelings for another man- a secret that you will do best by me to ignore as I do" (76). In this account, "intimacy between people as potentially objectifying and intrusive and presupposes the pessimistic view of intersubjective knowledge afforded by the analogy of psychological knowledge to carnal— to a sexual possession that can never absolutely establish its difference from violation" (75). This view importantly shows how the border between bestowal and bereavement remains unclear, it emphasizes how some experiences might not have come to fruition and how narratives *make* that "nothing" happen; it describes acts of taking take up what one has seemed to have acquired without even willing and to set aside that which we thought we knew. In these terms the only claim is to make a claim not to make one. However, where *Open Secrets* sees the making of an open secret of a *fulfilled experience* that is stated without emphasis like a claim whose only claim is that it has seemingly none at all to public attention or action, it makes sense to ask what may or may not be certified an experience to begin with. If *Open Secrets* might presume that there is an experience, itself attained, that is elided in its very presentation, the question here is whether the very act of determining "experience" itself might always falter, might always fall and fail. In this sense, it converges with Derrida's "En ce moment même dans cet ouvrage me voici," in *Psyché: Inventions de l'Autre* (Paris: Éditions Galilée, 1997) on the problem of gifts without restitution, where giving is always implicated with what cannot be given (by a subject).

[38] Such formulations dovetail with those according to which this deconstruction of experience becomes indistinguishable from an experience of deconstruction: "An experience without self, from outside self, an experience without experience itself." From Peggy Kamuf, "The Experience of Deconstruction," in *Book of Addresses* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2005), 154.

[39] In deconstructive idiom this might be described as an emphasis not on how lovers "meet each other but how they miss each other," to quote Barbara Johnson, *The Critical Difference: Essays in the Contemporary Rhetoric of Reading* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), 119.

[40] In reference to the "pretensions of the copula ("is")" one might also think here of former president Bill Clinton's declaration, during his 1998 address to the grand jury during his impeachment trial for sexual relations with his intern that it "depends on what the meaning of the word 'is' is" in regard to whether an amorous relationships is ongoing or whether it ever really "was."

[41] See Nietzsche, "Description of Ancient Rhetoric," trans. Carole Blair and David J. Parent, *Friedrich Nietzsche on Rhetoric and Language,* ed. Sander L. Gilman (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 2–193. For a discussion of Nietzsche's proclamations that knowledge-production is bound to the provisions of syntax, see Derrida, "Le supplément de copule: la philosophie devant la linguistique" in *Marges— de la philosophie* (Paris: Les éditions de Minuit, 1972), 212-3. Derrida's *La Carte Postale* additionally addresses the "S is P" propositional formula of subject/predicate.

[42] See *On the Genealogy of Morals*, trans. Walter Kauffman and R.J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage Books, 1989): "But there is no such substratum; there is no 'being' behind doing, effecting, becoming; 'the doer' is merely a fiction added to the

deed—the deed is everything [*es gibt kein 'Sein' hinter dem Tun, Wirken, Werden; 'der Täter' ist zum Tun blos hinzugedichtet*]. The popular mind in fact doubles the deed; when it sees the lightning flash, it is the deed of a deed: it posits the same event first as cause and then a second time as its effect [...] our entire science still lies under the misleading influence of language and has not disposed of that little changeling, the 'subject'" (45). Translation modified.

[43] "The belief in grammar, in the linguistic subject, object, in verbs has, thus far, subjugated the metaphysicians," writes Nietzsche. Cited in Christian Emden, *Nietzsche on Language, Consciousness, and the Body* (Chicago: University of Illinois, 2005), 80. Nietzsche comments of the Cartesian cogito that " In this famous cogito there is: (1)it thinks; (2) I believe that it is I who thinks; (3)...that "thinking" is an activity for which one must imagine a subject, if only "it"; and the *ergo sum* signifies nothing more. But this is a belief in grammar: one suppose 'things' and their 'activities,' and this puts us far from immediate certainty." Cited in Martis, *Representation and the Loss of the Subject,* 9.

[44] *The Portable Nietzsche,* ed. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Penguin, 1982), 483. See also Michel Haar, *Nietzsche et la métaphysique* (Paris: Gallimard, 1993).

[45] *The Will to Power,* trans. Walter Kaufman & R.J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage Books, 1967), 267.

[46] *Unpublished,* 71.

[47] On the mummification of metaphors and the congealment/concealment of figures into concepts (the subsequent occultation or occlusion of their figural genesis), see Sarah Kofman, *Nietzsche et la métaphore* (Pairs: Payot, 1972). Even the concept of metaphor (or the conceit of metaphor gorgonizing and metamorphosing into a petrified concept), is yet another metaphor, generating an infinite, substitutive sign-chain. On the metaphysics of substance, see Michel Haar, "Nietzsche and Metaphysical Language" in *Nietzsche: Contemporary Styles of Interpretation*, ed. David Allison (New York: Delta, 1977), 17-8 and Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 28. This is clearly not a charge leveled against the entirety of classical and medieval articulations of "substance" (*ousia, hypokeimenon, substantia, subjectum*) cannot be understood in Greek thought according to a dichotomy of subject/object (a duality entrenched in post-aristitotelian philosophic articulations) —in Aristotle's *Logic*, the subject occurs in terms of predication, then substance (*hypokeimenon*—subject and substance; "underlying" or "substratum") serves as that which is not predicted but of which something is predicated. In post-cartesian formulations, substance is said to take identifications with Being (Aquinas' self-subsisting God, Heidegger's *Dasein*) and logos (Descartes' cogito). For a recapitulation of this history see John Martis, *Phillippe Lacoue-Labarthe: Representation and the Loss of the Subject* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2006).

[48] *Twilight of the Idols,* in *Compendium,* 315. See also the *Late Notebooks* (1888): "the implication is always that *something* is moved, and whether in the action of a lump atom or even of its abstraction...we still conceive of a thing which effects—that is, we haven't left behind the habit that senses that language seduce us to. Subject, object, a doer for every doing, the doing separated from what does it: let's not forget that this is merely semiotics and does not refer to something real...We need unities in order to be able to count: we should not therefore assume that such unities exist. We have borrowed the concept of unity from our concept of 'I' our oldest article of faith. If we didn't consider ourselves to be unities, we would never have created the concept of 'thing'" (246).

[49] Cf. Derrida in *Dialogue with Contemporary Continental Thinkers*: "we msut ascertain what exactly we mean by 'presence.' The French or English words are, of course, neither Greek nor Jewish. So that when we use the word we presuppose a vasty history of translation which leads from the Greek terms *ousia* and *on* to the Latin *substantia, actus,* etc. and culminate in our modern term 'presence'" (108).

[50] *Will to Power,* 268-9.

[51] See Derrida, " 'Eating Well,' or the Calculation of the Subject" in *Points...Interviews, 1974-1994* (Stanford California: Stanford University Press, 1995), 262. According to this account, a certain tradition "from Descartes to Kant and to Husserl" would have, founded the "subject" on various predicates: "These predicates would be, for example, the sub-jective structure as the being-thrown—or under-lying— of the substance or of the *substratum*, of the *hypokeimenon*, with its qualities of stance or stability, of permanent presence, of sustained relation to self, everything that links the 'subject' to conscience, to humanity, to history" (259). In regard to the "substantialist or subjectivist metaphysics" associated with the grammar of the subject see Judith Butler's discussion of the "metaphysics of substance," rephrasing Michel Haar, in "Subjects of Sex/Gender/Desire," in *Gender Trouble,* 27-8 and "Contingent Foundations" in *Feminist Contentions: A Philosophical Exchange,* eds. Butler et al (New York: Routledge, 1995): "subjects who institute actions are themselves instituted effects of prior actions [...] the horizon in which we act is there as a constitutive possibility of our very capacity to act, not merely or exclusively as an exterior field or theater of operations. [...] the actions instituted via that subject are part of a chain of actions that can no longer be understood as unilinear in direction or predictable in their outcomes" (43). And later on: "There is no ontologically intact reflexivity to the subject which is then placed within a cultural context; that cultural context, as it were, is already there as the disarticulated process of that subject's production, one that is concealed by the frame that would situate a ready-made subject in an external web of cultural relations" (46).

[52] The metaphysics of the subject furthers the notion of a prediscursive subject of substantial identity who precedes social

signification and exceeds cultural location, sometimes construed in humanist philosophical discourses as a transcendental cogito or psychological ego with inborn attributes and pre-established capacities (language, consciousness, freedom, will). As Sarah Kofman notes in *Nietzsche et la métaphore:* "Ainsi *le* vouloir n'est qu'une figure rhétorique: si on cherche à decomposer le processus, jamais on ne parvient à du simple, l'élément dernier est encore un rapport. Vouloir est quelque chose de 'compliqué,' simplifié illusoirement par la conscience et le langage" (61). See also Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, *Le sujet de la philosophie* (Paris: Aubier-Flammarion, 1979). Both the classical liberal model of personhood and the existential analytics of choice, not to mention the prediscursive model of identity they seem to presuppose, take for granted a humanist conceit according to which actors meet and decide on equal footing because of factic, natural, or universal preconditions and attributes, ready-made and preconstituted persons who wield, if not yield, intentional action and decision prior to their discursive construction and implication in social relations. For these humanist models, there exists a precultural ontology of persons who, upon subsequent entry into social contracts and cultural bonds, have inborn capacities to voluntarily initiate intention and willfully accomplish action within discourse.

[53] Derrida, "'Eating Well,'" 255.

[54] *Unpublished,* 78; 118.

[55] *Will to Power,* 552 (1886-1887), 283.

[56] *On the Genealogy of Morals*, trans. Walter Kauffman and R.J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 45. On the metaphysics of substance, see Michel Haar, "Nietzsche and Metaphysical Language" in *Nietzsche: Contemporary Styles of Interpretation*, ed. David Allison (New York: Delta, 1977), 17-8 and Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 28.

[57] *Will to Power,* 269. This limit comes from the failings of a humanizing perspective, and the fact that this perspective is the only one available. To cite a notebook from 1872 in *Unpublished*: "Time in itself is nonsense: time exists only for a sesnsate creature. The same is true for space. Every *structure* appertains to the subject. It is the registering of *surfaces* by means of mirrors. We have to subtract all qualities. We cannot conceive things as they are, precisely because we then would not be capable of conceiving them" (46).

[58] *Writings from the Late Notebooks,* ed. Rüdiger Bittner and trans. Kate Sturge (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 20-1. The entry dates from around 1885. Elsewhere in the notebooks he refers to the concepts of subject and substance as anthropomorphisms: "Concepts can derive only from perception. 'Being' is the projection of breath and life onto all things: imposition of the human sense of life. The only question is: Whether the origin of all perceptions leads us to being: no. The form of thought, like perception, presupposes that we believe in being: we believe in being because we believe in ourselves. If the latter is a category, then certainly the former as well." From *Unpublished,* 119.

[59] See *Late Notebooks* (1887) "If we give up the effecting *subject*, then also the *object* on which effects are exerted. Duration, conformity with itself, being, inhere neither in what is called subject nor in what is called object. They are complexes of what happens which appear to have duration in relation to other complexes. If we give up the concept 'subject' and 'object,' the also the concept '*substance*' and consequently its various modifications, e.g., 'material,' 'spirit' and other hypothetical entities" (154).

[60] In French, the relationship between experience and experiment connoted by the term "expérience" is even stronger. Despite evident differences from English, certain French expressions seem to allude to these aforementioned presuppositions: "*avoir* de l'expérience"; "*être* expérimenté"; "*faire* l'expérience de."

[61] *Experientia* interweaves together " 'trial, proof, or experiment,' " describing both proof and pitfall, encounter and education: "Insofar as 'to try' (*expereri*) contains the same root as *periculum*, or 'danger,' there is also a covert association between experience and peril which suggests that it comes from having survived risks and learned something from the encounter (*ex* meaning a coming forth from)." From Martin Jay *Songs of Experience: Modern American and European Variations on a Universal Theme*, (Ewing, NJ: University of California Press, 2004), 10-11. The Greek nomenclature of *pathos*, while not etymologically related is nonetheless conceptually relevant here. See also the note and exposition of Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, *La poésie comme expérience* (Paris: Christian Bourgeois, 1986), 27-35. In a footnote, Roger Munier is cited: " 'Il y a d'abord l'étymologie. *Expérience* vient du latin *experiri*, que l'on retrouve dans *periculum*, péril, danger. La racine indo-européenne est PER à laquelle se rattachent l'idée de *traversée* et, secondairement, d'*épreuve*. En grec, les dérivés sont nombreux qui marquent la traversée, le passage : *peirô*, traverser ; *pera*, au-delà ; *peraô*, passer à travers ; *perainô*, aller jusqu'au bout ; *peras*, terne, limite. Pour les langues germaniques on a, en ancien haut allemand *faran*, d'où sont issus *fahren*, transporter et *fürhen*, conduire. Faut-il y ajouter justement *Erfahrung*, expérience, ou le mot est-il à rapporter au second sens de PER : épreuve, en ancien haut allemand *fara*, danger, qui a donné *Gefahr*, danger et *gefährden*, mettre en danger ? Les confins entre un sens et l'autre sont imprécis. De même qu'en latin *periri*, tenter et *periculum*, qui veut d'abord dire épreuve, puis risque, danger. L'idée d'expérience comme traversée se sépare mal, au niveau étymologique et sémantique, de celle de risque. L'*expérience* est au départ, fondamentalement sans doute, une mise en danger'" (30-1).

[62] "Text" in this particular (and unusual) sense would resonate with Derrida's claims in *Limited Inc* (Paris: Galilée, 1990): "il n'y a pas d'expérience de *pure* présence mais seulement des chaines de marques différentielles" (32); "ce que j'appelle 'texte'

implique toutes les structures dites 'réelles,' 'economiques,' 'historiques,' socio-institutionnelles, bref tous les référents possibles [...] tout référent, toute réalité a la structure d'une trace différantielle, et qu'on ne peut se rapporter à ce réel que dans une expérience interprétative. Celle-ci ne donne ou ne prend sens que dans un movement de renvoi différantiel" (273). In this account, experience is caught in writing: *graphemes* or "chains of differential marks." "Writing," in this idiom, "is" other than spoken and written words alone as well as the suspension of the very predicative copula "is": not a transcription, a mere recording of reported speech, of spoken language, but an array of graphematic marks that are materially re-markable and repeatable, purveying and pulverizing the meaning it enables and effaces. As will become clear, this reference to textualized experience is not a structuralist conceit equating experience with language. If experience is a text, this implies that experience is constituted within a differential network of referrals and relata, within the traces of what it is not, rather than within the predicates of a self-present, underlying subject (namely, a presupposed *hypokeimenon* or *substratum* of a subject who stands in transparent presence to itself).

[63] This is a question pursued in terms of experience and nonsubjective emotion in Rei Terada, *Feeling in Theory: Emotion after the "Death of the Subject"* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001) for whom "experience is experience at all only because of the self-difference of self-representation" (17).

[64] Cf. Derrida, *Positions* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1972): " 'Déconstruire' la philosophie ce serait ainsi penser la *généalogie* structure de ces concepts de la manière la plus fidèle, la plus intérieure, mais en meme temps depuis un certain dehors par elle inqualifiable, innomable, determiner ce que cette histoire a pu dissimuler ou interdire, se faisant histoire par cette repression quelque part intéressée" (15; emphasis added).

[65] From *Unpublished,* 45 and *A Treatise of Human Nature,* ed. Ernest Mossner (New York: Penguin Books, 1985), 310. Hereafter cited in text as *T*.

[66] *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding,Vol I.,* ed. Alexander Fraser (New York: Dover Publications, 1959), 371. Hereafter cited in text as *EU*.

[67] The argument here rejoins *Protagoras* (380 BC), which questions not only whether sophists can teach virtue but also whether virtue can be taught at all, and *Meno* (380BC), where the central paradox revolves around how virtue ought to be searched for if it is not known advance. As Socrates phrases it: "a man cannot search either for what he knows or what he does not know," for in the first case he cannot search for what he knows—since he knows it, there is no need to search" and, in the second case, if he does not what it is he is seeking "he does not know what to look for" (*G* 880). Socrates will go on to propose the famous *anamnesis* theory, according to which the immortal soul only recollects inherent knowledge conferred from the gods, and thus virtue is itself not knowledge that can be taught (a conclusion reversed in *Protagoras*). Kierkegaard, will go on to argue that all recollection is repetition, the same movement in different directions. Whereas recollection is repetition backward (what has been), repetition is recollection forward: one can't repeat what has been (since it has been) but when repeated, it is not the same since the has been already was and thus, in being repeated, the has been now becomes something new as it its repetition is renewed, the "now" of the has been is now potentially new, for it is yet to be, that is to say, yet to be something else. See *Fear and Trembling/Repetition,* trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983), 131-2 and 148-9.

[68] Plato is inconsistent on this point, however, as the *Republic* will state that it is by "experience, reason, and argument" that the philosopher proceeds (1189) and thus seems to value experience.

[69] All references to Aristotle come from *The Complete Works of Aristotle, Volume Two,* ed. Jonathan Barnes (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984). "Metaphysics" cited in text as *M*.

[70] This definition will be reprised multiple times throughout the early modern era. Consider for example, Hobbes' *Leviathan* which argues that "Much memory, or memory of many things, is called 'experience'" (5); "Just as having *much experience* is having *prudence*, as knowing *much science* is having *sapience*" (20). Hobbes also speaks of "natural wit" as "acquired purely through use and experience, without technique, development, or instruction" (30). From the version by Jonathan Bennett presented at www.earlymoderntexts.com.

[71] Jay, *Songs,* 11. Jay points out that the roots of *Erlebnis* is *Leben* (life), and *Erfahurng* is journey (*Fahrt*) and danger (*Gefahr*).

[72] This remark indebted to the discussion in Jay, *Songs,* Chapter 1.

[73] *Essais, Livre III,* ed. Alexandre Micha (Paris: GF Flammarion, 1979), 287. Hereafter cited in text as *E*.

[74] Montaigne adds that this in of itself is no mean feat: "a certain degree of intelligence is required to be able to know that a man knows not: and we must push against a door to know that it is closed to us" (*E* 285). This socratic skepticism is not the final word on the matter, however, for although Montaigne will never center upon one definition of experience, he indicates that experience is that which can be used, most especially in the domain of medicine. In an indirect critique of Plato's dismissal of the "slave-doctor," Montaigne suggests that those who have undergone illness are perhaps best suited to propose treatments for them: "As for bodily health, no man can furnish out more profitable experience than I, who present it pure, and no way corrupted and changed by art or opinion. Experience is properly upon its own dunghill in the subject of physic, where reason wholly gives it place" (*E* 289).

[75] *The New Organon,* ed. Lisa Jardine (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000). Hereafter cited in text as *N*.

[76] *Ethics,* ed. G.H.R. Parkinson (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

[77] These remarks draw from Jay, *Songs,* Chapter 1.

[78] *The Empiricists* (New York: Anchor Books Doubleday, 1961), 10. Hereafter cited in text as *EM*.

[79] *The Complete Works of Aristotle, vol I.* ed. Jonathan Barnes (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 4. Hereafter, all references will be to standard paragraph lines and sections.

[80] "each [individual term] signifies either substance or quantity or qualification or a relative or where or when or being in a position or having or doing or being affected. To give a rough idea, ideas of substance are man, horse; of quantity: four foot, five foot; of qualification; white, grammatical; of a relative: double, half, larger; of where: in the Lyceum, in the market-place; of when: yesterday, last year; of being in a position: is-lying, is-sitting; of having: has-shoes-on, has-armour-on; of doing: cutting, burning; of being-affected: being-cut, being-burnt" (1b25 - 2a4). Here Animal is genus, man species —both of which are secondary substances—and individual man is a primary substance

If one were referring to a specific man, like Socrates, *this man* would be a primary substance under which would be included the secondary substance or species of "man in general."

[81] "Of the secondary substances the species is more a substance than the genus, since it is nearer to the primary substance. For if one is to say of the primary substance what it is, it will be more apt to give the species than the genus" (2 b8–11).

[82] For very extensive reviews of these matters see Marc S. Cohen's "Aristotle's Metaphysics", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2012 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2012/entries/aristotle-metaphysics/ and Howard Robinson, "Substance", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2014 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2014/entries/substance/, and Thomas M. Lennon and Shannon Dea, "Continental Rationalism", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2014 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2014/entries/continental-rationalism/>. The following discussion draws from and extrapolates upon many of the excellent points made in these reviews.

[83] This discussion of subject matter owes to Marc S. Cohen's "Aristotle's Metaphysics."

[84] *Selected Writings,* (New York: Penguin Books, 1998), 31-2.

[85] John McCumber, *Metaphysics and Oppression: Heidegger's Challenge to Western Philosophy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 27

[86] *Being and Time,* trans. Joan Stambaugh (New York: State University of New York Press, 1996), 86, 87.

[87] See Simon Critchley, *Ethics—Politics—Subjectivity: Essays on Derrida, Levinas, & Contemporary French Thought,* (New York: Verso, 2009), 51. Critchley adds: "during the Middle Ages the meaning of the words *subjectum* and *objectum* was precisely the reverse of their modern signification. In the context of the English language, lexicographic evidence suggests that from the Middle Ages until the eighteenth century the word *subject* was used to name independently existing entities: the subject was that which was acted or operated upon, the 'object' upon which one exercised one's craft…The modern philosophical use of the word *subject* was the conscious or thinking subject, as self or ego, as that to which representations are attributed or predicated (the subject as subject of representation) first appears in the English language as late as 1796.

[88] *Principles* in *Philosophical Writings of Descartes, vol I.,* trans. John Cottingham et al. (Cambridge University Press, 1984), 210. Paragraph 51.

[89] While God is the only substance that depends upon nothing else, the term substance can still be applied to "created things" provided that they be considered to only depend upon God and exist without dependence upon other things save God.

[90] *Principles,* 210. Paragraph 52.

[91] *Principles,* 210-11. Paragraph 53.

[92] Cited in Critchley, *Ethics,* 53. Étienne Balibar challenges this reading in "Citizen Subject" in *Who comes after the subject?* Ed. Eduardo Cadava et al. (New York: Routledge, 1991): "it would be difficult to find the slightest reference ot the 'subject' as *subjectum* in the *Meditations,* and in that in general the thesis that would posit the *ego* or the 'I think/I am' (or the 'I am a thinking thing') as *subject*, either in the sense of *hypokeimenon* or in the sense of the future *Subjekt* (opposed to *Gegenständlichkeit*), does not appear anywhere in Descartes" (34).

[93] For Spinoza there would have only been *one* substance —God/nature— for which everything else would be a mode. Finite substances do not exist, according to Spinoza's monistic rendition in the *Ethics* (1686), only a single, eternal, all-encompassing substance, "*Deus sive Natura,*" which comes to be *causa sui* and without even needing to be thought, for to have to think substance or to have to know it would imply that substance could only be through and known through something else, some other substance, and those would be no substance at all. See proposition 8 of part I, finite substances don't exist, only a single divine substance in ethics. See definition 3: By 'substance' I understand: what is in itself and is conceived through itself, i.e. that whose concept doesn't have to be formed out of the concept of something else"; "By 'attribute' I understand: what the intellect perceives of a substance as constituting its essence." In Definition 5: "By 'mode' I understand: a state of a substance, i.e. something that exists in and is conceived though something else" (1). From the version by Jonathan Bennett presented at

www.earlymoderntexts.com. And later on, in part II: "The being of substance does not pertain to the essence of man; that is, substance does not constitute the form of man. The being of substance involves necessary existence…So if the being of substance pertained to the essence of man, then..man would exist necessarily, which …is absurd. [Since no 2 substances can exist] Since a number of *men* can exist, what constitutes the form of *man* is not the being of substance. This proposition is also obvious from the other properties of substance, namely that a substance is by its nature infinite, immutable, indivisible, and so on" (27). G.W. Leibniz, for his part, would argue that each substance or "monad" contained within itself its complete concept: "Each substance expresses the whole universe in its own way; and everything that happens to it is included in its notion, with all the circumstances and because it expresses everything else: the whole series of external things." See the *Discourse on Metaphysics,* version by Jonathan Bennett presented at www.earlymoderntexts.com, 27. Also noteworthy is the essay "First Truths" (c.1686).

[94] *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding, Vol I.,* ed. Alexander Fraser (New York: Dover Publications, 1959), 230. Hereafter cited in text as *EU*.

[95] "By the term *impression,* then, I mean all our more lively perceptions, when we hear, or see, or feel, or love, or hate, or desire, or will" (*EM* 317).

[96] "the word *idea*, seems to be commonly taken in a very loose sense, by Locke and others; as standing for any of our perceptions, our sensations and passions, as well as thoughts" (*EM* 320). In a certain sense, Hume sidesteps the issue of the potential idealism of the empiricist evaluation of experience: "It is a question of fact, whether the perceptions of the senses be produced by external objects, resembling them: how shall this question be determined? By experience surely; as all other questions of a like nature. But here experience is, and must be entirely silent. The mind has never anything present to it but the perceptions, and cannot possibly reach any experience of their connection with objects. They supposition of such a connection is, therefore, without any foundation in reasoning" (*EM* 421). Against the Kantian proposition of the noumenal order of "things in themselves," Hume suggests that the answer to what lies beyond experience can only be found through experience, and thus experience's answer must remain "silent."

[97] *Unpublished,* 83.

[98] "all arguments concerning existence are founded on the relation of cause and effect: that our knowledge of that relation is derived entirely from experience; and that all our experimental conclusions proceed upon the supposition that the future will be conformable to the past" (*EM* 330).

[99] *Unpublished,* 192.

[100] See also Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations:* "Thus one could in fact take 'grounds' for an opinion to mean only what a man had said to himself before he arrived at the opinion. The calculation that he has actually carried out. If it is now asked: But how *can* previous experience be a ground for assuming that such-and-such will occur later on?—the answer is: What general concept have we of grounrds for this kind of assumption? This sort of statement about the past is simply what we call a ground for assuming that this will happen in the future.—And if you are surprised at our playing such a game I refer you to the *effect* of a past experience (to the fact that a burnt child fears the fire)" (115e).

[101] *Unpublished,* 28. See also: "The sensation of similarity, *identifying*, is certainly a necessary prerequisite. After that, memory of one's own pain" (34); "The similar recalls what is similar and comapres itself with it: that is knowledge, the quick grouping of everything that is identical. Only the similar perceives the similar: a physiological process. Memory is the same thing as the perception of something new. Not thought added upon thought" (57). By a reversal, the mind mistakenly takes effects for truths: "The essence of truth judged according to its *effects.* The effects seduce us into accepting unproven 'truths'" (36).

[102] *Unpublished,* 59. See also: "Our sensory perceptions are based on tropes, not on unconscious inferences. Identifying similar thing with similar thing—discovering some similarity or other in one thing and another thing is the primordial procedure. *Memory* thrives on this activity and constantly practices it. *Misapprehension* is the primordial phenomenon…The sense of touch and simultaneously the visual image empirically provide two coexistent sensations; because they always appear together, they arouse the idea of a connection (by means of *metaphor*— for all things that appear together are not necessarily connected)" (68).

[103] *Heraclitus: The Complete Fragments*, trans. William Harris (unpublished manuscript), 11.

[104] "When we gradually follow an object in its successive changes, the smooth progress of the thought makes us ascribe an identity to the succession…When we compare its situation after a considerable change the progress of the thought is broken; and consequently we are presented with the idea of diversity: In order to reconcile which contradictions, the imagination is apt to feign something unknown and invisible, which it supposes to continue the same under all these variations; and this unintelligible something it calls a *substance, or original and first matter*." (*T* 269)

[105] From *Emmanuel Kant, Oeuvres philosophiques,* ed. Ferdinand Alquié et al. (Paris: Gallimard, 1980), 853. Hereafter, page numbers will be cited in the text along with paragraph markings. All translations from the French are original.

[106] Stephen Priest, in *The Subject in Question: Sartre's critique of Husserl in* The Transcendence of the Ego (Routledge: New York, 2000), argues that the "transcendental unity of apperception is sufficient for the unity of consciousness because if a set of thoughts could be the self-conscious thoughts of a subject then it follows that those thoughts are had or 'owned' by that subject. It would be inconsistent to maintain that they could belong to someone else. The unity of consciousness is a necessary condition for

that experience being one rather than more than one experience. This is because we individuate experiences partly through their owners. Although uncontroversially a subject has and so *a fortiori* may have more than one experience one experience cannot be and so *a fortiori* is not had by more than one subject" (21). Priest nuances this claim, however, in arguing that it is not guaranteed that Kant's unity is successful: "a series of experiences could be experiences of a single subject without it being the case that that subject could even in principle be conscious of having those experiences. It is false that the only reason why a subject could not even in principle be aware of having an experience is that that experience was not had by that subject. There are other possibilities. For example, a subject of experience may simply lack the cognitive capacity for self-consciousness…Kant has at most shown that the unity of consciousness is a necessary condition for experience and the transcendental unity of apperception is a sufficient condition for experience. He has not shown that the transcendental unity of apperception is necessary for the unity of consciousness so he has not shown that the transcendental unity of consciousness is necessary for experience" (21).

[107] Susan Hurley, "Kant on Spontaneity and the Myth of the Giving": *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* (1994).

[108] For an extensive consideration of this, see Stephen Priest, "Kant's Attack on Cartesian Dualism," (Unpublished Manuscript, 2007).

[109] Priest,*Subject*. As Priest aptly summarizes: "Husserl thinks the transcendental ego is an ineliminable subject of experience revealed by his *epoché* or phenomenological reduction, it is that which has all one's experiences. It unifies states of consciousness as one's own, exists always and only when they do and has an *auto-constitution*. Its existence is indubitable within the framework of transcendental subjectivity and its existence is in some sense necessary" (17). The noema's content is its sense (*Sinn*) as meaning (*Bedeutung*), so that in a sense, as later commentators would go on to remark, experience for Husserl is the experience of meaning. For Wittgenstein, in contrast, meaning is not coincident with experience: "The meaning of a word is not the experience one has in hearing or saying it, and the sense of a sentence is not a complex of such experiences" (155e).

[110] Cited in *Ibid.* See also David Woodruff Smith's *Husserl* (Routledge: New York, 2013).

[111] Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy, Second Book: Studies in the Phenomenology of Constitution,* trans. Richard Rojcewicz & Andre Schuwer (Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers, Dordecht, 1989). German from *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie, II.,* ed. Marly Biemel (Martinus Nijhoff, the Hague, 1952).

[112] See Emmanuel Levinas, "Philosophy and Awakening" in *Who comes after the subject?*: "the *Ideas I* affirm the subjacence of doxic theses to all conscious life, which, from that moment, is apophantic in its most intimate structure, on the brink of making itself discourses in its spiritual articulation, even if this discourses must spurn dialectics. Furthermore, we cannot fail to recognize the relation, unceasing in Husserl, of consciousness to identified entities: consciousness as thought of the Same. The pre-predicative toward which— as if to put logical thought into question—the analysis returns, is developed from the outset around the *substrata,* the supports for all formal modifications of logic. And thus the substantive, the nameable, the entity and the Same—so essential to the structure of re-presentation and of truth as truth of presence—remain the privileged and originary terms of consciousness" (209).

[113] *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology: From the Lectures, Winter Semester, 1910-1911,* 8-9.

[114] *The crisis of European sciences and transcendental phenomenology: An introduction to phenomenological philosophy,* trans. D. Carr (Evanston: Northwestern University Press : 1970), 184.

[115] *The Transcendence of the Ego,* trans. Forrest Williams et al. (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1957), 37. French edition: *La transcendance de l'Ego: Esquisse d'une description phénoménologique* (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1985), 20. Sartre is criticizing the move from Husserl's *Logical Investigations* (1900-1), where the I is not the ground of consciousness to the egological writings of the *Ideas* (1913).

[116] *Transcendence of the Ego,* 33. French, 16.

[117] This is Priest's apt formulation in *Subject,* 27.

[118] Judith Butler, *Subjects of Desire: Hegelian Reflections in Twentieth-Century France* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 106.

[119] This gloss of pre-reflective and reflective modes is Priest's, *Subject,* 45. Priest notes that Sartre's account runs into the difficulty of asserting both that "Consciousness is consciousness of itself" and "Consciousness is not its own object" (50).

[120] Just as far back as Fichte's project of *Wissenschaftslehre*, or *Science of Knowledge* (1797), philosophers have fallen into the circularity of the paradoxes engendered by post-Cartesian theories of the self. Peter Dews aptly summarizes this as follows: "[According to the post-Cartesian theory of the self] selfhood, which means self-consciousness, consists in a relation in which the subject turns back on itself and grasps its own identity with itself, in which the object is the reflection of the subject, rather than something *other than* the subject…The relation of reflection is intended to provide an account of what it is to be a self, yet in the very activity of reflection the self is already presupposed; for if the subject of the act of reflection were not already the self, then the object-self of which it comes to have knowledge could not be identical with it. Furthermore, unless the subject-self is already in some sense acquainted with itself, then it cannot *recognize* the object as itself: there is nothing *inherent* in a reflected image which reveals to the onlooker that it is his or her *own* image, and the subject cannot appeal to any third term for knowledge of

identity of the two poles, since this would involve an infinite regress". *Logics of Disintegration: Post-structuralist Thought and the Claims of Critical Theory* (New York: Verso, 2007), 25.

[121] In "Of the I as Principle of Philosophy," Schelling distinguishes an absolute identity from the subject: "the unconditional can lie neither in a thing as such, nor in anything that can become a thing, that is, not in the subject. It can lie only in that which cannot become a thing at all; that is, if there is an absolute *I*, it can lie only in the absolute *I*. Thus, for the time being, the absolute *I* is ascertained as *that which can never become an object at all*." Cited in Dews, *Logic,* 31.

[122] trans. Dorion Cairns (Martinus Nijohff, The Hague, 1982), paragraph 31.

[123] *Transcendence,* 97.

[124] Husserl encounters these very questions in *Basic Problems* when it concerns the encounter of I with another I: "Do we ever arrive at an *other* phenomenological I? Can the phenomenological reduction ever arrive at the idea of several phenomenological I's?" (82). Husserl has recourse to the notion of *empathy*, where by the I analogizes its inner life with that of another.

[125] *L'assassinat de l'expérience par la peinture, Monory* (Leuven University Press, 2013), 54. Lyotard goes on to ask what has undone experience: "et si le Je n'avait pas d'existence? et s'il n'y avait pas de dialectique temporelle amasant l'expérience? et si le monde n'avait pas besoin de l'aliénation d'un sujet pour se connaître ?" (54).

[126] *The Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1990), 64.

[127] *Voice,* 50. In this sense Husserl privileges a non-signifying originary perception/intuition.

[128] *Voice,* 7.

[129] *Voice,* 8.

[130] This summary is encapsulated in *Voice:* ""In internal discourse, I communicate nothing to myself. I indicate nothing to myself. I can at most imagine myself doing that, I can merely represent myself as manifesting something to myself.…I communicate nothing to myself and I can only pretend to, *because I have no need to communicate anything to myself.* Such an operation —communication from self to self—cannot take place because it would make no sense. And it would make no sense because it would have no *purpose*. The existence of physical acts does not have to be indicated…because the existence of physical acts is immediately present to the subject in the present instant" (41).

[131] *Voice,* 45.

[132] *Voice,* 45.

[133] *Voice,* 46.

[134] *Voice,* 42.

[135] *Voice,* 39. Footnote.

[136] *Ibid*.

[137] *Voice,* 73: "The living present arises on the basis of its non-self-identity, and on the basis of the retentional trace. It is always already a trace. This trace is unthinkable if we start from the simplicity of a present whose life would be interior to itself. The self of the living present is originarily a trace. The trace is unthinkable if we start from the simplicity of a present whose life would be interior to itself. The self of the living present is originarily a trace. The trace is not an attribute about which we could say that the self of the living present 'is originarily' the trace. It is necessary to think originary-being from the trace and not the trace from originary-being. This archi-writing is at work in the origin of sense. Since sense…has a temporal nature, it is never simply present. It is always already engaged in the 'movement of the trace, that is, in the order of 'signification.' Sense has always already exited from itself into the 'expressive stratum' of lived-experience. Since the trace is the relation of intimacy of the living present to its outside, the openness to exteriority in general, to the non-proper, etc., *the temporalization of sense is from the very beginning 'spacing.'* As soon as we admit spacing at once as 'interval' or difference and as openness to the outside, there is no absolute interiority. The 'outside' insinuates itself into the movement by means of which the inside of non-space, which bears the name 'time,' appears to itself, constitutes itself, and 'presents' itself. Space is 'in' time. It is the pure exiting of time to the outside of itself. Is outside-of-itself as the self-relation of time. The exteriority of space, exteriority as space, does not take time by surprise. Exteriority opens itself as the pure 'outside' 'in' the movement of temporalization…[thus] the theme of a pure interiority of speech or of 'hearing-oneself-speak' is radically contradicted by 'time' itself. Even the exiting 'into the world' is also originarily implied by the movement of temporalization. 'time' cannot be an 'absolute subjectivity' precisely because we are not able to think it on the basis of the present on the basis of the presence to itself of a present being…[E]expression does not come to be added on as a 'stratum' to the presence of a pre-expressive sense…[it] comes to supplement a lack, an originary non-self-presence. And if…writing in the every day sense, must necessarily 'add itself' onto speech in order to complete the constitution of the ideal object, if speech must 'add itself' onto the identity of the object in thought, this is because the 'presence' of sense and of speech has already begun to be lacking in regard to itself" (73-4).

[138] *Voice,* 58. And later: "What we would like finally to starting thinking about is the fact that the for-itself of self-presence, traditionally determined in its dative dimension as phenomenological, reflective, or pre-reflective auto-donation, arise in the movement of supplementarity as originary substitution, in the form of the 'in the place of'…in the very operation of signification

in general. The *for-itself* would be an *in-the-place-of itself*: put *for itself*, in the place of itself. The strange structure of the supplement appears here: a possibility that produces by delay that to which it is said to be added" (75).

[139] *Voice,* 71. *Différance* is described as sort of supplementarity, "the operation of differing that, at once, splits and delays presence, subjecting it by the same action to originary division and originary delay. Différance is to be thought prior to the separation between deferral…as delay and differing…as the active work of difference. It must be understood that differrance is unthinkable starting from consciousness, that is, starting from presence, or starting simply from the opposite of presence, absence, or non-consciousness. It is also unthinkable as the simple *homogeneous* complication of a diagram or a line of time, as complex 'succession.' Supplementary differrance vicariates for presence in its originary lack in regard to itself" (75). In this sense, this differential supplementarity would imply the "non-fullness of presence" and the "function of substitutive supplementing in general, the structure of the 'in the place of'…that belongs to every sign in general" (*Ibid*).

[140] *Voice,* 81: "When I say 'I am' to myself, this expression, as with every expression according to Husserl, has the status of being discourse only if its intelligible in the absence of the object, in the absence of the intuitive presence, therefore in this case, in the absence of myself. Moreover, it is in this way that the *ergo sum* is introduced into the philosophical tradition and a discourse on the transcendental ego is possible. Whether or no I have the actual intuition of myself, 'I' does express. Whether or not I am living, the words 'I am' mean. Here too is the fulfilling intuition is not an 'essential component' of the expression. Whether or not 'I' functions in solitary discourse, with or without the self-presence of the speaking being…And one has no need of knowing who is speaking in order to understand it or even to utter it…Just as I do not need to perceive in order to understand a perceptual statement, I do not need the intuition of the object 'I' in order to understand the word 'I'…The signifying value of the 'I' does not depend on the life of the speaking subject. Whether the perception accompanies or not the perceptual statement, whether life as self-presence accompanies or not the statement of the 'I,' this is perfectly indifferent to the function of the meaning. My death is structurally necessary to pronouncing the 'i.' whether I am also 'living' and whether I am certain about being alive, that comes over and above the movement of the meaning." (81-2). Death is implicated in life: "The statement 'I am living' is accompanied by my being-dead and the statement's possibility requires the possibility that I be dead—and the reverse" (82-3).

[141] *Subject,* 32.

[142] *Subject,* 32-33.

[143] Priest, *Subject,* 151.

[144] To the extent that such an experience would be without presence, and without a self-present subject to undergo it, can no longer be said to be an experience at all, this might be said to recall Blanchot's *l'Écriture du désastre* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1980), where disaster compels a sort of limit-experience, holding one in suspense or making one await a disaster that cannot be foreseen nor foretold–that which cannot happen in presence and yet already has come to pass— and for which there is, ultimately, no "one" that could be thought to simply predate its passing or survive in its wake.

[145] This repercusses a phrase from Blanchot's *L'entretien infini* (Paris: Gallimard, 1969): "désir qui ne désire rien que ce rien qu'il est" (168).

[146] This love outside itself, implying a sort of ecstasy or ek-stasis, recalls the "*j/e*" of Monique Wittig's *Le Corps lesbien*. The bar is supposed to signal "an excess of 'I,' an 'I' exalted.

[147] To let be is to let become nothing, but to let lie is also to let live. Again, from *l'entretien infini*: "Étrange rapport qui consiste en ce qu'il n'y a pas de rapport" (73).

[148] Newland's first breathless encounter with Madame Olenska, stems, in fact, from a lightweight touch: "It was the lightest touch, but it thrilled him like a caress," (42).

[149] The conversation is taking place between Madame Olenska and Archer. She begins by saying: "'If you're not blind, then, you must see that this can't last.'" To which he replies: "'What can't?'" The answer: "'Our being together- and not together.'" In these terms it is neither fusion nor fission that can be achieved between them because their intimacy would appear to be no more than a termless inexperience of each other that, while keeping them soldered together, nevertheless also kept them sundered apart.

[150] Archer has asked "'Then what, exactly, is your plan for us?' he asked." "'For *us*? But there's no *us* in that sense!" Madame Olenska replies (188).

[151] On "the interruption of *rapport*, a certain *rapport* of interruption," see Derrida's contribution "Three Questions to Hans-Georg Gadamer," which speaks of a relation limitlessly punctuated by disjunctures and disseverances, especially the very conceit that a rapport might be stabilized. In *Dialogue and deconstruction : the Gadamer-Derrida encounter,* eds. Diane P. Michelfelder & Richard E. Palmer (Albany : State University of New York Press, c1989), 53.

[152] It would even seem as if the very condition that they could not be conjoined left them no less apart, as if the only thing holding them near was the inevitability that they might always be riven in twain. Barbara Johnson's essay "Allegory's Trip-Tease: *The White Waterlily*," in *The Critical Difference: Essays in the Contemporary Rhetoric of Reading* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), analyzes a similar (non?)event in the prose poem by Mallarmé, "Le Nénuphar blanc" which

"tells the story of nothing happening between a man in a rowboat and an unknown woman who may or may not be standing on the bank" (13). The particular line the essay cites from Mallarmé's poetic prose, wherein the narrator speaks, is telling: "Séparés, on est ensemble," he says of the woman (quoted 14), according to which "indeterminacy" becomes "a form of intimacy" (13). The essay adds: "The precondition of togetherness seems to be separation, while the act of merging with the other divides the subject in two" (17). In the terms of Blanchot's *L'Écriture du désastre* (Paris: Gallimard, 1980), this might be called a "proximité d'éloignement" (58).

[153] A paraphrase: They are together in the state of being unable to be together. The two would hence seem to carry on in an infinite conversation sustained by a discretion that, quite paradoxically, also silences their amorous colloquy. A reference here could be Blanchot's *l'entretien infini*.

[154] Consider in this regard Marie de Gournay's novel *Le Proumenoir de Monsieur de Montaigne* (1594): "[T]he body and its gifts are damageable and exhaustible and exhaustible with them the desires that pertain to them," so declaims a narrator, "whereas the gifts of the spirit reflourish every day in new delights, and are inexhaustible *Egalité des hommes et des femmes ; Grief des dames ; suivis du Proumenoir de Monsieur de Montaigne*, ed. Constant Venesoen (Genève : Librairie Droz, 1993), 107. Likewise, in Tullia d'Aragona's discourse, *Diàlogo della infinità d'amore* (1547), carnal, "vulgar" love, is contrasted to an "honest love" upheld only by the senses of sight and hearing –devices oft employed by the lovers in the *Angoysses*.

[155] See Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender* (New York: Routledge, 2004).

[156] See Butler, *Undoing*, from which parts of this discussion derive.

[157] Butler, *Undoing,* 160.

[158] Butler, *Undoing,* 159.

[159] These would be, once again, Butlerian questions posed and discussed to different ends in works such as *Undoing Gender* and *Bodies That Matter.*

[160] So dispossessed, indeed, are the personages of the novel —one could also speak of remoteness, farness, or removedness; decathexis, distantiation, and divestment— that they seem dispossessed of even dispossession itself. Again, from *l'entretien infini*: "Étrange rapport qui consiste en ce qu'il n'y a pas de rapport" (73). This strange *rapport sans rapport*, a rapport without rapport, characterizes the fatigue of no longer being able to be able—when one can no longer "can"; when power and possibility are rendered nought or null- a sort of weariness where one can neither act for or against the persistence, the perpetuity, of a relationship –that might not even be one- that seems to abide even without the consent or the activity of those involved –and, at the same time not involved- in it. What perdures, if it does, is a relationship that isn't one and that lasts because it can't, because it never did nor ever could.

[161] Phrase is cited from page 112. To this lament Newland stands wordless, yielding to the insurmountable void that divides them from one another: "His arms were yearning up to her; but she drew away, and they remained facing each other, divided by the distance that her words had created." But these words that hold them at uncertain distance are also those which bind them together in a touchless embrace, a closeness without closure, that is not merely repression or denegation. Whence Newland's realization that "if the thing was to happen, it was to happen in this way, with the whole width of the room between them," (87). (This is echoed elsewhere in the novel as well: "He had really no idea what he was saying: he felt as if he were shouting at her across endless distances, and she might vanish again before he could overtake her," [149]). For it is not so much that this "distance" has barred him from his desire, but that he has come to desire this distance itself, and this because it has become not the trammel to but the means of his passion: a passion now defined by its very inaccessibility and unattainability rather than by confirmation and consummation. Like the play to which Newland plays spectator, there is a scene of fabric-kissing in this scenario: "She spoke in a low even voice, without tears or visible agitation; and each word, as it dropped from her, fell into his breast like burning lead. He sat bowed over, his head between his hands, staring at the hearth-rug, and at the tip of the satin shoe that showed under dress. Suddenly he knelt down and kissed the shoe. She bent over him, laying her hand on his shoulders, and looking at him with eyes so deep that he remained motionless under her gaze. 'Ah, don't let us undo what you've done!' she cried."

[162] Consider Simone Weil's fragment in *La pesanteur et la grâce* (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1988): "L'amour, chez celui qui est malheureux, est d'être comblé par la simple connaissance que l'aimée est dans la joie, sans avoir part à cette joie, ni meme desirer y avoir part" (21).

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

[1] "Pour moi, je n'espère, ne désire, ni ne demande ; ma passion n'est appuyée sur rien : elle subsiste, se nourrit, et s'accroît toute seule"; *Oeuvres complètes de Madame la marquise de Lambert , suivies de ses lettres à plusieurs personages célèbres* (Paris: Léopold Collin, 1808), 230. The reflexive verbs could equally be translated as "nourishes *itself*" and "grows *itself*"- suggesting a certain needlessness of reciprocity by another lover's action or interaction, though implicated therein.

[2] From *Petrarch's Lyrice Poems: The* Rime sparse *and Other Lyrics,* trans. Robert M. Durling (Cambridge: Harvard University

Press), 36, 37. Mention is also made of of the "miserable soul" which knows "through long experience [*per lunga esperienza*]" the ravages of time and Love (188, 189), of the hope that the speaker has "repeatedly experienced [*provato*]" (202, 203), and of fear "born of long experience [*d'antiche prove è nato*]" (328, 329).

