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The Gift of Poetry in Romantic and Post-Romantic Literature

By

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Doctor of Philosophy

Comparative Literature

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The Gift of Poetry in Romantic and Post-Romantic Literature

By

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B.A., The Pennsylvania State University, 2005

Advisor: Elissa Marder, Ph.D. Yale University

An abstract of
a dissertation submitted to the faculty of the
James T. Laney School of Graduate Studies of Emory University
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Abstract

The Gift of Poetry in Romantic and Post-Romantic Literature
By Adam Ross Rosenthal

This dissertation rethinks the importance of the gift for Romantic and Post-Romantic period poetry. I argue that, confronting calls for economic justification and the equally limiting consequences of utilitarianism and Kantian aesthetics, writers such as Shelley, Thoreau and Baudelaire turned to the gift as an alternative means of accounting for poetry's relevance. Because the gift is not a commodity, yet, by definition gives, contributing in the world, it supplies the possibility of imagining a role for poetry that is neither strictly economistic, nor outside history.

In chapter 1, "Shelley and the Gift of the Name," I examine Shelley's "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty" and show how the poet there understands his poetic vocation to be grounded in a denial of the divine gift of the name of God. The situation of the poet as a language-bearer and name-giver is determined by his lack, which he responds to by naming in his turn. In chapter 2, "The Gift of Poetry in Thoreau's *Walden*," I examine Thoreau's failed purchase of the Hollowell farm in the second chapter of *Walden* and show how he develops there a notion of poetry predicated on a gift that exceeds the circuit of economic exchange. In chapter 3, "Donner le souvenir: The Gift of Memory in Baudelaire," I read Baudelaire's "Morale du joujou" in order to show how the problem of the gift intersects with those of memory and aesthetics for Baudelaire through the figure of the "souvenir." In the second half of chapter 3 I examine how the figure of the collector in Benjamin's middle and late writings revolves around the figure of the *Andenken*, which I argue should be read as the translation of the Baudelairian "souvenir." Chapter 4, "Baudelaire and the Gift of Fate," examines how the problems of fate and chance are taken up in Baudelaire's prose poem, "Les Dons des fées." In a return to the motif of divinity that marked Shelley's "Hymn" in chapter one, chapter four shows how the presence of the gods in Baudelaire is marked by a fallenness and susceptibility to time usually relegated only to mortals.

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Introduction

THE GIFT OF POETRY

When Derrida begins his 1977-1978 lecture series on the gift, entitled "Donner—le temps," he does so by confessing what must have been the suspicion of everyone present at his seminar at the *Ecole normale supérieure*: The two subjects of the *agrégation* for the scholarly year being precisely Mauss' *Essai sur le don* (*à l'écrit*) and the problem of time (*à l'oral*), the juxtaposition of *both* topics in one course could be hardly more than an artificial pairing, an attempt to economize on his—and their—time, by discussing two otherwise unrelated subjects at once.[1] Yet if the impetus for their pairing is, avowedly, of the most contingent nature, what the fourteen sessions that follow demonstrate is a rigorous logic at work between their concepts. From Blanchot to Heidegger to Mauss to Baudelaire and beyond, each session of "Donner—le temps" shows an active complicity at work between the temporal and the giving: between the notion of the *present (or presence)*, and that of *presents*, between the thinking of time and that of the gift. To summarize a much longer argument, we could say that the gift and time are bound because, on the one hand, what the gift gives in Mauss *is* time (as deferral), and on the other hand, because time itself must be thought as the gift of a sending without origin (as in the *es gibt*) in Heidegger. The ramifications of this solidarity bear not only on the relationship between Heidegger and Mauss, however, but eventually also on the meaning of such closely linked concepts as forgiveness and the pardon, and even the rethinking of the relation between possibility and impossibility that the gift's double bind ushers forth.

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[1] The final 1991 edition consists of four chapters. Derrida explains in the "Avertissement" to the work that they faithfully follow the trajectory of the first five sessions of the 1977 lecture course. That original lecture course, however, will have consisted of fifteen sessions in all. Although Derrida discusses the apparently artificial nature of his title in the published, *Donner le temps* (1991), it is only in the unpublished 1977 lecture that he names their correspondence to the exam topics.

Derrida's lectures, later revised and published as *Donner le temps* in 1991, would establish the basis for renewed discussion of the gift, opening pathways for literary and philosophical research, and encouraging reappraisals of the writings of Mauss and Lévi-Strauss. Subsequent work by Jean-Luc Marion, Hélène Cixous, Luce Irigaray, Maurice Godelier, John D. Caputo, and most recently, Marcel Hénaff, Alan D. Schrift, Anne-Emmanuelle Berger and Sarah Haggarty has explored the impactfulness of the gift and giving for the philosophical tradition, the thinking of sexual difference and the work of literary writers, with ramifications for anthropology, philosophy, religion and literary studies. Yet for these authors, Derrida's work names above all a point of departure. Whether they agree or disagree with his position, *Donner le temps* represents a known quantity, and one whose place in the tradition is more or less delimited. This dissertation contends however that *Donner le temps* remains an important work today, and one that should be read not simply as a point of reference. Something remains *unread* or *unthought* in its pages, and this thing is the relation of the gift to the poetic.

A constant motif throughout *Donner le temps*, the poetic plays an essential role both as an example and as a conceptual point of reference when Derrida attempts to clarify how, precisely, presents may defy the metaphysics of presence. Derrida will go so far as to imply that one *must* consider the poem in order to understand the gift, yet for all this, the importance of poetry, or the poetic, is never completely clarified in the work. As a result, studies of Derrida's text tend to overlook the role that poetry plays in it, instead focusing on other more prominently raised issues, such as time, the counterfeit and economy. The present study, born out of the elliptical insistence of what I am provisionally calling the "poetic" for the conception of the gift in *Donner le temps*, is as much an attempt to justify Derrida's emphasis on their connection as it is an exploration of the poetic grounds for such a claim.

THE GIFT AND POETRY

Why think the gift and poetry together? In what lies the *imperative* to do so, and how, in turn, can the measure of this imperative be taken? *Donner le temps*, without perhaps ever fully thematizing the relation, insists on the significance of the poem for the gift. The consideration of poetry, Derrida rejoins time and again, is critical for that of giving, and readings of Mallarmé, Baudelaire and even Mauss, bear this out. Yet rather than account for this necessity, it often appears in *Donner le temps* as a given: as something propagated by the tradition itself that would be borne or suffered by Derrida's text even as he attempts to reflect on it. One reads in the second chapter, "Folie de la raison économique: un don sans présent," for example:

> Qu'est-ce qu'une chose pour qu'on puisse en parler ainsi? Plus tard nous devrions rencontrer cette question dans ou par-delà sa modalité heideggerienne mais elle paraît posée d'une certaine manière à l'ouverture même de *l'Essai sur le don*, aussitôt après la définition d'un programme et la citation d'un texte poétique en épigraphe. (Pourquoi faut-il commencer par un poème quand on parle du don? Et pourquoi le don paraît toujours être le *don du poème*, comme dit Mallarmé?). (59)

Why must one begin with a poem when speaking about the gift? And why does the gift always appear to be the gift of the poem? In receiving these questions, in proposing them *as* the offerings of a tradition that would extend at least from Mallarmé to Mauss, Derrida not only acknowledges a kind of necessity persisting between the gift and poem, but also sees a resource for comprehending an essential aspect of the former. At the limit, it is not simply the fact of the poem and gift's collusion that interests him then, but the further possibility that the poem would be that from which any thinking of the gift must begin. On the following page of the chapter, in

one of the most difficult—and most quoted—passages of *Donner le temps*, Derrida formulates the relation thusly:

> Le don donne, demande et prend du temps. La chose donne, demande ou prend du temps. C'est une des raisons pour lesquelles cette chose du don se liera à la nécessité—interne—d'un certain récit ou d'une certaine poétique du récit. Voilà pourquoi nous tiendrons compte de *La fausse monnaie*, et de ce compte rendu impossible qu'est le conte de Baudelaire. La chose comme chose donnée, le donné, le donné du don n'arrive, s'il arrive, que dans le récit. Et dans un simulacre poématique de la narration. L'ouverture de l'*Essai sur le don* inscrit donc en épigraphe un "vieux poème de l'Edda Scandinave"… (60).

To understand the nature of the bond or bind that Derrida here proposes between the gift and the poem we must first clarify the relation among: "la nécessité—interne—d'un certain récit" or "d'une certaine poétique du récit," "un simulacre poématique de la narration," and "un vieux poème." Three (or four) things that one might hesitate to lump together, but which all are used in the passage as so many semi-synonymous terms for what no one captures alone. The proliferation of non-synonymous synonyms has an immediate precedent at the beginning of the citation, where it is "giving" "demanding" and "taking" that are joined in order to name three irreducible, yet also inseparable, aspects of the gift's (or thing's) activity. One could not simply collapse the give, demand and take of the gift into a mere identity, yet a rigorous delimitation of the difference between each would also be impossible. Giving will never be equal to taking, but when the given of the gift *demands* a return, who is to say where the one begins and other ends?

In the case of the three or four names for that to which the gift is tied, or for that to which the gift *will be tied* [se liera à], it is a question above all of *récit*. The futurity of this bond ("se

lier" can also mean to become friendly with) does double duty in the passage, referring on the one hand to what is to come in the body of the text or seminar, and on the other hand to the very structure of the gift and its arrival.[2] The gift as a giving, demanding or taking of time is bound to the structure of the future, and the difference between the future considered as a future-present and a future *to come* structures Derrida's entire work. The tie of the gift to the *récit* is then itself, in some sense, futural. It is a necessity—*it will be*—and a necessity whose arrival, *if it arrives*, is tripled or quadrupled through the non-self-sameness of *récit* with itself. The gift arrives, if it arrives, only in *récit*, and we could also put this: only on the condition of *récit*. *Récit* names the condition of possibility and impossibility of the gift, whose arrival (or non-arrival) is conditioned by it. But what is *récit*, and why does the future of the gift depend on it?[3]

The—internal—necessity of a certain *récit* (or narrative), or of a certain poetics of *récit* is first and foremost not poetry. Poetry, understood as versified language, or as acts of language

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[2] That Derrida is speaking proleptically here is the most obvious sense of his use of the future tense and it is affirmed in the following sentence when he refers explicitly to the discussion of "La Fausse monnaie" that is to follow, with another verb in the future: "Voilà pourquoi nous *tiendrons* compte de…" One can, in fact, interpret the entire paragraph as commenting on the specific choice of a text of Baudelaire, thereby minimizing the force of Derrida's comments, and the importance of what he here calls *récit*, for the gift. Doing so, however, only postpones the more fundamental question—why choose Baudelaire's prose poem in the first place?—rather than dismissing it. Even if Derrida "means" to speak only of his selection of "La fausse monnaie," and the arrival (or non-arrival) of the gift in *récit* exclusively in that text, one would still have to ask: Why select *this* text, and why dedicate one half of *Donner le temps* to the discussion of a prose poem? The question of the example here outweighs the specific point of emphasis.

[3] "The future of the gift" in this sense names both the gift's arrival, if it arrives, in a future-present that is mediated by *récit*, and it names the gift's non-arrival understood as the future of the future, which is opened by the structure of *récit*, or what of *récit* gives its non-presence to itself. "The future of the gift" also names, in some sense, Derrida's *interest* in writing on the gift. If *Donner le temps* succeeds in anything, if it wagers anything, it is in the name of this future, of reserving a place for the future of the gift, which is also the future of the future. Finally, then, "the future of the gift" names the future that the gift gives, the gift's future, upon which both the gift and the future would depend. What does the future give? And did Derrida ever think to ask this question?

reflexively participating in the institutions of Poetry or Poetics, does not necessarily exclude narrative or narration, but neither does it encompass all its forms, nor are all of poetry's forms encompassed by it. *Récit*, from *réciter*, "to recite or recount," derives etymologically from the Latin *citare*, "to call or convoke."[4] Related to the English "cite," in both the senses of quotation or mention, and that of summoning before a court of law, *récit* formally implies repetition, and usually the repetition of events, whether real or imagined. A *récit* summons certain events before an audience, before whom they may always be called to give further account. This re-citing or re-presenting, which is to say, the internal necessity of a certain form of re-presentation, re-citation or repetition, is that in or through which the gift arrives, if it arrives. The thing as given thing *only* arrives, if it does so, in *récit*, and this necessity is linked to what both the gift and *récit* share with respect to the structure of time.[5]

For *récit*, or narrative, of course also gives, demands and takes time. On the one hand it demands and takes the time of listening or reading, the measurable or chronological time of minutes, hours and days spent with narratives, and in this sense it also participates in giving structure to this time, in giving the time of life as one caught up in narratives of all kinds, "fictional" and "real," "conscious" and "unconscious," or "composed" and "symbolic." On the other hand, however, as a literary form, *récits* do not merely participate in the time of reading, but give a time internal to themselves. The time of narrative (diegetic or non-diegetic) bears no relation to the time of reading, and is inscribed through the various textual operations at work in any text. *Récits*, we might say, demand that time take account of itself, precisely insofar as they

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[4] *Citare* is also related to a favorite term of Derrida, "to solicit." "Solicit," which originally means to agitate or to set into motion (*sollus 'entire' + citus 'set in motion'*) is comprised in part of the past participle of *ciere*, of which *citare* is the frequentative. On the relation between deconstruction and solicitation see "Différance" in *Margins of Philosophy*.

[5] To be precise, the gift's relation with time is only *one* of the reasons why it would be tied to the internal necessity of narrative according to Derrida.

give it, take it away, and demonstrate its structure to be one tied to the trace. The bond that the gift and *récit* share with time, as originary structurers of temporality, is one reason why the former will be tied to the internal necessity of the latter, which is to say, why the figure of *récit* gives to the gift its conditions of possibility and impossibility. *Récit*, in this sense, names less a genre of literary praxis than it does a formal structure of textuality, of which the gift would partake. One that emerges with the "compte rendu impossible" of Baudelaire, but whose limits exceed explicit codification. This is why it is also a "certain poetics of narrative," thus not narrative as such, but what inheres structurally to certain operations of re-citation as narrative neither exclusively to be found in *récit*, nor inclusively found in all *récits*. The polymorphousness of the poetics of *récit* is then what is affirmed in the final two lines of the citation. That the thing as given only arrives, if it arrives, in *récit*, and moreover in "un simulacre poématique de la narration," puts under erasure all presupposed notions of genre and convention. The latter phrase is an abyss, into which is drawn any possibility of sustaining a distinction between poetry and prose, or any hopes of positively articulating the formal distinctions of what is here called "*récit.*" Placed in apposition to the sentence preceding it, the phrase yielding the opposition of "poematic simulacrum" and "narration" sets an irresolvable tension into play as the very basis of *récit*. The two readings of the line, established by the double genitive "de" that joins subject and object, force one to ask whether, indeed, the poematic simulacrum of narration is the *poematic* concealment of itself in the founding of narration and narrative (that would in turn be artificial), or else, if narration, the act of giving account, is the ground or basis of the simulacral emergence of the poematic.

"Poematic," formed from "poem" and "(auto)matic," is offered in "Che cos'è la poesie?" (1988) as a corrective for "poétique," which is itself offered in place of "poésie."[6] Bound to the poem and its mechanical, iterative, inscription, poematic names what in poetry strays, and in this way cannot be taken up into a *poiesis* or "poésie pure." It is instructive that in the same passage where Derrida introduces this distinction, he also says of "le don du poème," that it "*ne cite rien*" (296; emphasis added), which would force us to understand the structural conditioning act of *récit* as *cite-less*, as giving to the extent that what it gives remains without citation and thus without arrival. In any case, the (non)-arrival of the gift would be on the condition of a narrative (*récit*) that is itself caught between the poematic trace of a poem without poetry and the act of narrative (narration) that is both constitutive of, and constituted by, that poem. Between, in other words, something given and something giving, between the "passive" and "active," between the trace (poematic) and the gift of the trace (narration).

That the gift is always the gift of the trace is what Derrida affirms a few page later when he addresses Boas' assertion that the, "Indian does not have a system of writing." The gift is here tied to the internal necessity of *récit* because it is itself a form of writing, the marking of a trace, and thus productive of the very thing (*récit*) that conditions its (im)possibility:

> Relevons d'abord, au passage, cette allusion à l'écriture. Pour reprendre l'expression à nos yeux très problématique de Boas, 'l'Indien' n'a pas de 'système d'écriture'. Nous voyons ainsi s'annoncer un certain rapport entre l'écriture ou son substitut (mais qu'est-ce qu'un substitut d'écriture sinon une écriture?) et le procès du don: celui-ci ne se

[6] In *Points ...: Interviews, 1974-1994*. Ed. Elisabeth Weber. Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 1995. Print. The term "poématique" first appears in séance nine of "Donner—le temps" (since excluded from the text of *Donner le temps*) as an attempted translation of Heidegger's term *Dichtung*, as used in "The Origin of the Work of Art" in order to refer to the originary role of language as "poem," which role would make possible "poetry" as such.

> détermine peut-être pas seulement comme le contenu ou le thème d'un écrit—compatibilité, archive, récit ou poème—, mais déjà, en lui-même, comme le marquage d'une trace. Le don serait toujours le don d'une écriture, d'un mémoire, d'un poème ou du'un récit, le legs d'un texte en tout cas, et l'écriture ne serait pas l'auxiliaire formel, l'archive externe du don, comme ce qu'évoque ici Boas, mais 'quelque chose' qui se lie à l'acte même du don, l'*acte* à la fois au sens de l'archive et de la mise en oeuvre performative. (63)

The gift, as trace, would always be the gift of a writing—we could also say the *economy* or *aneconomy* of a text, poem or narrative—of which the gift (as trace) always partakes already. Yet if the gift is bound on both sides by "écriture," then its futural relation to *récit* [cette chose du don se liera à…] cannot simply to understood temporally.[7] It is now the very future (or *à-venir*) of the gift that is bound to that of *récit*: the gift's future on the condition of *récit*, the future of *récit* on the condition of the gift. Each, that is, understood the deferral or *différance* of the other.

POETRY OF THE GIFT

The question of arrival and non-arrival that is so crucial for the gift gains its exemplary form in *récit*, and the text of *Donner le temps* is on the whole composed as an interplay between "philosophical" and "anthropological" texts on the one hand, and "poetic" or "narrative" texts on the other. These latter literary texts both contaminate the non-literary (as exemplified in the appearance of the "vieux poème" serving as epigraph to Mauss' essay,) and offer singular forms of thinking and writing about of the gift, which are then examined in their own right. Extended

[7] Even in the present passage, where what is bound [se lie à] is "l'écriture" and "l'acte même du don," the use of the present tense for "se lier" is within a conditional structure: "l'écriture ne serait pas… mais 'quelque chose' qui se lie à…" Is this bond something that might ever be able to be expressed in the present of the present?

analyses in *Donner le temps* of Mallarmé's poems "Aumône" and "Don du poème," and of Baudelaire's prose poems "La Fausse monnaie" and "Dédication," force one to ask not only what the particular status of these readings is with respect to their philosophical counterparts, but also what the specificity of the literary might be in these discussions. For not only do these latter texts explicitly take up the problem of the gift, but as Derrida has already indicated, the question of the gift is inscribed *right on them*, as poems, *récits*, dedications, etc. Yet even if the same could be said for Mauss and Heidegger's works, the specificity of these literary texts falls to the manner with which they encounter their own givenness.

The Gift of Poetry in Romantic and Post-Romantic Literature takes the relationship of poetry and the gift as its starting point. If Derrida asks how the poem, or a certain poetics of narrative (*récit*), must be taken up in order to understand the gift; how, in sum, the question of poetic language insists itself into any discussion of giving, then *The Gift of Poetry* reverses the order of this inquiry. It asks: How does a certain concept of the gift insist itself into poetry, and in particular, into the question of poetry as it is raised in Romantic period writing, broadly understood? It asks: In what ways does "Poetry," or the institutions of poetry, not only require a concept of the gift, but reflect on their own necessity for this concept, and for a concept of *givenness*? How does poetry respond to the question of its origin and that of its end, its givenness and what it gives in turn? If Derrida looks to *récit* and the poem in order to answer how the gift gives time while undermining the very notion of presence, then *The Gift of Poetry* asks how poetry looks to the gift for its own self-definition and clues into its own self-deferring structure.

The Gift is Poetry introduces not merely a shift of emphasis then, but a completely different perspective from which many of the same questions confronting *Donner le temps* can be posed anew. If a certain gift is given only on the condition of the poetic or poematic, can it

likewise be said that poetry—or a certain iteration of the poetic—is given only on the condition of a specified notion of the gift? This perspective requires reassessing poetry as such, and its history, by way of the (self)proposed question of the gift. To understand the specificity of the poetic would be precisely to grasp how the poetic understands itself as a given/giving. History, or literary history, in this instance is no longer merely a question of institutions, or even social contexts, but of the internalization of a relation with history (the referent), as it is taken up in the question of the gift. Poetry does not simply take up the question of the gift as any other, in other words, but always already as the question of its outside: its origins and ends, its presence and disseminatory legacy. But also the limits of poetic form, and the experience (internal to poetry) of its self-division and confrontation with something called narrative prose.

The analyses that follow ask in their own way after the specificity of the Derridean example in *Donner le temps*, whose circumscription within the last two centuries remains an unreflected element of his text.[8] This gesture is not necessarily to historicize Derrida's insights, but rather bears the potential to open them up even further, by asking how the question of the gift may already be bound to the self-reflection of poetic, or poematic writing. It is precisely because the relatedness of the gift and poetry cannot be reduced to a historical event or period that we must then ask after the specificity of this relation at any given time. In this way we observe how their bond is not a given of "Poetry" or even *the* poem, but always written in *poetries*, *poems* and *récits*.

[8] *Donner le temps* is not without reflection on the historical conditions making a text like "La Fausse monnaie" possible, or which condition its encounter with the impossible. Derrida has an extended discussion of the institutions of charity that made possible something like the donation of a counterfeit coin in the first place. Yet this discussion does not touch on what I am calling the "poetic origins" of his thinking of the gift. Nor does it touch on the necessities factoring into his choice of literary examples all taken from the last two centuries.

As becomes clear in the chapters that follow, the interrogation of the poetico-donatory-relation in Romanticism does not occur, strictly speaking, within "poetic" texts. Rather, "poetry" is taken up in a variety of places, some poetic, some prosaic, some critical and others narrative. In each instance, whether in Shelley's "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty" or Thoreau's *Walden*, the question becomes how the concept of poetry is represented as being bound to that of the gift, and what the implications of this relation are. The economy of the texts in which these interrogations take place—that is, their status as "poems," "prose works" or "prose poems"—invariably factors into the interrogations themselves, and often becomes complicated as the texts unfold. "Poetry," therefore, names in this dissertation the problem of the concept of poetry as it is encountered in literary works, and not the proper name of a select body of texts that one calls "poetic." One might say, to conclude, that the following readings track the contamination of both poetic and prosaic texts alike by a concept of poetry that is haunted by the gift.

Chapter One

The first chapter, "Shelley and the Gift of the Name," examines one of Shelley's most well-known poems, the "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty," and shows how the poet there understands his poetic vocation to be grounded in a denial of the divine gift of the name of God. The situation of the poet as a language-bearer and name-giver is determined by his lack, which he responds to by naming in his turn. Yet a further consequence also follows, for if language itself bears no traces of a divine gift, then it may never give a fully present meaning or referent either. The denial of the divine present, in short, results in a linguistic mode destined to fail, which is to say, destined not simply to name, but to re-name, and to give itself other than it is. The word Shelley's poem offers to describe language's condition is "remain," and it is the mode of remaining of the name and word—"the name of God and ghosts and Heaven, / Remain"—that marks the point from which any interrogation of the poem must begin.

SHELLEY AND THE GIFT OF THE NAME

> THE WRECKS AND FRAGMENTS OF THOSE SUBTLE AND PROFOUND MINDS, LIKE THE RUINS OF A FINE STATUE, OBSCURELY SUGGEST TO US THE GRANDEUR AND PERFECTION OF THE WHOLE. THEIR VERY LANGUAGE […]
> (*A DISCOURSE ON THE MANNERS OF THE ANCIENTS, RELATIVE TO THE SUBJECT OF LOVE*, NOTOPOULOS 404[9])

I GIVEN NAMES

The title of Shelley's "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty," as has often been pointed out, serves to situate the poem within a tradition that it will attempt to displace. Naming itself a hymn, Shelley's poem invokes a Christian concept of divinity that it will call into question, and

[9] Notopoulos, James A., *The Platonism of Shelley; a Study of Platonism and the Poetic Mind*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 1949.

by placing itself in an ironic relation to this Christian tradition, it both dislocates and capitalizes on its various conventions. As Earl Wasserman, Spencer Hall, and Richard Cronin have shown, the "Hymn" incorporates Christian thematics throughout, and disfigures them by way of a series of reinscriptions of canonical doctrine.[10] Not only then does the poem's speaker decry the "name of God," but in championing the secularized virtues of "Love, Hope, and Self-esteem" (l.37), he refers by negation to the love of God, hope of salvation, and faith in a transcendent divinity (Hall 133).[11]

Of course, the hymnic genre predates the Christian tradition's appropriation of it, and there are also many questions that remain unanswered concerning the Greek influences in the poem. Not only, that is, as to its relation to the Greek hymnic tradition, but also the much debated influence of a Platonic metaphysics on its conceptual configuration.[12] This latter, much derided hypothesis, has received no shortage of criticism over the last sixty years, and mostly

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[10] See Earl Wasserman's *Shelley: A Critical Study*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1971, Spencer Hall's "Power and Poet: Religious Mythmaking in Shelley's 'Hymn to Intellectual Beauty,'" *Keats-Shelley Journal*, vol. 32 (1983), pp. 123-149 and Richard Cronin's *Shelley's Poetic Thoughts*. London: Macmillan, 1981, 224-230, on the relation between Shelley's hymn and the Christian hymn.

[11] Whether these represent fully secularized deformations of Christian theology as Hall would have them, or virtues of another vision of divinity that would not succumb to monotheism's pitfalls, as Wasserman sees it, or even the remnants of another kind of deformation yet to be named, remains to be seen. All citations and line references of Shelley's "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty" are taken from the Shelley's corrected *Examiner* text (1817), as printed in *Shelley's Poetry and Prose*, New York: W.W. Norton, 2002, unless otherwise noted. When indicated, *SDN* refers to the Scrope Davies Notebook variant of the "Hymn," dating from August 1816.

[12] The relation of the "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty" to the Greek hymnic tradition has received relatively little critical attention. One of the few critics who treat the influence of the classical hymn on Shelley's poem is John Knapp, in his "The Spirit of the Classical Hymn in Shelley's 'Hymn to Intellectual Beauty,'" *Style*, vol. 33, No. 1. Shelley, in fact, translated seven of the surviving Homeric hymns between 1817 and 1820. Additionally, Leigh Hunt had published a number of translations of Greek odes and hymns in his 1815 *The Feast of the Poets, with Other Pieces in Verse*.

with due cause.[13] Motivated largely by the Platonic resonances of Shelley's title and his avowed interest in Plato's thought, this position has been condemned not only for its oversimplification of Shelley's position and tendency to reduce it to mere Platonism, but also due to its neglect of Shelley's "intellectual philosophy" and the sophistication of his reading of Plato, which would much better be expressed as *reflective*, than merely *mimetic*. One need not look very hard to see extra-Platonic elements infiltrate the "Hymn." Most notably those empirical or utilitarian items such as the "world" that, as Pollin has pointed out, are to be consecrated alongside the transcendent ones. (Pollin 14)

If, nevertheless, the question of Plato's influence has remained persistent for readers of the "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty," it is ultimately less because of any Platonism in the poem, than the title's inscription of a more or less Platonic phrase. Both more *and* less, as critics of the "Hymn" would have it. For it was not until nearly two years after Shelley's composition of the "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty" on the shores of Lake Geneva that he would translate that fateful line: *ἀλλ᾽ ἐπὶ τὸ πολὺ πέλαγος τετραμμένος τοῦ καλοῦ* as, "but [he] would turn towards the wide ocean of intellectual beauty," in his masterful rendering of Plato's *Symposium* (Plato 210d/ Notopoulos 449).[14] Transcription *from* his "Hymn" *to* Plato's *Symposium*, then, and this in the most literal sense of the word. For it would here be a matter of writing across texts, from one context to another, from one body, title or text to another, but also, lest we forget, from one

[13] For proponents of Shelley's Platonism, and the Platonism of the "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty" in particular, see William Temple's "Plato's Vision of the Ideas," *Mind*, XVII (1908), James A. Notopoulos' *The Platonism of Shelley*, C.H. Grabo, *The Magic Plant*, (Chapel Hill, Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1936), p. 179, and Benjamin Kurtz, *The Pursuit of Death* (New York and London, Oxford Univ. Press 1933). Opponents of this position are Wasserman, Cherniak, *The Lyrics of Shelley*, 36, McNiece, Pollin and Bloom, *Mythmaking*, 36.

[14] Alexander Nehamas and Paul Woodruff's translation in *Symposium*. Indianapolis: Hackett Pub., 1989, gives: "but the lover is turned to the great sea of beauty" (58).

language to another. A trans-crib-lation, departing at the same time from Plato's textual source and his own "Hymn," which ought to be, but is not, foreign to it.

"Intellectual Beauty" (as a phrase) is then both more and less Platonic. For, as is evinced by the chronology of the poem's composition, it is born out of Shelley's own work, only to converge with Plato at a later date. The problematic relation of Shelley's poem to the Platonic tradition is only exacerbated by the fact that the phrase "intellectual beauty" is absent from the poem itself, appearing only in its title, as though a leftover or supernumerary of the text. Yet despite its liminality, this title suffices to articulate a bond that no amount of disapproval, dissuasion, or disavowal would be capable of fully denying, and not only because of the possibility that Shelley had read Plato's *Symposium* prior to composing the "Hymn," or conversely, that he had translated the *Symposium* with his "Hymn" in mind.[15] Nor is this even because of the potential that "intellectual beauty"—again as a phrase—seems to offer for the Platonic idiom. At the limit, none of these hypotheses is sufficient to account for the bond—itself productive of these speculations—constituted by the sheer coincidence of two inscriptions of "intellectual beauty." This coincidence, which may or may not simply be coincidental, has the potential to exceed all given contexts. Indeed, it forces us to raise the very question of context, or contexture, through the perplexing bearing of the "Hymn" on the *Symposium*, and vice versa. It forces us to ask how, or even whether, the problematic of intellectual beauty—as well as its

[15] Thomas Medwin's *Revised Life of Shelley*, ed. H. B. Forman. London, 1913, recounts that Shelley had first read the *Symposium* while at Eton, with Dr. James Lind around 1810. Newman Ivey White repeats Medwin's assertion in his biography of Shelley, although he casts some doubt on Medwin's justification for his assertion. (White vol. 1 50, 576 n.72)

translating, transcribing, citing, or naming—speaks through these texts. A question for which all hypotheses are possible, and many of the wildest, no doubt, have already been conjectured.[16]

Any reading of Shelley's "Hymn," then, must account for this coincidence, if only in order to dismiss it as just that. And so, whether we follow Wasserman, who in his *Shelley: A Critical Reading* argues that, to the contrary, it is not that the term "Intellectual Beauty" implants a Platonic concept into Shelley's poem, but rather that the term inscribes Shelley's own reading and interpretation of Plato into the Platonic text (Wasserman 192), or, alternatively, any of the other numerous critics who have attempted to trace the sources for Shelley's compelling title outside of Plato, "Intellectual Beauty," for better or worst, seems destined to link these two texts.

[16] See, on the problem of Shelley's title, especially James A. Notopoulos' "The Platonic Sources of Shelley's 'Hymn to Intellectual Beauty,'" *PMLA*, Vol. 58, No. 2 (Jun., 1943), pp. 582-584, and Burton R. Pollin's "Godwin's 'Memoirs' as a Source of Shelley's Phrase 'Intellectual Beauty,'" *Keats-Shelley Journal*, vol. 23 (1974), pp. 14-20. Although Pollin's argument is relatively straightforward, as he identifies the use of the term "Intellectual Beauty" in the first edition of Godwin's *Memoirs of the Author of a Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, and then tries to show why this would have been a likely source for Shelley's phrase, a more radical thesis emerges of some interest to the current discussion. After discussing the appearance of Intellectual Beauty in Godwin, Pollin turns to the phrase's appearance in Shelley's translation of the *Symposium*, which he must, as the result of the anti-Platonic nature of his argument, demonstrate to be of no consequence to Shelley's "Hymn." In order to do so, however, Pollin must entertain what he admittedly calls a "remote possibility." Namely, that "the adjective was inserted by Mary herself," since all publications of Shelley's translation are based on Mary's transcript of Shelley's original manuscript, and, in the words of B. Farrington, "'It is not an easy matter to decide to what extent Mrs. Shelley and her literary advisers retouched the text of Shelley's translations'" (Pollin 19). Although Pollin's hypothesis is sheer speculation—and he admits as much—it raises an important theoretical point, and illuminates a certain non-identity on the level of the signifier that is too often forgotten. For it does not simply raise doubt as to the integrity of the Shelleyan text, but does so by highlighting the non-identity of the signifier to itself. His argument goes straight past the order of the sign, signifer and signified, and recalls a materiality of the letter, whose forgetting or repression is necessitated by the establishing any identity in the first place. The proposal of two authors for the two intellectual beauties (Mary and Percy) in truth is not necessary, for it is always possible that a difference on the level of the letter, between two different signatures of the same author, could reveal an incommensurability invisible on the level of the sign. The sign consolidates itself at the site of the letter's oblivion.