[3] A note on chronology: although typically the "long eighteenth century" (c. 1660-1830) is said to include the seventeenth- to the nineteenth-centuries, with the "early modern" period both preceding and subsuming it, the texts considered in these pages overlap both "periods." For an argument in favor of expanding the usual chronology of eighteenth-century French fiction, most especially in terms of the development of women's writing, see, Joan DeJean (2001) "Was the Eighteenth Century Long Only in England?" Eighteenth-Century Fiction: Vol. 13: Iss. 2, Article 3. Available at: http://digitalcommons.mcmaster.ca/ecf/vol13/iss2/3. The term "long eighteenth-century," generaly emloyed in British historiography, does not employ a calendar division for parsing chronologies, but usually takes as its starting point the Glorious Revolution (1688) to the end of the Napoleonic wars (1815). Some have further expanded the dates to encompass a larger circuit of historical events (e.g. 1650, 1660, or 1680 to 1830 or 1840). See *Cultures of power in Europe during the long eighteenth century*, eds. Hamish Scott and Brendan Simms (Cambridge, UK ; New York : Cambridge University Press, 2007) and *The Oxford History of the British Empire: Volume II: The Eighteenth Century (Oxford History of the British Empire)*. ed. P. J. Marshall (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

[4] As will become clear, this reference to textualized experience is not a structuralist conceit—as if a typology of "amorous discourse" could be constructed based on linguistic patterns and tropes (Cf. Roland Barthes' *Fragments d'un discours amoureux*). The undoing of the opposition between experience and textuality might be read, rather, along the lines of Derrida's *De la grammatologie,* wherein experience is inextricable from its textual effect, constituted within a differential network of referrals and relata, within the traces of what it is not, rather than within the predicates of self-presence and self-identity (namely, a presupposed *hypokeimenon* or *substratum* of a subject, stance or stasis in presence). Text, in this formulation, is not confined to the printed page or to bookends, but as the movements of deferral and differentiation within an open-ended, self-differing and differentiating force-field of relationality, for even to posit that which is pre- or extra-discursive is still to *signify* it as such, and thus to rely on language as the opposition against which extra-textual postulations are defined: "*text*, as I use the word, is not the book. No more than writing or trace, it is not limited to the *paper* which you cover with your graphism. It is precisely for strategic reasons [...] that I found it necessary to recast the concept of text by generalizing it almost without limit, in any case without present or perceptible limit, without any limit that *is* [...] which is not to say that it can be read the way one reads a book. That's why the text is always a field of forces: heterogeneous, differential, open, and so on." Derrida and Peggy Kamuf, trans. " But, beyond... (Open Letter to Anne McClintock and Rob Nixon)," *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 13, No. 1 (Autumn, 1986): 167-8. This receives attention in later sections of this introduction, for example *infra* note 31. This rendition of "text" might be brought to bear on the Foucaultian notion of discourse which, according to Judith Butler's essay "For a Careful Reading" in *Feminist Contentions: A Philosophical Exchange* (New York and London: Routledge, 1995), "is not merely spoken words, but a notion of signification which concerns not merely how it is that certain signifiers come to mean what they mean, but how certain discursive forms articulate objects and subjects in their intelligibility [and, it might be added, how some are rendered unintelligible] [...] Discourse does not merely represent or report on pregiven practices and relations, but it enters into their articulation and is, in that sense, productive" (138). A footnote adds that discourse ought "to be differentiated from 'language' spoken or written, and from forms of representation and/or meaning-constitution. The discourse on subjects (whether it be a discourse of mental health, legal righst, crimilaity, sexuality) is constitutive of the *lived* and *actual* experiences of such subjects, but comes to articulate [and, one might add, disarticulate] the possibilities in which subjects achieve intelligibility, that is, in which subjects appear at all (143).

[5] As Paul de Man's "The Resistance to Theory" in *The Resistance to Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002) remarks: "we seem to assume all too readily that, when we refer to something called 'language,' we know what it is we are talking about, although there is probably no word to be found in the language that is as overdetermined, self-evasive, disfigured and disfiguring as 'language'" (13). In this rendition, already elaborated in *Allegories of Reading: figural language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke, and Proust* (New Haven and London: Yale Univeristy Press, 1979), to attempt to define, denominate, or account for what language "is" is itself an effort also complicit with and produced by language, in that in order to speak of language, recourse to language must inevitably be made. "As such, it is bound to consist of the very figural structures that can only be put in question by means of the language that produces them. What is then called 'language' clearly has to extend well beyond what is empirically understood as articulated verbal utterance and subsumes, for instance, what is traditionally referred to as perception" (234).

[6] See Nietzsche, "Beyond Good and Evil," *Compendium,* 11. For a discussion of Nietzsche's proclamations that knowledge-prodution is bound to the provisions of syntax, see Derrida, "Le supplément de copule: la philosophie devant la linguistique" in *Marges— de la philosophie* (Paris: Les éditions de Minuit, 1972), 212-3. See also Nietzsche, "Description of Ancient Rhetoric," trans. Carole Blair and David J. Parent, *Friedrich Nietzsche on Rhetoric and Language,* ed. Sander L. Gilman (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 2–193.

[7] "cette timidité particuliere aux amans" —this is from the 1626 and 1627 version. Variations include: "cette timidté naturelle aux amans" (1599, 1607); "ceste timidité particuliere aux amans" (1623); "ce respect timide particulier aux amans," (1641). From *Le Promenoir de Monsieur de Montaigne, Texte de 1641, avec les variants des editions de 1594, 1594, 1598, 1599, 1607, 1623, 1626, 1627, 1634*, ed. Jean-Claude Arnould (Paris : H. Champion, 1996), 83.

[8] Howie, *Claustrophilia: The Erotics of Enclosure in Medieval Literature* (New York: Palgrave, 2007), 25.

[9] This would be an experience without experience or an "inexperience" for which there seems to be no undergoer. Such formulations dovetail with those according to which this deconstruction of experience becomes indistinguishable from an experience of deconstruction: "An experience without self, from outside self, an experience without experience itself." From Peggy Kamuf, "The Experience of Deconstruction," in *Book of Addresses* (Stanford, Calif. : Stanford University Press, 2005), 154. Also relevant is Blanchot's formulation, in *L'entretien infini* (Paris: Gallimard, 1969), an "experience of non-experience" (311).

[10] In French, the relationship between experience and experiment connoted by the term "expérience" is even stronger. Despite evident differences from English, certain French expressions seem to allude to these aforementioned presuppositions: "*avoir* de l'expérience"; "*être* expérimenté"; "*faire* l'expérience de."

[11] Here the question is not of how or whether preconstituted subjects undergo experience, but how experience constitutes and produces subjects.

[12] Cf. Derrida, *Limited Inc* (Paris: Galilée, 1990): "il n'y a pas d'expérience de *pure* présence mais seulement des chaines de marques différentielles" (32); "ce que j'appelle 'texte' implique toutes les structures dites 'réelles,' 'economiques,' 'historiques,' socio-institutionnelles, bref tous les referents possibles […] tout référent, toute réalité a la structure d'une trace différantielle, et qu'on ne peut se rapporter à ce réel que dans une expérience interprétative. Celle-ci ne donne ou ne prend sens que dans un movement de renvoi différantiel" (273). "Writing," in this idiom, "is" the other than spoken and written words alone as well as the suspension of the very predicative copula 'is': not a transcription, a mere recording of reported speech, of spoken language, but an array of graphematic marks that are materially re-markable, repeatable, purveying and pulverizing the meaning it enables and effaces, as a persistent, haunting return of that which is not in the present nor in presence, never fully ownable by a self or numerically reducible to that self's appropriative, proper unity in the present nor in the purview of meaningful perception, the self-conscious understanding of a subject. Writing is thus not the means of essaying to efface the absence and distance of différance, as Barbara Johnson's essay "Writing" would have it, but is itself that différance by supplementary logic, neither the logic of identity nor that of noncontradiction. In *Critical Terms for Literary study,* ed. Frank Lentricchia et al. (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago press, 1995). "Différance" implies *le même* and *l'autre* at once, and never appears as such but leaves a trace that is neither present nor absent, a trace which is not proof nor a proof.

[13] This comes through in Aphra Behn's *Letters Between a Nobleman and his Sister* (1684-7) wherein we read: "I see thee not, I touch thee not; but when I hast with transport to imbrace thee, 'tis shadow all, and my poor Arms return empty to my Bosome." From *The works of Aphra Behn*, ed. J. Todd (Columbus: Ohio State University press, 1993), 38.

[14] As Barbara Johnson's essay "Allegory's Trip-Tease: *The White Waterlily*," in *The Critical Difference: Essays in the Contemporary Rhetoric of Reading* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), "The aesthetic tendency to overvalue the nonattainment of literal sexual goals has a long and impressive history in Western literature, occurring in the service of both of the titillations and frustrations of deferment and of the promotion of higher spiritual values of which the life of the body gives only a crude material image. This is particularly true of allegorical literature, of which *Le Roman de La Rose* (*The Romance of the Rose*) can here be considered exemplary, since the history of its interpretations ("la querelle") is an oscillation between delightful deferment and divine transfiguration" (14). The medieval aesthetics of courtly love —which emphasizes the remoteness and removedness of the love object from the physical grasp of the seeker— would also constitute a point of departure for reflections on the nonviability of acting directly on one's love, as some contend that Jacques Lacan's psychoanalytic seminars on sexuality demonstrate. See *Encore: Le Séminaire Livre XX* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1975).

[15] Cf. Olwen Hufton, *The Prospect before Her: A History of Women in Western Europe,* vol I: *1500-1800* (London : HarperCollins, 1995) as well as Margaret L. King and Albert Rabil Jr's "The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe," the Editors introduction to *The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe Series* to be found, for example at the start of Giulia Bigolina's *Urania. A Romance,* ed. and trans. Valeria Finucci (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 2005), xiii-xxxi, and *Sexuality and gender in early modern Europe : institutions, texts, images*, ed. James Grantham Turner (Cambridge, Eng. : New York, NY : Cambridge University Press, 1993). On the discursive ideology of this Western education of chaste continence where to not see, to not act, and to remain ignorant of what a decent woman should not know are paramount, see Ruth Bernard Yeazell, *Fictions of Modesty* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991), Sarah Kofman, *Le respect des femmes (kant et rousseau*) (Paris: Galilée, 1982), Hanne Blank, *Virgin: The Untouched History* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2007), Shoshana Felman, *What does a woman want?: reading and sexual difference* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), and R.F. Brissenden, *Virtue in distress: studies in the novel of sentiment from Richardson to Sade* (London: MacMillon, 1974).

[16] See Nadine Bérenguier, *Conduct books for girls in enlightenment France* (Farnham, Surrey ; Burlington, VT : Ashgate, c2011), Katherine Crawford, *European sexualities, 1400-1800* (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2007), and Margaret L.

King's and Albert Rabil, Jr.'s "The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe," Marie le Jars de Gournay, *Apology for the woman writing and other works,* ed Richard Hillman et al. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), vii-xxv. Such hegemonic ideals of feminine conduct and capacity, it has been argued, will have been constituted by the heterogeneous and gendered ideologies most frequently associated with the conduct and education of women. See for example Chapter 3 of Cathy Yandell's *Carpe Corpus: Time and Gender in Early Modern Europe* (Newark : University of Delaware Press ; London : Associated University Presses, c2000).

[17] *Egalité des hommes et des femmes ; Grief des dames ; suivis du Proumenoir de Monsieur de Montaigne*, ed. Constance Venesoen (Genève : Librairie Droz, 1993): "selon l'ignorance et l'inexpérience où elles sont nourries" (43).

[18] It is important to add here that the modest figure of the inexperienced "angel in the house" —or domestic, sexless, wifely helpmate— is not a transhistorical mythology. Akin to April Alliston's notion of "the Great Gender Shift" —see "Aloisa and Melliora (Love in Excess)," in *The Novel, vol.2: Forms and Themes,* ed. Franco Moretti (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006), whereby former representations on the defense of physical chastity lapsed into discursive depicturings concerned with the moral character of heroines — as some point out it is possible to conjecture that up until around the mid- to late-eighteenth-century there persisted the alternative mythology of women's sexuality as uncontrollable, insatiable, and destructive (the biblical figure of "Eve," the literary trope of the enchantress and sorcercess from medieval chivalric tales, the Aristotlian conception of woman's body as *physis* [matter and nature] and men as *logos* [spirit and mind] etc.). And, as others have emphasized by looking at the classical philosophical tradition of corporealizing materiality/matter (of the feminine body) over the detached, abstracted, spirit (of the masculine mind), in Western metaphysical traditions the discursive figure of woman, far from always being considered a sexless anhedonic "angel" (as certain Victorian variations on this theme would have it), were often taken to be freighted with the crudities of embodiment (on the thematics of disembodiment and corporealization, see Elizabeth Grosz*'s Volatile bodies : toward a corporeal feminism* [Bloomington : Indiana University Press, c1994]). For a charting of the historical sexualization and engendering of Western conceptions of the body, see Thomas Laqueur, *Making sex : body and gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge, Mass. : Harvard University Press, 1990).

[19] Consider, for example, the eleventh chapter of Fénelon's treatise *De l'education des filles* (1687) on the epistemtic and erotic limits of education: "Let us now take a look at what a woman needs to know. What are her jobs? She is in charge of her children's upbringing [...] She must also oversee the conduct, morals, and service of the servants, see to the household expenditures, and make sure all is done economically and honorably [...] Women's knowledge, like men's, should be limited to what is useful for their functions; the difference in their tasks should be lead to the difference in their studies. It is therefore necessary to restrict women's education to the things we have just mentioned." Quoted in Barbara Johnson, *A world of difference* (Baltimore : Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), 77.

[20] "Woman": the name of an eternally fraught and ever-fluctuating historical and discursive category that will never, it would seem, be reducible to a unitary quiddity. For reflections on the philosophical and historical ramifications of the problematized category of "woman," see Denise Riley *"Am I that Name?" Feminism and the Category of Woman in History* (Minneapolis : University of Minnesota, c1988) and Judith Butler, "Subjects of Sex/Gender/Desire," in *Gender Trouble: feminism and the subversion of identity* (New York : Routledge, 1990). The denomination "woman" will be employed here in catachrestical rather than ontological terms, not denoting an immutable, essential, or empirical referent but, rather, the tension of referentiality implied by the supposition that such names are also, and always, discursive figures.

[21] Wittig, *The Straight Mind and Other Essays* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992).

[22] "One is not born a woman," in *The Straight Mind*. Wittig argues those so-called natural facts about sex and gender — taken to be immediate/sensible givens of physical facticity—are in fact not facts at all, but phantasmatic formations and mythic constructions: "race,exactly like sex, is taken as an 'immediate givne,' a 'sensible given,' physical features,' belonging to a natural order. But what we believe to be a physical and direct perception is only a sophisticated and mythic construction, an 'imaginary formation,' which reinterprets physical features (in themselves as neutral as any others but marked by the social system) through hthe network of relationships in which they are perceived. (They are seen as *black,* therefore they *are* black; they are seen as *women*, therefore, they *are* women. But before being *seen* that way, they first had to be *made* that way" (12).

[23] Wittig, "Straight Mind," in *Straight*, 26.

[24] Wollstonecraft, *Vindication* in the version by Jonathan Bennett presented at www.earlymoderntexts.com. This citation grafts together quotes from pages 30 and 37 respectively. Emphasis in the original. And elsewhere: "If you are going to exclude women, without consulting them, from sharing in the natural rights of mankind, then defend yourself against accusations of injustice and inconsistency by proving that *women don't have reason*" (2).

[25] Johnson, "Teaching Ignorance," in *A World of Difference,* 68.

[26] Wollstonecraft, quoting Knox, writes: "'Can anything,...be more absured than keeping in a state of ignorance, and yet vehemently insisting that they resist temptation?'" (77).

[27] For illuminating discussions of these problematics, see Bérenguier, *Conduct books for girls in enlightenment France*, Katherine Crawford, *European sexualities, 1400-1800* (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2007) as well as *Perilous performances : gender and regency in early modern France* (Cambridge, Mass. : Harvard University Press, 2004). Nancy Armstrong's

Desire and Domestic Fiction (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), for its part, comments that in the early novelistic production of Europe "protagonists understand social experience as a series of sexual encounters" (29). When framed as such, experience takes on an ambiguous value.

[28] The concept-metaphor of virtue, itself a multivalent and protean "regulatory ideal," has a complex linguistic history which obtains to this day, as Deborah Lesko Baker's scholarly edition of the *Complete poetry and prose: : a bilingual edition. Louise Labé,* trans. Annie Finch (Chicago : University of Chicago Press, 2006), suggests: "[A]s confirmed by dictionaries of sixteenth-century French language, *vertu* is a word of multiple resonances, and in conventional practice is often attributed along gender lines, such that 'virtue' for women is typically associated with moral goodness, especially chastity, whereas for men it more often carries the connotations of strength, courage, and power, stemming etymologically from the Italian *virtù* and, by extension, from the Latin *virtus*" (22). A footnote adds: "Cotgraves 1611 *Dictionarie of the French and English Tongues* offers the following range of definitions for the term *vertu*: "Virtue, goodnesse, honestie, sinceritie, integritie, worth, perfection, desert, merit; also valour, prowess, manhood, also energie, efficacie, force, power, might. Huguet's seven-volume 1950 dictionary of sixteenth-century French language presents similar threads of meaning: *force, courage, vaillance* (valor), *talent, propriété* (propriety), *pouvoir* (power), *qualité* (upstanding character)," (222 n.6). See also Chapter 3 of Cathy Yandell's *Carpe Corpus: Time and Gender in Early Modern Europe* (Newark : University of Delaware Press ; London : Associated University Presses, c2000).

[29] Plato, *Symposium,* 9. Hereafter cited in text as *S.*

[30] See 1142a of Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* in *The Complete Works of Aristotle,* ed. Jonathan Barnes (New Jersey: Princeton University Press 1984), 1803.

[31] Cf. *Before Sexuality: The Construction of Erotic Experience in the Ancient Greek World,* ed. David Halperin et al. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990).

[32] See Deborah Lesko Baker's introduction to *Complete poetry and prose: : a bilingual edition. Louise Labé,* trans. Annie Finch and ed/ Deborah Lesko Baker (Chicago : University of Chicago Press, 2006), 22. A footnote adds: "Cotgraves 1611 *Dictionarie of the French and English Tongues* offers the following range of definitions for the term *vertu*: "Virtue, goodnesse, honestie, sinceritie, integritie, worth, perfection, desert, merit; also valour, prowess, manhood, also energie, efficacie, force, power, might. Huguet's seven-volume 1950 dictionary of sixteenth-century French language presents similar threads of meaning: *force, courage, vaillance* (valor), *talent, propriété* (propriety), *pouvoir* (power), *qualité* (upstanding character)," (222 n.6).

[33] Such hegemonic ideals of feminine conduct and capacity, it has been argued, will have been constituted by the heterogeneous and gendered ideologies most frequently associated with the conduct and education of women. See for example Chapter 3 of Cathy Yandell's *Carpe Corpus: Time and Gender in Early Modern Europe* (Newark : University of Delaware Press ; London : Associated University Presses, c2000).

[34] *Vindication,* 12-13. Wollstonecraft's contention is that both virtue and knowledge ought to be inculcated in the same degree to both men and women.

[35] Linda Zerilli's *Signifying Woman*, captures this point with precision: "woman is both the condition and the vanishing point of canonical political theory. [...] woman is neither outside the margins nor at the margins of the political; instead, she constitutes and unsettles those margins. A frontier figure that is neither wholly inside nor wholly outside political space [...] Woman is not an embodied social referent or extralinguistic entity to be discovered or re-presented, whether truly or falsely; she is rather a cipher, a series of absences to be filled, spaces to be organized, protean energies to be harnessed [...] Woman is not a being but a signification—wholly arbitrary and fundamentally unstable because dependent for its meaning on the relational structure of language. She is a complex, discursive site of sociosymbolic stabilization and destabilization, a site of cultural meanings that are constructed and contested across a wide range of signifying practices" (2). Zerilli goes on to add that to treat political theory as a signifying practice and woman as signification is to engage with the terms of post-Saussurean linguistics, "in order to put the referential model of language (i.e. language as re-presentation) into question," namely: "(1) to analyze a text is to ask not *what* does it signify but *how* does it signify, that is, to question the figuration rather than the re-presentation of objects [...] (2) the theorist employs the symbolic resources of language to generate rather than simply communicate political meanings; (3) these meanings are produced through the play of linguistic signs that are perfectly arbitrary and intrinsically unstable; (4) this instability of language is related to the fundamentally unsettled character of politics *as a realm of speech* and of the citizen *as a speaking being* [...] To think about language in this way—as articulation rather than representation, as defined by the principle of difference rather than identity—is to recognize, for example, that the term 'woman' has no meaning apart from the term 'man,' that both derive their meaning from the differences between them and, what is more, those between them and all the terms. Man and woman emerge through the process of signification, as the effect of the play of innumerable differences [...] Rather than treat woman either as an embodied social referent or as a term whose meaning preexists its figuration, narrative invocation, and circulation in the political text, I examine woman as she is produced symbolically and deployed rhetorically in theoretical interventions in historical debates about the crisis in political meaning" (3-4). In Zerilli's terms, the illusion of "mimesis" is a performative effect of "diegesis" by the political theorist's text.

[36] One need only consider the controversy surrounding the *Roman de la rose.* See *Debating the Roman de la rose: A Critical*

Anthology, Christine McWebb, ed. (Routledge Medieval Texts. New York: Routledge, 2007).

[37] See John J. Conley, *The Suspicion of Virtue: Women Philosophers in Neoclassical France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002), 184 (Appendix C).

[38] See Penelope Deutscher's opening discussions of the history of philosophy in *Yielding Gender: Feminism, Deconstruction and the History of Philosophy* (London and New York: ROutledge, 1997). For a historical study of the materialization of (gendered) bodies, see Thomas Laqueur's *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Harvard, Massachusetts: Havarad University Press, 1992).

[39] But the binary between feminine inexperience and masculine experience comes under fire for other reasons as well: even this classic feminist argument that femininity has been "associated with the irrational, the sensible and the private sphere" (Deutscher, *Yielding,* 3) and the masculine with the rational, intellectual, and the universal, has come under pressure from "queer" histories of Greek thought which seek (a) to complicate the presumed historical alignment of rationality, activity, and masculinity on the one hand, and irrationality, femininity, and passivity on the other; (b) to investigate the differential social allocation of these categories as political effects insofar as they are unevenly distributed to various "subjects" within an historical field of power (a field constituted by abjecting those who do not fit the category of subject, foreclosing their viability and possibility as subjects from the start). See *Before Sexuality: The Construction of Erotic Experience in the Ancient Greek* World, eds. David M. Halperin, John J. Winkler, and Froma I. Zeitlin (Princeton: Princeton Universsity Press, 1990). In contemporary feminist and queer reformulations, it has been important to show how humanist discourses which claim to be able to identify the "human" or the essential traits of personhood are a set of political effects instituted by a given truth regime within a contingent normative frame delimiting what counts as a subject in terms of the purported natural features that this subject is thought to represent, a naturalist humanism that is only provisionally won, as it were, by means of an uneven distribution of certain traits to specific populations and the withholding of these traits from others (consider, for example, that the discourses of rights and natural reason in Ancient Greek thought did not often consider women, children, or slaves as rights-bearing citizens). A discussion of this problematic recently took place through the Istanbul Workshop, co-directed by Judith Butler and Zeynep Gambetti, "Thinking Vulnerability and Resistance: Feminism & Social Change," September 16-19, 2013.

[40] The use of this unwieldy term "concept-metaphor" is meant to recall the chiasmatic intermeshing of concept and metaphor: concepts are issued, often, through metaphors, while metaphor is itself a concept; philosophy and rhetoric are bound to each other, however much the one might try to distance itself from the other. Derrida's "La mythologie blanche" in *Marges,* inquires whether the very concept of metaphor might be deconstructed and a different relation between them articulated according to an "other logic." A part of the work here will be to query whether this may be so.

[41] Centuries later, Virginia Woolf would parody this early modern conceit in *Orlando* (1928) when the eponymous protagonist realizes, upon transmogrifying into a woman, that "the whole edifice of female government is based on that foundation stone [virtue]; chastity is their jewel, their centre piece, which they run mad to protect, and die when ravished of." In *Orlando* (New York: Hacrout Brace & Company, 1956), 153-4.

[42] Plato, *The Symposium,* trans. Robin Waterfield (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 24. One reads further: "love is of that which man wants and has not" (25). This postulation results from the exposition on the question: "Is love the love of something or of nothing?" (23). In this vein, one need only consider in this vein Dante's *The New Life* or Marie de France's *Lais* in a Western context, or Murasaki Shikibu's *Tale of Genji* in an East Asian one.

[43] One need only think of the multifarious trajectories of "desire" in Spinoza, Hegel, Nietzsche, and Lacan, not to mention the affirmative "desiring-machines" of Deleuze, Barthes' "pleasures of the text," Foucault's "bodies and pleasures," or Girard's "triangular desire." On the intricacies and trajectories of Platonic figurations of "desire" see Judith Butler, "Desire" in *Critical Terms for Literary Study,* ed. Frank Lentricchia and Thomas McLaughlin (Chicago and London: Uiverity of Chicago Press, 1995), 372.

[44] Barbara Johnson, *The Critical Difference,* 14.

[45] The term became highly controversial during the *querelle des Amies*, a dispute amidst the poets La Broderie, Charles Fontaine, and Antoine Héroët that pitted various figures of friendship against one another. "Ami" remains a particularly ambiguous vocable in old regime French. As the first edition of the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française* (1694) avers, the appellation denotes those who amiably share sympathies but also, significantly, to lovers ("It is sometimes said of a married woman, that *she has a friend* [*ami*], to suggest [*faire entendre*] that she has a lover [*amant*]") and, far before that, medieval and early modern literatures employ the namesake for both platonic amities and passionate amours. See ARTFL, http://artfl-project.uchicago.edu/content/dictionnaires-dautrefois.

[46] If during the early modern period, Petrarchist and platonic conceptions of love are constantly in dispute with courtly conventions and medieval notions of erotic love, then there is not simply one totalizing or overarching theory of amour for the literary figures of "love," themselves multiple and multivalent. These terms are continual objects of contest. Such debates, sometimes called the *Querelle des Amyes,* would pit medieval theories against certain ideals of Christian humanism, such as conjugal love. See Kelly Digby Peebles' "The Literary World of 'Les Comptes Amoureux par Madame Jeanne Flore,'" (PhD diss.,

University of Virginia, 2010), for a consideration of these tropes and trends. Also of interest here would be Robert Cottrell, "Le Déplacement d'Eros par Anteros dans *L'Amye de Court* de La Borderie," and Jan Miernowski in *Anteros: Actes Du Colloque De Madison (Wisconsin) Mars 1994,* eds. Ulrich Langer (Orleans: Paradigme, 1994), 117-135.

[47] The 17th c. develops a discourse of "repos" or repose, exemplified in *La Princesse de Cleves* and Catherine Durand's *La Comtesse de Mortane*, where a woman's "repose" or peace from passion becomes the condition of love, and the 18th c. discourse of defensive virtue is also well at hand.

[48] Cf. English Showalter, "*Romans*, Romances, *Nouvelles*, and Novels" in *The Evolution of the French Novel 1641-1782* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1972), 11-37 and Francis Gingras *Le Bâtard conquérant: essor et expansion du genre romanesque au Moyen Âge* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2011). The romance is thought to recall the chivalric conventions of certain Middle Age verse narratives and, importantly, was entertained a rapport with woman's writing: "Romance as a literary form had longstanding medieval associations with women, often for negative reasons," so relates one critical account of this persuasion, for though "predominantly written by men, romances often inscribed a female audience, even when the male author might simultaneously be addressing the members of his own sex." From Josephine A. Roberts' introduction to *The First part of The Countess of Montgomery's Urania* (1621) by Lady Mary Wroth (Michigan: University of Michigan, 2008): "As Patricia Parker ['s *Literary Fat Ladies: Rhetoric, Gender, Property*] observes, the digressiveness of the genre was linked to the supposed garrulity and irrationality of women and to the seductive power of female desire" (xviii). On the feminizations of the novel one might consult Michael Danahy *The feminization of the novel* (Gainesville : University of Florida Press, 1991) and Carla Hesse *The Other Enlightenment : how French women became modern* (Princeton, N.J. : Princeton University Press, 2001).

[49] When capitalized, "Ancien Régime" (Old Regime) refers to the commonly accepted periodic time-frame for a certain breadth of literary production, roughly extending from the fifteenth century to the eighteenth, though when in lower case it alludes to a more supple, protean, and multivalent concept-metaphor and qualifier. This is not to suggest, however, that there subsits a dichotomy between the demarcation of historical periods and ahistorical adjectives; "history" and "theory" are inevitably imbricated by, and implicated within, each other.

[50] *Nouvelles du XVIIe siècle*, eds. Raymond Picard and Jean Lafond (Paris: Gallimard, 1997), 793.

[51] (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1995): "il faut les aimer, s'il est possible, sans qu'ils en sachent rien" (107).

[52] *Romans de femmes du XVIIIe siècle*, ed. Raymond Trousson (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1996), 791-2: "Les femmes seules possèdent le secret d'apprendre parfaitement tout ce qu'elles n'osent demander, par l'art de savoir faire des questions indirectes avec une adresse inimitable."

[53] These conventions hark back some medieval portayals of virtue as well. Consider Petrarch's poem, ostensibly voiced by a woman lyricist, who claims that 'whoever lets herself be deprived of honor is no longer/a lady and no longer alive [*qual si lascia di suo onor privare/né donna è più, né viva*]" in *Rime sparse*, pp. 424, 425 respectively.

[54] Cf. English Showalter, "*Romans*, Romances, *Nouvelles*, and Novels" in *The Evolution of the French Novel 1641-1782* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1972), 11-37 and Francis Gingras *Le Bâtard conquérant: essor et expansion du genre romanesque au Moyen Âge*. Par Francis Gingras. (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2011). The romance is thought to recall the chivalric conventions of certain Middle Age verse narratives and, importantly, was entertained a rapport with woman's writing: "Romance as a literary form had longstanding medieval associations with women, often for negative reasons," so relates one critical account of this persuasion, for though "predominantly written by men, romances often inscribed a female audience, even when the male author might simultaneously be addressing the members of his own sex." From Josephine A. Roberts' introduction to *The First part of The Countess of Montgomery's Urania* (1621) by Lady Mary Wroth (Michigan: University of Michigan, 2008): "As Patricia Parker ['s *Literary Fat Ladies: Rhetoric, Gender, Property*] observes, the digressiveness of the genre was linked to the supposed garrulity and irrationality of women and to the seductive power of female desire" (xviii). On the feminizations of the novel one might consult Michael Danahy *The feminization of the novel* (Gainesville : University of Florida Press, 1991) and Carla Hesse *The Other Enlightenment : how French women became modern* (Princeton, N.J. : Princeton University Press, c2001).

[55] Huet's *Traité de l'origine des romans* (1670) (Paris: N.L.M. Dressarts, 1798), for example, remarked that the prose romance was itself already a translation of and transition from the verse and epic romance: "Autrefois, sous le nom de Romans, on comprenait, non-seulement ceux qui étaient écrits en prose, mais plus souvent encore ceux étaients écrits en vers" (2-3).

[56] As April Alliston's "Female Sexuality and the Referent of Enlightenment Realisms" in *Spectacles of realism : body, gender, genre*, eds. Margaret Cohen and Christopher Prendergast (Minneapolis : University of Minnesota Press, c1995) notes, "Twentieth-century historians of the novel generally distinguish the emerging genre from earlier (romance) narrative by its increased 'realism,' variously defined in terms of referentiality tot the details ofa quotidian experience shared by readers," though in fact these "logics of referentiality," as the essay will go on to argue is multiple and cannot conform to univocal (and indeed often anachronistic) standards of realism (11). For more on the relation between the romance and the novel, see J. Paul Hunter, *Before Novels: The Cultural Contexts of Eighteenth-Century English Fiction* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1990) and Michael McKeon, *The Origins of the English Novel, 1600-1750* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987).

[57] See the dictionary entries at ARTFL under "roman" in the Dictionnaire de l'Académie française (1694), Dictionnaire de l'Académie française (1762), Féraud (1787-8), Dictionnaire de l'Académie française (1798), Dictionnaire de l'Académie française (1835), Littré (1872), Dictionnaire de l'Académie française (1932-5), accessed April 24th, 2012, http://artflx.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/dicos/pubdico1look.pl?strippedhw=roman. On theories of the novel see *The Novel. An Anthology of Criticism and Theory, 1900-2000*, ed. Dorothy J. Hale (Victoria, Australia: Blackwell Publishing, 2006).

[58] William Godwin (*On History and Romance* [1797]) and Carlyle championed the romance as a more imaginative way to rewrite History . Still, writers like Samuel Jonhson (in *The Rambler,* no. 4 [1750]) and Clara Reeve (*The Progress of Romance* [1785]) would attempt to mark a distinction between the romance and the novel. The highly contested difference between the romance the novel is explored in Sarah Green's *Romance Readers and Romance writers* (1810). See *Novel and Romance, 1700-1800: A Documentary Record,* ed. Ioan Williams (London: Routledge, 1970).

[59] Added to this is the fact that, as some literary historians argue, the competition and controversy surrounding the romance in early modern Europe had less to do with the novel versus the romance, than older forms of romance versus new romance. See James Grantham Turner "'Romance' and the Novel in Restoration England," *Review of English Studies* LXII (2011): 1-28.

[60] The problem of separability between the two narrative "forms" of the novel and the romance would reflect a problem of distinction indwelling the very notion of genre, an undecidability which would lie within and at the heart of "genre" itself. See Jacques Derrida, "La loi du genre" in *Parages* (Paris: Galilée, 1986) and *Genèses, généalogies, genres et le génie : les secrets de l'archive* (Paris : Galilée, 2003).

[61] Such formulations reverbate those of Johnson, *Critical: "*The problem of difference can thus be seen both as an uncertainty over separability and as a drifting apart within identity [...] The differences *between* entities [...] are shown to be based on a repression of differences *within* entities, ways in which an entity differs from itself," (x-xi). On "différance" see Derrida's eponymous essay in *Marges*.

[62] On the Renaissance novel, see Domna Stanton's "Woman as Object and Subject of Exchange: Marie de Gournay's *Le Proumenoir* (1594)," in *L'Esprit Créateur* 23, no. 2 (summer 1983): 9-25 and bibliographic references in Chapter 2.

[63] On the *roman d'analyse* see Shirley Jones Day, *The search for Lyonnesse : women's fiction in France, 1670*-1703 (New York : P. Lang, 1999), Dorothy Frances Dallas, *Le roman français de 1660-1680* (Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1977), Pascal Champain, *Le roman français du xviie siècle, un genre en question* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2007), and Nicole Aronson, "Amour et marriage dans les oeuvres de Mlle de Scudéry," *L'Esprit Créateur* 19.1 (Spring 1979).

[64] On eighteenth-century epistolary literature see Antoinette Sol, "The Second Time Around: Marriage and Remarriage in Riccoboni and La Guesnerie," in *Eighteenth-Century Life* Volume 26, Number 2 (Spring 2002): 53-68 and Antoinette Sol, *Textual promiscituies: Eighteenth-century critical rewriting* (. London: Bucknell University Press, 2002). One might also consult Susan Dalton, *Engendering the Republic of Letters Reconnecting Public and Private Spheres in Eighteenth-Century Europe* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University press, 2003), Rousset, "Une forme littéraire: le roman par lettres," *Forme et signification* (Paris: J. Corti, 1962) 65-108, April Alliston *Virtue's Faults: Correspondences in eighteenth century British and French Women's fictions* (Stanford California: Stanford University press, 1996) and Henri Coulet, *Le Roman jusqu'à la Révolution* (Paris: Colin, 2000).

[65] On the nineteenth-century sentimental novel see Evans, *Le Roman social sous la Monarchie de Juillet* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1930), David Denby, *Sentimental Narrative and the Social Order in France 1760-1820* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), and Margaret Cohen, *The Sentimental Education of the Novel* (Princeton, N.J. : Princeton University Press, c1999),

[66] Cf. Ellen Constans, *Parlez-moi d'amour: le roman sentimental : des romans grecs aux collections de l'an 2000* (Limoges : PULIM Presses universitaires de Limoges, 1999). The word "roman" has a fractured history, ranging from the early, allegedly "sentimental" novels of the Renaissance –like Hélisenne de Crenne's *Angoysses qui procedent d'amours* (1538) which transfigures the chivalric romance of the medieval era- to the psychological novel (17th century), and the eighteenth-century epistolary sentimental novel (*roman épistolaire sentimental*). The "novel" as a term or as a (non?)genre, marks the convergence of medieval Romances and novella traditions. For a general perspective on these purported genres, see Katharine Anne Jensen, *Writing Love, Letters, Women, and the Novel in France, 1605-1776* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern University Press, 1995) and Charlotte Daniels, *Subverting the Family Romance: Women Writers, Kinship Structures, and the Early French Novel* (Lewisburg, PA : Bucknell University Press ; London : Associated University Presses, 2000).

[67] From *The progress of romance, through times, countries and manners; ... in a course of evening conversations. By C. R. author of the English Baron, The two mentors, &c. In two volumes. ...* Vol. Volume 1. (Colchester: 1785), 111. Eighteenth Century Collections Online. Gale. Princeton University Library,http://find.galegroup.com.ezproxy.princeton.edu/ecco/infomark.do?&source=gale&prodId=ECCO&userGroupName=prin77918&tabID=T001&docId=CW113748612&type=multipage&contentSet=ECCOArticles&version=1.0&docLevel=FASCIMILE (accessed July 3, 2012)

[68] It is not so much that these texts flit or flip between the virtual and actual but that they constitute the very boundary of

this tension itself. To borrow from Deleuzian parlance, it might be said that the virtual and the actual are so inextricable that the one cannot be disassociated from the other. In Deleuze's "The Actual and the Virtual," one reads that "[p]urely actual objects do not exist. Every actual surounds itself with a cloud of virtual images. This cloud is composed of a series of more or less extensive coexisting circuits, along which the virutal images are distributed, and around which they run." See Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet, *Dialogues II*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam. (New York : Columbia University Press, 2007 [Rev. ed]), 148. For a useful discussion of how virtuality does not simply mean "non-material" see Ella Brians, "'Virtual' Body and the Strange Persistence of the Flesh: Deleuze, Cyberspace and the Posthuman" in *Deleuze and the body*, eds. Laura Guillaume and Joe Hughes (Edinburgh : Edinburgh University Press, c2011).

[69] As Silivia says, for example, in Aphra Behn's *Love-Letters between a Nobleman and his Sister* (1684-7) (*The works of Aphra Behn*, ed. J. Todd. Columbus: Ohio State University press, 1993) : "my unexperienc'd innocence ne're met with so fatal a story" (13). What might such unexperienced or nonexperience amount to? The reflections on Musil in Blanchot's *Le Livre à venir* (Paris: Gallimard, 1959) concerning experiences that are seemingly lived –but without anyone there to live through them- offer, in a similar vein and with resonant language, some (im)possibilities to explore: that which almost or nearly happens but nonetheless does not; that which comes to pass without anything really coming to pass; that which takes place, but only insofar as it doesn't; that which happened, but did it actually happen? (197, 202). In these formulations, it is not that events that take place really or that they are really accomplished, for that which happened could have happened otherwise and thus didn't really happen (in actuality). One might even speak of an amorous experience which isn't or which doesn't realize/actualize itself.

[70] See Joan DeJean *Ancients against moderns : culture wars and the making of a fin de siècle* (Chicago : University of Chicago Press, 1997) and more recently *Revisiter la "querelle des femmes": Discours sur l'égalité/inégalité des sexes, de 1600-1750,* eds. Danielle Haase-Dubosc and Marie-Élisabeth Henneau (Publications de l'Université de Saint-Etienne, Coll. L'Ecole du genre, 2013).

[71] Another polyvalent term, "histoire" refers in French to both History and story, an ambiguity much exploited by writers of the epoch. See Christian Zonsa's "Les femmes, ces faiseuses d'histoire. Les femmes et l'écriture de l'histoire dans les nouvelles historiques," in *Les femmes et l'écriture de l'histoire 1400-1800* (Publications des Universtiés de Rouen et Du Havre, 2008), 407-424.

[72] See April Alliston, "Gender and the Rhetoric of Evidence in Early-Modern Historical Narratives," *Comparative Literature Studies*, Vol. 33, No. 3 (1996), 233-257.

[73] Not only a seventeenth-century phenomenon, however, eighteenth-century works like Mademoiselle Fontette-Sommery's *Lettres de Madame La Comtesse de L… A Monsieur Le Comte De R…*(1785) (Paris: Chez Barrois, 1785) also attempts to blend a Louis XIV historical setting with epistolary realism.

[74] Note the beguiling "Avertissement" to Louise-Geneviève Gillot de Sainctonge's *Histoire secrete de Dom Antoine Roy de Portugal"Tirée des memoires de Dom Gomes Vasconcellos de Figueredo* (1696) *(*A Paris … : Chez Jean Guignard …, M.DC.LXXXXVI [1696]): "On doit être persuadé que je ne raporte rien dans la vie de Dom Antoine Roy de Portugal, qui ne soit trés – véritable; j'ay pour maxime qu'il n'est permis de donner l'effort à son imagination, que lors qu'on écrit des Romans, & qu'à l'égard del'Histoire, on ne sauroit avoir trop d'exactitude & de sincerité" (n. pag). This "lady doth protest too much" rhetorical feint of disclaiming only emphasizes, of course, that an impurity of discourses is at stake in the novel.

[75] In this way the tension and ambiguity of genre that these *romans* underline is itself embodied by the title these works occasionally adopt. When Du Plaisir's "Sentiments sur les lettres et sur l'histoire" first appears in 1683, he will refer "History" to "story," suggesting the narrative quality thematized by the double sense of the word *histoire* in French.

[76] Such oxymora clearly differ from the traditionally endeictic and exhibition-laden definitions of experience (specifically, those empiricist definitions according to which experience would constitute a trial or test through which one passes and thanks to which one can claim to have acquired gainful insight and testimony). Raymond Williams' *Keywords: a vocabulary of culture and society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985)*,* for example, defines experience as "(i) knowledge knowledge gathered from past events, whether by conscious observation or by consideration and reflection; and (ii) a particular kind of consciousness, which can in some contexts be distinguished from 'reason' or'knowledge'" (126).

[77] For François' *Open Secrets: the literature of uncounted experience* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008) the historical novella of Madame de Lafayette, constitutes a "negative contribution to the public record, supplying the reasons why x or *y* didn't happen and explaining material events in light of projects that never came to fruition," (99). This also becomes a problematic for reading: how does one read for that which has been disappeared, effaced, or made inapparent, that which had to be excluded in order for public discourse to be established (and which inevitably haunts the vanity of the claim to self-groundedness by the upwelling of that which was excluded, abjected, or slighted)? How to read the illegibility of a text where every appearance is in fact a place-holder for that which it has also erased?

[78] (London: 1750), 158. The question of feminine authorship in volume 2, wherein one of the narrators/epistolarians writes: "me voilà donc Auteur ? mais si on le sçvaoit, on en riroit, & Auteur femelle: à propos de quoi? Je n'en sçais rien" (111).

[79] As Scudéry's *Clélie, histoire romaine* (Paris: chez Augustin Courbé, 1660), will have it, in the poetics of "vray-semblance," that which is untrue does not dissemble truth from sight or enshroud it from view; quite to the contrary, it seems to

ressembles truth by appearing to bring it to light, by seeming more truthful than truth itself: "on peut dire que quelquesfois le mensonge est plus agreeable que la verité: & qu'il ressemble mieux à la verité, que la verité mesme" (Volume 2, 1383).

[80] Alliston, "Gender," 250.

[81] Likewise, the periodic or temporal designations, "Romantic," "Renaissance," etc. are fictive and fickle categories, open to renewal, displacement, and dispersal—depending on context.

[82] See Katherine Sobba Greene, *The courtship novel, 1740-1820: A feminized genre* (Lexington, Ky. : University Press of Kentucky, c1991) and Shifra Armon, *Picking Wedlock: Women and the Courtship novel in Spain* (Lanham, Md. : Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, c2002).

[83] Cf. *Parlez-moi d'amour: le roman sentimental : des romans grecs aux collections de l'an 2000* (Limoge: Presses Universitaires de Limoges, 1999); Vincent-Buffault *The History of Tears: sensibility and sentimentality in France* trans.Teresa Bridgeman (New York : St. Martin's Press, 1991); Philip Stewart, *L'invention du sentiment : roman et économie affective au XVIIIe siècle* (Oxford : Voltaire Foundation, 2010). For a version of this history in a British context see G.-J. Barker-Benfield *The Culture of Sensibility: Sex and Society in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992);

[84] Consider, for example, that Hélisenne de Crenne's *Les angoysses qui procedent d'amours* (1538) and Marie de Gournay's *Le Proumenoir de Monsieur de Montaigne* (1594) have been respectively garlanded as the first "sentimental novel" and first "psychological novel" in the canon of French literature Cf. M.J. Baker, "France's First Sentimental Novel and Novels of Chivalry" in *Symposium Symposium* 27, no.4 (1973), 303-8 and Ilsley, "New Light on the 'Proumenoir de M. de Montaigne," in Modern Philology, vol. 52, No.1 (Aug., 1954), 11. Likewise, much of second-wave salon writing, like that of Madame de LaFayette is taken to apotheosize the seventeenth-century *roman d'analyse;* the eighteenth-century epistolary novels Madame Riccoboni, and Madame de Charrière have been read for the conventions of sentimentalism they both display and dismantle (For the dismantling of these conventions see Joan Hinde Stewart, *Gynographs : French novels by women of the late eighteenth century* [Lincoln : University of Nebraska Press, 1993]). Equally, Germaine de Staël's and George Sand's innovations and reformulations of sentimental plots in their novels of the nineteenth-century have also been the subjects of numerous exegeses. Cf. Cohen, *The Sentimental Education of the Novel* and Namoi Schor *George Sand and idealism* (New York : Columbia University Press, 1993). While twentieth-century and contemporary scholarship of old regime French women's fiction, coming from various quarters, has beseiged some of the traditional tenants of structuralist literary-history, when concept-metaphors like "sensibilité" and "sentiment" are presumed to transcend and extend, almost like a platonic form, over an expanse of time and across so-called "women's writing," this restores certain questionable foundationalisms.

[85] Cf. Stewart, *Gynographs.*

[86] For a consideration of these tropes, one might consult Aurora Wolfgang, *Gender and Voice in the French Novel, 1730-1782* (Aldershot, Hants, England ; Burlington, VT, USA : Ashgate, c2004), Brigitte Louichon, *Romancières sentimentales: 1789-1825* (Saint-Denis : Presses universitaires de Vincennes, c2009), DeJean *Tender Geographies*, Alliston *Virtue's Faults*, Éric Paquin *Le récit épistolaire feminine au tournant des Lumières et au début du XIX siècle (1793-1837): adaptation et renouvellement d'une forme narrative* (Diss. Université de Montréal, 1998), and Nancy K. Miller, *Subject to change : reading feminist writing* (New York : Columbia University Press, 1988).

[87] According to this view, it would seem that the indelible couplet of gender/genre has more often than not operated as a regulatory norm, catching "women's writing" within a tangle of both tacit and outspoken presumptions, the most prevalent of which being that feminine pen is the most "romantic" one: uncritical and first-degree outpouring, subjectivistic and sentimental prose, hyper-personalized and hyperbolic melodrama, romances, and their authors, have long been identified with emotive expression and solipsistic simpering, characterized as restlessly reflecting on the 'internal' and the 'personal' elements of experience.

[88] See Margaret Cohen, "In lieu of a Chapter on Some French Women Realist Novelists," in *Spectacles of Realism: Gender, Body, Genre,* eds. Cohen et al. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995). See also Cohen *The Sentimental Education of the Novel* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2002). In order to expose the falsely univocal generic history of realism offered by North American interpretations of French literary narratives and with the aim of tracing an archaeology of the erasure of a specific variation of the sentimental novel, a "materialist" viewpoint which regards "genre [as] a social relation" is proposed, and representative examples –like Sophie Cottin's *Claire d'Albe* (1799)- are analyzed as archetypal models of the sub-genre of the "sentimental social novel" whose literary codes are catalogued and classified, the overarching features of which are framed within the Hegelian conception of tragedy as a sort of "prehistory" to Romanticism's development. But why, one might ask, has French realism been exclusively associated with "the novels by Balzac, Stendhal, Charles de Bernard, and Félix Davin," leading to the dubious assertion that French "women writers [did] not participate in the consolidation of French realism" where "French realism" means 'writing like Balzac'? Precisely because some have sought to find ersatz imitations of a certain 'Balzac' - one who demonstrates "narrative strategies includ[ing] extensive descriptions of physical appearance and social setting, omniscient, nondidactic narrators, and plots focused on ambitious quests for love and/or some form of social power working through suspense and revelation" (Cohen, "In Lieu," 90) – does it becomes possible to easily demarcate the factitious boundaries

of an exclusivist, myopic vision of 'Realism' while ostracizing and relegating to oblivion all texts which are not exact replications of the idealized model 'Balzac' is said to typify (or relegating supple, complex 'non-Balzacian' texts to simplifying generic categories, like the "feminine social novel" without first questioning *from within* the very designation of 'Realism.' While Cohen's project attempts to find opposing genres and sub-genres to 'Realism,' the difference that it is posited is one *between* genres, rather than asking after the more complex question of the differences *within* the notion of genre itself.

[89] François, *Open Secrets,* 73. Some aesthetic and literary-historical analyses of "sentiment" and "sensibility."