As concerns these other sources for "Intellectual Beauty," as various critics have shown, Shelley could not simply have invented the phrase. Not in any simple or simply straightforward sense of invention, anyway. Shelley would have been hard pressed to trademark the term, "Intellectual Beauty," and convincing cases have been made to show that he neither discovered nor produced it from oblivion or non-existence. And yet, to assume for "Intellectual Beauty" a derivative nature—and by extension, for the poem itself—simply because it may refer to, cite or recall another term or name, or another use of the same term, would be, perhaps, to miss the point. To miss, indeed, what remains of invention between the absolutely new and the repetition of the same, but also between invention as production and invention as discovery. The question of poetic language hangs on this point, as the interpretation of its role and the nature of its *inter*vention in the world cannot but depend on how one understands the articulation of poetic language within and between languages, texts and contexts already constituted, to which it can only respond.

Research by Newman I. White, Gerald McNiece, James A. Notopoulos and Burton R. Pollin has shown the prevalence of the term in Shelley's day. It was, as Notopoulos indicates, a "leitmotif of Platonism" (198), although, to all appearances, it does not actually appear in the dialogues of Plato. Notopoulos develops his argument in "The Platonic Sources of Shelley's 'Hymn to Intellectual Beauty,'" and then at greater length in *The Platonism of Shelley*. In his attempts to locate the origins of Shelley's title, he identifies a number of prior occurrences of "Intellectual Beauty," both within the English tradition and beyond. The most obvious source, although one that does not actually contain the phrase, is Spenser's "An Hymne of Heavenly Beautie," which Mary Shelley, at least, is known to have read in 1818, and Percy to have purchased in Spenser's *Works* in 1812. For the first actual occurrence of the phrase, however,

one must look to Plotinus, who entitles section v, viii of his *Ennaeds*, "Concerning Intellectual Beauty [*η΄ Περὶ τοῦ νοητοῦ κάλλους*]." And while Notopoulus would not condone the assumption of an hypothetical reading of Plotinus by Shelley—for which, he admits, there is no evidence—he nevertheless identifies the repetition of the phrase in a number of works that Shelley would have read prior to the summer of 1816, and that he finds "sufficiently attractive in presentation to influence Shelley's choice of the title of a poem embodying a personal Platonic experience" (197). And these can be found in Lord Monboddo's *Of the Origin and Progress of Language* (105-106), Wieland's *Agathon* in Pernay's French translation*, Histoire d'Agathon*, where it appears twice as "Beauté Intellectuelle" according to White, and in Robert Forsyth's *The Principles of Moral Science*, where it appears as the title to chapter xvi and once more on page 514. Additional research by McNiece notes that it appears not only in the first edition of Godwin's *Memoirs of Mary Wollstonecraft* (an observation Pollin also makes), but also in Blake's "Descriptive Catalogue," as well as Coleridge's notebook, as "perfect Intellectual Beauty or Wholeness" (McNiece 328, n.30).[17] Matthews and Everest, finally, in their annotations to the poem in the Longman edition, *The Poems of Shelley*, also identify the phrase in Opie's *Adeline Mowbray*, evidently read by Shelley in 1811, and in Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, page 525.

The research of these scholars is more than adequate to demonstrate that Shelley's inventiveness does not lie in the production of the term. But even if Shelley's poetic naming of "Intellectual Beauty" reflects earlier influences, and even if, as these readers also succeed in showing, a number of these sources supply rich contextual material that might have informed the

[17] See Blake's "Descriptive Catalogue" in *Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, ed. David V. Erdman, New York: Doubleday, 1965, p. 535. See *Notebooks*, ed. Kathleen H. Colburn, Item #2012, for instances of "Intellectual Beauty" in Coleridge.

sense of Shelley's usage, something remains lacking in their accounting for the appearance of "Intellectual Beauty" within the "Hymn." For no prior determination can do justice to the way in which the naming of "Intellectual Beauty" nevertheless, and *out of this relation of iteration*, names the act of naming and the singularity of a poetic gesture of name-giving. In reading Shelley's poem, and in attempting to come to terms once more with its uncanny relation to his *Symposium* translation, it behooves us to attend to the ways in which it renders unstable the propriety of the patent and the pretension to naming rights.

"Intellectual Beauty," then, is not simply one phrase among others when it enters the economy of Shelley's poem. But neither is it a phrase at all, at least, that is, if by "phrase" one understands a set of words forming a conceptual unit with a more or less definable content. As becomes evident in reading the "Hymn," "Intellectual Beauty" is a name, given for the personified subject of the poet's verse. This subject, moreover, as the source of beauty and truth, embodies that which is itself beyond all appearance, knowledge and representation, and therefore also beyond the order of the concept.[18] "Intellectual Beauty" is the first name that the poem gives for this unnameable non-being. It is the first name, and one that is never repeated, but only replaced and displaced through the introduction of a series of equally un-iterated names for *the name*.[19] And Shelley's "Hymn," which recounts of the passage of this ungraspable non-being

[18] This is a theme that runs throughout the "Hymn," but which is particularly prominent in the first and fourth stanzas. The visitations of the "Power" in the first stanza are at a double remove—the shadow of some unseen Power being itself unseen—highlighting that apprehension of this force is neither possible as a sensible, nor as an intelligible entity. In the fourth stanza, the spirit's resistance to keeping "firm state within [the] heart," again figures its incomprehensibleness.

[19] On the problem of "Intellectual Beauty's" relation to "the name" or the name of god, see Richard Isomaki, "Interpretation and Value in 'Mont Blanc' and 'Hymn to Intellectual Beauty,' *Studies in Romanticism*, Vol. 30, No. 1 (Spring, 1991), pp. 57-69, and Cronin (227-230). Isomaki, following Cronin, takes "Intellectual Beauty" as a substitution for the "'poisonous names' of 'God and [Holy] ghosts and Heaven." But this is neither entirely accurate nor false.

and its diverse effect on the world, is above all a poem about naming. About the necessity and impossibility of giving a name, and the economy of poetic name-giving that results thereby.

In all, the poem—or its speaker—gives five names for the unnameable, beginning with "Intellectual Beauty" and following with "Power" (l.1), "Spirit of BEAUTY" (l.13), "LOVELINESS" (l.71), and "SPIRIT" (l.83). As becomes clear in the "Hymn," these names are spoken on the condition of the absence of the "Spirit," whose further denial of any gift of a name for itself—or even any word, voice or response capable of consolidating itself into some(thing) given—constitutes the position from which the poet speaks. The uttered names, therefore, at

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From the perspective of Christianity "Intellectual Beauty" does indeed substitute for the name of god, hence for *the name*. Nevertheless, insofar as the "Hymn" circumscribes the very appearance of the name of god within its more originary movement, this cannot simply be considered a substitution.

McNiece, in "The Poet as Ironist in 'Mont Blanc' and 'Hymn to Intellectual Beauty'" also contextualizes the third stanza as expressing the importance of identifying—and naming—the one true name: "If we could but find the right name, God's holy name (they seem to think), then He might respond and explain. But such hard-to-avoid presumptions are banished by 'awful doubt' or mild faith appropriate to our frail and elusive illuminations. The unnameable though real presence or light eludes the defining" (330).

It is my contention, however, that Shelley's "Hymn" must be understood to be at one and the same time both about *this name*, the name of god, and not at all about it. About it, *as a name*, but not about it, *as a deity*. "Intellectual Beauty" is not another name for "God," but refers quite specifically and pragmatically to a divinity of the beautiful, with all its implications for the appearance of truth and love in the world, or its coordinate absence, and the appearances of mutability and death. This deity is then quite simply not the God of Christianity—nor a replacement for it: another ultimate cause or prime mover. Nevertheless, the imposition of this other divine form (and everything that follows from it) enacts a referendum on the fundamental conceptions of monotheism to the point where the very possibility of something like monotheism is circumscribed as one of its possibilities: "No voice from some sublimer world hath ever to sage or poet these responses given—*therefore* the name of God and ghosts and Heaven, / Remain the records of their vain endeavor." The moment of Christianity would be derivative, then, with respect to the phenomenon of "Intellectual Beauty." The passage of "Intellectual Beauty" then (the main subject of the poem), which involves that of its name, the impossibility of its bearing *a* name (and the relation of naming to the passage of beauty is what must above all be thought in the poem), both mimics the problematic of the name of the Christian God, and enacts it on another level that not only quashes the very thought of *a* divine origin, but also unwrites (or unspells) the names of mutability, of the name, and of beauty. It is not only then the absolute that is deconstructed, but the name of mutability itself, which is subjected to here being thought.

once supplement this absence and recall it. They mark and remark this absence, and thereby raise the question of its essence: of that which conditions and un-conditions name-giving, be it divine, human or poetic. Although, then, "Intellectual Beauty" is the first name given, it does not simply name itself. Or rather, we should say, it does not name itself as the univocal, given name for itself; it is not, simply, a *given* name. For given (or named) by the poet in the absence of a name, and above all the name *of* this god, *this* gift (name) anticipates its replacement by other names.[20] Each of the given names for "Intellectual Beauty" (including "Intellectual Beauty" itself) is then given as the trace—in the Derridean sense of the term—of every other; which is to say that the *presence* of each name is only constituted by its specific difference, and is therefore in no way present to itself.[21]

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[20] When God gives a name for himself, this name, the name *of* god, is both the name that God gives himself, by giving it to man, and the name of "God" that serves to remember this gift. Here, however, this order is disrupted.

[21] On the Derridean notion of the trace, and in particular how it disrupts the logic of the sign by displacing the relation of signifier to signified, see *Of Grammatology*, pp. 44-64. Deborah Elise White, in her treatment of the name in Shelley's dedication and first canto of *The Revolt of Islam*, has identified a similar set of issues at work, albeit with different ramifications for that text. In her "Shelley and the Proof of History" in *Romantic Returns: Superstition, Imagination, History*, White argues for the centrality of the name within the passage from "eye to star," a passage that allegorizes the allegedly transcendent, pre-linguistic, communion of "kindling" or "speechless beauty" (133). Similar to "intellectual beauty," then, this "speechless beauty" lies at the edge of phenomenality and in fact makes the experience of beauty (or any experience *tout court*) possible in the first place, through the communion of its intuition. What White shows, however, through her reading of the Dedication ("To Mary--") and its thematization of names, is that the passage from "eye to star turns on the name. The perfected aesthetic communion that kindles the encounter between text and reader thus includes a perfected language: the language of names." (137). This "perfected," symbolic language of names, nevertheless is confronted with its own partiality in Canto I as names become distorted by "the deceptive variability of signification. Abstracting or particularizing, they remain merely allegorical…The world in which evil triumphs…is one in which appearances deceive because unified identities have been dispersed into a multiplicity of forms. Names become multiple as well, at once excessive and insufficient for their task…Even the holiest name, when mediated by particular, historical names (Greece, France), risks partaking of evil's metamorphic powers unless those names are understood correctly to be *mere* names—signs that derive from and point toward the power of holiest name, but are themeselves no more than the bare remainder, "--," of a kindling *that has*

The naming of "Intellectual Beauty," and, as a consequence, the name "Intellectual Beauty" itself, therefore inaugurates another kind of naming and another kind of gift, and its name names this unnaming and renaming—but also this re-gifting—as the poem's subsequent naming-acts testify to. As a consequence, what the gift of the name of "Intellectual Beauty" gives (and names) is a concept of the gift as something not given, something that is given despite and on the condition of its absence, something made possible on the condition of its impossibility. The gift of "Intellectual Beauty" marks both the necessity and impossibility of giving names: a double condition that falls to the poet and that determines the economy of his relation with this other that, not giving its name, yet remains, and remains *to be named*.

Incidentally (but not simply by coincidence), the unnaming of the Name coincides in the "Hymn" with the lyric act *par excellence*. It coincides, that is, with poetic apostrophe. Marked both in the poem's title—"Hymn *to* Intellectual Beauty"—and within the poem's body—"To thee and thine" (l.62)—the act of address both complements and further problematizes the naming gesture, whose names therefore are supplemented by a series of deictics. As a consequence, any consideration of the one must take into account its ramifications for the other, as they systematically posit and disrupt reference.

But the problem of address in a hymn is more complicated still.[22] For it cannot simply be reduced to the explicit apostrophe. An unspoken, but no less significant address is implicated by

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occurred " (137-8). When "intellectual beauty" can be read as just such a "bare remainder" it will be possible to put into perspective its relationship both to signification and naming.

[22] That Shelley's "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty" constitutes a hymn, moreover, is refuted by Cronin, who argues that the poem is properly an ode, but following eighteenth-century convention, "give[s] the title 'hymn' to any poem in which the quality addressed is awarded divine or celestial characteristics" (224). For Cronin, the difference ultimately comes down to "the earnest hymn which celebrates God" and "the lighthearted ascription of divine status to an abstract quality" (224). Nevertheless, Cronin believes that Shelley confuses the two registers,

the hymnic performance itself which, sung *to* some absent god, is nevertheless also executed *for* its human audience. Hence, while a hymn may call to its explicit addressee in order to sing their praises, ask for pity, or lament the poet's fate, the expectations for the hymn's audience need not (and usually do not) coincide. And this is the case precisely insofar as a hymn may serve certain pedagogical functions with respect to its listeners or witnesses who, more human than divine, stand to learn from it, whether that be as from an example to follow, a testament of piety, or even a dissuasive onto-theological critique. While, then, any of these modalities would be possible in a hymn, each requires a division between the object of devotion and audience of the hymnic performance, even if we could imagine a hymn in which one subject fulfilled both roles. The importance of this latter, unspoken addressee, who is also the reader, coincides with what we might call the "Hymn's" ethical moment, and also a Shelleyan ethics of naming whose limits must still be determined.

It should also be noted that the *Symposium*, if not a hymn in form, concerns the event of prayer or praise of a god. It is the Platonic dialogue most concerned with the possibility of something like the hymnic gesture, and recounts a series of speeches that are proposed on the condition of the absence of sufficient poetic attention for Love:

> Is it not strange, Eryximachus, that there are innumerable hymns and paeans composed for the other gods, but that not one of the many poets who spring up in the world have ever composed a verse in honour of Love, who is such and so great a god? Nor any one of those accomplished sophists, who, like the famous Prodicus, have celebrated the praise of Hercules and others, have ever celebrated that of Love… That so much serious thought

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and ultimately allows that "the poem contains three languages; a religious language borrowed from orthodox Christianity, a declamatory language borrowed from the eighteenth-century ode, and a language borrowed from Wordsworth" (230).

> is expended on such trifles, and that no man has dared to this day to frame a hymn in honour of Love, who being so great a deity, is thus neglected, may well be sufficient to excite my indignation. (Notopoulos 418-9).

To truly compare, or to come to terms with the relation of the "Hymn" to the *Symposium*, one would have to ask how Shelley and Plato's works both treat, and bring into question, the possibility of hymnic prayer. For at its most radical, Shelley's poem does not merely engage with the generic conventions of the hymnic genre, but problematizes the logic of identity and the concept of reference on which the hymn depends. By asking the question of the name, it touches on the question of language itself: the word, and the relation of word to thing. What does language, or the name, articulate? What is the being of the thing prior to its naming, and how could the measure of this act of naming be taken without the further use of linguistic acts that make possible our apprehension in the first place? The "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty" both names, and problematizes the order or law of the name. It comments on, and attempts to perform another kind of naming, and it does so while admitting that there are better or worse, or more or less "poisonous" (l.53) names. At bottom, it is because, for Shelley, the name is involved in more than mere reference, it is because the name names, and in naming gives some thing, that one must be attentive to names and naming, to more and less "poisonous" or "false" (l.53 *SDN*) names.[23] The extent to which the poetic gesture of Shelley's "Hymn" may be said not simply to live up to that which it names (adequation), nor even to ground its addressee through the text itself, but, at the limit, to problematize the process by which language fulfills both of these

[23] The power of names and naming is a common *topos* of twentieth-century philosophical thought, treated by Heidegger, Blanchot and Benjamin within the continental tradition alone. On this problem, see especially, Martin Heidegger, "The Word," Maurice Blanchot, "Literature and the Right to Death," and Walter Benjamin, "On Language as Such, and the Language of Man."

functions, will play a large role in determining just what is meant by the "name," and the poet's relevance as *ersatz* name-giver.

If, then, "Intellectual Beauty" is neither a phrase, nor even simply a name, but a name for that which gives naming as a gift that will never be present, a properly improper name that is always losing itself by being found, and finding itself by being lost;[24] if "Intellectual Beauty" names the poetic act of naming *par excellence*, as the impossibility of naming, an impossibility that is its very condition of possibility, then it may pose a few problems for any reading hoping to determine the precise relation of the "Hymn" to Plato's *Symposium*, by way of "Intellectual Beauty." This is not, of course, to say that it would be impossible to determine the *meaning* of "Intellectual Beauty" as it appears in each text—at least to a reasonable degree of certainty—and then to analyze the extent to which the one coincides or diverges from the other. Rather, what becomes difficult is reducing the inscription of "Intellectual Beauty" to any mere signification, or signifying function. Delimiting, at the expense of what we might call its naming function, its signified without remainder. Something remains in "Intellectual Beauty" *as a name* that will not be reduced to hermeneutical or exegetical determinations. Or as Shelley's poet proclaims:

> No voice from some sublimer world hath ever
> To sage or poet these responses given—
> Therefore the name of God and ghosts and Heaven,
> Remain the records of their vain endeavor,
> Frail spells—[…] (ll.25-29)

[24] Critical here and elsewhere is that the name "Intellectual Beauty" refers both to the words or phrase in the poem, and to the unnameable force that conditions and makes possible its own naming, precisely by not giving its name. Hence, "Intellectual Beauty" names the misnaming of the name made possible by the non-gift of that which "Intellectual Beauty" appears to give, but which, in fact, it only gives by not giving it. Its gift is given by not being given, it gives non-giving.

The name remains. Names *remain*. Being given nothing, all that remains is a remainder of the name. But in the wake of this vacancy, how to read such frail spells?

II RE-NAMING / REMAINING

> FIRST, THEN, HUMAN BEINGS WERE FORMERLY NOT DIVIDED INTO TWO SEXES, MALE AND FEMALE; THERE WAS ALSO A THIRD, COMMON TO BOTH THE OTHERS, THE NAME OF WHICH REMAINS, THOUGH THE SEX ITSELF HAS DISAPPEARED. THE ANDROGYNOUS SEX, BOTH IN APPEARANCE AND IN NAME, WAS COMMON BOTH TO MALE AND FEMALE; ITS NAME ALONE REMAINS, WHICH LABOURS UNDER A REPROACH. (*THE BANQUET*, NOTOPOULOS, P. 429)

> TRUTH IS NOT AN INTENT WHICH REALIZES ITSELF IN EMPIRICAL REALITY. THE STATE OF BEING, BEYOND ALL PHENOMENALITY, TO WHICH ALONE THIS POWER BELONGS, IS THAT OF THE NAME. THIS DETERMINES THE MANNER IN WHICH IDEAS ARE GIVEN. BUT THEY ARE NOT SO MUCH GIVEN IN A PRIMORDIAL LANGUAGE AS IN A PRIMORDIAL FORM OF PERCEPTION, IN WHICH WORDS POSSESS THEIR OWN NOBILITY AS NAMES, UNIMPAIRED BY COGNITIVE MEANING. (WALTER BENJAMIN, (36) *THE ORIGIN OF GERMAN TRAGIC DRAMA*)

It is in the second and third stanzas of the "Hymn" that the most explicit account of the name is given. Not simply what the name *is*, but how it has come to pass that names *are*, that there are names, that, as the poet explains, the name *remains*. What is thought here is not then simply the diagnosis of a few particular names, nor even the history of these names, but the ontological bearing of the name as remainder, by way of a certain sending—or lack thereof—that precedes being, and in preceding being opens it. While in the second stanza the poet addresses the "Spirit of BEAUTY" in order to question both its being and bearing on the world, in the third he responds to his own questioning stance, and the meaning of the Spirit's failure to offer any more perceptible response to these and similar queries.

II

Spirit of BEAUTY, that dost consecrate
With thine own hues all thou dost shine upon
Of human thought or form,—where art thou gone?
Why dost thou pass away and leave our state,
This dim vast vale of tears, vacant and desolate?
Ask why the sunlight not forever
Weaves rainbows o'er yon mountain river,
Why aught should fail and fade that once is shewn,
Why fear and dream and death and birth
Cast on the daylight of the earth
Such gloom,—why man has such a scope
For love and hate, despondency and hope? (ll.13-24)

The second stanza, addressed to the "Spirit of BEAUTY," begins like the first stanza by positing this spirit's singular nature: *that dost consecrate*... This time, however, the uttered qualities do not participate merely in an act of veneration, for no sooner are they mentioned than does the poet raise a flurry of questions to this absentee entity. That the spirit's presence consecrates will only add intensity to the interrogation, for it makes that much more regrettable its disappearance, and in turn, the poet's affective response to it.

This is no simple suite of queries, either, and at least one major division separates the first two from the latter four. First and foremost, the opening inquiries, "where art thou gone? / Why dost thou pass away and leave our state, / This dim vast vale of tears, vacant and desolate?" (ll.15-17) are phrased as questions, posed in an explicitly interrogatory mood and addressed to the spirit itself ("thou"), while the following four are grammatically grouped within a single sentence, and abandon the questioning grammar. Indeed, although the latter four continue along the same questioning vein, and even retain the question mark, their queries diverge from the

being of this spirit to its various effects, ceasing to be phrased explicitly as questions and abandoning any explicit reference to their addressee.[25] Nor is it entirely clear that they still refer to, or address this spirit—or its by-products—and concluding such requires assuming that the passage from "human thought or form" and "our state," to "yon mountain river," is an unproblematic one. There is nothing in the poem to prevent us, alternatively, from reading these four follow-up exhortations as being wider in scope than the Spirit's domain, whose limits might yet come to encompass—or produce—"sunlight" and "fear," but yet might not.

If the first questions call for a spirit's response, the latter—at least at the level of the letter—call for a spirit's questioning: "*Ask* why the sunlight not forever / Weaves rainbows o'er yon mountain river…" (ll. 18-19 my emphasis) The poet begins by calling to the spirit to answer, but he seems to pursue his questions by rendering overt the already coercive nature of the question, by calling—or imploring—the spirit to call in its turn. He tells the spirit "Ask," as if to give an account of itself to itself. Alternatively, the imperative of this *Ask* need not, necessarily, call directly to the spirit, but in the way of a parabasis might signal a self-exhortation of the poet, as he, shaken, must reassure himself of the very questioning gesture here at play. In this way, instead of asking, he would command himself to ask, and call to himself to call, because the upholding of the apostophe he has just opened to the Spirit has itself become too onerous a task. He must tell himself to ask because, the spirit being absent, it is no longer self-evident that he should address it at all. Why address an absent spirit, especially one whose absence brings into question both its bearing on the world, and its very existence? Why address this absent spirit when the hymn may not reach its vacant ears? What if, like the *Ask*, these questions only

[25] This is not, however, the case in the earlier *SDN* version of the poem, where the question mark is replaced by a mere period.

question themselves, only return in the repetition of their pronouncement to their own sounding, never arriving outside or beyond the linguistic gesture? *Ask*.

In order to put an end to these questions, the third stanza does not respond to them, but rather responds to the lack of response they have elicited:

> No voice from some sublimer world hath ever
> To sage or poet these responses given—
> Therefore the name of God and ghosts and Heaven,
> Remain the records of their vain endeavor,
> Frail spells—whose uttered charm might not avail to sever,
> From all we hear and all we see,
> Doubt, chance, and mutability.
> Thy light alone—like mist o'e mountains driven,
> Or music by the night wind sent
> Through strings of some still instrument,
> Or moonlight on a midnight stream,
> Gives grace and truth to life's unquiet dream. (ll.25-36)

These questions, which the poet is not the first to ask, have received no response from the voice of "some sublimer world." In qualifying his comments in this way, however, the poet is careful not to categorically dismiss the possibility that there have been responses. Rather, what he claims is that no response given by a "voice" has been received. Responses there may be, but none in the form of a sublimer voice's gift. The voice, which speaks in the name of its speaker and as the sign of that speaker's presence, also speaks *for* its speaker. It goes ahead of its speaker and says: I am a speaker, and this is my voice. The voice gives the name for its speaker, or rather, it appears to name its speaker as nameable, and it does so even before this name is spoken, even before the words have been uttered, or have signified anything. The gift of a voice's response is

therefore inseparable from the gift of its name, as the present that only a named or nameable subject is capable of bestowing.

When the poet denies the voice's present, he also denies the distinction of subjecthood that comes with a voice, along with its naming power. In doing so, he severs his own vocation, with its vocalizations, from the character of the spirit. Voices, with their names—both given and received—are the things of poets and sages.[26] To name, to call, in short to voice, are the poet's givens. Whatever this spirit may then be said to be, the radical denial of its voice—which can be taken either as the poet's denial of a voice to the spirit, or the spirit's denial of *its* voice to the poet—is the fundamental starting point from which language, or the voice, begins. This is what the "Therefore" proclaims, when it establishes a logical connection of consequence between the voice's absence and the state of the name as remainder: "Therefore the name of God and ghosts and Heaven, / Remain the records of their vain endeavour, / Frail spells—[…]" (ll. 27-29). Denied the voice and coordinate response of some sublimer being, it falls to poet and sage to endeavor to respond to these questions, but also, to endeavor to name. In the absence of these gifts, poet and sage must supply this lack by giving name themselves.

But this is a vain endeavor, the poet tells us. It is vain, empty or idle to utter these frail spells. It remains a question, however, how we are to understand the transition from the absence of a sublimer response, to the circumstance of the sage and poet's endeavor. Although it is clear that what is missing is some firmer knowledge concerning the being of this spirit, and/or the metaphysical conditions contributing to such a high variance of worldy events and experiences, it is less evident how this corresponds to a poetic or sage-worthy endeavor. Verily, a duty, for this being "their endeavour," it is both what they strive for, and what binds them; what puts them in a

[26] *SDN* here reads: "To wisest poets these responses given."

state of responsibility to which they respond by endeavoring.[27] What, exactly, is the poet's vain task?

With respect to this question, the events of the fifth and sixth stanzas may prove instructive. For there it is also a matter of poetic debt, which the poet, flashing back to his youth, reflects on as the origins of his poetic vocation. This latter debt is also one of the main sources for traditional interpretations of the "Hymn," as it apparently recounts the autobiographical experience of a divine visitation. Backed up by accounts of Shelley's youth, and a reported moment of epiphany he underwent while a student, this experience, along with the phrase "Intellectual Beauty" itself, stand as two of the more stabilizing elements used to interpret the poem[28]:

> While yet a boy I sought for ghosts, and sped
> Through many a listening chamber, cave and ruin,
> And starlight wood, with fearful steps pursuing
> Hopes of high talk with the departed dead.
> I called on poisonous names with which our youth is fed;
> I was not heard—I saw them not—
> When musing deeply on the lot
> Of life, at that sweet time when winds are wooing
> All vital things that wake to bring
> News of buds and blossoming,—
> Sudden, thy shadow fell on me;

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[27] "Endeavour," from the French, "En-Devoir," means quite literally to be in a state of obligation. It is then from out of this state of being obliged that the colloquial sense of endeavor, as a striving, emerges. "Their endeavour," in short, names not the endeavor that they possess or will, but the endeavor—or endebtedness—that possesses them, and to which they can only respond.

[28] As is perhaps not surprising with respect to an experience of this nature, critics are conflicted over the precise date of its occurrence. Most believe it either occurred while Shelley was a student at the Syon House Academy, or at Eton. See Notopoulos (15) and Bieri, *Percy Bysshe Shelley: Youth's Unextinguished Fire, 1792-1816*, (75) for each of these versions.

I shrieked, and clasped my hands in extacy!

6.

I vowed that I would dedicate my powers

To thee and thine—have I not kept the vow? (ll.49-62)

While yet a boy and all too eager to meet ghosts of the dead, "thy shadow," the poet recalls, "fell on me" (l.59). From that moment on he was hooked, and he reports in the following stanza how he "vowed that I would dedicate my powers / To thee and thine—" (ll.61-62). Although the poet immediately thereafter asks, "have I not kept the vow?" (l.62), as though acknowledging a lingering doubt that may have arisen between the moment narrated and narrating moment, the gesture need not be taken too gravely, as the "Hymn" itself stands as a monument to his experience and vow, affirming each through its presence. The "Hymn," which bears the poet's experience inscribed on its surface, seems to stand as the culmination of his vow—a vow that made the "Hymn's" writing possible in the first place, supplying as it does the conditioning moment of poetic conception.

And yet, if the depicted relationship between recounted experience and occasion of recounting appears all too felicitous, this cannot entirely cover over the ambivalence of the encounter thereby described. Access to divinity is nothing short of rending, as the shadow's fall results in a less than poetic *shriek*. "Sudden, thy shadow fell on me; / I shrieked, and clasped my hands in extacy!" (ll.59-60). If the clasping of hands "in extacy!" indicates an exuberant rapture, the shriek that precedes it less easily conforms to this joyful, lyrical tone. Certainly one can shriek with joy, but as the expression of the shock of visitation, the shriek sounds and resounds the uncertainty and unaccountability of what is occurring, prior to its reflection as positive or negative, and prior to the clasping of hands that signals the rejoining of self with itself. The encounter with the other that interrupts the speaker's communion with "life" and "All vital

things" takes him by surprise, and it makes him shriek. And none other than this is the experience of poetry, the opening of the poetic, and the encounter with the origin and end of poetic praxis, whose limits the "Hymn" embodies and recounts, achieves yet falls short of, circumscribes yet is somehow also excluded from, as we shall see.[29]

It would be tempting, then, to relate the poetic and sagacious endeavor of the third stanza to the vow of the sixth. In the sixth we find both a vow and a dedication: the origin of a debt, and one that can only be repaid, if at all, through a lifetime's work. The poet here does not dedicate any *thing* to the spirit—nothing, that is, that could be simply or immediately repaid—but rather his "powers" themselves. Yet as these are his ("my") powers, they remain of a personal nature, they are a possessed or possessive power that becomes the possession of the Spirit through the poet's vow. The debt, in sum, is the debt of a self, an "I", who claims it through the performance of a speech-act reported in the poem. As a consequence, this latter autobiographical account aligning the poem's composition and its poetic origins along a temporal axis must be read against, and not with, that of the third. For the endeavor of the third stanza, by contrast, is born out of the denial of a sublimer voice. The consequence of the endeavor is not, merely, some thing, nor even a disposition of the poet, but is the name itself, and the being of the name as what

[29] In particular, this is what is at stake in the final lines of the sixth stanza: "They know that never joy illumed my brow / Unlinked with hope that thou wouldst free / This world from its dark slavery, That thou […] / Wouldst give whate'er these words cannot express" (l.67-72). Just as the "Hymn" puts us in touch with the *origin* of poetic conception that is the scene of visitation of stanza five, so too does it present the *end* of poetic conception, which is the expression beyond expression of words, the "gift" that the "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty" identifies as the culmination it yearns for, but cannot attain on its own. Although origin and end are here staged in linear chronological fashion in these two stanzas, with the grammatical opposition of past to present, and the conditional of "Wouldst give" marking futurity, the earlier stanzas, we will show, bring into question the narrativization of these "events," and their separation into linear chronological moments. Against this then, would be the status of language, and the name, as remaining, and poetic language as that which gives expression to what in language's gift remains, precisely, to be given.

remains: "Therefore the name of God and ghosts and Heaven,/ Remain the records of their vain endeavour." In this way the poet contracts nothing, nor takes anything on himself, but finds that he is already oriented by this absence that precedes him and makes the name—and language—possible as such.[30] The endeavor is not vain because it fails to name, but, to the contrary, precisely because the naming succeeds. Succeeding to name the endeavor fails. That the endeavor results in the name is the failure, and it is one born out of the absence of some sublimer gift, as becomes evident in the fourth stanza.[31]

The scope of the endeavor, then, should be understood to comprehend not only the questions the poet poses in the second stanza, but more fundamentally, the very necessity of speech, question and knowledge, which makes the manifestation of those questions necessary in the first place. The endeavor is not any specific endeavor—just as it is not to write any particular poem, nor any specific treatise—but rather describes being, life, or existence as so many consequences of the spirit's denied presence. The absence of the spirit opens life as endeavor, and as such, the question and the name, responding to this fundamental lack and therefore emblematic of it, become possible in the first place.[32]

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[30] The denial of the voice would be both the condition of possibility, and impossibility for language and the name. The name is opened by its absence, yet insofar as this gift is not given, language—and the name—is rendered equally impossible, unable as it is to consolidate itself into something given or present.

[31] This is the sense of those cryptic lines: "Man were immortal, and omnipotent, / Didst thou, unknown and awful as thou art, / Keep with thy glorious train firm state within his heart" (ll. 39-41). This "firm state," like the presence of a voice from some sublimer world that would give the gift of its response, is not contingently denied, but constitutively so. That the spirit does not make firm state in the heart, does not make itself present there, is what separates mortality from immortality, or the poet's name (gift) from the spirit's. For an alternative reading of the "firm state," see Forest Pyle's excellent reading in "'Frail Spells': Shelley and the Ironies of Exile," *Romantic Circles Praxis Series*, August (1999).

[32] So too poetry, as Shelley famously puts forth in his *Defense*: "Poetry, in a general sense, may be defined to be 'the expression of the Imagination': and poetry is connate with the origin of man" (511, *Shelley's Poetry and Prose*).