[90] In these accounts emotions are to be phenomenally expressive in language and revelatory of a subject bearing emotions of cognitive or ideational content, but this subject said to manifest itself through the sentimental text is, in fact, also assumed to precede it. This "expressive hypothesis" characterizing the critical works on 'sensibility' and 'sentiment' suppose finding a subject they've already presumed exists. See Terada, *Feeling in Theory: Emotion after the "Death of the Subject."* It is unclear when sentiments "appear" in texts whether these "sentimental" scenes *are* the thing in and of itself, or the point to its own pointing to that thing. In Terada's *Feeling*, feeling is always feeling like another or as another. Pure intentionality or nondifferential feeling would be impossible, the cancelling of selfsame sensation is part and parcel of affection. Even if intuitive, nonverbal, or pre-linguistic, sentiments are pictured as *speech* in these aesthetic interpretations, a perhaps much too limited reading of romantic phrases like French romantic novelist Anne-Marie Beaufort d'Hautpoul's sentimental aphorism that "[la] bouche se tait, mais [le] coeur parle" (Madame Beaufort d'Hautpoul, *Les Habitants de L'Ukraine, ou Alexis et Constantin* (Paris, François Louis, LIbraire, 1820), p.93, vol.2). Such romantic idioms, for instance, do not signify that the heart speaks or is speech, but rather that an anthropomorphic or personifying figure –unsemantic in and of itself, a non-figure which makes possible a figural relation- institutes the fiction of a heart being *able* to speak, endows an inanimate figure with agency by uncertain, catachrestic, rhetorical means. Ignoring these implications, for certain aesthetic interpretations, the signified of sentiment or even sensation itself would be revealed in narrative language and the experience to which sentiment refers could only be revealed and retained in language since the referent of experience would be the meaning of the reference of language and its apotheosis in expression: "the sentimental text declares that its ambition is the affirmation and celebration of the possibility of a common, communicable human experience," declares a study whose intent is to demonstrate the audience-oriented intentionality of sentimental works (Denby,79). The proto-Habermasian belief in the communicable democratic form of fraternity is manifest in this description of the sentimental text as taking part in "the Enlightenment project" as that of "fraternity," (*Ibid*).

[91] One notable exception is Lynn Festa's *Sentimental Figures of Empire*, in which "sentiment," "sentimentality," "sympathy," and "sensibility" are not treated as mere catch-all lexemes, even if seventeenth- to nineteenth-century literary practice encouraged a certain slippage in conceptual taxonomy.

[92] "Women's writing" has, in some traditions of scholarship, been paired either with hyperbole and hysteria or with delicacy and daintiness. As is noted in *An Encyclopedia of continental women writers*, ed. Katharina M. Wilson (New York : Garland Pub., 1991), for example, one of the first novels in French attributed to a woman, Marguerite Briet's/Hélisenne de Crenne's *Les Angoysses* (1538), "has often been criticized as over-extravagant, verbose, pretentious, and Latinate" (175).

[93] See Joan DeJean, "Classical Reeducation: Decanonizing the Feminine," in *Yale French Studies* 75 (1988) and "Sappho's Leap: Domesticating the Woman Writer," in *L'Esprit Créateur* 25, no.2 (1985): 14-21, for sustained reflections on the heritance of these classical prejudices.

[94] "[l'auteur] doit être réellement une femme, comme le prouvent non seulement le fait qu'elle parle en son propre nom au feminine (ce pourrait être une ruse, plusieurs auteurs masculins ont voulu faire croire que tel out el de leurs écrits était d'une femme), mais surtout le ton de ces intrusions d'auteur, qui est celui de la sensibilité, de l'indulgence, d'une sagesse due à l'expérience du malheur." This comes from Henri Coulet's comments on "Les Prétendus" in the volume he edited, *Nouvelles du XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Gallimard, 2002), 1447.

[95] *Nouvelles du XVII siècle*, 779.

[96] "Pour moy, je suis flattée que l'on me soupçonne et je croy que j'avoûrois le livre, si j'estois asseurée que l'auteur ne vînt me le redemander" from the second volume of Lafayette, *Correspondance*, ed. André Beaunier (Paris: Gallimard, 1942), 63.

[97] Johnson, *The Feminist Difference : literature, psychoanalysis, race, and gender* (Cambridge, Mass. : Harvard University Press, 1998), 123. Italics in original.

[98] And there is the presumption that such writing displays the overindulgent and overdrawn sententiousness of her "feelings.' To assume that "women writers" adhere to specific semiological codes and that these codes can be easily discoverable, only embrawns dualistic prejudices inherited from the classical age, for instance that, as Jensen's *Writing Love, Letters, Women, and the Novel in France, 1605-1776* puts it, "women who write depict their own selves and (love) lives in a transparent, not to say naive unselfconscious fashion," (76). See especially the first chapter on this subject, "Men's Models of Feminine Epistolarity, or How to Write Like a Woman in Seventeenth-Century France," (9-35).

[99] Jane Tompkins, *Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction, 1790-1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 123. To which it is added: "The very grounds on which sentimental fiction has been dismissed by its detractors, grounds which have come to seem universal standards of aesthetic judgement, were established in a struggle to supplant the

tradition of evangelical piety and moral commitment these novelists represent" (*Ibid*). While the reference is to American fiction, and thus cannot be considered culturally versal, the implications it might be said to bear on the French context are not to be dismissed.

[100] See the reflections of Barbara Johnson *The feminist difference : literature, psychoanalysis, race, and gender* (Cambridge, Mass. : Harvard University Press, 1998), Nancy K. Miller, *Subject to Change: Reading Feminist Writing* (New York : Columbia University Press, 1988) and *The heroine's text : readings in the French and English novel, 1722-1782* (New York : Columbia University Press, 1980) and *passim*.

[101] For a Marxist-influenced reading, see Donovan's *Women and the Rise of the Novel: 1405-1726* (New York : St. Martin's Press, c1999). See Georges May's *Le Dilemme du romn au xviii siècle* and "L'histoire a-t-elle engendré le roman?" in *Revue d'histoire littéraire de la France,* LV, 1955, p.155-176 and Trousson, "Préface," *Romans de femmes du xviii siècle*, pp. xviii: "Si les femmes, à partir du xviiie siècle, se taillent une part importante dans la production romanesque, c'est parce que les hommes affectent de leur abandonner un genre vulgaire et méprisé," and Beebee's genealogical study, *Epistolary Fiction in Europe 1500-1850*, especially chapter 5, "The lettered woman as dialectical image," pp. 103-137). Only the novel, it is said, which is debased and thought of as corrupt because it is not constrained by classical or formal rules can be the lot of woman and the genre allotted to them. As these historical interpretations contend, if for the eighteenth-century anyone and everyone can write "a novel," because the genre is written in an atheistic and vernacular language –*la langue romane*- and not reducible to any definitive schema, then women, constrained by social norms, subject to men by convention, are thus constrained to a genre of novel that itself is thought to have no constraints. Women would have hence been the susceptible, lowly readership to whom the reading of such ill-born literature was aimed, as the semi-ironic preface to Rousseau's *Julie, ou la Nouvelle Héloïse*, implies: "Ce recueil [des lettres] avec son gothique ton convient mieux *aux femmes que les livres des philosophes*…Quant aux filles, c'est autre chose. Jamais fille chaste n'a lu des romans…Celle qui, malgré ce titre, en osera lire une seule page est une fille perdue." (p.3.).

[102] This contrasts, however, with other medieval conventions –like that of a woman's artful deceitfulness (one of the images in the so-called "misogynist" speech of the jealous husband in *Le Roman de la Rose*)- and is only one particular vantage admist a plethora of discourses. On the *Romance of the Rose* see Christine de Pizan, et al. *Debate of the Romance of the rose*, ed. and trans. David F. Hult (Chicago : The University of Chicago Press, 2010).

[103] "Ce sexe va plus loin que le nôtre dans ce genre d'écrire ; elles trouvent sous leur plume des tours et des expressions qui souvent en nous ne sont l'effet que d'un long travail et d'une pénible recherche ; elles sont heureuses dans le choix des termes, qu'elles placent si juste, que tout connus qu'ils sont, ils ont le charme de la nouveauté, et semblent être faits seulement pour l'usage où elles les mettent ; il n'appartient qu'à celles de faire lire dans un seul mot tout un sentiment, et de rendre délicatement une pensée qui est délicate." See "Des ouvrages de l'esprit," in *Les Caractères,* 1 -2. Barthes' *Le Neutre*, "Délicatesse et socialité," makes note, the etymology of *Delicatus* is linked with deliquescence, decadence, and effeminacy, 64.

[104] ("*Il n'appartient qu'à ce Sexe aimable*") and ("*ses productions ces graces, cette finesse ingénue &ce pathétique attendrissant qui ne nous agite pas avec la violence &l'enthousiasme du nôtre; mais nous émeut par dégrés, fait couler nos larmes &nous subjugue*"), pp.iij-iv.

[105] See Georges May and Trousson, "Préface," *Romans de femmes*., pp. xviii-xix *op cit*. As the "préface pour les Dames" of Olympe Gouge's *Mémoire de Madame de Valmont* (1788) declares, the very act of a woman writing remains unthinkable because it deviates from the gender role allotted to her: "men hold that we are only properly fit to lead a household; and that women who tend toward the mind and give themselves with prentension to literature are insufferable beings to society." "les hommes soutiennent que nous ne sommes propres exactement qu'à conduire un ménage; et que les femmes qui tendent à l'esprit et se livrent avec prétention à la littérature sont des êtres insupportables à la société" 7. And yet, as Gouges' novel itself attests, these "insufferable beings" did not merely set down their pen. Might one read Gouges' statements as declaring that "Femmes" who "se livrent," to write *livres*, books and works, are insupportable, insufferable beings, a being which cannot be thought within the exclusionary terms of a culture which cannot accept a "woman" who writes?

[106] See Lesley H. Walker. *A mother's love : crafting feminine virtue in Enlightenment France* (Bucknell University Press, c2008). "There is a little world of sentiment made for women to move in," writes for example Savillon in Herny Mackenzie's novel *Julia*, "where they certainly excel our sex, and where our sex ought, perhaps to be excelled by them." *Op cit*., p.539.

[107] From Margaret Cohen, "In lieu of a Chapter on Some French Women Realist Novelists," in *Spectacles of Realism: Gender, Body, Genre,* eds. Cohen et al. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 90; list of "realist" authors comes from p. 91. See also Cohen *The Sentimental Education of the Novel*. In order to expose the falsely univocal generic history of realism offered by North American interpretations of French literary narratives and with the aim of tracing an archaeology of the erasure of a specific variation of the sentimental novel, a "materialist" viewpoint which regards "genre [as] a social relation" is proposed, and representative examples –like Sophie Cottin's *Claire d'Albe* (1799)- are analyzed as archetypal models of the sub-genre of the "sentimental social novel" whose literary codes are catalogued and classified, the overarching features of which are framed within the Hegelian conception of tragedy as a sort of "prehistory" to Romanticism's development. But why, one might ask, has French realism been exclusively associated with "the novels by Balzac, Stendhal, Charles de Bernard, and Félix Davin," leading to the dubious assertion that French "women writers [did] not participate in the consolidation of French realism" where "French realism"

means 'writing like Balzac'? Precisely because some have sought to find ersatz imitations of a certain 'Balzac' -one who demonstrates "narrative strategies includ[ing] extensive descriptions of physical appearance and social setting, omniscient, nondidactic narrators, and plots focused on ambitious quests for love and/or some form of social power working through suspense and revelation" (Cohen, "In Lieu," 90) – does it becomes possible to easily demarcate the factitious boundaries of an exclusivist, myopic vision of 'Realism' while ostracizing and relegating to oblivion all texts which are not exact replications of the idealized model 'Balzac' is said to typify (or relegating supple, complex 'non-Balzacian' texts to simplifying generic categories, like the "feminine social novel" without first questioning *from within* the very designation of 'Realism.' While Cohen's project attempts to find opposing genres and sub-genres to 'Realism,' the difference that it is posited is one *between* genres, rather than asking after the more complex question of the differences *within* the notion of genre itself.

[108] The *loci classici* of such claims would seem to have become Roland Barthes, "La mort de l'auteur" (1968) in *Le Bruissement de la langue* (Paris: Seuil, 1984) and Michel Foucault, "Qu'est-ce qu'un auteur?" republished in the collected volumes of *Dits et écrits*.

[109] See Joan W. Scott's "The Tip of the Volcano," in *Comparative Studies in Society and History* , Vol. 35, No. 2 (Apr., 1993), pp. 438-443: "Those who interrogate the category of 'women' never argue that it has no meaning and no effects, nor do they say that there are no women in history. Rather, the point is to contest the essentialist notion underlying some identity politics," (438-9). In this vein, to say that texts which are 'signed by women' but whose authors have never been registered by public record or in the annals of history is to underline both the difficulties of retrieving the biographical details of women writers *and* the fact some of these writers may have not been biological women at all, at least as the latter is commonly understood. Why has the latter been taken indeed, as an irreducible, irrefutable materiality, as a stable entity which might taken on societal constructions but which itself is not taken as one? The claim that there is a true, material, historical referent –'women writers,' 'male writers,'- that subtends texts bearing such signatoires is nevertheless a signification , through language, which claims to find a referent extradiscursively or prelinguistically to its own performative procedure. Instead of speaking of 'authors' one might well speak of authorizing effects, for there is no 'author' which precedes its authorization.

[110] "Discourse" here is not merely a reference to Foucault, though it is that too but, rather, to the formulation of Derrida's *De la grammatologie* –"il n'y a pas de hors-texte"- according to which there would be nothing which might appear beyond textuality, the latter understood in its most robust terms as a web of relations and referrals, *not* as mere linguistic signs.

[111] See Julia Fawcett's study "Over-Expressing the Self: Celebrity, Shandeism, and the Autobiographical Performance, 1696-1801." (PhD Dissertation, Yale University, 2011).

[112] See Derrida, *Limited Inc* and Butler, *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative* (New York: Routledge, 1997).

[113] Butler *Excitable Speech,* 25. In these terms, the graphematic iterability of the signature would seem to imply that the very act of signing produces the illusory effect of a signatory who would predate and initiate the signing act. If the signatory's "identity" depends on the signature without which it would be no signatory at all, and if the signature can —indeed must— be able to be cited and reiterated in the absence of that signatory all together, then it makes little sense to speak of a sovereign subject who precedes and initiates the iterability of signature, since this is not a series of iterations orchestrated by a subject but an iterability that institutes the very linguistic possibility of a subject.[113] More to the point, the signatory only comes to be as the act of signature comes to a close and the performative act appears to be accomplished. In this way, the act of signing produces the fictitious effect of a signatory who would have existed temporally and spatially "before" the act of signing and who would have preceded and initiated this act as its cause. (And here it is clear the temporalities at work far exceed simple self-presence: the signatory can only be postulated as the act of signing comes to an end and is subsequently posited as the causal origin of the signing act even as it follows from this very positing). In Nietzsche's terms, a discursive sign-chain or textual field precedes the signer, for there is no subject who stands before or behind this discourse and intiates its willful act through it: if one is first addressed in language, and by language, in order to then proceed as a social being, then it is not a subject who signs but the signature's effect which retroactively posits the subject as that signature's bearer.

[114] Derrida *Otobiographies: l'enseignement de Nietzsche et la politique du nom propre* (Paris: Éditions Galilée, 1984): "La signature invente le signataire" (22).

[115] See Derrida's famous "Signature, événement, contexte" in *Limited Inc.,* from which this discussion borrows, on the "graphematic" citationality of the signature (the iterability of the mark). Following the logic of this argument, there would seem to be no "signer" that first exists behind the signature, no doer who stands in temporal and spatial priority before the deed, but only the repeated actings of signature of which the conceit of an already existing and masterful subject is a discursive effect only subsequently postuled as origin of the act. Grammar founders here, for the precise point is that neither the signatory nor the signature operate as "subjects" who unilaterally or monocausally effectuate an "act" but, rather, that the iterability of signatures —their need to be grafted into other contexts and repeated in spite of the signer's intention in order to operate— undercuts the very distinction between subject and object, cause and effect, and moves from a grammar of the subject to the question of a linguistic performativity that is orchestrated by no subject. Clearly, the point is not that subjects ought to be jettisoned from this scene: not only ought they not to be, they cannot be: there can be no signing without subjects, but this needn't mean that the

place that subject occupies is the sovereign source of its speech and the totalizing master of that speech's effects. That this language cannot be owned and claimed by any one user marks the alterity of a language that one uses and is used by but never chose to use, a language through which other voices speak as one uses it and as the one who uses it.

[116] This unwilled dimension of language, the fact that the "one" who uses it cannot choose to be unimplicated in the language in which one finds oneself from the start, comes to the fore with the idea of social interpellation: the terms and names by which one is called are never under the sovereignty of the one named, and even when those names might be inadequate or injurious one cannot "be" in language without having already been addressed by it. [Butler, *Bodies that Matter:* "the use of language is itself enabled by first having been *called a name*; the occupation of the name is that by which one is, quite qithout choice, situated within discourse. This 'I,' which isp orudced through hteh accumulation and convergence of such 'calls,' cannot extract itself from the historicity of that chain or raise itself up and confront that chain as if it were an object opposed to me, which is not me, but only what others have made of me; for that estrangement or diviosn produced by the mesh of itnerpellating calls and the 'I' how is its site is not only violating, but enabling as well [...] The 'I' who would oppose its construction is always in some sense drawing from that construction to articulate its opposition" (122).] Language is not simply the instrument of one's using, but that which enables that very "one" to "be" at all, even if not fully as a self-identical being, insofar as this one never owns this language in which its identity is evermore expropriated. Again, this is not to say that there are signatures with no signatories —there is no signing without a signer— but that this scene of signature, always=s already given over to an echo-chain of reverberations and reinvocations, is not governed by an overarching, sovereign subject nor by that subject's presumed intention.

[117] See Chapter One of Kamuf, *Signature Pieces, op cit*. on some of this history.

[118] See Katharine Jensen, *Writing Love, Letters, Women, and the Novel in France, 1605-1776* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern University Press, 1995). In these terms, "woman" was not simply an object of discussion but also constructed as a subject of writing. However, the subject of writing becomes a contested category, most especially because the very production of the subject of woman as a trope that both men and women writers could inhabit, passed of a ruse of power (the construction of a speaking subject) as though this were a subject (of natural woman) who preexisted its particular construction by that given interpretative field of power. Indeed, one might even go so far as to suggest that the very production of this polarity or duality between woman as object and subject of writing is itself the discursive production of a binary frame as the effect of a given epistemic regime of power. On "nobodies" see Catherine Gallagher *Nobody's story: the vanishing acts of women writers in the marketplace, 1670-1820* (Berkeley : University of California Press, 1995).

[119] See Peggy Kamuf, "Writing like a Woman," in *Women and Language in Literature and Scoeity,* ed. Sally McConnell-Ginet, et al. (New York: Praeger, 1980).

[120] Consider in this regard Derrida's figure of the "mime" in Mallarmé's "Mimique" from "The Double Session," in *Dissemination* trans. Barbara Johnson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981): "He represents nothing, imitates nothing, does not have to conform to any prior referent with the aim of achieving adequation or versimilitude. One can here foresee an objection: since the mime imitates nothing, reproduces nothing, opens up in the origin the very thing he is tracing out, presenting or producing, he must be the very movement of truth. Not, of course, truth in the form of adequation between the representation and the present of the thing itself, or between the imitator and the imitated, but truth as the present unveiling of the present...But such is not the case...We are faced then with mimicry imitating nothing; faced, so to speak, with a double that doubles no simple, a double that nothing anticipates, nothing at least that is not itself already double. There is no simple reference...This speculum reflects no reality: it produces mere "reality-effects."...In this speculum with no reality, in this mirror of a mirror, a difference or dyad does exist, since there are mimes and phantoms. But it is a difference without reference, or rather a reference without a referent, without any first or last unity, a ghost that is the phantom of no flesh..." (205-6). The iterations of imitation that produce the mistaken conceit of a subject who initiates these iterations is an effect of these iterations themselves. For if the original can only be defined in terms of its derived effects —that is, its imitative instantiations— then it has no identity apart from them. In this way the original fails to be an "origin" in that it is only known through its secondary and derived effects —and thus depends on these very effects to posture as their origin— revealing itself in the process to be no more than a fictious and phantasmatic conceit of an origin it could never actually be.

[121] See Peggy Kamuf, *Signature Pieces: On the institution of authorship* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1988). In this "graphematic structure" —not anchored in an originary intention, signified, or referent— signatures are only given in contexts (even if contexts are themselves not simply "given"), from which they must break before landing in a new context not only changes that context but marks a separation from a prior context. Any identification of a context itself needs to be contextualized (and so forth), leading to an illimitability of contextualization.

[122] For an interesting review of these debates, see Toril Moi, "'I Am Not a Woman Writer': About Women, Literature and Feminist Theory Today", *Feminist Theory* 9.3 (December 2008): 259-71.

[123] These questions, recurrent in feminist contentions regarding the category of the "woman writer," are surely not to be resolved here. There is a robust history to these discussions on this point. See Mary McAlpin's "Poststructuralist Feminism and the Imaginary Woman Writer: The *Lettres Portugaises,"* in the *Romantic Review* (January 1999) vol 90. Issue 1 for a discussion of the

implications of adopting or abdicating the empirical determinability of the 'woman writer.' See also the entry "cross-dressing" in *The Feminist Encyclopedia of French Literature*, ed. Sartori et al. and Kamuf's "A Double Life (Femmeninism II)," from the essay of the same name in *Men in Feminism*, eds. Alice Jardine & Paul Smith (New York : Methuen, 1987). 93-7. Also of interest is Butler's *oeuvre*, from *Gender Trouble* to *Undoing Gender*. Kamuf has criticized Butler's inattention to the language of gender governing her account, assuming, at least in *Gender trouble*, that the dualistic opposition between "sex" and "gender," in the language of her discourse, itself furthers a binary it sought to undo. See "The Other Sexual Difference," in *Book of addresses* (Stanford, Calif. : Stanford University Press, 2005) and Derrida's "Women in the Beehive," in *Men in feminism.* Alliston's *Virtue's Faults* also significantly emphasize that the poetics they refer to may not refer exclusively to biological womanhood, but to rhetorical practices.

[124] Katharine Jensen, *Writing Love, Letters, Women, and the Novel in France, 1605-1776* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern University Press, 1995), xvi.

[125] A helpful clarification of the terms of this debate, and negotiating within these terms to the point of their displacement, is provided by Diana Fuss' *Essentially speaking : feminism, nature & difference* (New York : Routledge, 1989).

[126] See McAlpin, "Poststructuralist Feminism." In essentialist empiricist accounts, an extratextual person simply "exists" behind or beyond the texts that bear her name while in the seeming linguistic monism of certain deterministically constructivist accounts this author would only be composed of language conceived as a pure ideality. Both of these "positions," as McAlpin's account outlines them, would also seem like overly reductive exaggerations contained within a dualistic frame.

[127] Catharine Malabou's *Changing Difference: The Feminine and the Question of Philosophy,* trans. Carolyn Shread (Malden, Ma: Polity Press, 2011), rightly emphasizes that the deconstruction of categories associated with the feminine need not entail a negationist doxa, or a reduction to a bincar debate between essentialist and anti-essentialsit polemics: "Let us then think this name 'woman' as an empty but resistance essence, an essence that is resistant because empty, a resistance that strikes out the impossibility of its own disappearance once and for all. To ask what remains of woman after the sacrifice of her being is to signal, beyond both essentialism and anti-essentialism, a new era in the feminist struggle, changing the terms of the battle" (v).

[128] In this way, the guiding assumption that women's writing is sentimental is amplified and aggrandized: the conflation of sentimentality and femininity is generated and maintained within the enclosure of this set of presumptions. This sexist pretension thus discursively produces this conflation, subsequently masking this very operation, in order to appeal to this very conflation as a foundation by which to legimitate and ground its own illusory authority. This self-aggrandzing and self-amplifying tactic is a discursive strategy by which the fiction of sentimentality is routinely instituted and enforced as natural and historical "fact."

[129] Cf. On feminine signatures, see Todd, *The Sign of Angellica: Women, Writing and Fiction, 1660-1800 (*London : Virago, 1989). For the imputations of sentimentality to French women's literature see Stewart, *Gynographs.*

[130] Ultimately, there are no justifiable a priori criteria that can determine what makes a language more 'emotive' than another, since hyperbole, ellipsis, repetition, overstatement, stuttering etc – hermeneutic and nonhermeneutic elements, grammar, semantics, and syntax- do not purvey feeling; rather, it is in reading –so, another writing- that such distinctions, impossibly, are made. With the downfall of a coherent concept of 'sentimental' or 'sensible' language comes the unsettling of literary-historical categories and taxonomies.

[131] These are not worthless endeavors in and of themselves, they are just not the ones taken up here. Other scholarly accounts have already attended to these words' definition in their literary deployments, other critical works have already attested to their mutable manifestations in the genre of literature traditionally baptized "sentimental." Cf. Goulemot, "roman sentimental" in *Vocabulaire de la literature du xviiie siècle*, Pierre Dumonceaux, *Langue et sensibilité au XVIIe siècle: l'évolution du vocabulaire affectif* (Genève : Droz, 1975), Cohen *The Sentimental Education of the Novel.* For further references, see Chapter 4 and the bibliography appended to this study.

[132] At the risk of rehearsing earlier formulations, it should perhaps be repeated that to ask if terms such as "sentimentality" have become lapidified, congealed, or cemented names unduly applied to old regime "women's fiction" is not to say that there exists some pregiven entity (the "text") which evades these names, as if there would first be a free-floating text to which is then appendend temporally subsequent names: no, already constituted by legacies of naming there would be no text without its prior linguistic nomination; there would be a naming which precedes and constitutes the text it names along (Nietzsche spoke of "sign-chains," Derrida "iterabilty," Foucault "convergence") and these echos, cumulative repetitions are discursively with which these names are freighted are drawn upon with every reinvocation and reinstitution of the name. Every such instance of a text's naming, in other words, is a sedminted historicity of ritualized representations, but a provisional instancing of which it has a prior historicity and a futurity of effect; the prior history (and the possibility of futurity) haunt, precede, and exceed every so-called "instance." This historicity makes possible the possibility of an instance, but the temporality of this sintance cannot be confined nor identified within the bounds of the present (the past and future effects of the instance of naming cannot be conclusively accounted for). These texts are inherited, generation to generation, with the sedimented history of these nominations. For even to claim that a text is not one, as Diderot did in the eighteenth century, is still to denominate the text as expressing an identity: the identity of not being itself. The task is clearly not to liberate some sort of presumed "virgin" text, a pure entity merely

enshrouded beneath "improper" titles. The latter argument itself presumes that a "proper" or "right" name might be achieved and that the text might somehow be considered exempt from the names without which it would never even "be" as it awaits eventual christening. Rather, if there *is no proper name* by which these fictions ought to be designated, perhaps the task is not merely to find fault in old names or to propose new ones, but to analyze the ways in which the generic denominations by means of which these texts have been or could be called are themselves never fully true or referentially expressive of what they seemingly signify, are themselves always falling apart?

[133] Consider that if "inexperience" is not simply a theme, trope, or rhetorical figure that metaphorically represents a philosophical concept ("a representation of unrepresentable experience"), allegorically resembles a determinate negation ("an experience whose identity is that it is not one"), or mimetically reflects a reified referent ("a presentation of inexperience as such"), then the very claims of referential and representational felicity upon which such mimetic conceptions of language depend, as well as the ontological suppositions they implicitly support, are suspended, if not critically undermined. Audrey Wasser's "Figure to Fissure: Beckett's *Molloy*, *Malone Dies*, and *The Unnamable,"* Modern Philology, Vol. 109, No. 2 (November 2011), issues a slightly different, through still related, caution: "For even given the argument that [a literary] work is nonmimetic in the sense that it does not reflect actual situations in the world (itself a debatable issue), we continue to attribute a function of reference to elements of the text when we treat them as metaphors for philosophical concepts. And, whether we read these elements as figurations of a critique of the subject or as figurations of a crisis in the very concept of the work, we perpetuate a structure of reflection that merely serves to reterritorialize the very 'subject' in question: we map it either onto the philosophico-literary relation or onto the text as a whole. In the latter case, the work becomes the new subject: insofar as the reader relies on interpretative strategies that relate a part of the text to the whole by means of a metaphorical and, in the end, totalizing gesture, she reconstitutes the text as a space of interiority structured by a very recognizable operation of self-reflection and synthesis" (255-6). According to this formulation, itself indebted to a Deleuzian framework, the question becomes less one of meaning of figures than of the constitutive conditions of their "autoallegorizing" production, emphasizing not what they "mean" but how they "work."

[134] ARTFL, Dictionnaires d'autrefois. Online: http://artflx.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/dicos/pubdico1look.pl?strippedhw=inexperience. Accessed April 20, 2012.

[135] Such ignorance is therefore not at all "innocent." See Nancy K. Miller, "Novels of Innocence: Fictions of Loss," *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, Vol. 11, No. 3 (Spring, 1978): 325-339. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's "Axiomatic" in *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley : University of California Press, c1990) for reflections on "ignorances" as well as the chapter "Privilege of Unknowing" in *Tendencies* (Durham : Duke University Press, 1993) and Avital Ronell's *Stupidity* (Urbana : University of Illinois Press, c2002). In a Foucaultian turn of phrase, one might even say that "inexperience" comes to delimit a discursive formation, a volatile domain of unstable norms and forms defining what can and cannot emerge as an intelligible experience.

[136] (Amsterdam and Paris: Chez Merigot le jeune, Libraire, Quai, des Augustins, au coin de la rue Pavée, 1777), 24.

[137] (Paris: De Lormel, 1781), 20.

[138] "j'étais simple, ingénue, sans experience" in *Nouvelles du XVIIIe siècle*, 805.

[139] The French word for "experience" converges the sense of experiment and experience more strongly than its English counterpart.

[140] This comes close to what is described as the "unlived possibilities" or "preemptive loss" of foreclosed desire in Judith Butler's *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997): "If this love is from the start out of the question, then it cannot happen, and if it does, it certainly did not. If it does, it happens only under the official sign of its prohibition and disavowal" (139).

[141] "J'ai toujours eu l'habitude d'aimer et d'être aimée; et puis, vous savez…,vous connaissez…, l'unique confidente de mes pensées les plus secrètes, mais chut! Néanmoins, je commence toujours" from *L'érotisme Directoire : Illyrine, ou, l'Ecueil de l'inexpérience*, with a preface from Claudine Brécourt-Villars (Paris: Garnier, 1983), 24. The conjunction of the two words for "know" in French –"savoir" and "connaître"- leaves open whether the ellipses refer to "You know…(what I've done)" —a predicate following "savoir"— and "You know…(who I'm speaking of)" —nouns, names, and people following directly after "connaître."

[142] *Op cit.,* volume 1, 5.

[143] Cf. R.S. Crane, "Suggestions toward a genealogy of 'The man of Feeling,'" *ELH*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (December 1934): 205-230.

[144] This situation mirrors and reprises the impossibility of contradictory gender identifications as Butler's discussions of "gender melancholia" —in *The Psychic life of Power: theories in subjection* (Stanford, Calif. : Stanford University Press, 1997)— have pointed out. If a non-normative experiential potentiality is evicted from the realm of possibility, if it "is from the start out of the question, then it cannot happen, and if it does, it certainly did not" (139).

[145] "comme toutes les jeunes gens sans expérience, je prenois de simples galantries d'usage pour autant d'hommages […] Les hommes ne font dangereux que lorsque nous sommes sans expérience" (London: Veuve Ballard, 1783), 5-6, 7. La Marquise

de*** has written this letter.

[146] (Paris: P. Schoëll, 1813), 187. In the novel communication rests on a fragile balance between divulgation and destruction: "please burn this letter as soon as you will have read it" writes the heroine (24), the sender nearly indistinguishable from cinders.

[147] Mary Wollstonecraft, *Maria or the Wrongs of Women* (1798) in *Mary; Maria; Matilda*, ed. Janet Todd (New York: Penguin Books), 95. Though beyond the bounds of this inquiry, a consideration of the differences and cross-references between British and French considerations of experience with regard to fiction associated with women would be interesting.

[148] Mme Booser's novel, *Triomphe de la saine philosophie ou la vraie politique des femmes* (1795) in *Vivre libre et écrire: Anthologie des romancières de la période révolutionnaire (1789-1800)*, ed. Huguette Krief (Oxford and Paris: Voltaire Foundation, 2005) presents, through the apothegms of the character Éléonore, this traditional mode of conduct: "N'oublie pas," she says to her friend Cornélie, "que la modestie est le relief de notre mérite. La soumission, le respect, sont les devoir que la nature et les lois sociales nous imposent envers notre mari" (144).

[149] (Paris: Chez Le Jay, Libraires 1775): "Les réflexions de la jeuensse ne peuvent lui tenir lieu de l'expérience. Je sens bien ce qui me manqué; mais il ne depend pas de moi de l'acquérir" (11).

[150] (London: chez A. Dulau et co. soho square, 1800), 34. From the first volume.

[151] *Romans de femmes du XVIIIe siècle*, ed. Raymond Trousson (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1996), 695.

[152] (Paris: Chez Belin, 1799), 74.

[153] On the *Bildungsroman* see Marc Redfield, *Phantom Formations: Aesthetic Ideology and the* Bildungsroman (Ithaca, N.Y. : Cornell University Press, 1996). Unlike the definition of experience as the withstanding of a particular trail from which one can begin to acquire knowledge (or phenomenology's emphasis on *lived* experience), in-experience on the other hand intimates that if peril has been withstood, neither survival nor instruction can be considered as the fruitful consequences of the encounter insofar as it is lamplessly unclear whether, in fact, any encounter has taken place at all. This mirror's Ralph Waldo Emerson's claim in "Experience" that "All I know is reception; I am and I have; but I do not get, and when I have fancied I had gotten anything, I found I did not," in *Ralph Waldo Emerson* (Oxford Authors), ed. Richard Poirier (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 233. Avital Ronell identifies a similarly perverse reversal of experience an innocence in *Parsifal*. See *The Test Drive* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2005): "Parsifal is made to undergo the experience of many trials in order to gain…innocence. This process resembles anything but the trajectory of the *Bildungsroman*. Experience is not meant to lead to maturity or ethical comprehension but to a kind of aporetic term, eliciting a dispossession of self linked to absolute innocence" (115).

[154] This daintiness is not mere silence. One might even read this tact and *tacet* –a delicacy that is not simply aphasia- as a revendication of right to a certain silence and speechlessness, to the verbal silence of *taceo*, of the right to be silent or to reduce to silence that which should not or cannot be spoken of by *locutio*. On *sileo/taceo*, see Barthes "Le Silence," in *Le Neutre : notes de cours au Collège de France, 1977-1978*, ed. Thomas Clerc (Paris : Seuil : Institut mémoire de l'édition contemporaine, c2002), 49-51. Another perspective, taking after Michel Foucault's *Histoire de la sexualité* (Paris: Gallimard, 1976), might argue that the very language of proscription (near-silence) on erotic issues fails insofar as this proscriptional language is itself eroticized in its very endeavor to proscribe. In that account, the proscriptive law which seeks to repress desire in fact produces the fantasy of trespassing the repressive law in order to better amplify its own claims.

[155] On this near-silence, see Barthes, *Le Neutre*, where to speak of the unspeakable is a continual paradox: "le parler, c'est le défaire, mais ne pas ler parler, c'est manquer sa 'constitution,'" (57-8). On delicacy (66), also mentioned in the course, there is made mention of an unviolent resistance to broadly classify or explain by individuation ('this is that').

[156] This observation differs, however, from the oft-lambasted "hermeneutics of suspicion," according to which "the force of any interpretive project" is that of "*unveiling hidden* violence," a practice critiqued by Sedgwick's "Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading," in *Novel Gazing*: *queer readings in fiction* (Durham, NC : Duke University Press, 1997), 18. The finessed sidelining of explicitness in fictions of romance is more complex. On the implications of this 'speaking without speaking' see Derrida, "Comment ne pas parler," in *Psyché* and *Of Spirit: Heidegger and the question*, which consecrates a meditation on *vermeiden* (fleetingly avoid)**:** "What does 'avoid' mean, in particular in Heidegger? –and it is not necessarily avoidance or denegation. […] I'm thinking in particular of all those modalities of 'avoiding' which come done to saying without saying, writing without writing, using words without using them: in quotation marks, for example, under a non-negative cross-shaped crossing out (*kreuzweise Durchstreichung*), or again in propositions of the type: "If I were yet to write a theology, as I am sometimes tempted to do, the word 'Being' ought not to appear in it,' etc." (2). Whether this approximates theories of political subversion outlined in Chela Sandoval's *Methodology of the Oppressed* or Gisele Mathieu-Castellani's "La parole chétive" —"puny parlance"— is unclear, however, for the efficacy of such strategies promise no obvious or immediate 'subversive' fruit.

[157] "[Elle] fit si bien (je ne sais par quels moyens) qu'elle obtint la vie de son père." The edition consulted here is (Paris : Garnier Flammarion, 1966), 56.

[158] These techniques align with the rhetorical devices of parasiopesis and praeteritio, occupatio and occultation (Cf.

Lanham, *A handlist of Rhetorical Terms*). They also recur in Madame de Sainctonge's aforesaid *Histoire de Dom Antoine*, wherein one reads of the Prince Henry's sexual anomaly: "Quelques Officiers des plus considerables de la maison d'Henry, lui avoient inspiré l'envie de se marier; ils le flatoient qu'il pourroit avoir des enfans, il consultoit tous les jours ses Medecins, pour sçavoir s'il devoit en esperer; cela paroissoit fort surprenant à tout ceux qui l'avoient connu dans sa jeunesse, car ils ne lui avoient jamais remarqué aucun panchant pour les femmes? [*sic*] apparamment que la passion qu'il avoit p'empêcher [*sic*] que Philippes ne régnât aprés lui en Portugal, fut si forte qu'elle l'emporta sur son inclination naturelle" (32). The punctuation and the rhetorical devices of story-telling are somewhat odd in this rendition. Hasn't it been the case, the text asks (waffling between narrator and character), that Henry never had a penchant for women? His "natural inclination" —non-heterosexual penchant? Impotence?— is left not only as a question but also of questionable narrative origin (*whose* question is this?).

[159] Ellipses in the original version (Paris: Chez Delaunay, 1821): "le moment de ma ruine était arrivé, ni mes prières, ni mes larmes, ni mes cris, ne purent me sauver….je fus à lui"(169-170). Likewise, and years earlier, the narration in Sophie Cottin's *Claire d'Albe* (1799), ed. Margaret Cohen (New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 2002) had described the heroine's adulterous affair in terms of elision and ambiguity of agent/object: "Elle n'est plus à elle, elle n'est plus à la vertu; Frédéric est tout, Frédéric l'emporte…" (148).

[160] Likewise, and though not of French provenance, Heinrich von Kleist's *Die Marquise von O* (1808)- with its famous dashes- reproduces this. "[H]aving already been stricken speechless by her ordeal, she now collapsed in a dead faint. Then – the officer instructed the Marquise's frightened servants, who presently arrived, to send for a doctor" (70). "Female sexuality is only ever legible in Kleist," prophesies a critical essay of this persuasion, "where it quite simply isn't, and can never be, namely during the 'dead faint.'" Kelsey Craven, "Hysterica Passio: The Fainted Ladies of von Kleist," unpublished paper, 3. Adds Claudia Brodsky's "Whatever Moves You: 'Experimental Philosophy' and the Literature of Experience in Diderot and Kleist," in *Traditions of Experiment from the Enlightenment to the Present: Essays in Honor of Peter Demetz,* eds. Nancy Kaiser and David E. Wellbery (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1992): "[T]he celebrated dash […] is impossible to understand in representational terms. This *Gedankenstrich* ['thoughtline,' dash] is literally a line acting in the place of discursive thought, a graphic symbol of an entirely mechanical action that no properly linguistic sign can represent, since to say 'The Count did' this or that would be just what the Count himself could not say. On the other hand, there is almost no sentence in the story that does not reprsent that action in some way. As soon as one is informed fo the facts of *Die Marquise von O…*, the who, where, and when that the Marquise does not know and the Count cannot say, the story appears to narrate nothing so much as its graphic sign. Outside knowledge eof the empirical even that Kleist represents purely symbolically -that is, in a dash- colors every action narrated and speech recounted in the story with the displaced meaning of a double entendre […] these double or metaphoric meanings serve as symbolic compensations for ignorance [namely,] to have told a story that begins with the open publication of an unthinkable ignorance proceeds to narrate the trials of an empirically impossible innocence, and ends with the drawing of contracts for the production of oxymorons to come" (42-3).

[161] Other precursorial heroines —like Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa Harlowe* (1748) and Sophie von LaRoche's *Geschichte des Fräuleins von Sternheim* (1771) for example— had somewhat similarly withstood scenes of violation portrayed by equivocality rather than explicitness. On the discourse of sexual violation see France Ferguson, "Rape and the Rise of the Novel,"in *Misogyny, Misandry and Misanthropy*. Ed. R. Howard Bloch and Frances Ferguson (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press), 88-112. Also in this vein, "queer" sex acts and "deviancies" such as incest or pedophilia —highly different from each other and not to be conflated with one another, and which do not necessarily reinforce the exigencies of the typically heteronormative marriage-plot—cannot be claimed as having been witnessed to even when they have

[162] Put another way, one might say that the representation of inexperience contests phenomenal representationalism itself, since experience is "constituted by" that which "resists" or eludes "comprehension" rather than self-awareness or cognizant perception. This is Cathy Caruth's formulation "The Insistence of Reference," in the introduction to *Critical Encounters: reference and responsibility in deconstructive writing*, eds. Cathy Caruth and Deborah Esch (New Brunswick, N.J. : Rutgers University Press, 1995), 1. Scott's interrogation of the concept of "experience" in "The Evidence of Experience," *op cit.*, is also not without interest here.

[163] Consider, in this regard, as the preface to the Renaissance romance *Les angoisses douloureuses qui procèdent d'amour* (1538), will have it, readers of the work may find their "hearts moved to some astonishment in considering whence proceeds the boldness to take it upon myself to title the present work mentioning unchaste love affairs, which according to the opinion of some timid ladies might be judged more worthy of being kept in profound silence rather than published and vulgarized." From *The Torments of Love*, trans. Lisa Neal and Steven Rendall (Minneapolis : University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 73. Here one of the novel's narrators, Hélisenne, evaluates the performative contradiction involved in essaying to verbalize what is to be silenced rather than publicized, muted rather than reported, namely the "unchaste" experiences some might deem impossible to recount but which the *Angoysses*, even in recognizing this may be so, does anyway.

[164] *Torments,* 17; second citation is from 59.

[165] (Paris: Honoré Champion Éditeur, 2002), 129.

[166] (London and Frankfort: Bassompierre, 1757), 49. From volume 1.

[167] (Paris: Maradan, 1817), 120-1. The French gives: "Crois-moi, la réputation d'une femme ressemble à une glace polie, le plus léger souffle peut la ternir: il ne suffit pas que nous soyons sûres de nous, de notre conscience à nous bien conduire, il faut que le monde ait mis le sceau à notre réputaion pour qu'elle soit sans tache, et la plus légère inconséquence souvent la détruit sans retour"

[168] (Paris : Dentu, 1821): "Ce n'est pas assez que vous soyez pur, il faut encore le paraître aux yeux de ceux qui vous entourent" (193; Italics in the original).

[169] One could say these heroines are "slaves to reputation" to lift a line from Du Plaisir's *La Duchesse d'Estramène* (1682), where one reads that the heroine "était esclave, ou idolâtre, de sa réputation." (799).

[170] Russian writer Zinaida Volkonskaïa underlines this paradox when she describes the reputation of one her worldly salon characters, the baroness de Saint-Elly in her nouvelle "Laure, Nouvelle Européenne," (1819), in *La littérature russe d'expression française xviiie-xixe siècles* (Wien: Wiener Salwistischer Alamanch, 1994): "Elle n'avait jamais fait une imprudence, et l'aplomb qu'elle avait su conserver au milieu de ses intrigues, la faisait regarder das le monde comme un être extraordinaire: on nommait tout bas ses amans, mais on la jugeait, comme on juge ses supérieurs, en secret et sans scandale" (393).

[171] (Paris: Béchet, 1817): "[a]busée par son inexperience" (100; volume 2) for the first citation, and *Idem* for the second: "Une conduite plus réservée, plus sédentaire, et surtout un profound silence sur tout ce qui s'était passé, étaient les seuls moyens commandés par la prudence, les seuls qui fussent en son pouvoir pour se pardonner des fautes irréparables."

[172] Some have even ventured the hypothesis that when applied to "male" protagonists this form of inexperience —the unmentionable experience one is never to have— is not so much the prospect of having sex but, on the contrary, not being able to. In Mme Duras's posthumously published novel *Olivier, ou le secret* [1822], for example, impotence is the secret around which the novel can only periphrastically circumlocute. Though the work endlessly skirts around this undisclosed mystery, namely a man's inability to perform, it must never be mentioned in forthright terms. And if by chance this *impotentia coeundi* has to be accounted for, it should be done so, it would seem, through euphemism, secrecy, and divagation (Cf. Margaret Waller, *The male malady : fictions of impotence in the French romantic* [New Brunswick, N.J. : Rutgers University Press, 1993]). Others would argue, however, that this framework is too heterosexist, and that it is, rather, non-heteronormative libidinal possibilities as they are both discursively represented and disavowed which provide instantiations of "inexperience" for men whose amorous pursuits, when homosexual, constitute the desire "that dare not speak its name" (Cf. Sedgwick's *Epistemology of the Closet* and *passim*) Surely other figures of disowned desire and elided experience abound in addition to these.

[173] Whence the spate of moralizing prefaces —parodic or not— affixed to *romans*, forewarning the reader against the very work they are going to read. Cf. *Recueil de préfaces de romans du XVIIIe siècle*, eds. Christian Angelet and Jan Herman (Saint-Etienne : Publications de l'Université de Saint-Etienne ; Leuven : Presses universitaires de Louvain, 1999-). For who would dare to stake such an experience as their own rather than that of another, attributing such mischances to a pitiable, fallen victim whose plights one can certainly identify with but which one, as a respectably virtuous individual, would never admit to having first-hand experience of oneself?

[174] On this allusive, elusive "who" see Blanchot's *L'amitié* (Paris: Gallimard, 1971): "Et lorsque nous nous posons la question : 'Qui fut le sujet de cette expérience?,' cette question fait peut-être déjà réponse, si, à celui même qui l'a conduite, c'est sous cette forme interrogative qu'elle s'est affirmée en lui, en substituant au "Je" fermé et unique l'ouverture d'un 'Qui?' sans réponse ; non que cela signifie qu'il lui ait fallu seulement se demander: 'Quel est ce moi que je suis?,' mais bien plus radicalement se ressaisir sans relâche, non plus comme 'Je' mais comme un 'Qui?,' l'être inconnu et glissant d'un 'Qui?' » indéfin (328). See also Derrida's " 'Eating Well,' or the Calculation of the Subject," on the "call that comes from nowhere," a "call of the other" that "must remain nonreappropriable, nonsubjectivable, and in a certain way nonidentifiable, a sheer supposition," in *Points . . . : interviews, 1974-1994*, ed. Elisabeth Weber ; trans. Peggy Kamuf et al (Stanford, Calif. : Stanford University Press, 1995), 276.

[175] On the ungendering of the "on" as a writerly and political practice, see Wittig, "The Mark of Gender," in *The Straight Mind*, 83-4.

[176] Consider in this vein, Johnson's "Poetry and Its Double: Two *Invitations au voyage*": "The question is thus not [...] Who is speaking here, the *je* or the *on*? but rather, Can the act of speaking have *one* subject? Can the boundary line between *je* and *on* ever really be determined?" (39).

[177] "L'on cede aisément à ce qui plaît" (393). From *Nouvelles du VIIe siècle*. This effect is carried on in Madame de Tenain's *Le Comte de Clare, Nouvelle Galante* (1695) (A Cologne, chez * * *, 1695) when the count de Clare addresses a marquise he adores: "Comme on se persuade aisément ce qu'on souhaite, il crut qu'il n'avoit qu'à lui découvrir son amour pour s'en faire aimer. Les regards tendres, & les soûpirs enflâmez furent d'abord ses interpretes; mais la Marquise, dont l'esprit étoit occupé d'autre chose, n'entendit pas ce langage, ou du moins feignit de ne pas l'entendre" (5).