Names, therefore, remain. These names: the name of God and ghosts and Heaven, remain. But as every reader of Shelley's poem will have noticed, the poet's grammar is at odds with the line's most clearly intelligible sense. It requires a slight misreading, or at least a neglect of the ambiguities of the phrasing, in order to come away with the simple assimilation of *God*, *ghosts*, and *Heaven* to names, which then would serve as the collective subject of the verb *remain* in the next line. The problem is not insoluble, but it is challenging enough to require discussion. Simply put, whereas "name" is singular and clearly refers to "God," the verb "Remain" requires a plural subject, which must then be understood to be the collection of "name of God," "ghosts," and "Heaven." However bizarre an assemblage, the most direct way of understanding the line would be as the *name* of God, followed by the *being* ghosts and Heaven. Moreover, the earlier draft of the "Hymn" in the *Examiner* (1817), as well as that published in *Rosalind and Helen* (1819), read, "Therefore the names of Demon, Ghost, and Heaven, / Remain." Whereas this earlier draft both explicitly names "Demon, Ghost and Heaven," *as names*, and gives each name as singular and in the form of a proper name, the later, corrected draft, drops the plural "names" and in addition to replacing "Demon" with "God," pluralizes and uncapitalizes "Ghost," as though reinforcing the divided being of the phenomena, rather than the singular idealizing form of the name.[33] Everything Shelley altered, in other words, serves to problematize the direct assimilation of the line to a mere collection of names.

This is not to say that the dominant and dominating reading of "God and ghosts and Heaven" as names is simply incorrect. Despite the ambiguity, it would be entirely permissible to take the form "name of" as implicitly repeated for each item of the list. This reading is further reinforced by the second half of the sentence, which calls these subjects "Frail spells," and again

[33] *SDN* shows the corrected *Examiner* edits, with the sole exception being that both "God" and "Ghosts" are capitalized there.

refers to their "uttered charm." However, even if the force of the line ultimately pulls towards this interpretation, the phrasing's striking ambiguity calls to be read.

The problem, of course, essentially amounts to knowing what the difference between a name and a thing is, and thus understanding how it could be that both might "remain," and do so as similar consequences of the non-event of the absence of the spirit's gift. As I have already indicated, if the endeavor is vain, it cannot be because poet and sage fail to name, but conversely, because naming happens; because—perhaps—not only the name of God, but also ghosts and Heaven, remain. But what is the remaining of the name of God, this "frail spell"? The endeavor, which results from the absence of the spirit's gift or presence, leaves as its records these traces, and it is the being of these traces as *remaining* that Shelley's hymn ought allow us to think; that is, it ought allow us to think the history of a certain sending of the traces of God, ghosts and Heaven, through the problematic figure of the name.

The name of God remains. This means, first and foremost, that God, or God's name, persists, idles or hangs on.[34] The record of the poet's vain endeavor to respond to the question of being—to the gloom of death and birth, and the scope of despondency and hope—this name of God is the poet's gift. Of all names, however, that of God identifies what is both most and least bound to the word. For the *name* of God names an origin, and a conception of origin—and origination—that presents a condition of possibility for naming as such. To name God is to name the origin of the poet's ability to name. The gift of the name of God therefore not only gives *a* name, but gives a conception of naming that exceeds the word and derives it from the presence of this transcendent being, whose words the poet, in his turn, would only relate. What the name

[34] On the problems of the "rest" or "remainder" as that which exceeds the presence of the present, see especially Derrida's "The Time of the King" in *Donner le temps*, where Derrida develops the relation of remainder to the gift, as well as *Glas*.

of God names, then, is already in excess of the domains of the name and of language. The name of God posits an entire conception of language, and, in so doing, a relation of word to thing, and of being to non-being.

That the name *of God* remains, moreover, is not because it is the first name given, but on the contrary, because the "name of God" names language in general. Or rather, it is the opposite that holds. The endeavor: responding to the absence of the Spirit, does not result in the *proper name* of God, but begets language, and therefore also poets. No poet without the denial of the Spirit's gift, likewise no language. But language, insofar as it is then given, gives the name, and in each name it gives it gives the name of God, as the ineluctable consequence of the word. The name of God names the excess of name (or word) over the purely linguistic. The name cannot remain what it is, because it cannot but also give being *and* the difference between beings and language. That the name of God remains, then, is the persistence of name *and* Heaven *and* ghosts; the latter two of which are bound to the word (of God), yet irreducible to it, no longer *simply* words. They are in a state of undecideable difference from the word, and from the theological system it posits before articulating theology as such—that is, before signifying *God*, *ghosts* or *Heaven*.

Remaining, then, articulates the resistance of name to be what it *is*. It articulates a restlessness, but also a remnant. For the name of God, however outmoded, outdated and even surpassed, remains and is ever again *re*named. Remaining, we might say, is—but also names—the being of being, as the consequence of the absence of the Spirit's gift, or the presence of its voice.

In commenting on the character of these, "Frail spells—whose uttered charm might not avail to sever, / From all we hear and all we see, / Doubt, chance, and mutability" (ll.29-31),

Forest Pyle has astutely pointed out the ambivalence of the poet's judgment.[35] For it is not simply a dismissal of the power of these spells, as would be the case were he to have said that they *do not avail to sever*, but instead a call for what would appear to be a necessary critique of them. That they "*might not* avail to sever," indeed touches on the danger posed by the word, which can always fail to be read as spell (or word), and taken instead for a God (or being). And this danger too remains, so long as does language, and the name(s) of God it bears with it.

Against the assumption, then, that the "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty" concerns a (personal) experience or a (poetic) intuition of the deified spirit, the present articulation asks us to ask whether the problem of the name that its third stanza thematically raises, may not precisely be performed by the naming gestures of the poem.[36] It asks us to ask after the relationship between the logic of naming developed in the poem, and that enacted by it. The names *given* for "Intellectual Beauty," (including "Intellectual Beauty") would then have the potential to engage with the gesture and problem of the gift, which makes any name as such possible in the first place. A name, as name, must be given. It must be present and present to itself and its referent. To disrupt the logic of the gift (of the name) is then likewise to question the structure of reference. To emphasize the re-giving of names to this spirit, as Shelley's "Hymn" does, is also then to emphasize the allegorical and non-symbolic nature of these names. Both their arbitrariness, with respect to that which they name, and their materiality, as differing inscriptions whose difference ought be, but is not quite, effaced. Neither mere signifiers, nor naming symbols, these names remain and resound as the memory of an articulation of language

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[35] See his "'Frail Spells': Shelley and the Ironies of Exile."

[36] Perhaps we might better say that this problem is also *at stake in* the names offered by the poem, in, that is, the poem's gift(s). For certainly nothing is "performed" absolutely, with a felicity that could be measured, or that attains some identifiable end. If the name(s) of "Intellectual Beauty" *perform* anything, it is only the thought of a certain failure of the name to name, to be present to itself and to its referent.

that cannot but be mistaken for the one or the other. And in this way they offer a vision of poetry's gift.

To return to the "Hymn's" sixth stanza, it would now be a matter of hearing the poet's address otherwise:

> I vowed that I would dedicate my powers
> To thee and thine—have I not kept the vow?
> With beating heart and streaming eyes, even now
> I call the phantoms of a thousand hours
> Each from his voiceless grave: they have in visioned bowers
> Of studious zeal or love's delight
> Outwatched with me the envious night—
> They know that never joy illumed my brow
> Unlinked with hope that thou wouldst free
> This world from its dark slavery,
> That thou—O awful LOVELINESS,
> Wouldst give whate'er these words cannot express. (ll.61-72)

Of hearing an address that no longer looks to the presen(t)ce of a voice from beyond. That "thou—O awful LOVELINESS," would *give* "whate'er these words cannot express," now names what in "LOVELINESS" remains beyond expression, and at the limit, beyond the word. But "Thou" refers to nothing other than the "LOVELINESS" on the page, the marking, "LOVELINESS," that makes possible both word and name, but whose articulation can never be reduced to the presence of either.

Chapter Two

Chapter two, "The Gift of Poetry in Thoreau's *Walden*," examines a short passage at the beginning of the second chapter of *Walden*. Previously published as "A Poet Buying a Farm," the passage recounts Thoreau's near-purchase of the Hollowell farm and serves as the transition from its prefatory first chapter, "Economy," to the main subject of the work, life at Walden Pond. The events recounted in "A Poet Buying a Farm" precede life at Walden and narratively they play the role of a double. In this way the Hollowell purchase serves as a model for the experiment at Walden and the present chapter demonstrates that the implications of this comparison are far-reaching for any approach to Thoreau's seminal work.

Thematically, what Thoreau recounts at the beginning of the second chapter of *Walden*, entitled "Where I Lived, and What I Lived For," stands in stark contrast to Shelley's poet's concern in his "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty." From the question of the divine relation—or non-relation—of language, and the denial of a fully present gift of the name, we turn to an all too prosaic exchange of dollars and cents between "poet" and "farmer." Nevertheless, Thoreau's failed purchase implicitly references the failure of Shelley's poet to name adequately. In each case the experience of failure, or the failure to experience, names less a state of deficiency than it does a necessary point of departure. Poetic insight into the remaining of language follows only from the experience of a constitutive failure.

Just as in Shelley's verse, the measure of poetry, or the poet, is given in the Hollowell passage through what the poet ultimately is able to give. What he can or cannot give back, what remains to be given, and what, after all, it means to give in the first place. By transposing, or "bearing" these questions into an explicitly economical domain, Thoreau's purchase also serves as a transition between Shelley's metaphysical discourse and Baudelaire's urban interests.

Although it is difficult to imagine a greater clash than that between Thoreau's pastoral and Baudelaire's debauch, Thoreau's keen eye into the commodity and its limits shares an intensity with Baudelaire's, who will also ask how the problem of the gift is inseparable from that of poetic endeavor.

THE GIFT OF POETRY IN THOREAU'S *WALDEN*

I. INTRODUCTION

In the second chapter of Thoreau's *Walden*, entitled: "Where I Lived, and What I Lived For," three prefatory pages are dedicated to a rather dazzling event. It is the purchase of the Hollowell farm. This purchase, it must be noted, never properly or entirely takes place. Thoreau is never, *in deed*, "burned by actual possession" (*Walden* 59).[37] That is, neither does he seize possession of the property itself by entering or occupying it, by claiming rights to it by his physical occupancy, nor does he seize possession of the deed to the property; that title that in turn *entitles* its proper and legal possessor to the ownership of the coordinated property—entitles him to the occupation of that which he, properly speaking, will already legally occupy at the point in which he possesses the complete and signed deed. Thoreau never holds either the title to the land, or the land itself, either *de facto* or *de jure*, licitly or illicitly. The closest Thoreau will in fact come to ownership will be a verbal commitment, made to the current owner and proprietor, from whom he agrees to buy the farm. Although the promises to buy and sell the property will prove, by all indications, infelicitous; although the land will not change hands and no exchange beyond this exchange of promises will take place, this exchange, what we may call *the deed before the deed before the deed*, will set in motion a sequence of events that surpasses

[37] All citations from *Walden* are taken from *Walden, Civil Disobedience and Other Writings*. Ed. William Rossi. New York: W.W. Norton, 2008.

Thoreau's "arithmetic," and in which a notion of poetry is articulated by way of the impasse between imagination and economics. In this way, the narrative of this failed acquisition will bring to bear an unheralded sense of "linguistic value," and one that cannot simply be reduced to either a linguistic or an economical concept. Caught between a language of the imagination and a system of fiduciary exchange, the event of Thoreau's misplayed purchase remains to be thought. In what follows then we will read this event, surpassing arithmetic or any *art of counting*, and the narrative act of *recounting* that binds, inscribes and archives it.

The space of the Hollowell episode is slight, occupying but a few pages at the opening of *Walden*'s second chapter, and although, narratively speaking, it is no more than a transition, serving to prepare the reader for what Thoreau himself will admit is *Walden*'s proper topic—i.e. life at Walden Pond—its insertion cannot be overlooked. According to J. Lyndon Shanley, whose 1957 *The Making of Walden* remains the definitive study of Thoreau's process in composing *Walden*, the episode first entered its pages in 1852. Five years after Thoreau's first lectures of *Walden* material, and three years after the completion of the book's first draft in 1849, the Hollowell scene was added to *Walden*'s fourth draft. In assessing the development Thoreau made towards what would be published in 1854—what Shanley identifies as the seventh and final draft—Shanley notes the significance of the Hollowell purchase for rendering explicit Thoreau's views on property and making clear his aim, more generally, in seeking out the pond: "[E]ven limiting ourselves to the explicit exposition of his ideals we find great additions. One of the finest is the first six paragraphs of 'Where I Lived,' on buying a farm, in which Thoreau told more not only of his attitude toward possessions but also of what he sought from the countryside he knew and loved so well" (58). Indeed, Shanley demonstrates that the addition of the purchase into the pages of *Walden* belongs to the definitive structural formation of the work:

> Although together Thoreau added a significant portion of new material in VI, but the growth here did not result [sic], as did that in V, in a completely new set of dimensions and proportions. It might be said that Thoreau extended the structure in IV and V and that in VI he filled the gaps he had left; or that *Walden* shot up in its adolescence in IV and V and filled out in its maturity in VI. (68)

The appearance of the Hollowell episode, then, coincides with the genesis of *Walden*'s final form and offers insight into Thoreau's complicated stance towards property—a stance which, eventually, will lead him to take up residence at Walden Pond. This is also what Thoreau says in the narrative when he explains that the Walden experiment directly followed that of the Hollowell farm. Although there is no evidence that Thoreau began writing the Hollowell episode prior to 1852—already five years after leaving Walden pond in September of 1847—his journal and a letter of Ellen Sewall's support the dating of its occurrence to before the move to Walden, in July of 1845.[38] The *Variorum Walden* notes that the Hollowell farm was: "An old farm on the Sudbury River just below Hubbard's bridge [now "Heath's Bridge"], in Concord" (*Variorum* 283, n.2). No more than two miles from Walden Pond, Thoreau frequented the spot and probably "purchased" the farm in April of 1841.[39] Walter Harding's *The Days of Henry Thoreau: A Biography* recounts the period in Thoreau's life preceding the move to Walden Pond. Although Harding's main source for details of the purchase appears to be what Thoreau writes of it himself in *Walden*, his contextualization is helpful for understanding how it fits into a series of attempts

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[38] Walter Harding alludes to such a letter in *The Days of Henry Thoreau*, p. 123, n.9. It was written to Prudence Ward on April 8th, 1841.

[39] There are a number of telling journal entries during April of 1841 as well, which might lead one to think he purchased the farm then, or at least was beginning to consider it. See especially *Journal 1*, p. 301 for April 16th: "I have been inspecting my neighbors' farms to-day—and chaffering with the landholders—and I must confess I am startled to find everywhere the old system of things so grim and assured. Wherever I go the farms are run out, and there they lie, and the youth must buy old land and ring it to."

Thoreau made at this time to find a proper writing retreat.[40] Initially interested in taking an attic room, Harding explains, Thoreau turned instead to the purchase of a farm, and only after investigating several spots—including, but not restricted to the Weird Dell, Baker, and Hollowell farms—did he look into building a cabin by Sandy Pond (*The Days of Henry Thoreau* 122-123). Refused by the owners of the latter, much as he was earlier by those of the Hollowell Farm, Thoreau looked at Walden Pond as a viable spot, probably because the land surrounding it had recently been purchased by Emerson.[41]

Thoreau's purchase of the Hollowell farm is caught in a series culminating with Walden Pond. But the purchase also stands out from this sequence, for no other precursor makes it into the pages of *Walden*. Indeed, Thoreau thought highly enough of the Hollowell passage and its recounted purchase to publish it independently as an essay that he then called "A Poet Buying a Farm" (1852) in the literary journal *Sartain's Union Magazine.* Published in the same year that it was added to the folds of *Walden*, the Hollowell passage shares this honor with only one other

[40] Although Thoreau's desire to find a quiet spot to dedicate himself to writing precedes his brother John's death in 1842, after the death his move to Walden Pond is motivated expressly by writing *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers* in commemoration of two weeks spent there with his late brother. Just as in *Walden*, Thoreau shortened by half the time spent on-site in his narrative account of it.

[41] For various reasons, including the refusal of the Hollowell place, his growing philosophical opinions about the problems surrounding property and ownership that developed in this period—and if some speculation is permissible, probably also his lack of capital—Thoreau eventually discarded the idea of owning a farm and decided instead to take to the woods. As Harding points out, the practice was not at all uncommon in this period. Charles Stearns Wheeler, a classmate of Thoreau's at Harvard, lived for a short while in a cabin on Flint's Pond—during which time Thoreau may have visited him—and Ellery Channing, Thoreau's close friend and source for the "poet" in the dialogue of "Brute Neighbors," spent time living alone in a cabin on the Illinois prairies (*Variorum* 13). Other "experimental" (in our sense) living practices were also present in Concord in the nineteenth-century, including the famous Brook Farm and Fruitlands communities.

segment of that work, a portion of the chapter "Sounds" that became "The Iron Horse" and that treats of the ecological soundscape created by the locomotive in the woods of Concord.[42]

The peculiar subject of Thoreau's essay—why recount the story of a poet in so prosaic a situation as participating in a transaction of dollars and cents?—is doubled in its oddly bluff title, which, contrasted with the poetic flair of "The Iron Horse," begins to look downright plebeian. One might suspect, however, that contained in these willful prosaisms is a more pointed design and even a response to an Emersonian poetics that "A Poet Buying a Farm" would then attempt to rewrite. We could summarize the relation by saying that if Emerson lectures and publishes "The Poet" as the first text of his seminal *Essays: Second Series* (1844), then we need look no further than Thoreau's own title, "A Poet *buying a farm*," for evidence of his displacement of Emerson's lofty vision. This both is and is not Emerson's poet, *the* poet Emerson envisioned, here fractured by an indefinite article that signals he may not be up to the world-historical task Emerson laid out for him. Not without a hint of fraternal or filial tension—Emerson's waning interest in Thoreau's poetry is largely considered the reason Thoreau stopped writing and publishing in verse—Thoreau's text both pursues and shocks Emerson's aesthetic vision, *economizing* on it, and rendering it prosaic.[43]

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[42] Harding notes in the *Variorum Walden* that it is possible Thoreau intended to publish more of *Walden* independently, but the failure of *Sartain's Union Magazine* in August 1852 may have stripped him of his venue ("Introduction," 283, n. 1). Incidentally, as a result of this failure, Thoreau was never paid for either publication. It is worth noting that "The Iron Horse" is extremely ambivalent when it comes to the expansion of locomotive technology—and sounds—into the woods of Concord. Far from a reactionary or purely negative piece, "The Iron Horse" is remarkable for its sensitivity to the peculiarly aesthetic dimensions of this innovation.

[43] Most of Thoreau's writing of poetry took place between 1837 and 1844. While Thoreau did continue to write in verse and insert it into his prose works—such as in *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers* and in *Walden*—beginning in 1841 there is marked decline in his writing of poems, and after 1844 he ceased altogether to try to publish his poems independently. Elizabeth Hall Witherell makes this point in "Thoreau as poet." She also surveys Thoreau's

The contextual, historical and biographical interests of the Hollowell purchase aside, there remains one significant reason to consider it. And this time, for the sake of *Walden* itself; our reading and interpretation of what comes to pass in its pages. When explaining the relation of the Walden experiment to the purchase of the Hollowell Farm in chapter two, after having recounted his purchase, but before launching into the description of Walden Pond, Thoreau relates, by way of transition, the one to the other in the following somewhat surprising manner: "The present [Walden] was my *next experiment of this kind*, which I purpose to describe more at length, for convenience putting the experience of two years into one" (61; emphasis added). If we take Thoreau at his word here, then he does not merely relate the two events as temporally successive. He equates them and he thereby justifies the presence of the Hollowell purchase in *Walden* not by virtue of its immediate anteriority in time, but on the grounds of its structural resemblance to the Walden experiment. It would no longer be a question of tracking Thoreau's shifting motivations and the twists of fate that ultimately led him to the pond, but instead of asking how the two events might be understood to be consonant. Not the drive to purchase the farm and that motivating the move to Walden, but something here called an "experiment," which refers equally (*in kind*) to the Walden experiment—whatever that may ultimately name—and the Hollowell purchase, *even, and especially, in its failure*. It is, then, the very exemplarity of "Walden," its meaning and the meaning of its "experiment," that is here at stake in the short Hollowell passage, and it would only be by reading the Hollowell experiment and gauging the

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complicated relationship with writing verse, and attempts to clarify why he might have stopped publishing his poems.

sense of its failure that one would be prepared to shed new light on this experimental sense of "Walden" and to ask again in what its event consists.[44]

II. Experimentation and Autobiography

The recounting of Thoreau's purchase of the Hollowell farm appears at the very opening of the second chapter of *Walden*. Treating *of* the poet and doing so in prose, Thoreau places him in the most prosaic situation: in a transaction of dollars and cents. The poet here narrated is of course also the poet narrating—Thoreau—and this will not be without interest for Thoreau's own, complicated relationship with poetry or for the referential status of the events here recounted, and their adherence to and departure from "lived" events preceding *Walden*'s composition. While the textual differences between the text of "A Poet Buying a Farm" and its inscription in *Walden* are not insignificant, including the addition of paragraphs four and six, the greatest discrepancy between the versions is contextual.[45] As a work unto itself, "A Poet Buying

[44] The Hollowell purchase allows us to understand something essential in the structure of "Walden." The poet's purchase would thus appear to be anterior to Walden both temporally and structurally. It is nevertheless also the case that "Walden," understood not simply as the title of the work, but as the site in and during which its writing takes place, is "anterior" to the Hollowell experiment. Sequence and linear temporality no longer applies to the relation between these two "experiments," because even if we can plot the sequence of Thoreau's experiences at the one and the other, the full meaning of the proper names "Walden" and "Hollowell" remains deferred. It is only on the condition of "Walden" that the experimental sense of "Hollowell" gains its full expression, yet it is also only through the sense of the repetition of "Hollowell" that "Walden" will become what it is.

[45] Of the paragraphs added after the publication of "A Poet Buying a Farm," the first explains the allure of the farm to him, and the second reflects on a quote from Cato. Shanley notes that Thoreau began reading the Romans on agriculture in 1854 and believes all the Latin quotations to have been added at that point (69, n. 13). Finally, a typographical difference appears in the *Walden* version that in the concluding line of the journal edition reads as follows: "It makes but little difference, whether you are committed to a farm or the county jail!" There is no such emphasis in *Walden*, which has no exclamation point after "jail." Thoreau, who moved to Walden Pond on July 4th of 1845, of course famously spent a night in jail in 1846 for tax evasion.

a Farm" was a brilliant literary essay, but inscribed into the sinuous folds of *Walden*, its text accrues inestimable value.

The second chapter of *Walden*, entitled "Where I Lived, and What I Lived For," is itself divided into two unequal parts. The first, prefatory portion, consists of the text of "A Poet Buying a Farm" with the amendments just mentioned. The second part, by far the bulk of the chapter, is separated from the first by a line space, and takes up Thoreau's "next experiment," that famous experiment at Walden Pond. As noted above, the dependence established by Thoreau between these two experiments only increases the importance of clarifying what, indeed, is here meant by "experiment." What "experiment" means, but also, what "Walden" means. No reading of *Walden* has ever taken place without posing, or at least *answering*, whether expressly or not, the question as to to what the volume's title refers. Whether its event is one that was *lived*, or, conversely, an event *of* writing or something indistinguishable between the two, as critics have variously argued.[46] Instead of posing once more this question directly to "Walden," then, we will ask what the meaning of the Hollowell experiment might be—its hypothesis, or perhaps its gamble or wager—with the hope that its response can in turn serve to illuminate new aspects of the former.

But what, then, would it mean to understand "Walden" as the next experiment of *this kind*? To take "A Poet Buying a Farm," the experiment *avant la lettre*, or more particularly here, the event of the purchase it recounts, as somehow prefatory for "Walden"? As, perhaps, an original to a copy**,** or else, a prototype to a later, more developed model. The Hollowell purchase anticipates the "Walden experiment," although it may not simply double it. More than

[46] Most notably Stanley Cavell, in his *The Senses of Walden*, has argued that "Walden" is an event of writing, and Barbara Johnson, in her "A Hound, a Bay Horse, and a Turtle Dove: Obscurity in *Walden*," that "Walden" resides between something written and something lived, further complicating both positions.

anticipatory in mere metonymical or temporal terms, if the Hollowell purchase serves as a "model" it is to the extent that it raises the same question as the Walden experiment. Testing, through a different particular or instance, the same theory, as a part (experiment) to whole (theory). This would mean, on the one hand, that a structural and not a temporal tie binds the two together. On the other hand, even allowing for a structural resemblance, it would still be possible to understand the "Hollowell experiment" as a first, *failed* experiment, against the second, *successful* experiment, at Walden Pond. Given the failed purchase of the former, there is something appealing in this approach, which would also affirm "Walden" as successful, felicitous, or positive, as far as events, or experiments, go. The question of success or failure seems to get closer to the root of the issue. For if nothing else, what the Hollowell experiment problematizes is the difference between *success* and *failure*, or between *purchase* and *possession*. The Hollowell experiment is thus not only an example of Thoreau's experimental research, but it is also a reflection on the stakes and assumptions of any empirically based testing. To ignore this would be to miss what insights it can offer us concerning Thoreau's understanding of experimentation, poetry, and writing alike. Why publish as "A Poet Buying a Farm" the tale of one's failed experiment? Does the success of life at Walden consist in mere occupation? Each of these terms will have to be reassessed, if only because what the Hollowell purchase teaches is that non-possession is the goal. Such an unpossessing purchase must bring into question our assumptions about the acquisition of knowledge, hence the nature and aim of experimentation, and its successes or failures. In what, then, does the purchase consist? And if nothing is gained, why make such an un-possessing purchase?

III. LIVING DELIBERATELY

> THINGS ALWAYS BRING THEIR OWN PHILOSOPHY WITH THEM, THAT IS, PRUDENCE. NO MAN ACQUIRES PROPERY WITHOUT ACQUIRING WITH IT A LITTLE

> ARITHMETIC ALSO. (EMERSON, "MONTAIGNE, OR THE SCEPTIC," *REPRESENTATIVE MEN* 235.)

As the chapter title indicates, the majority of "Where I Lived, and What I Lived For" will be concerned with where Thoreau lived, and what he lived for. But it is critical to realize that while the chapter heading poses the *where* and then *what* as separate subjects, these topics are in fact inseparable for Thoreau. Thoreau, who famously moved to Walden Pond to "live deliberately," is the first to say that *where* always conditions *what*, or perhaps more precisely, that "what" *should condition* "where."[47] The chapter begins however neither with *where* nor *what*, but with reflections on the stage of life that in turn makes one reflect on living: "At a certain season of our life we are accustomed to consider every spot as the possible site of a house" (59). We next learn that at a certain point of *his* life, Thoreau had the custom of buying houses *in imagination*: "In imagination I have bought all the farms in succession, for all were to be bought, and I knew their price" (59). A problem of reference immediately arises, as it becomes clear that this imagined habit, or habit of imagining, could not have been completely restricted to Thoreau's fantasy. Sure enough, these *imagined purchases*, Thoreau recounts, earned him the title of "real-estate broker" with his friends. The quotation continues:

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[47] Thoreau is nothing short of obsessed with this coherence of place and life. To take a few examples from *Walden*:
"Moreover, I, on my side, require of every writer, first or last, a simple and sincere account of his own life, and not merely what he has heard of other men's lives; some such account as he would send to his kindred from a distant land; *for if he has lived sincerely it must have been in a distant land to me*" (5; emphasis added).
"I discovered that my house actually had its site in such a withdrawn, but forever new and unprofaned, part of the universe….then I was really there, or at an equal remoteness from the life which I had left behind…" (63).
"*I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately*, to front only the essential facts of life, and *see if I could not learn what it had to teach*, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived" (65; emphasis added).

> I walked over each farmer's premises, tasted his wild apples, discoursed on husbandry with him, took his farm at his price, at any price, mortgaging it to him in my mind; even put a higher price on it,—took everything but a deed of it,—took his word for his deed, for I dearly love to talk,—cultivated it, and him too to some extent, I trust, and withdrew when I had enjoyed it long enough, leaving him to carry it on. This experience *entitled me* to be regarded as a sort of real-estate broker by my friends. (59; emphasis added)

What of this practice of speculating on houses? Leaving aside the problem of reference for a moment, we would still have to come to terms with an imaginary speculation, with a desire to speculate fantastically, with a fictional speculation in other words. But further still, what is it to speculate on the house? Not simply this or that house, but houses in general, that is, the very possibility of housing: "every spot as the possible site of a house." Speculating, then, on the *oikos* of *oikonomia*.[48] To speculate on the *oikos* is no longer one form of speculation among others because it raises the very question of economy, the origin or destination of any circulation as such, by posing, as its subject, the grounding condition of economy that is the house. Thoreau here imagines an investment without investment, and does so from *no where*, before any *oikonomia*, or economy, has been established.

The issue raised by Thoreau's speculations on houses goes straight to the heart of the Walden experiment. It would be as though in imagining, speculating or investing *without* investment on the house, Thoreau was attempting to reach a point *before* economy. To establish,

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[48] "Economy" from the Greek *oikonomia*, which perhaps more literally means household management. It is formed from the Greek for house, *oikos*, which can also mean property or family, and the Greek for law, *nomos*, which is also the law of partition or distribution (nemein). The role of the "house" in economy is not merely contingent then, but signals that all economy, insofar as it involves a point of origin or return, gives thereby a certain concept of the house. For circulation or distribution requires a point from which to begin, and at which to end. This *is* the house. Therefore no economy without the house, and no house without economy. For a helpful analysis of this logic, see Derrida's *Donner le temps*, pages 17-18.

or re-establish the *oikos* and re-invent or simply obliterate, economic circulation. Such would be the stake or wager of his solitude. *Walden* thus opens with the following:

> When I wrote the following pages, or rather the bulk of them, *I lived alone*, in the woods, a mile from any neighbor, *in a house which I had built myself*, on the shore of Walden Pond, in Concord, Massachusetts, *and earned my living by the labor of my hands only*. I lived there two years and two months. At present I am a *sojourner* in civilized life again. (7; emphasis added)

It is as though at Walden Pond, *the house*, there is neither circulation, nor economy, or at least the economy at work there exists apart from that of life at large. This would be the force of the final sentence: now that Thoreau is back in "civilized life," he is a "sojourner," itinerant, a wanderer precisely to the extent that he is *in circulation*.[49]

However tempting, and even "correct," such a reading would be, it depends on an opposition between economy and aneconomy. Like the opposition between civilization and nature that is also operative throughout *Walden*, the opposition between economy and aneconomy is constantly being disrupted.[50] The first and most telling indication is the trope of

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[49] The theme of the "house" or "home" in *Walden* is extremely complex. And not only because the work takes it as its primary subject, verily, its condition for being written. There are at the very least two kinds of houses. Put very briefly, the first type of house, the *good* house, of which Thoreau's at Walden pond would be one, is owned by its owner, even *maintains* him. The *bad* house on the other hand would be that of which the New Englanders in particular suffer. It is bad because it *owns* its owner, who in turn must work to maintain *it*. See the entire first chapter "Economy," especially pages 7-10. On the problem of Thoreau's economics more generally, and the relationship between his writings and the historical climate from which they emerged, see Leonard N. Neufeldt's extensive study, *The Economist: Henry Thoreau and Enterprise.*

[50] In her "The Inhibitions of Democracy on Romantic Political Thought: Thoreau's Democratic Individualism" Nancy L. Rosenblum makes a similar argument concerning the liminality of Thoreau's remove. Contextualizing Thoreau's withdrawal against the "actual expatriat[ions]" of Byron and Shelley, (59) Rosenblum argues that Thoreau's escapism was comparatively blunted, and takes the contemporary publication of his political essays with his nature writings as corroboration of the latter's political bent. For Rosenblum, Thoreau's succumbing to what she

spectating that organizes Thoreau's passage through the farmlands of Concord. He is here closer to a *flâneur* than a peripatetic, and when he passes through the idyllic countryside he subjects it to the vulgar lens of the window-shopper: "*all the farms were to be bought, and I knew their price*." Just as troubling is the figure of the "farm" itself, which is here the privileged object of Thoreau's imagined speculations. The farm, as well as being one of the most frequent topics of *Walden*, is one of the most overdetermined. As the site of the dissemination of seeds, of both cultivated and wild apples, of farmers, with their pecuniary interests, as well as of the poet, and his poetic ones, the farm will come to name the privileged site of a chance: the chance of an event, or even a gift, as we shall see.[51] A site, in other words, in which such supposedly strict oppositions are put into contact and made to contaminate one another. Hence the interest of Thoreau's purchase of the Hollowell farm, which we are now still only anticipating.

> The purchase will take place under the *leading hand* of Thoreau's "imagination":
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> *My imagination carried me so far* that I even had the refusal of several farms,—the refusal was all I wanted,—but I never got my *fingers* burned by actual possession. The nearest that I came to actual possession was when I bought the Hollowell place… (60; emphasis added)

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calls "democratic inhibitions" checks what she identifies as the romantic ideal of absolute creative independence. Rather than uncover *inhibitions* or restrictions, one might ask whether Thoreau's self-displacement does not displace the very site of democracy, such that it would no longer simply be a question of being *more* or *less* democratic—or more or less inhibited by democratic ideals—but of democracy's own eccentricity or what one might call the eccentric center of democracy. Is not this exteriority the very condition of democratic critique, without which no democracy would be worthy of the name?