[178] When the text later describes the disquiet of its heroine, it appeals again to the externalized intervention of this "on" in lieu of a description of her interiority. One reads that "[t]he countess of Tende spent the night, as one can imagine, wracked by

her worries," ("La comtesse de Tende passa la nuit comme on se le peut imaginer, agitée par ses inquiétudes" [393]). Here, it is what could be imagined that is depictured by an exterior means rather than by internal depths, a certain porousness between the generalizing, narratioral voice and its characters. An expression that had already appeared in Lafayette's prior *Histoire de la princesse de Montpensier* (1662), also collected in *Nouvelles du XVIIe siècle*: "The princess of Montpensier remainded afflicted and troubled, as one can imagine." "La princesse de Montpensier demeura affligée et troublée, comme on se le peut imaginer," (376).

[179] On seventeenth-century formulations and stylistic formulae, see Greenberg, *Subjectivity and Subjugation in Seventeenth-Century Drama and Prose*: *the family romance of French classicism* (New York : Cambridge University Press, 1992).

[180] "Comment un être de cette espèce avait-il pu toucher une personne aussi essentielle que j'ai dit qu'était Lucinde ? Je l'ignore" (844). The story is included in *Nouvelles du XVIIIe siècle*, *op cit*.

[181] (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1985), 587.

[182] "je pense même qu'un amour raisonnable n'est pas de l'amour; mais je suis femme, et mon opinion ne compte pas" (151).

[183] "Je ne cherche point à établir cette opinion: c'était celle de M. Vernet" (121). From *Deux nouvells françaises* (1816) (Adamant Media Corporation, 2006). The opinion in question with which the narrator refuses to identify is an Aristophanic myth: "il ya un être, un seul être au monde, fait pour nous rendre heureux: on en est souvent séparé pendant la vie; mais alors il est inutile de chercher à le remplacer; il faut attendre…"

[184] A tentativeness and speculative tonality reprised in Mme de Ranchoup's *Lord Wentworth* (Paris: Delaunay, 1813): "Un auteur français dit: 'L'amour naît brusquement, sans autre réflexion.' Si je voulois reconnoiter la vérité de son témoignange, j'aovuerois que la confusion subite qui se fit dans les idées de miss Wentworth à l'aspect d'Edwin prouve son assertion" (48). Here the rgister remains hypothetical and unconfirmed, as indicated by the protasis ("If").

[185] "Le peu de romans que j'ai lus m'ont donné une idée générale des sentiments du coeur," (177). From Bernard's *Oeuvres.* As Chapter 3 will explore, Bernard's narration repulses the pinions of opinions that, paradoxically, it alone has made available.

[186] Sophie Cottin, author of the incendiary *Claire d'Albe* (1799) will also comment that without anonymity her work would have stood unsheltered from critique for having torn "le voile de la volupté" with such seeming vividness: "L'entière certitude que j'avais, en écrivant ce roman, que jamais on n'en soupçonnerait l'auteur, m'y avait fait répandre des couleurs un peu voluptueuses, des passions un peu vives. Aussi une des plus vives contrarieties que j'ai éprouvées de ma vie, est d'avoir été reconnue lorsque je m'y attendais si peu, et qu'il me semblait avoir pris toutes les precautions nécessaires pour éviter ce chagrin." Cited in Brigitte Louichon, *ROmancières sentimentales (1789-1825)* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de Vincennes, 2009), 69.

[187] By virtue of this anonymity, these works could be disburthened of the ethical onus to be held accountable for the nakedness of the ill-wrought, unseemly, or indecorous scenarios they may depict, precisely because not traceable to an evident source. See Catherine Gallagher *Nobody's story : the vanishing acts of women writers in the marketplace, 1670-1820* (Berkeley : University of California Press, c1994.), DeJean "LaFayette's Ellipses: The Privileges of Anonymity." For a questioning of the institution of authorship (and the figures of anonymity and personality) one might consult Peggy Kamuf's *Signature pieces : on the institution of authorship* (Ithaca : Cornell University Press, 1988).

[188] In the words of Louichon's *Romancières sentimentales*, "Le narrateur [de ces romabs] ne se contente ni de tout narrer, ni de tout expliquer" (122).

[189] (Paris: Gueffier and Delaunay, 1813), 14: Il trouvoit d'ailleurs piquant de régner sur un coeur novice, et commode de dominer un être sans experience."

[190] *Ibid*, 25.

[191] *Ibid,* 44: "Effrayée de tout ce qu'elle a écouté, rougissant de tout ce qu'elle-même a montré de sensibilité, honteuse des aveux qu'elle a entendus et des caresses innocents qu'elle a souffertes, elle se relève brusquement, fait relever de même le jeune homme, cache son visage dans ses deux mains, et s'enfuit avec la rapidité de l'éclair." A young suitor has just confessed love to Mélise.

[192] On the conflictual concept-metaphor of 'virtue' see Brissenden, *Virtue in distress* and Alliston, *Virtue's Faults*.

[193] (Pithiviers, Cocatrix l'aîné, l'an IV [1796]), 72: "Mademoiselle, c'est vous qui, sans le savoir, avez couru le plus horrible danger"). The heroine is Charlotte Benson, from an intercalated story, "Histoire de Madame Haller." Charlotte's benefactor, Mr. Wilburn, infatuated by the bewitcheries of her beauty and virtue, has attempted to climb into her room via a ladder, before being surprised by Mme Brunel and, falling, is foiled from his lascivious intent.

[194] This leaves open the question as to whether the heroine's 'inexperience' might not also be —in a complicated, nonlinear fashion— "mimicked" to an extent by the reader who, for his part, would affront virtual experiences he is exposed to —on the page— without necessarily undergoing these experiences empirically himself, an experienceless encounter which would confront him with an experience he faces in reading but also avoids, paradoxically, by the very fact that he is only reading them. However, it is not so much that the reader will pantomime or performatively withstand the inexperience of which he reads —an overbearingly crude and consequentialist version of "reader reception theory," as well as a brutal misapprehension of

rhetoric as no more than pure, referential mimesis—for, as Kamuf's "The Experience of Deconstruction" will have it (171), the dyadic distinction between so-called "real" or empirical "life" and that of its supposed fictional "representation" founders here, inasmuch as a part of reading *about* inexperience is, of course, not being able to fully experience it either. This deconstruction of empirical and speculative experience and experiment was also thematized in the eighteenth-century, as Brodsky's "Whatever Moves you," and Caruth's *Empirical Truths* suggests. Is the reading of inexperience to miss, inescapably, both the experience of inexperience *and* the inexperience of experience if either of these is understood as a "taking place" within presence and available to a self-present subject who weathers them, insofar as the narration of romance fiction is never that of immediate, explicit representation purveying a transparently available tenor or evidencing a manifestly cognizable content?

[195] On the differing theoretical "regimes" of writing in old regime fictionalities see Nicholas D. Paige, *Before fiction : The Ancien Régime of The Novel* (Philadelphia : University of Pennsylvania Press, c2011). Hence in a German context, Sophie von LaRoche —not unmindful of the seemingly one-dimensional, cardboard cut-out quality of her heroine— would write that the protagonist of her *Geschichte des Fräuleins von Sternheim*, a novel thought to be a revival of Rousseausite sentimentalism, was no more than a "*papiernes Mächden,*" a papergirl without flesh or blood. Cited in the introduction to*The History of Lady Sophia Sternheim* (1771), trans. Christa Baguss Britt (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1991), 6.

[196] Motley philosophical and contemporary theoretical inquiries pullulate with titles and concepts for the faintness of inexperience, for its namelessness and nebulousness: impossible experiences and experiences of the impossible; unclaimed, uncounted, or "counter-" experiences; "para-experiences" without a cognizant, self-perceptive subject and thus an experience without experience; subjectless, limit-experiences that so expunge the distinction between the fictional and empirical bounds of experience that they are without the negativity of even the notion of "without" itself… Chapter 9 of Jay's *Songs of Experience,* "The Poststructuralist Reconstitution of Experience," details scores of so-called post-structuralist philosophies of experience, asking: "can there be experiences worthy of the name, experiences without the robust, integrated subject, which deny presence, plenitude, interior depth, and narrative completion? Can there be a non-phenomenological notion of an experience that isn't so much actively 'lived' as suffered or endured? Must a plausible notion of experience mean refusing the insight that the object, thing, or other at least to some degree inhabits or haunts the subject, agent, or self? Can the ecstatic de-centering of the self produce an experience that resists location in an integral, coherent ego?" (367).

[197] There is no duality or binaric dialogue here, no common conditions (a Habermasian perspective) for there would always seem to be an intercession and intervention of some sort, in deconstructive idiom this would be called the *tiers*, or third party, which inevitably intereferes. For "L'expérience du tiers" see Derrida, *Adieu à Emmanuel Lévinas* (Paris: Éditions Galilée, 1997). The metaphysics of substance and the received grammar of the subject would need to be revised in order to pose an alternative set of questions.

[198] Cf. Anne-lise François, "'Not Thinking of you as Left Behind' : Virgil, and the Missing of Love in Hardy's *Poems of 1912-13*," *ELH 75, 1* (2008), 67. In this sense, Experience would thus seem to always, necessarily, fall and falter into inexperience -non-experience, experience without experience- insofar as it is never available in presence nor accessible to immediate perception because mediated through, meditated in, and to an extent made by linguistic means.

[199] Such questions might be brought to bear on Jean-Luc Marion's *Le phénomène érotique. Six meditations* (Paris: Bernard Grasset, 2003), which displaces an ego-centered phenomenology and the Cartesian cogito from their place of priority and privilege, shifting a perspective from an analysis centered on existence, epistemology, or being, to the question of love without being ("m'aime-t-on d'ailleurs?"), where the precise vanity to avoid is that of ontological security (the state of "being" loved). In this sense, the question is not whether one *is* loved but how, lacking any confirmation that one is loved in return in the least, to live, or love, for others. Here the asymmetrical, nonreciprocal rapport consists in loving without knowing one is loved in return, even if that offering up of love might result in loss. Marion's account appears to differ from the deconstruction of phenomenological (or intentional) experience in Derrida's writings, in that a deconstructive idiom might attend to the ambiguity of a *plus d'expérience* (no more experience and more than experience). Whereas one might usefully follow the undoing of the predicate to the point of its own excess, how experience becomes no more, Marion's notion of "saturated phenomena" or "counter-experience" seems to center on how experience *becomes more than itself* but still becoming (more) experience, that is still caught within the pretensions of the "as such" of phenomenology.

[200] See the 1st chapter of François *Open Secrets*, "Toward a Theory of Recessive Action." In a related vein, Nouvet's "An Impossible response: The Disaster of Narcissus" in *Yale French Studies*, No. 79, Literature and the Ethical Question (1991): 103-134, postulates the problems of echo and answer in ethical quandaries, while Peggy Kamuf's "Deconstruction and Love" in *Book of addresses* explains the difficulties of answering address and preserving that which, because loved so or too much, cannot be preserved in an ontological form at all.

[201] Roland Barthes, *Frament d'un discours amoureux* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1977): "Sentiment *raisonable*: tout s'arrange—mais rien ne dure. Sentiment *amoureux*: rien ne s'arrange—et pourtant cela dure" (167).

[202] Shoshana Felman's *Le Scandale du corps parlant*: *Don Juan avec Austin, ou, la séduction en deux langues* (Paris : Seuil, 1980), drawing its points from Lacan and Austin, provocatively suggests that the missing of performative speech acts, rather than their

felicity of action, may constitute the scandal of seduction.

[203] On virtuality as "real"-effect without actualization, see Deleuze's *Le Bergsonisme* … (Paris, Presses universitaires de France, 1966). For a useful discussion of how virtuality does not simply mean "non-material" or "disembodied" see Ella Brians, "The 'Virtual' Body and the Strange Persistence of the Flesh: Deleuze, Cyberspace and the Posthuman" in *Deleuze and the body*, eds. Laura Guillaume and Joe Hughes (Edinburgh : Edinburgh University Press, 2011).

[204] *Gravity and Grace,* trans. Emma Crawford and Mario von der Ruhr, (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), 9. French, "Vide et Compensation" in *La pesanteur et la grâce* (Paris: Librairie Plon, 52: "Un être aimé qui déçoit. Je lui ai écrit. Impossible qu'il ne me réponde pas ce que je me suis dit à moi-même en son nom." It should be noted here that the lover who writes this is unidentified grammatically of having any sex. It is also unclear what grammatical gender to assign to the "beloved being" which, it should be said, could be a he or a she —even an "it," since a "beloved being" ("*un être aimé*") needn't be a person at all, even if for the moment it might be assumed (but why?) that it is a "he." The translation from *Gravity and Grace* significantly reduces the ambiguities of the extract by ascribing a gender ("him") to the beloved being, when in fact the French leaves unspecified what gender or the sex the beloved is, or if it is even a person rather than a thing.

[205] Such formulations might seem to invite comparison with the Lacanian formulations that in love, that woman plays her part in "giving in love what she does not have," (From Jacques Lacan, "The Meaning of the Phallus," in *Feminine Sexuality: Jacques Lacan and the 'école freudienne,'* ed. Juliet Mitchell and Jacqueline Rose, trans. Jacqueline Rose (New York: W.W. Norton, 1985), 84). But whereas the dynamic of having and not having is described in the psychoanalytic account as gravitating around the deeds and needs of the so-called "Phallus," at issue presently is a dynamic of relinquishment and 'not-having' so radical that any such notion of a primal, superlative signifier orienting and orchestrating the scenography of interaction would not longer be tenable. Consider that if in the Lacanian formulation the giving of what one does not have is in reference to the acquisition or deprivation (the having or not having) of the "Phallus," for the texts of this study, and the particular passage in question, any such ultimate or omnipotent figure and signifier would be radically dispossessed of its purchase. For a critique of this phallic figure, see Butler, "The Lesbian Phallus and the Morphological Imaginary," in *Bodies that Matter,* 57-91. As Derrida's interrogations of Lacanian categories have also usefully suggested, the problematic of "not giving what one does not have," must importantly be formulated as a question rather than a quest for a privileged, indivisible signifier: "how can one give what one does not have?", from Derrida, "I have a taste for the Secret," in *Il Gusto del segreto*, 7. (The discussion concerns Heidegger's Anaximander fragment; and how "Plotinus before him, and Lacan afterwards," might have "pose[d] basically the same question"). In the context of this chapter it might be asked: what is the ethical valence of asking someone to do nothing in favour of their love, to refrain from acting altogether?

[206] (Paris: chez Delaunay, libraire, 1822): "s'il était possible qu'il m'aimât!" (356). The phrase is not quite an asertion, an affirmation, a hypothesis, a thesis, nor even an interrogation but a suspension of predication itself.

[207] "Ses désirs se bornaient à lui souhaiter avec ardeur une félicité qu'il n'était pas en son pouvoir de lui procurer" (850).

[208] On the "ethical value of doing nothing," see François, *Open Secrets,*197.

[209] One might call Valmont's nonagential, not necessarily downhearted gesture as both a "don" and an "abandon" —a gift in abandonment. This is Blanchot's insight in *La communauté inavouable* (Paris : Editions de minuit, 1983), 30-1. Therein the notion of "l'abandon vécu en commun" is also explored s(33).

[210] Such formulations might seem to invite comparison with the Lacanian formulations that in love, that woman plays her part in "giving in love what she does not have." From Jacques Lacan, "The Meaning of the Phallus," in *Feminine Sexuality: Jacques Lacan and the 'école freudienne,'* ed. Juliet Mitchell and Jacqueline Rose, trans. Jacqueline Rose (New York: W.W. Norton, 1985), 84. But whereas the dynamic of having and not having is described in the psychoanalytic account as gravitating around the deeds and needs of the so-called "Phallus," at issue presently is a dynamic of relinquishment and 'not-having' so radical that any such notion of a primal, superlative signifier orienting and orchestrating the scenography of interaction would not longer be tenable. Consider that if in the Lacanian formulation the giving of what one does not have is in reference to the acquisition or deprivation (the having or not having) of the "Phallus," for the texts of this study, and the particular passage in question, any such ultimate or omnipotent figure and signifier would be radically dispossessed of its purchase. For a critique of this phallic figure, see Butler "The Lesbian Phallus and the Morphological Imaginary," in *Bodies,* 57-91.

[211] "c'est en me refusant àvous que je veux vous prouver que je vous aime plus que je n'ai jamais fait," (Nabu Press 2011), 99-100.

[212] Cf. For a history of the tenderness of various discourses of love, amongst which the neo-platonic, see Maurice Daumas, *La Tendresse amoureuse, XVIe-XVIIIe siècles* (Paris: Perrin, 1996).

[213] "[À] quel signes saurez-vous reconnaître qu'il [le texte] dit ou tait ce que vous appelez tranquillement la 'différence sexuelle'?" queries Derrida's "*Geschlecht I, Différence sexuelle, différence ontologique*," in *Psyché: Inventions de l'autre* apropos the "neutralité" of Heidegger's *Dasein* (16).

CHAPTER 2: RENAISSANCE

Note: A draft version of this chapter was presented at the Comparative Literature Works in Progress colloquium, Princeton University (December, 2012) and as an invited lecture at the Department of French and Francophone studies, Middlebury College (January, 2013).

[1] *The Torments of Love*, ed. Lisa Neal ; trans. Lisa Neal and Steven Rendall (Minneapolis : University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 44. (All English references, cited parenthetically in the text, will come from this edition. All French citations will come from *Les angoisses douloureuses qui procèdent d'amour,* ed. Jean-Philippe Beaulieu [Saint-Etienne : Publications de l'université de Saint-Etienne, 2005]: "le mal qu'il faut que j'endure sans y pouvoir ni vouloir résister est violent et insupérable! C'est une plaie que nulle médicine ne peut souder" [94-5]). Translations will be silently modified whenever necessary and duly noted.

[2] *Rime sparse, op cit.,* 226, 227.

[3] If Guénélic suffers, then, it is not so much because he hasn't suffered at all, innocent and taintless, but because he hasn't suffer *enough*. He suffers because he cannot attain the suffering declined from his experience, a suffering that, if only it could fully be suffered, would no longer be so insufferable. Left inaccessible to experience is his desire to actually, finally, suffer his suffering, and so he awaits an experience he will never be capable of having, one that he can only have, if ever does, because he can't. And so his suffering lasts, lingers. For if there is no one capable of standing this pain –let alone he himself- Guénélic can only but be pained, not because he feels this pain but because he doesn't, because he isn't able to even when, even as, he does. Aggravated because held in suspense is he, aggrieved because consigned to a termless wait in which there is no pain he can yet experience. Wanting, waiting for an experience never his, an experience that never is: such might be a paraphrase of Guénélic's endless plight, painful precisely because it is so painless.

[4] The work is possibly of Marguerite Briet's hand, possibly not. See Jerry Nash, "Constructing Hélisenne de Crenne: Reception and Identity," *Pour le soie amisté,* ed. Keith Busby and Catherine M. Jones (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000), 371 and Christine de Buzon, "Hélisenne de Crenne" in Michel Simonin, *Dicionnaire des lettres françaises. Le XVIe siècle* (Paris: Fayard/Librarie générale française, 2001 [La Pochothèque]), 306-9. On the construction and "clothing" of the authorial figure of "Hélisenne" see Leah Chang's "Clothing the Book: Dame Helisenne, Denys Janot, and the Mark of Multiplicity," in *Into Print: The Production of Female Authorship in Early Modern France* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2009). See also Chapter 5, "The Hand of Gournay," 175-209 for thoughtful reflections on the gendering of authorship and reception in the early modern period.

[5] "Pharmakon," as deployed in Derrida's *La dissemination* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1993), refers to the overdetermined significations encapsulated in this single Greek vocable, amongst which the mutually cancelling meanings of remedy and poison. In Guénélic's case, it would seem that its possible nepenthe is also its poison, as if that which would kill him would also be that in which he would search for his survival, surviving in and by that which will ultimately decease him.

[6] Consider the comparable remarks of Smock's "Quiet" in *Qui Parle*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (Fall 1988), 78: "This burden is unbearable, none can bear it, and all who have to, suffer from their very idleness with regard to it, their passivity. Suffering suffers from being spared the burden, saved the pain. It suffers from being safe. It suffers, as Blanchot says (*L'Ecriture du désastre*), from being innocent, and it would like to become guilty in order to abate. Pain would like to become *active* in order to lesson, in order to rest, in order to quit. It would like to *bear* the burden of innocence, it wants to be *able* to: it would that *guilt* should answer the innocence, should redeem safety, and indeed salvation."

[7] The first portion of the novel is said to constitute its "sentimental" part, the second a chivalric tale, and the third a Christianized near-epilogue preconizing neoplatonism. It should also be noted that the "roman de chevalerie" of the second part is itself already a compilation of the epic and courtly love, with Arthurian themes and styles from literatures of Antiquity, as notes Jean-Philippe Beaulieu's "Perceforest et Amadis de Gaule: le roman chevaleresque de la Renaissance" in *Renaissance and Reformation / Renaissance et Réforme*, Volume 27, issue 3 (1991): 187-97. On the ambiguity of representation, see Janine Incardona, "*Les Angoysses douloureuses qui procedent d'amours*, une vision ambigüe de l'amour," in *Renaissance, Humanisme, Réforme*, vol. XXII, n. 42, (June 1996): 7-28 and *passim*. Incardona notes that " [l]a réalisation de cet 'amour sensuel,' est pourtant toujours empêchée, toujours différée" (22).

[8] The name of the attributed author —"Hélisenne de Crenne," possibly the penname of the French noblewoman Marguerite de Briet, possibly an editorial fabrication— is shared by the protagonist and narrator, a provocative ambiguity that, whether interpreted as literal autobiography or literary autofiction, emphasizes how much the question *of* autobiography and fiction, gender and genre, signature and sexuality, is always *in* question when reading the work. On Briet's biography, itself contested, see Diane Wood, "Marguerite Briet," in *Hélisenne de Crennne. At the Crossroads of Renaissance Humanism and Feminism* (Madison and Teaneck: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press; London: Associated University Presses, 2000), 57-76. See Jerry Nash, "Constructing Hélisenne de Crenne: Reception and Identity," *Pour le soie amisté,* ed. Keith Busby and Catherine M. Jones (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000), 371 and Christine de Buzon, "Hélisenne de Crenne" in Michel Simonin, *Dicionnaire des lettres françaises. Le XVIe siècle* (Paris: Fayard/Librarie générale française, 2001 [La Pochothèque]), 306-9. On the construction and "clothing" of the authorial figure of "Hélisenne" see Leah Chang's "Clothing the Book: Dame Helisenne, Denys Janot, and the Mark of Multiplicity," in *Into Print: The Production of Female Authorship in Early Modern France* (Newark: University of Delaware

Press, 2009). See also Chapter 5, "The Hand of Gournay," 175-209 for thoughtful reflections on the gendering of authorship and reception in the early modern period.

[9] The work is often called the "first sentimental novel of France." Cf. Gustave Reynier, *Le Roman sentimental avant L'Astrée* (Paris: Colin, 1908) and M.J. Baker, "France's First Sentimental Novel and Novels of Chivalry," *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* 36 (1974): 33-45.

[10] *The Torments of Love*, trans. Lisa Neal and Steven Rendall (Minneapolis : University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 63. All English references, cited parenthetically in the text, will come from this edition. All French interpolations come from *Les Angoisses douloureuses qui procèdent d'amour,* ed. Jean-Philippe Beaulieu (Saint-Etienne : Publications de l'université de Saint-Etienne, 2005).

[11] On Briet/Hélisenne's readership see Wood's "Hélisenne Reading and Reading Hélisenne," the first chapter of *Hélisenne de Crenne*, 23-56.

[12] In this sense, the novel even seems to depart from the Aristophanic myth in Plato's *Symposium and Phaedrus,* trans. Robin Waterfield (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), by which beings "embrace that which is like them" (17), and in which "this meeting and melting in one another's arms, this becoming one instead of two" is "the very expression" of "ancient need" (18).

[13] Indeed, neither strictly mental or material, amorous experience does not so much oscillate between ideality and materialization, being and having, but, in a crucial sense, *is* no more than this very oscillation itself. In this way, it is not that there is a given reality, itself material, that is opposed to Hélisene's imaginary perception, but that her imaginary is formative of reality as well, for in this novel imagination itself has material effects, and the material and the imaginary are chiasmatically bound together, taking place at one and the same time. For Hélisenne's amorous experience, if it is one, would seem to be neither fully materialized nor fully negated, neither completely virtual nor completely actual: a chiasm, rather than a chasm, between them.

[14] On the thematics and dynamics of this "transgression" see Colette H. Winn, "Ré-écrire le féminin: *Les Angoysses douloureuses qui procedent d'amours* d'Hélisenne de Crenne (1ère partie). Autour des notions de transgression et de 'jouyssance,'" in *Renaissance and Reformation/Renaissance et Réforme,* vol. XVI, n.1, (1992): 39-55.

[15] This caricature comes under criticism in Virginia Woolf's biographical parody *Orlando,* wherein we read: "when we are writing te life of a woman, we may, it is agreed, waive our demand for action, and substitute love instead. Love, the poet has said, is woman's whole existence" (268).

[16] Chang, *Into print,* 142. This summary draws from Chang's wonderfully textured account.

[17] This is Roland Barthes' terminology for the action-event axis that creates suspense in narrative. See *S/Z* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1970).

[18] The term became highly controversial during the *Querelle des Amyes*, a dispute among the poets La Broderie, Charles Fontaine, and Antoine Héroët that pitted various figures of friendship against one another.

[19] If during the early modern period Petrarchist and platonic conceptions of love are constantly in dispute with courtly conventions and medieval notions of erotic love, then there is not simply one totalizing or overarching theory of amour for the literary figures of "love," themselves multiple and multivalent. These terms are continual objects of contest. Such debates, sometimes called the *Querelle des Amyes,* would place medieval theories in contention with certain ideals of Christian humanism, such as conjugal love. See Kelly Digby Peebles, "The Literary World" and *Anteros: Actes Du Colloque De Madison (Wisconsin) Mars 1994,* ed. Ullrich Langer and Jan Miernowski (Orleans: Paradigme, 1994), 117-135.

[20] To argue that emotional states, when represented, are "eventful" like "physical actions" implicitly instates an unyielding, literalizing analogy between how text describes action (at the constative level) and how it acts or enacts rhetorical effects (at the performative level). A deconstructive rhetorical reading might issue a critique here that what a text *says* and what it *does* are not commensurate and that the very notion of language *acting* is itself a figure of language that says what language does and thus, far from clarifying the distinction between what language says and does, confounds the distinction all the more. If figural language does not mimetically represent whereof it speaks but also rhetorically acts and enacts, then does the very distinctions between acting and non-acting come apart? Are the means of language —its rhetorical and linguistic devices—irreducible to univocal meaning? See Paul de Man *The Resistance to Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002) and *Allegories of Reading: figural language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke, and Proust* (New Haven and London: Yale Univeristy Press, 1979). It will be crucial to return to this point at the end of this chapter.

[21] Cf. Simone Weil, *La pesanteur et la grâce* (Paris: Agora, 2008). In these terms, this unbearable experience would be devoid of experience, it would suspend the lover who might wish to stand it and leave him perennially in want of and in wait for an experience he never fully has, an experience that he can only have to the extent that he doesn't, that he didn't— that he never did. It is more as if between an experience's happening and its nonevent there would be an interval of waiting; a wait for the possibility of either an event's occurrence or nullification, its eventuation or noneventuation, to even become potentialities. Not suffering enough, he suffers because he is unable to suffer, if only he could suffer, then he might suffer less. He awaits experience.

[22] Derrida et al. *Dire l'événement, est-ce possible?* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2001).

[23] Blanchot's reflections on Musil in *Le Livre à venir* (Paris: Gallimard, 1959), describes in resonant language experiences

that are seemingly lived —but without anyone there to live through them: a love story that should have been told— but strangely wasn't: that which almost or nearly happens but nonetheless does not; that which comes to pass without anything really coming to pass; that which takes place, but only insofar as it doesn't; that which happened, but did it actually happen? (197, 202). In these formulations, it is not that events that take place really or that they are really accomplished, for that which happened could have happened otherwise and thus didn't really happen (in actuality). In terms of the *Angoysses*, one might speak of a love which isn't and which doesn't realize/actualize itself.

[24] Consider for example Raymond Williams' *Keywords: a vocabulary of culture and society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985) which defines experience as "(i) knowledge gathered from past events, whether by conscious observation or by consideration and reflection; and (ii) a particular kind of consciousness, which can in some contexts be distinguished from 'reason' or 'knowledge'" (126).

[25] In this sense, Hélisenne bends .'s description in the *Rime sparse* of his "burden of love [*l'amoroso incarco*]" (290, 291) to create an even more plangent and paradoxical formulation

[26] To the extent that such an experience would be without presence, and without a self-present subject to undergo it, can no longer be said to be an experience at all, this might be said to recall Blanchot's *l'Écriture du désastre* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1980).

[27] Hélisenne's description of "the unbearable burden of love" finds resonance in the comparable remarks of Ann Smock's "Quiet" in *Qui Parle*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (Fall 1988): "This burden is unbearable, none can bear it, and all who have to, suffer from their very idleness with regard to it, their passivity. Suffering suffers from being spared the burden, saved the pain. It suffers from being safe. It suffers, as Blanchot says (*L'Ecriture du désastre*), from being innocent, and it would like to become guilty in order to abate. Pain would like to become *active* in order to lessen, in order to rest, in order to quit. It would like to *bear* the burden of innocence, it wants to be *able*" (78).

[28] In deconstructive idiom this might be described as an emphasis not on how lovers "meet each other but how they miss each other," to quote Barbara Johnson, *The Critical Difference: Essays in the Contemporary Rhetoric of Reading* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), 119.

[29] See Kelly Digby Peebles, "The Literary World of 'Les Comptes Amoureux par Madame Jeanne Flore'" (PhD diss., University of Virginia, 2010), for a consideration of these tropes and trends.

[30] On love-melancholy, see Marion Wells, *The Secret Wound: Love-Melancholy and Early Modern Romance* (Sanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2007).

[31] See Giorgio Agamben's *Infancy and History: The Destruction of Experience*, trans. Liz Heron (New York: Verso, 1993).

[32] This phrase and this particular insight come from Giorgio Agamben's *Infancy and History: The Destruction of Experience*, trans. Liz Heron (New York: Verso, 1993).

[33] Hegel's ambiguous promulgation in *The Phenomenology of Spirit* that "Substance is Subject" might be read as stating that the subject underlying phenomena —*hypokeimenon, subjectum*— is a substratum, a substance and stance —*ousia, substantia*— of the self. However, the pivotal "is," if read not as an existential and ontological copula whereby "Substance" is merely interpreted as the (grammatical) subject predicated by the "Subject," implies that the one is defined only in differential relation to the other and rhetorically oscillates between the two in non-linear fashion: subject is substance only insofar as substance is subject. On the Hegelian sentence, see Judith Butler, "Hegel: Desire, Rhetoric Recognition" in *Subjects of Desire: Hegelian Reflections in Twentieth-Century France* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 18-19.

[34] See " 'Eating Well,' or the Calculation of the Subject" in *Points…Interviews, 1974-1994* (Stanford California: Stanford University Press, 1995), 262. According to this account, a certain tradition "from Descartes to Kant and to Husserl" would have, founded the "subject" on various predicates: "These predicates would be, for example, the sub-jective structure as the being-thrown—or under-lying— of the substance or of the *substratum*, of the *hypokeimenon*, with its qualities of stance or stability, of permanent presence, of sustained relation to self, everything that links the 'subject' to conscience, to humanity, to history" (259). In regard to the "substantialist or subjectivist metaphysics" associated with the grammar of the subject see Judith Butler's discussion of the "metaphysics of substance," rephrasing Michel Haar, in "Subjects of Sex/Gender/Desire," in *Gender Trouble,* 27-8 and "Contingent Foundations" in *Feminist Contentions: A Philosophical Exchange,* eds. Butler et al (New York: Routledge, 1995): "subjects who institute actions are themselves instituted effects of prior actions […] the horizon in which we act is there as a constitutive possibility of our very capacity to act, not merely or exclusively as an exterior field or theater of operations. […] the actions instituted via that subject are part of a chain of actions that can no logner be understood as unilinear in direction or predictable in their outcomes" (43). And later on: "There is no ontologically intact reflexivity to the subject which is then placed within a cultural context; that cultural context, as it were, is already there as the disarticulated process of that subject's production, one that is concealed by the frame that would situate a ready-made subject in an external web of cultural relations" (46).

[35] *Will to Power,* 268. See also *Late Notebooks* of 1886: "We place a word t the point where our ignorance beings—where we can't see any further, e.g., the word 'I,' the words 'do and 'done to': these may be the horizons of our knowledge, but they are not 'truths'" (106).

[36] Heidegger's reformulation of phenomenology in *Being and Time. A Translation of* Sein und Zeit, trans. Joan Stambaugh (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1996), emphasizes the two aspects of *phainomenon* as both that which shows itself in itself and as semblance, that which shows itself as it is not or what it looks like. Appearance is both that which manifests itself but also concealsitself in disclosure. "Hence phenomenology means [...] to let what shows itself be seen from itself, just as it shows itself from itself" (30). It is perhaps for this reason that Derrida and others would come to argue that, in the terms of (Husserlian) phenomenology's eidetic reduction, an *epoché* according to which intentional acts and their perceptual *noema* are considered in bracketing the represented object from external and existential presumptions, experience is reduced to an experience of meaning and, moreover, "a perception of phenomenality."

[37] If Montaigne had meditated upon experience in terms of the authority garnered from undergoing illness, it would be interesting to compare this vision of experience with that proffered in the *Angoysses*: "a wound no medicine can close," Guénélic says, similar to Hélisenne's pithy phrase, "an unbearable burden of love." In both of these descriptions, amorous experience is not that which one actively lives through but that which is suffered indefinitely (grammar is misleading here, as the "that which" here is not a substance or a substantive); experience is not consciously enacted or endured by a subject in presence and unlike the phenomenological conceit of experience there is no self that undertakes this experience, but a self that never was itself because always ecstatically outside itself, an experience that resists the comprehension, completion, and closure theorized in those phenomenological accounts which presume a transcendental ego.

[38] See Martin Jay's *Songs of Experience: Modern American and European Variations on a Universal Theme*, (Ewing, NJ: University of California Press, 2004), 10-11. The Greek nomenclature of *pathos*, passion, and passivity, while not etymologically related is nonetheless conceptually relevant here. See also the note and exposition of Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, *La poésie comme expérience* (Paris: Christian Bourgois, 1986), 30-1.

[39] See Williams, *Key Words,* 127-8. On Enlightenment experimentation see Claudia Brodsky, "Whatever Moves You: 'Experimental Philosophy' and the Literature of Experience in Diderot and Kleist," in *Traditions of Experiment from the Enlightenment to the Present: Essays in Honor of Peter Demetz,* eds. Nancy Kaiser and David E. Wellbery (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1992).

[40] See Giorgio Agamben, *Infancy and History: The Destruction of Experience*, trans. Liz Heron (New York: Verso, 1993).

[41] The concept-metaphor of experience, as Jay claims in *Songs of Experience*, stems from the Greeks to modernity and beyond, filtering through Montaigne's "Of Experience" in his essays, Francis Bacon's *experiential literata* in the *Novum organum* to Lockean empiricism, Berkeley's immaterialsm (the nonexperience of materiality), Kant's transcendentalism, Hume's empiricism, and Husserl's phenomenology undergoing radical paradigm shifts all throughout its long, discontinuous history. However, while "experience" might well have a historicity (never simply emerging *ex nihilo*), whether or not it can be said to constitute a universal and self-identical theme is far less certain.

[42] "Text" in this particular (and unusual) sense would resonate with Derrida's claims in *Limited Inc* (Paris: Galilée, 1990): "il n'y a pas d'expérience de *pure* présence mais seulement des chaines de marques différentielles" (32); "ce que j'appelle 'texte' implique toutes les structures dites 'réelles,' 'economiques,' 'historiques,' socio-institutionnelles, bref tous les referents possibles [...] tout référent, toute réalité a la structure d'une trace différantielle, et qu'on ne peut se rapporter à ce réel que dans une expérience interprétative. Celle-ci ne donne ou ne prend sens que dans un movement de renvoi différantiel" (273). In this account, experience is caught in writing: *graphemes* or "chains of differential marks." "Writing," in this idiom, "is" other than spoken and written words alone as well as the suspension of the very predicative copula "is": not a transcription, a mere recording of reported speech, of spoken language, but an array of graphematic marks that are materially re-markable and repeatable, purveying and pulverizing the meaning it enables and effaces. As will become clear, this reference to textualized experience is not a structuralist conceit equating experience with language. If experience is a text, this implies that experience is constituted within a differential network of referrals and relata, within the traces of what it is not, rather than within the predicates of a self-present, underlying subject (namely, a presupposed *hypokeimenon* or *substratum* of a subject who stands in transparent presence to itself).

[43] *Unpublished*, 56.

[44] *Unpublished,* 65.

[45] On the metaphysics of substance, see Michel Haar, "Nietzsche and Metaphysical Language" in *Nietzsche: Contemporary Styles of Interpretation*, ed. David Allison (New York: Delta, 1977), 17-8 and Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 28.

[46] *A Nietzsche Compendium,* ed. David Taffel (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2008), 203-4. See also *Late Notebooks* of 1885-6: "The separation of 'doing' from the 'doer,' of what happens from a something that *makes* it happen, of process from a something that is not process but is enduring, substance, thing, body, soul etc.—the attempt to grasp what happens as a kind of displacement and repositioning of what 'is,' of what persists: that ancient mythology set down the belief in 'cause and effect' one

this belief found a fixed form in the grammatical functions of language" (88). For a scintillating analysis of Nietzsche's (re)vision of the subject, see Sarah Kofman, "Descartes Entrapped," in *Who comes after the subject?*

[47] In French, the relationship between experience and experiment connoted by the term "expérience" is even stronger. Despite evident differences from English, certain French expressions seem to allude to these aforementioned presuppositions: "*avoir* de l'expérience"; "*être* expérimenté"; "*faire* l'expérience de."

[48] Hume illustrates this in his *Treatise of Human Nature* (1739-40) when describing the inference made from impression to idea: "'Tis therefore by EXPERIENCE only, that we can infer the existence of one object from that of another the nature of experience is this. We remember to have had frequent instances of the existence of one species of objects; and also remember, that the individuals of another species of objects have always attended them, and have existed in a regular order of contiguity and succession with regard to them. Thus we remember to have seen that species of object we call *flame*, and to have felt tha species of sensation we call *heat*. We likewise call to mind their constant conjunction in all past instnaces. Without any farther ceremony, we call the one *cause* and the other *effect,* and infer the existence of the one from that of the other" (*T* 135).

[49] For a critique of this notion of repetition in experience whereby the plurality of experiences becomes reduced to the abstract singular noun of "experience" see Peggy Kamuf, "The Experience of Deconstruction," in *Book of Addresses* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2005).

[50] See Deleuze, "A Philosophical Concept…" in *Who Comes after the Subject?: "*we believe that the notion of subject has lost much of its interest on behalf of *pre-individual singualrities and non personal individuations*" (95).

[51] See Nietzsche, "Description of Ancient Rhetoric," trans. Carole Blair and David J. Parent, *Friedrich Nietzsche on Rhetoric and Language, e*d. Sander L. Gilman (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 2–193. For a discussion of Nietzsche's proclamations that knowledge-production is bound to the provisions of syntax, see Derrida, "Le supplément de copule: la philosophie devant la linguistique" in *Marges— de la philosophie* (Paris: Les éditions de Minuit, 1972), 212-3. Derrida's *La Carte Postale* additionally addresses the "S is P" propositional formula of subject/predicate. In reference to the "pretensions of the copula ("is")" one might also think here of former president Bill Clinton's declaration, during his 1998 address to the grand jury during his impeachment trial for sexual relations with his intern that it "depends on what the meaning of the word 'is' is" in regard to whether an amorous relationships is ongoing or whether it ever really "was."

[52] Such formulations dovetail with those according to which this deconstruction of experience becomes indistinguishable from an experience of deconstruction. See Kamuf, "The Experience of Deconstruction": "An experience without self, from outside self, an experience without experience itself," (154).

[53] See for example, Wood, *Hélisenne,* and Buzon, "Les miroirs d'Hélisenne de Crenne," in *Hélisenne de Crenne. L'écriture et ses doubles,* eds. Jean-Philippe Beaulieu and Diane Desrosiers-Bonin (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2004), 71-81. For an explicit discussion on the ambiguity of rhetoric and depiction in the novel, one might refer to Janine Incardona, "*Les Angoysses douloureuses qui procedent d'amours* , une vision ambigüe de l'amour," in *Renaissance, Humanisme, Réforme*, vol. XXII, n. 42, (June 1996): 7-28 and *passim*.

[54] Henri Coulet's *Le Roman jusqu'à la Révolution* (Paris: A. Colin, 1967-68) prefers the former characterization, Tom Conley's "Feminism, *écriture*, and the Closed Room: The *Angoysses douloureuses qui procedent d'amours*" *Symposium* 27 (Winter 1973): 322-331, the other.

[55] Coulet, *Roman,* 105. The French: "Helisenne s'inspire évidemment de la Fiammetta de Boccace […] Mais Fiammetta était une invention de Boccace, tandis qu'Helisenne se souvient de ce qu'elle a vécu."

[56] Barbara Johnson, *The Feminist Difference : literature, psychoanalysis, race, and gender* (Cambridge, Mass. : Harvard University Press, 1998), 123. Italics in original.

[57] Coulet, *Roman,* 105.

[58] "La seconde partie des Angoisses douloureuses composée par dame Hélisenne parlant en la personne de son ami Guénélic" (147).

[59] *A Renaissance Woman: Helisenne's Personal and Invective Letters,* trans. Marianna M. Mustacchi and Paul J. Archambault (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1986), 81 and 84. French edition *Les épîtres familières et invectives. [suivi de] Le songe*, ed. Jean-Philippe Beaulieu (Saint-Etienne : Publications de l'Université de Saint-Etienne, 2008), 71, 74-5. Translation modified.

[60] For the impossibility of reducing the narrative to autobiographical coordinates, see Katharine Ann Jensen "Writing Out of the Double Bind: Female Plot and Hélisenne de Crenne's *Les Angoysses douloureuses qui procedent d'amours" Oeuvres & Critiques* 19, no. 1 (1994): 61-67.

[61] See *On the Genealogy of Morals*: "But there is no such substratum; there is no 'being' behind doing, effecting, becoming; 'the doer' is merely a fiction added to the deed—the deed is everything [*es gibt kein 'Sein' hinter dem Tun, Wirken, Werden; 'der Täter' ist zum Tun blos hinzugedichtet*]. The popular mind in fact doubles the deed; when it sees the lightning flash, it is the deed of a deed: it posits the same event first as cause and then a second time as its effect […] our entire science still lies under the misleading influence of language and has not disposed of that little changeling, the 'subject'" (45).

[62] *Unpublished,* 65.

[63] "The belief in grammar, in the linguistic subject, object, in verbs has, thus far, subjugated the metaphysicians," writes Nietzsche, as cited in Christian Emden, *Nietzsche on Language, Consciousness, and the Body* (Chicago: University of Illinois, 2005), 80. Nietzsche also says of the Cartesian cogito that the thinking ascribed to an "I" is no more than a belief in the grammar of a subject (an "I" or an "it" that thinks).

[64] *On certainty,* ed. G.E.M. Anscombe and G.H. von Wright (New York: Harper & Row, 1972) Paragraph, 166.

[65] Hélisenne expires in the third part of the novel, "Repentance d'Hélisenne, et de son trépas," (English 183; French 332). See Malenfant, "Quelques Modalités exemplaires des *Angoysses Douloureuses qui procedent d'amours* d'Hélisenne de Crenne (1538)," in *Hélisenne de Crenne. L'écriture et ses doubles*, 83-109 and Nash's "Discours Performatif d'une femme écrivain 'exerceant oeuvre viriles': *Les Epistres Familieres et Invectives* d'Hélisenne de Crenne," also in the same volume, 153-167.

[66] For further reflection on this, see Martine Debaisieux, " 'Des Dames du temps jadis': Fatalité culturelle et identité féminine dans *Les Angoysses douloureuses," Symposium* 41 (Spring 1987): 28-41 and the essays collected in *Hélisenne de Crenne. L'écriture et ses doubles, op cit*.

[67] Even if there is no directly accessible referent of lived experience subtending the novel, the *Angoysses* no less mimics the biographical gestures it simultaneously deconstructs in collaging and collapsing details of Hélisenne's life with that of Marguerite Briet, the novel's presumed author. As Neal notes in her introduction to her translation of *Torments*: "Like her heroine, the author did in fact legally separate from her husband and may have been sequestered by him as well; she held properties in her name (a fact referred to in the novel); and a number of place-names in the book are palindromes of places important in her life ("Eliveba for "Abeville," "Hennerc" for "Crenne")" (x). Is it not so much, then, that referentiality is nullified but that the biographical references to which the text alludes are suspended of ontological and metaphysical commitments to referential realism? If biographical elements in the novel are not simply neutralized or negated, perhaps what is being called into question is the belief in their presuppositional priority to serve as foundational givens or referential grounds with which to interpret the narrative. If the work is not simply opposed to autobiography, or if it is in any way autobiographical, is it because this autobiographical posturing is both an effect of fiction and persuasive as autobiographical precisely insofar as its fictionality cannot be diametrically set in contrast to the "real"?

[68] See for example Wood's *Hélisenne,* and Buzon, "Les miroirs d'Hélisenne de Crenne," in *Hélisenne de Crenne. L'écriture et ses doubles,* eds. Jean-Philippe Beaulieu and Diane Desrosiers-Bonin (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2004), 71-81. For an explicit discussion on the ambiguity of rhetoric and depiction in the novel, one might refer to Janine Incardona, "*Les Angoysses douloureuses qui procedent d'amours* , une vision ambigüe de l'amour," in *Renaissance, Humanisme, Réforme*, vol. XXII, n. 42, (June 1996): 7-28 and *passim*.

[69] See also Blanchot's *l'entretien infini* (Paris: Gallimard, 1969) for the thematics and poetics of the termless wait.

[70] This recalls some of the problems we encountered early on concerned the temporal and grammatical antimonies that arise when discussing experience which, in the *Angoysses,* takes the form of waiting: is waiting an experience or in wait of experience? When we retrospectively look over Hélisenne's story we might claim to find experience, in retrospect, but is the *ex post facto* reconstruction of experience —proclaiming, only afterwards that "yes, this was an experience all along!"— the same as *experiencing* experience at the moment of its unfolding (is there such a moment)? If one only comes to experience proper after the fact, in retrospect, then is experience ever present to oneself or a self, or is it always belated, deferred, untimely? Does experience always come too late, just the way Hélisenne waits for Guénélic only to perish upon finally meeting him, just the way Guénélic finally saves Hélisenne only to find that she cannot be saved at all? And what of the added complication that we are *reading* of experiences which are depicted in figural language and which do not seem to be taking place at all, even as they are being described? Does the act of our reading itself constitute an eventful experience that makes up for the lack of action, event, and experience described within the narrative, as some might well presume it does, or is there a more complex dynamic at work? When are we sure we are self-presently undergoing experience or is it that experience was never possible in presence, if experience is only labeled and understood as such after the fact? Would any attempt to demarcate the extent to which an experience is lived (be it in narrative, reading, living) inevitably falter?

[71] On Guénélic's "chivalric inaptitude" one might consult Beaulieu's "Où est le héros ? La vacuité de la quête chevaleresque dans les Angoysses douloureuses d'Hélisenne de Crenne," in *Héroïsme et démesure dans la littérature de la Renaissance : les avatars de l'épopée : actes du colloque international (21-23 octobre 1994), réunis et présentés par Denise Alexandre.* (Saint-Etienne : Publications de l'Université de Saint-Etienne, 1998), 140. This exaggerated courtliness is apotheosized, in Guénélic's own words, as a form of "gentle [*gentil*] love."

[72] Søren Kierkegaard, *Fear and trembling*, edited by C. Stephen Evans and Sylvia Walsh ; translated by Sylvia Walsh (Cambridge, UK ; New York : Cambridge University Press, 2006), 34-5. Cited paranthetically in the text as (*FT*)

[73] *Repetition,* 201. The passage ends: "It would end with my fumbling for her as if I were grabbing at a shadow or as if stretched out my hand after a shadow."

[74] In one scene, for example, Hélisenne hears the music her beau plays even though she does not go to the window for fear: "I heard some musical instruments, which were playing in great harmony and melodious resonance" (17).

[75] Derrida, *On touching, Jean-Luc Nancy*, trans. Christine Irizarry (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005), 2. Originally published as *Le Toucher, Jean-Luc Nancy* (Paris: Galilée, 2000).

[76] See Colette H. Winn's article "La symbolique du regard dans *Les Angoysses douloureuses qui precedent d'Amours* d'Hélisenne de Crenne" in *Orbis Litterarum,* Vol. 20, no.2 (September 1985): 207-221. For a psychoanalytic reading of this play of regards see Robert D. Cottrell's "Female Subjectivity and Libidinal Infractions: Hélisenne de Crenne's *Les Angoysses douloureuses qui precedent d'Amours*" in *French Forum,* Vol.16, no. 1 (January 1991): 5-19.

[77] The text often reprises this formulation "by signs"— for instance, sometimes sighs can serve as signs as well: "So many sighs rushed forth from my breast that one followed another," says Hélisenne of one interview with her beloved (23). But what are these signs? Or rather, in a perhaps less ontologically-laden formulation: *how* might they signify? On the chiasmatic relation between signification and materiality, see Judith Butler, *Bodies that matter : On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (New York : Routledge, 1993).

[78] Howie, *Claustrophilia,* 138.

[79] The narrator even comments on the seeming improbability this love which has burgeoned without immediate contact or direct exposure, instigated by nothing more than a brief eyeful of one another: "Ladies, I exhort you and plead with you to judge the great power of love, considering I had never seen this person. You may find it very strange, for love usually results from continual contact" (10).

[80] Here nearness and blindness become modes of approach rather than pure obstructions. On the problem of tactility see Judith Butler's provocative essay, "Merleau-Ponty and the touch of Malebranche" in *The Cambridge Companion to Merleau-Ponty*, eds. Taylor Carman and Mark B.N. Hansen (Cambridge: Cambridge University press, 2004), 181-205.

[81] For a gripping analysis of this medieval scene of a (poetic) *lai* recounting no more than laying beside one's beloved, see Cary Howie, *Claustrophilia: The erotics of enclosure in medieval literature* (New York : Palgrave, 2007). Indeed, if Madame de Lafayatte's *La Princesse de Clèves* can be considered the seventeenth-century heir to the *Angoysses* —in that both narratives depict a woman whose avowal of an adulterous ardor that she never acts upon is nonetheless taken to constitute an adulterous act in and of itself— Marie de France's *Lais* might be considered its precursor. In the *Lais* love never appears apart from suffering, loss, and imprisonment —motifs reprised in the *Angoysses*— and extramarital affairs are given ambivalent treatment, neither strictly celebrated nor outright condemned.

[82] From Cary Howie's "Pornography and Parataxis," in the volue co-written with Bill Burgwinkle, *Sanctity and Pornography: On the Verge* (Manchester University, 2011), 70.

[83] See Anne-Lise François's essay ""The feel of not to feel it," or the Pleasures of Enduring Form" in *A Companion to Romantic Poetry*, ed. Charles Mahoney (Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishing, 2011) which rephrases this as the "feel of *almost* to feel it."

[84] This resonates with Blanchot's "rapport sans rapport," as discussed in Derrida's *Parages* (Paris: Galilée, 1986), 188. Derrida pushes the formulation to its limit with a "sans sans sans," a without that is without even the notion of without itself (151).

[85] It might be useful to recall that Briet/Crenne had also composed a "songe" —*Le Songe de madame Helisenne*— even though a *songe*, allegorical and often didactic in tone, cannot be conflated with the consolatory erotic dreams within the *Angoysses*. See the translation of this text in *Writings by pre-revolutionary French women,* eds. Anne R. Larsen and Colette H. Winn (New York ; London : Garland Pub., 2000).

[86] Nietzche, *Beyond Good and Evil* in *Compendium,* 80-1.

[87] In this sense, if the *Angoysses* alludes to Boccaccio's *Elegy of Lady Fiammetta* its rhetoric of torment also exceeds that of its Italian intertext. See Giovanni Boccaccio *The Elegy of Lady Fiammetta,* trans. Mariangela Causa-Steindler and Thomas Mauch (Chicago : University of Chicago Press, 1990). For more correlations and contradistinctions see M.J. Baker, "*Fiammetta* and the *Angoysses douloureuses qui procedent d'amours*," *Symposium* 27, no.4 (Winter 1973): 303-8.

[88] "Alas, he has no other goal than to deprive me of my honor," Hélisenne will remark when noticing her beloved's imprudence" (16-17), "But despite the fact that I am aware of all these things, *my bitter fate has so bound me that it is not in my power or capacity to unbind myself in any way*" (58; emphasis added).

[89] From the essay "Désistance," an introduction to Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe's *Typography : mimesis, philosophy, politics*, trans. Christopher Fynsk (Cambridge, MA : Harvard University Press, 1989), 4. The French: "ce qui s'anonce comme ineluctable semble être en quelque sorte déjà arrivé, arrivé avant d'arriver, toujours passé, en avance sur l'événement" in *Pysché: Inventions de l'autre* (Paris: Galilée, 1987-2003), 202.

[90] Whereas Neal's translation prefers the 1538 version – passion begins to *diminish*" Beaulieu's French edition opts for the 1541 version, choosing the variant "*dominer*" –dominate- for "*diminuer*"- diminish.

[91] *Dialogue on the infinity of love*, ed. and trans. Rinaldina Russell and Bruce Merry (Chicago ; London : University of Chicago Press, 1997), 84.

[92] Blanchot's *L'Écriture du désastre,* 30.

[93] This is a paradox formulated in Blanchot's *Le livre à venir* (Paris: Gallimard, 1959) as that which is "[t]oujours encore à venir, toujours déjà passé" (18).

[94] *The Writing of the Disaster,* trans. Ann Smock (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), 12. French is from Blanchot, *Écriture du désastre,* 24.

[95] Consider in this regard Marie de Gournay's novel *Le Proumenoir de Monsieur de Montaigne* (1594): "[T]he body and its gifts are damageable and exhaustible and exhaustible with them the desires that pertain to them," so declaims a narrator, "whereas the gifts of the spirit reflourish every day in new delights, and are inexhaustible *Egalité des hommes et des femmes ; Grief des dames ; suivis du Proumenoir de Monsieur de Montaigne*, ed. Constance Venesoen (Genève : Librairie Droz, 1993), 107. Likewise, in Tullia d'Aragona's discourse, *Diàlogo della infinità d'amore* (1547), carnal, "vulgar" love, is contrasted to an "honest love" upheld only by the senses of sight and hearing –devices oft employed by the lovers in the *Angoysses*.

[96] For a discussion of these themes, see Megan Conway, "Classicism and Christianity in Hélisenne de Crenne's *Les Angoysses douloureuses," The Journal of the Rocky Mountain Medieval and Renaissance Association* 18 (1997): 11-31.

[97] Barbara Johnson, *The Critical Difference,* 14. This is especially acute, Johnson notes, in the case of medieval romances such as *Le Roman de la Rose*, in which the famous allegorical figure of the rose's deflowering vacillates between sublimation and consummation, depending on how it is read. We might add that troubadour tropes of *l'amour de loin* and Marie de France's allegorically ambiguity-laden *Lais* also attest to lyric and narrative forms where love is portrayed as an ambivalent bind of deferment and delight.

[98] See Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender* (New York: Routledge, 2004), who uses the provocative phrase "love that has no place in the name of love."

[99] What is more, the descriptive and generic term "romance" (*roman*), a generic label frequently attached to the fictional pieces in verse or prose associated with themes of love from the medieval era onward, is a contested category throughout the early modern and old regime period which, long before it came to signify "novel," referred *inter alia* to a narrative of chivalry or a novelistic fiction, a lyrical form, an epic, and/or an amorous ("romantic") intrigue. Genre and gender become enmeshed here, not only because "romance" could refer to both narrative form and erotic relationships but also because romance reading and writing was associated with femininity and womanhood by both detractors and supporters alike. Cf. English Showalter, "*Romans*, Romances, *Nouvelles*, and Novels" in *The Evolution of the French Novel 1641-1782* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1972), 11-37 and Francis Gingras *Le Bâtard conquérant: essor et expansion du genre romanesque au Moyen Âge* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2011). The romance is thought to recall the chivalric conventions of certain Middle Age verse narratives and, importantly, was entertained a rapport with woman's writing: "Romance as a literary form had longstanding medieval associations with women, often for negative reasons," so relates Josephine A. Roberts, for though "predominantly written by men, romances often inscribed a female audience, even when the male author might simultaneously be addressing the members of his own sex" (xviii). See Roberts' introduction to *The First part of The Countess of Montgomery's Urania* (1621) by Lady Mary Wroth (Michigan: University of Michigan, 2008).

[100] These would be, once again, Butlerian questions posed and discussed to different ends in works such as *Undoing Gender* and *Bodies That Matter.*

[101] The decentering of the phenomenological "subject" is not by any means a new claim (it has arguably even become cliché), nor is it the only claim of this commentary, but it is a claim that takes part in those conversations in continental and poststructuralist philosophy that have sought to displace the presumptive priority of the subject. Likewise, it is important to underscore that such a critique of the subject is clearly not a charge leveled against the entirety of classical and medieval articulations of subject and "substance" (*ousia, hypokeimenon, substantia, subjectum*) which cannot be understood in Greek thought according to a dichotomy of subject/object (a duality entrenched in post-aristitotelian philosophic articulations). In Aristotle's *Logic*, the subject occurs in terms of predication, then substance (*hypokeimenon*—subject and substance; "underlying" or "substratum"). This would be that which is not predicted itself but of which something is predicated. In post-cartesian formulations, substance is said to take identifications with Being (Aquinas' self-subsisting God, Heidegger's *Dasein*) and logos (Descartes' cogito). These are far from simple distinctions to make. Even Hegel's seemingly straightforward formulations like "Subject is Substance" vacillates in its formulation since the copula is not ontological but speculative, a hinge that links rather than predicates. For a recapitulation of this history of subject/substance see John Martis, *Phillippe Lacoue-Labarthe: Representation and the Loss of the Subject* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2006).

[102] See Edmund Husserl, *Logical Investigations,* trans. J.N. Findlay (New York: Routledge, 1970). If ontology concerns being, epistemology knowledge, logic reason, and ethics acts, then phenomenology's presupposed domain is experience studied in *epoché*: conscious experience, analyzed in first-person perspective and in suspension, bracketed from exterior considerations and distilled to its noema, is scrutinized in relation to the presupposed intentionality it would fulfill in the self-presence of lived experience.

[103] For a review of some of these debates see Sonia Kruks, *Retrieving Experience: Subjectivity and Recognition in Feminist Politics* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2001). This work attempts to retrieve existentialist and phenomenological notions

of embodiment and situatedness to show that the critique of the Cartesian subject was not alien to Sartre and de Beauvoir.

[104] Cf. James Mensch, *Postfoundational Phenomenology: Hussserlian Reflections on Presence and Embodiment* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University, 2001).

[105] Consider, in this regard Jean-Luc Marion's contentions in *Étant Donné: Essai d'une phénoménologie de la donation* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1997). In contradistinction to a classical liberal model of personhood or an existentialist theory of choice that might take the category of the "I" as its analytic point of departure, Marion's proposal is that "la détermination du phénomène comme donné, si elle peut et doit se dispenser de tout donateur, advient cependant toujours à un donataire: 'ce qui vient après le sujet,' nous le décrivons ici comme l'adonnée, sans autre *subjectum* que son aptitude à recevoir et à *se* recevoir de ce qu'il reçoit" (9). Derrida questions the traces of onto-theology (and the presumptive premises of Husserlian phenomenology) in Marion's account, asking whether the given is never given as such or in presence but remains deferred or projected to come—in other words, even the gesture of accounting for phenomena as *given*, and without regard to the giver, still remains within the Husserlian paradigm of intentional experience (the given is what is perceived). See "On the Gift: A Discussion between Jacques Derrida and Jean-Luc Marion," in *God, the Gift, and Postmodernism*, eds. John D. Caputo and Michael J. Scanlon (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1999), 54-78.

[106] "[We] must deconstruct what counts as 'experience' in order to foreground multiplicities, contradictions and cosntructions of such potent entities," writes Donna Haraway in *Primate Visions: Gender, Race, and Nature in the World of Modern Science* (New York: Routledge, 1989), 420. Motley philosophical and theoretical inquiries pullulate with titles and concepts for the problem of "experience." A non-exhaustive sampling might include: Avital Ronell's *The Test Drive* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 2005) attempts to examine experimentation and experiment, testing and proving; Joan Wallach Scott's essay "The Evidence of Experience" in *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 17, No. 4 (Summer, 1991): 773-797, interrogates the consideration of experience as a self-evident reality of subjects rather than as "historical processes" that "position subjects and produce their experiences" (777), while Anne-Lise François' notion of "uncounted experiences" in *Open Secrets: The Literature of Uncounted Experience* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008) describes a fulfilled, mild and minimal experience that goes uncounted. Cathy Caruth's "unclaimed experience" in *Unclaimed experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996) and Ernst van Alphen's "Symptoms of Discursivity: Experience, memory and trauma" in *Acts of Memory—Cultural Recall in the Present,* eds. Mieke Bal et al (Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 1999), 24-38, detail a traumatic return and repetition of a belated experience. Alice Jardine's "The Demise of Experience" in *Gynésis: Configurations of women and modernity* traces the decimation of a simplistic understanding of the concept (New York : Semiotext(e), 1991), 145-55. Other references will appear scattered throughout these notes.

[107] "Evidence of Experience," 793.

[108] See the discussion between Judith Butler and Ernesto Laclau in *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality* (New York: Verso, 2000), 36-41, 162-169, 193-5. Butler also explores a "counterhegemonic trajectory of translation" in *Parting Ways: Jewishness and the Critique of Zionism* (New York, New York: Columbia University Press, 21012), 16-7. Gayatri Spivak discusses the problem of translation in "A Translator's Preface" and "Afterword" in *The Spivak Reader,* ed. Donna Landry and Gerald MacLean (New York: Routledge 1996).

[109] Consider, for example, Teresa de Lauretis' definition of experience in *Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984) becomes "the process by which, for all social beings ,subjectivity is constructed. Through that process one places oneself or is placed in social reality, and so perceives and comprehends a subjective (referring to, originating in, oneself) those relations—material ,economic, and interpersonal—which are in fact social and, in a larger perspective, historical" (159).

[110] See Ludwig Wittegenstein, *Philosophical Investigations,* trans. G.E.M. Anscombe (New York : Blackwell Publishing, 2001), 4. Laclau's essay "Constructing Universality" in *Contingency* also makes use of Wittegenstein's use of language games (283-4), as does Linda Zerilli's "Doing Without Knowing : Feminism's Politics of the Ordinary," in *Political Theory* 24, no.4 (August1998): 435-458.

[111] See Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason* (New York: Random House, 1988), ix. "The Subject and Power" in *Critical Inquiry,* Vol 8, No. 4 (Summer, 1982): 777-795.

[112] See for example Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (New York: Routledge, 1993), a work which often has recourse to this particular phrasing of the matter.

[113] Derrida, *Demeure. Maurice Blanchot* (Paris: Galilée, 1998): "*la* langue n'existe pas, personne ne l'a jamais rencontrée" (17).

[114] Consider Derrida's claim in Derrida and Maurizio Ferraris, *A Taste for the Secret,* trans. Giacomo Donis, (Maden, Ma: Polity, 2001): "The notion of trace or of text is introduced to mark the limits of the linguistic turn. This is one more reason why I prefer to speak of 'mark' rather than of language, in the first place the mark is not anthropological; it is prelinguistic; it is the possibility of language, and it is everywhere there is relation to another thing or relation to an other. For such relations, the mark has no need of language" (76). While Derrida's point is well taken, to what extent is the conceit of a "prelinguistic" site for the

mark a discursive fiction? To posit a prelinguistic mark is still to posit it (in language), and thus far from escaping language bears the rhetorical mark of the act of positing.

[115] As mentioned in note 25, *supra,* text in this formulation is not confined to the printed page or to bookends, but refers to the movements of deferral and differentiation within an open-ended, self-differing and differentiating force-field of relations that are not strictly mental or phenomenological but also material, social, and historical: "*text*, as I use the word, is not the book. No more than writing or trace, it is not limited to the *paper* which you cover with your graphism. It is precisely for strategic reasons [...] that I found it necessary to recast the concept of text by generalizing it almost without limit, in any case without present or perceptible limit, without any limit that *is* [...] which is not to say that it can be read the way one reads a book. That's why the text is always a field of forces: heterogeneous, differential, open, and so on." From Derrida, " But, beyond... (Open Letter to Anne McClintock and Rob Nixon)," trans. Peggy Kamuf, *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 13, No. 1 (Autumn, 1986): 167-8.

[116] (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1967), 225.

[117] " 'Expérience' a toujours désigné le rapport à une presence, que ce rapport ait ou non la forme de la conscience," notes Derrida in *De la grammatologie* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1967), 89.

[118] Monique Wittig's critique of such postulations —whether it be the "semiotic" or *écriture féminine*—is that such theories to minimize the cultural stakes of their own arguments, acting as though they were describing the real rather than performatively instituting a contingent version of the real. In such theories, "one remains within the classical division of the concrete world on the one hand, and the abstract one on the other. Physical or social reality and language are disconnected. Abstraction, symbols, signs do not belong to the real. There is on one side the real, the refere,t and on the other side language. It is as though the relation to language were a realtion of function only and not one of transformation. There is sometimes a confusion between signied and referent...Or there is areduction of the signified to a series of messages, with relays of the referent remaining the only support of the meaning" (*SM* 77-8). For Wittig, so-called abstract categories are themselves operative in the "real as social," since language is not only a form but also a material order, a matter.

[119] For further consideration of these questions see Butler's discussions in *Bodies that Matter* and "How Can I Deny," 5-10, as well as Derrida's *Limited Inc.*

[120] On the metaphysics of substance, see Michel Haar, "Nietzsche and Metaphysical Language" in *Nietzsche: Contemporary Styles of Interpretation*, ed. David Allison (New York: Delta, 1977), 75: "Our oldest metaphysical foundation is the one that we rid ourselves of last—assuming we do rid ourselves of it—that foundation which is incorproated in language and in grammatical categories and makes itself indispensable just at the point where it seems that we must cease to think if we are to renounce this metaphysics.' Grammar induces belief in the existence of real equivalents to grammatical rules; thus, it makes us believe that the grammatical subject is the effective cause of action expressed y the verb. That the 'I' determines the verb 'to think' is the grammatical superstition from which Descartes, despite his resolve to doubt everything, could not escape. The Cartesian *cogito* is only one among many examples of the power of grammatical prejudice. It is also responsible fro the very notion of substance. The simple function of the verb creates the illusion of a substance behind the verb. When one says 'the light shines,' one arbitrarily isolates a cause, 'the light' as an entity separate from its effect, the act of shining. Similarly, morality falsely separates the force from its effects. From the point of view of the subject, this grammatical structure reflects a metaphysical desire: the desire to be the cause of oneself, the desire that expresses itself every time I say 'I think that...' Thus, metaphysical categories derive not from the metaphysical subject but from that more imperceptible form of subjectivity: the grammatical subject. 'The concept of substance is a consequence of the concept of the subject, not the reverse.' Whence the category of being. Following this reasoning, one immediately infers acts from an underlying permanent cause. The plurality of phenomena is propped up by a single, simple substance: Being."

[121] Giorgio Agamben, *Infancy and History: On the Destruction of Experience,* trans. Liz Heron (New York: Verso, 1993), 6-8.

[122] Peter de Bolla, *Art Matters* (Cambridge, Massachusetts : Harvard University Press, 2001).

[123] See Butler's eloquent discussion of these difficulties in "How can I deny that this hand and this body are mine?" in *Qui Parle*, Vol. 11, No. 1 (Fall/Winter 1997): 1-20. References throughout the following discussion to the giving and withholding of reference, and the elusion of the referent from referential capture in language in constructivist discourses are indebted to this essay and constitute an elaboration and extension of its arguments. Butler's concern in that essay, however, is the body, while here the question concerns experience and reference not just to language *per se* but to textuality.

[124] See Butler, "How Can I Deny," 1-5 which discusses, in a different context, how the body is given "in parts" and at once "given and withheld" through language.

[125] *Ibid.* See also Unni Langas, "Between Experience and Representation: Intimacy and Identity in Texts by Vita Andersen and Marion Hagen," *Scandinavian Studies,* Volume 81, no.2 (2009): 141-56, for a discussion of the chiasm in Merleau-Ponty, Butler, and others.

[126] Or perhaps the very language of "givenness" no longer applies in the same way it used to. If experience is not simply a ready-made referent or a thing-in-itself, if it remains entangled in the referentially unreliable toils of figuration, then it is not simply *outside* language, neither purveyed *through* language nor unilaterally produced *by* it, but, in a crucial sense, experience pushes the

limits of language itself. For it is not enough to conclude with the constructivist postulation that experience is given in part and in parts in language, or that discourse produces experience as its discursive effect, not least of all because constructivist formulations unwittingly reinvoke a metaphysics of the subject by placing language/discourse in the subject-position of a personified agency that monocausally and unilaterally performs the act of producing determined effects. Even if one were to argue that experience is given in and by language, it still remains to be asked what is *excluded* —what is not given or could not be given— in order for a given experience to be constituted and circumscribed in the first place. In this sense, the question is not merely whether experience is inextricable from a certain grammar without which it could not appear or come to be known, but how experience does *not* merely appear as a intuitive phenomenality and is *not* simply given as a representational content, precisely because experience is bound up with a larger array of social norms that constrain and bound its representability, what might even be called a social textuality —an open-ended web and weave of referrals and deferrals, differences and references, a force-field of social relations that both constitute and deconstitute "experience," always already in difference from itself. To say that experience is confounded in a certain textuality is to suggest that experience is not an identifiable phenomenon or intuitive content represented in language, in that the very conceit of experience as a phenomenality that "appears" in presence is shown to be riddled with constitutive non-presences. This is different from the claim that language creates experience, for that claim implies that, by a sort of linguistic monism, experience is simply composed of language or reducible to it as language's determined effect and product. Indeed, such a version of linguistic determinism would presuppose a mimetic and referential conceit of language whereby a prediscursive, noumenal, or ontic referent ("experience as such") would merely be reflected or deflected by the representational functions of language. In this view, language would either approximate or fail to adequate that of which it speaks, either mechanically reproducing and determining it or endlessly skirting around the ineffable and the asignifying, for there would exist a presumed ontological divide between the prelinguistic reality designated with varying degrees of success by language and the symbolic designations or representations of that language. In the wake of deconstruction, however, a different set of questions impose themselves: If experience cannot be considered outside a contextual web of differences and references, then in a significant sense is experience always already different from itself (and thus not quite an experience)? Might any appeal to a prediscursive or presocial conceit of experience regress into a classical, and ultimately unjustifiable, form of idealism?

[127] On performative rather than expressive models of identity see Butler, "Bodily Inscriptions, Performative Subversions," in *The Judith Butler Reader*, ed. Sara Salih (Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 103-118.

[128] As Derrida comments in *Dire,* the saying of saying the event always comes in a temporal delay and deferral: "en raison de sa structure de dire, le dire vient après l'événement…à cause du fait qu'en tant que dire et donc structure de langage, il est voué à une certaine généralité, une certaine itérabilité, une certaine répétabilité, il manqué toujours la singularité de l'événement" (89). If an event is that which is unanticipatable and unexpected, what isn't planned, then the saying that attempts to say it, coming after, misses the singularity of the event. Derrida adds: "À mesure meme que se développe la capacité de dire immédiatement, de montrer immédiatement l'événement, on sait que la technique du dire et du monterer intervient et inerprète, sélectionne, filtre et par conséquent fait l'événement. Wuand on pretend aujourd'hui nous montrer '*live*', en direct, ce qui se passé, l'événement qui a lieu dans la Guerre du Golfe, on sait que si directs, si apparemment immédiats que soient le discours et l'image, des techniques extrêmement sophistiquées de capture, de projection et de filtrage de l'image permettent en une seconde de cadrer, de sélectionner, d'interpréter et de faire que ce qui nous est montré en direct soit déjà, non pas un dire ou un montrer de l'événement mais une production de l'événement. Une interpretation fait ce qu'elle dit, alors qu'elle pretend simplement énoncer, montrer et apprendre; en fait, elle produit, elle est déjà d'une certaine manière performative. De façøn naturellement non dite, non avouée, non declare, l'on fait passer un dire de l'événement, un dire qui fait l'événement pour un dire de l'événement. La vigilance politique que cela appellee de notre part consiste évidemment à organizer une connaissance critique de tous les appareils qui prétendent *dire* l'événement là où on *fait* l'événement, où on l'interprète et où on le produit" (90). In this sense, to say is a performative enactment, not a netural report: "tous ces modes de paroles où parler ne consiste pas à faire savoir, à rapporter quelque chose, à relater, à decrier, à constater, mais à faire arriver par la parole" (91).

[129] We see the reemergence of this latter figure in contemporary theories of the "multiple subject" which define the subject through myriad variables of identity but do not call into question the fundamental category of a subject standing behind or beyond all of the multiple relations that compose who it is.

[130] For this notion of repetition in experience whereby the plurality of experiences becomes reduced to the abstract singular noun of "experience" see Peggy Kamuf, "The Experience of Deconstruction," in *Book of Addresses* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2005). On performative rather than expressive model of identity see Judith Butler, "Bodily Inscriptions, Performative Subversions," in *The Judith Butler Reader*, ed. Sara Salih (Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 103-118.

[131] One might consider, for example, the notion of "counter-experiences" in Jean-Luc Marion's *The visible and the revealed* trans. Christina M. Gschwandtner et al. (New York : Fordham University Press 2008), "para-experience[s]" in Lyotard's *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute,* trans. George Van Den Abbeele (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), and mystical

"inner experiences" in George Bataille's *Inner experience*, trans. Leslie Anne Boldt (Albany : State University of New York Press, 1988). Avital Ronell's *The Test Drive* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2005), follows after the drive in Western thought toward "experimentation, trial, hypothetical, positing, retrial" (156) as that which both "allows for the emergence of a reality frame to assert itself" (164) and occasions "disappropriating forms of experience" (10). See also Derrida, " 'Eating Well,' or the Calculation of the Subject" in *Points…Interviews, 1974-1994* (Stanford California: Stanford University Press, 1995), and Timothy O'Leary's discussion of Foucault's "experience-book" in *Foucault and Fiction: The Experience Book* (New York: Continuum, 2009).

[132] See Jean-François Lyotard, *The Assassination of Experience by Painting—Monory,* trans Rachel Bowlby (London: Black Dog Publishing Unlimited, 1998) and Agamben, *Infancy and History*.

[133] If Hélisenne is not dying from love, but dying to love, at the same time this love also refuses to simply die away; a love that won't die.

CHAPTER 3: EARLY MODERN

[1] *La comtesse de Mortane / par Madame* *** (1699) (A La Haye : Chez Meyndert Uytwerf … , 1700), 35: "aimez moy toujours, ne me le dites jamais." This phrase runs in countercurrent to the rhetoric of Anne Ferrand's *Histoire nouvelle es amours de la jeune Bélise et de Cléante* (1689) in which it is declared: "Aimez-moi s'il est possible et vous souvenez de moi si vous pouvez" in *Lettres portugaises, Lettres d'une péruvienne et autres romans d'amour par lettres*, eds. Bernard bray and Isabelle Landy-Houillon (Paris: GF Flammarion, 1983), 230. It also differs from thefamous French song of eighteenth- or nineteenth-century genesis: "Parlez-moi de l'amour." Lacan's seminar, *Encore*, will muse about this phrase.

[2] For similar impossible speech moments see Smock, " 'Why two to say one thing?'" in *What is There to Say?*

[3] This blanketing term seems to refer to second-wave salon writing (i.e. writings after 1660), which differ from the earlier baroque novels of action and farce and which take up the neo-classicist concerns of the *nouvelle historique* and the erotic topoi of the *histoire galante.* See Shirley Jones Day, *The search for Lyonnesse : women's fiction in France, 1670-*1703 (New York : Peter Lang, 1999), Dorothy Frances Dallas, *Le roman français de 1660-1680* (Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1977), Pascal Champain, *Le roman français du xviie siècle, un genre en question* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2007), and Nicole Aronson, "Amour et marriage dans les oeuvres de Mlle de Scudéry," *L'Esprit Créateur* 19.1 (Spring 1979). The registers of style and the rosters of themes devolved from medieval and Renaissance bellelettristic traditions (and incorporated by French novels) has also inspired fresh analyses of trans-national intertextuality, while the influence the seventeenth-century novel been said to league to its so-called literary heirs of the eighteenth- and nineteenth- centuries –like the concept-metaphors of "*passion*," "*sentiment*," and "*sensibilité*" —has also not been kept untended by literary historical studies. See footnote 4, *infra,* and other references cited *in passim*.

[4] Audrey Wasser's "Figure to Fissure: Beckett's *Molloy*, *Malone Dies*, and *The Unnamable," Modern Philology*, Vol. 109, No. 2 (November 2011), for example, cites Madame de LaFayette's *la princesse de Clèves* in a footnote as an example of how "both the French and the English novels have their beginnings in sustained psychological explorations, where the action of the plot is grounded in the mental space and narrative voice of their heroes and heroines" (249-50). The totalizing reinscription of a psychologically-grounded and self-reflecting subject presumed in this characterization comes under question in the readings that follow. For scholarship on the conventions of seventeenth-century romantic bathos that the *roman d'analyse* —sometimes included amongst or denominated as the *nouvelle historique, histoire classique,* or *histoire galante*— both proffers and parries one might consult the following: See Shirley Jones Day, *Lyonnesse*, for a review of writings of French women in their cultural and political contexts. Jean DeJean's *Ancients against moderns : culture wars and the making of a fin de siècle* (Chicago : University of Chicago Press, 1997) suggests a "sentimental revolution" took place in the seventeenth-century with a reevaluation of the terms of tender. See also DeJean's *Tender Geographies* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991) and Ann Lewis', " "*Sensibilité* in the 17th century," in *Sensibility, Reading and Illustration: Spectacles and Signs in Graffigny, Marivaux, and Rousseau* (London: Legenda, 2009), 263-4. The latter provides important cataloguing. The slippery unwieldy concept-metaphor, "sensibilité'" was a problem that, though unresolved, was tackled and confronted throughout French literature. Lewis' work points out, the usages of sensibility present vastly contradicting tenants: sensibility is used to identify "spontaneous instinctive pre-reflexive reactions taken to guarantee authenticity and altruism, and to exclude the interference of calculation and self-interest," to indicate "a type of consciousness or self-awareness," among other features (40).

[5] See Joan DeJean, "Classical Reeducation: Decanonizing the Feminine," in *Displacements: Women, Tradition, Literatures in French,* ed. Joan DeJean and Nancy K. Miller (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991) and Margaret Cohen, *The Sentimental Education of the Novel* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1999).

[6] See "Du Plaisir as Theoretician and Practicioner of the Novel Form," Ellen Janet Hunter (Dissertation, University of British Columbia, 1968).

[7] Du Plaisir's novella occupies an interesting place in the temporal trajectory of novels here, following Lafayette and preceding Bernard, and in a way his nouvelle marks a point of transfer between them: the Princess' "inimitable example" of virtue is imitated by Du Plaisir, whose heroine also renounces her beloved, but finds a different ending than its predecessor (the heroine seemingly coming to terms with her loss and accepting another man's love). Bernard's novella carries the tragedy further than the

preceding works by ending with a heroine who only feels death in her heart for the beloved she has lost, but who must live on nonetheless without him. While the intertextual influences and resonances amongst these works are surely worth investigating, that will have to be explored on another occasion even if intertextual intimations between Du Plaisir and Bernard will be broached toward the end of this essay.

[8] Consider Bernard's opening lines: "Je conçois tant de dérègelemnt dans l'amour, même le plus raisonable, que j'ai pensé qu'il valait mieux presenter au public un tableau des malheurs de cette passion que de faire voir les amants vertueux et délicats, heureux à la fin du livre. Je mets donc mes héros dans une situation si triste qu'on ne leur porte point d'envie" (177). This preface is to *Eléonor*. That of *Amboise* reprises the language of this foreword: "Peut-être se plaindra-t-on de ce que je ne recompense pas la virtu du comte d'Amboise, mais je veux punir sa passion et j'ai déj¡a declare dans la Préface d'Eleonor d'Yvrée que mon dessein était de ne faire voir que des amants malheureux pour combattre, autaunt qu'il m'est possible, le penchant qu'on a pour l'amour" (239).

[9] Cf. Anne-Lise François, "'Not Thinking of you as Left Behind' : Virgil, and the Missing of Love in Hardy's *Poems of 1912-13*," *ELH* 75 (2008), 67. Consider in this vein the interesting semantic distinction made in G. Cayrou's *Le Français classique. Lexique de la langue du dix-septième siècle,* (Paris: Henri Didier, 1923), according to whichs an "amant" "se distingue de l'amoureux, qui aime sans être aimé."

[10] (Paris: Honoré Champion Éditeur, 2002), 164: "C'est un [*sic*] erreur introduite dans le monde [...] de croire qu'il faille des déclarations d'amour" —an observation to which Alphonse, a protagonist of the novel, gently replies: "Doubtless [...] it suffices to love to make known that one loves" ("Sans doute [...]il suffit d'aimer pour faire conaître qu'on aime").

[11] "non u tames oro, verum ut amere sinas" (l.96) From, "XV Sappho Phaoni," Sappho's verse letter to Phaon, pp.186 (Latin) and 187 (English), *P. Ovidi Nasonis Heroides*, bilingual edition, *Heroides and Amores* transl. G. Showerman and revised by G.P. Goold.

[12] "Si vous avez vu ce que j'ai osé faire, aye la bonté, Madame, de me laisser croire que vous l'ignorez; je n'ose vous en demander davantage." *La Princesse de Clèves* (Paris: Gallimard, 2000), 123.

[13] "Et il se retira après ces paroles et n'attendit point sa réponse," *Ibid.*

[14] On this "appel d'air" see Simone Weil, "Accepter le vide," in *La Pesanteur et la grâce* (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1988), 54. The fragmentary piece describes a recompense impossible to return, beyond natural exertion, an "appel d'air": "Nécéssité d'une recompense, de recevoir l'équivalent de ce qu'on donne. Mais si, faisaint violence à cette nécessité, on laisse un vide, il se produit comme un appel d'air, et une recompense surnaturelle survient. Elle ne vient pas si on a un autre salaire : ce vide la fait venir" (*Ibid*). Vanishingly faint, these words seem to die out at the very moment of being spoken, dissipating into a surround of silence from which they are only momentarily distinguishable. It is not what discourse *represents* that matters, as if a transcendent meaning were already enfolded within its boundaries, but the sheer exteriority of a language that abides in the absence of answer that constitutes this appeal of air.

[15] "Refusez-moi toutes les fois que je vous demanderai de pareilles choses; mais ne vous offensez pourtant pas si je vous les demande." From *La Princesse de Clèves* (Paris: Garnier Flammarion, 1966), 124-5. This phrase ends up speaking groundlessly of that which cannot be spoken about when it nevertheless does, as if it were impotent to say what it nonetheless could not renounce from saying, as if it would only say what it never could but already had—and so still, to a certain extent, hadn't yet.

[16] Hear the hypothetical mode, for example, of a heroine of Charlotte Rose de Caumont de La Force's *Histoire Secrete de Marie de Bourgogne* (1694) (Lyon: Chez Antoine Besson, 1694): "je vous estime, je vous aimerois s'il m'étoit permis: Mais aprés cela, plaignez-moi, plaignez-vous; je ne ferai que vous estimer" (27; volume 1). Self-abnegating avowals are also present elsewhere in this text: "je vous supplie de ne me le jamais faire sçavoir: je vous supplie encore de me quitter tout présentement, de ne penser jamais à moy" (247); "c'est en vain que je l'aime" (248).

[17] *Nouvelles du XVII siècle*, 779.

[18] "Pour moy, je suis flattée que l'on me soupçonne et je croy que j'avoûrois le livre, si j'estois asseurée que l'auteur ne vînt me le redemander" from the second volume of Lafayette, *Correspondance*, ed. André Beaunier (Paris: Gallimard, 1942), 63.

[19] *Du célibat volontaire ou La vie sans engagement,* ed. Séverine Auffret (Paris: Indigo & côté-femmes éditions), 26. The text goes on to add three remarks to this definition: "Il ya beaucoup de choses à remarquer dans les trois parties de cette définition. La première est l'indifférence où vivent les personnes qui ne sont point engagées dans une profession particulière. La seconde est le pouvoir qu'elles ont d'embrasser l'état qui sera le plus propre à leur esprit et le plus conforme à leur inclination. La troisième est la fermeté dans laquelle elles persévèrent constamment, ne voulant point d'autre parti que celui de l'indifférence" (27). In regard to this power in abeyance, and hence no power at all, such persons "se contentent du pouvoir qu'elles ont, sans jamais l'exécuter" (29).

[20] Weil, *Pesanteur,* 98.

[21] Part III, Proposition XLI. For the English see Spinoza, *Ethics*; *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect; Selected Letters*, trans. Samuel Shirley (Indianapolis, Indiana: Hackett Publishing Inc., 1992), 128. Translation modified. The Latin gives several indefinite pronouns, much like Weil's indeterminate "beloved being": "PROPOSITIO XLI. Si quis ab aliquo se amari imaginatur,

nec se ullam ad id causam dedisse credit [...] eundem contra amabit." A version of the Latin text, from which this citation is culled, can be found at http://users.telenet.be/rwmeijer/spinoza/conc.htm?lang=E. Consulted April 16th, 2012.

[22] "[N]e me rends pas ce que je donne," so might be reformulated this (non)claim, "[i]l suffit que tu l'entendes, que tu commences à comprendre et à reconnaître. Tu as commencé à recevoir son injonction, à te rendre à ce qu'il dit, et plus tu lui obéiras en ne restituant rien, mieux tu lui désobéiras et te rendras sourd à ce qu'il t'adresse." From Derrida, "En ce moment même dans cet ouvrage me voici" in Derrida, *Psyché,* 162-3.

[23] Spinoza suggests as much in the *Ethics* when he propounds that will ought to be reconceived in the context of love: "it is a property of the loer to will to join himself with the loved thing, [but] I do not understand by 'will' consent, or a deliberation of the mind, i.e., a free decree…by 'will' I understand the contentment that there is in the lover on account of the presence of the loved thing, by which the pleasure of the lover is strengthened, or at any rate fostered" in *Ethics,* ed. G.H.R. Parkinson (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

[24] Whereas the materialist viewpoint would assume that amorous experience can only be verified and validated as "real" and "actual" by empiricist expectations of eventuation in the form of material consequence, the idealist perspective presumes that intangible modes of loving constitute a more authentic version of amorous endeavor which cannot be evaluated by purely positivist means. Instead of valorizing realized consequence and fulfilled action, the idealist position settles for dialectical resolution and determinate negation: the inefficacy of amorous experience on a material plane would *itself* be an experience, the experience of not having any material experience whatsoever.

[25] See Joan DeJean *Ancients against moderns : culture wars and the making of a fin de siècle* (Chicago : University of Chicago Press, 1997) and more recently *Revisiter la "querelle des femmes": Discours sur l'égalité/inégalité des sexes, de 1600-1750,* eds. Danielle Haase-Dubosc and Marie-Élisabeth Henneau (Publications de l'Université de Saint-Etienne, Coll. L'Ecole du genre, 2013).

[26] Another polyvalent term, "histoire" refers in French to both History and story, an ambiguity much exploited by writers of the epoch. See Christian Zonsa's "Les femmes, ces faiseuses d'histoire. Les femmes et l'écriture de l'histoire dans les nouvelles historiques," in *Les femmes et l'écriture de l'histoire 1400-1800* (Publications des Universtiés de Rouen et Du Havre, 2008), 407-424.

[27] See April Alliston, "Gender and the Rhetoric of Evidence in Early-Modern Historical Narratives," *Comparative Literature Studies*, Vol. 33, No. 3 (1996), 233-257.

[28] Not only a seventeenth-century phenomenon, however, eighteenth-century works like Mademoiselle Fontette-Sommery's *Lettres de Madame La Comtesse de L… A Monsieur Le Comte De R…*(1785) (Paris: Chez Barrois, 1785) also attempts to blend a Louis XIV historical setting with epistolary realism.

[29] Note the beguiling "Avertissement" to Louise-Geneviève Gillot de Sainctonge's *Histoire secrete de Dom Antoine Roy de Portugal"Tirée des memoires de Dom Gomes Vasconcellos de Figueredo* (1696) *(*A Paris … : Chez Jean Guignard …, M.DC.LXXXXVI [1696]): "On doit être persuadé que je ne raporte rien dans la vie de Dom Antoine Roy de Portugal, qui ne soit trés – véritable; j'ay pour maxime qu'il n'est permis de donner l'effort à son imagination, que lors qu'on écrit des Romans, & qu'à l'égard del'Histoire, on ne sauroit avoir trop d'exactitude & de sincerité" (n. pag). This "lady doth protest too much" rhetorical feint of disclaiming only emphasizes, of course, that an impurity of discourses is at stake in the novel.

[30] In this way the tension and ambiguity of genre that these *romans* underline is itself embodied by the title these works occasionally adopt. When Du Plaisir's "Sentiments sur les lettres et sur l'histoire" first appears in 1683, he will refer "History" to "story," suggesting the narrative quality thematized by the double sense of the word *histoire* in French.

[31] For François' *Open Secrets: the literature of uncounted experience* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008) the historical novella of Madame de Lafayette, constitutes a "negative contribution to the public record, supplying the reasons why x or *y* didn't happen and explaining material events in light of projects that never came to fruition," (99). This also becomes a problematic for reading: how does one read for that which has been disappeared, effaced, or made inapparent, that which had to be excluded in order for public discourse to be established (and which inevitably haunts the vanity of the claim to self-groundedness by the upwelling of that which was excluded, abjected, or slighted)? How to read the illegibility of a text where every appearance is in fact a place-holder for that which it has also erased? However, while *Open Secrets* seeks to give place to *fulfilled* or *satisfied* experiences that merely appear camouflaged in revelation or occluded in their uncovering, it will be less certain for the novels convened herein if experience is first ever fulfilled and then *uncounted*. Rather, what allows for experience to be denominated and confirmed in the first place, and is this ever possible? Might the attempt to determine "experience" always be countered by falling and faltering into its 'inexperience'?

[32] As Scudéry's *Clélie, histoire romaine* (Paris: chez Augustin Courbé, 1660), will have it, in the poetics of "vray-semblance," that which is untrue does not dissemble truth from sight or enshroud it from view; quite to the contrary, it seems to ressembles truth by appearing to bring it to light, by seeming more truthful than truth itself: "on peut dire que quelquesfois le mensonge est plus agreeable que la verité: & qu'il ressemble mieux à la verité, que la verité mesme" (Volume 2, 1383).

[33] Alliston, "Gender," 250.

[34] Day's *The Search for Lyonnesse* speaks of heroines who "mov[e] like […] sleep-walker[s]" (104), and Franco Piva's edition

of *Oeuvres: Romans et nouvelles* (Paris: Nizet, 1993) states that "Les personnages de Mlle Bernard ne se possèdent pas, ne jouissent d'aucune autonomie, ni matérielle, ni psychologique" (167). It will be from this edition that all subsequent citations of Catherine's Bernards work is culled and cited in the text.

[35] Consider, for example, La Force's *Marie de Bourgogne*, wherein a heroine states to an importunate suitor: "ne tachez pas de troubler un repos que je cherche à me donner depuis si long-temps [,] faites que ej ne perde jamais les derniers sentimens que je puis avoir pour vous" (256). The seventeenth-century ideal of "repos" and its suspension of propositional judgement has afforded interesting reflections on Jansenist thought. Cf. Domna Stanton, "The Ideal of 'Repos' in *Seventeenth-Century French Literature*" in *L'Esprit créateur* 15 (spring-summer 1975): 79-104, on *otium* and *ataraxia*, and Anne-Lise François, "*L'aveu sans suite,"* in *Open Secrets*: *the literature of uncounted experience (Stanford:* Stanford University Press: 2008) on this "term's polyvalence in seventeenth-century Stoic, Epicurean, skeptic, and Jansenist schools of thought" and the *Princesse de Clèves*' reworking of the worldly change in relation to the concept), while the privileges and predicaments of the "feminine" "virtue" of self-effacing anonymity and wilful refrain predominant in the French classical age has served as an occasion of reflection for feminist-inflected criticism. *Open Secrets* also offers a persuasive account of Marie de Lafayette's *La princesse de clèves'* negotiation with the telling of history and the form of the nouvelle's story. For François, the "suspended diectics" or lack of an underscored insistence in expression reveals itself in a subjective perception stated almost flatly, not by self-representation or thoughtful reflection but by sort of story-telling occasioned when no narrative weight is deposited but a "weightless open secret" reveals itself. DeJean, "Lafayette's Ellipses: The Privilege of Anonymity," *PMLA* 99 (October 1984), 884-902. The fact that femininity and anonymity were linked is made evident with Du plaisir's preface to his *La Duchesse d'estramène* (1682), where the narrator, assuming a feminine voice, writes "Elle vous prie ne point mettre son nom dans l'extrait du privilege," since "elle se défie toujours d'elle-même," in *Nouvelles du XVIIe siècle* [779]). Studies taking their cues from the insights of psychoanalysis have examined how seventeenth-century novellas can at times represent star-crossed courtisans whose interactions remain fraught with communicative misfire and missed opportunity, the most celebrated paragon thereof being, perhaps, *La princesse de Clèves.*

[36] See the first chapter of Anne-Lise François *Open Secrets*, "Toward a Theory of Recessive Action." In a related vein, Claire Nouvet's "An Impossible response: The Disaster of Narcissus,"
Yale French Studies, No. 79, Literature and the Ethical Question (1991): 103-134 postulates the problems of echo and answer in ethical quandaries, while Peggy Kamuf's "Deconstruction and Love" in *Book of addresses* (Stanford California: Stanford University Press, 2005) explains the difficulties of answering address and preserving that which, because loved too much, cannot be preserved in an ontological form at all.

[37] French literature of the classical age can sometimes be read in somewhat harsh lighting. This is apparent in Stewart's *L'invention du sentiment: roman et économie affective au xviii siècle* (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2010) which somewhat downplays the seventeenth-century's contribution to the reinscription of the terminology of sensibility.

[38] This term is not only meant in its Lacanian register (*Méconnaissance*) but, rather, in its deconstructive implications, as a passage from interiority through the non-proper: "When I see myself, regardless of whether it occurs because a limited area of my body is given to my look or it occurs by means of a specular reflection, the non-proper is already there in the field of this auto-affection which thereafter is no longer pure, it is the same thing in the experience of touching-touched. In the two cases, the surface of my body, as a relation to exteriority, must begin by exposing itself in the world" in *Voice*, 68.

[39] "Lovers" is already no longer —was it ever?— the right word, for at issue here is not a concrete subject-position or a definable ontology. In post-identitarian terms one might say that one never fully has been a lover, one strives endlessly, and hopelessly, to become loving. On "Becoming" see Braidotti, *Nomadic Theory: The Portable Rosi Braidotti* (New York: Columbia University Press, c2011), 42-3.

[40] In other words, what *Estramène* depicts is not merely a thematic topos of immaterial love —like the intangible neoplatonic forms of amour that flit across the pages of Renaissance poetry— nor the espousal of an ethical program of conduct —though some might detect traces therein of Levinas' ethics of infinite attentiveness to the "other," Vattimo's *pensiero debole*, "weak thought," or Nietzschean *amor fati* — nor even the pathos of "star-crossed lovers" whose circumstantial constraints forbid the flowering of their desires. What do we make of a scene where, hanging on his beloved's every word, a lover ultimately lets everything hang in words? Is a love that is produced by language, and in language, ultimately a love *as* language? If language is not a transparent medium, empty vessel, or effaceable vehicle that merely conveys desire nor, oppositely, one that covers it up, if it neither simply displays nor dissembles passion, then might language become itself that which is desired, a love *of* language?

[41] Du Plaisir, *La Duchesse d'Estramène* in *Nouvelles du XVIIe siècle*, eds. Raymond Picard and Jean Lafond (Paris: Gallimard, 1997). The French: "Mlle d'Hennebury n'avait ausi osé ajouter de foi à ce qu'elle avait entendu dire du duc d'Olsingam et néanmoins elle avait laissé pnecher son esprit à une sorte d'estime pour lui qui le lui représentait au-dessus de tout ce qu'elle connaissait de plus aimable."

[42] "Elle ignorait encore la force des inclinations et elle eût été bien éloignée de craindre que l'on pût avoir plus que de l'estime pour un homme qu'on n'a point vu. Sans cesse le duc d'Oslingam se présentait à son esprit. Elle lui appliquait, avec cette imprudence d'un coeur nouveau, les traits de son portrait et elle avait de la joie de pouvoir se dire qu'elle n'avait rien vu encore

qui pût lui être comparable."

[43] Indeed, in psychoanalytic terms, for example those of Jean Laplanche's *Essays on Otherness*, ed. John Fletcher (London: Routledge, 1999), this hallucination is not so much the reflection of Mlle d'Hennebury's *own* wishes and wants but speak to, and perhaps from, those of others (whether they be social and/or unconscious).