[51] On "apples" and the importance of distinguishing *cultivated* from *wild* apples, see especially "Wild Apples" (1862) and in *Wild Fruits*, the section "Wild Apples." In *Walden*, as well as being central to "Where I Lived, and What I Lived For," see also "House-Warming." On "farmers," see especially "Economy" and "The Bean-Field" in *Walden.*

Carried by his imagination, Thoreau tells us that he had already received the refusal of several farms and that, counterintuitive as it may seem, the refusal was all he wanted.[52] What will come to mark the singularity of the Hollowell farm experiment is precisely the proximity to which he comes to *being burnt*, to crossing the boundary leading outside of his speculative imagination, into the terrestrial domain of "actual possession." We must however return to the first paragraph of the second chapter in order to appreciate fully what this movement entails.

Following Thoreau's speculations on houses, the paragraph continues in much the same vein, but shifts to that of a speculation on living. It is now a matter of inhabiting without inhabiting:

> Wherever I sat, there I might live, and the landscape radiated from me accordingly… Well, there I might live, I said, and there I did live, for an hour, a summer and a winter life; saw how I could let the years run off… The future inhabitants of this region,

[52] Thoreau's express desire for "refusal," and the entire sequence of the Hollowell episode bears comparison to the prose poem "Le mauvais vitrier [The Bad Glazier]" (1862) of his French contemporary Charles Baudelaire. "Un de mes amis, le plus inoffensif rêveur qui ait existé, a mis une fois le feu à une forêt pour voir, disait-il, si le feu prenait avec autant de facilité qu'on l'affirme généralement. Dix foix de suite, l'expérience manqua; mais, à la onzième, elle réussit beaucoup trop bien. Un autre allumera un cigare à côté d'un tonneau de poudre, *pour voir*, *pour savoir*, *pour tenter la destinée*, pour se contraindre lui-même à faire preuve d'énergie, pour faire le joueur, pour connaître les plaisirs de l'anxiété, pour rien, par caprice, par désoeuvrement [One of my friends, the most inoffensive dreamer that ever lived, once set fire to a forest to see, he explained, if it were really as easy to start a fire as people said. Ten times in succession the experiment failed; but the eleventh time it succeeded only too well. Another will light a cigar standing beside a keg of gun-powder, just *to see, to find out, to test* his luck, to prove himself he has enough energy to play the gambler, to taste the pleasures of fear, or for no reason at all, through caprice, through idleness.]" (*Paris Spleen* 12; *Oeuvres Complètes* 285). Baudelaire's poem refers implicitly back to Rousseau's *Rêveries du promeneur solitaire* and is an explicit rewriting of Poe's "The Imp of the Perverse," which poses, as its title indicates, the question of a *perverse impulse*. Although Thoreau will certainly not go so far as to theorize perversity, the trope of "experimentation" as it appears in Baudelaire identifies something of the idleness that characterizes Thoreau's narrative, and the almost passive abandon that quickly escalates *refusal* to *acceptance*, and then *consequence, obligation* and even *punishment.* See Rousseau's fourth reverie on lying for a similar progression, as well as Kierkegaard's *The Concept of Irony*, Part two, "Observations for Orientation," in which he diagnoses a similar desire in the ironist.

> wherever they may place their houses may be sure that they have been *anticipated*. An afternoon sufficed to lay out the land into orchard, wood-lot, and pasture, and to decide what fine oaks or pines should be left to stand before the door… and then I let it lie, *fallow perchance*, for a man is rich in proportion to the number of things which he can afford to let alone. (58-59; emphasis added)

We might read the above passage and the recounting of the purchase of the Hollowell farm that follows it as repetitions. On each occasion, there is a gradual fall from the privacy, safety and sterility of the guiding hand of the imagination, into the burning, binding commitment of reproductive work in the field. In this passage we see the pure spectating glance metamorphose into the projective act of the creative imagination ("saw how I could let the years run off"), and we arrive finally at a fantastic pronouncement by our poet to which we will return: "The future inhabitants of this region, wherever they may place their houses may be sure that they have been *anticipated*." What of this anticipation? What *is* anticipation? The moment that straddles the weightless flight of the imagination and the heavy-handed labor of the cultivator. Thoreau apparently escapes unscathed from his anticipation, rich as he is in proportion to that which he can afford to let alone, but let us remark the haunting "perchance" that marks the barrenness of land left in such a state. What is at stake in this "perchance"? A certain, even unaccountable, fecundity? What seed might yet be sewn through sheer anticipation, *perchance*?

Thoreau's purchase of the Hollowell farm, what he will here call the first "experiment" of the Walden Pond variety, is thus initiated by his imagination. And almost by chance. For, as he tells us, "the refusal was all I wanted." By chance, as though he had been testing the boundary all along, but without really wanting to exceed it—both wanting *and* not wanting to exceed it. The possibility of remaining within the "imaginary realm" is threatened from the moment its

movement is initiated. Let us look, then, at Thoreau's purchase of the Hollowell farm and observe how easily, how abruptly, the imagination risks leading outside of itself:[53]

> My imagination carried me so far that I even had the refusal of several farms,—the refusal was all I wanted,—but I never got my fingers burned by actual possession. The nearest that I came to actual possession was when I bought the Hollowell place, and had begun to sort my seeds, and collected materials with which to make a wheelbarrow to carry it on or off with; but before the owner gave me a deed of it, his wife—every man has such a wife—changed her mind and wished to keep it, and he offered me ten dollars to release him. (59)

Thoreau, by his own admission, "buys" the Hollowell property. But between the purchase, and what he calls "actual possession," remains an abyss, the calculation of whose borders threatens a certain madness.[54] For his purchase, even if we allow that it is *not yet* possession, nevertheless

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[53] The threat of exceeding the "imagination" and falling into the "real"—of *burning his fingers* on possession—that Thoreau here stages, is not without ramifications for the autobiographical text of *Walden.* That is, it touches on a central issue of autobiography, which is the relation between "lived events" and the "text" that inscribes them. Given the primacy of events, and the secondary nature of the act of writing that ought simply to record them, how should we understand the role played by writing—or the *interest* of writing autobiography—as it interposes itself into the narrative, and begins to affect, from the inside, the text it ought merely to produce, from the outside? What happens, when writing one's autobiography, when one confronts the moment of narration in the narrative? Not that the tradition, from Augustine to Rousseau, to Proust and beyond, is not without answers. The Hollowell episode, in addition to thinking something like an event of poetry, re-poses through the question of "possession" the proper subject of autobiography. What does autobiography record? And is not its grasp or possession of "lived events" just as profoundly brought into doubt when the narrated limit between "imagination" and the "real" is troubled? Flipping the problem on its head, would it not be correct to say that it is just this ungraspable limit that autobiography is most adept at thinking?

[54] Again, the wife. The place of the wife who haunts this exchange, the woman whose proper place is the house and who is legally excluded from the legal-linguistic operation is that of the abyss. Or rather, the limits of the abyss are articulated through that of the wife. If we take Thoreau at his word and give it its full due, the comment "every man has such a wife" reads less as a misogynistic remark than it does as a comment about the structural necessity of thinking what (always) comes between two men in the full presence of their speech. Woman, and all her

carries the force of a contract, exemplified in the farmer's counter-offer of ten dollars in order to be released.[55] With the counter-offer, which is the first recognition of an obligation, Thoreau expresses shock and makes the first pronouncement of "truth" in his narrative:

> Now, to speak the truth, I had but ten cents in the world, and *it surpassed my arithmetic to tell*, if I was that man who had ten cents, or who had a farm, or ten dollars, or all together. (59; emphasis added)

What *happens* here in Thoreau's narrative, and also happens to his narration, is an experience with his own speech, which, in being taken as titled by the farmer, reveals something about the nature of fictional—we could also say counterfeit—language. The farmer accepts Thoreau's proposal to buy the farm, and what looked like mere playing—"my imagination carried me so far…"—an exercise of informal or poetic speech, is taken as prosaic. But what seals the deal for Thoreau, to abuse the expression, is not the farmer's acceptance of the offer to buy, but his subsequent reneging on the deal. The moment of the farmer's reneging turns out to be the affirmation of the contractual or performative character of their earlier shared words. In other words, by offering Thoreau something for nothing, he has affirmed a certain irreversibility in what has occurred. The moment the untitled offer to purchase is taken as *argent comptant* [titled currency], there is no turning back. "Poetic" or counterfeit language, once it is taken as

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unknowable depths, stands between them from askew and interrupts their free exchange. "Wife" here names what is least accountable in the house, what both constitutes and de-constitutes the house as the center of exchanges.

[55] It is not a coincidence that it is the farmer's wife who changes her mind. The right to buy and sell property was not won for all women in America until around 1900. Until that point, the property of women was largely under the control of their husbands—which may very well be the case here. The 1848 "Married Women's Property Act" in New York was one of the more comprehensive laws passed, allowing women to retain rights to their property in marriage. Thoreau's rather misogynous aside—which is hardly an indictment of gender inequality—nevertheless highlights women's marginal status, and gives us to think another form of "non-possession," and its interruption of the exchange between rights bearing men.

"prosaic," or titled, cannot simply be untitled without the repayment of a debt.[56] And it is at the very moment of the farmer's offer of ten dollars in remuneration for voiding the deal that the sense of his own discourse breaks down; that is, he admits, the transaction "surpassed my arithmetic." The limit of the arithmetical is here not simply fictional or poetic speech—the play of the imagination—but what is experienced by Thoreau as the moment of fiction's crossing over into the realm of "truth." A counterfeit coin yielding valid or titled currency.[57]

The farmer offers Thoreau ten dollars to be released from his bond. With this, Thoreau's pure speculation has turned a profit, and it is revealed that he has been speculating with real, titled currency all along. Or, at least, with that which had the capacity to be taken as such. This, then, is perhaps why—as we shall see—Thoreau cannot simply balance his account, cannot, that is, entirely own the text that he so adeptly produces.[58]

As though it still held out the possibility of delimiting these fields as separate and discriminate, Thoreau makes his appeal to "truth": "Now, to speak the truth, I had but ten cents in the world, and it surpassed my arithmetic to tell, if I was the man who had ten cents, or who had a farm, or ten dollars, or all together" (59). However, at this moment, *in truth,* Thoreau can

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[56] That is, the irreversibility of a debt is here *threatened*. It would always, of course, have been possible that the farmer himself was only joking. Nothing excludes the possibility that, indeed, the joke is here on Thoreau, and the very farmer he believes to be so *prosaic*, so unimaginative and incapable of thinking in any terms beyond those of dollars and cents, *actually* is only playing a cruel joke on Thoreau. Allowing for this irreducible possibility, what is important for us is that within the parameters of his narrative, Thoreau appears to take the farmer's sincerity at face value, hence as binding. The bind, between the poetic and prosaic or fiction and truth, between that which should be separate and separable, ends all "arithmetic" within Thoreau's narrative.

[57] See Baudelaire's "La fausse monnaie [The Counterfeit Coin]" for a parallel instance. Derrida explores the ramifications of this short text in *Donner le temps*.

[58] We begin to see what is at stake in Thoreau's anticipation, and the haunting "perchance" that marks seeds left unsown. What is the order—if such a term is adequate here—of the imagination, if it remains unanticipatable, if the production of its seeds remains categorically contingent, if the order of "anticipation" names that which is beyond all anticipation, because it names something like the relation of thought to action, or fiction to reality? As though the difference between these orders could still be maintained.

no longer tell what is given. Whether he is who he thought he was—the man with ten cents—or someone who has purchased a farm, or someone whose compensation for the voiding of that purchase has earned him ten dollars. Or, finally, somehow, by some incalculable calculation, he who has "all together." In the moment of truth, nothing is taken for granted, and at the same time, everything remains in suspense.

It might be possible to identify here once more a certain logic of the commodity at work, that Thoreau would then express or satirize through his unarithmetical exchange. Insofar as the reversibility of each element for its other is to some extent precisely what comes to pass in the commodity, where any thing becomes inextricable (at least in imagination) from that for which it might be exchanged: money, or a ten-cent investment; the commodity, or the farm; and the profit, or the ten dollars that results from this peculiar form of speculation. But it is the commensurability of the inequivalent in Thoreau's calculation: ten cents for a farm for ten dollars, culminating in the figure of the "all together," that shows another logic to be at work. The "all together" does not name the potential outcome of an exchange, or calculation, but the moment of its failure. It is as though the dissymmetry of Thoreau's, or the poet's, "imaginative" offer to buy the farm with the prosaic acceptance of the farmer has been translated back into the economic realm and threatened flattening a diachronic sequence, or accounting—sequential narrative and logic itself defined as the balancing of accounts—into an unsituatable set of mere signifiers: or poetry. In other words, what is here "poetic"—what *happens*, or *fails* to happen; happens *in failure*—is not a versified speech, or a readily recognizable language of the imagination that opposes and therefore upholds a prosaic discourse of work and labor, but an

irruption internal to a language of "truth" that is barely, if at all, registered in the account.[59] Poetry, or poetic language, is here no present, if by "present" one understands something that may simply be given, bartered with, exchanged or counted on to stand up to, and hold its ground against, a prosaic, or straight-speaking other.[60]

When Thoreau recovers his senses—and cents—but finds he is still faced with the farmer's impending ten dollars, he resolves to let things stand as they are, or nearly so:

> …it surpassed my arithmetic to tell, if I was that man who had ten cents, or who had a farm, or ten dollars, or all together. However, I let him keep the ten dollars and the farm too, for I had carried it far enough; or rather, to be generous, I sold him the farm for just what I gave for it, and, as he was not a rich man, made him a present of ten dollars, and still had my ten cents, and seeds, and materials for a wheelbarrow left. I found thus that I had been a rich man without any damage to my poverty. But I retained the landscape, and I have since annually carried off what it yielded without a wheelbarrow. (60; emphasis added)

Thoreau wishes to walk away. To abandon, without remainder, what must never actually have been his, if his claim to having never been "burnt by actual possession" is to remain viable. Indeed, if his interaction with the farmer of the Hollowell place is to remain an anecdote in the

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[59] Perhaps Thoreau's failure of arithmetic reveals something about the moment of exchange itself that is impossible, yet necessary—necessary, because this is the condition for any contract at all, but impossible, because how could one ever rigorously determine the value of any coin, any currency, any signifier, at a given time? Each is haunted by the possibility of reversal, and by a certain insanity that opens the possibility of reading, or misreading, in the first place during that moment when words and deeds coexist, coexist precisely in order to be substituted for one another: like a promise for a promise for a title for a deed for land, etc. Does not poetry (or the poematic) name the moment when language ceases to be taken for granted? When the value or meaning of a given signifier no longer remains assured? What if "poetry" named the disruptive event of an irruption into—and out of—prose accounting?

[60] Let us not forget that "prose" comes from the Latin *prosa (oratio)*, or "straightforward (discourse)."

annals of his life before "Walden," a story of a near-collision but eventual escape from the threat of domestic, or *domesticated* existence, then it is crucial that he not bear the traces of the encounter and that his poverty not be damaged by it. The opposition operating between monetary or material poverty and intellectual or spiritual poverty here makes possible the distinction between two forms of "retention": one that relies on wheelbarrows and the other that does not. What is essential is that Thoreau not bear the burden of the land on his shoulders and that he rather, and even to this day, retains only the land*scape*. The landscape is all the better because, lifting up his mind without wearing down his body, it allows a pecuniary poverty to coexist with intellectual affluence. But does Thoreau walk away with his poverty intact? Does the time of his encounter, that missed or failed encounter of his experiment with the farmer, really pass without *material* effects? So that afterwards Thoreau will still, seemingly, be able to gloat that he, "had been a rich man without any damage to [his] poverty"?

There are indications that matters are not so straightforward. The first being Thoreau's admission of a labor done. Just as he will have been "carried" by his imagination, so too does he, with reference to the exchange with the farmer, "carr[y] it far enough." While he possesses the "generosity" to return all the farmer's possessions without usury, the question of compensation lingers. Hence Thoreau's reference to and identification with Atlas in the following paragraph:

> To enjoy these advantages I was ready to carry it on; like Atlas, to take the world on my shoulders,—I never heard what compensation he received for that,—and do all those things which had no other motive or excuse but that I might pay for it and be unmolested in my possession of it… (60)

Thoreau, unlike Atlas, does not carry it on, but in *raising* the question of compensation with respect to Atlas' labor, the very order of recompense has been displaced. What form of payment

would have been adequate to Atlas' effort? When it is a matter of bearing on one's shoulders not merely a load or harvest, but "the world," as Thoreau calls it, compensation can no longer be thought of in terms of coins and currencies. For the very order, or cosmos, upon which circulation is constituted is thereby transformed. If Atlas' labor raises the question of compensation, then, it is not simply because he lacked the sponsors to properly expiate their debts, but because the language of debt and expiation is no longer sufficient.[61]

The question becomes whether Thoreau's work does not, like Atlas', in some sense displace the order or circulation of debt. That is, whether his exchange with the Hollowell farmer does not exceed the basic conditions of accounting, such that it would no longer simply be a matter of picking up, or putting down again, a given load. What, after all, does Thoreau carry and then evidently put back down? "[F]or I had carried *it* far enough," he specifies. The reference of the "it," however, is hardly unambiguous, and can only with great difficulty be determined as the land—the land that Thoreau *would have* carried on, had the farmer sold it to him. "It" may just as well refer to the conversation, or impression, that Thoreau carried the cash required to make such a purchase in the first place. Nor is the ambiguity of the "it" at all dispelled by the verb "carrying," for this verb's frequency in the passage, and each time with different degrees of literality, is itself overdetermined. The insistence of carrying, carrying on, carrying off, carrying

[61] Thoreau's reference to Atlas may be more complicated yet. Although Thoreau ascribes to Atlas the bearing of "the world," traditionally Atlas is understood to have borne the heavens. He was given the task as punishment for having sided with the Titans against the Olympians in the Titanomachy. His bearing of the heavens is already the payment of a debt, in the form of a punishment for a transgression—albeit a transgression that becomes one *after the fact*, only once the Olympians won power over the heavens. According to Virgil's account, the purpose of his lifting of the sky was to separate the heavens from the earth, and thereby to break the intercourse of the spheres and to establish two orders. Atlas' bearing of "the world"—whatever, exactly, we understand Thoreau to mean by this—involves then *at the same time* the return or payment of a debt in an economy that precedes it, *and* the establishing of a new economy, or order, that is born out of the tension of his division. It is a *return* on a debt, and the *displacement* of the order of that debt, on the occasion of Olympians coming to power.

far enough, and carrying both with and without a wheelbarrow, is by itself sufficient to highlight the uncanniness of the displacements here carried out. The displacements occur not only between fields and farms, but tropes too, in an agri-linguistic play that verily constitutes the passage at hand. If then, at the end of the day, what Thoreau carries far enough is not simply *this* conversation with the farmer, but a language that threatens to lose itself in the abyssal distinction between poetry and prose, then *it* may not simply be something he can re-place.

The gesture of putting back down, in other words, just like that of picking up or of coming into possession, may fail. Closing an account will never simply be a matter of returning or of giving back to someone what he or she is due without the haunting possibility of some remainder—perchance. This remainder, unlike what Thoreau claims he takes away from his encounter ("But I retained the landscape…") is no longer something present, but speaks only to what in his "all together" remains at bay, unspoken and unaccounted for, as the residue of the linguistic fracture that we then called "poetry." This would be a poetry without poetry, a poetry incapable of collecting or consolidating itself into any poetics, a poetry, finally, that is only ever encountered at the moment of its dispersing. Poetry as the poematic, if by the latter we understand the event of an impossible conjoining of poetry and prose, of imagination and mechanicity, of *poema* and *matic*.[62]

[62] I here propose an understanding of Derrida's expression "poematic." The term "poematic" for Derrida is both a corrective, stripping from "poetry" or the "poetic" its pretensions to purity or truth, and it is a means of thinking the automaticity of memory, or the "learning by heart," through imprinting directly on the "poem" the necessity of repetition, or "matic." All of the above might also be taken as a gloss on the following line from *Given Time*: "The thing as given thing, the given of the gift arrives, if it arrives, only in narrative. And in a poematic simulacrum of narrative" (41). Hearing the genitive as double would force us to think a certain undecidability of the originariness of poematic simulacrum and narrative, each of which would then be the condition of the other, without however being reducible to it. On the "Poematic," see also "Che cos'è la poesia?" and "Istrice 2: Ick bünn all hier," reprinted in *Points.* Sarah Wood gives a very

As the site of an encounter with economy, with the economy of economy or even the economy *of* language, the Hollowell purchase testifies to something other than an exchange. And yet it is just the uniformity of a balanced transaction that Thoreau yearns for as he takes leave of the farmer and his wife. We may compare Thoreau's determination to balance his account with the farmer to his expressed desire in the preceding chapter, "Economy," to "give" or "render" an account.[63] That is, in other words, "to acquire strict business habits… To oversee all the details yourself in person; to be at once pilot and captain, and owner and underwriter; to buy and sell and keep the accounts; to read every letter received, and write or read every letter sent…" (17). To keep his obligations and payments straight, in sum. Yet the fastidiousness of good business practices, we also learn, in no way safeguards against certain insolvencies that are endemic to various forms of work. Aspiring to transparency in one's business does not suffice, in other words, to attain balanced books: "You will pardon some obscurities, for there are more secrets in my trade than in most men's, and yet not voluntarily kept, but inseparable from its very nature. I would gladly tell all that I know about it, and never paint 'No Admittance' on my gate" (15). Or again, in the conclusion to *Walden*: "It is a ridiculous demand which England and America make, that you shall speak so that they can understand you" (217). In giving an account of

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good alternative reading of Derrida's poematic through his debt to Artaud in her editorial, "It will have blood," in *Deconstruction and Poetry*.

[63] To take only a few examples:

"Moreover, I, on my side, require of every writer, first or last, a simple and sincere account of his own life…" (5).

"These statistics, however accidental and therefore uninstructive they may appear, as they have a certain completeness, have a certain value also. Nothing was given me of which I have not rendered some account" (45).

And from "Where I Lived, and What I Lived For":

"I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and…if it were sublime, to know it by experience, and be able to give a true account of it in my next excursion" (65).

oneself in narrative, and even in autobiographical narrative, the aim is not transparency, but something truer than transparency. Obscurities remain, and so too, of necessity, certain imbalances and unpaid debts between writer and reader.[64] "To give an account" thus names for Thoreau an act that exceeds all intentions to give, and above all to give something that could be recounted, recuperated or reported. For something remains, perchance, and this remainder brings into doubt not only *what* it is that one has (ten cents, seeds and materials for a wheelbarrow), but at the limit even *who* one is, or who it is that gives, at any given moment ("it surpassed my arithmetic to tell, *if I was that man* who had ten cents, or who had a farm, or ten dollars, or all together").

Something remains, perchance, and this remainder exceeds the purview of any anticipation. Confronted with the farmer's ten dollars, Thoreau cannot *simply* return it. He cannot simply let the farmer "keep" his ten dollars as though nothing had happened or come to pass, as though all accounts were squared with nothing left over, as though an unpayable debt had not been opened. As if to acknowledge this—even as he would wish to disavow it—Thoreau cannot but make one final, superfluous, act of "generosity":

> However, I let him keep the ten dollars and the farm too, for I had carried it far enough; or rather, to be generous, I sold him the farm for just what I gave for it, and, as he was not a rich man, made him a present of ten dollars, and still had my ten cents, and seeds, and materials for a wheelbarrow left. (60)

The space between generosity and its other is here infinitesimally small. It is at best a *generous* distinction. For the character of generosity, if at all applicable here, is certainly not appropriate to

[64] Thoreau's affirmation of the necessity of obscurities in autobiography presents a departure from the Augustinian or even Rousseauian models, where the logic of confession sets transparency as the aim.

describe Thoreau, who only gives back what was never really his own. Whereas to make a present, to truly give generously, would require doing so without calculation or condition. If something exorbitant nevertheless remains, it can only be the very distinction of generosity, which, precisely because it is not a distinction, must invent—or reinvent—itself. In other words, what is generous, what *gives* because it is not given, can only here be the superfluity of a distinction that is not one, that names a space that is no present, and that barely, if at all, happens. Happens only, if at all, in the space of the simulacrum of a narrative both capable and incapable of producing something other: but that always might yet give itself as other. What is generous here is nothing that is given, then, but only the concept of "generosity"—a *generous* generosity—that produces, through the simulacrum of a calculation, the surplus of an arithmetic that cannot balance its accounts. If ten dollars is here *made present*, something else, nevertheless, remains out of the account. "Generosity" here remembers this, even as it cannot, for essential reasons, name it.

Having given his gift—or at least the memory of a past or future gift to come—and then cited lines of Cowper, Thoreau returns, in conclusion, to the question of what he will have "yielded without a wheelbarrow." This time, however, it is less a question of a given subject named "Thoreau," than "a poet":

> I have frequently seen a poet withdraw, having enjoyed the most valuable part of a farm, while the crusty farmer supposed that he had got a few wild apples only.[65] Why, the owner does not know it for many years when a poet has put his farm in rhyme, the most

[65] *Walden: A Fully Annotated Edition* points out the following extract from Emerson's *Nature* as a site of resonance: "There is a property in the horizon which no man has but he whose eye can integrate all the parts, that is, the poet. This is the best part of these men's farms, yet to this their warranty-deeds give no title." (*Annotated* 80)

> admirable kind of invisible fence, has fairly impounded it, milked it, skimmed it, and got all the cream, and left the farmer only the skimmed milk. (60)[66]

We might ask what the nature of such a rhyme-fence might be? Seizing, *in language*, the fattiest, richest portion of this figural farm-cow, the poet *impounds* and secures his somewhat unlikely poetic bounty. Cream, here, does not simply name something to be drunk or meted out incrementally. It is something, already, on the order of excess. The richest milk a cow can give, it names what cannot be reduced to dollars and cents; what, *of writing*, is perhaps yet to be given. For Thoreau, the experience of *A Poet Buying a Farm* is to be located somewhere between purchase and possession, at the site of an (im)possible confrontation between two different economies, where, *impounded in rhyme* "the farm" is no longer given as such, but *hollow-ed out* in its very name, it is written.[67]

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[66] *Walden: A Fully Annotated Edition* identifies this "poet" as Ellery Channing, Thoreau's friend and also the "poet" who appears in dialogue in the "Brute Neighbors" chapter of *Walden*. See Channing's poem "Baker Farm," quoted in the chapter of the same name in *Walden*, for a possible reference for Thoreau's highly suggestive comments.

[67] How then to read "Walden" *after* the Hollowell farm experiment? How to approach the proxemics of this "next," which, in posing, apposing and juxtaposing the events of *Walden* and of "A Poet Buying a Farm," shows them at once to be the closest and most distant of counterparts? If the experiment at Walden Pond is that which comes *next*, this "next" must be read neither metonymically nor metaphorically, neither simply temporally nor synchronically, but as the parataxis of two gifts which, exceeding the economy of any exchange, calls to thinking the very linkage of their linking. If the Hollowell experiment gives itself as a model, then, it is as the gift of an experience with language that calls into question legibility, and that would force us to rethink *Walden* as so many singular experiences with the illegible.

Chapter Three

Chapter three, "Donner le souvenir: The Gift of Memory in Baudelaire," begins by studying the frictions at work in the use of the term "souvenir" in Baudelaire's essay about toys, "Morale du joujou." As a term that can refer both to a material keepsake and to an immaterial element of memory, this chapter shows, the souvenir offers the possibility of troubling their distinction and interrupting the order of the mnemonic through the contamination of a commodity logic. Just then as Thoreau's poetic or imaginative excursions through the farmlands of Concord suffered a crisis through the imposition of an economic language of exchange, in Baudelaire's essay the structure of the mnemonic is subjected to economic principles through the "gift" of the souvenir. This gift, narrated at the beginning of "Morale du joujou," is at once the most generous and most selfish present, yet because it stands at the origin both of aesthetic sensibility and of mnemonic formation, it has massive consequences for how we consider the operations of the latter two systems. In the second half of the chapter the motif of the souvenir, or *Andenken*, is pursued in Walter Benjamin's writings, and particularly through the figure of the collector. In Benjamin the collector collects above all *Andenken*, but this function has a history and is linked directly to the shifting structures of experience and memory that come about principally in the nineteenth century. Read through the lens of Benjamin's critical writings, the theme of the souvenir in Baudelaire becomes not only a threshold concept between the immaterial and material, but one with specific historical valences still of import today.

DONNER LE SOUVENIR: THE GIFT OF MEMORY IN BAUDELAIRE

PART I

I INTRODUCTION

> DAS HEROISCHE TENOR DER BAUDELAIRESCHEN INSPIRATION STELLT SICH DARIN DAR, DASS BEI IHM DIE ERINNERUNG ZU

> GUNSTEN DES ANDENKENS GANZ ZURÜCKTRITT. ES GIBT BEI IHM AUFFALLEND WENIG "KINDERHEITSERINNERUNGEN." (*GS*, v.1.2 690)[68]

Baudelaire's 1853 essay, "Morale du joujou," begins with a staged scene of remembrance: "Il y a bien des années,—combien? Je n'en sais rien…" (581).[69] This autobiographical opening is the first of many narrative strategies employed in the text, mobilized in order to engage with its subject, the toy. With both philosophical and aesthetic reflections, autobiographical and impersonal narrative reporting, and data drawn from memory as well as current fashions in toy-making, the text of "Morale" multiplies its approaches to the "joujou" and even comes to look something like the seductive scientific toy discussed in its concluding pages, the *phénakisticope*, which also approaches its subject by multiplying its images. Rather than outlining a systematic classification for the toy, by instead slipping in and out of these various narrative forms "Morale" at once encases the "joujou" within the mystique of lived experience and rejects the pathos of this designation, thereby hinting at something of the complexity of its subject.

Although this opening reminiscence is merely one approach among the many employed in the short text, it nevertheless has been taken to supply the motive for the rest. This *childhood* memory, so the story goes, gives birth to a desire or fascination, which in turn becomes an *adult* compulsion, and properly sublimated, perhaps even a *studied* subject, exemplified by the writing of the essay itself. It becomes doubtful, however, in reading the narrator's account, whether he will ever truly outgrow this formative experience. Which, in this case, is not merely a motive, but something of an obsession. Giorgio Agamben and Philippe Bonnefis have taken this line in

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[68] "The heroic tenor of Baudelairean inspiration lies in the fact that in his work memory gives way to the souvenir. In his work, there is a striking lack of 'childhood memories'" (*SW*, v.4 190).
[69] All citations and page numbers of "Morale du joujou" are taken from Charles Baudelaire, *Oeuvres complètes*, v.1.

approaching the text of "Morale," profitably studying the fetishistic current that runs through the essay.[70] But while the narrative of a failed sublimation of a childhood trauma perhaps explains reasonably well the progression—or lack thereof—of the text, one should ask whether it does not succumb to the very logic of mimesis that the toy partakes in dismantling, all the while missing what "Morale" has to say about the structure of memory and its dispossession from the subject. Focusing instead on what "Morale" discloses about this structure would have the potential to displace the relation that the narrative itself seems to offer between the narrating subject, *his* memories, and the subsequent—and symptomatic—appearances of the toy that follow. It would, moreover, offer another perspective on what has, at least since Walter Benjamin's seminal reading of Baudelaire, occupied a major place in Baudelaire studies: the shocking depiction of a mnemonic system out of sync with its subject, and the ramifications of this disruption for lyric poetry.[71]

For while Benjamin's compelling account of the mnemonic plight of the *Fleurs du mal* adeptly diagnoses the conditions through which the structures of memory and experience undergo fundamental shifts in the course of the nineteenth century, the logic of the *souvenir* articulated in "Morale" engages with certain of what we might call 'material conditions,' that haunt memory's very conceptualization as a system. The French *souvenir* lies at the threshold of the material and the ideal, of the objective and subjective sides of the mnemonic. By naming at

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[70] See *Stanzas*, part II, for Agamben's discussion of Baudelaire's work. Philippe Bonnefis discusses the "Morale du joujou" in "Child's Play: Baudelaire's *Morale du joujou*."

[71] Benjamin lays out the main components of his argument in "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire," although the problematic relations between *Erlebnis* and *Erfahrung*, and *Andenken* and *Erinnergung*, are constant occupations of his late writings. On these in particular, see: "The Storyteller," "The Image of Proust," "Central Park" and convolutes "H" and "J" of the *Arcades Project*. Among the many notable recent studies of Baudelaire's mnemonics influenced by Benjamin, see Richard Terdiman's influential *Present Past: Modernity and the Memory Crisis*, Elissa Marder's "Women Tell Time," and Kevin Newmark's "Who Needs Poetry? Baudelaire, Benjamin, and the Modernity of 'Le Cygne.'"

once a psychic memory and material token in Baudelaire, it therefore both enforces the limits between these domains, and offers a possible path for their destabilization. By exploring—and exploiting—the convergence of its *ideal* and *real* senses, and especially the passage of the one into the other, Baudelaire's text thus poses questions not only with respect to the structure of psychic memory, but also concerning the role of gift- or commodity-exchange for the process of its theorization. For just as commodity forms become inextricable from the souvenir's material side in modernity, (as, for example, in the form of the keepsake or gift-book), in Baudelaire's text this commodification, or commodifiability, becomes the point of departure for the exploration of the immaterial mneme. At the limit, "Morale" does not merely pose memory as a structure—whether human or inhuman—but by way of the souvenir's material meaning asks after the structure of this structure, and its (perhaps) eventual destructuring: the moment when the concept of memory itself might be opened to the immemorial.