[44] Nor can one claim that the unrepresentable is represented in just one way for, from a *political* perspective, the very gesture of attempting to delimit the unfigurable is itself a performative act worthy of further scrutiny for the boundary lines it draws.

[45] Cf. Derrida, *Memoirs of the Blind: The Self-Portrait and Other Ruins,* trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993). Cited hereafter as *MB*.

[46] "the *unbeseen*, as one speaks of the unbeknownst" (*MB,* 45).

[47] This "*anamnesis of memory itself*" is described thus: "Memory or not, and forgetting a memory, in memory and without memory" (*MB,* 45).

[48] But if there is a certain *anamnesis* at work there is also, it would seem, a certain *amnesia* too. If drawing is not just the perfect recalling of a past present by the draftsman, nor something that simply resists phenomenality altogether, then it would seem that there is a certain invisibility which abides as both the enabling condition and the deconstruction of visibility: "the visibility of the visible cannot, by definition, be seen" (*MB,* 45). Through recourse to Merleau-Ponty's *Le visible et l'invisble,* Derrida argues that the draftsman is given over to "the other of the visible" (*MB,* 52) rather than the strictly visible or the strictly invisible. This would be a nonvisbility that is not opposed to but *other* to visibility, an invisibility within and outside visibility, neither separable from it or constituting another regime of visibility (i.e. it would not be that which once was and has now disappeared, nor would soon appear): "This nonvisible does not describe a phenomenon that is present elsewhere, that is latent, imaginary, unconscious, hidden, or past; it is a 'phenomenon; whose inappearance is of another kind; and what we have here seen fit to call transcendentality ; an amnesic remembering and memory" (*MB,* 52). Mesmerized by the invisible within the visible, the draftsman is caught between remembering that which was seen and imagining that which has not yet appeared. Or to cite another passage, from the French edition: "Le visible *en tant que tel* serait invisible, non pas comme visib*ilité, phénoménalité ou essence* du visible, mais comme le corps singulier du visible meme, à meme le visible—qui produirait ainsi de l'aveugelment, par émanation, comme s'il secrétait son propre *médium*" (56).

[49] We can even think of the mundane example of the draftswoman looking back and forth between the model and the page, sketching the whole while (and thus not always looking at the model or not always looking at the page).

[50] The French gives: "Le tracé sépare et se séapre lui-même, il ne retrace que des frontières, des intervalles, une grille d'espacement sans appropriation possible. L'*expérience* du dessin (et l'expérience, son nom l;indique, consiste toujours à voyager par-delà les limites) traverse et institute en meme temps ces frontiers" (58).

[51] In a third movement of the argument, Derrida also seems to suggest that this point might be generalized for the discussion of *language* as well, when he speaks of the rhetoric *the (re)trait*, where similarly the withdrawing of the line allows for speech, drawing and discursivity interfolding together. This argument might be viewed in both Derrida's *De la grammatologie* (where historically and philosophically Western metaphysics has privileged *phonocentrism* and phonetic writing over the written) and the essay "The retreat [retrait] of Metaphor" on Heidegger. In these terms, it would seem that the stigma/point/instance is in both drawing and discourse at once drawn and impossible.

[52] "Elle connut par sa gloire toute l'indignité d'aimer un homme que l'on n'a point vu, et de l'aimer avant que d'en être aimée."

[53] On the history of ocular metaphors, see Martin Jay, *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought* (Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 1993).

[54] Piva's "lexique" —at the close of the first volume the collected works of Bernard *Oeuvres*— notes that for *aimable,* "Au XVIIe siècle, le mot avait, le plus souvent, le sens de 'digne d'être aimé'" (422).

[55] As is described later: "Because having been so far from her in the Garden, he could only judge her air and her height/size," (786). The French: "Pour avoir été trop éloigné d'elle dans le Jardin, il n'avait pu juger que de son air et de sa taille."

[56] Of course, it is not as though there is a strict division between seeing and reading here, as Jean-François Lyotard's *Discours, figure* (Paris: Klincksieck 1971) contends, there is an eruption of the figural within discourse. In this account, seeing and reading, the visual and the discursive, are constantly interweaving and inter-disrupting one another, inextricably bound to one another but not therefore reducible to each other.

[57] A similar episode occurs in "Eléonor" in *Nouvelles du XVIII* between the heroine and the duke de Misnie: "De son côté, elle avait une sensible joie de voir les yeux de ce duc appliqués sans cesse à rencontrer les siens. Elle sentait, pour ainsi dire, qu'elle l'était. D'abord il semblait qu'elle cherchât les regards du duc de Misnie; mais enfin elle commenca à les éviter, et il s'aperçut par là qu'elle les avait entendus" (931), who originally does no see her "fully" but only "envisageait avec plaisir qu'elle serait parfaitement belle dans peu de temps, et il sentait un commencement d'amour, qui était fondé sur les charmes qu'elle

devait avoir, autant que sur ceux qu'elle avait déjà" (931).

[58] Indeed, the final line of the passage —"she left [...] in a state easy to imagine easy to imagine"— recalls the initial state of Mlle d'Hennebury's predicament: the reader is told that her state is easy to imagine but not therefore easy to see... Here it less a question of *seeing* than a contouring or conditioning of (in)visibility for *reading*.

[59] For the redescription of "experience" within the the context of writing as "marks" —graphematic marks which exceed their instances, capable of breaking with the contexts amd signifieds that do not exhaust their meaning, spaced in differential relations— see Derrida, "Signature, Événement, Contexte" in *Limited Inc* (Paris: Galilée, 1990), according to which experience " ne se sépare pas de ce champ de la marque, c'est-à-dire dans la grille de l'effacement et de la difference, d'unités d'itérabilité, d'unités separable de leur context interne ou externe et séparables d'elles-mêmes, en tant que l'itérabilité même qui constitue leur identité ne leur permet jamais d'être une unité d'identité à soi" (31). Différance affects identity, supplementarity the law of noncontradiction, trace the origin, iterability repetition, and the graphematic the logic. See also, *Politiques de l'amitié* (Paris: Galilée, 1994): "Une ouverture structurelle lui permet de se transformer ou de laisser place à un autre context. C'est pourquoi toute marque détient une force de détachement qui non seulement peut la libérer de tel ou tel contexte déterminé, mais lui assure meme son principe d'intelligibilité et sa structure de marque, c'est-à-dire son *itérabilité* (répétition *et* altération). Une marque qui ne pourrait d'aucune manière se détacher de son context singulier, si peu que ce soit, en serait-ce que par la répétition qui la démultiplie, la divise et la multiplie en l'identifiant, ce ne serait plus une marque" (244). Likewise, Derrida's *Positions* (Paris: Minuit, 1972): "ce travail ne peut être un travail purement 'théorique' ou 'conceptuel' ou 'discursif', jeveux dire celui d'un discours tout entire réglé par l'essence, le sens, la vérité, le vouloir-dire, la conscience, l'idéalité, etc. Ce que je appellee *texte* est aussi ce qui inscrit et déborde 'pratiquement' les limites d'un tel discours. *Il y a* un tel texte général partout où leur instance est remise en position de *marque* dans une chaine dont c'est structurellement son illusion que de vouloir et de croire la commander. Ce texte général, bien sûr, ne se limite pas, comme onl'aura(it) vite compris, aux écrits sur la page. Son écriture n'a d'ailleurs pas de limite extérieure, que celle d'une certaine *re-marque*. L'écriture sur la page, puis la 'littérature,' sont des types determines de cette re-marque. Il faut les interroger dans leur spécificité et, à nouveaux frais, si vous voulez, dans la spécificité de leur 'histoire,' et dans leur articulation avec les autres champs 'historiques' du texte general" (81-2).

[60] In this sense, this scene of witnessing would seem to privileging narration over perception, blindness and indirection rather than referential intuition. One might consider in this regard, Derrida's provocative claim that when we gaze upon another who can see, or who can gaze back, we do not see their eyes but their gaze: More naked because one then sees the eye *itself*, all of a sudden exhibited nits opaque body, an organ of inert flesh, stripped of the signification of the gaze that once came to both animate and veil it. Inversely, the very body of the eye, *insofar as it sees,* disappears in the gaze of the other. When I look at someone who sees, the living signification of their gaze dissimulates for me, in some way and up to a certain point, this body of the eye, which, on the contrary, I can easily stare at in a blind man, and right up to the point of indecency. [...] we are all the more blind to the eye of the other the more the other shows themselves capable of sight, the more we can exchange a look or gaze with them. This is the law of the chiasm in the crossing or noncrossing of looks or gazes: fascination by the sight of the other is irreducible to fascination by the eye of the other; indeed, it is incompatible with it. This chiasm does not exclude but, on the contrary, calls for the haunting of one fascination by the other" (*MB,* 106).

[61] "Mlle d'Hennebury quitta sa compagnie avec un esprit aigri et mécontent. Elle tâchait de se faire un Bonheur de tout ce qui s'était passé. Elle tâchait de se dire que la honte d'aimer un homme qui n'a vait pas tout l'extrême mérite que l'on peut avoir l'aiderait à reprendre une indifférence dont la perte lui donnait de si véritables déplaisirs pour l'intérêt de sa gloire. Mais, malgré ses souhaits, elle était également attachée au duc d'Olsingam, et, s'il est vrai que'lle le désirât en soi-même tel que celui qu'elle avait vu dans le Jardin, il est certain aussi qu'au travers de son dépit elle sentait que son coeur ne serait jamais ouvert à un autre." The passage, when cited in full, containes an interesting reflexive pronoun "en soi-même" which, in the seventeenth-century, can certainly link to a pronominal subject (in this case "she"), but which might also have a more ambiguous reference.: "If it is true that she might have desired him/it in and of itself"..."

[62] Her innocent culpability, in other words, stems from being unable to love the duke except on condition that he be anything but himself, on condition that he differs from and exceeds himself. Rather than a mere repetition of the selfsame, isomorphic and identical "duke," one would have a division of his self and the othering of himself to himself. On iterability and non-coincident identity, see Derrida, *Limited Inc.* and Blanchot *L'écriture du désastre* (Paris: Gallimard, 1980): "L'autre n'est en rapport qu'avec l'autre: il se répète sans que cette répétition soit répétition d'un même, se redoublant en se dédoublant à l'infini" (59).

[63] It would be difficult to mark a division here between seeing an external object (the duke in the garden) and an internal one (the duke in the imagination), especially in the wake of Husserlian phenomenology. For our purposes, and as Derrida reminds us, we can take the philosophical point that the representation of the self is not self-reference, it always must refer outside itself, and thus self-reference never can recoil into auto-affection because it needs prosthesis and simulacra "disproportion, dissymmetry, and expropriation" (*MB,* 121), that is, the eyes of the other

[64] Paul de Man's "Hypogram and Inscription" in *The Resistance to Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press,

1986) makes a corollary point in reference to Descartes: "Descartes found it difficult to distinguish between waking and sleeping because, hwen one dreams, one always dreams that one is awake [...] How then is one to decide on the distinction between hallucination and perception since, in hallucination, the difference between *I see* and *I think that I see* has been one-sidedly resolved in the direction of apperception? Consciousness has become consciousness only of itself. In that sense, any consciousness, including perception, is hallucinatory [...] Just as the hypothesis of dreaming undoes the certainty of sleep, the hypothesis, or the figure, of hallucination undoes sense certainty" for it becomes unclear whether what is taken by this sense certainty "is plausible because of the empirical existence of dreams and hallucinations or whether one believes that such a thing as dreams and hallucination existes because language permits the figure" that would allow this (49-50).

[65] Here, it is not a question of simply discounting or refuting the ontological effects of the presumed real, but asking how the "real" is delimited when no longer considered to be a prediscursive reality, ontic referent, or noumenal given. Might the ontological effect be a discursive effect, a construction of a particular discourse, by means of which a real is constituted through the production of its opposite and outside (which is neither really opposite or outside, because interdependent, in *différance*, with the "real" for its conceptual definition) of that which is supposed to be unreal, the phantasmatic, the fantastical? If the real itself phantasmatic as a conceit, though dissembled as being real by disguising its own status as phantasmatic in order to better secure its own illusory authority of reality, then the real is only definable in terms of its presupposed remainder and exterior, that which is excluded as not being real but phantasmatic. The real is subsequently said to be a referent that was always already there, outside or beyond discourse and its signification, and to which any reference is said to tend. But if this referent is itself a construction, a peformative effect of the very discourse that claims to discover it or simply find it outside its own discursive production of it, then such a distinction between the real and phtantasmatic no longer holds. See Judith Butler, "The Force of Fantasy: Feminism, Mapplethorpe, and Discursive Excess," in *The Judith Butler Reader*, eds. Sara Salih and Judith Butler (Malden, MA : Blackwell Pub., 2004), 183-203.

[66] "that when it is though [*wenn gedacht wird*] there must be something 'that thinks' is simply a formulation of our grammatical custom that adds a doer to every deed," cited in Gayatri Spivak, "Translator's preface," in Derrida, *Of Grammatology* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), xxiv. Here requirements of grammatical custom instate a subject prior to its acting and for which its acting will be an original, causal, or intentional effect of this subject, the acting itself also congealed into a single, periodic, stabilized (substantialized?) deed. When this acting is later attributed to the subject it might well be that this subject is metaleptically inaugurated and peformatively produced as the origin of this deed but is only, in fact, deriving its authority or authorship from the citation of an iterable convention.

[67] Following Laplanche and Pontalis, "Fantasy and the Origins of Sexuality," in *Formations of Fantasy*, eds. Victor Burgin et al (London: Methuen, 1986), one might describe this scence of fantasy not as the encounter between a preformed subject and an object, but as a staging of the scene of this encounter itself. Fantasy, as invocation of an irrecoverable primary or original desire (a postulation of an origin which is itself a fantasy). This setting, a staging of fantasy, distributes and disperses the "subject"—at once object, desire, scene, setting, and none of these: "In fantasy the subject does not pursue the object or its sign: he appears caught up himself in the sequences of images. He forms no representation of the desired object, but is himself represented as participating in the scene although, in the earliest forms of fantasy, he cannot be assigned any fixed place in it [...] As a result, the subject, although always present in the fantasy, may be so in a desubjectivized form, that is to say, in the very syntax of the sequence in question. On the other hand, to the extent that desire is not purely an upsurge of drives, but is articulated into the fantasy, the latter is a favoured spot for the most primitive defensive reactions, such as turning against oneself or into an opposite, projection, negation: these defenses are even indissolubly linked with the primary function of fantasy, to be a setting for desire, in so far as desire itself originates as prohibition, and the conflict may be an original conflict" (26-7).

[68] On "subject-effects" see Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics* (New York: Routledge, 1988), 204: "a subject-effect can be briefly plotted as follows: that which seems to operate as a subject may be part of an immense discontinuous network ('text' in the general sense) of strands that may be termed politics, ideology, economics, history, sexuality, language, and so on. (Each of these strands, if they are isolated, can also be seen as woven of many strands.) Different knottings and configurations of these strands, determined by heterogeneous determinations which are themselves dependent upon myriad circumstances, produce the effect of an operating subject. Yet the continuist and homogenist deliberative consciousness symptomatically requires a continuous and homogeneous cause for this effect and thus posits a sovereign and determining subject. This latter is, then, the effect of an effect, and its positing a metalepsis, or the substitution of an effect for a cause."

[69] Given the ordering of received grammar, in other words, the grammar of the subject might delusively seem to reflect and represent a pre-existing ontological order when it is in fact responsible for having conjured forth this very delusion; a grammatical prerequisite has been converted into an ontological necessity when the subject is *taken too literally* as a substantive and a substance, an entity or identity that performs and orchestrates action, because language has been conceived as mimetically representing whereof it speaks.

[70] Jean Baudrillard's figure of the "simulacrum," a copy with no original, a mimesis of no prior identity or reality, but the

ceaseless repetition of copies, might seem to name the predicament at issue here. See "Simulacra and Simulations" in *Jean Baudrillard, Selected Writings*, ed. Mark Poster (Stanford University Press, 1998), 166-184. Gilles Deleuze's *Difference and Repetition,* trans. Paul Patton. (New York: Columbia University Press,1968), remarks that simulacra would constitute "those systems in which different relates to different *by means of* difference itself. What is essential is that we find in these systems no *prior identity,* no *internal resemblance*" (299), or modes of simulation for which the language of representation no longer holds.

[71] "Et quel fut son étonnement quand elle vit que cet homme qui lui avait donné tant d'aigreur contre le duc d'Olsingam était le duc d'Olsingam lui-même ! D'abord elle avait été fâchée de ce qu'un autre avait de l'avantage sur lui. il lui sembla alors qu'elle aurait souhaité qu'il fût moins amiable, et elle se demandait en tremblant où elle trouverait quelque secours pour détruire dans son coeur une inclination si bien fondée."

[72] Such might be a reading following the theoretical outlines of "recessive action" presented in the first chapter of François, *Open Secrets*.

[73] Mme d'Hilmorre, custodian of the orphaned Mlle d'Hennebury, marries the young heroine to her son, the duke d'Estramène.

[74] A wonderful ambiguity caught in the word "remettre" in French –to give back, to return, to forgive (as in a debt)- and "remit" in English, as Simone Weil's *La pesanteur et la grâce* (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1988) suggests in description of the disappointment of those who do not meet what was imagined of them: "Les hommes nous doivent ce que nous imaginons qu'ils nous donneront. Leur remettre cette dette"; "Accepter qu'ils soient autre que les créatures de notre imagination, c'est imiter le renoncement de Dieu"; "Moi aussi, je suis autre que ce que je m'imagine être. Le savoir, c'est le pardon" (52).

[75] The passage continues: "It is precisely no a theme, for it ruins the theme, the position, the presentation or representation of anything an everything. Ruin is, rather, this memory open like an eye, or like the hole in a bone socket that lets you see without showing you anything *at all*, anything *of the all.* This, *for* showing you *nothing at all, nothing of the all.* 'For' means here both *because* the ruin shows *nothing at all* and *with a view to* showing *nothing of the all."* (69)

[76] "Lovers" is already no longer —was it ever?— the right word, for at issue here is not a concrete subject-position or a definable ontology. In post-identitarian terms one might say that one never fully has been a lover, one strives endlessly, and hopelessly, to become loving. On "Becoming" see Braidotti, *Nomadic Theory: The Portable Rosi Braidotti* (New York: Columbia University Press, c2011), 42-3.

[77] What *Amboise* depicts is not merely a thematic topos of immaterial love —like the intangible neoplatonic forms of amour that flit across the pages of Renaissance poetry— nor the espousal of an ethical program of conduct —though some might detect traces therein of Levinas' ethics of infinite attentiveness to the "other," Vattimo's *pensiero debole*, "weak thought," or Nietzschean *amor fati* — nor even the pathos of "star-crossed lovers" whose circumstantial constraints forbid the flowering of their desires.

[78] Aubignac's *Amelonde: Histoire de Nostre Temps* (1669) could be said to exemplify this, and this also comes through at certain moments in De La Force's *Marie de Bourgogne* (1694): "en amour une personne de mon sexe ne devroit ceder qu'à la pudeur pour n'avoüer jamais qu'elle aime, si elle a le malheur d'aimer" (209-10). In Anne de La Roche-Guilhen's *Histoire des favorites* (1697), ed. Els Höhner et al. (Saint-Etienne : Université de Saint-Etienne, 2005), the fifteenth-century historical figure of Agnès Soreau is said to have avoided the king's unwanted advances in just this way: "il recut des réponses si équivoques et si peu positives qu'il ne put en être satisfait" (129) Louise-Genevieve de Gomes de Beaucour's *Les Egarements des Passions et Les Chagrins Qui Les Suivent: Representez Par Plusieurs Avantures Du Tems* (1697) would go on to critique the pretensions of "virtuous women" as dissimulated coquettes.

[79] On seventeenth-century formulations and stylistic formulae, see Mitchell Greenberg, *Subjectivity and subjugation in seventeenth-century drama and prose : the family romance of French classicism* (Cambridge [England] ; New York : Cambridge University Press, 1992).

[80] This also occurs in La Force's *Marie de Bourgogne,* from volume 2: "On ne pourroit trouver de paroles pour exprimer sa surprise," it is reported, upon a heroine's reading of a letter sent to her by a queen (395).

[81] For a discussion of non-persons and personal pronouns, see Emile Beneviste, *Problèmes de linguistique générale* (Paris: Gallimard, 1976) and Barbara Johnson, *Persons and Things* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2008).

[82] As Maurice Blanchot's *l'espace littéraire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1955) describes it, "Personne ne fait partie du 'On'…parce qu'elle transforme tout ce qui a accès a elle, même la lumière, en l'être anonyne, impersonnel, le Non-vrai, le Non-réel, et cependant toujours là" (28).

[83] Consider also, La Roche-Guilhen's *Histoire des favorites*, especially the story of "Agnès" wherein the king's ardor for Agnès is described through the "on." After obtesting that he will give her his full confidence in the light of court scandal, one reads "mais peut-on répondre de ce que l'on fera, quand on a tant d'amour, et que l'on est exposé à tant de perfidie?" (161). Catherine Bernard's stylistic techniques, the subject of Chapter 3, complicate this strategy even more, in that the "on" is often grammatically feminized though still anonymous. For example, in *Fédéric de Sicile* (1680) collected in *Oeuvres,* one finds: "On veut être éloquente quand on est un peu revenue de son premier transport, afin de faire du moins partager ses maux à quelqu'un" (87-

8); "avouez qu'on est bien heureuse d'inspire des sentiments si délicats"; "quand on est heureuse, on renferme toute sa joie chez soi [...] mais quand on est affligée, il faut nécessairement se décharger d'une partie de sa douleur" (113); "Quand on est contente du present, on ne détourne point sa vue sur des souvenirs fâcheux" (134). What to make of a generalized anonymity that is nevertheless feminized? What would such a rhetorical strategy entail by implication?

[84] This problematic contention would be similar to one according to which a *speech act* of making a promise, writing a letter, or, as Julie does, asking a question, is itself a "deed" (itself an action or conduct). In this argument, far from negating action speech inevitably compels it. Such a view, however, conflates speech acts with action itself as if they were one and the same, while confusing a metaphor of act with the actualization of a result or the fruitful concretization of an outcome. Consider that if words are figured as having the agency of physical force then, conversely, physical force is figured as itself linguistic.This consequentialist perspective presupposes that performativity tends more toward its felicity than its misfire, and resorts to a sort of linguistic monism: in this contention, Hypolite's act not only expresses but efficaciously enacts his love, bringing it about or willing it into being. For discussions of speech acts see J.L. Austin's classic *How to do things with words,* Derrida's "Signature, événement, contexte," in *Limited inc.*, Shoshana Felman's *Le Scandale du corps parlant. Don Juan avec Austin, ou la Séduction en deux langues*, and Judith Butler's *Excitable speech*.

[85] Anne-lise François' *Open Secrets*: *the literature of uncounted experience* describes this "mode of recessive narration," in seventeenth-century texts, specifically Madame Lafayette's *La Princesse de Clèves*, as allowing "subjective perceptions to assert themselves with the simplicity and flatness of objective truths; so self-contained they can hardly even be said to occur, these states of mind at the same time more closely resemble decisions than reflections, insofar as they can only be briefly narrated, rather than articulated, vocalized or elaborated in cognition." It amounts to a "case of unvoiced or unclaimed language, of a report not structured and directed as communication," where "inward states and mental decisions being materialized for the first and last time by this strangely agentless mode of report can also clarify the 'uncounted experiences'...in which *uncounted* refers less to an absence of narration or failure to acknowledge than to an action of 'uncounting,'" (12-13).

[86] Emphasis added. French: "dans [cette] rencontre [Hypolite] ne songa qu'à sa chere Julie: & en effet, la tendresse qu'il avoit pour elle lui donna tant de force & adresse, que l'ayant prise par ses habits, il ne la quitta point qu'il ne l'eût mise dans l'Isle .[...] Ha! Malheureux, s'écria-t-il, je suis la cause de la perte de ma soeur, elle a esté au fond de l'eau avant que j'aye pû l'en tirer, Julie, ma chere Julie, que vais-je devenir?" The interpolation "cette" is that of the editor's.

[87] This occurs at other moments of the text as well, where what Hypolite "thinks" and "feels" is externalized by discourse: " "*if you knew* what I just felt, you would have pitied me" ("*si vous sçaviez* ce que je viens de ressentir, vous auriez pitié de moy" [16]) Hypolite's claim that what he felt is not representable and unknowable is in fact belied by the text's garrulity, by its tendency to exteriorize and expose, insofar as a moment earlier the text states that he "was close to dying by the extreme pain he was *feeling*" ("*fut prest d'expirer par la douleur extreme qu'il* ressentoit" [*Ibid*]" Emphasis added. Hypolite's claim to fathomless interiority has quite simply been said, in constative frankness, by the novel itself, which exposes with vigilance that which its characters claim is unrepresentable in language; that which cannot be said, in other words, has been ruthlessly put forth in words. Even when Hypolite claims to be unable to utter, the text sputters in his place, saying the unsayble, relentlessly exposing with clarity what he has protested could never be revealed in speech. What Hypolite cannot say, the novel says by proxy, as if the text did not so much inhibit speech as speak without cessation, even when it seemed to say too little, not enough, or nothing at all, about how its personages 'thought' or 'felt.' Here colourful exclamation is bled out -blenched of understatement and pithless of personality- by the seeming frankess of constation through which it is delivered; it implies that the novel's constativeness cannot refrain from speaking regardless of whether it says too little or too much, as if had no qualms as to whether it exposed everything or admitted nothing (As if the text would be indifferent to its unbridled garrulity, its white noise, or its gagged silence. See,Blanchot's "La Clarté Romanesque," the VI chapter of *Le Livre à venir*. Therein Blanchot describes how the clarity of the novel seems to dissipate shadow and thin out depth, reducing it to the sheen of surface. This clarity, monotonous and widespread, colourless and illimitable impregnates the space it occupies with its luminosity. This clarity is so clear it seems to expose all save itself. Whence comes this clarity? This clary might well be empty for all it does is render visibility visible. Whose voice is this? "Et la voix qui parle dans un révit, est-ce toujours la voix d'une personne, une voix personnelle? N'est-ce pas d'abord pour l'abili du Il indifférent, une étrange voix neuter qui [...] erre de-ci de-là, parlant on ne sait d'où, comme à travers les interstices du temps qu'elle ne doit pas, cependant, détruire ni altérer?" [224]). Said differently, the explicit statement that Julie cannot know what he felt conveys, to a degree, the difficulty of representing that which cannot be represented or known and thus reinstalls the effort to get beyond language within the pinions of linguistic holds, since having to signify the pre-discursive or the pre-linguistic, inevitably posited as such by signification.

[88] "un narrateur neutre de roman [qui] raconte les sentiments d'un personnage sans les partager," in Stewart, *L'invention du sentiment,* 8-9.

[89] Cf. Beneviste, *Problèmes, op cit.* 207-8. This "no one" is not a "some one" –a personification of a nobody speaking. In the context of Japanese literature –which is noted for similar incursions of personless speaking- Motoki Tokeida posited that in Heian literature, the subject was only a spectre. Later scholars like Fujii Sadakazu and Takahashi Tooru, respectively drew from this

implication that a Zeroperson (*muninshoo),* a ghostly wash of voices (the hushed rustling of the *nyoobo*/ladies-in-waiting who seem to narrate the story and in the same instance withdraw from the scene of utterance, muffled in their silks) emanating from chimercal sources would on occasion inhabit the characters of the novels as chimerical and impersonal implied narrators (*mononoke no yoona katarite*). See Yoda, *Gender and National Literature, op cit*, p.165.

[90] Riley's *Impersonal,* warns against this implied vitalism in figurations of language: "[T]here's no need to suppose that to reflect on language's workings in us must conjure a [...] reified Language which speaks us so that we fall into quivering helplessness before it. Nor need language suffer a theatrical personification as a seducer glittering with ruses to entice the innocent. To consider language itself shouldn't plunge us into anxiety over a loss of our own 'agency' [...]On the contrary, the truer reification would be always to conceive of language as our tool. This stance that insists on language as an instrument of willed control glosses over its directing rawness" p.6-7.

[91] This would emanate from the drone of the novel's incessant speech, an unfurling void without assignable subjectivity, an "espace neutre" deserted of both ascertainable personality and discernable interiority. These are extrapolations of Michel Foucault's *la pensée du dehors*, pp.11-13.

[92] But, again, this is not to postulate that the narration is a primary, omniscient narrator and the characters it depictures the naïve and auxiliary enunciator's of its knowing resolutions. Rather, it seems to suggest that Hypolite's acts do not simply 'speak for themselves'; they instead *appear* to confirm an instance of the novel's impersonal language and causelessness of narration, as if the novel spoke once by itself in neutral observation ("*sa chere*"), then once again, only this time through the ruse of personation ("*ma chere*"), a subtle reinvocation that does not therefore leave the distinction between speakers facile to disentangle. If it seems impossible to ascribe psychology and ontology to Hypolite insofar as the proclamation of his language appears less created than derived, this might ensue from the fact that his performance is inextricable from the novel's constation –the voicelessness of its voice- neither reducible to nor exceeding but to a degree enabled by it, as if the impassivity of the former allowed for the seeming passion of the latter. If this were not so, of course, no one could take up language at all. But already the volunteerism beguilingly implied by the grammar of this statement is misbegotten, for without language no subject could emerge in the first place. A speaker does not initiate a speech act absent of a context and a concatenation of signs which have come before him, one which he does not own and, within the confines of his minimal speech, can not absolutely own up to; the speaker is itself expropriated by a language which delineates and circumscribes his very linguistic being, which, perhaps, allows for the very fable of existence itself. Cf. Derrida's infamous *Limited Inc*. Hypolite's words thus do not simply originate with his speech but precede and marshal the enunciator's speech. Language is not willed *ex nihilo* by a subject, but predates the subject's use of it and, to a degree, uses that subject. In order to speak at all, recourse to priori instances of language is necessary, a recourse to a language that is not fully owned or governed by he or she who utilizes it, an indelibly depersonalized and inhuman system which continues to persist beyond the pale of its enunciative moment.

[93] *Hypolite,* 171-2. Quotation marks interpolated for grammatical clarity.

[94] On the "supplément" see Derrida, *De la gramatologie*.

[95] Denise Riley, *The Words of Selves: identification, solidarity, irony* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 36.

[96] If passion is often depicted as no more than a pane of words, then when these words pretend to convey emotion or express feelings such affects would seem to emanate from discursive resources rather than private depths. Adela Pinch's *Strange Fits of Passion*, on eighteenth-century English conceptions of emotion, focuses on the transpersonal, linguistic dimension of affect—insofar as it is a matter of personification and rhetoric, channelled and circulated between and amongst people, rather than privately sustained by them because irradiating from a hidden depth. Wendy Anne Lee's *Failures of Feeling in the British novel from Richardson to Eliot* (Princeton University dissertation, 2010), also posits the failures of emotion to be achieved in unmediated perfection.

[97] From *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes,* trans, John Cottingham et al.(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989). Does Descartes' formulation here submit a correspondence between submission and action, or an undoing of that distinction altogether?

[98] Whence the "clarity" of this white writing, long remarked by critics, wherein internality is made into surface. This clarity changes narrative time as well, elaborating "un temps sans profondeur, dont l'action consiste plutôt à réduire tout ce qui est profondeur –et d'abord la profonde vie intérieure- à des modifications de surface, comme pour permettre de décrire les mouvements de cette vie en termes d'espace," Blanchot, "Clarté," in *L'espace,* 225. In this sense, might the *roman d'analyse* be said to intriguingly disembowel its characters of their subjective stuffing and psychological personhood? Is any knowledge characters may have –of themselves, of one another- or indeed, even what they "think" or how they "feel," never quite evidenced *even as it is never left unsaid,* as if the point of the text's limpid language was to leave unpertubed the tranquillity of its explicitness, leave unruffled its flat surface, rather than prompt a search for an ulterior motive or a hidden meaning buried beneath its already near-transparent promulgations?In the case of the aforementioned "on," for instance, it is ascribed certain traits, explicitly, but while not left undescribed, who or what is being felt is no less easily discernable. Madeleine de Scudéry's earlier nouvelle *Mathilde* (1667) had already preconized the example of this oxymoronic "opaque transparency." When Mathilde, the heroine, describes

her friend "Laure," the legendary love of the poet "Petrarch," she alleges that to know "the heart of Laura" does not *seem* difficult to infer, because so clear and fathomable, but nor does she reveal what Laura's heart is: "It seems to me that it is not so difficult; she appears so sincere, so good- what appearance is there that she can hide so well her sentiments?" ("[I]l me semble qu'il n'est point trop difficile; elle paraît si sincère, si bonne, quelle apparence y a-t-il qu'elle puisse si bien cacher ses sentiments?" [13]). Laure's sentiments are sketched as being so thin to disguise that they seem exposed, similar to the gauzy language –namely, the rhetorical question- that illustrates it, a language that seems incapable of caching anything abaft its seemingly sincere semblance. And yet, is it not so much that characters are pure translucencies rendered by a simplistically univocal rhetoric, but that the fiction of a mysterious, buried interiority –interred in some inner sanctum- finds no more refuge from the novel's intruding clarity, a light and lightness that that seems to pervade every space and suffuse every surface?

[99] Hence will Anne de La Roche-Guilhen's *Histoire des favorites* (1697) portray the fifteenth-century historical figure of Agnès Soreau, subject to the king's unwelcome advances, with a certain lightness of touch in narration: "Agnès," one reads "loved him perhaps more than she might have wanted" ("Agnès […] l'aimait peut-être plus qu'elle n'eût voulu" [132]).

[100] *Nouvelles du XVII siècle* 389: "Il ne put cacher entièrement sa passion; elle s'en aperçut; son amour-propre en fut flatté; elle sentit une inclination violent pour lui."

[101] Similarly, the eponymous heroine of Antoinette de Salvan de Saliès' *La Comtesse d'Isembourg* (1677) in *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Gérard Gouvernet (Paris : Honoré Chapion Éditeur, 2004) — whose suitor simply "la vit et l'aima," saw her and loved her— provides an example of an amorous rapport without there being further need for elaboration or supplemental corroboration by proof: "they were for her two things which closely followed each other" ("c'était pour elle deux choses qui se suivaient de près" [63]). Salies' text juxtaposes being seen and being loved, but though they follow after each other they do not necessarily follow the one after the other because of an agent and its action.

[102] "Quoiqu'il y eût cent choses galantes à dire"; "je les passe légèrement" (113).

[103] On Bernard's elusive biography, see Piva's "A la recherche de Catherine Bernard," in *Oeuvres,*15-47.

[104] Henri Coulet's *Le roman jusqu'à la Révolution* contends for example that Bernard's novel-cycle "n'aurait peut-être pas été écrit si Madame de Lafayette n'avait pas fourni à Catherine Bernard un modèle" (293). Piva notes similar lines of thinking in Marie-Thérèse Hipp's *Mythes et réalités. Enquête sur le roman et les mémoires (1660-1700)* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1976). The tradition of disenchanting or disabusing love's seeming innocence would be carried through in Mme de Tencin's *Malheurs de l'amour* (1747), itself sharing the same title as Bernard's work.

[105] Indeed, Madame de Villedieu's *Les Désordres de l'amour* (1670), as Jones' *The Search for Lyonesse* demonstrates, afforded a great deal of congruent themes. See Chapter 1, "Role models of the 1670's," 23-83.

[106] "Novel" and "nouvelle" (*roman* and *nouvelle*) were sometimes opposed to each other —and "nouvelle" furthermore was distinguished from the "conte"— while also referring *simultaneously* to narratives in prose. The novel, of course, condenses the twin literary heritages of the *chanson de geste* and historiographical narrative, with a form of narration that is thought to proceed quicker than that of the earlier epic. What apotheosizes the poetics of the novel or of the nouvelle is indeed permanently open to contest, especially since, given the 'structureless' —or 'non-convetional' form of the novelistic art, often different terms were applied to the same work. The measurement of length between "roman" and "nouvelle" wasfurther obscured by the designation of "petit roman" also current at the time. Other writers of the "nouvelle classique" which are of interest are Madame de LaFayette ("Histoire de la princesse de Montpensier" [1662] and "Histoire de la comtesse de Tende" [1718]), Fléchier ("Mademoiselle de Combes" [1665]), Mme de Villedieu, ("Le Portefeuille" [1674]), Du Plaisir ("La Duchesse D'Estramène" [1682]), Germont ("Le Napolitain" [1682]). These fictions, alternately are called "*histoire galante…histoire secrete, mémoires secrets, nouvelle galante, annales galantes, histoire des amours*" as Jean DeJean points out in *Tender Geographies,*138.

[107] Unlike the classical background and pastoral setting of the baroque novel and *roman précieux* (first half of the seventeenth-century), and differing form the extended agonistic and action-oriented plots of the *roman héroique* of the epoch of Louis XIII the so-called *roman d'analyse* or "psychological novel," under which many *nouvelles historiques* of the epoch of Louis XIV have been subsumed, has recourse to either medieval, 'gothic' backdrops, or to early modern ones. See notably the introduction to the Pléiade edition of *Nouvelles du xviie siècle and* DeJean, *Tender Geographies.*

[108] "Je conçois tant de dérègelemnt dans l'amour, même le plus raisonable, que j'ai pensé qu'il valait mieux presenter au public un tableau des malheurs de cette passion que de faire voir les amants vertueux et délicats, heureux à la fin du livre. Je mets donc mesh éors dans une situation si triste qu'on ne leur porte point d'envie" (177). This preface is to *Eléonor*. That of *Amboise* reprises the language of this foreword: "Peut-être se plaindra-t-on de ce que je ne recompense pas la virtu du comte d'Amboise, mais je veux punir sa passion et j'ai déj¡a declare dans la Préface d'Eleonor d'Yvrée que mon dessein était de ne faire voir que des amants malheureux pour combattre, autaunt qu'il m'est possible, le penchant qu'on a pour l'amour" (239).

[109] The passage *in extenso*: "Un jour que le roi était à la promenade et que toute la cour le suivait, ce comte, voyant que Sansac était à quelques pas de la foule, s'approcha de lui pour parler de Mademoiselle de Roye; mais, quoiqu'ils eussent également envie de parler d'elle, aucun d'eux ne pouvait se résoudre à commencer. Enfin d'Amboise suivit son dessein: il la loua beaucoup, mais Sansac la loua peu, autant peut-être pour n'être pas d'accord avec son rival que de peur de se découvrir.

Cependant le comte d'Amboise n'était pas enétat de se rassurer; il aurait été inquiet si le marquis de Sansac avait trop admire Mademoiselle de Roye, et il le fut encore de ce qu'il ne voulait pas l'admirer assez."

[110] This sketches the aporetic and asymptotic relationship of jealousy and proof, where jealousy will always "want proof" (desire and lack it). See Kamuf, "Jealousy wants Proof" in *Books of Addresses* as well as Derrida's "En ce moment même dans cet ouvrage me voice" in *Psyché*.

[111] Mlle d'Annebault who is pointedly pictured as one whose "beauty could make happy a man who would not have loved Mademoiselle de Roye" (249-50). Mlle d'Annebault's beauty, as the qualification of her character already attests, is counterposed to that of Mlle de Roye or, rather, becomes the inverted negation of it.

[112] This occurs as well in *Eléonor d'Yvrée* when Mathilde, best friend of Eléonor, begins to realize she has feeling for the duke de Misnie: "It seemed to her that she would not have wanted to remove the duke de Misnie from Eléonor, but that she wished to find a lover like him, and she felt that, if he had not preceisely resembled him, he would not have pleased her. This sentiment only gave her at first a melancholy which did not cease to have its sweetness but, when she came to recognize the nature of it, she had a very strong pain for it" ("Il lui semblait qu'elle n'aurait pas voulu ôter le duc de Misnie à Eléonor, mais elle souhaitait e trouver un amant comme lui, et elle sentait que, s'il ne lui avait pas precisemeent ressemblé, il ne lui aurait pas plu. Ce sentiment ne lui donna d'abord qu'une mélancolie qui ne laissait pas d'avoir sa douceur mais, lorsqu'elle vint à en conna^^tre la nature, elle en eut une douleur très vive" [184]).

[113] "il y survint des difficulties qu'on n'avait pas prévues." Notice, though this be an *obiter dictum*, that the formulation which introduces this benedictory intervention takes the passive and impersonal grammatical forms that have constituted a focus of these reflections. Also worthy of note, Mlle de Roye has inquired in the meanwhile, with a little "too much concern," into Sansac's putative wedlock, and comes to learn of his "resistance" such that "it was not even impossible for her to understand that in this she had a part" (251). This knowledge, however, has been delivered to her as if from elsewhere, for it is only by a *post facto* and belated deduction from the care with which she applies herself to all of Sansac's *faits et gestes* that confirms the thoughts she had already been cultivating: "The care [*application*] which she had for all the actions of the marquis at every moment reinforced her in the thought that she had touched him [*la confirmait à tous moments dans la pensée qu'elle l'avait touché*]. She followed her penchant with scruple, but she followed it" (*Ibid*). The succinctness of this last line issues a compelling formulation for the recessive dynamics of this tale's characters and of the language which limns them: lovers hesitate, not hasten.

[114] Mlle de Sansac is tellingly sketched as motivated by an ambivalent impetus: she has "at first some difficulty" to officiate this task because she holds for Amboise "a singular esteem" at the same time that "this same esteem carried her imperceptibly to act against his marriage" (252). This will prove crucial to the imbroglio which develops later on, but already the narrative forecasts that a "singular" sentiment animates Mlle de Sansac to militate, insensibly, in favour of a situation of which she herself is not completely cognizant. For in his frequentations of Mlle de Roye, Amboise might find little sympathy from her but, intriguingly, it is Mlle de Sansac who, meeting him there quite often, "had found him as amiable as unhappy" and "imperceptibly" is "lead to other sentiments" from her pity (253). To the former triangulation binding Sansac, Roye, and Amboise is superadded Mlle de Sansac's affection for Amboise, since she believes she is serving him in precluding his espousal of someone who despises himIn this way, the triangulation figured in *Eléonor d'Yvrée* is scaffolded once again, though the addition of Mlle de Sansac complicates the trinity that triangulation implies.

[115] Mlle de Roye grants at this point that Amboise might have many good qualities but does so with a kind of "spite." If throughout these pages a recurrent emphasis has been that the surest obstacle to the materialization of an amorous rapport remains the lovers themselves, then Amboise's case only seems to corroborate the example, for to Mlle de Roye "[h]is merit was a secret reproach of the indifference she had for him; she detested that he loved her and that he was loveable" (252). Like the Duke d'Olsingam in *La Duchesse d'Estramène*, so loveable that this interfered with his beloved's affections, the more that Amboise appears amiable to Mlle de Roye, the more she abominates him.

[116] The dispossessed or negated agency reflected in the foregoing example is also translated, in the case of Amboise, into a sort of irresolution. For Amboise knows not how to proceed: on the one hand, it seems disagreeable to wed someone inclined toward another, but while "reason was opposed to this plan" Amboise is nonetheless "in love" (253). In a moment of free indirect discourse, it is asked: "How to lose the hope of seeing her his? [*Comment perdre l'espérance de la voir à lui?*]" (*Ibid*). To which is tendered a tentative reply: "After many uncertainties, he saw that it was not possible for him to make any resolution" (*Ibid*). If Amboise cannot see Mlle de Roye as his own, so too can he cannot any more see this as possible. From incertitude he passes to irresolution in regard to Mlle de Roye just as she had earlier transitioned from nonparticipation to silence in regard to Sansac.

[117] Mlle de Sansac appeals to her father on this count, who is soon convinced of the benefits of the endeavour, as this might allow the unification of the Sansac and Roye familial lines. Also enlisted by her is the queen's aid, who in conference with Mlle de Roye's mother, essays to move her in favour of marriage with Sansac. These pleas are only met with refusal, however, for the highly principled Madame de Roye pities Amboise as well as respects the former covenant they had agreed upon.With this she asks that the queen suffer her discord with the counsel brought to her. Though the queen attempts to extract the promise that Mlle de Roye might be married to Sansac in the event that the wedding with Amboise fall through, the insulted Madame de Roye

fabricates a falsehood on the spot: her daughter, she says, is loath to marry Sansac because she has antipathy toward him "It was not," is said, "that [Mme de Roye] believed it," but "extracted herself in this way from an awkward situation [*d'un pas embarrassant*]" (254).

[118] Matters are only worsened when Sansac naively enlists the aid of Mme de Tournon, a perfidious countess, to assist him in his efforts. Tournon's enmity stems from her rebuffed advances. In an interesting variation of the other lovers seen thus far (who analyze and refuse to analyze each other), the narration offers an interesting commentary on Mme de Tournon's mistake: "Bien qu'elle dût connaître que les soins qu'il lui rendait n'avaient pas le caractère de l'amour, on se trompe aisément sur une mati¡ere si délicate. L'application qu'on apporte à l'examiner est un moyen presque sûr de s'y méprendre" (256). Interestingly, the most assured way to mistake friendship for love is by the means through which it is examined. This observation, and its rhetorical effect, also appears in Louise-Genevieve de Gomes de Beaucour's *Les Egarements des Passions et Les Chagrins Qui Les Suivent: Representez Par Plusieurs Avantures Du Tems* (1697) (Paris: Chez Jean Guignard, 1697): "comme on se persuade aisement ce qu'on souhaite, elle ne douta pas qu'elle n'en fût aimée" (6).

[119] The narrative then lapses into a question which, not unlike those already witnessed, is neither fully attributable to a personage or to a narrator. Mlle de Roye, one reads, is "strongly" affected by this, but, it is asked: "Why this eternal constraint? [*Pourquoi cette contrainte éternelle?*]" (258). Why is she constrained, if this constraint is indeed hers? The concatenation of lines which follow seem to be thoughts Mlle de Roye could have had: "She was not yet his wife. Such a confidence could only serve to release her [*la dégager*] and put her in the liberty to follow her sentiments" (*Ibid*). This reasoning resides intriguingly on the cusp of confession: are they Mlle de Roye's thoughts? Might they be that of the reader or the narrator? Or would they be beholden to both though reducible to neither?

[120] The text reverts to another instance of free-indirect-discourse: "What ill-feelings [*ressentiments*] did Monsieur d'Amboise not have against the one who took away the heart of his mistress and who, if he had followed impetuousness, he would be carried to cruel extremities against him!" (259). On this "forgetting" one might consult De La Force's *Maride de Bourgogne*: "quand on n'est point aimé & qu'on n'a point d'espérance de l'être, on peut tirer de son courage assez de fermeté pour s'oublier soy-même" (211).

[121] "Je ne vous demande point de passion, ajouta-t-il malgré lui; laissez-moi la mienne, c'est tout ce que je vous demande"

[122] Consider in this light an aphorism from Blanchot's *L'Écriture du désastre*, which resonates here: "Ne pas répondre ou ne pas recevoir de réponse est la régle: cela ne suffit pas à arrêter les questions. Mais quand la réponse est l'absence de réponse, la question à son tour deviant l'absence de question (la question mortifiée), la parole passé, fait retour à un passé qui n'a jamais parlé, passé de toute parole" (54).

[123] But "if these reflections troubled the happiness he was waiting for, they did not prevent him from waiting for it," and this because "everything was being arranged for his marriage [*Tout se disposait pour son mariage*]" (269).

[124] Reprising the impersonal formulations already analyzed, Mlle de Roye's emotions are described in dispassionate terms: "She saw her very self [*Elle se regardait elle-même*] as the cause of her misfortunes. Never had she seen herself so ready to enter into an engagement against which all her heart was revolting" (269). The text represents Amboise's reaction in a similar manner: "What despair for Monsier d'Amboise!" (*Ibid*). The text then verges unto a sentence fragment which not only has no certain voice (though one is to presume it is Amboise's), it also conveys a cryptic insight: "The means of forcing a person who was forcing herself for love of him? [*Le moyen de contraindre une personne qui se contraignait elle-même pour l'amour de lui?*]" (*Ibid*). Sansac's representations are also conveyed in this way: "what could happen to him sadder than being hated by Mademoiselle de Roye and to never see her again? [*que pouvait-il lui arriver de plus triste que d'être haï de Mademoiselle de Roye et de ne la voir jamais*]? (274).

[125] The passage had begun thus: "He even flattered himself that an extraordinary action would perhaps produce an extraordinary effect and that, if it didn't bring back Mademoiselle de Roye to him in doing for her something of which another could not be capable, he made at least all mean unworthy to be loved by her. […] Still, he thought that he would poison the happiness of his rival by giving to him his mistress himself. But, after all, these weren't but ideas […] He went to see Mademoiselle de Roye the next day."

[126] "je vous adore malgré vous, &, si je l'ose dire, malgré moy" (111; volume 1).

[127] "vous voyez le plus amoureux de tous les hommes; vous savez que vos rigueurs ne m'ont point empêché de l'être […] J'aurais dû, malgré elles, être sûr que vous ne n'aimerez jamais [sic] et cependant ells m'on fait espérer [sic] , ou elles m'ont tenu lieu de Bonheur, tant que vous n'avez été à personne; mais vous ne sauriez plus éviter d'être à quelqu'un," and then he adds "et je crains que vous n'en trembliez."

[128] Consider, Blanchot's *L'Écriture du désastre*: Blanchot, "Donner, ce n'est pas donner quelque chose ni même se donner, car alors donner, ce serait garder et sauvegarder, si ce que l'on donne a pour trait que personne ne peut vous le prendre, vous le reprendre et vous le retirer, sommet de l'égoïsme, ruse de la poassession" (83).

[129] If the decathected rhetoric of Mlle de Roye's reply, ashen in tone and anemic of power, appears nonchalant toward resolving the quandaries it confronts, this is perhaps because in a very specific sense its language seems indifferent to making observable change or effectuating positive consequence This is often the ambiguous duty devolved to seventeenth-century *roman*

d'analyse heroines, where the obligations of virtue require them to feign silence for what cannot be said, or curtain from view that which should not be seen -and when that which is forbidden is said, or seen, then it certainly should not be claimed as having been witnessed and still less understood (This is arguably cousin to -though not collapsible with- what is often called "political neutrality." Witness to both sides of a polemic, but beholden to neither, neutrality does no more than state what cannot possibly be done, namely, to adjudicate between or beyond what already is). Clarice, the heroine of Préchac's nouvelle *La Duchesse de Milan* (1682), exemplifies an instance thereof when forced by her mother to choose between her French lover and an Italian prince: "she thought it far more to the purpose to dwell in indifference, without doing anything that could irritate either of the two parties ("elle croyait qu'il étoit bien plus à propos de demeurer dans l'indifference, sans rien faire qui pust irriter aucun des deux parties" [36]). Not itself a position, Clarice's "indifference" can, it would seem, only recognize the exteriority of those positions –that of her lovers and her mother- to which she cannot belong and within which she has no shelter, just as Julie's query both proposes a question and retracts it in one breath -beseeches and desists, beckons and balks- leaving undecidable whether it asks, states, or judges (Some might wish to call this a performative contradiction –as if this itself were an objection- that "not making a decision is itself a decision, the decision not to make a decision." But this is to ignore the deconstructive caution that the only decision possible is an impossible one, one made when no predicted or programmatic calculus willed by an all-knowing subject is viable. How to make judgements when there exist no criteria in advance? Cf. Derrida, "Préjugés," and *passim*).

[130] "What words for Monsieur d'Amboise! Could he make any reflexions contrary to his happiness?" (307.).

[131] And what is horrifying here is, yet again, *not* the confirmation of knowledge nor the consummation of an infidelity, but the *uncertainty* into which Ambosie is *de novo* thrown: "While he had been a lover, the entire assurance of not being loved had seemed to him less cruel than the uncertainty to which he then saw himself reduced" (311). French: "Tant qu'il n'avait été qu'amant, l'entière assurance de n'être pas aimé lui avait paru moins cruelle que l'incertitude où il se voyait alors réduit"

[132] It is also this aspect of anonymity and ambiguity which grants fictions of romance their equivocal political tenor, for while its vagueness might enfranchise its author from incrimination it also offers no unequivocal moral stance or declarative authority on the scenes that it depicts (or, as is often the case, which it refrains from depicting). Hearken, in this regard, the ambiguous portent that Lafayette's aforementioned *La Princesse de Clèves* issues at its novel's seemingly didactic end: "Et sa vie, qui fut assez courte, laissa des exemples de vertu inimitables " (180). This declamation of the "inimitable" paragon of virtue that its protagonist is said to typify leaves shadowy whether this "inimitability" is to be celebrated for its unexampled, nunnish righteousness or whether, oppositely, it could never be imitated by anyone else—precisely because it was never a believable nor viable model to begin with. Does the peerlessness implied by "inimitable" —that is, without example— mean an unparalleled apotheosis of virtue or perhaps more sinisterly, that which is never to be —or is never able to be— imitated or approximated by any one? Left umbrageous is the moralizing message one might wish to impute to the novel, for skirting experience, so the narrative ambivalently implies, would seem more crucial than taking responsibility for it. The afore-mentioned efforts of illustration and demonstration in the mode of didacticism –presenting various models of conduct to observe or to avoid- have thusly seemed subject to misfire when trying to offer prescriptive determinancy, insofar as readers are taught only a virginally blank, defensively shielding instruction. Unlike the adage of the anonymously authored moral tale "L'Expérience" (1771) collected in in *Nouvelles du XVII siècle* —"The best advice is not worth the faintest experience" ("Le meilleur conseil ne vaut pas la plus faible expérience" [826])— the *Princesse de Clèves*'s final decree is unclear, for whether the purposive function of its own narrative is to purvey positive advice or, on the contrary, portray a negative, victimized experience that is to be obviated, is left uncertain.

[133] Following his decease, Mlle de Roye's state of mind is painted in ambiguous terms. It is unclear what her own thoughts are to Sansac, and what relations she shares to them: "[She] avoided thinking of the marquis de Sansac's letter; it seemed to her that it was from indifference, but she thought incessantly of the generosity that her husband had had in to consent in dying that she marry him, though she had no design to profit from it. When she returned home, she entered her *cabinet* and could not prevent herself from reading the letter that Monsieur d'Amboise had given to her from this marquis, and that she had kept; she found it filled with passion [*pleine de passion*], and she read it again; then she entered into a profound reverie in which she did not with to distinguish her own thoughts [*dans laquelle elle ne voulait point distinguer ses propres pensées*]" (315).

[134] In *Oeuvres*, 399.

[135] "hors l'amour, vous avez eux eu tous mes autres sentiments."

[136] Save for love, he has had all her all, but, in a crucial sense, love has saved neither of them.

CHAPTER 4: OLD REGIME

[137] One is reminded of the chorus' line in Euripide's *Alcestis,* collected in *The Complete Euripides, Volume V*, eds Peter Burian and Alan Shapiro (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 45.

[1] Mlle de Motte, *Histoire de Zulmie Warthei* (La Haye and Paris: Chez la Veuve Duchesne, Libraire, rue Saint-Jacques, au Temple du Goût, 1776), 211. Hereafter cited in text as *Z*.

[2] "Que vous pardonnerais-je? je n'ai reçu de vous aucune offense, qui méritât ni haine, ni colere."

[3] This and the paragraph that follows are extrapolations of Jacques Derrida's "To forgive : the unforgivable and the imprescriptible," in *Questioning God*, eds. John D. Caputo et al (Bloomington, IN : Indiana University Press, 2001), 30-6. According to an "other logic" whereby, forgiveness could only be accorded, impossibly, to the unforgivable (forgiving the culprit *as* culprit, and not without making the demand that he conform to economic conditions of punishment and exchange). The negation implied in impossible has the connotation of something which cannot or ought not to be committed; it is already passed (like Blanchot's "disaster") and yet can never become present or be considered a past present, it is thus impassable because it never passes, nor has ever passed, into the present (31). This temporalized paradox is referred to as the "pastness of an eventness" (passéité d'une événementialité).

[4] This forgiveness irreducible to the present, since this past is not a past present, a presence that has now fallen into the past, since it was never present to begin with.

[5] Cf. "To forgive,." In Derrida's account, it is not so much that the word of pardon be mentioned but that it be "signified" (32), even if there will always be an undecidable address as to who or what is being pardoned or doing the pardoning (36). There would be no knowable or presentable knowledge that could be appropriated by a judging self nor determined by it. This address of pardon is undecidable is to the extent that it is both a recalling of the past and a futural call or appeal for what comes forth. Always given (and given over) to the other from the beginning, even one's signature is already countersigned and reappropriated by the other, insofar as sociality and relationality implies an original and unending address, a requesting forgiveness for "being-there" (43). Even if it isn't known whether or not this forgiveness will be given, it is presumed and hoped for, an unconditional forgiveness that needn't be asked for, a forgiveness given without the expectation of expiation from others. This "address of forgiveness" refers to both 'the act of asking for forgiveness," and "the place from which forgiveness, once the request is received by the addressee, [...]is either granted or not granted" (46). In this sense, it is not only singular but also has to be iterable; pardon being not commensurate with what seems like its various instances (juridical judgment etc.) for it cannot be evaluated by the same common measure.

[6] See "On Forgiveness," in *Questioning* God for a roundtable discussion whose commentary by Derrida is not irrelevant in this context: "if forgiveness happens, then this experience should not become the object of a sentence of the kind '*S* is *p*,' 'this is, this presents itself as forgiveness,' because forgiveness should not present itself. If it happens, it should not be in the form of something present. [...] So as soon as I am sure that I forgive, for example—I cannot be sure that he other forgives— if is ay that I know that I forgive, if I say, lightly, 'I forgive you,' this sentence in the present, with a verb in the present tense, is absolutely the destruction of forgiveness. That is because it implies that I am able to forgive, that I have the power to forgive, the sovereign power to forgive, which introduces me into the scene of the economy of exchange. You have to recognize that I forgive you, and this is recognizable, which is, of course, the beginning of the destruction of what forgiveness should be" (53).

[7] Derrida, "To Forgive." Derrida's essay points out that there would seem to be not time for giving or for forgiving; insofar as pardon is tethered to a past that doesn't pass while the gift is in the present, so both forgiveness and gift "never *present themselves as such* to what is commonly called an experience, a presentation to consciousness or to existence" (22). The passage adds that one is "incapable of giving enough" or "of being present enough to the present that I give," one always has "to ask forgiveness for not giving, for never giving enough." The implication here is that when one gives one also, inevitably, takes, so that even when one gives one might have to ask for forgiveness for the taking implied in giving: one must be forgiven for forgiveness, one has to be forgiven for any implicit sense of mastery toward or for the act gift-giving. This account thus underlines the complicities and the paradoxes of gift and forgiveness, specifically the entanglements implied in the word couplets of give/get, forgive/forget. The meanings and use of these words will always be somewhat problematic, for there can be no "truly" proper experience of forgiveness, insofar as there will always be a confusion of who or what is forgiven and who or what asks for this forgiveness.

[8] "Si vous m'aimiez, vous me diriez que je suis l'objet de votre haine" he says, he goes to kill himself saying that."

Note: All translations from French sources are original unless noted otherwise.

[9] Multiple French epistolary novels have been said to rehearse the topos of unrealized passion. See Janet Gurkin Altman, *Epistolarity: Approaches to a Form* (Columbus : Ohio State University Press, 1982).

[10] It has become almost commonplace to remark that the ethos of self-rescinding amorous accostment cultivated in the *roman épistolaire sentimental* takes after the epistolary form which comprises its love letters, one defined by physical distance and temporal disunion between the epistolarians rather than by the material or concrete contact betwixt them: lovers not only speak *in* each other's absence but, no less importantly, *of* that absence. In epistolary novels, it is often said, an abstemiousness of intimate contact and an eschewal of explicit expression prevail; experience appears vicarious, belated, or missed rather than fulfilled and relationships seem tenuous, sheer, or shatterable rather than robust. See Regina Bochenek-Fanczowa. *Le Roman épistolaire à voix multiples en France de 1691-1782*. (Cracow: Nakladem Universytetu Jagiellonskiego, 1986)

[11] ("*reddebant nomen concave saxa tuum*")Letter X Ariadne to Theseus ("ariadne theseo"): Latin, p. 122; Eng, p.123.

[12] ("*Nec qui ate nostra sperem prece posse moveri, adloquor*"); Letter VII "Dido Aeneae," Latin, p.82; English, p.83. In contrast

to the epic and its fascination with the retelling of past events, the *Heroides* features heroines of mythology coming forth and narrating stories of loss and desire. As Linda Kauffman argues in *Discourses of Desire* (specifically the first chapter, "Ovid's *Heroides*: 'Genesis' and Genre." Ovid's *Heroides* importantly rejects Augustan roman values of vainglory and sponors a new genre which isn't 'epic' but challenges "notions of tradition ,of origins, of fathers, of paternity, ofa authority, of identity," insofar as he identifies with the poetess "Sappho" (61) and reworks the boundaries of gender and genre. In this work, as Marina Brownlee's *The Severed Word: Ovid's 'Heroides' and the 'Novela Sentimental'* comments, interestingly rework the rhetorical relations between the classical categories of *suasoriae* (logic) and *Ethiopoiiae* (emotion and character), and whose heroines complicate the imbricated relations that bonds (*foedus*), loyalty (*fides*) and faithfulness (*fida*) share (Cf. Kauffman, 35), influencing the later *novela sentimental* of Spanish provenance and the *roman sentimental* (two different genres despite the misleading homology of their names), of French tradition.

[13] Likewise, Juliet's well-known apostrophe -"O Romeo, Romeo ! wherefore art thou Romeo ?"- in Shakespeares' tragedy *Romeo and Juliet* (1591-5). Juliet, thinking she's alone, addresses her words to the night -to nothing or to no one- but at the same time is unwittingly only speaking to Romeo. She speaks to him not just by rhetorical address but also quite literally, since Romeo watches her secretly from the shadows, "bescreen'd in night." Juliet's words conjure a fictive address and apostrophe that is concurrently personal and impersonal insofar as it seems to account for her beloved's presence at the same time that it leaves him uncounted altogether. Thus is Romeo at once interpellated and disregarded by a question that seems destined for his reply even as it speaks to no one in particular.

[14] On some of these traditions see in particular Katherine Ann Jensen, *Writing Love: Letters, Women, and the Novel in France, 1605- 1776* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern University Press, 1995).

[15] *Marie de Sinclair* (Paris: Indigo & Côté-femmes éditions, 1999), 8. Hereafter cited in text as *M*.

[16] As we will see, the seeming partitions or binaric borderlines separating "man" from "woman" are not, nor were ever, fixed and the presumed integrity of these gendered categories is perpetually prone to its own undoing.

[17] Indeed, it will ultimately become difficult to speak of the configurations amongst the personages of the story in terms of couplings and triangulations: the intricate dynamics amidst the protagonists, immersed in a matrix of conflicting erotic demands, resist confinement to a dyadic or even a triadic structure. Devised and dismantled at one and the same time, these relationships would appear to escape the very numeric logic they seem to elicit.

[18] It would likewise be misleading to presume that heterosexuality, itself a uniquely modern conceit, is a self-evident and secure category, as if it were an analytic given or a natural fact with transparent meaning and transhistorical application that could be opposed wholesale to its supposed conceptual adverse, homosexuality. See Hanne Blank, *Straight : the surprisingly short history of heterosexuality* (Boston : Beacon Press, 2012). One might say that Marie becomes the site wherein heterosexual and homosexual desires both intermingle and fail to converge insofar as Fernance's and Adèle's respective identifications and longings meet, and do *not* meet, in her. As Judith Butler's *Undoing Gender* (New York: Routledge, 2004) argues, heterosexuality —that is, the cultural constellations which comprise its phantasms, norms, practices— is not the unique preserve of "heterosexuals," an identity or an ontological entity, for who is to declare that homosexuality or heterosexuality have ever been felicitously achieved without ambivalence and, moreover, is it not the case that the one cannot be defined without reference to the other, as if each would insist within the other?

[19] See April Alliston, *Virtue's Faults, op cit.* and Lillian Faderman, *Surpassing the love of men : romantic friendship and love between women from the Renaissance to the present* (New York : Morrow, 1981). One might also consult Sharon Marcus, *Between women : friendship, desire, and marriage in Victorian England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).

[20] See Hannah Blank, *Straight: The Surprisingly Short History of Heterosexuality* (New York: Beacon Press, 2012). Indeed, even if one does not wish to acknowledge any "queer" instances the novel one has nonetheless, already acknowledged them, as it were, even if this acknowledgement is only that such instances are illegitimate, unintelligible, or irrelevant. This denial or dismissal, acknowledging such possibilities only to claim they are not or never were operative, serves to recognize the possibility it also repudiates, for the very *resistance* to acknowledging the possibilities of non-heteronormative sexualities already indicates a certain "gender trouble" already in play that must be acknowledged as operative in order to be subsequently repudiated as inoperative. See Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, ed. *Novel gazing : queer readings in fiction* (Durham, NC : Duke University Press, 1997), *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley : University of California Press, 1990), and *Tendencies* (Durham : Duke University Press, 1993).

[21] As queer theories of the last decades have pointed out, heterosexuality is often presupposed to be a given, taken to be unmarked and universal, while homosexuality is the denaturalizing and subversive "other" which exposes heterosexuality's fundamentally fictional status. But why must it be presumed that heterosexuality is itself secured and self-sufficient, while other non-heterosexual practices and sexualities are polymorphous, permeable, and unfixed? Might not heterosexuality in and of itself also be prone to its own self-subversion, itself no more than a contingent and phantasmatic cultural conceit that never successfully becomes itself? What constitutes a felicitous accomplishment of heterosexuality or, indeed, is this supposed accomplishment merely the attempt to mime a notion of felicitous success that is itself groundless and unsubtantiated by any natural foundation?

To what extent are *both* the concepts of heterosexuality and homosexuality liable to their own failure and foundering? Such questions also constitute the inquiry pursued in Judith Butler, "Imitation and Gender Insubordination" in *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader*, eds. Henry Abelove et al. (Routledge: New York, 1993), 307-320 and in "The Question of Social Transformation" in *Undoing Gender*: "What happens when terms such as butch and femme emerge not as simple copies of heterosexual masculinity and heterosexuality [*sic*] femininity but as expropriations that expose the nonnecessary status of their assumed meanings? [...]categories like butch and femme [are] not copies of a more originary heterosexuality, but they sho[w] how the so-called originals, men and women within the heterosexual frame, are similarly constructed, performatively established. So the ostensible copy is not explained through reference to an orign, but the origin is understood to be as performative as the copy" (209).

[22] In *Romans de femmes du XVIIIe siècle*, ed. Raymond Trousson (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1996), 647.

[23] "Par la suite l'expérience lui apprit que, pour les femmes honetes et sensibles, le veritable amour n'est autre chose qu'une amitié exaltée, et que celui-là seul est durable." In *Romans de femmes,* 790.

[24] Derrida's "'This Srange Institution Called Literature'" in *Acts of Literature,* ed. Derek Attridge (New York: Routledge, 1992), nuances this claim with the remark that "One can[...] suspend not reference (that's impossible) but the thetic relation to meaning or referent" (45). A later passage adds: "If every literary text plays and negotiates the suspension nof referential naivety, of *thetic* referentiality (not reference or the intentional relation in general), each text does so differently, singularly" (47).This literary "experience" would be "a nonthetic experience of the thesis" (46) for "literatures *being-supsneded* neutralizes the 'assumption' which it carries" (49). Suspension here connotes "*hanging on* and *hanging between, dependent* and *independent,* an 'assumption' both assumed and suspended" (49).

[25] In this sense, the readings that follow are accompanied by the deconstructions of "amity" proposed in Derrida's *Politiques de l'amitié, suivi de L'oreille de Heidegger* (Paris: Galilée, 1994).

[26] On these norms, see *Family, gender, and law in early modern France,* eds. Suzanne Desan and Jeffrey Merrick (University Park, Pa. : Pennsylvania State University Press, 2009) and Allan Tulchin, "Same-Sex Couples Creating Households in Old Regime France: The Uses of the Affrèrement," *Journal of Modern History* 79 (2007): 613-47. This takes on acute implications when considering Adèle's case in *Marie*.

[27] (Paris: Gallimard, 1972), 130. Hereafter cited in text as *R*.

[28] The supposed innocence of Suzanne exemplifies the twin senses of inexperience: because undesigning and unexperienced, or at least seeming so, Suzanne can manage to speak of that which should never be mentioned. Whence emanates Suzanne's eerie "privilege of unknowing": "I know nothing, and I would rather know nothing than acquire knowledge which might make me unhappier than I am now. I have no desires, and I don't want to discover any I couldn't satisfy." Quoted in Sedgiwck, "Privilege of Unknowing: Diderot's *The Nun*" in *Tendencies,* 38. For this critical account, "Suzanne's pointed ignorance" should be read for "*what it makes happen*," namely an ignorance that "permits her [...] to participate in all the physical pleasures without any of the guilt or anxiety of her Mother Superior's sexuality'" (38). Rather than a site of agentless unknowing, Suzanne is not "passively *lacking* the knowledge that what is going on constitutes 'sexuality,'" but "actively and even lustily *repel*[*ling*] it," *ibid*, or better, "she has only the power *of being manipulated*, manipulate that power how she may" (40). The essay adds furthermore that "although she refuses to be taught that the scenes between herself and the Superior have verbalizable content, she refuses also to be content *not* to verbalize them" (40). In Claudia Brodsky's "Whatever moves you," in *Traditions of Experiment from the Enlightenment to the Present,* one reads that Suzanne "not only seduces everyone around her but experiences sex without knowing or feeling anything 'inside' her" (33); "Seducing everyone who sees her act while verbally insisting that, in acting, she never knew what she had done, Suzanne is Diderot's 'dummy'" (30).

[29] The "as if" clauses scattered amid these phrases attest to the hypothetical register of its claims. Later on (198) Suzanne has asked "—Et dites-moi ce qu'il faut que je fasse pour vous le prouver," to the Mother Superior when the latter claims Suzanne doesn't love her. "—Il faudrait que vous le devinassiez," says the Mother Superior, to which replies Suzanne: "—Je cherche, je ne devine rien."

[30] The ambiguity is marked at the end of the novel, if not all throughout: "Je suis une femme, peut-être un peu coquette, que sais- je? Mais c'est naturellement et sans artifice" -"I am a woman, perhaps a bit coquette, what do I know? But this is by nature and without artifice" (267). To what degree is Suzanne's writings coquettish as well, only feigning or teasingly pretending to disacknowledge that which it recounts in order to license the narrative to speak explicitly of the most impudent scenes?

[31] In the formulation of one critical account, Suzanne would typify "a woman who knows *only* that she does not know what she is doing," insofar as she "flatly reiterates her extraordinary ignorance of- indeed her failure to actually experience- the content of what she does" even if or even as she does it. See Brodsky, "Whatever Moves You: 'Experimental Philosophy' and the Literature of Experience in Diderot and Kleist," in *Traditions of Experiment from the Enlightenment to the Present*, 33, 31 respectively. Italics in the original. These "homoerotic tableaux [are] described as empty of experience" adds this account later (36), seemingly confirmed at various moments of the novel, for example: "j'étais presque réduite à l'état d'automate; je ne m'aperçus de rien; j'avais seulement par intervalles comme de petits mouvements convulsifs," says, for example, Suzanne at one point in description of her conduct (84).

[32] This might be reformulated as "something is occurring which nevertheless doesn't come to pass" in the words of Smock's *What is there to say?*, 115.

[33] "Je cède enfin, madame, à vos instances. Vous allez connaître la cause de mon aversion pour l'amour. Si je vous ai caché longtemps mon secret, c'es qu'il ne me concernait pas seule; vous le dire, c'est vous apprendre les malheurs de la femme que j'ai la plus aimée, et dont j'ai été la meilleure amie."

[34] Cf. Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*.

[35] ARTFL, *Dictionnaires d'autrefois*. http://artflx.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/dicos/pubdico1look.pl?strippedhw=ami. Consulted, Friday September 21st, 2012.

[36] See Allan H. Pasco, *Revolutionary love in eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century France* (Burlington : Ashgate, 2009) and Ekaterina R. Alexandrova's dissertation, "Outlandish Fictions: The Eighteenth-century French Novel and Marriage on Women's Terms," (University of Pennsylvania, 2012)

[37] See for example, Judith Butler, "Melancholy Gender" in *The Psychic Life of Power: theories in subjection* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1997) and *Bodies that matter: on the discursive limits of "sex"* (New York : Routledge, 1993). In this last account, the lack of conventions for the acknowledgement and avowal of certain types of attachments are preemptively cancelled and only preserved in and as loss: "To the extent that homosexual attachments remain unacknowledged within normative heterosexuality, they are not merely constituted as desires that emerge and subsequently become prohibited. Rather, these are desires that are proscribed from the start. And when they do emerge on the far side of the censor, they may well carry that mark of impossibility with them, performing, as it were, as the impossible within the possible. As such, they will not be attachments that can be openly grieved. This is, then, less the *refusal* to grieve (a formulation that accents the choice involved) than a preemption of grief performed by the absence of cultural conventions for avowing the loss of homosexual love" (236).

[38] This erotics of enclosure and disclosure, proximity and distance, is exemplified in a *tableau* depicted shortly thereafter. Marie sits down and the two place themselves around her, at once close to, and enclosing, her, even though neither will ultimately obtain her (12). This splitting of a "lesbian" might even seem to prefigure Mallarmé's "l'après-midi d'un faune" in the nineteenth-century.

[39] To riff on Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's famous *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985).

[40] This dovetails with the Derridean ethos of *tout autre est tout autre.*

[41] Which is not to say that these logics were ever secure—indeed, the slippage between philia and eros, amity and amour, has marked the histories of the terms of "friendship" (cf. Derrida, *Politiques de l'amitié*). Note this slippage in a later work by Marguerite Desbrosses, *Mathilde de Puiseley* (Paris: Pougens, 1803): "Je vais devenir la compagne de Gustave, l'amie de tous ses momens, la mere de ses enfans. Il sera mon amant, mon ami, mon époux" (186). There is a marked shift in the heroine's language from romantic love to amity and maternity.

[42] "Lovence" in Derrida's *Politiques de l'amitié*, refers to "l'amour *dans* l'amitié, l'aimance au-delà de l'amour et de l'amitié selon leurs figures determines" (88) and thus Derrida seeks to pursue "la possibilité d'une expérience de l'amitié hors ou en deçà de cette logique oppositionnelle [ami/ennemi]" (276), a friendship that is neither active nor passive, inclusive or selective, but which resists and exceeds this exclusionary logic of fraternization altogether. Like différance, the "—ance" ending to "aimance" bespeaks a process that is not a process, that which is not merely the object to a subject's operation.

[43] The passage, more fully reconstituted, is posed as a series of rhetorical questions: "Ne savez-vous pas que ce qui a bien souvent causé la ruine es femmes, c'est plutôt tout ce qu'elles se sont dit pour se persuader qu'elles aimaient, que l'existence d'un véritable sentiment? Que serait-ce qu'un sentiment sans aucun espoir ? on assure qu'il n'y en a jamais eu" (*M,* 29).

[44] Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection* (Stanford, Calfornia: Stanford University Press, 1997), 8-9.

[45] Butler, *Psychic,* 23. The account notes further on: "The foreclosure of cetain forms of love suggests that the melancholia that grounds the subject (and hence always threatens to unsettle and disrupt that ground) signals an incomplete and irresolvable grief. Unowned and incomplete, melancholia is the limit to the subject's sense of *pouvoir* [...] Melancholia rifts the subject, marking a limit to what it can accommodate. Because the subject does not, cannot , *reflect* on that loss, that loss marks the limit of reflexivity" (23). And elsewhere: "Is there a loss that cannot be thought, cannot be owned or grieved, which froms the condition of possibility for the subject? Is this what Hegel called 'the loss of the loss,'a foreclosure that constitutes an unknowability without which the subject cannot endure, an ignorance and melancholia that makes possible all claims of knowledge as one's own? Is there not a longing to grieve—and, equivalently, an inability to grieve— that which one never was able to love, a love that falls short of the 'conditions of existence'? This is a loss not merely of the object or some set of objects, but of love's own possibility: the loss of the ability to love, the unfinishable grieving for that which founds the subject" (24); "certain forms of love entail the loss of the object [...]because such objects fail to qualify as objects of love: as objects of love they assume a mark of destruction. Indeed, they may threaten one's own destruction as well: " I will be destroyed if I love in that way.' Marked for 'death,' the objet is, as it were, already lost" (27).

[46] On the undoing of psychoanalytic postulates of "being" and "having," see "Sexual dispossessions," in Judith Butler and

Athena Athanasiou, *Dispossession: The Performative in the Political* (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2013), 44-55.

[47] The French gives: "Intention de renoncer à l'intention, désir de renoncer au désir, etc. 'Je renonce à toi, je l'ai décidé' : la plus belle et la plus inévitable de la plus impossible déclaration d'amour. Imaginez que je doive ainsi prescrire à l'autre (et c'est le renoncement) d'être libre (car j'ai besoin de sa liberté pour m'addresser à l'autre comme autre, dans le désir comme dans le renoncement). Je lui prescrirais donc de pouvoir ne pas répondre —à mon appel, à mon invitaiton, à mon attente, à mon désir. Et je dois lui faire une sorte d'obligation de rester libre, pour prouver ainsi sa liberté, dont j'ai besoin, justement, pour appeler, attendre, inviter. Ce n'est pas seulement moi, ni mon propre désir que j'engage ainsi dans la double contrainte d'un *double bind*, c'est lautre [...] Comme si jappelais quelqu'un, par exemple au téléphone, en lui disant en somme : je ne veux pas que tu attendes mon appeal et en dépendes jamais, va te promener, sois libre de ne pas répondre. Et pour le prouver, la prochaine fois que je t'appellerai, ne réponds pas, sans quoi je romps avec toi. Si tu me réponds, c'est fini entre nous" (198).

[48] "non u tames oro, verum ut amere sinas" (l.96) From, "XV Sappho Phaoni," Sappho's verse letter to Phaon, 186 (Latin) and 187 (English), *P. Ovidi Nasonis Heroides*, bilingual edition, *Heroides and Amores* transl. G. Showerman and revised by G.P. Goold.

[49] See Derrida's *La voix et le phénomène* (Paris: PUF, 1967). If Husserl had claimed that there were two sorts of signs, indication and expression, then the phenomenological conception of language would seem to hinge on the distinction between indicators that point to but do not mean and expression, namely the self-expression of the self in consciousness, a sort of imaginary communion with the self which is not a communication with the self. The interior voice might seem subjectively represent things to a self but its ideality is, in these terms, preserved from indication. The distinction between indicative communication and imaginary soliloquy, however, if dependent on repetition means the sign could be representable, repeatable, and thus not sovereignly free from indication. If the ideality of presence is to be followed to its logical limit, it must presuppose the death of the agent to whom it is supposed consciousness is conferred, in soliloquy, or in Rousseauian terms, in reverie, for the ideality of presence must be said to be intelligible preceding and subsequent to the life of the subject whom is understood through and by consciousness. Absolute consciousness and the authority this seems to afford is split and splintered, submitted to its proper death; a presence that must repeat to be assumes that the death of the subject to whom it is thought ideal, transcendental consciousness ("conscience") or feeling ("sentiment") is bestowed does not, in fact, essentially matter. Here there would seem to converge several overlapping onto-theological presuppositions instated by a certain form of representation according to which knowledge of the self exists in immediate and transparent revelation, capable of being communed by an idea that would also be a substance of self-presence. By virtue of *voice*, experience and conscience would be susceptible of hearing itself intelligibly speak ("s'entendre-parler"), exiling and evicting material, alien supports –writing- in favour of an "auto-affective" relation to self purveyed by a phono-centrism that conflates meaning and phenomenal presence: "proximité absolue de la voix et de l'être, de la voix et du sens de l'être, de la voix et de l'idéalité du sens" (23). Derrida's *De la grammatologie* finds attestation in Rousseau's oeuvre to this unspoken continuity between the ideality of "sense"- in its multiple senses- which supposes an emulous relation with the production of voice as the assertion of being, or in post-Husserlian terminology, an expressive self-communion of voice essays to withdraw from the facticity of indication. In this argument, reading Rousseau's *Essai sur l'origine des langues* as well the vast array of philosophico-literary languages his other texts brandish exposes a certain phenomenological phonocentrism, one which assumes that the directly phenomenal access to meaning by nonopaque signs through voice is possible ("Le phonème se donne comme l'idéalité maîtrisée du phénomène" [*Voix,* 87]) and furthermore articulates this idealized form of logocentric expression–a recourse to and presumption of transcendental, ideal, self-present meaning- with a subtending metaphysics of presence whose structuring claim is that a primary *presentation*, an ideality, can be re-presented diaphanously by speech, and the self-sufficient sense of this ideality can be apprehended like phenomenal concepts presented to thought without mediation. The undifferentiated or immediate originary presence taken for granted in various, heterogeneous metaphysics has determined a score of foundational concepts of philosophy -essence, temporal punctuality, consciousness, perception- but, as *De la grammatologie* details, if presence or quiddity can only be understood, not in its self-referential containment, but as (de)constituted by imperfective temporal referrals of what "was to be," of a past that never was or could be present, a past so seemingly absolute or so passive it could never have been a past-present, [see Rodolphe Gasché's discussion of "always-already" in "Reading Chiasms: An Introduction" to Andrzej Warminski's *Reading in Interpretation, Hölderlin, Hegel, Heidegger* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press,1987), xi-xii] then it would seem that all along a sort of textual, non-original *différance* –the name and the concept for that which is neither a name nor a concept- difference and deferral, the traces of traces of what it differs from and what it must defer for presence to 'be' –both always already and not yet, to be- has made possible presence only to the extent, paradoxically, that it has withdrawn and liquidated the essence of presence. In this context, speech turns out to be itself a form of writing –a maintenance of detours, spacings, differences, traces, deferrals, displacements, deaths- an *archi-écriture* whose origin never was one, never was, and never appeared in its original presence or presentation, but was and was always already marked, marred, and re-marked by differentiating grafts, quotable citations, iterable representations of a representations, rooted in and rotted by a divisable, dissemination of supplements and substitutions, deferrals and referrals, marks and remarks, relations of

force: text. The traditional romantic diction of tropes like the "Origin" of emotion and the "Originality" of expression -if understood as idealized, unrepeatable, unitarily self-present, platonic, or transcendental forms- are particularly crippled in this account which allows, perhaps even *affirms*, repetition: of the iterable, the conventional, the secondary or the belatedly coming-afterward, not the self-present recounting of sublime aesthetic experience. Indeed, it is the very tension or stricture of the singularly unrepeatable with the necessity of repetition that constitutes a major problematic continually replayed and at play in deconstruction.

[50] See Derrida, *De la Grammatologie* (Paris: Minuit, 1967) on the "epoch of Rousseau" as the "name of a problem" and more generally *Aufklärung. Les Lumières allemandes*, ed. and trans. Gérard Raulet (Paris: GF Flammarion, 1995).

[51] *Wilhelm Meister's apprenticeship*, ed. and trans. Eric A. Blackall and Victor Lange (Princeton, N.J. : Princeton University Press, 1995). Hereafter cited in text as *W*.

[52] See Drew Milne, "The Beautiful Soul: from Hegel to Beckett", *Diacritics 32.1* (2002): 63-82

[53] *Phenomenology of Spirit,* trans. A.V. Miller; ed. J.N. Findlay (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977). Cited in text as *P*.

[54] "It is the fluctuating attitude to itself of the Unhappy Consciosuness; but here this fluctuation takes place explicitly for consciousness within itself, and is conscious of being the Notion of Reason, whereas the Unhappy [...] The absolute certainty of itself thus finds itself, *qua* consciousness, changed immediately into a sound that dies away, into an objectification of its being-for-self; but this created world is its *speech*, which likewise it has immediately heard and only the echo of which returns to it. This return, therefore, does not mean that the self is in essence and actuality present in its speech; for essence is not for it an *it-self* or merely *implicit* being, but its very self" (*P,* 399; ¶658).

[55] The full passage gives: "It does well to preserve itself in its purity, for it *does not act*; it is the hypocrisy which wants its judging to be taken for an *actual* deed, and instead of proving its rectitude by actions, does so by uttering fine sentiments. Its nature, then is altogether the same as that which is reproached with making a duty a mere matter of words." Hegel adds "duty without deeds is utterly meaningless" (*P,* 403).

[56] The passage, *in extenso,* gives: "Now, in so far as the self-certain Spirit, as a "beautiful soul," does not possess the power to renounce the knowledge of itself which it keeps to itself, it cannot attain to an identity which the consciousnees it has repulsed, nor therefore to a vision fo the unity of itself in the other, cannot attain to an objective existence. Consequently, the identity comes about only negatively, as a being devoid of Spirit. The "beautiful soul," lacking an *actual* existence, entangled in the contradiction between its pure self and the necessity of that self to externalize itself and change itself into an actual existence, and dwelling in the *immediacy* of this firmly held antithesis— an immediacy which alone is the middle term reconciling the antithesis, which has been intensified to its pure abstraction, and is pure being or empty nothingness— this "beautiful soul," then, being conscious of this contradiction in its unreconciled immediacy, is disordered to the point of madness, wastes itself in yearning and pines away in consumption. Thereby it does in fact surrender the *being-for-self* to which it so stubbornly clings; but what it brings forth is only the non-spiritual unity of [mere] being" (406-7; ¶668).

[57] Another passage appears particularly telling in this regard: "Mais moi, qu'aurai-je donc souhaité ? [...] car il me semble que d'amitié même, on doit bien aimer Fernance. Mais si le sort l'avait uni à une maîtresse tendre, passionnée, qui eût éprouvé pour lui un peu du même amour que j'ai, ne serais-je pas encore plus malheureuse ? Ah ! je n'avais rien à désirer, sinon qu'il n'eût appartenu à personne et que personne n'eût été à lui. Au lieu de cela, quand bien même j'aurais quelque attrait pour lui, il faut qu'il se dise en me voyant : Il ne m'est pas permis de l'aimer. [...] Je ne puis plus écrire. Je souffre cruellement ; et quelle consolation puis-je espérer ? Mon sort est fixé, et ne peut changer jamais. Que ne puis-je fuir de ces lieux ! Tout ce que je vois est funesete à mon repos ; mais je suis attachée ici, et vous le savez, Adèle, puisque je n'ai pas eu le courage de m'éloigner , quand votre amitié l'a voulu." (*M,* 64)

[58] This also comes to the fore in a scene where Fernance and Marie are reading *Caliste,* the famous novel by Isabelle de Charrière (1787). When Fernance says that Caliste is not loved and unhappy, Marie responds that, because Caliste has at least loved (and confessed to it), unhappiness is not her only lot.

[59] "non u tames oro, verum ut amere sinas" (l.96) From, "XV Sappho Phaoni," Sappho's verse letter to Phaon, pp.186 (Latin) and 187 (English), *P. Ovidi Nasonis Heroides*, bilingual edition, *Heroides and Amores* transl. G. Showerman and revised by G.P. Goold.

[60] That is, though not murmured in a surround of silence Marie's speech seems to speak to no one, as if it could not speak on the behalf of anyone, as if it crumbled to dust at the very moment of its pronouncement. Even when it appears most barren of interlocution Marie's non-command is not deserted of audience but, and this would seem to be the intriguing aspect of its form, it acts as if it were, for it concurrently allows its addressee, Fernance, to remain unburdened of the necessity to retort at all.

[61] While Marie's petition appears self-rescinding in style and rhetorical in dress Fernance is nevertheless interpellated by its call, one that, as has become evident, he cannot ultimately answer to. For though Marie's plaint seems directed toward Fernance, it also leaves him ungrazed of its claims, insofar as the linguistic guise that her plaint dons remains too lightweight and attenuated of assertiveness to qualify in the slightest as a literal question beckoning an answer. Whence an added hue to the quandary of Marie's plaint: it is not just that loving and living mutually countermand each other within the terms of her query,

but, rather, that the query itself subsists without Fernance's response. It is said as if it had no need of him at the same time that, paradoxically, it endures as an appeal addressed to him alone. The chasteness of Marie's question renders any possible reply Fernance could furnish redundant even as it remains a question that appears directed only to him. He cannot respond with love if he wishes to maintain her life, but nor can he avoid having already been addressed by a question mercilessly unresponsive as to whatever it is he might say.

[62] "[N]e me rends pas ce que je donne," so Marie's words seem to forewarn Fernance, "[i]l suffit que tu l'entendes, que tu commences à comprendre et à reconnaître. Tu as commencé à recevoir son injonction, à te rendre à ce qu'il dit, et plus tu lui obéiras en ne restituant rien, mieux tu lui désobéiras et te rendras sourd à ce qu'il t'adresse." From Derrida, "En ce moment même dans cet ouvrage me voici," pp.162-3. Still employing the idiom of this essay, one might recapitulate Fernance's predicament as follows: "Si je restitue, si je restitue sans faute, je suis fautif. Et si je ne restitue pas, en *donnant* au-delà de la reconnaissance, je risque la faute."

[63] *Ibid*, 152. However, as has been outlined, Fernance cannot *not* respond, he cannot but attempt to recognize, reappropriate, or restitute even when asked not to.

[64] This is not to imply *grosso modo* that there is no scene of address that takes place between Marie and Fernance, as if Marie's words were swathed in autarchic, self-enclosed power or phenomenological purity. The indifference to reply her question seems to sport does not amount to a virginal, private language purring in self-present soliloquy. Still less does it mean that her language operates as if were a god-like agent, a sovereign "I" endowed with the divine capacity to speak unneedful of a "you," an other and interlocutor. Nor does the seeming impassivity and unresponsiveness of Marie's supplication to Fernance's reply mean it expresses an intuitive voice in communion with itself, as one would say in post-husserlian terminology. It is not as if Marie's supplication subsists in an intuitionist, autoaffectionate immersion, liberated from indication, division, and estrangement. At least since Derrida's *la voix et le phenomène*, *La voix et le phénomène* there have been several critiques and trans-valuations of the phenomenological presupposition in Husserl's writings wherein the claim is made that there are two sorts of signs, indication and expression. Indicators do just that, they point to but they do not mean. Expression on the other hand would be the self-expression of the self in consciousness, a sort of imaginary communion with the self that is at the same time not a communication with the self. The interior voice might represent things to the "me" but its ideality is preserved from indication. The distinction between indicative communication and imaginary soliloquy, however, if dependent on repetition means the sign could be representable, repeatable, and thus not sovereignly free from indication. If the ideality of presence is to be followed to its logical limit, it must presuppose the death of the agent to whom it is supposed consciousness is conferred, in soliloquy. Cf. Geoffrey Bennington/Derrida's *Jacques Derrida*.

[65] Indeed, from this perspective, Marie's supplication might be likened to Juliet's well-known apostrophe —"O Romeo, Romeo ! wherefore art thou Romeo"— in Shakespeares' tragedy *Romeo and Juliet* (1591-5). Juliet, thinking she's alone, addresses her words to the night -to nothing or to no one- but at the same time is unwittingly only speaking to Romeo. She speaks to him not just by rhetorical address but also quite literally, since Romeo watches her secretly from the shadows, "bescreen'd in night." Both Marie and Juliet's words conjure a fictive address and apostrophe that is concurrently personal and impersonal insofar as it seems to account for their lover's presence at the same time that it leaves them uncounted altogether. And so too is Fernance, like Romeo, at once addressed and disregarded by a question that seems destined for his reply even as it speaks to no one in particular.

[66] The distinction Walter Benamin drew between *Erlebnis* (Lived experience), and *Erfahrung* (unlived/wisdom-drenched experience) might be applied here, insofar as experience that seems unlived –where sensation is not guaranteed nor adducive to a totality- might be said to permeate *Hypolite*.

[67] Denise Riley, *Impersonal passions, language as affect*, p.13.

[68] Cf. Kierkegaard's *Works of Love*, "Love's Hidden Life and Its Recognizability by Its Fruits," which draws contrary implications in the Apostle John's imperative, pp.11-12. Julie's words are offered irrespective of what they mean or imply –what can be said about them or to them- for they endure as a certain testimony, since she does not *say* what she wishes of Hypolite, does not communicate a definite meaning he could prize or assert a factuality he could judge, they are recessive rather than aggressive.

[69] Judith Butler, *Giving an Account of oneself*, p.26. If this is right, then it also seems inescapable to concede that there is no diagnosable 'speaker' to be found abaft the utterance it is thought to animate, even if it may be that all questions needs must conjure the fiction of a questioner. For if language is not merely instrument or tool of a speaker who can possess it through usage but also, crucially, the impersonal means without which no subject could be possible at all, then the very scenario of "Julie," an agent, posing a question to "Hypolite," an addressee, is a grammatical fable and ruse. If the question erodes so too does the subject thought to prompt it.

[70] Ibid, p.28. The context is a post-hegelian query of the scene of recognition.

[71] It is for this reason that her query appears featherweight, all fragility, for her overture can yield neither demand nor desire: less important is what her question may ask or mean then that there be a question at all. To do otherwise would risk

imposing too much on Hypolite, would risk encumbering him with the burden to act or respond in some way, when in fact it is by not responding and not repaying her regard that he can be held in the address of her question.Or better, unable to wilfully intend her speech, Julie's words offer her at the same time that they simply cannot. As the uses and ruses of language adumbrate, it would be a grammatical fable to posit "Julie" as the subject of a speech she authors, wilfully intends, or can even offer in the first place. In this regard, the gift tendered is nullified in its very offering; one that is given when it cannot be given, one that is delivered only to be rendered null. And yet, even if Julie's question is not tantamount to a "deed and truth" of love orchestrated by her control, it is not thereby absent altogether.

[72] Or rather, it is not that there 'are' two individuals who pre-exist their exteriority to words, but that everything is sheer surface to begin with, externalized. Consider the psychoanalytic notion of the *partes extra partes* "Pure space is based on the notion of the part, as long as one adds to that the following, that all of the parts are external to each other" (Lacan, *Encore*, p.23.) or in deconstructive idiom, such a "partage" –distribution and sharing, even 'parting'- "does not obey a logic of distinction, it is not a parting with two parts," (Derrida, *Il Gusto*, p.61.) there is not something of them outside/ or before or beyond the language they employ.

[73] Derrida's *Le Toucher, Jean-Luc Nancy*, offers a succinct version of what the following pages will submit, namely that "à l'origine du *se sentir* comme *se toucher*," there would seem to be "la loi de *fiction* […] un lieu béant, donc, une bouche, que dans le *remplacement*, là où il ne trouve sa place que dans le remplacement." This substitutive replacement, "la trace de la métonymie ou de la prothèse technique, la place du phantasme aussi, c'est-à-dire du revenant spectral (*phantasma*)," are the linguistic occasions – words- by which feeling and touching become even possible to be spoken of at all, p. 48

[74] *Op cit*, p.149.

[75] This paradox is not new: those sweet nothings and empty promises whispered between paramours, those tattered promissory notes and dog-eared billet-doux bartered between knight and lady, those interminable speeches and soap-opera sagas that seem to drone on in an endless rumour through the pages of medieval Western European romances and lyrical laments, have always testified that the words passed between lovers are often, in the end, the only wispy remains of their relation: like phantom fossils of a love that may well been otherwise nonexistent, words constitute the slenderest of evidence for an unsubstantial relationship that might well have always been phantasmal had no written record been kept. Clearly, the division between survivable signifier and figmental disappearance is not so decisively separable. As Derrida's *Feu la cendre* and *La Carte postale* point out, the supposed materiality of the signifier, what Lacan's seminar on the purloined letter claimed to persist in its indivisablity ("en alléguant que cela survit au papier brûlé ou déchiré et dure de ne pas se laisser diviser", one reads in the *Carte postale* p.506), might always be no more than cinders, remains.

[76] One finds "conservez-moi votre amitié," in one letter of 1760, in *"Je meurs d'amour pour toi." Lettres à l'archiduchesse Marie-Christine, 1760-1763,* ed. ÉLisabeth Badinter (Paris: Éditions Tallandier, 2008), 80.

[77] This loss would remain unvowed because unavowable—Adèle does not first love and then find her love impossible, for her love has been prohibited from the beginning: a love that was impossible from the start because no conditions or conventions of recognition are in place.

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[1] *Will to Power,* 264. Translation modified.

[2] If Husserl presumed an auto-affectionate self communing with itself in presence —and not passing through the exteriority of the signifier by wallowing in a pre-expressive signified sense—Derrida argues that difference does not supervene upon self-presence, but always worked it from within: "This movement of difference does not supervene upon a transcendental subject. The movement of différance produces the transcdentnal subject. Auto-affection is not a modality of experience that characterizes a being that would already be itself (*autos*). Auto-affection produces the same as the self-relation in the difference with itself, the same as the non-identical.

[3] *Voice,* 4.

[4] *Voice,* 64. The passage continues: "Since the sense is determined on the basis of a relation to the object, the medium of experiession must protect, respect, and restore the *presence* of the sense, *at once as the being-in-front of the object* available to a look, and *as the proximity to oneself in interiority*. The *pre* of the *present ob*ject now-in-front-of is an *against* …at once in the sense of the *up-against* of proximity and the *over-against* of the op-posite."

[5] "Phenomenology and the Closure of Metaphysics: Introduction to the Thought of Husserl," trans. Ronald Bruzina in *The New Yearbook for Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy III* (2003), 118. The deconstructions carried out in *La voix et le phénomène,* are all devoted to the Husserlian presumption of "an originaly silent, 'pre-expressive' layer of lived-experience" as if meaning never needed to pass through the exteriority of the signifier (13). But because ideal objects need to be created/intended language cannot be avoided.