The following will tackle these questions, of memory's limits and its immemorality, by asking how indeed "memory" or the "souvenir" is imagined in "Morale." Is it imagined as a faculty of the mind, or subject, or as something else? Perhaps something that does not yet have a content, for which no there would be no *proper concept*, or whose concept would be still *to come*. Does memory name something like the "to come" in Baudelaire? That is, the site of the possibility, or chance of an event? The event of poetry, for example, out of very "minimal" conditions, like the *presentation* of a mere toy?

Such is the question that the text of "Morale" has the possibility to raise: that of the relation between a *presentation* and its inscription in memory; an inscription, moreover, that would not foreclose, but instead open the event of something like poetry. This issue, far from being a motif exclusive to "Morale," can be traced throughout Baudelaire's oeuvre, which

repeats it in many different ways, not only in the *Fleurs du mal*, or in Baudelaire's writings on Poe, but also in "Le Peintre de la vie moderne," and elsewhere. Kevin Newmark has decisively shown this with respect to "The Painter of Modern Life,"[72] where, he demonstrates, there is a breakdown between structures of mimesis and representation and those of memory and poetry. Here, however, we shall attend to the notably (an)economical nature of what is *re*presented, by asking what "Morale" stages in the uneasy aligning of memory, the gift, and the toy.

II DONNER LE SOUVENIR

> LA DIFFÉRENCE ENTRE UN DON ET TOUTE AUTRE OPÉRATION D'ÉCHANGE PUR ET SIMPLE, C'EST QUE LE DON DONNE LE TEMPS. *LÀ OÙ IL Y A LE DON, IL Y A LE TEMPS.* CE QUE ÇA DONNE, LE DON, C'EST LE TEMPS, MAIS CE DON DU TEMPS EST AUSSI UNE DEMANDE DE TEMPS. IL FAUT QUE LA CHOSE NE SOIT PAS *IMMÉDIATEMENT ET À L'INSTANT* RESTITUÉE. IL FAUT LE TEMPS, IL FAUT QUE ÇA DURE, IL FAUT L'ATTENTE — SANS OUBLI. (DERRIDA, *DONNER LE TEMPS* 59-60)

> MEMORY IS, THEREFORE, NEITHER PERCEPTION NOR CONCEPTION, BUT A STATE OR AFFECTION OF ONE OF THESE, CONDITIONED BY LAPSE OF TIME. AS ALREADY OBSERVED, THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS MEMORY OF THE PRESENT WHILE PRESENT, FOR THE PRESENT IS OBJECT ONLY OF PERCEPTION, AND THE FUTURE, OF EXPECTATION, BUT THE OBJECT OF MEMORY IS THE PAST. ALL MEMORY, THEREFORE, IMPLIES A TIME ELAPSED. (ARISTOTLE, "ON MEMORY AND REMINISCENCE" 607)[73]

The text of "Morale" begins with a scene of childhood remembrance, as the narrator recalls a visit with his mother to a certain Madame Panckoucke's home. As normally happens when one thinks back to those events of "la première enfance" (581), some things are extremely clear, others vague. While the precise details of *when* and *who* remain hazy, others, such as the growth of grass in the corners of the courtyard, sharp. "Je me rappelle très-distinctement que

[72] See his essay "Off the Charts" in *Baudelaire and the Poetics of Modernity*.
[73] Translated by J.I. Beare, in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*. Ed. Richard McKeon. New York: Random House, 1941.

cette dame était habillée de velours et de fourrure" (581), our narrator explains, and so too, in turn, have "Morale's" commentators.[74]

Some time into their visit, as though finally registering the presence of this young child, Panckoucke announces: "Voici un petit garçon à qui je veux donner quelque chose, afin qu'il se souvienne de moi" (581). Taking the boy by the hand, she leads both mother and child to a room covered on every surface with the greatest display of every sort of toy, expensive and cheap, simple and complex, "où s'offrait un spectacle extraordinaire et vraiment féerique." "Voici…le trésor des enfants," Panckoucke explains, "J'ai un petit budget qui leur est consacré, et quand un gentil petit garçon vient me voir, je l'amène ici, afin qu'il emporte un souvenir de moi. Choisissez" (581).

As so often happens, a fight breaks out between mother and son when they disagree on his selection. Commanded to choose—but a choice he is all too happy to make—the boy selects "du plus beau, du plus cher, du plus voyant, du plus frais, du plus bizarre des joujoux," and only after much opposition, with his mother insisting on an all-too mediocre specimen, does he resign himself to a compromise.

Later in life—the boy-become-man explains in the present of the narration—he still wonders at Madame Panckoucke and at the other boys who have been similarly marked by her. But in what, exactly, does this marking consist? Certainly, *that there was a marking* is testified to by the mania that the narrator explains he is still susceptible to: to this day he cannot pass a toy store without thinking of Panckoucke, or to be precise, "à la dame habillée de velours et de fourrure, qui m'apparaît comme la Fée du joujou" (582). He is also possessed by an enduring interest and admiration for this "singular statuary" of the toy, in which, he reflects, all of life is

[74] This is a favorite line for readers of the text's eroticism, commented on in Bonnefis (27-28) and Berger (181), and quoted in Agamben's discussion of fetishism (57).

found in miniature. And this, it seems, is precisely what Madame Panckoucke would have wanted. As her first remark baldly puts it, this gift, the gift of the toy, is given for the sake of producing such a memory: an *auto-hetero-souvenir* if you will, of the self, but *in* the other: "Voici un petit garçon à qui je veux donner quelque chose, afin qu'il se souvienne de moi." There can be no question of altruism here, or of a gift given without return and for the sake of another: at stake is nothing less than the *self of the self*—and to this end, Panckoucke's "joujou" takes as much, if not more, than it gives. This interest is explicit and unwavering in the logic of both her statements, in which the sole concern is the future inscription of her memory. The futurity of this memory-to-be coincides with the movement from visibility—the here and now of the contingency of the present, and the presence of that present: *vois-ci*—to intelligibility. *Souvenir* means the coming-up of the thing, as it makes its return in the mind of the rememberer, and as is perhaps clearer in its earlier form: *il* me *souvient*. In the best of cases this coincides with a lifting-up of the stuff of natural existence—*voici un garçon*—into the elevated and internalized realm of signification and meaning—*un souvenir de moi*.[75] Of course, that which is arbitrary and contingent in this case is not completely so: girls, for example, are excluded outright. And that which results may never find a completely consolidated place in the realm of the mind: *velours et fourrure* are at best parts of the "moi," and we are not even sure whether this "Panckoucke" woman is the *mother*, *wife* or *sister-in-law* of the current *monsieur* of that name.[76] Baudelaire's

[75] For an in depth discussion of the implicitations of this logic for both Baudelaire and Hegel, see Cynthia Chase's "Getting Versed: Reading Hegel with Baudelaire" in her *Decomposing Figures.*

[76] The text begins: "—je fus emmené par ma mère, en visite chez une dame Panckoucke. Était-ce la mère, la femme, la belle-soeur du Panckoucke actuel? Je l'ignore" (581). Another, even more threatening potential, lurks as well. For it is not only possible that in becoming a memory only a part of her has subsisted, but that these very traces should become severed from *her* memory altogether. In this way they would re-emerge as though automatically, without any reference or acknowledgement of their origin. How then to read the reapparance of this all too particular pairing of "velours" and "fourrure" in part two of "Un Fantôme," "Le Parfum." Not only is this

mnemonics are rarely without such tribulations, whether they are figured as the *blessé qu'on oublie* of "La cloche fêlée," buried in plain sight, or as the perfume bottle *qui se souvient* of "Le flacon," which, however, speaks of its own place in the future as, "perdu dans la mémoire des hommes" (ll.21-22).

Here, in "Morale," it is Panckoucke who calls to be recalled, and who thus gives us an image of the other side of remembering. "*Remember! Souviens-toi!* prodigue! *Esto memor!*" (l.13), as "L'Horloge" will so eloquently put it seven years later.[77] Unlike the exhortations of the clock, however, Panckoucke's is a less direct method, commanding the boy "to choose" a souvenir, *in order that* a souvenir might be left over. The command to remember of "L'Horloge" is in the context of that poem closer to a reminder of what is already known than it is generative of a "new" memory, with its "ticks" hinting at a knowledge that is irrepressible: namely that time and its technics *mean* mortality. Even allowing for these essential differences, the surprising insertion of "prodigue!" carries unexpected resonances with this earlier, childhood scene. In the prodigious gap between the French and Latin languages, and the two perhaps irreconcilable roots of *subvenire* and *memare*, "prodigue" of "L'Horloge" calls out in self-contradiction. Either an accusation *or* command to give, *and to give lavishly*, "prodigue!" vacillates between an adjectival indictment of frivolity—prodigue!—and the verbal command to do just that: To spend or give, and to do so generously. Between the command to remember and that to be mindful,

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the only place that the two reappear in the *Fleurs du mal*, but they do so there amidst a discussion of the inebriating qualities of memory; the association of smell with elements of the past.

[77] The refrain of "souviens-toi," repeated five times in "L'Horloge," is the expression of a quantified concept of time that relies on the *mémoire volontaire*. The empty repetition of seconds, which bear little likeness to the spaces of the days of the calendar, call to mind—or to memory—their own instant. This is something that is absolutely placeable (the precise instant of an hour of a day), and thus absolutely unplaceable (a moment wholly unspecific and unbound to anything beyond the frame whereby it becomes a point of reference—the clock).

between a return and a reserve, would lurk something like this incompatible indictment *and* command to give, and to give *too much*. But why adjoin the gift and memory? *Le don et le souvenir?* Why situate the gift's double and contradictory injunction alongside the command to remember, and to remember the only thing one would like to forget?[78]

Let us return, however, to our Dear Madame Panckoucke, who also forces us to consider a conjunction of *giving* and *memory*. No Pandora, she gives but *souvenirs*. Anne-Emmanuelle Berger, in commenting briefly on "Morale" in her *Scènes d'aumone,* has remarked on the centrality of giving in the text, and even goes so far as to understand the gift as its main subject.[79] She takes "Morale" as a series of reflections about the gift, or giving, which circulate and find their currency by way of the problematics of the toy and child, and the sexual overtones that charge both childhood and adult poetic or aesthetic production. Although we have only treated the first few paragraphs of the text, perhaps we may yet amend this to say, at least as a hypothesis: "Morale" is a text about *the gift of memory*—which is above all here *not simply given*, but inscribed into a scene of donation.

As Madame Panckoucke is only too happy to admit, she sets aside a "petit budget," which, dedicated to the children who visit her, can turn a healthy profit in *recollection*. Converting dollars and cents into the *trésor des enfants*, these *joujoux* become so many *souvenirs* once given to little boys. "Afin qu'il emporte un souvenir de moi," as she puts it. At stake in the

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[78] Although slightly less vexing from this perspective, one could also think of "Je te donne ces vers afin que si mon nom," which offers a similar agglutination of giving and memory. In that poem it is the gift of "vers" that forms the *fatigante mémoire*, which *might* remain, and thereby haunt the reader. Of course, what "Je te donne ces vers" gives is not a toy, but a poem. Situated between an act of seduction and a hail to prosperity, the gift of "Je te donne" is likewise caught between an *economic* end and one, perhaps, that is slightly less quantifiable. The question that it raises, like "Morale," is not whether a memory is left over, but rather why the act or logic of the gift should be tied to that of memory in the first place.

[79] See in *Scènes d'aumône: misère et poésie au XIXe siècle*, "Les dons de Baudelaire."

coincidence of these two senses of the "souvenir," the souvenir as "keepsake" and the souvenir as "memory," would then be not only a reflection on the conditions that inhabit and make possible aesthetic or poetic production—as the rest of the text explores—but also a thinking of the play of memory, or the time that ties together the presence of a present turned past, and a future still to come. In other words, Panckoucke's souvenir ties together through the economic problem of the gift both the questions of poetry, or imagination, and that of memory; as something not merely passive—or *mimetic*—but open to contingency, *and being given otherwise*. But what does it mean to give, let alone to give memory? Setting into circulation untold *souvenirs*, Madame Panckoucke raises this question anew.

In her consideration of "Morale du joujou," Berger identifies two types of gifts among those described by Baudelaire. While Panckoucke's unadulterated encouragement of the child's pleasure gives the impression of a "pure gift" without conditions, those expensive gifts described as being lavished by and on the rich succumb to a calculative operation, and thus by ostentatiously emphasizing their status as commodities, are at best "pseudo-gifts." Because, Baudelaire explains in a key formulation, children "jouent sans joujoux," *less is more* when it comes to toys. To succumb to the temptation to show off in the act of giving fails both with respect to the gesture—for such a gift is no gift at all—*and* it fails to contribute to "la poésie enfantine." In a similar logic to that of "The Painter of Modern Life," it is as though the expensive toys which imitate life *too well* drown out the imagination. The extreme case of this in the text is that of little girls whose form of play is purely mimetic: not only do they imitate their mothers when they "jouent à la madame"—imitating in this way an imitator—but what is worst, they do so by pretending to "se rend[re] des visites." *Returning, within the reserve of a reserve.* So offensive is this image that reflecting on it forces our narrator to cry out: "Les pauvres petites

imitent leurs mamans: elles préludent déjà à leur immortelle puérilité future, et aucune d'elles, à coup sûr, ne deviendra ma femme" (583). The toy then would be tied to the imagination's power of breaking with the mimetic, which opens the field of poetry and art: "Le joujou est la première initiation de l'enfant à l'art" (583). If this vision is to hold true, only a pure gift—one without calculation—and hence, one not constrained by debts to that which is, or any other form of servility, would be capable of giving a poetry so pure as to be worthy of the name. This is why Baudelaire differentiates between those toys given in "hommage de la servilité parasitique à la richesse des parents" (584) and those that constitute "un cadeau à la poésie enfantine" (584). In contrast, the "impure gift" that is calculated leads directly to a lack of imagination that is reliant on mimesis, and thus to the repetition of that which is.[80]

But is there such a thing as a "pure gift"? Does one ever give without expecting a return, without expectation, or even anticipation? Here, above all, is it not precisely in order to preserve an image of the giver that the gift is offered? If the possibility of poetry is opened by the gift—as the primal scene of Panckoucke's donation at least asks us to consider—it will have to be out of its originary *im*purity. Rather than offering an alternative to calculation or economism, Panckoucke's "gift" names the duplicity inherent in any act of donation—at once excessive and restricted, expectant and prodigious. If "poetry" is possible, it is not as a *poésie pure*, but instead it must emerge out of this always already fractured bearing. This is precisely why the most disruptive toy of all—the *joujou vivant*—is given "par économie" (585). The lowest (Rat), is the highest (Art).[81]

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[80] See in particular pages 182-3 of *Scènes d'aumône* for Berger's development of this argument.

[81] This is of course the logic at work in the anagrammatical play of the *joujou vivant*. In the portion of "Morale" that would later be extracted to form the prose poem "Le Joujou du pauvre," the narrator recalls having seen a poor boy and rich boy playing together, the rich boy's interest having been piqued by the former's highly unusual toy. This "rat vivant!" that the poor boy

So why, after all, give a *souvenir*? Why give memory? If the gift at the origin of poetry is not a pure gift making way for a pure poetry, it instead opens the possibility of poetry and its others: both rat *and* art, poetry *and* prose, and poverty *and* wealth, whose respective differences it both constitutes and draws into question. To give memory, to give *in order* to give memory, to think memory as something that must be given, asks whether it is also constituted out of an originary impurity. Put otherwise, it asks whether the structure of memory is *historical*.

III

> BEKANNTLICH WAR DER LEBENSKREIS, DER EHEMALS VON DEM GESETZ DER ÄHNLICHKEIT DURCHWALTET SCHIEN, UMFASSEND; IN MIKROKOSMOS WIE IM MAKROKOSMOS REGIERTE SIE. JENE NATÜRLICHEN KORRESPONDENZEN ABER ERHALTEN ERST IHR EIGENTLICHES GEWICHT MIT DER ERKENNTNIS, DASS SIE SAMT UND SONDERS STIMULTANTIEN UND ERWECKER DES MIMETISCHEN VERMÖGENS SIND, WELCHES IM MENSCHEN IHNEN ANTWORT GIBT. DABEI IST ZU BEDENKEN, DASS WEDER DIE MIMETISCHEN KRÄFTE, NOCH DIE MIMETISCHEN OBJEKTE, ODER GEGENSTÄNDE, IM LAUFE DER JAHRTAUSENDE DIE GLEICHEN BLIEBEN. VIELMEHR IST ANZUNEHMEN, DASS DIE GABE, ÄHNLICHKEITEN HEVORZUBRINGEN—ZUM BEISPIEL IN DEN TÄNZEN, DEREN ÄLTESTE FUNKTION DAS IST—UND DAHER AUCH DIE GABE, SOLCHE ZU ERKENNEN, SICH IM WANDEL DER GESCHICHTE VERÄNDERT HAT. (WALTER BENJAMIN, "ÜBER DAS MIMETISCHE VERMÖGEN," *GS* V.2.1 210-11)[82]

If memory, or the *souvenir*, like *joujoux* not only can but must be given, then could it also be speculated on, or even economized? Alternatively, could it be prodigious? Madame

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unveils, guarded and anesthetized in a grilled box, marks at once the difference between the "real" and "imaginary," and the impossibility of keeping the two apart. For just as a rat can always become art, so too might art, becoming a rat, bite back.

[82] "As is known, the sphere of life that formerly seemed to be governed by the law of similarity was comprehensive; it ruled both microcosm and macrocosm. But these natural correspondences are given their true importance only if we see that they, one and all, are stimulants and awakeners of the mimetic faculty which answers them in man. It must be borne in mind that neither mimetic powers nor mimetic objects remain the same in the course of thousands of years. Rather, we must suppose that the gift for producing similarities (for example, in dances, whose oldest function this is), and therefore also the gift of recognizing them, have changed in the course of history" (Walter Benjamin, "On the Mimetic Faculty," *SW* v.2.2 721).

Panckoucke's gift to our little Charles is a reflection on this, memory's economics: its laws of distribution, or internal division. Perhaps even the fact that it has conditions of production that determine such laws. Which is not to say that memory, in turn, is imagined as divided between a pure and calculated form, nor even that it is split between a *mémoire volontaire* and *mémoire involontaire*. But perhaps it gives to think that there would be a potential, within the operations of memory, or the *souvenir*, to break with the linearity or continuity of a restricted mimetic economy of return. To be prodigious, as it were. What would it mean for memory to turn a profit? If it looks anything like the situation of "Spleen" II—which opens, let us recall, *J'ai plus de souvenirs que si j'avais mille ans*—this may be a less than desirable state of affairs. Memory may function best when it operates at a loss. But the question here is less what happens when it overproduces—as appears to be the case in "Spleen" II—or underproduces—as happens, for example, in "La Cloche fêlée"—than its recourses for exceeding such tabular laws of accounting.

The gift of the souvenir aids in the production of memories. But make no mistake, the memory *produced*—if memory there is, and if "production" is the best term to describe what comes to pass—this memory is the memory of how *to* produce memories, or how memories are produced; for which the text of "Morale" becomes both a sort of quasi-instruction manual, and a testament to the "success" of its method. By offering a scene of memory's production, "Morale" thinks the meaning of the act of recollection, but it also implicitly acknowledges this act's structural openness, or susceptibility to, remembering itself otherwise than it is. "Memory" remains dependent upon an act of recall in order for it to form a concept of itself. And this dependence—we might even say this structural incompleteness—is one reason why there may be no concept of memory in Baudelaire.

In *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, Derrida distinguishes between what he calls the "impression" or "notion" of a concept, and a mere "subconcept." Whereas the subconcept fails to achieve the clarity of the concept for inessential or contingent reasons—as in, for example, the case of something not fully thought through, or poorly conceived of—the *impression* of a concept retains an opacity for essential reasons. Preceding or anticipating the concept as a hint of something yet to come, the impression nevertheless may never arrive at anything more definite. For Derrida, it is the notion of the archive, and above all the Freudian notion of the archive, that retains an essential opacity:

> Well, concerning the archive, Freud never managed to form anything that deserves to be called a concept. Neither have we, by the way. We have no concept, only an impression, a series of impressions associated with a word. To the rigor of the *concept*, I am opposing here the vagueness or the open imprecision, the relative indetermination of such a *notion*... I do not consider this impression, or the notion of this impression, to be a subconcept, the feebleness of a blurred and subjective pre-knowledge, destined for I know not what sin of nominalism, but to the contrary, I will explain myself later, I consider it to be the possibility and the very future of the concept, to be the very concept of the future, if there is such a thing and if, as I believe, the idea of the archive depends on it. (24)

If the notion of the archive remains suspended, or in reserve in Freud, it is because, we could say, it remains to be archived. Because—and this is essential—*the* archive always awaits the arrival of another archive which cannot but, *après coup*, challenge the conditions by which its concept is present to itself. The archive, or *arché*, as innovative and conservative, is always in a position to

be rewritten, and Freud's work, although not alone in this respect, would be uniquely attuned to the difficulty.

If Baudelaire does not name the archive as such, his attention to the *givenness* of memory, both here in "Morale," and elsewhere, nevertheless arrives at something like an *impression* of it. To read memory in Baudelaire would be to attend to the rigor of its impression, which is to say, the systematic denial of the possibility of anything like a systematic account of the mnemonic, the writing of a memory [mémoire] that, in both its structure and content, is to come. What "Morale du joujou" offers, in this respect, is an image of memory thinking itself historically. And this means: asking after the memory of memory, remembering the meaning or sense of the act of recall. Baudelaire, who never tired of staging the failings of memory and mnemonics, here takes a different approach, but one no less shocking for its "success."[83]

To speak generally, any thing can become the subject of a memory, but what is here recalled as coming to pass between the narrator and Madame Panckoucke is not merely the memory of an event, but a thinking of *the event of memory*, through the presentation of a gift. As when one confronts anything written, whether a monument or a text or a poem, it inscribes the possibility of the repetition of a content, but also a logic of archivization. Panckoucke's memory is such a logic of archivization—of putting to memory. Memory is here a gift because it can always recall something that was not merely *forgotten*, but which has not yet been thought: like the conditions of a gift (presentation) of memory (souvenir) that appears *given* (present). As

[83] If the recalling of a present as it becomes an element of the past names an at best impoverished concept of *mémoire*, especially in light of Benjamin's work on *Erinnerung*, *Erfahrung*, *Andenken* and *Eingedenken* in "Central Park," "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire" and the "Theses on the Philosophy of History," this model nevertheless remains rigorously open to the possibility of an impossible event: the encounter with a past that was never fully present, the apprehension of an unknown rule of memory's own technics. "Morale" gives meaning to the sense of a memory, or *souvenir*, forgetful of its scene of production and its material conditions for operating.

Aristotle observed, "memory" gives the past as the condition for the presentation of itself. To think memory historically it behooves us to *recall*, or denaturalize, the present(ation) of that past.

PART II: *ANDENKEN* AND THE PROBLEM OF THE SOUVENIR IN BENJAMIN

I

Just as Baudelaire's "Morale du joujou" makes use of the *souvenir* in order to explore the tenuous border between the material and immaterial, one can find in Benjamin's work equal attention given to the figure of the souvenir, or *Andenken*, which, for him, allows for insight into the confrontation between commodification and memory, or what Benjamin calls, "das Schema der Verwandlung der Ware ins Objekt des Sammlers [the schema of the commodity's transformation into an object for the collector]" (*GS*, v.1.2 689-90; *SW*, v.4 190). This, in "Central Park," (1938-1939)[84] is Benjamin's characterization of the "Andenken," which literally names a "thinking-on," but idiomatically refers to a memory, a memento, or a keepsake. Hence also a souvenir.[85] Straddling the domains of the commodity and of memory, the thematic of the *Andenken* in Benjamin's work offers an image of the interpenetration of memory with

[84] According to Tiedemann, "Central Park" was probably written between July 1938 and February 1939, during Benjamin's exchange with Adorno over "The Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire" (Rolf Tiedemann, 'Nachwort' to Walter Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire, ein Lyriker im Zeitalter des Hochkapitalismus* (Frankfurt am Main, 1974), 191.) "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire," which Benjamin would compose in an attempt to rewrite "The Paris of the Second Empire," was written from February to July of 1939, and then published in the *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung* in 1940.

[85] Although in English "souvenir" has borne the exclusive sense of "keepsake" since the end of the eighteenth century, both the French "souvenir" and German "Andenken" retain the double senses of "memory" and "reminder" through the twentieth century. That is, each can refer either to a psychic *mneme* or a material *memento*. In the course of the nineteenth century, to this latter material meaning was superadded a commercial sense brought on by the emergence of the souvenir industry and its mass production and distribution of—to take only two examples—gift-books and tourist souvenirs. Although this final sense of souvenir as commodity is much more prominent in the German "Andenken" or English "souvenir" than it is in the French, it nevertheless can be seen to infiltrate all three terms.

experience, and of their evermore antagonistic relationship in modernity. For, as Benjamin shows, the privileging of the commodity form bears directly on the diminishing of certain mnemonic configurations. At the limit, however, the problem of the "souvenir" or *Andenken* not only offers another account of the destruction and renewal of the aura in the nineteenth century,[86] but reveals an essential character of memory, with resonances beyond the last two centuries, and for which the event of "commodification" would only be the most recent name.

II

> WAS IN DEN PASSAGEN VERKAUFT WIRD, SIND ANDENKEN. DAS 'ANDENKEN' IST DIE FORM DER WARE IN DEN PASSAGEN. MAN KAUFT IMMER NUR ANDENKEN AN DIE UND DIE PASSAGE. ENTSTEHUNG DER ANDENKENINDUSTRIE. WIE WEIß ES DER FABRIKANT. DER DOUANIER DER INDUSTRIE. ([O, 76], "ERSTE NOTIZEN," *GS*, V.5.2 1034)[87]

What does the souvenir name if not this odd convergence of the commodity with a concept of memory? To serve as the schema for the transformation of the commodity into a collectible object is to participate in a re-suffusing of authenticity [Echtheit][88] into what has, for better or worst, been deprived of just this. The commodity, in its most classical Marxist definition, is that form a good takes once its value in the market has superseded its use-value. At

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[86] Other instances discussed by Benjamin of such decline and renewal would be those of celebrity, film and gambling, analyzed in "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility" and in "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire."

[87] "The things sold in the arcades are souvenirs. The 'souvenir' is the form of the commodity in the arcades. One always buys only mementos of the commodity and of the arcade. Rise of the souvenir industry. As the manufacturer knows it. The custom-house officer of industry." (<O, 76>, "First Sketches," *The Arcades Project*, 864)

[88] The term "authenticity [Echtheit]" is favored throughout the "Work of Art" essay along with "uniqueness [Einmaligkeit or Einzigkeit]," as the principle traits marking the being [Dasein] of artworks prior to the development of technological reproduction techniques. (See *GS*, v.1.2 479, 480, 481 n.8, 482) "Authenticity," for Benjamin, names just the relatedness of an artwork to a "here and now." That is, to a time, place, and history, to which the work, as *singular* work, testifies. While then a painting bears its own "history," in the form of the "changes to the physical structure of the work over time, together with any chances in ownership" (*SW*, v.4 253), one photographic print, for example, is in principle inseparable from another, and therefore would no longer hvae access to this criterion.

that point when commodities are produced irrespective of their particular uses—i.e., only in order to be exchanged for other commodities—then what Marx famously calls "commodity fetishism" arises. The thing, as the object of such a fetishism, is no longer simply a thing—or even a use-value—but becomes a value *tout court*. It has come to represent that for which it might be exchanged and for this reason becomes indissociable from this possibility. The commodity then is no longer simply "itself,"—i.e. a material object with particular qualities—but a value that is equivalent to all other commodities of similar value.[89] Lost or forgotten in all this, however, are both the conditions of production of individual commodities—for being a value, they no longer represent the specific labor that went into producing them, but only a "generalizable" labor represented by an abstract duration of time[90]—and the use-value of the thing itself, the specificity of which, in becoming a commodity, is also obliterated. The situation of the commodity is thus one of forgetting: a forgetting of the thing's origins and of its character as a particular, material product with determinate ends.[91]

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[89] Marx expresses this in a number of different ways at the beginning of *Capital*. "A Commodity," he explains, "is therefore a mysterious thing, simply because in it the social character of men's labour appears to them as an objective cahracter stamped upon the product of that labour, because the relation of the producers to the sum total of their own labour is presented to them as a social relation, existing not between themselves, but between the products of their labour." Further in the same paragraph: "But it is different with commodities. There, the existence of the things *qua* commodities, and the value-relation between the products of labour which stamps them as commodities, have absolutely no connexion with their physical properties and with the material relations arising therefrom. There it is a definite social relation between men, that assumes, in their eyes, the fantastic form of a relation between things" (72).

[90] See especially pages 39 and 40 of "Commodities" on this.

[91] Richard Terdiman also makes this argument in his introduction to *Present Past: Modernity and the Memory Crisis* (1993). For Terdiman, "the enigma of the commodity is a memory disorder" (12) to the extent that what distinguishes the commodity is the effacement of its past, of its conditions of production. He locates the "event" of this form of mnemonic disruption alongside other disruptions of memory's economics that occurred in post-revolutionary France. The trade in "souvenirs" and "keepsakes" (13) burgeoning in the 19th-century constitutes for Terdiman a kind of meeting point of two simultaneous mnemonic phenomena: 1) The generation

We could put this another way by saying that the commodity is not *collectible*: that what one collects, when one collects, are *never* commodities. For, having been stripped of precisely that which renders the thing differentiatable—i.e., for Marx, its use-value, physical properties and conditions of production—the commodity form names just that which is generalizable, absolutely commensurate and inessential. Exchange-value supplies no possible ground for separating one commodity from another, whether it be the same or a different type.

In order to become collectible—and in order to be re-imbued with an aura in the Benjaminian sense—the commodity, we read in "Central Park," must be subjected to the *schema* of the souvenir. Benjamin's term here, *Schema*, is essential, as it speaks to the scope of the phenomenon, which reaches beyond any particular class of objects. The *schema* of the souvenir [Das "Andenken" ist das Schema der Verwandlung…] is no more immanent in the miniature Eiffel towers of the Parisian peddler, or the "I Love NY" T-shirts of a Manhattan street vendor, than it is in a pebble, a car, a hammer or a handkerchief. It is merely a form or figure—a schema—that haunts the commodity and names its potential for being (re)imbued with a character, history, story or identity of its own; for its being imbued with a character that renders it *itself*, its own, the "own" of an own.[92] The schema of the souvenir concerns, in other words,

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of an object whose primary goal is to retain an element of the past, and 2) the constitution of that object *as* commodity, whereby its own conditions of production have been forgotten.

[92] We could also say that it imbues it with the potential for bearing a *fate [Schicksal]*. This is one of the main points of Benjamin's well known 1931 text, "Unpacking My Library: A Talk About Book Collecting." There he explains that for the collector, not *works*, but *copies of works [Exemplare]* have fates. And the most important fate of a copy, "is its encounter with him, with his own collection [ist das wichtigste Schicksal jedes Exemplars der Zusammenstoß mit ihm selber, mit seiner eigenen Sammlung]" (*SW* v.2.2 487; *GS*, v.4.1 389). Precisely insofar as these individual copies are able to testify to their own histories, thereby becoming in some sense "works" in their own rights, are they then collectible. And this occurs when they are *enframed* by "everything remembered and thought, everything conscious," that "becomes the pedestal, the frame, the base, the lock of his [the collector's] property" (*SW* v.2.2 487). This ability of the thing to testify to a history of its own, and thus to bear a fate, can be further related to

the very being of the thing, just as the commodity form names less a specific group of objects, than an event that befalls object-ivity, rendering goods exchange-values.[93]

If the schema of the souvenir counteracts a certain oblivion of commodification on the one hand, then, it will no less resist the massiveness [massenweises Vorkommens] of mass-produced articles on the other. That is, the vitiation of the object *qua* authentic [echt] or unique [einmalig] through its subjection to a production process marked by technological reproducibility. What Benjamin theorizes with respect to works of art in "The Work of Art in the

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Benjamin's earlier remarks in the "Task of the Translator," regarding the work's relation to the concept of life, which, he there argues, should be determined by history rather than nature: "The concept of life is given its due only if everything that has a history of its own, and is not merely the setting for history, is credited with life. In the final analysis, the range of life must be determined by the standpoint of history rather than that of nature, least of all by such tenuous factors as sensation and soul" (*SW* v.1 255).

[93] A reading of "Spleen" II would have to account for this logic of the commodity and of the souvenir, as they come into conflict with one another. The opening of the second strophe narrates just such an "event" befalling household objects, which is there articulated through the logic of "encumbering [encombré]," through which they are extracted from the circuit of memory. The third and final strophe narrates a further transformation of this order. That understanding this phenomenon in Benjamin also requires passing through "Spleen" II—that is, if one can simply pass through the poem—becomes evident in the following passage from "The Paris of the 19th Century in Baudelaire," part two, "Le Flâneur," note 148: "On this point [of Baudelaire's empathy with inorganic things], the second 'Spleen' poem is the most important addition to the documentation assembled in the first part of this essay. There is scarcely a single poet before Baudelaire who wrote a verse anything like 'Je suis un vieux boudoir plein de roses fanées.' The poem is entirely based on empathy with the material, which is dead in a dual sense. It is inorganic matter, matter that has been eliminated from the circulation process.