[6] *Voice,* 21. See also *Voice*: "the systematic solidarity of the concept of sense, ideaity, objectivity, truth, intuition, perception, and expression. Their common matrix is being a *presence*: the absolute proximity of self-identity; the being-in-front o the object in its availability for repetition; the maintaining of the temporal present, the ideal form of which is the self-presence of

transcendental *life* whose ideal identity allows *idealiter* repetition to infinity. The living-present, which is a concept that cannot be decomposed into a subject an attribute, is therefore the founding concept of phenomenology as metaphysics" (85)

[7] *Grammatology,* 12. This argument follows Derrida's claim in *Speech and Phenomenon*. For Husserl, in "internal discouse, I communicate nothing to myselr and can only pretend to, *because I have no need to communicate anything to myself.* Such an operation—communication from self to self—cannot take place because it would make no sense. And it would make no sense because it would have no *purpose*" (41). Derrida will go on to argue, however, that every present is itself a repetition implicit in the very notion of phenomenological ideality: "*ideality,* of that which *is*, which can be *repeated* indefinitely in the *identity* of its *presence* because fo the very fact that it *does not exist*" (5). That which secures the ideality of ideality is "the *living present*, the self-presences of transcendental life" (6). Derrida's project will be to underline how phenomenology is dirempted from within by "an irreducible non-presence recognized as constituting value, and with it a non-life or a non-presence of the living present, a non-belonging of the living present to itself, a non-originarity that cannot be eradicted" (*ibid*). For Husserl would have followed metaphysics in privileging logic as prior to and superior to the sign, defining the essence of language as a logic whose telos is "being as presence" (7). Presence here refers to "the proximity of what is set out as an object of an intuition and the proximity fo the temporal present which gives its form to the clear and actual intuition of the object" (8). Because ideality does not exist it can, in Husserl's argument, be repeated indefinitely to a transcendental consciousness. Living speech would seem to embody both life and ideality.

[8] *Grammatology,* 20. See Also *Voice*: "In order to really understand that in which the power of the voice resides, and that in which metaphysics, philosophy, the determination of being as presence are the epoch of the voice as the *technical* mastery of object-being, in order to really understand the unity of *techne* and *phone*, it is necessary to think the objectivity of the obect. The ideal object is the most objective of objects; it is independent of the *hic et nunc* of events and of the acts of the empirical subjectivity who intends it. The ideal object an be repeated, to infinity, while remaining the same. Its presence to intuition, its being-in-fronto-of for the look depends essentially on no mundane or empirical synthesis; the restoration of its sense in the form of presence becomes a universal and unlimited possibility but its ideal-being is *nothing* outside of the world; it must be constituted, repeated, and expressed in a medium that does not impair the presence and the self-presence of the acts that intend it: a medium that preserves at once the *presence of the object* in front of the intuition and the *presence to oneself*, the absolute proximity of the acts to themselves. Since th idealit yfo the object isonly its being-for a non-empirical consciousness, it can be expressed only in an element whose phenomenality does not have th for m of mundanity. *The voice is the name of this element. The voice hears itself.* Phonic signs…are 'heard' by the subject who utters them in the absolute proximity of their present. The subject does not have to pass outside of himself in order to be immediately affected by its activity of expression. My words are 'alive' because they seem not to leae m, seem not to fall outside of me, outside of my breath, into a visible distance; they do not stop belonging to me, to be at mydisposal, 'without anything accessory'"…in this way, the phenomenon of thevoice, the phenomenological voice, is *given*" (65). The relation to substance is also revealed: "Husserl cannot bracket what the glossematicians call the 'substance of expression' without threatening his entire project. The appeal to this substance plays therefore a major philosophical role" (66). In this sense, the hearing-oneself-speak, does not pass outside itself, but remains in auto-affectionate proximity to itself. Thus even when spoken to another the other would hear the hearing-oneself-speak and reproduce it in their own auto-affection: "This possibility of reproduction, whose structure is absolutely unique, *gives itself* as the phenomenon of an unlimited mastery or an unlimited power over the signifier…It would therefore be possible that the signifier be absolutely near to the signified intended by intuition and guiding the meaning. The signifier would become perfectly diaphanous by reason of the absolute proximity of the signified." (69).

[9] *Grammatology*: "phonocentrism merges with the historical determination of the meaning of being in general as *presence,* with all the subdeterminations which depend on this general form and which organize within it their system and their historical sequence (presence of the thing to the sight as *eidos,* presence as substance/essence/existence [*ousia*], temporal presence as point [*stigmè*] of the now or of the moment [*nun*], the self-presence of the cogito, consciousness, subjectivity, the co-presence of the other and of the self, intersubjectivity as the intentional phenomenon of the ego, and so forth" (12). And *Voice*: "The 'apparet transcenence' of the ovice…is based on the fact that the signified, which is always essentially ideal, the 'expressed' *Bedeutung*, is immediately present ot the act of expression. This immediate presence is based on the fact tha the phenomenological 'body' of the signifier seems to erase itself in the very moment it is produced. From this point on, it seems to belong to the element of ideality. It reruces itself phenomenologically and transforms the mundane opacity of its body into pure diaphaneity. This erasure of the sensible body and of its exteriority is *for consciousness* the very form of the immediate presence of the signifier" (66). And elsewhere: "When I speak, it belongs to the phenomenological essence of this operation that *I hear myself during the time* that I speak. The signifier that is animated by my breath and by the intention of signification…is absolutely close to me. The living act, the act that gives life…that animates the body of the signifier and transforms it into an expression that wants to say, the soul of language ,seems not to separate itself from itself, form its presence ot itself. The soul of language does not risk death in the body of a signifier abandoned to the world and to the visbility of space. The soul can *show* the ideal object or the ideal *Bedeutung,* which relates to it, without venturing outside of ideality, outside of the interiority of life present to itself…The phenomenon does not

stop being an object for the vvoice. On the contrary, insofar as the ideality of the object seems to depen on the voice and thus becomes *absolutely available* in it, the system that connects phenomenality to the possibility of *Zeigen* functions better than ever in the voice. *The phoneme gives itself as the mastered ideality of the phenomenon*" (66-7). In this sense, the speaker is supposed to hear herself speak, phoneme converging with intention (want-to-say).

[10] "*Ousia*," 40. This last claim becomes clearer when further considering Derrida's essay "*Ousia* and *Gramme,*" a part of which analyzes the aporia Aristotle encounters in the *Physics* (IV), when discussing time. Does time apply to beings or to non-beings? Aristotle suggests, in a first movement, that time is and is not: when trying to secure the *now* (*nun*) in and of itself, apart from that which no longer is and that which is not yet, effaces the *now* as a being and implicates it in relation to its nonbeing. (Hegel glosses this aporia quite eloquently in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*: "The Now is pointed to, *this* Now.'Now'; it has already ceased to be in the act of pointing to it. The Now that *is*, is another Now than the one pointed to, and we see that the Now is just this: to be no more just when it is. The Now, as it is pointed out to us, is Now that *has been* and this is its truth; it has not the truth of *being*.") Trans. A.V. Miller (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 63 (Paragraph 106). The passage continues"But what essentially has been [*gewesn ist*] is, in fact, not an essence that *is* [*kein Wesen*]; *it is not.*" The *nun* thus proves divisible, and subject to the non-presence inasmuch as it is given as what no longer is and what is not yet: as a now follows another in time it cannot simply obliterate the preceding now (or time itself would cease), nor can it only successively efface the preceding now (otherwise there would only be a simultaneity of nows, eliminating time), nor can the now stay the same now (or the intervals time-spans would be undermined, once again defeating time). Derrida comments: "The preceding now…must be destroyed by the following now. But, Aristotle then points out, it cannot be destroyed 'in itself'…that is, at the moment when it is…No more can it be destroyed in another now…for then it would not be destroyed as now [for it would still remain a now]; and, as a now which has been, it is (remains) inaccessible to the action of the following now" (57). And if it is, to cite Hegel, "no more when it is," then time is not given in the present, for it is not as though the past and future supervene unto a *nun* that exists atemporally apart from them. This contradication is not resolved by espousing an understanding of time as predicated on the succession of indivisible nows (never coeval with other nows) rather than a coexistence of plurals nows, it in fact aggravates the paradox. As Derrida argues later on in "*Ousia*": "This impossibility implies in its essence, in order to be what it is, that the other now, with which a now cannot coexist, is also in a certain way the same, is also a now as such, and that it coexists with that which cannot coexist with it. The impossibility of coexistence can be posited as such only on the basis of a certain coexistence, of a certain *simultaneity* of the nonsimultaneous, in which the alterity and identity of the now are maintained together in the differentiated element of a certain same" (55). Even if it were argued that the *nun* is affected with the nonbeing of time but is itself not of time, as a being that abides through time and is not lost in the becomings of past and future, pinpointing the "now" remains irresolvable. This establishes Derrida's affirmation of the metaphysical connivance between *ousia* and *parousia*.

[11] Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena,* 72 footnote. For Husserl, Derrida argues in *Speech and Phenomena*, verbality/expression would be a sudden restoration of sense, as if meaning were already in intuition, present to the self: "Since the sense is determined on the basis of a relation to the object, the medium of expression must protect, respect, and restore the *presence* of the sense, *at once as the being-in-front of the object* available to a look, and *as the proximity to oneself in interiority*. The *pre* of the *present ob*ject now-in-front of is *against* (*Gegen*wart, *Gegen*stand) at once in the sense of the *up-against* of proximity and the *over-against* of the opposite" (64).

[12] *Speech and Phenomena*, 72 footnote: "…[But] The determination of 'absolute subjectivity' would also have to be erased as soon as we think the present on the basis of différance and not the reverse. The concept of *subjectivity* belongs *apriori and in general* to the order of the *constituted.* This holds *a fortiori* for the analogical appresentation that constitutes intersubjectivity. Intersubjectivity is inseparable from temporalization as the openness of the present to an outside-of-itself, to an *other* absolute present. This outside-of-itself of time is its *spacing*: an *archi-scene*. This scene, as the relation of a present to an other present *as such,* that is, a non-derived re-presentation…produces the structure of the sign in general as 'referral,' as being-for-something…and radically forbits its reduction. There is no constituting subjectivity. And it is necessary to deconstruct all the way down to the concept of constitution."

[13] Heidegger seems to overlook this dislocation of the self into otherness in his evaluation of Hegel in "Hegel's Concept of Experience," in *Off the Beaten Track*, ed. and trans. Julian Young and Kenneth Haynes (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

[14] See also, "Eating Well." In Derrida's reading of Heidegger the subject is a project, it is thrown in to being, "The subject assumes presence, that is to say sub-stance, statsis, stance. Not to be able to stabilize itself *absolutely* would mean to be able *only* to be stabilizing itself" (270). Derrida goes on to speak of the ex-appropriation of the subject that which cannot be subjectivated, not a closure or self-enclosure upon oneself, what of the other who cannot be interiorized: "If we still wish to speak of the subject—the juridical, ethical, political, psychological subject, and so forth—and of what makes its semantics communicate with that of the subject of a proposition (distinct from qualities, attributes viewed as substance, phenomena, and so on) or with the theme or the thesis (the subject of a discourse or of a book), it is first of all necessary to submit to the test of questioning the essential predicates of which all subjects are subject. While these predicates are as numerous and diverse as the type or order of subjects

dictates, they are all in fact ordered around being-present [*étant-présent*]: presence to self-which implies therefore a certain interpretation of temporality; identity to self, positionality, property, personality, ego, consciousness, will intentionality, freedom, humanity, etc."

[15] Simon Critchley, *The Ethics of Deconstruction: Derrida and Levinas* (West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Press, 1999), 29.

[16] "*Ousia* and *Gramme*: Note on a Note from *Being and Time*," in *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 38.

[17] Consider, in this regard Jean-Luc Marion's contentions in *Étant Donné: Essai d'une phénoménologie de la donation* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1997). In contradistinction to a classical liberal model of personhood or an existentialist theory of choice that might take the category of the subject as its analytic point of departure, Marion's proposal is that "la détermination du phénomène comme donné, si elle peut et doit se dispenser de tout donateur, advient cependant toujours à un donataire: 'ce qui vient après le sujet,' nous le décrivons ici comme l'adonnée, sans autre *subjectum* que son aptitude à recevoir et à *se* recevoir de ce qu'il reçoit" (9); "lorsque nous disons que la donation réduite ne demande aucun donateur pour son donnée, nous n'insinuons *pas* qu'elle réclame un donateur transcendant; lorsque nous disons que la phenomenologie de la donation outrepasse par definition la métaphysique, nous ne sous-entendons *pas* que cette phenomenology restaure la métaphysique; et lorsque enfin nous opposons l'adonné à la subjectivité transcendantale, nous ne suggérons *pas* que le 'sujet' renaît dans la donation" (11). Derrida counters the traces of onto-theology (and the presumptive premises of Husserlian phenomenology), in asking whether the given is never given as such or in presence but remains deferred or projected to come—in other words, even the gesture of accounting for phenomena as *given*, and without regard to the giver, still remains within the Husserlian paradigm of intentional experience (the given is what is perceived). See "On the Gift: A Discussion between Jacques Derrida and Jean-Luc Marion," in *God, the Gift, and Postmodernism*, eds. John D. Caputo and Michael J. Scanlon (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1999), 54-78.

[18] *Voice and Phenomenon* makes the relation between presence, experience, and life apparent: "The metaphysics of presence in the form of ideality is also a philosophy of *life*" (9). Lyotard also suggests as much in *The Assassination of Experience:* "that Life signifies the death of what one is, and this death certifies that life has a meaning, that one is not a stone. A third axiom gives experience its full scope: the world is not an entity external to the subject, it is the common name for the objects in which the subject alienates himself (loses himself, dies to himself) in order to arrive at himself, to live" (85).

[19] As is remarked in Derrida's *Voice and Phenomenon:* even to make a pronouncement about lived experience is to entail, structurally, my death, insofar as the descriptive phrase must be repeatable and recuperable beyond and outside my saying of it: "My death is structurally necessary to pronouncing the 'i.' [...] The statement 'I am living' is accompanied by my being-dead and the sttement's possibility requires the possibility that I be dead—and the reverse." (82-3).

[20] See Butler's reflections on Derrida's notion of "survival" in "On never having learned how to live" in *differences: A journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* (2005) 16 (3): 27-34.

[21] Motley philosophical and contemporary theoretical inquiries pullulate with titles and concepts for the faintness of inexperience, for its namelessness and nebulousness: impossible experiences and experiences of the impossible; unclaimed, uncounted, or "counter-" experiences; "para-experiences" without a cognizant, self-perceptive subject and thus an experience without experience; subjectless, limit-experiences that so expunge the distinction between the fictional and empirical bounds of experience that they are without the negativity of even the notion of "without" itself...Derrida's *Apories : mourir-- s'attendre aux "limites de la vérité"* (Paris : Galilée, c1996), for example, links experience to its impossibilities: "Peut-on parler et en quel sens d'une *expérience de l'aporie ? De l'aporie comme telle ?* Ou inversement : une experience est-elle possible qui ne soit pas expérience de l'aporie?" (35). This is echoed also in *Spectres de Marx : l'état de la dette, le travail du deuil et la nouvelle Internationale* (Paris : Editions Galilée, c1993) : "partout où il y a deconstruction, il s'agirait de lier une *affirmation* (en particulier politique), *s'il y en a*, à l'expérience de l'impossible, qui ne peut être qu'une experience radicale du *peut-être*," (65). Martin Jay's *Songs of Experience: Modern American and European Variations on a Universal Theme*, (Ewing, NJ: University of California Press, 2004), details scores of so-called post-structuralist philosophies of experience, asking, in the final Chapters: "can there be experiences worthy of the name, experiences without the robust, integrated subject, which deny presence, plenitude, interior depth, and narrative completion? Can there be a non-phenomenological notion of an experience that isn't so much actively 'lived' as suffered or endured? Must a plausible notion of experience mean refusing the insight that the object, thing, or other at least to some degree inhabits or haunts the subject, agent, or self? Can the ecstatic de-centering of the self produce an experience that resists location in an integral, coherent ego?" (367). On "Limit experiences" see Blanchot's *l'entretien infini* (Paris: Gallimard, 1969), George Bataille's *Inner experience*, translated and with an introduction by Leslie Anne Boldt (Albany : State University of New York Press, c1988), and Foucault's definition thereof -"an experience of the *impossible* (the impossible being both that which we experience and that which constitutes experience)" in "A Preface to Transgression," in Michel Foucault *Language, counter-memory, practice : selected essays and interviews*; edited, with an introd., by Donald F. Bouchard ; translated from the French by Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon (Ithaca, N.Y. : Cornell University Press, 1977), 32 and as "the task of 'tearing' the subject from itself in such a

way that it is no longer the subject as such, or that it is completely 'other' than itself so that it may arrive at its annihilation, its dissociation. It is this de-subjectifying undertaking, the idea of a 'limit-experience' that tears the subject from itself" which is at stake- from "How an "experience-Book' is Born," in *Remarks on Marx. Conversations with Duccio Trombadori* (New York : Semiotext(e), c1991), 31-2. The passage continues: "Experience is neither true nor false: it is always a fiction, something constructed, which exists only after it has been made, not before; it isn't something that is 'true,' but it has been a reality," (36). Anne-Lise François' "uncounted experiences" in *Open Secrets: The Literature of Uncounted Experience* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008) denotes a fulfilled, mild and minimal experience that is deliberately, lightly, uncounted, whereas Cathy Caruth's "unclaimed experience" in the Unclaimed experience : trauma, narrative, and history (Baltimore : Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), details a traumatic return and repetition of a belated experience. Peggy Kamuf's "The Experience of Deconstruction" in *Book of Addresses* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005) deconstructs some of the founding tenets of empiricist experience through a reading of Freud. Joan Scott's essay "The Evidence of Experience" from *Critical Inquiry* , Vol. 17, No. 4 (Summer, 1991), pp. 773-797 interrogates the consideration of experience as self-evident, while Jardine's "The Demise of Experience" in *Gynésis: Configurations of women and modernity* traces the decimation of a simplistic understanding of the concept (New York : Semiotext(e), c1991), 145-55. On "counter-experiences" see Jean-Luc Marion's *The visible and the revealed* trans. Christina M. Gschwandtner et al. (New York : Fordham University Press), 2008. and on "para-experience[s]" Lyotard's *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute,* trans. George Van Den Abbeele (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988).

[22] For this notion of repetition in experience whereby the plurality of experiences becomes reduced to the abstract singular noun of "experience" see Peggy Kamuf, "The Experience of Deconstruction," in *Book of Addresses* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2005).

[23] Nietzsche, *Compendium,* 179.

[24] We see the reemergence of this latter figure in contemporary theories of the "multiple subject" which define the subject through myriad variables of identity but do not call into question the fundamental category of a subject standing behind or beyond all of the multiple relations that compose who it is.

[25] *Twilight of the Idols* in *Compendium,* 314, 316.

[26] Nietzsche, *Compendium,* 53.

[27] See also *Unpublished:* "All explaining and knowing is actually nothing but categorization.—Now with a bold leap: the manifoldness of things isplaced under a single heading when we view them, as it were, as countelss actions of *one single* quality ,for example, actions of water, as in the case of Thales… innumerable actions are subsumed under one abstraction that is taken to be their cause. What abstraction (characteristic) subsumes the manifoldness of all things? The quality 'watery,' 'moist.' The entire world is moist, *hence, the state of being moist is the eseence of the entire world*. Metonymy! A false inference. A predicate is confused with a sum of predicates (definition). *Logical thought*…develops quite slowly. But false inferences are more accurately understood as metonymies, that is, rhetorically, poetically. All *rhetorical figures* (that is, the essence of language) are *logical paralogisms*. This is where reason begins!We observe how *philosophy* is at first carried on in the same manner in which *language emerged,* that is, illogically" (68). See also: "Synthetic judgments describe a thing according to its consequences, which means *essence* and *consequences* are *identified,* which means a *metonymy*. Thus a *metonymy* lies at the essence of synthetic judgment, which means it is a *false equation*" (75).

[28] *Unpublished,* 74.

[29] *Compendium,* 325-6. Nietzsche also problematizes the conceit of willing, especially as it appears in Schopehnhauer, in *Beyond Good and Evil*: "he seems to have adopted a *popular prejudice* and exaggerated it. Willing—seems to me to be above all something *complicated*, something that is a unity only in name—and it is precisely in a name that popular prejudice lurks, which has got the mastery over the inadequate precautions of philosophers…let us say that in all willing there is firstly a plurality of sensations, namely, the sensation of the condition '*away from which* we go,' the sensation of the condition *towards which* we go,' the sensation of this '*from*' and *'towards'* itself…Inasmuch as in the given circumstances we are at the same time the commanding *and* the obeying parties, and as the obeying party we know the sensations of constraint, impulsion, pressure, resistance, and motion, which usually commence immediately after the act of will; inasmuch as, on the other hand, we are accustomed to disregard this duality, and to deceive ourselves about it by means of the synthetic term 'I': a whole series of erroneous conclusions, and consequently of false judgements about the will itself, has become attached to the act of willing—to such a degree that he who wills believes firmly that willing *suffices* for action….he who wills believes with a fair amount of certainty that will and action are somehow one….*L'effet c'est moi*" (25-6).

[30] See *Unpublished*: "The statement: there is no knowledge without a knower or no subject without an object and no object without a subject, is entirely true, but utterly trivial. We cannot say anything about the thing in itself because we have pulled the standpoint of the knower, that is, of the measurer, out from under our own feet. A quality exists *for us,* that is, measured according to us. If we take away the standard, then what remains of the quality! We can prove what things *are* only by means of a measuring subject placed alongside them. Their properties in themselves are of no concern to us; they matter only insofar as they have an effect on us.Now, the question is: How did such a measuring being come about?" (50)

[31] Nietzsche, *Compendium,* 24.

[32] *Compendium,* 28. See also, *Unpublished*: "A specific sensation and a specific visual image—always appear together: the belief that the one is the cause of the is *a metaphor, adopted from* ***will*** *and act:* an analogical inference. The only form of causality of which we are aware is that between willing and acting—we transfer this to all things and thereby explain the relationship between two changes that always occur together. The intention, or willing, produces nouns, actions produce verbs…[Thus] one of our *characteristics* leads to action: whereas in reality what happens is that we infer characteristics on the basis of action: we assume the existence of characteristics because we observe actions of a particular sort. Thus: the *action* comes first; we connect it with a characteristic. First the word for the action arises, from it is derived the word for the quality. This relationship transferred onto all things is *causality*. First 'seeing,' then 'sight.' The one who 'sees' is taken to be the cause of 'seeing.' Between the sense and its function we experience a regulated relationship: causality is the transfer of this relationship (of sense to sensory function) onto all things…*Sensing a stimulus to be an activity*, sensing something that is passive to be active, is the first sensation of causality, that is, the initial sensation already produces this sensation of causality…A word such as 'seeing' is *one* word for that interconnection of stimulus and activity. *The eye acts upon a stimulus*: that is, it sees. We explain the world on the basis of our sensory functions: which means, we presuppose a causality everywhere because we ourselves are *constantly experiencing* changes of this sort" (64-5).

[33] *Will to Power,* 268. This passage comes from fragment 484 (Spring-Fall 1887). The passage continues: "In short, this is not merely the substantiation of a fact but a logical-metaphysical postulate—Along the lines followed by Descartes one does not come upon something absolutely certain but only upon the fact of a very strong belief. If one reduces the proposition to 'There is thinking, therefore there are thoughts,' one had produced a mere tautology: and precisely that which is in question, the 'reality of thought,' is not touched upon— that is, in this form the 'apparent reality' of thought cannot be denied. But what Descartes desired was that thought should have, not an *apparent* reality, but a reality *in itself*."

[34] Nietzsche, *Will to Power,* 186. On the metaphysics of substance, see Michel Haar, "Nietzsche and Metaphysical Language" in *Nietzsche: Contemporary Styles of Interpretation*, ed. David Allison (New York: Delta, 1977), 17-8 and Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 28.

[35] *Nachgelassene Fragmente* (1885) in *Sämtliche Werke: Kritische Studienausgabe in 15 Bänden,* ed. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1980), vol 11, 639-40. See also *Compendium*: "a thought comes when 'it' wishes, and not when 'I' wish; so that it is a *perversion* of the facts of the case to say that he subject 'I' is the condition of the predicate 'think.' *One* thinks; but that this 'one' is precisely the famous old 'ego,' is, to put it mildly, only a supposition, an assertion, and assuredly not an 'immediate certainty.' After all, one has even gone too far with this 'one thinks'—even the 'one' contains an *interpretation* of the process, and does not belong to the process itself. One infers here according to the usual grammatical formula—'To think is an activity; every activity requires an agency that is active; consequently….' More rigorous minds, however, learnt at last to get along without this 'earth-residuum,' and perhaps someday we shall accustom ourselves, even from the logician's point of view, to get along without the little 'one' (to which the worthy old 'ego' has refined itself)" (24-5).

[36] See *Unpublished:* "In political society a firm agreement is necessary, it is based on the customary use of metaphors. Every uncommon one disrupts, indeed, destroys it. Thus, what constitutes political propriety and morality is using every word in the very same way the masses use it. To be *true* simply means not to deviate from the common meaning of things. The true is the *existent*, as opposed to the nonreal. The first convention is the one that determines what should be considered 'existent.'…Initially the word 'true' means nothing other than what custom has made into the common metaphor—hence merely an illusion to which one has become accustomed due to frequent use, and that hence no logner is felt to be na illusion: forgotten metaphor, that is, a metaphor whose metaphorical nature has been forgotten" (72).

[37] (PhD diss., Yale University, 2014). On file with the author.

[38] This is also salient in Wittig's reading of Aristotle's *Metaphysics,* the science of first principles and causes of being and substance: "From terms [like male and female, rest and motion, straight and curved etc.] whose function had been to sort out, to classify, to make measurement possible, they were translated into a metaphysical dimension, and pretty soon they got totally dissociated from their context" (*SM* 51).

[39] "as long as oppositions (differences) appear as given, already there, before all thought, 'natural'—as long as there is no conflict and no struggle— there is no dialectic, there is no change, no movement" (*SM* 3).

[40] The extent to which "what we believe to be a physical and direction perception is only a sophisticated and mythic construction, an 'imaginary formation'" (*SM* 11-2).

[41] *Philosophische Untersuschungen*, trans. G.E.M. Anscombe (New York: Blackwell Publishing, 2001), 4/4e. All references to Wittgenstein's investigations will come from to this bilingual edition. Cited in text as *PI.*

[42] See also paragraphs 311 (on the "illusion of private exhibition") and 315 (on learning pain and experience).

[43] Paul de Man, "The Resistance to Theory" in *The Resistance to Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), 13.

[44] See Derrida's early essay, "La mythologie blanche (la métaphore dans le texte philosophique)" in *Marges—de la philosophie* (Paris: Éditions Minuit, 1972).

[45] "The Relation of the Rhetorical to Language" in *Friedrich Nietzsche on rhetoric and language*, ed. Sander L. Gilman et al (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 25.

[46] De Man, *Allegories of Reading: figural language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke, and Proust* (New Haven and London: Yale Univeristy Press, 1979), 234.

[47] *écriture et la différence,* 411. The rest of the passage gives: "It became necessary to think both the law which somewho governed desire for a centre in the constitution of structure, and the process of signification which orders the displacements and substitutions for this law of central presence—but as a central presence which has never been itself, has always already been exiled from itself into its own substitute. The substitute does not substitute itself for anything that which has somehow existed before it, henceforth, it was doubtless necessary to begin thinking that there was no center, that the center could not be thought in the form of a being-present [*étant-présent*], that the center had no natural site, that it was not a fixed location but a function, a sort of non-place in which substitutions of signs were endlessly coming into play [*se jouaient*]. This is the moment when language invades the field of the universal problematic…"

[48] *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (New York: Verso, 1985), 108.

[49] *Ibid*, 109.

[50] *Ibid,* 115.

[51] See Kearney, *Continental Thinkers.*

[52] Shoshana Felman's *The Scandal of the Speaking Body: Don Juan with J.L. Austin, or Seudction in Two Languages* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003) puts this succinctly: "language [is not] a *statement* fo the real, a simple reflection of the referent or its mimetic representation. Quite to the contrary, the referent is itself produced by language as its own *effect*…referential languge effects. This means that between language and referent there is no logner a simple opposition (nor is there identity, on the other hand): language makes itself part of what it refers to (without, however, being all that it refers to). Referential knowledge of language is not knowledge *about* reality (about a separate and distinct entity), but knowledge that *has to do with reality,* that acts within reality, since it is itself—at least in aprt—what this reality is made of. The referent is no longer simply a preexisting *substance,* but an *act,* that is a dynamic movement of modification of reality" (51). Judith Butler, in an afterword to the book, modifies this claim by adding that "an act refers only insofar as it presumes a situation upon which to act. Thus, although the referent institutes reality rather than describing it, the referent always institutes reality within an already constituted field. It is not God's performative, which brings into being what it names and thereby exercises the performative in a creation *ex nihilo* the performative, understood as illocutionary, indicates reality, even transforms it, as a matter of course; it seeks to modify a situation, to have acertain effects. It therefore has this situation as its necessary, if not constitutive referent. (The phenomenological word 'horizon' perhaps describes this better than 'referent.') Indeed, the instituting act cannot be conceived without this indication junction…[without] a referential field to act upon and transform, [and] so it also seeks to transform that field in accord with wishes and desires that are carried in language, that precede and exceed the strategic intentions of the speaker" (122).

[53] In this sense, it can be deduced that if experience is heteronomous to the language through which it is figured and by which it is constituted, then the indirection and indefinition in narration of fictions of romance, their obliquity and omission in diction, nullify the very phenomenality of experience itself, especially if the latter is only understood as an identifiable phenomenon, objectifiable thing, or discrete event that could be pointed to deictically and perceived directly.[53] Experience might never be self-evident nor manifestly apparent because always already textual, evermore inwoven by the language which confers it its outlines but with which it is not completely commensurate. Cf. Butler's opening remarks in *Bodies that matter, Excitable Speech,* and "How Can I Deny That These Hands and This Body Are Mine?" This also recalls the deconstructive caution that "*il n'y a pas de hors texte*" of Derrida's *De la grammatologie*.

[54] Studies that have contributed to questions concerning emotion, affect, and intensity (from vastly different theoretical positions) include Philip Fisher, *The Vehement Passions* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002) Heather Love, *Feeling Backward* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), Kathleen Stewart, *Ordinary Affects* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), Sianne Ngai, *Ugly Feelings* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), *The Affect Theory Reader*, ed. Melissa Gregg et al. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), and Marta Figlerowicz, "Affect Theory Dossier: An Introduction," *Qui Parle*, Vol. 20, No. 2 (Spring/Summer 2012), pp. 3-18; Martha Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions* (Cambridge, 2001). ; Charles Altieri, *The Particulars of Rapture* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004). Though not on affect *per se* , Catherine Diehl's dissertation "Theory of Intensive Magnitudes in Leibniz and Kant (Princeton University, 2012) also contributes to discussions of contemporary intensity.

[55] For example, Ruth Leys' "The Turn to Affect: A Critique" — Critical Inquiry 37, no. 3 (2011): 434-72—constitutes a controversial critique which takes issue with those studies that seem to disjoin affect from emotion, with the former representing "anti-intentional," nonsignifying and prepersonal/unconscious intensities, and the other embodying private or subjective states.

The essay is particularly critical of Brian Massumi, *Parables of the Virtual* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003) as well as Deleuzian accounts more generally. In post-Kantian terms, it would seem that materialist theories of affect ignore *Vorstellung* (representations as images of the mind) in favor of *Darstellung* (the sensible presentation of representations).

[56] See for example Judith Butler's early critique of Kristeva's notion of the "semiotic" and drive theory in *Gender Trouble*, which claims that historically contingent representations of drives might well "preexist" the very drives that are said to precede representation (120). Denis Riley also offers a critique of the subjective idealism implied in those theories which pose a disjunctive binary between language and affect. *Impersonal passion : language as affect* (Durham : Duke University Press, 2005). Clearly, however, the criticism leveled against uncritical appropriations of Deleuzian affect should not be conflated with Butler's critique of Kristeva's psychoanalytic account of drive theory (insofar as Deleuze significantly opposes psychoanalysis and its presumed "negativity").

[57] See for example Eric Shouse's distinctions in "Feeling, Emotion, Affect." *M/C Journal* 8.6 (2005). 05 Feb. 2013 <http://journal.media-culture.org.au/0512/03-shouse.php>.

[58] See Butler's compelling account of affect as a (non-subjective) act of interpretation in *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable?* (New York: Verso, 2009) and Denise Riley, *The words of selves : identification, solidarity, irony* (Stanford, Calif. : Stanford University Press, 2000), 36.

[59] When speaking of feeling, the sensations described do not pre-exist their discursive enunciation but nor are they mechanically constructed by it, merely reducible to linguistic stuff and pre-determined by a mechanistic signifying system. See Denise Riley, *The words of selves : identification, solidarity, irony* (Stanford, Calif. : Stanford University Press, 2000) and *Impersonal passion : language as affect* (Durham : Duke University Press, 2005).

[60] Interesting accounts on this topic include Catherine Malabou, "How Is Subjectivity Undergoing Deconstruction Today? Philosophy, Auto-Hetero-Affection, and Neurobiological Emotion," *Qui Parle*, Vol. 17, No. 2 (2009): 111-122 and Rei Terada, *Feeling in Theory: Emotion After "The Death of the Subject"* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003).

[61] See in particular Adrian Johnston and Catherine Malabou's *Self and Emotional Life: Philosophy, Psychoanalysis, and Neuroscience* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013).

[62] Butler, *Frames,* 50.

[63] Butler, *Frames of War, op cit.,* 71.

[64] Denby's *Sentimentalism and Social narrative* and Barthe's *Fragments d'un discours amoureux* (Paris : Éditions du Seuil, 1977) for example— conflate a language that represents sensation with its coincident performance *of* and *as* some sort of extra- or pre-linguistic sensation itself, which is to presume that a calculable sensory percept could, somehow, perfectly embody a material or ideal signified. In more philosophical terms, one might say that sentiment and all it stands for —perception, emotion, experience, sensation— are implied to be ontic entities or noumenal things-in-themselves, pre-given referents simply deposited into the bounds of discourse from without. If sentimental texts, so-called, display highly rhetorical portrayals of sentiment, the language of these works cannot simply be said to simply establish an *emotional language* or *the language of emotion* whose meaning would be simply be "sentimental," even if this has often been supposed to be the case.

[65] This would not mean, of course, that sensation would be reducible to linguistic stuff and pre-determined by a mechanistic signifying system. Indeed, far from securing a model of linguistic constructivism where language acts as an agent to univocally fashion its referents and re-exhibit them, one ought not ignore the deconstructive caution that "il n'y a pas de hors texte" (Cf. Jacques Derrida, *De la grammatologie*). To assume that there subsists some prelinguistic 'beyond,' untouched by relationality and referral, unembroiled in textual interlacements and interrelationships, untainted, in other words, by 'text' in the most robust sense of the term, is to reinstate sovereign signifieds, -transcendental concepts, irreducible foundations- as naturalized grounds and unquestionable preconditions. When it is claimed that experience is totally unspeakable, some sort of precomprehended knowledge, this merely theorizes the inverted image of meaning, its dyadic counterpart: the present absence of meaning. To theorize experience as abdicating linguistic holds -and eschewing contact with all things discursive- is itself a sense, the sense of declaiming the absence of sense, and thus a reinforcement of a linguistic model that claims a signified for its content (where this signified is precisely to mean "the negation of all signification") even when it attempts to shun it. Whether negated or posited, fixations on meaning never occasion an asylum from language's grasp as they purport to for they re-install a similar deterministic model of linguistic reference and meaning. And to say that experience meaning because it betokens the sensorial and the noncognitive still resides within a structure where only meaning -its presence- or meaning -its absence- are available possibilities, a structure, in other words, where the accent is still unduly put on meaning itself.

[66] It is precisely because the telling of inexperience is rendered by a poetics of prettification and pretermission that in fictions of romance this "lack of experience" —in all senses of the term— becomes a complexly discursive fiction —one without dialectical resolution and synthesis— rather than a mere determinate negation. This would not be a merely a determinate negation, a positive feature defined negatively (an experience that *is* what it is *not*; a positive experience that simply cannot appear *as such* but which nevertheless *is* even though hidden etc.), for notions of positivity and appearance are problematized when these

depictions are read in literary and discursive terms. As Derrida's *Apories : mourir-- s'attendre aux "limites de la vérité"* (Paris : Galilée, c1996) would have it experience is inevitably linked to its own aporias and impossibilities: "Peut-on parler et en quel sens d'une *expérience de l'aporie ? De l'aporie comme telle ?* Ou inversement : une experience est-elle possible qui ne soit pas expérience de l'aporie?" (35). This is echoed also in *Spectres de Marx : l'état de la dette, le travail du deuil et la nouvelle Internationale* (Paris : Editions Galilée, c1993) : "partout où il y a deconstruction, il s'agirait de lier une *affirmation* (en particulier politique), *s'il y en a*, à l'expérience de l'impossible, qui ne peut être qu'une experience radicale du *peut-être*," (65).

[67] The question would have been posed as far as Plato's *Timaeus* for which, it has been argued, matter (*hyle*) was not understood in terms of *aesthesis* but *anaisthesis:* not "the form of an actual experience but, instead, in the form of an experience of the potentiality for experience" (859). See Daniel Heller-Roazen "The Matter of Language: Guilhem de Peitieus and the Platonic Tradition, "*MLN*, Vol. 113, No. 4, French Issue (Sep., 1998), 851-880. In the ninth book of Aristotle's *Metaphysics,* for example, this potentiality for experience is described as "'that which is potential can both be and not be, for the same is potential both to be and not to be' (*to dynaton einai endekhetai einai kai me einai*)" (861). Every potentiality, then, must also be an impotentiality (every *dynamis* an *adynamia*), much like every experience would also be defined as its potential to be none at all, an "inexperience." If potentiality were always fruitful then it would never be potential because instantiated and actualized; potentialty is only possible to the extent that it might always fail to be (or to become) possible, to the extent that it might always occur otherwise to itself.

[68] Scott's "Evidence of Experience," reworks this grammar when it reports that "[i]t is not individuals who have experience, but subjects who are constituted through experience" (779). The passage continues: "Experience in this definition then becomes not the origin of our explanation, not the authoriatative (because seen or felt) evidence that grounds what is known, but rather that which we seek to explain, that about which knowledge is produced. To think about experience in this way is to historicize it as well as to historicize the identities it produces" (780). Scott concludes:"we need to attend to the historical processes that, through discourse, position subjects and produce their experiences" (779); "It ought to be possible…to 'make visible the assignment of subject-positions,' not in the sense of capturing the reality fo the objects seen, but of trying to understand the operations of the complex and changing discursive processes by which identities are ascribed, resisted, or embraced, and which processes themselves are unremarked an dindeed achieve their effect because the yare not noticed. To do this a change of objects seems to be required, one that takes the emergence of concepts and identities as historical events in need of explanation. This does not mean that one dismisses the *effects* of such concepts and identities, nor that one does not explain behavior in terms of their operations. It does mean assuming that the appearance of a new identity is not inevitable or determined, not something that was always there simply waiting to be expressed, not something that will always exist in the form it was given in a particular political movemtn or a t aparticular historical moment" (792); "Tracing the emergence of a new identity as a discursive event is not to introduce a new form of linguistic determinism, nor to deprive subjects of agency. It is to refuse a separation between 'experience' and language and to insist instead on the productive quality of discourse. Subjects are constituted discursively, but there are conflicts among discursive systesm, contradictiosn within any one of them, multiple meanings possible for the concepts they deploy. And subjects do have agency. They are not unified, autonomous individuals exercising free will, but rather subjects whose ageny is created through situatiosn and statuses conferred on them beign a subject means being 'subejct to definite conditions of existence, conditions of endowment of agents and conditions of exercise.' These conditons enable choses, although they are not unlimited. Subjects are constituted discursively and experience is a linguistic event (it doesn't happen outside established meanigns), but neither is it confined to a fixed order of meaning. Since discourse is by definition shared, experience is collective as well as individual. Experience can both confirm what is already known (we see what we have learned to see) and upset what has been taken for granted (when different meanigns are in conflict we re-adjust our vision to take account of the conflict or to resolve it—that is what is meant by 'learning from experience,' though not everyone lerans the same lesson or learsn it at the same time or in the same way). Experience is a subject's history. Language is the site of history's enactment…The question then becomes how to analyze language" (793).

[69] "How can we get away from this contract between the grammar of the subject or substantive and the ontology of substance or subject?" asks Derrida in " 'Eating Well,' or the Calculation of the Subject" in *Points…Interviews, 1974-1994* (Stanford California: Stanford University Press, 1995), 262. In regard to the "substantialist or subjectivist metaphysics" associated with the grammar of the subject. See also Judith Butler's discussion of the "metaphysics of substance," rephrasing Michel Haar, in "Subjects of Sex/Gender/Desire," in *Gender Trouble,* 27-8.

[70] See again Derrida, "Eating Well," according to which a certain tradition "from Descartes to Kant and to Husserl" would have, founded the "subject" on various predicates: "These predicates would be, for example, the sub-jective structure as the being-thrown—or under-lying— of the substance or of the *substratum*, of the *hypokeimenon*, with its qualities of stance or stability, of permanent presence, of sustained relation to self, everything that links the 'subject' to conscience, to humanity, to history" (259).

[71] René Descartes, *Discours de la method* (Paris: GF Flammarion, 2000), 33.

[72] In deconstructive idiom, the "constitutive outside" is the excluded contingent ostracized by the postulation of identity. If experience has long been placed in "presence," then inexperience constitutes the "absence" to it. As Derrida's "ouisa et

grammè: note sur une note de Sein und Zeit" in *Marges— de la philosophie* (Paris: Les éditions de Minuit, 1972), asks in relation to this metaphysical tradition of presence and experience: " Comment aurait-on pu penser l'être et le temps *autrement* qu'à partir du présent, dans la forme du présent, à savoir d'un certain *maintent en général* qu'aucune *expérience,* par définition, jamais ne pourra quitter? L'expérience de la pensée et la pensée de l'expérience n'ont jamais affaire qu'à de la présence" (41). In these terms, the parameters by which "experiences" become recognizable as such are delimited by a metaphysics of presence, which becomes an interpretative norm governing an experience's recognisability.

[73] Foucault's remarks on the limits of experience in *Remarks on Marx, Conversations with Duccio Trombadori* (New York : Semiotext(e), c1991), as limit-experience are suggestive in this context: "The phenomenologist's experience is basically a way orf organizing the conscious perception (*regard réflexif*) of any aspect of daily, lived experience in its transitory form, in order to grasp its meaning. Nietzsche, Bataille, and Blanchot, on the contrary try through experience to reach that point of life which lies as close as possible to the impossibility of living, which lies at the limit or extreme [...] The work of the phenomenologist, however, essentially consists of unfolding the entire field of possibilities connected to daily experience. Moreover, phenomenology tries to graps the significance of daily experience in order to reaffirm the fundamental character of the subject, of the self, of its transcendental functions" (30-1). This is reposed elsewhere as the question: "Can't there be experiences in which the subject, in its constitutive relations, in its self-identity, isn't given any more? And thus wouldn't experiences be given in which the subject could dissociate itself, break its relationship with itself, lose its identity?" (49).

[74] On the fraught concept-metaphor of the resistance to resistance see Derrida, *"Résistances"— de la psychoanalyse* (Paris : Galilée, 1996), de Man, *The Resistance to Theory*, and Kamuf, "Pieces of Resistance" in *Signature Pieces*.

[75] On "experience" as "text" see Derrida, *Limited Inc, op cit*., specifically footnote 8 *supra.* See also the (re)formulation of "il n'ya pas de hors-texte" as "il n'y a pas de hors-contexte."

[76] Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, *La poésie comme expérience* (Paris: Christian Bourgois, 1986), 27-35.

[77] Sedgwick's "Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading," in *Novel Gazing,* seems to propose that resisting the conceptual collapse of virtuality from actualization is called for: "I don't mean to hypostatize, here, 'the way it actualy did' happen, or to deny how constructed a thing this 'actually did' may be- within certain constraints. The realm of what *might have happened but didn't* is, however, ordinarily even wider and less constrained, and it seems conceptually important that the two not be collapsed; otherwise, the entire possibility of things' *happening differently* can be lost," (37 n.24). And yet, might the possibility that what 'actually did happen' and what 'might have happened' cannot be finally and incontrovertibly delimited, allow for the rethinking of the virtuality that something different may have occurred, precisely because the 'actual' was never certain –never *actualized*- and could never be so, finally? The strong or firm distinction that partitions these two theoretical virtualities might foreclose the differential possibility it sought to promote by discounting those experiences that persist because they haven't or indeed, cannot: an experience of fiction or, better still, an experience *as* fiction.

[78] Foucault's definition of "limit-experience"—"an experience of the *impossible* (the impossible being both that which we experience and that which constitutes experience)"— points to the limits of an identitarian and substantialist conception of experience. From "A Preface to Transgression," in Michel Foucault in *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology*, ed. James d. Faubion, trans. Robert Hurley et al. (New York: The New Press, 1998), 71. Elsewhere, experience is alluded to not only as "something you come out of changed" (26) but as "the task of 'tearing' the subject from itself in such a way that it is no longer the subject as such, or that it is completely 'other' than itself so that it may arrive at its annihilation, its dissociation. It is this de-subjectifying undertaking, the idea of a 'limit-experience' that tears the subject from itself" which is at stake. See "How an "experience-Book' is Born," in *Remarks on Marx. Conversations with Duccio Trombadori* (New York : Semiotext(e), c1991), 31-2. The passage continues: "Experience is neither true nor false: it is always a fiction, something constructed, which exists only after it has been made, not before; it isn't something that is 'true,' but it has been a reality," (36). Blanchot's *l'entretien infini* (Paris: Gallimard, 1969) and George Bataille's *Inner experience*, trans. Leslie Anne Boldt (Albany : State University of New York Press, c1988), also interesting elaborations on the limitations to experience.

[79] Cf. *Nishida Kitarō Zenshū*, (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1987–89).

[80] Derrida, "Eating Well," 259.

[81] *Ibid*, 266.

[82] See *Ibid*, 268 and "Maddening the Subjectile" trans. Mary Ann Caws, *Yale French Studies,* No.84, Boundaries: Writing & Drawing (1994) on the subjectile not being a subject or a"*subservient* substratum of a representation" (169) but the interposition of a between, "neither object or subject, neither screen nor projectile [neither subservient, nor dominating], the subjectile can *become* all that" (*Ibid*). the essay elaborates:: "A subjectile is not a subject, still less the subjective, nor is it the object either, bu then exactly what, and doesthe question of 'what' have any meaning for what is *between* this or that, *whatever it is*? Perhaps the *interposition* of a subjectile, in this matter of drawing by hand...Let's give up first of all trying to be ever *in front*, face to face wit the hpictograms which will never be *ob-jects* or subjects present for us" (164). And later on: "The subjectile: itself between two places/ it has two situations. As the support of a representation, it's the subject which has become a *gisant*, spread out, stretched out, inert, neutral...[and] as that which participates in the forceful throwing or casting....as what has to be traversed, pierced,

peetrated in order to have doen wit the ht screen…the *trajectory* fo what is thrown upon it should dynamize this skin in perforating it" (168).

[83] *Continental Thinkers,* 125. See also Derrida's remarks on the "desistance" of the subject in *Psyché, vol II* (Paris: Galilée, 2003.

[84] Experience, in their writings, is always *framed* by forms of representation that are contingent and cultural rather tha logical and natural. These frames delimit the sphere of experience since the discursive, visual, and sensual aspects of experience do not circulate outside of a given discourse that outlines the parameters and rules of recognizability, of what counts as reality and "what happened." Experience is inevitably *regulated*, and in various ways the these theorists argue that the regulation of experience is also an experience, even if an experience of regulation or an experience in regulation, insofar as the way experience is framed takes part in, and is a part of, experience. Experience is not merely represented or shown through the language that frames it—it is significantly staged and constructed by it. Some experiences will be conferred reality, others will be jettisoned from the delimited field of what counts as reality. Phenomenological concerns —"what I experience and will be capable of experiencing ; what I can say of experience— must be displaced toward questions concerning what circumscribes and contours the sphere of the experiencable, a discursive *circumscribes and contours the sphere of the experienceable, a discursive domain of speech without which I won;t be able to talk of (and hence never have experienced) experience at all.*

[85] Blanchot, *Écriture du désastre,* 92.

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