Désormais tu n'es plus, ô matière vivante!
Qu'un granit entouré d'une vague épouvante,
Assoupi dans le fond d'un Sahara brumeux;
Un vieux sphinx ignoré du monde insoucieux,
Oublié sur la carte, et dont l'humeur farouche
Ne chante qu'aux rayons du soleil qui se couche.

The image of the Sphinx which concludes the poem has the gloomy beauty of the white elephants that are still found in some arcades." That "Spleen" II was a poem of increasing importance for Benjamin is testified to both by the fact of its recurrence in his writings, and the absence, for all that, of any extended treatment of the poem. See also [J53,1] of the *Arcades Project*, and {44} of *Central Park*, as well as the short, untranslated text, "Für arme Sammler" (1931), where Benjamin discusses the category of the *veralteten*, the "middle class" of books residing between the new and old.

Age of its Technological Reproducibility," and then crowds in "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire," supplements Marx's observations by reflecting on how the advent of new technologies affects not only the use-value of commodities as they become fetishes, but also the uniqueness of art objects once they are conceived as technologically reproducible, and hence originarily replaceable. Not only those media whose forms only emerge with the technologically reproductive apparatuses themselves, such as photography and film, but also those, like performance and drawing, which precede their invention, but whose subsequent subjection to the technologies of sound recording and lithography leave them no less altered. At stake is nothing less than the conception (or being) of the work itself, its "present" form [Hier und Jetzt], which, in *being present*, is no less absent, multiple and multiplying, and no longer bound to the hand of its fabricator or to the time of its performance.[94] Once conceived as *originally* massive, the work according to Benjamin loses its claims to authenticity along with its authority, such that one photograph, print or recording is in principle absolutely replaceable by—and thus indistinguishable from—any other, and this without loss.[95] Like the commodity form, then, which opens goods to a form of apprehension in which only a socially determined market value remains, the instantiation of originary massiveness that technological reproductivity initiates, subjects human populations, the natural environment and man-made goods alike, to an uprooting of their spatial and temporal orientations.

The motif of collectibility as conceived by Benjamin—to say nothing of the emergence of collections and collectors in the nineteenth century—concerns the means of response to these

[94] This is precisley, Benjamin explains, what even the best reproductions cannot replicate: "Noch bei der höchstvollendeten Reproduktion fällt *eines* aus: das Hier und Jetzt des Kunstwerks—sein einmaliges Dasein an dem Orte, an dem es sich befindet" (*GS*, v.1.2 475).
[95] See especially Samuel Weber's "Mass Mediauras, or: Art, Aura and Media in the Work of Walter Benjamin," in *Mass Mediauras: Form, Technics, Media* (1996) for an illuminating discussion of the problem of mass in Benjamin's work.

various tendencies in modernity to "'*get closer' to things spatially and humanly [Die Dinge sich räumlich und menschlich 'näherzubringen']"* (*SW* v.4 255; *GS* v.1.2 479), and as a consequence, to overcome that which is unique [Einmaligen] in each given thing [Gegebenheit]. The tendency to sever the thing from its singularity here and now, in other words, and render it massive.

Although Benjamin does not use the term "collectibility," or *Sammelbarkeit*, himself, his extensive writings on collecting articulate something just like this: the historical and theoretical conditions that render the practice of collecting not only historically actual, but a virtual possibility.[96] Collecting, one learns in "Unpacking My Library," belongs to the age of the commodity, but precisely as an alternative to consumption. (*GS*, v.4.1 389) By bringing things into his collection, the collector—or "possessor"[97]—severs them from their uses, and thereby frees [lösen] them. In the new relation that then holds between the object and its possessor, the thing is liberated from its prior identification with a use- or exchange-value, in order to take on a

[96] That is, Benjamin's analyses of the phenomenon of collecting go beyond its actual manifestation in collections, to think the general conditions that render *collectibility* virtually "present" in the commodity, and by extention, in the thing in general. We could also say that Benjamin shows how the commodity becomes haunted by this schema of the souvenir. In his *Benjamin's -abilities*, Weber has analyzed the logic of Benjamin's oft-used suffix *–barkeit [ability]*, a usage he likens to Derrida's thinking of iterability. Iterability, unlike iteration, does not involve an actual repetition, but only addresses the necessary possibility of such a repetition. Collectibility, Benjamin shows, is not merely an event that befalls the thing from the outside, but inheres as one of its possibilities. Although, we shall see, this "possibility" of the thing does not leave it simply intact, but alters its very essence as an object.

[97] This is particularly prevalent in "Unpacking My Library" and "Convolute H: The Collector," of the *Arcades Project*. In "Between the Profane and the Redemptive: The Collector as Possessor in Walter Benjamin's 'Passagen-Werk'," Paul Holdengräber reflects on the importance of differentiating between the "possession [Besitz]" and "ownership [Eigentum]" for Benjamin. For while possession merely entails physical control, ownership implies legal claim. Yet what remains central for Benjamin is just this somewhat illicit desire of the collector to hold or handle his prized possessions. (115 n.1) Although Benjamin's discussions of this liberating power of the collector are always held in reference to their use, or use value (what he refers explicitly to as, its "Funktionswert," "Nutzen," and "Brauchbarkeit" (*GS* v.4.1 389), the onus of the current argument is precisely to show how the ramifications of Benjamin's thinking of collecting exceed use, and touch both on commodity exchange value, as well as the massiveness of things.

new sense determined by the collection itself. Although "Unpacking," written in 1932, addresses neither technological reproducibility nor the becoming commodity of the object directly, it nevertheless anticipates the ways by which the practice of collecting poses a counter to their effects. For the event of the inscription of the thing into the circle of the collector does not merely liberate it from its use, but establishes a new relation between the pair, and one that speaks to the very ways in which massiveness and commodification are vitiating.[98] It allows, we see in "Unpacking," even printed editions of works—and in "Convolute H" a misprinted streetcar ticket (207)—to become "present" *for* the subject-collector, and this, even if each remains rigorously non-present, or "massive" *in itself*, or with respect to its productive origin. The addition of an object into a collection represents nothing less than its "rebirth" ("Unpacking" 487), and it is this possibility of renewal which collecting brings with it that gives its form so much potential precisely at the moment when modern phenomena of mass movements and commodification are on the rise.

The rise of collecting, Benjamin reflects in "Convolute H: The Collector," has essentially to do with the emergence of industrial forms of production:

> Fundamentally a very odd fact—that collector's items as such were produced industrially. Since when? It would be necessary to investigate the various fashions that governed collecting in the nineteenth century. Characteristic of the Biedermeier period (is this also the case in France?) is the mania for cups and saucers. (*The Arcades Project*, 206, [H2,4])

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[98] In "Unpacking" Benjamin characterizes the moment of acquisition as an "embedding [einschliessen]": "Es ist die tiefste Bezauberung des Sammlers, das einzelne in einen Bannkreis einzuschließen, in dem es, während der letzte Schauer—der Schauer des Erworbenwerdens—darüber hinläuft, erstarrt. [The most profound enchantment for the collector is the locking of individual items within a magic circle in which they are frozen as the final thrill, the thrill of acquisition, passes over them.]" (*GS*, v.41 389; *SW*, v.2.2 487)

and this, even if collecting is also a "primal phenomenon" (210, [H4,3]) bound no less to the student, who "collects knowledge," than to physiology, and as such manifested in "Animals (birds, ants), children, and old men" (211, [H4a,2]). Emerging in response to the decline of the aura in things brought on by industrialism, collecting illustrates for Benjamin a means of its re-emerge, and this, even if it must ultimately be judged a degraded form.[99] At all events, it is the particular development of its motif in Benjamin through the schema of the souvenir that illuminates its profound ramifications for the structure and play of memory. For, as Benjamin explains in "Unpacking," "every passion borders on the chaotic, but the collector's passion borders on the chaos of memories" (*SW*, v.2.2 486).[100] To the far-reaching effects caused by commodification and technological mass-reproduction on the artwork and, at the limit, virtually all objects of experience, then, forms nevertheless emerge which, however impoverished, work to counteract this disturbance. One can speak of "original" or *signed* prints, just as the commodified and mass-produced articles of the souvenir trade become the prized tokens of so many individuals' pasts, despite, or perhaps by virtue of, their being "hollowed out."[101]

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[99] For the collector, in a manner that we could oppose to the translator's, brings things into *his* space, and makes them *present* there: "The true method of making things present is to represent them in our space (not to represent ourselves in their space.) (The collector does just this, and so does the anecdote.)…We don't displace our being into theirs; they step into our life [Die wahre Methode, die Dinge sich gegenwärtig zu machen, ist, sie in unsere<m> Raum (nicht uns in ihrem) vorzustellen. (So tut der Sammler, so auch die Anekdote.)…Nicht wir versetzen uns in sie, sie treten in unser Leben.]" (206, [H2,3]; 273, [H2,3]). Compare this to the concluding remarks of "Unpacking": "…ownership is the most intimate relationship that one can have to things. Not that they come alive in him; it is he who lives in them" (*GS*, v.2.2 492).

[100] "Jede Leidenschaft grenzt ja ans Chaos, die sammlerische aber an das der Erinerungen" (*GS*, v.4.1 388).

[101] That is, "hollowed out" with respect to their use-value, conditions of production, and the integrity that has "traditionally" marked objects made by hand, bestowing on them the authenticity of an original. The souvenir of the *Andenkensindustrie* is utterly devoid of these traits, which is why its reemergence as a token of an individual's past is both paradoxical and perfectly emblematic of the logic of the "aura." In a letter to Benjamin on August 5th, 1935—later cited by Benjamin in "Convolute N" of the *Passagen-Werk*—Adorno addresses this

Taken in the abstract then, what we call in English a "souvenir"—meaning *touristic* souvenirs, that which ones buys or procures in order to remember an event of one's past experiences, or in order to give to another, so as to be remembered by him or her through it—names the capacity for a (generic, massive or commodity) thing to become a *particular* object again, imbued with the irreplaceable character of testifying to a time and/or place within a subject's past.[102] And in many cases, the very event of the object's procurement—whether by

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problem in objects as their being "ausgehöhlt": "'Indem an Dingen ihr Gebrauchswert abstirbt, werden die entfremdeten ausgehöhlt und ziehen als Chiffern Bedeutungen herbei. Ihrer bemächtigt sich die Subjektivität, indem sie Intentionen von Wunsch und Angst in sie einlegt. Dadurch daß die abgeschiednen Dinge als Bilder der subjektiven Intentionen einstehen, präsentieren diese sich als urvergangne und ewige. Dialektische Bilder sind Konstellationen zwischen entfremdeten Dingen und eingehender Bedeutung, innehaltend im Augenblick der Indifferenz von Tod und Bedeutung. Während die Dinge im Schein zum Neuesten erweckt werden, verwandelt die Bedeutungen der Tod in älteste.' Zu diesen überlegungen ist zu berücksichtigen, daß im neunzehnten Jahrhundert die Zahl der 'ausgehöhlten' Dinge in vorher ungekannten Maß und Tempo zunimmt, da der technische Fortschritt immer neue Gebrauchsgegenstände außer Kurs setzt" (*GS*, v.5.1 582, [N5,2]).
"'With the vitiation of their use value, the alienated things are hollowed out and, as ciphers, they draw in meanings. Subjectivity takes possession of them insofar as it invests them with intentions of desire and fear. And insofar as defunct things stand in as images of subjective intentions, these latter present themselves as immemorial and eternal. Dialectical images are constellated between alienated things and incoming and disappearing meaning, are instantiated in the moment of indifference between death and meaning. While things in appearance are awakened to what is newest, death transforms the meanings to what is most ancient.' With regard to these reflections, it should be kept in mind that, in the nineteenth century, the number of 'hollowed-out' things increases at a rate and on a scale that was previously unknown, for technical progress is continually withdrawing newly introduced objects from circulation" (*The Arcades Project*, 466).

[102] The "irreplaceability" is of course no essential trait of the thing—it does not in this case relate to its conditions of production—but is an inscription, or trace of irreplaceability that may be inscribed on an object through its encounter with someone. Thus, for example, a mass-produced miniature Eiffel tower that one purchases in Paris and one bought second-hand in the United States may not differ in any way materially. Yet insofar as the one is encountered *in* Paris, and the other in Texas, the former will testify to its Frenchness, and the latter its Texanness. This is why, so far as the souvenir is concerned, it matters not at all whether one retains the Eiffel tower or a pebble, so long as either is encountered in France, and can thereby testify to its *terroir*, so to speak. The contingent, even haphazard nature of the souvenir, certainly is in no position to counter the ontological shifts set into motion by commodification and technological mass production on things. Yet the simple fact that, in a certain sense, none of that matters for the

purchase, gift, chance finding, or (why not?) theft. The marketing of this memorabilia—as so many keepsakes, souvenirs and mementos—should be understood as a particular *response* to a general structural possibility of the commodity, which, being "itself" devoid of substance, is all the more susceptible to being re-imbued with any arbitrary signification.[103] And while the problem of the collection and that of the souvenir certainly should not simply be conflated, they nevertheless touch each other at certain essential points. For in the case of each, as has already been intimated, the problems of memory become intertwined with the status of a "material" object. If the collector collects objects determined by the rule of his collection, the amasser of souvenirs merely collects memories of him- or herself, giving his person as rule for his "collection." The emergences in the nineteenth century of the "Andenkensindustrie" and "Sammlung," while being themselves signs of what Benjamin would call the "destruction of the aura," also then represent modes of its re-emergence.

The "souvenir" can thus be understood as the calcified form of a potential immanent in all commodities. And the *schema* of the souvenir therefore lets us think this general capacity whereby "massive" commodity objects (those without a "here and now," which no longer therefore have a claim to uniqueness and as a consequence have been stripped of the ability to

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collector, who is able to render unique even a mass produced cup or saucer through its encounter *with him*, makes his image that much more powerful. It also illustrates just how difficult it has become to think what exactly has been lost; to think the meaning of an *identity*, or *presence*, untouched by relatively recent events. One could go further and ask how the very notion or concept of "loss," throughly affected by the latter movements, might itself be the biggest obstacle to understanding the present, and past situations. Benjamin's work attempts to think the meaning, or specificity, of the loss of loss, for the present historical moment.

[103] Dealing with the apparent paradox of the souvenir's role in rendering the commodity collectible—when it is precisely the souvenir-industry that most clearly renders the keepsake *absolutely general*, as in the case of Victorian gift-books—is one of the more difficult, and fruitful, elements of Benjamin's thought of the collector. It is the object's *confrontation* with the subject (whether a collector *per se*, or a tourist) that serves as the model for its de-commodification and transformation into something else.

testify to a past) are re-imbued with a character that makes them singular and inheritable again: hence, *collectible*.

III

The implications of this commodity form—or schema—of the "souvenir," cannot however be fully grasped by a consideration that is restricted to its manifestation in commodity objects. For just as the motif of collecting combines a form of commodity culture with a memorial orientation, so too is the souvenir caught between an economic and mnemonic concept. And considered as a concept or elemental feature of memory, the "souvenir" testifies to a no less significant movement for Benjamin within the mnemonic realm. In the immediately following entry of the same section (44) of "Central Park" quoted above, Benjamin explains:

> Das heroische Tenor der Baudelaireschen Inspiration stellt sich darin dar, dass bei ihm die Erinnerung zu gunsten des Andenkens ganz zurücktritt. Es gibt bei ihm auffallend wenig "Kinderheitserinnerungen." (*GS*, v.1.2 690)[104]

Having recourse here to the mnemonic sense of "Andenken"—as a discrete, conscious memory—Benjamin opposes it to another mnemonic form, "Erinnerung." In Baudelaire, the rise of "Andenken" would coincide with the receding of "Erinnerung," and out of this situation the particular character of the heroic would emerge.[105] Additionally, according to Benjamin, this lack of "Erinnerung" is testified to by the distinct absence of childhood memories that one finds in his work. "Andenken"—or the souvenir—thus finds itself at the center of a mnemonic vision

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[104] "The heroic tenor of Baudelairean inspiration lies in the fact that in his work memory gives way to the souvenir. In his work, there is a striking lack of 'childhood memories'" (*SW*, v.4 190).
[105] "Central Park" is, in this respect, something of an anomaly, for both in texts preceding and following it the main mnemonic opposition is that between *Erinnerung* and *Gedächtnis*, or *Eingedenken* and *Gedächtnis*. "Andenken" is absent from "The Image of Proust" (1929),"On Some Motifs in Baudelaire" (1939), "The Storyteller" (1936) and the "Theses on the Philosophy of History" (completed in 1940) alike.

marked by a declining past. And although this mnemonic vision is here offered only in fragment, it can be found in more developed form in numerous texts of the 1930s, of which "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire," "The Storyteller: Reflections on the Work of Nikolai Leskov," and "The Image of Proust," are only a few. In these texts one finds a persistent interest in the intersection of the mnemonic with problems of experience. That is, with the situation of experience in modernity, which, like memory, Benjamin also shows to be divided.

That these mnemonic divisions have their correlate in experience is what one also learns in an earlier section (32a) of "Central Park," when Benjamin explains that, "Das Andenken ist das Komplement des 'Erlebnisses' [The souvenir is the complement of lived experience.]" (*GS*, v.1.2 681). *Erlebnis*, or "lived experience," is that form of experience privileged in modernity, where the experience of shocks has become the norm. In a configuration that receives its most developed exposition in "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire" (1939), *Erlebnis* is opposed to *Erfahrung*, as a fully conscious (and thus impoverished) form of experience, to one imbued with unconscious or traditional data. If the canonical forms of *Erlebnis* are gambling, machine labor and being jostled by a crowd, it is because such activities are marked either by the repetition of a movement without history—or future—or because in their very abruptness they privilege conscious awareness over unconscious reception. *Erfahrung*, on the other hand, requires another orientation of the subject, which Benjamin associates with that of tactile craftwork or storytelling. In the case of storytelling, developed at greatest length in "The Storyteller," the transmissibility of experience [Erfahrung] that takes place between a storyteller and listener speaks to a form that is not exhausted by the presence of its content. Opposed to the information or data of news periodicals, whose ephemerality and explanatory nature confirms their privileging of *Erlebnis*, the story, in its highest form, thrives precisely because of what it denies:

a fully present or exhaustible meaning or sense. This, in turn, is why stories continue to interest us, hundreds or even thousands of years after their first telling, while the presentation of *actualité* becomes obsolete almost immediately.

The aligning of *Andenken* with *Erlebnis*, then, allows us to understand the role of memory within the ongoing crisis of experience that is the subject of "The Storyteller" just as it is of "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire." For as *Erinnerung* gives way to *Andenken*, so too does *Erfahrung* give way to *Erlebnis*. Memory and experience are inseparable in this account, which further aids us in understanding how, beyond sheer coincidence or homonymy, the two senses of "Andenken"—as a memorial commodity and a form of psychic memory—might be bound. For the question still remains of how to conceive of the souvenir [Andenken]; that is, of the interpenetration or adulteration of each of its senses by the other, and particularly of the manifestation of this problem in the work of Benjamin and Baudelaire. To put this more concretely, however, we must still ask how the coordination operates between the rise of the commodity souvenir [Andenken], and this shift in memory and experience, as that of *Andenken* [souvenir] and *Erlebnis*, over *Erinnerung* [memory] and *Erfahrung*. What, in other words, is the mnemonic concept of the souvenir, and how does it relate to its commodity form?

IV

In a series of rather ruthless formulations that compose the remainder of (32a), Benjamin hints at this concept:

> Das Andenken ist das Komplement des 'Erlebnisses.' In ihm hat die zunehmende Selbstenfremdung des Menschen, der seine Vergangenheit als tote Habe inventarisiert, sich niedergeschlagen. Die Allegorie hat im neunzehnten Jahrhundert die Umwelt geräumt, um sich in der Innenwelt anzusiedeln. Die Reliquie kommt von der Leiche, das

> Andenken von der abgestorbenen Erfahrung her, welche sich, euphemistisch, Erlebnis nennt (*GS*, v.1.2 681).[106]

What in section (44) of "Central Park," with respect to the commodity, is named its schema of collectibility—"Andenken"—here becomes the reflection of the human's self-alienation. There can be no mistaking the prevalence of "Andenken" in this transformation, as the very mode of the emerging human's relation to its past is that of the inventory. When the inventory defines the human's connection to its past, and when the elements thereby sorted can only be "dead effects," the concept of memory (as souvenir) is reduced to that of the catalogue.[107] And this, just as experience, in the form of *Erfahrung*, is reduced to its "extinct" form, *Erlebnis*; what is here called the source [herkommen von] of *Andenken*.

The souvenir [Andenken] then names the coincidence of a concept of memory and an activity of the commodity [Das "Andenken" ist das Schema…]. Insofar as it is that potential for the commodity to become imbued with *collectibility* (in the form of acquiring a precise place within the memory of its collector or possessor), it heralds a mnemonic regime dominated by *Erlebnis*, or "lived experience." Insofar as it names a concept of memory hostile to *Erinnerung*, it offers a mnemonic vision devoid of any past outside of that which can be catalogued—distinguished, we might say, by its *recallability*—and thereby thinks the very condition and

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[106] "The souvenir is the complement to 'isolated experience.' In it is precipitated the increasing self-estrangement of human beings, whose past is inventoried as dead effects. In the nineteenth century, allegory withdrew from the world around us to settle in the inner world. The relic comes from the cadaver; the souvenir comes from the defunct experience [Erfahrung] thinks of itself, euphemistically, as living [Erlebnis]" (*SW*, v.4 183).
The above is immediately preceded in 32a by the following: "The souvenir is a secularized relic."

[107] Tellingly, the "Andenken" of this passage cannot be determined as either the commodity form, or mnemonic form. There is no necessary separation in this passage, as both are begotten from the same condition, propagated by the destruction of *Erfahrung*, and manifested *between* the realms of "experience" and "memory," the "object" and "subject." The "Andenken," here as elsewhere, works to undermine these divisions.

necessity of "souvenirs." Although circumscribed into two relatively stable categories then, the "Andenken," or "souvenir," lives at the tenuous border of its material and immaterial motifs. And it becomes difficult, despite all available contexts, to decide between its senses. For it cannot but destabilize the binary by which it appears. This not only takes effect in practice, in reading Benjamin's account in "Central Park," or in confronting Baudelaire's writings, but at the theoretical level the souvenir must force a reconsideration of the basic assumptions at work in its employment. What, after all, is an object *devoid* or *imbued* with identity? In either case, it must already assume a relation to a subject with respect to which identity could inhere in the first place. How can we understand the stance, or bearing, of an "object" or "thing" which exists as a property, a testimony, or a trace of the past, if not as already being related to an historical being? Before the separation into *objective* (commodity) souvenirs and *subjective* (mnemonic) souvenirs, must not the commodity/memory that is "mine" exist somewhere between pure interiority and pure exteriority, just as my memory requires a concept of reference that exceeds itself? How can objects participate as "mementos" if "my" memory is not already located somewhere between "me" and "it"? The language of interiority and exteriority, and even of memory itself, becomes ineffective when faced with the logic of the souvenir, which locates the past unapologetically in some object that, to cite Benjamin citing Proust, one may or may not ever encounter. To do justice to such phrases as, *Parfois on trouve un vieux flacon qui se souvient*, ("Le Flacon") or:

> *Il est amer et doux, pendant les nuits d'hiver,*
>
> *D'écouter, près du feu qui palpite et qui fume,*
>
> *Les souvenirs lointains lentement s'élever*
>
> *Au bruit des carillons qui chantent dans la brume*. ("La Cloche fêlée")

requires attending to an encounter that may have long since abandoned anything resembling a "mnemonic" concept.

Chapter Four

Chapter four, "Baudelaire and the Gift of Fate," examines how the problems of fate and chance are taken up in Baudelaire's prose poem, "Les Dons des fées." Common threads running throughout his works, fate and chance here become intertwined in a peculiar fashion, as the gift of fate is allegorized in a scene of divine donation. In a return to the motif of divinity that marked Shelley's "Hymn" in chapter one, chapter four shows how the presence of the gods in Baudelaire is marked by a fallenness and susceptibility to time usually relegated only to mortals. The place of poetry in "Les Dons des fées," as was also the case for *Walden*, is set in strict opposition to that of economy, and once again it is the experience of a certain failure or lack—here a *rien*—that will open the fairies and the recipients of their gifts alike to something neither purely economical nor purely aneconomical, but which remains to be given. This gift, the "don de plaire," gives both the poetic and the prosaic otherwise, as it refuses the distinction, and in this way it models what in Shelley was called the "name," and what in Thoreau remained suspended between "purchase" and "possession."

BAUDELAIRE AND THE GIFT OF FATE

I

> WHEN EACH COMES FORTH FROM HIS MOTHER'S WOMB, THE GATE OF GIFTS CLOSES BEHIND HIM. (EMERSON, "FATE" 264)

> THE COMPLETE ELUCIDATION OF THESE MATTERS DEPENDS ON DETERMINING THE PARTICULAR NATURE OF TIME IN FATE. THE FORTUNE-TELLER WHO USES CARDS AND THE SEER WHO READS PALMS TEACH US AT LEAST THAT THIS TIME CAN AT EVERY MOMENT BE MADE SIMULTANEOUS WITH ANOTHER (NOT PRESENT). IT IS NOT AN AUTONOMOUS TIME, BUT IS PARASITICALLY DEPENDENT ON THE TIME OF A HIGHER, LESS NATURAL LIFE. IT HAS NO PRESENT, FOR FATEFUL MOMENTS EXIST ONLY IN BAD NOVELS, AND IT KNOWS PAST AND FUTURE ONLY IN CURIOUS VARIATIONS. (BENJAMIN, "FATE AND CHARACTER," *SW* V.1 204)

As a text concerned with the gift and destiny, Baudelaire's prose poem "Les Dons des fées" stands at the juncture of two problematics, whose respective developments can be traced through two vast bodies of texts in his work. On the one hand there would be "La fausse monnaie" and everything that it confers concerning chance, the event, giving, pleasure, and above all the relation of giving to pleasure, while, on the other hand, we would have "Morale du joujou," its concern with fate and fating, the child, the child's toy and its gift, and everything that that gift and the play it begets may usher forth. Certainly this is a false dichotomy between "La Fausse monnaie" and "Morale du joujou," which meet in their concerns with giving, sovereignty and play—in other words, with that which one incites or compels to happen beyond the scope of one's actions; the possibility, or (im)possibility, of events that ensue, the future, in sum. And yet each text sets us adrift in distinct directions. The former, articulated in terms of a pleasure [plaisir]—and an always potentially criminal pleasure at that—brings to bear the role of pleasure and pleasing in Baudelaire's work more generally.[108] Not only what he says concerning art and

[108] While the topic of pleasure in Baudelaire is far too vast to treat here, we may at least indicate that within the confines of the *Spleen de Paris* one finds a number of different forms of pleasure, each with varying moral consequences. If in "Le Confiteor de l'artiste" a fairly traditional Romantic notion of *volupté* is put forward, which being too intense threatens pain, in "Le Mauvais vitrier" a *jouissance* is named that being so powerful, allows one to act in willful disregard for its (necessarily) negative consequences. The *plaisir* of "La Fausse monnaie," by contrast, is directly associated with the experience of chance: "'Vous avez raison; après le plaisir d'être étonné, il n'en est pas de plus grand que celui de causer une surprise'" (ll.19-21). A surprise, of course, can turn out well or poorly, as the text of "La Fausse monnaie" goes on to explore, and at the limit, the particular notion of *plaisir* put forward there concerns just this indeterminacy. Baudelaire had treated the feelings of surprise and wonder in his *Salon de 1859*, where he differentiates between two forms of shock, one suitable for the arts and an abuse of them: "Je parlais tout à l'heure des artistes qui cherchent à étonner le public. Le désir d'étonner et d'être étonné est très légitime. *It is a happiness to wonder,* 'c'est un bonheur d'être étonné'; mais aussi, *it is a happiness to dream,* 'c'est un bonheur de rêver.' Toute la question, si vous exigez que je vous confère le titre d'artiste ou d'amateur des beaux-arts, est donc de savoir par quels procédés vous voulez créer ou sentir l'étonnement. Parce que le Beau est *toujours* étonnant, il serait absurde de supposer que ce qui est étonnant est *toujours* beau. Or notre public, qui est singulièrement impuissant à sentir le bonheur de la rêverie ou de l'admiration (signe de

pleasure in his critical writings,[109] and sexual pleasure in the *Fleurs du mal*, but especially the link between pleasure and the aleatoric that emerges in other prose poems such as "Le Mauvais vitrier," "Le Galant tireur," and the "Dédicace" to *Spleen de Paris*, and by extension, to texts such as "Le Jeu" and "Le Joueur généreux" concerned with games and gambling.[110] "La Fausse monnaie" stands as a synecdoche for the haphazard, the contingent, and the play of chance, whose situation marks nothing less than the whole of Paris—*paris*, of course, also means "wagers" in French—which serves as the unknowable ground and condition of possibility for the

petites âmes), vuet être étonné par des moyens étrangers à l'art, et ses artistes obéissants se conforment à son goût; ils veulent le frapper, le surprendre, le stupéfier par des stratagèmes indignes, parce qu'ils le savent incapable de s'extasier devant la tactique naturelle de l'art véritable" (*OC* II 616).

[109] On pleasure in the critical writings, see especially "Quelques caricaturistes français" (*OC* II 547): "Dans les arts, *il ne s'agit que de plaire,* comme disent les bourgeois"; "Fusées" (*OC* I 661): "Ce qu'il y a d'enivrant dans le mauvais goût, c'est le plaisir aristocratique de déplaire"; and "Réflexions sur quelques-uns de mes contemporains" (*OC* II 153): "Lycanthrope bien nommé! Homme-loup ou loup-garou, quelle fée ou quel démon le jeta dans les forêts lugubres de la mélancolie? Quel méchant esprit se pencha sur son berceau et lui dit: *Je te défends de plaire?* Il y a dans le monde spirituel quelque chose de mystérieux qui s'appelle le *Guignon*, et nul de nous n'a le droit de discuter avec la Fatalité." On sexual pleasure in the *Fleurs*, see in particular "À une passante," "Femmes damnées (À la pâle clarté)," and "Le Crépuscule du matin."

[110] On the problems of pleasure and criminality, especially as concern the accident and hitting one's mark, see Elissa Marder's forthcoming essay "From Poetic Justice to Criminal Jouissance: Poetry by Other Means in Baudelaire" in *Time for Baudelaire (Poetry, Theory, History)*. In the "Dédicace" it is both a question of the pleasure of reading—"Considérez, je vous prie, quelles admirables commodité cette combinaison nous offre à nous, à vous, à moi et au lecteur. Nous pouvons couper où nous voulons, moi ma rêverie, vous le manuscrit, le lecteur sa lecture; car je ne suspends pas la volonté rétive de celui-ci au fil interminable d'une intrigue superflue…Dans l'espérance que quelques-uns de ces tronçons seront assez vivants pour vous plaire et vous amuser, j'ose vous dédier le serpent tout entier" (ll.5-17)—and of the chance, or circumstance, by which such a work comes to be in the first place: "Mais, pour dire le vrai, je crains que ma jalousie ne m'ait pas porté bonheur…je faisais quelques chose… de singulièrement différent, accident dont tout autre que moi s'enorgueillirait sans doute, mais qui ne peut qu'humilier profondément un esprit qui regarde comme le plus grand honneur du poète d'accomplir *juste* ce qu'il a projeté de faire" (ll.42-52).

numerous encounters (and missed encounters) of the *Tableaux Parisiens*, and subsequently the *Spleen de Paris*.[111]

"Morale du joujou" on the other hand, as the reverse side of this counterfeit coin, concerns much more emphatically the damning, conditioning, fating elements whose thinking make possible, or necessary, a text like "La Fausse monnaie" in the first place.[112] As such it brings to bear a suite of pieces concerned with the limiting nature of destiny, including Baudelaire's Poe essays, the mostly counterfeited poem "Le Guignon," *Conseils aux jeunes littérateurs* and the prose poems "Les Bienfaits de la lune," "Les Vocations" and "Les Tentations ou Éros, Plutus et la gloire."[113] Even in "Morale," the dooming nature of destiny is questioned alongside an interrogation of play, whose embodiment in the child is further examined in texts like "De l'essence du rire" and "Le Peintre de la vie moderne." Yet "Morale" enters us into a domain where the felicity of the child's play (as play) comes into question, and this, even if "Morale" may eventually give birth to a text like "Le Joujou du pauvre," [114] where it is once more a question of *démesure*, and the pleasure it elicits.[115]

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[111] E.S. Burt points out the semantic play at work in the proper name Paris in her introduction to *Poetry's Appeal*. Paris, quite simply, makes possible the unique experiences recounted in the *Tableaux Parisiens* by hosting its masses and supplying the necessary condition for a heretofore unknown and unforeseen experience of surprise in everyday life. In fact, there is nothing "everyday" about this life in Paris. This is also visible in the "Dédicace" and first poem, "L'Etranger," of the *Spleen de Paris*, it becomes thematized in poems like "A une passante," "Le Cygne" and "Les Sept vieillards."

[112] Philippe Bonnefis, for example, explicitly proclaims that, "Predestination…is the true subject of *Morale du joujou*" ("Child's Play: Baudelaire's *Morale du joujou*" 33).

[113] The question of being gifted or blessed [doué], also plays prominently in the *Salon de 1859*, in the opposition between imagination and skill.

[114] "Le Joujou du pauvre" was originally written as a subsection of "Morale du joujou."

[115] Children, of course, "jouent sans joujoux" in Baudelaire's famous analysis of the toy. Which is to say, they play from nothing, they generate activities and toys out of *rien*, and in this way pursue unmotivated and unanticipated ends. Yet Baudelaire's text asks whether this play is not itself subjected to forms of predisposition and predestination. The question of play as it emerges in "Morale" should however be put under greater scrutiny, and not only because the child and his

If a (provisional) separation between texts like "La Fausse monnaie" and "Morale du joujou" nevertheless proves helpful for our approach to a poem like "Les Dons des fées," then it is because by taking up chance (or contingency) and fate respectively, they express two poles of Baudelaire's thinking and writing. Certainly, these poles merely represent opposing expressions of a single question and will ultimately bleed into one another—after all, what discussion of fate can occur without a consideration of chance and the subject, and vice verse?—but as unreconciled, the Baudelairian exploration of fate and contingency remains at its most forceful, with the greatest potential for illuminating the figures and motifs each problematic mobilizes at various moments of his writings. We might say that, insofar as the concepts of fate (or necessity) and contingency require each other in order to maintain their distinction, so too must we maintain a reserve before those texts that emphasize the one or the other, for only by doing so can we grasp the full scope of their conflict.

The organizing scene of "Les Dons des fées" concerns the apportionment of gifts [dons (l.2)] to the newly born.[116] Fathers whose children are within twenty-four hours of life [arrivés à la vie depuis vingt-quatre heures (l.3)] have brought their newborns to receive their due. This second birth, or this birth into a birthright, takes place through the paternal line—fathers and their sons—while the mothers (ostensibly still recovering in bed) are left at home. Taking the mother's place, however, and supplementing her gift with one of another order, are the Fairies,

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play become satanic in "De l'essence du rire." For the child who does not yet know work, the very notion of "play" is itself something of an anachronism and an anthropomorphism. Baudelaire's fascination with the prostitute, who embodied the becoming work of play, and becoming play of work, stands as a counterpoint to any grasp of the child in his writings.

[116] Fate (as the Greek *moira*) means apportionment. It means that which one is allotted. The dissemination or proliferation of fates, of theories of fate, necessity, chance and luck, follow as so many attempts to comprehend the fact of receiving, of receptivity, of being beholden to gifts and givens. On the difference between gifts and givens, and by extension, transcendental conditions and the conditioned, see pp. 54-55 of Derrida's *Given Time*.

these "antiques et capricieuses Soeurs du Destin," these "Mères bizarres de la joie et de la douleur" (ll.4-6).[117] What these mothers and sisters give are "Gifts, Faculties, Good Luck," and "Invincible Circumstances." Not just any gifts then, but what we might call—if Baudelaire's poem did not precisely disrupt our conceptual and linguistic grasp of these phenomena, and the orders by which they are given—"natural" or innate gifts. Gifts of god, then, natural givens, biological gifts perhaps, elementary data [*donné*] of life in any case, that, once awarded or denied, condition one's future inexorably.

In this way the text of "Les Dons des fées" allegorizes the destining of destiny, what becomes the *giving*, or gift, of destiny. And "destiny" should be heard in its broadest—but also etymological—sense, as the fixing or setting into place, the binding, of that which limits, conditions or defines the life to come; whether we call this destiny, providence, or biology, or think of it through a Greek, Christian or materialist biological atheistic conception. It is the gift, in short, of the given. What happens to the concept of destiny—or necessity, or even biology—once it is figured as a gift? When destiny becomes a gift, and is thus not *merely* given, does this radically alter its concept? These are some of the questions at the center of "Les Dons des fées."

Baudelaire's prose poem stages the presentation of these givens that, being given, cannot simply be produced through acts of will or reason, and that are therefore also excluded from all scenes of donation and gift-exchange.[118] Subjecting these mythical, transcendent, prehistoric

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[117] Although it is possible that girls, or *nouveau-nées*, are also admitted to this scene, reference to the newborns occurs in the masculine or mixed plural, rendering their presence grammatically ambiguous at best. When mention is finally made of the particular gifts granted to individual children, each of the three recipients discussed is male. For an exception to this rule, see "Les Bienfaits de la lune," in which a female "enfant gatée" is destined by the moon.

[118] These limits, of course, are always shifting. If, at a certain moment in history, the gift of artistic prowess appears god-given, and thus excluded from all human gift-exchange, one nevertheless finds practices of prayer and sacrifice concerned, precisely, with ensuring the promise of these gifts to future progeny. Modern practices of eugenics and genetic engineering

gifts to what one critic has called "mechanical time," his poem ironizes the theological motif and subjects it to the clichés of bureaucracy and sovereign caprice all too prevalent during the second empire in France.[119] When bureaucracy is the model for divine order, and the divine for bureaucratic order, neither the one, nor the other, still operates as perhaps it should. On the other hand, it may be that only once the one is cast in the light of the other, is the truth of each revealed.

In any case, it is clear that "Les Dons des fées" presents a rather scathing social critique. The means by which it does so: comedy, humor and irony, have been carefully studied by one of the few critics who discusses the prose poem.[120] Sonya Stevens, in her chapter, "The Prose Poem and the Dualities of Comic Art," examines the structure of the text's employment of irony, and does so while demonstrating its relation to—but we might also say its application of—the principles articulated in Baudelaire's essay "De l'essence du rire." For Stevens, "Les Dons" exemplifies a poetics that "De l'essence" would explicate, and it does so while also engaging

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are just two more attempts to intercede on behalf of one's offspring in what cannot be acquired by a subject for him or herself, but appears decided before the beginning of one's life. Moreover, nothing precludes the further possibility in coming years that genetic engineering should become a fully commodified practice, at which point one might very well imagine a "gift-exchange" of genes, between future sets parents, for each other's children. If the limit between the gift and given is rigorously fluid and thus indeterminable, what remains to be thought is not the moment of their division (say between a pre-life and life), but the meaning of each of these categories understood as the deferral of the other. If there can be neither an absolutely given given, nor a gift totally under the conscious control of its giver, what happens to the concept of each?

[119] See pp. 54 & 71-72, n.77 in Paul Smith's "Paul Cézanne's Primitive Self and Related Fictions," in C. Salas (ed)., *The Life and the Work: Art and Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2007).

[120] Of the other scholarly discussions of "Les Dons des fées," many have focused on the litany of supernatural deities enumerated at the text's conclusion. Marc Eigeldinger, in his "Baudelaire et 'Le Compte de Gabalis," traces their origin to Monfaucon de Villar's *Comte de Gabalis ou Entretiens sur les sciences secrètes*, and Reginald McGinnis, in his "Modernité et sorcellerie: Baudelaire lecteur du XVIII siècle" examines the role of sorcery in the text. For other examinations of the prose poem see also, Maria C. Scott's *Baudelaire's Le Spleen de Paris: Shifting Perspectives*.

with a polemic that she shows is ongoing in his work: that with the bourgeois conception of art as pleasant or pleasing.[121] As already indicated, "Les Dons" is also implicated by the many expressions of destiny and chance developed throughout Baudelaire's oeuvre. Yet it is not clear that it merely articulates another position on the opposition between destiny and chance. On the contrary, by staging the gift of fate "Les Dons" asks how it is that fate comes to be in the first place. It asks whether the fating of fate is not itself subject to chance, and finally, whether time remains an irreducible aspect of any such gift. The gift of destiny gives time to its recipient in the form of the time of life, but if this gift must itself *take place*, if it must *come to pass*—even if this coming to pass is not itself simply temporal—then how can we express its relationship to the time it gives? What does the mutual dependence of the concepts of destiny and the gift do to the one and the other? If "Les Dons des fées" poses these and other questions, then reading the text would no longer be a matter of identifying its relation, or exemplification, of either historical motifs, or intratextual problematics, but at the limit would require asking what would be the necessity of a concept of "the gift," for that of "destiny," or "destiny" for that of "the gift." This would mean, finally, that "Les Dons" does not simply participate in a poetics of pleasure, fate, donation, or even irony, but articulates an irony of irony not referable to any other model, or a fate of fate whose destiny is still to come. To read "Les Dons des fées" would be to ask how destiny, chance and the gift condition—and uncondition—one another in Baudelaire's brief text.

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[121] This is also an observation that Robert Kopp makes in his notes to the *Gallimard* edition of the text (2006). There he points us to a rather telling quotation from *Réflexions sur quelques-uns de mes contemporains*: "Lycanthrope bien nommé! Homme-loup ou loup-garou, quelle fée ou quel démon le jeta dans les forêts lugubres de la mélancolie? Quel méchant esprit se pencha sur son berceau et lui dit: *Je te défends de plaire?* Il y a dans le monde spirituel quelque chose de mystérieux qui s'appelle le *Guignon*, et nul de nous n'a le droit de discuter avec la Fatalité. C'est la déesse qui s'explique le moins, et qui possède, plus que tous les papes et les lamas, le privilège de l'infaillibilité" (*Le Spleen de Paris* 304).

II

As mentioned above, the destining and destined orders of Baudelaire's poem are articulated along gendered lines. A situation that raises a number of questions. What does it mean that women and girls are excluded from the realm of fate or destiny, yet embody the destining order? Why are these non-human fairy figures, the givers of destiny, circumscribed by the sororal and maternal, while the fraternity of men—or at least those men who "have faith" in fairies—is beholden to the ineluctable destining of its female other? And as to this distinction among fathers, "Tous les pères qui ont foi dans les Fées," are we to understand their *croyance* merely as a form of superstition, or, perhaps, as ironically speaking to the irreducibility of phenomena like *foi*, *fées*, and by extension, art, the literary, and all that which cannot be absolutely analyzed, explained or accounted for?[122] These fathers are far from what we might imagine Baudelairian role models to look like, yet the faith they display bears an essential relation to the play of the counterfeit and of fiction.

The "Sisters of Destiny" epithet ascribed to these fairies is, of course, a classical figure, to say nothing of "Mères de la joie…", with antecedents throughout the Greco-Roman tradition.[123] Perhaps the most famous such sisters were the Greek Moirai: Lachesis, Clotho and Atropos. Goddesses of childbirth and overseers of life, these sisters were charged with imparting each newborn with a course of life by spinning for him or her a destining thread. While in Homer the three are yet unnamed, appearing in the *Odyssey*, for example, rather as fate personified, in

[122] Baudelaire's reference to those fathers "qui ont foi," as in those fathers who *retain* the faith, points us towards the struggle of the Christian church to eradicate the remnants of Druidic belief and religious practice throughout the medieval period. The belief in fating fairies was, according to Maury, precisely one of these prominent "pagan" institutions to have been preserved. For an interesting discussion of the struggle of the Christian church to eradicate these Druidic practices and beliefs, see 88-93 in *Les Fées du moyen-âge*.

[123] The sisters of fate presided over the birth of infants, and thus filled a maternal function without being themselves mothers.

Hesiod's *Theogony* they are dubbed triplets and are presented as the children of Zeus and Themis.[124] From this point on they would become fixtures of Greek myth, and when, for example, Plato concludes his *Republic* with his Myth of Er, Socrates also recounts of these sisters, whom he there claims are the daughters of Ananke, or necessity.[125] Socrates explains that Lachesis (literally "dispenser of lots") sings of what has been, Clotho ("spinner") of what is, and Atropos ("inevitable," or literally "unturnable") of what will be. The sisters each bear wreathes and are dressed in white, and when a soul passes through the "demonic place" (614c) lying between heaven and earth, Socrates, relating Er's tale, recounts that Lachesis first dispenses lots to them, then Clotho spins the threads for the life selected, and Atropos finally renders those threads irreversible. In this way they establish the next course of life for each soul prior to its rebirth. Critically, however, in Socrates' recounting this process is mediated by a decision that each soul must make—informed, of course, by philosophical knowledge, or doomed by ignorance of it—between the lives available to be selected.

Equivalents to the Greek Moirai, the Roman Parcae, Nona, Decima and Morta, had the double role of presiding over childbirth and establishing destinies.[126] The Latin term *parca*, like the Greek *moira*, originally bears an economic sense. *Moira* literally signifies "apportionment,"

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[124] See Maury 11. On the difference between Homeric fate and later Stoic, and then Virgilian conceptions of fate and destiny, see Boyancé, "Fatum," in *La Religion de Virgile*. He concludes, in sum, that while the Homeric *moira* is largely a subjective concept, treated with respect to the individual about whom a destiny is allotted, the stoic conception emphasizes the sovereign utterance, or decree, whereby providence in general is decreed. (42-3) Virgil, by contrast, incorporates aspects of both the Homeric personal fate, and Stoic providence, while introducing a destiny of collectivities, such as that of Troy and Rome. (44) Boyance's text also touches on the important issue of the conflicts between multiple destinies, and the double role of the gods, and in particular Jupiter, as both a decreer of fate, and one obedient to its decree.

[125] *Republic,* Bk. X 617.

[126] On the relation between these two roles and the debates surrounding the importance or priority of either, see Léontine Louise Tels-de Jong's *Sur quelques divinités romaines de la naissance et de la prophétie*. As Tels-de Jong and others show, the Roman Parcae both adopt the roles of these Greek deities, and represent the survival of older Latin Druidic cults.

or that which one is allotted, one's lot, and the adjective *parca*, from the verb *parcus* (to spare or refrain from), means frugal or economical, which sense is preserved in the English "parsimonious."[127] In the Roman tradition "Nona [ninth]" was the goddess of childbirth and was called upon during the ninth month of pregnancy to spin a child's thread of life, while "Decima [tenth]" would determine its length and "Morta [death]" would cut it. The Parcae, of course, were also known as the *Fata*, or Fates, and when Ovid speaks of them, for example, it is as *dominae fati* attending an infant's birth:

> Whether chance brought this upon me or the wrath of the gods, or whether a clouded Fate [Parca] attended my birth, thou at least shouldst have supported by thy divine power one of the worshippers of thine ivy. Or is it true that whatever the sisters, mistresses of fate [dominae fati], have ordained, ceases wholly to be under a god's power? (Tristia, 5.3. 1-28)[128]

The French language, like the English, is most closely marked by this Greek and Roman tradition of fating goddesses in the term "fée." The "fée," like the English "fairy" or "fay," derives from the same Latin root of *fata* or *fatum*. From the verb *fari*, "to speak," *fatum* literally translates as "that which has been spoken." In English, the double sense of the Latin *fatum* as personified spirit and celestial cause achieves a semantic separation by being split into two words, fairy and fate, such that one hardly even hears in each their mutual origin any longer. Similarly, in French one finds both *fée* and *fatalité*, along with various adjectival forms, *fatidique* and *fatal* (as in *Déesses fatales*), and their derivative forms, *féerique*, *fatalement*, etc., each

[127] On this etymology see especially Tels-de Jong, who disputes it.
[128] Ovid. *Ovid with an English Translation: Tristia, Ex Ponto*. Trans. Arthur Leslie Wheeler. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1939.

etymologically linked to the Latin *fatum*.[129] While, then, French contains a number of synonyms by which to name the conditions—or should we say passions—of fate and destiny, such as *destin*, *destiné, sort*, or the adjective *funeste*, the French "fée" remains the sole noun directly descended from these *fata* that still recalls their personified forms. Nor had this etymology fallen into obscurity in Baudelaire's day, as Alfred Maury's seminal 1843 study of fairy mythologies shows. Even the title of Maury's work, *Les Fées du moyen-âge*, emphasizes the significance of the term "fée" as a cardinal thread linking the archaic to medieval periods.[130] A contemporary of Baudelaire, Maury traces the origins of the Greek and Roman destining goddesses to the topical, loco-centric divinities of the Gauls and Germanic peoples. (7-10; 13) Protective goddesses, these proto-fates watched over the prosperity of men and presided over their destinies. Although there is no evidence to support that Baudelaire ever read or even knew of Maury's work, the agreement of "Les Dons des fées" with many of the essential elements of what Maury discloses to be the predominant fairy mythology shows how indebted Baudelaire was to this tradition. In *Les Fées du moyen-âge* Maury examines the etymological roots of "fée" in the Latin *fata*, (11) while exploring the diabolical (or non-christian) interpretations of the fairy throughout the medieval period. Characteristic of the fairies, Maury shows, was their attendance at the birth of infants, to whom they alternatively dispensed good qualities and defects, as well as good and bad luck (29).[131] In developing on what he identifies to be one of the most traditional depictions of the fairy, its role as a worker, Maury even draws on the then current French expression: *travailler comme une fée*, (33) and elsewhere he highlights the fairy's position as a tireless

[129] "Déesses fatales" is the traditional way in French of referring to the Parcae.
[130] Maury's work attempts to trace the resistance of Druidic rites and pre-Christian cults in the medieval period, against the explicit attempts of the church to wipe them out. In other words, it deals with a remainder of faith that persists despite Christian imperialism.
[131] The judgments of the fairy, Maury explains, were often thought to depend on the course of the sky during birth, as well as the precise hour of delivery. (24 n.1)

mediator between the divine and mortal realms. All resonances which are, of course, preserved in Baudelaire's text.[132]

While, then, the term "Fée" signifies in nineteenth-century French the fantastic female fairies who occupy the center of Baudelaire's "Dons des fées," it also bears with it the weight of this tradition, to which, as if bound by *ananke* herself, it cannot but also respond. "Fée" signifies "fairy," but what fairy *means*, what "fairy" or "fée" here names, is fate. Which is not, of course, to say that the meaning of "fate" is any less overdetermined or plurivocal. In fact, the meaning of "Fate"—as this long and tortuous tradition of divining sisters shows—appears less fated than ever. Attempts to circumscribe or define it by Hesiod, Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, Seneca, Emerson, and even Benjamin, only demonstrate how open its field is. A field to which Baudelaire's rather prosaic fairy-tale must be added, and to which it may contribute something in its turn.

III

> SOME SAY, THAT EVER 'GAINST THAT SEASON COMES
> WHEREIN OUR SAVIOUR'S BIRTH IS CELEBRATED,
> THIS BIRD O' DAWNING SINGETH ALL NIGHT LONG:
> AND THEN THEY SAY NO SPIRIT DARES STIR ABROAD;
> THE NIGHT ARE WHOLESOME; THEN NO PLANETS STRIKE
> NO FAIRY TAKES, NOR WITCH HATH POWER TO CHARM,
> SO HALLOW'D AND SO GRACIOUS IS THE TIME. (*HAMLET*, 1.1 LL. 158-164)

Sisters of fate and mothers both of joy and sorrow, the fairies gather to dole out a rather mixed bag of life-altering effects. These are *gifts* [dons], as the text's title and first lines indicate,

[132] We must still ask to what extent Baudelaire merely picks up on this tradition of the fairy-worker, or displaces it through his emphasis on the meaning of "work," especially through the poem's ironic concluding image of the "don de plaire" in the son of a merchant, and the figure of time that haunts and conditions the fairies' labor.

encompassing *les Dons, les Facultés, les bons Hasards* and *les Circonstances invincibles*.[133] That is, so many givens. So many things that, not being *things*, cannot be handled, exchanged, picked up or put back down again. Like destiny itself, then, these fairies hand out what is outside of human economy, what enters the human—or economic—realm only by virtue of its "innateness" or "naturalness." Hence, what cannot simply be given by one subject to another. As one fairy will point out explicitly at the conclusion of the text, these gifts are "indisputable [indiscutable]" (l.95), that is, *non-exchangeable*. The gift, then, "gifts" as they are named in "Les Dons des fees," identify precisely what cannot be given—or given back—by any mere mortal, but what, being there from the start, condition the economy to come.[134]

Although, then, these givens are not ontic, although they are neither beings nor things—despite lying like so many "prix" next to the bench—it is worth reflecting on the relation between them and what gets proffered in "La Fausse monnaie"; that is, the counterfeit coin that like any other piece of change passes from one hand to the next, and appears to epitomize the prosaic economy of terrestrial gift-exchange. It is worth reflecting on their relation because they appear to offer stark contrasts both in the type of gifts they concern, and in the concepts of fate at play in each. "La Fausse monnaie," as the title indicates, concerns the reception of a coin, whose

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[133] Gifts (or *natural* gifts, what cannot be acquired or given by other means), faculties, good luck or chance, and invincible circumstances.

[134] The divine nature of these gifts means, for example, that one must separate the "dons" of "Les Dons des fées" from the "donner" and "hommage" of "Le Joujou du pauvre." There is a longer story to tell about the relation of these two poems, which have followed one another both in the *Spleen de Paris*, and in *La Presse*, where they were first published on September 24th, 1862. But even before either was published, each will have been apposed and opposed in the earlier "Morale du joujou" (1853), which bore an earlier version of the "Joujou du pauvre," as well as a destining fairy in the figure of Madame Panckoucke, who was there called the "Fée du joujou." By apposing "Les Dons des fées" to "Le Joujou du pauvre," in some sense then Baudelaire made up for cutting "Joujou" from the text of "Morale," and thereby removing the fairy-gift from its economy. To think the necessity of each text, and the relation of the *given* to the gift, would be to begin to understand how the problem of the *don* takes shape as a central issue in Baudelaire.

always potentially counterfeited nature opens its field of possibilities, and conditions certain contingencies that, at the limit, remain unanticipatable. A counterfeit coin is both that which one might always, perhaps, have been given, and something that "happens" to "the given." For once the possibility of a counterfeit has entered the economy of the "authentic," authenticity itself comes into question and the value of the present gives itself over to a non-presence. The gift of the counterfeit coin thus names an event through which the given gives itself otherwise and is opened to a future *à-venir*.[135]

Well, at its core, or at least if we follow its etymology, the Greek term and conception of fate, "moira," just means "what one is allotted." The reception or receipt of some thing: a lot, a card or a coin, is one's fate insofar as it is what one receives, and a counterfeit coin, perhaps, just names or recalls the irreducible and ineradicable blindness of any recipient with respect to what he or she receives at a given moment. One always receives—whether in a commodity or gift exchange—without knowing, without absolute or definitive knowledge of what it *is*, or *will be*, of what might always (im)possibly be or come about. Now, "Les Dons des fées," which engages with givens that one cannot simply give, appears to concern just the opposite. It involves "fate" not as a thing or being, but as an ontological or transcendental condition. It concerns the being of our being as fated, and asks how this "event" can be considered from various modern and ancient perspectives. And this is how the concept of fate tends to be thought today, as something that supervenes over and conditions life from beyond it. But of course, even this transcendental or conditioning concept of fate is not totally distinct—or totally distinguishable—from the counterfeit coin named above. Not only because each represents a form of allotment, but more critically, because the divide between the transcendental or conditioning, and the conditioned or

[135] On "La Fausse monnaie," and its ramifications not only for literary fiction but also the gift and the event, see *Given Time* pp.71-172.

ontic, is here not absolute. It being impossible to know when the presentation of a coin is the result of "Fate"—or chance—or conversely, how one's Fate might manifest itself in life—and manifest itself it must—the difference between the conditioned and conditioning remains practically untenable. In short, there can be no question of fate without that of its manifestation, and no manifestation of "chance" that is not, potentially, susceptible to fate. As we shall see, just as in "La Fausse monnaie" the receipt of the counterfeit coin was marked by a certain experience of contingency, in "Les Dons" the reception of necessity itself—immutable destiny—is marked by that of the greatest chance.

To return to Baudelaire's text, it was observed that these gifts are precisely of a character to be ungivable: to be beyond exchange and any human gift-economy. But, of course, what "Les Dons" recounts is just the event of their presentation. Not given by any mere human, it is the fairies' job to give them out, and they do just this. Unlike the "prizes" that these gifts resemble, however, the fairies follow no principle, nor law, in deciding on their endowment. If one gives "prix" based on merit, if one *earns* "prix," in other words, no such rule should determine or organize the distribution of "dons." As Baudelaire's text explains,

> Les Dons n'étaient pas la récompense d'un effort, mais tout au contraire une grâce accordée à celui qui n'avait pas encore vécu, une grâce pouvant determiner sa destinée et devenir aussi bien la source de son malheur que de son bonheur. (ll.17-21)

And this is, far from a superfluous or baroque condition placed upon their distribution, just what these gifts demand. That is, if the gift, as gift, is to be worthy of the name, if it is to defy economy and the order of reason, if the gift, in sum, is not simply to participate in an exchange or calculation, then it—or they—must be given without condition and irrespective of all reason. If they are to be *unconditional*, then they must also be *unmerited*, or, more precisely still, given

without respect to merit. The irony that we will see emerge later in the text, the irony of the particularly inappropriate nature of each gift presented by these fairies with respect to their recipients, of the semblance of "bad luck" at work in their acts of donation, is therefore doubly ironic, an irony of irony: for the very perceptibility of "irony" requires reference to the questions of merit and of reason. Reading irony in these gifts is itself the ironic gesture, for the gift, at the limit, as *unmerited*, is beyond irony or any dialectic of the subject.

The gift, if it is to be worthy of the name, must exceed all calculation, justification, and even reason, and the word that Baudelaire's text gives for this, for the unjustifiable or the given, is "grâce."[136] Yet what these gifts, once given, determine, what the gifts *give*, is just determination, necessity and irrevocable circumstance. Fate, in so many words. The "gift of fate" thus names the conjoining of contingency and necessity, of the spontaneous and circumscribed. And at a certain level of their concepts, this is also what the "gift" and "fate" each name, independently of the other, and prior to any narrative conjoining of the two—although, perhaps with certain critical differences that we will come to later. The figure "gift of fate" thus brings out certain, perhaps inapparent, conceptual attributes of each term. For if fate does not simply name necessity, if fate as *moira*, or what one receives, names a receptivity of the subject for that which he or she is never, simply, owed; if fate, in other words, always happens to or befalls the subject as an event, then the destining of destiny or the saying of fate would not simply participate in an economy of reason or in the application of a calculative law. (And, conversely,

[136] "Grâce," with its Greco-Roman origins, not only hints at yet another set of mythical female triplets—Les Grâces or Charites, Aglaea, Eurphrosyne and Thalia—but names a kind of gift particularly marked by its having been unmerited. "Grâce," as in the expression, "faire grâce [to pardon]," names the gesture of bestowing upon someone what they are not owed—in this case their freedom, freedom from the law and punishment, but not from guilt. Whether it is the Christian God or political sovereign giving pardon, "grâce" bears a strong theological sense, if only because conceptually, by bestowing such a gift, one places oneself outside of the circulation of men, their economy, and the rights of law.

it would be this receptivity that opens the very orders of economy and calculation.) The fating of fate, in other words, could not simply be reduced to the inevitability of a punishment that one—or one's family, for example—earns. On the contrary, the fating of fate must always be contingent, arbitrary and unjustifiable, with respect to its recipient. The apportionment of fate, however irrevocable, and however great the appeal it makes *nachträglich* to a sense of divine justice, would nevertheless always be excessive or *unmerited* with respect to its subject, and therefore also, in some sense, a "gift."

On the other hand, the gift, giving beyond economy and outside the reach of any calculation of the subject, this gift which one receives and which even in refusing one remains *subjected to*, as a passion to undergo and a sign of the self's inherent openness to the other, this gift, even when it is the gift of *nothing*, the absence of a gift that, nevertheless, *happens*, this gift sets into motion economies and it binds. The binding nature of the gift is perhaps the most frequent leitmotif of Mauss' *Essai sur le don*, which studies among other things the processes by which gifts form bonds between those who participate in gift-exchanges. The compulsion to return the gift, and moreover, to not refuse the gift in the first place, this compulsion that the thing, as gift, gives irrespective of its particular character, is a form of bond and therefore also a destiny. Yet if the gift is binding, it remains to be seen whether this necessity is not itself marked by contingency and chance, or the possibility of accident. The gift sets into motion an economy, but this in no way assures a safe return.[137]

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[137] In an instructive reading for the present discussion, Geoffrey Bennington in his *Frontiers: Kant, Hegel, Frege, Wittgenstein* explores the modalities of the phrase "necessity of contingency" both as a deconstructive *topos* and a Hegelian motif. On the one hand, within the Hegelian corpus where the force is on the objective genitive, contingency is rendered an effect of necessity, which is to say a necessary consequence of the process of the world spirit. Understood in this way, the contingency of fate would itself be fated, and this, even if it is fated to be contingent. On the other hand, if we emphasize the subjective genitive, this allows us (perhaps)

At any event, the gift of the fairies determines the destiny of its recipient: "[U]ne grâce accordé à celui qui n'avait pas encore vécu, une grâce pouvant déterminer sa destinée et devenir aussi bien la source de son malheur que de son bonheur" (ll.18-21). More precisely still, what the gift as grace conditions is one's "malheur" as well as one's "bonheur." But the terms "malheur" and "bonheur"—misfortune and good luck—here name both conditions (bad luck or good), and what those conditions condition (calamity or happiness). Because, in short, to have "bad luck" is both a harbinger of bad things to come, and a tragedy in itself, the difference between condition and conditioned is easily effaced, and an end metonymized by its cause. Bad luck itself, *mal-heur*, literally means "bad-hour," which repeats the displacement of form (time) and what fills it (events). For surely there can be no "hour" that is truly bad, but only bad things that arrive within its frame. To be *malheureux*, or *heureux*, is equally to be with bad luck, or good, whose reified forms in the life of an individual are called unhappiness or happiness.[138] This problem of the hour [heure], both its shape and what fills it, haunts "Les Dons des fées," for it emerges here both as the content of the fairies' gifts (*bonheur* as a certain experience of the hour), and as the condition under which these gifts are given. That is, temporality, tempo and time. This is the unhappy result of the mediating role of the fairy, who intervenes between man [l'homme] and god. For, this "monde intermédiaire…est soumis comme nous à la terrible loi du Temps et de son infinie postérité, les Jours, les Heures, les Minutes, les Secondes" (ll.23-27).

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to think a contingent contingency. This contingency would not ultimately be subsumable to necessity, because it instead thinks the contingency of necessity, or what Bennington calls "necessity [as] the contingency of that contingency, and to that extent the contingency of that necessity" (159). What the gift names, unlike fate, is perhaps just this contingency of necessity, the (im)possibility of a non-return.

[138] The English "happiness" of course repeats this movement. The *OED* states for "happiness": "The quality or condition of being happy. 1.a. Good fortune or luck in life generally or in a particular affair; success, prosperity" "Happy" derives from "hap," which itself bears the sense of "Good fortune, good luck; success, prosperity." ("hap, n.1" & "happiness, n." *OED Online*. Oxford University Press, March 2014. Web. 26 March 2014.).

The introduction of time into the equation precipitates a supplementary order of contingency, as the fairies' work becomes mired in all that which invariably comes with temporality: frustration, accident and apathy. A strict relation with the temporal, of course, has always been a distinct feature of the Fates, and one need look no further than Socrates' description of the Moirai in the *Republic*, and the assignment there of an order of time (past, present and future) to each, to see this. This association is, moreover, according to Maury, one of the very oldest, (66) and we can perhaps see its legacy in the "bon*heur*" and "mal*heur*" of Baudelaire's text just described. Nevertheless, the subjection of the act of donation itself to the temporal order presents an interruption of this classical vision. For in the Platonic text the order of the cosmos and cycle of births and rebirths is mediating by these time-giving fates, who give the tri-partite division of past, present and future without being themselves—or their weaving—susceptible to it. Baudelaire's text begins:

> Toutes ces antiques et capricieuses Soeurs du Destin, toutes ces Mères bizarres de la joie et de la douleur, étaient fort diverses: les unes avaient l'air sombre et rechigné, les autres, un air folâtre et malin; les unes, jeunes, qui avaient toujours été jeunes; les autres, vieilles, qui avaient toujours été vieilles. (ll.4-9)

And yet the scene of adjudgement, subjected to the law of Time, fundamentally changes the nature of their gifts. If fate determines the order of time for the human in Plato, in Baudelaire time orders the order of fate. No atemporal plane exists in Baudelaire's poem from which the decision on the gift could "first" be made.[139] But neither is the time that precedes fate a pure, homogonous time, a time without difference or without history. The designation of "mechanical time," as a description of the age or epoch within which this scene appears to unfold—that is, the

[139] It is perhaps worth asking what Derrida's *Donner le temps* would have looked like had he taken up "Les Dons des fées" instead of "La Fausse monnaie."

age of machines and mechanics, of clocks and machine-labor—seems apt to indicate the day of Baudelaire's poem. The tribunal on which these fairies preside could just as well be a post office, or civil service desk, ruled by a well-defined "work-day," and divisible into perfectly interchangeable quantities of hours, minutes and seconds. And the analogies that Baudelaire's narrator offers, to ministers during a day of public audience, or federal pawn-shop [Mont-de-piété] employees when a national holiday allows for the free redemption of pledges, parodies the institutional, bureaucratic nature of the fairies' service.[140] The *fall* into time and finitude that even the most holy body succumbs to as it institutionalizes practices and contends with greater demands than it has means, is indeed the situation of these non-aging beings, as they seek to deal with the claims of the crowd—or at least to wait out the end of their shifts without too much trouble. Even the term Baudelaire's text employs to describe the effect of the "foule des solliciteurs" upon the overworked fairies, "ahuries [stunned]," recalls Benjamin's famous description of the distinctly modern "shock experience." These fairies are *on the clock*, and work by the clock, as their longing glances to its slow moving needle indicate.

Yet the term "mechanical time," for all its exegetical force, gives the impression that one might yet find a non-mechanical, or pre-technical time.[141] A time *off the clock* so to speak, or one that would no longer be susceptible to the operations and failings of the mechanical supplement that takes an otherwise pure, unadulterated or natural time, and in deforming it also renders it

[140] "Mont-de-piété" were originally a fifteenth century innovation of the Catholic church in Italy, as a method of organizing charity, before being adopted in France as anti-usury state money lenders, which would eventually become the Crédit municipal de Paris in the twentieth-century. A twist Baudelaire would not live to see, but one that he surely anticipates.

[141] This is, in fact, the context in which Smith employs it, referring in Cézanne's *Bathers at Rest* to "the imagery of childhood…[that] represents a time before capitalism alienated the self by undermining the physicality of experience through the phantasmagorical allure of commodity and by subjecting time to the standardized, 'mechanical' rhythm of the clock that regulates efficient labor" (54).

quantifiable and automated. A natural time, then, such as would be produced on the body, or by the body, by the regularity of the menstrual cycle, or through the trimesters of fetal gestation. Or perhaps, even *prior* to the feminine supplement and the biological clock she ushers forth into the world, we could think of the pure**,** timeless being of an auto-generative mankind without sexual reproduction. Perhaps even without the hard, seasonal labor of sedentary cultivation that woman's introduction dooms mankind to in a text such as *Works and Days*. The specter of such an imagined a-mechanical or non-mechanical time, of a time without mechanicity, iteration, or difference, a time without quantification or quantity, a time without clocks, in other words, seems suspect at best. Without, then, simply effacing the specificity of the time of these fairies and their gifts, we must nevertheless ask what "time" itself names, and how its originary technicity might be thought alongside its "modern" manifestations, with their reinventions of mechanicity.[142]

[142] The association of femininity and time has been a constant concern in the work of Elissa Marder, who in this context has explored the inscription of temporality on the female body in Baudelaire's *Fleurs du mal* in her "Women Tell Time," in *Dead Time.* There, she shows, time is not only mediated by women, but is given by them, as they organize its starts and stops for the poet. In her recent book, *The Mother in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction: Psychoanalysis, Photography, Deconstruction*, Marder offers a study of the cultural, literary and philosophical roles of what she calls the "maternal function." Reading the often contradictory injunctions associated with this function—which is represented both as being purely natural and the first instance of work or *labor*—she shows how the as yet unthought problem of mothering persists in various forms from antiquity to the present. The non-reproductive maternal function fulfilled by the fairy givers of Baudelaire's prose poem must be considered in light of these questions of labor, time and maternity, raised in her work. In sum, the fairies stand as figures who mediate not only between the mortal and divine realms, but also, as Marder develops through the figure of Pandora (pp.8-16), as mediators between the natural and technological. The *second* birth that they bestow on the newly born poses the question of the limit not between life and death, but between chance and necessity, or luck and fate, through the problem of time, which interrupts the "natural" or "fatedness" of the moment of this gift with an irreducible technicity. That Baudelaire should have selected a distinctly maternal figure to embody the paradoxes of temporality and givenness is certainly no coincidence, and it remains to be seen in what way these "bizarre Mothers" resolve any of the conflicts they open.

These *fées* are *affairées* (l.22), bothered by their labor and interested in it less as an end in itself, than as a means to an end, as the further term, "corvée" (l.59)—duty or chore—attests. It is under the condition of this timed labor, then, that the gifts of destiny are presented. If the gift of fate gives time, if it is traditionally tasked with giving a limit to the time of life, as well as shaping the course of that life's events, its mal*heur* or bon*heur*, then here that gift is itself subject to temporality and its vicissitudes. The most glaring of which, the most outrageous such gaffe, is none other than running out of gifts to give.

IV

> NEXT, ORIGINALLY THE *RES* NEED NOT HAVE BEEN THE CRUDE, MERELY TANGIBLE THING, THE SIMPLE, PASSIVE OBJECT OF TRANSACTION THAT IT HAS BECOME. IT WOULD SEEM THAT THE BEST ETYMOLOGY IS ONE THAT COMPARES THE WORD TO THE SANSKRIT *RAH*, *RATIH,* GIFT, PRESENT, SOMETHING PLEASURABLE. THE *RES* MUST ABOVE ALL HAVE BEEN SOMETHING THAT GIVES PLEASURE TO ANOTHER PERSON.
> (MAUSS, *THE GIFT* 64)[143]
>
> HE WOULD HAVE BEEN HORRIFIED AT THE IDEA OF GIVING PLEASURE.
> (SARTRE, *BAUDELAIRE* 116)
>
> —IL Y A DES PARENTS QUI N'EN VEULENT JAMAIS DONNER. CE SONT DES PERSONNES GRAVES, EXCESSIVEMENT GRAVES, QUI N'ONT PAS ÉTUDIÉ LA NATURE, ET QUI RENDENT GÉNÉRALEMENT MALHEUREUX TOUS LES GENS QUI LES ENTOURENT. JE NE SAIS POURQUOI JE ME FIGURE QU'ELLES PUENT LE PROTESTANTISME. ELLES NE CONNAISSENT PAS ET NE PERMETTENT PAS LES MOYENS POÉTIQUES DE PASSER LE TEMPS. (BAUDELAIRE, "MORALE DU JOUJOU," *OC* I 586)

Although at no point in "Les Dons des fées" is a specific tally given of the fairies or of their solicitors, nor any indication of the numerical limit of their gifts—the text opens, "C'était *grande assemblée* des Fées, pour procéder à la répartition des dons parmi *tous* les nouveau-nés, arrivés à la vie depuis vingt-quatre heures" (ll.1-3; emphasis added)—in point of fact only three

[143] Mauss, Marcel. *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*. Trans. W. D. Halls. London: Routledge, 1990.

gifts are recounted, along with their respective presentations.[144] Nor, if we follow our narrator, is what gives these presents their remarkable character even their standing *as* gifts. As though so many supplements or appendages to the text, the three offerings and their presentations that the narrator presents *us* with are introduced by the additive adverb "aussi." If the true subject of "Les Dons" is the gift, these gifts are not merely given, then, but somehow *also* given:

> Aussi furent commises ce jour-là quelques bourdes qu'on pourrait considérer comme bizarre, si la prudence, plutôt que le caprice, était le caractère distinctif, éternel des Fées. (ll.41-44)

Not quite gifts, or perhaps *more than* gifts, the following follow *also*. The only gifts whose presentations should be presented in "Les Dons" are thus those that, barely gifts at all, name something beyond the norm. These are not exactly donations then, but "bourdes": gaffes or blunders.[145] Nor are they given, but "committed [commises]." As the narrator points out, such gaffes could be considered strange, if prudence, rather than caprice, were the distinct and eternal character of fairies. But given that the defining character of fairies *is* caprice, one can hardly wonder at the occurrence of these gaffes. In fact, it would be worth asking whether, and to what extent, they may still even constitute "bourdes" at all, as soon as caprice has become the rule. For the occurrence of a fall or misstep requires that one might be capable of walking straight in the first place. Only from the perspective of a certain *human* reason, from a sense of the proper ordering of gifts—what amounts to a calculation of what is *due*—does it become possible to

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[144] Incidentally, the number three is, according to Maury, also carried over from the Parques to the medieval fairy traditions. (32)

[145] The primary sense of "bourde," dating back to the twelfth century, is that a fake or fabricated story that is told either for amusement [plaisanterie], or in order to deceive [mensonge]. It later takes on the sense of a grave error committed due to ignorance or absent-mindedness. For this reason it is perhaps closest to a "blunder" (related to blind), or "slip" which each implies ignorance rather than the misapplication of judgment, as "mistake" can sometimes mean.

view these presents as improperly allocated, or as so many "bourdes." In any case, the extent to which, or standard by which, each gift may be considered a blunder, will have to be weighed on a case by case basis.[146]

Three gifts then, and a series of blunders, that include these gifts while not exactly being exhausted by them. For a certain profusion of *maladresse* enters Baudelaire's text at just the moment of their presentation, as if to remind us that there are at all times two scenes of donation, and two gift-(an)economies: that being narrated, among fairy, father and son, and the scene of narration itself, between narrator and reader.

At any event, the first "bourde" is a rather classic one. A case of the misapplication of wealth, and of the intensifying, rather than softening, of socio-economic inequalities:

> Ainsi la puissance d'attirer magnétiquement la fortune fut adjugée à l'héritier unique d'une famille très riche, qui, n'étant doué d'aucun sens de charité, non plus que d'aucune convoitise pour les biens les plus visibles de la vie, devait se trouver plus tard prodigieusement embarrassé de ses millions. (ll.45-50)

The "puissance," or power of attracting wealth—*fortune* is also good luck—is granted to an already wealthy heir. What is worse, or what is equally unfortunate, is that lacking both a sense of charity, or any desire for material goods, he should leave this fortune inactive, out of work, and stillborn, so to speak. Such a blunder, or mistake—if mistake there is—would then go against the flow of economy and the circulation of capital, denying both personal [convoitise] and social [charité] ends, and resulting in a build-up of unused resources.

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[146] From an Aristotelian point of view, god is the absolute cause and thus what he gives, what is given *by nature*, is not luck. Luck is a cause either with divine origin or without, but both must be separated from the doling out of the gifts of nature at birth. On this see "Luck, Good Fortune and Happiness" in the *Eudemian ethics*.

The second error, also introduced by the adverb "Ainsi," consists in the gift of the love of Beauty and the gift of poetic Power to a beggar's son. Hence, a certain misapplication of artistic sensibilities, and as a consequence the stifling of their peculiarly productive potentials:

> Ainsi furent donnés l'amour du Beau et la Puissance poétique au fils d'un sombre gueux, carrier de son état, qui ne pouvait, en aucune façon, aider les facultés, ni soulager les besoins de sa déplorable progéniture. (ll.51-55)

Introducing the least concrete, and least commercial, traits into the least hospitable environment, the second mistake not only leaves poverty in place, but also leaves the bestowed gifts to waste away in unsuitable conditions. Although the work of a "carrier," or quarry-worker, is likened to that of the poet elsewhere in Baudelaire's *oeuvre*—for what both seek are gems of one kind or another—here this hard-hatted man stands as an impediment to the blossoming of poetic *puissance*.[147] In contrast to the economic sway of the first award, then, the second bears a distinctly aneconomical potential, which is here doomed by poverty, rather than wealth, and by too much desire, or *want*, rather than too little.

If these two "bourdes" are (apparently) committed by the fairies, a third, in the form of a parapraxis, is thereafter perpetrated by the narrator himself, upon forgetting to tell the reader an element critical to the present context:

> J'ai oublié de vous dire que la distribution, en ces cas solennels, est sans appel, et qu'aucun don ne peut être refusé. (ll.56-58)

Leaving us uninformed, of course, increases the probability that further unwarranted mistakes and misunderstandings will follow, and incidentally, turning his attention back to his narrative, it

[147] See "Le Guignon": "Loin des sépultures célèbres,/ Vers un cimetière isolé,/ Mon coeur, comme un tambour voilé,/ Va battant des marches funèbres./ --Mant joyau dort enseveli/ Dans les ténèbres et l'oubli,/ Bien loin des pioches et des sondes;/ Mainte fleur épanche à regret/ Son parfum doux comme un secret/ Dans les solitudes profondes" (ll.5-14).

is just such a consequence that the narrator recounts. To be precise, what he relates is a *faux pas*, perpetrated by one of these solicitors, in the form of an unbecoming accusation, precisely, to have been forgotten by the fairies. This *faux pas* will ultimately lead to the third, and final, gift.

Returning to his narrative the narrator recounts that a shopkeeper [pauvre petit commerçant], grabbing hold of one of the fairies' multicolored robes, cried out[148]: "'Eh! madame! vous nous oubliez! il y a encore mon petit! Je ne veux pas être venu pour rien'" (ll.66-67). Having exhausted their supply of gifts ("car il ne restait plus aucun cadeau, aucune largesse à jeter à tout ce fretin humain" [ll.60-61]), the fairies had begun to leave when this incursion occurs. Nor, as the narrator points out, was this of little concern to the singled-out Fairy, for, he repeats, nothing *at all* remained to be given ("La Fée pouvait être embarrassée; car il ne restait plus *rien*" [ll.68-69]), and yet despite this lack, she does not simply ignore the father's plaint, but attempts to assuage it. It thus becomes evident that something more troubling, more *mistaken*, we might say, now comes to pass, than in the former incidents. For unlike the due or undue allocation of gifts at stake in the above-cited *bourdes*, here it would be a matter of having anything to give at all; of not giving, or giving nothing, in short.

As for the concern of the fairy-giver for this oversight, it is easy to see how being unable to present a destiny (no matter the kind), represents a "problem" of a completely different order than that of the particular results of an individual granting. For while it is a simple enough matter to shrug off the pettiness of human reason and its inability to raise itself to the heights of a divinely given-gift; while, moreover, the very relation (or relatability) of the gift to reason (and calculation) is what is here suspended, on the other hand, to be seen to have overlooked, or to

[148] It is worth noting that the traditional attire of both fairy and Moira is white. See Plato's (617c) and Maury (28). By dressing his fairy in multicolored robes of vapor, Baudelaire appears then to reverse just this tradition, perhaps in order to further highlight the uncanny relation of his fairy tale to past images of fate.

have miscalculated, on the need to give in the first place, concerns something else entirely. For even if the gift exceeds reason and the order of calculation, even if the gift is radically unmerited, as we are told, one must nevertheless still give something. Something must be given; or, at the very least, one must express the intention to give *no thing*. Otherwise, it would be a real blunder, and precisely the kind that would draw into question the sovereignty of these providential sisters, and even, at the limit, the status of their gifts as pure donations. If the fates themselves, being within temporality, can *mis*calculate, perhaps they too (even if only occasionally) *calculate*. The depletion of presents—but more precisely, the acknowledgment of this depletion—speaks to the finitude of these fairies, their subjection to a temporality that is expressed not in a personal mortality, but rather through the limits of that which they have to give.

Put otherwise: if even transcendental givens must be the result of a donation, if *the given* no longer refers to an absolutely present—and therefore un-presentable—gift, if determination or that which binds [destinare] must be *sent*, and this sending is subjected to difference (whether we express this difference as "le Temps" or *différance* or deferral), then what destines destiny, or what destines the destining of destiny, cannot simply be another given. In Baudelaire, there is no simple or simply given origin, outside temporality and before (gift)-economy. No present(ce) prior to economy, or prior to *economies* of time, calculation, supply and demand. Yet for all this, it is not yet evident that Time, what Baudelaire here calls "the law of Time," is such a monolithic foundation that everything comes to pass only on its condition. If there is no presentation of the gift without time, or outside the conditioning of time and temporality, it remains to be seen whether time itself might not be able to given otherwise; whether, that is, time itself need be given, but by a gift that is no present, or perhaps, any-thing. Is time itself subject to the chance of such a gift?

Let us put aside this question for a moment. The Fairy, we have observed, is in something of a bind. Faced with an unhappy client, she has nothing left to give. But in a stroke of good luck—or providence, perhaps—she remembers "in time [à temps]" a well-known, yet little-used law:

> Cependant elle se souvint à temps d'une loi bien connue, quoique rarement appliquée, dans le monde surnaturel… [L]a loi qui concède aux Fées, dans un cas semblable à celui-ci, c'est-à-dire le cas d'épuisement des lots, la faculté d'en donner encore un, supplémentaire et exceptionnel, pourvu toutefois qu'elle ait l'imagination suffisante pour le créer immédiatement. (ll.69-80)

This law, granting to fairies the ability [faculté] to give *one more lot* [lot], one more prize or fate, "supplémentaire et exceptionnel"; the law, in sum, of imaginative creation, permitting the creation of yet something else, once everything known or *given* has been exhausted; this law allows the Fairy to attempt to supply the shopkeeper's surprising request. This law—let us call it the law of the supplement—allows a fairy to create *immediately*, in the present of the present, one more gift. When nothing remains, when no gifts are present to be presented, this supplementary law covering the donation of supplements can be called upon.

It is at just this moment of the gift's creation in and by its supplemental law that the narrator transitions to the present tense. Only with the third and final presentation—the supplement of a supplement, for we are still within the remainder of "bourdes" (*Aussi furent commises*…)—will the narrator shift to direct discourse, so as to relate what comes to pass without mediation or delay. Giving himself over to the present, then, the narrator relates the event of a performance of the creation of a gift. The law by which this performance takes place,

strictly speaking, would then be a law of the event, for this "well-known law" regulates the imagination's creative impulses by stipulating its capacity to give.

Although the fairy's response to the shopkeeper appears to happen all at once, in point of fact the structure of her response is double, consisting initially in the recollection of this law and secondly in its implementation. While her recollection of the law occurs *in time*, or *à temps*, as an act of recall that happens *just in time*, so to speak, in order to maintain the order of the day without suffering a lapse—or a further embarrassment before this dissatisfied father—the precise time of the law's "application" is more difficult to pin down. For in applying the law *immediately*, some thing does not merely come to pass, but is given. The giving of this gift, in other words, is no mere transfer, or even transformation of a prize, but its creation. How to understand the time of the creation of a gift?

Although well-known, the law of supplemental donations is "rarely applied," the narrator tells us, perhaps because the "faculty," or capacity it grants, "la faculté d'en donner encore un," operates by way of the imagination so as to mediate its creations and facilitate their donations. To each of these functions would correspond a separate gift: for in order for the law to be applied, and a gift given to someone, the imagination would first have to give this supplemental something itself, which is nothing prior to its creation.[149] It must do so "immediately," we learn,

[149] In the *Salon de 1859*, the imagination is also associated with a power of supplementation. See for example: "Cependant, pour revenir à ce que je disais tout à l'heure relativement à cette permission de suppléer que doit l'imagination à son origine divine…" (*OC* II 622) or: "parce que l'imagination, grâce à sa nature suppléante, contient l'esprit critique" (623). Nevertheless, the indefinable faculty of imagination, "reine des facultés," that Baudelaire also esteems with having created the world ("Comme elle a créé le monde [on peut bien dire cela, je crois, même dans un sens religieux], il est juste que'elle le gouverne" [621]) this faculty holds her providence over the true and possible: "L'imagination est la reine du vrai, et le *possible* est une des provinces du vrai. Elle est positivement apparentée avec l'infini" (621). If the imagination simply rules over the true and the possible, if it is "positively" related to the infinite, then what it supplies, what the imagination *creates*, remains bound to a totality, a closed (even if infinite) system, contained and

and the question that this immediacy raises—in contradistinction to the *à temps* of memory: *in* time or *on* time, inserted *at* the time of time—is how to understand its relation to linear chronology. Can the act of creation (here of the imagination) be grasped at a single point of time, as though it were one event among others? Does it simply come to pass as, evidently, one waits in line for one's chance at a prize, or does the act emerge *out of time*, so to speak, thereby breaking with the past and reorienting the temporal order? What is created by the imagination, what renders the gifts of the imagination creations, is the absolute discontinuity of what it gives form to with any past or prior being. What the imagination produces stands in no ready-made relation either to *material* elements that it would reorganize, or to *ideas* or *concepts* already conceived of. Creation names here just the discontinuity of a gift (something given) with respect to past economies of beings or forces. To historicize, or reduce the act of creation and what it creates to an anticipating calculation would be to deny precisely what sets the imagination apart.

The "immediacy" of the imagination, understood as a break with the past, would no longer indicate a *present* moment, but the non-present interruption of the atemporal into temporality. The irruption of an event that does not simply arrive *in time* to save the day, but disrupts the very presence of the present and the "law" by which it is implemented. The word "loi" makes a total of three appearances in Baudelaire's text, twice with respect to the imagination, and once in reference to "Time" and its "infinite posterity, the Days, Hours, Minutes, Seconds" (ll.25-27). In light of the litigious nature of Baudelaire's text, with all its

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constrained by that which is merely "possible." The imagination, in other words, becomes one more power [puissance], or even an ability [pouvoir]. At question in "Les Dons des fées," specifically through the play of chance and necessity, or temporality and fate, is just the nature of the imagination and what it gives, and whether its gifts may not name the impossible possibility of an event. The question raised by "Les Dons" is whether these gifts merely remain possible, or rather, perhaps interrupt that order and its time, and offer the incursion of something like an impossible gift, and one that forces a reconsideration of all that comes to pass in these pages.

tribunals, judgments and pardons, one might begin to wonder whether what is really at stake in "Les Dons des fées" is not just an examination of this law of Time. The subpoenaing and subjection of Time's law, then, to that of the gift: of the faculty to give *one more*, and to mediate between the imaginary of the imagination and the ontic realm of that which is. For, rather than maintaining the order of time, this rarely applied law would appear to mediate an immediacy of imagination that is no longer present, and whose gifts may suspend the presence of their own effects. The question would then become not *when*, but *what*, after all, the imagination gives.

When the fairy finally does announce her gift to the peddling father and his son, it comes as a surprise:

> Donc la bonne Fée répondit, avec un aplomb digne de son rang: "Je donne à ton fils… je lui donne… le *Don de plaire*!" "Mais plaire comment? plaire…? plaire pourquoi?" demanda opiniâtrement le petit boutiquier… (ll.81-85)

The fairy's bestowal of her gift on the merchant's son is a speech-act. But her performative, reported in the first person of the present tense, does not merely announce the passage of a good from her possession to that of another. It is also the act of creation itself, the means by which the "object" to be bestowed comes into being in the first place. The imagination, granted its power by this well-known law of the supplement, enacts its creations as the performance of a performative, which means that there is no gift of the imagination in this instance prior to its being given to someone. But what, after, is this gift? Where has one ever seen the *Don de plaire*? The gift of pleasing? Like all such *natural* gifts or talents, the gift of pleasing has no material body outside of its particular manifestations, which testify to it, but can never present it, the "thing" itself, directly. The gift of pleasing, moreover, is distinct from the two first gift-gaffes, the "power [puissance] to magnetically attract wealth [fortune]," and the "love of Beauty and

poetic Power [Puissance].” For while these former gifts consisted of “powers” and an aesthetic sensibility, the latter, that of the “Don de plaire,” is itself a “gift.” The gift that is given in the “Don de plaire” is a gift, which means, first of all, that whatever the *don de plaire* is, whatever the “don” of this gift names, is neither a power nor a love. Neither an *ability* nor a *desire*, but something that, not relating to either of these anthropomorphic drives or faculties, can only be designated by the here nearly tautological designation of “don.” The *Don de plaire* is neither a *power* to please, nor a *love* of pleasing, but the *gift* of pleasing: as though a tendency, a nearly unconscious inclination, that one could not help but effect.

What this third and final gift gives is the gift of pleasing, and this gift is a gift. It remains to be seen in what, exactly, the difference between giving a “power,” a “love” and a “gift” consists, and how this relates to the nature of pleasing specifically. Any gift can give pleasure (or surprise), but the gift of pleasing is the gift *of* gifts (“Je lui donne… le *Don*”), because unlike the former two presents, the gift of pleasing (which is also the gift of giving), bears no immediate, or intransitive, meaning or sense. The gift of pleasing, unlike the power to accrue wealth, or the love of beauty, has no meaning without reference to an other, an object, or a recipient. Even if the other gifts can have meanings, as well as real consequences, for other people, as beauty and wealth (for better or worst) fulfill social functions, the gift of pleasing is the only gift that has *no* meaning without others to whom it can be directed.[150] Thus, the gift of pleasing is on the one hand comparable to the abstract concept of the gift, which requires a donee in order to be thought, and on the other hand it is a synecdoche for this abstract ideal of the gift, for it gives as its content what *all* giving ought to give: i.e. pleasure. To give the gift of pleasing is to give giving by one of its parts. Of course, this may also be the case for the *power* of winning fortune,

[150] This would also mean that the question of ethics is fundamentally different when it concerns pleasing (or the gift), than when it concerns these other modes.

the *love* of beauty, or the *poetic power*, but each of these gifts also bears an ineradicable ambivalence: I can become a miser or my love of beauty may be so esoteric that it rather displeases than pleases those who read my verse. The banality, even crudeness, of the sensual nature of the gift of pleasing at once removes it from the complexity and the ambivalence of giving, (in these instances that of charity or poetry or art), by naming one of their supposed or essential possibilities. It also ironizes, by banalizing into a hedonism, their so-called ethical moments. The ability for both wealth and art to play social roles, for which "pleasing" names one interpretation, is necessarily coupled with their ability to fail in these functions, and to alienate or displease the public. The gift of pleasing is therefore at once the most essentially giving-gift (as the gift of giving), and the least, (as the least ambivalent, seemingly most straightforward of the presentations).

We may also observe that the two preceding gifts—the power of attracting fortune and love of beauty (or poetic power)—are opposed to each other and distinguished as poetry is from prose, or as wealth is from poverty. The gift of pleasing, on the other hand, has no substance. That is, it lacks a field or domain—a body—specific to it. Pleasing is part of each other gift, yet isolates from each what one would hope would be an *effect* of these other practices or powers, and the singular character of pleasing—that is, of being characterless—is just what infuriates the father, the *petit commerçant*. What is the *work* specific to this trait? It is neither part of the economy as such (fortune), nor even part of what is excluded from that economy, as its proper margin (poetry as the property of the beggar), but seems to hang or float suspended, part of no one and nothing. Of course, there is one profession that specializes only in pleasing, and it is infamously caught between the financially driven pursuits of the workplace and what is generally understood to be opposed to them. In the figure of the prostitute, Benjamin astutely observes, the

realm of work and that of pleasure become inextricable. Hardly a painless job, in prostitution the free-floating magnanimity of the gift of pleasing becomes embodied, revealing ever-potential economic avenues awaiting even the least utilitarian gift.

The gift of pleasing, we might say, refuses all of these distinctions, precisely because it gives itself to each of them. At once bodiless and a figure for the body's bind, it disturbs the father both because it is *too economical* and *not economical enough*. The gift of pleasing, insofar as it gives pleasure, both is immediately understood by all, and defies the understanding, forcing the inevitable question, *how?*[151] It is the gift *of* giving as it relates exclusively to the other, but precisely for this reason its *effect* is always deferred, always awaiting expression in the other (an expression that is always counterfeitable), and never available in itself to the giver. As a result, the gift of pleasing defies our interpretive categories, and in a rigorous sense it remains to be given.

[151] The "power to attract wealth" might raise a similar question, but is different for at least two reasons. First, unlike the gift of pleasing it is a cliché, and thus does not strike as odd or unplacable in the same way. Second, whatever questions may remain, the *power* to attract wealth is a power [puissance]. It is an ability. The gift of the gift of pleasing, on the other hand, has a self-referentiality that defies understanding and merely repeats its status as a gift, without offering further specifications as to the genre (or gender) or class of the gift. Perhaps it is the androgyny of this gift that ultimately makes it so disturbing for the father.

Conclusion

In following the reemergence of questions of poetry, language and donation in Shelley, Thoreau and Baudelaire, the above chapters demonstrate an ongoing conflict internal to poetic discourse. This conflict manifests variously through the "name" in Shelley, the problem of "purchase" in Thoreau, and in the double figure of the "souvenir" and then the elusive "don de plaire" in Baudelaire. In each case, each of these motifs sets the stage for an articulation that cannot be grasped either by their speakers, or by the texts themselves, and that even the term "poetry" fails to fully capture. Indeed, in many cases it is precisely through a form of failure—whether in naming, possessing, giving freely or giving at all—that the crucial experience comes to the fore.

The internal relatedness of the gift to poetry is perhaps most salient in Shelley's "Hymn," where the poetic vocation is explicitly located between the denial of a gift, and poetry's own ability to give, as mediated by this denial. In this way Shelley's poem and Baudelaire's "Dons des fées" share an odd bond, as both offer images of what I have called "the gift of the gift," or the "gift of giving." In Shelley's case, the denial of the gift of the name of god conditions all nomination and all giving to come. Giving and nomination become possible to the extent that they are impossible, never capable of arriving at a fully present or self-same given. The "don de plaire" is also a gift of giving, although a much more inscrutable one, an ironic gift that establishes the ethics or even economy of giving as bound to the other and denied the giver. These gifts do not merely present some thing, then, but they give conditions for giving and therefore disrupt or alter the very meaning of the gift and that to which it is bound. That the gift becomes the gift of the gift in these texts is no coincidence, as the very difference between conditioning and conditioned, or transcendental and experiential, is intimately bound to the gift

and the meanings of the *given*. That is, the possibility of rigorously delimiting *what gives* from *what is given*, a topic, of course, at the forefront of Baudelaire's "Dons des fées."

If the necessity of a concept of the gift for poetry is most visible in Shelley, then the reappearances in Baudelaire's "Morale du joujou" and "Dons des fées" of a gift at the origin of poetic sensibility nevertheless smuggle into those texts "modern" or "modernized" intimations of this connection. Although, we might say, these gifts do arrive, in Baudelaire's texts they are always already divided, already calculating and drawn into relations of antagonism and economy. If the gods are already gone for Shelley, then those gods (or fairy-givers) who remain for Baudelaire are merely posing as such as they pursue selfish aims and are subjected to similar forms of temporality and finitude as mortals are. A properly poetic sensibility, we learn in "Morale du joujou," would require a properly pure gift in order to be possible, but just as "Morale" sets into doubt the possibility of any such gift, so too does it disrupt the notion that poetry itself is—or should be—pure.

The impurity of poetry, its refusal to simply oppose itself to prose, as well as its inability to remain strictly aneconomical, is a theme that runs through every text examined in the above chapters. Given Shelley's denial of poetic exclusivity to verse in his "Defense of Poetry," and Baudelaire's reflexively antagonistic championing of the prose poem, this perhaps comes as the greatest surprise in *Walden*, a text with few pretensions to a poetic sensibility in the first place, and in which quite a bit of work had to be done even to render these issues visible. Yet as Thoreau's encounter with the farmer makes clear, every transaction, and even the most prosaic of dollars and cents, is caught between registers of language whose incommensurability is only an alibi for not reading. Strictly speaking, there can be no incommensurability in language. No truly incommensurate, or measureless parts. But this is not because all language (poetic and prosaic,

legal and illegal, felicitous and infelicitous, etc.) relates perfectly to itself and is therefore measurable. Rather, language is so shot through with incommensurability that the only possibility for commensurability (or, we might say, legibility) is of the incommensurable. What Thoreau allegorizes as the confrontation between "poetic" and "prosaic" discourses is not an extreme or uncommon, nor even a strictly *literary*, event. It is rather the general condition under which linguistic operations unfold. To think the generality of what Thoreau's text offers us as readers would be to begin to read a "prose poetry" worthy of the name.

Such a "prose poetry," or a "poetry without poetry," or something like the poematic for Derrida, or what the "poematic simulacrum of narration" does to *récit*, stand as so many attempts to articulate where each of these texts leads us. But what in the realm of poetics would go by these names must in turn be thought as structuring the gift, and here once more not simply as a privileged moment only (non)attainable by select literary texts, but as general structures of textuality and giving. The very differences between economy and aneconomy, or the gift and exchange, between structures of reciprocity and return versus those non-structures of absolute incommensurability, must be thought as being no longer opposed. Just as the figure of the event for Derrida merges singularity and repetition, or the unique and unrepeatable with the necessity of iterability, so too must the figure of the gift be seen to name both the economical and aneconomical, the excluded origin of economy as well as what goes by the name "gift-exchange." To return once more to *Walden*, what Thoreau's failure of identity indicates ("[I]t surpassed my arithmetic to tell, if I was that man who had ten cents…") is the always already economical *and* aneconomical nature of any given. The return of generosity that follows in the form of "a present of ten dollars" is both inscribed in a system of debts that renders it strictly ungenerous (or ungiving), and excribed, or exorbitant with respect to this circuit, irreducible to it

and therefore not simply present. Each of the above readings attempts to show how the gift sets into play the irreducible relay of (an)economy.

The problem of sexual difference plays a prominent role in each chapter with the exclusion of the first. Woman, as wife, fairy godmother, giver of fate, mother and excluded other, circulates in these chapters as both the origin of economy and its unworthy heir. Whether as the embodiment of the home in Thoreau, or the giver of gifts in Baudelaire, she occupies a position of the not quite human, the aneconomical and alegal. She has no voice (or barely a voice) in the exchange between rights holding men recounted in *Walden* and can only insert herself through the representation of her husband whom she must persuade. Yet she is also there closest to the farm. The farm, as a locus of reproductive labor and domestication, is in some sense only an extension of her, which she embodies as well as occupies. Certainly, for Thoreau, she is both the greatest attraction and repulsion that the farm holds—"every man," after all, "has such a wife"—which is also to say that she presents the greatest danger to "the poet," as he attempts to maintain his autonomy from responsibilities born of hard labor. In Baudelaire's "Morale du joujou" as well as "Dons des fées" she is the giver who is excluded from receiving gifts, the mother who destines *man*kind while not participating in its legacy. Woman, sister and mother in each instance names something that remains unthinkable for the circuits of economy that *she* proffers. An unaccountable origin irreducible to the particular gifts she bestows, she haunts the protagonist of "Morale du joujou" just as she does Thoreau (and the farmer) in *Walden*, and serves to recall that what is given is never fully present.

The choice to examine individual texts culled from much larger *oeuvres*, or excerpts from longer works, as in the case of *Walden*, allowed for more intensive analysis of the interruptions that occur in language between the poetic and prosaic, and as the experience of failure

documented in each author's work. The interest of these readings is less to propose an explicit or thematic connection between giving and poetry, as would be the case, for example, with a *Romantic* motif that emerges only with Romanticism and its legatees, than it is to see how Romanticism itself responds to the poetic necessity to account for itself as a historical phenomenon irreducible to historical conditions. To see, in other words, how the problem of poetry develops a language capable of accounting for its own paradoxical referentiality by way of the gift. From this perspective the gift of poetry names also a poetry of the gift, but one whose limits are no longer, strictly speaking, "poetic."

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