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Reading to the Test:

Character, Method, and Complicity in U.S. Writing from Emerson to Adorno

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An abstract of a dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the
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Abstract

Reading to the Test:

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By Claire Laville

In "Reading to the Test," I demonstrate that recurrent literary figures and changing theories of reading drove the evolution of experimental psychology, and argue that the ubiquity of the test motif demands that we reconsider the priority granted to character and experience in recent critical theory and U.S. intellectual history. Additionally, I show the pertinence of earlier debates surrounding human-subjects research to discussions of figure and personification in literary theory.

Chapter 1 responds to an increasingly canonical assessment of Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry James as proto-pragmatic thinkers, an assessment that relies upon the link between *experiment* and *experience*. I argue that Emerson and James contest that link, often holding to a stubborn and potentially queer disbelief in the existence of other minds.

In the second chapter, I describe the psychological experiments Gertrude Stein carried out as an undergraduate. She told the story of trying to write "automatically" several times, in different genres and voices. In so doing, she grappled with traditions, literary and scientific, that held repetition to be a characteristically feminine style of passivity or complicity. Her 900-page novel *The Making of Americans* reflects her ambivalence toward studying human subjects and toward her teachers' all-encompassing theories of character, habit and experience.

The third chapter begins with the curious fact that Henry A. Murray, who designed numerous personality tests for psychiatric and military use, was also one of Herman Melville's earliest biographers. Murray and his colleagues' appropriation of Melville and Hawthorne unsettles the conventional history of American Renaissance scholarship, as well as commonsensical distinctions between a close (or even queer) reading and a reductive one.

Chapter 4 finds Theodor Adorno and Vladimir Nabokov, émigré writers of conflicting ideologies, mocking and reimagining the personality tests whose creation I discussed in the previous chapter. Particular tests challenge each author's presumptions about the redeeming value of art and the power of self-reflection. At the same time, testing provides a way for each author to abstain having to accept either social or disciplinary formations as given.

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The friendships I've made during my years of graduate study came as the best kind of surprise.

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List of Abbreviations

AI	Paul de Man, *Aesthetic Ideology*
AP	Theodor W. Adorno, et al., *The Authoritarian Personality*
BB	Herman Melville, *Billy Budd, Sailor*
CR	Stanley Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*
CM	Theodor W. Adorno, *Critical Models*
CMA	Gertrude Stein, "Cultivated Motor Automatism"
DE	Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*
DI	Martin Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination*
EC	Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*
E&L	Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Essays & Lectures*
Exp.	Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Experience"
ETE	Stanley Cavell, *Emerson's Transcendental Etudes*
JMN	Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks*
IGI	Judith Butler, "Imitation and Gender Insubordination"
Intro.	Henry A. Murray, Introduction to *Pierre* (Hendricks House)
LIA	Gertrude Stein, *Lectures in America*
MA	Gertrude Stein, *The Making of Americans*
M-D	Herman Melville, *Moby-Dick* (Northwestern-Newberry)
MM	Theodor W. Adorno, *Minima Moralia*
NR	Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Nominalist and Realist"
P	Herman Melville, *Pierre* (Northwestern-Newberry)

PBC	William James, *Psychology: Briefer Course*
RR	Paul de Man, *The Rhetoric of Romanticism*
RT	Paul de Man, "The Rhetoric of Temporality"
SE	Sigmund Freud, *Standard Edition of the Complete Works*
SR	Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Self-Reliance"
TAT	Thematic Apperception Test
TAV	Judith Butler, "Taking Another's View: Ambivalent Implications"
TD	Avital Ronell, *The Test Drive*
TF	Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling*
WPE	William James, "A World of Pure Experience"

Introduction

Reading is connected with psychological testing, whether we like it or not. The pervasiveness of the relation between reading and testing impinges upon our powers as critics to give an account of our critical practices, to affirm certain identities ('queer,' for instance) vis-à-vis literary artifacts, and to defend the arts and humanities by traditional means. This project examines the origins and consequences of that connection in American letters between the mid nineteenth century and the mid twentieth. Scholars in the humanities often contrast their interpretive methods, favorably, to the direct, invasive, and potentially mortifying exercises on human bodies preferred in other disciplines. This opposition remains largely under-theorized.[1] At the center of my dissertation is the personality test: literally, the methods used by psychologists and social researchers since the early twentieth century, including the Rorschach inkblot test, the Thematic Apperception Test, and others; and metaphorically, thought experiments querying the existence or the worth of others. I demonstrate that recurrent literary figures and changing theories of reading drove the evolution of psychological testing, and argue that the ubiquity of testing demands that we reconsider the priority granted to character and "lived" experience in recent critical theory and intellectual history. Additionally, I show the pertinence of earlier debates surrounding human-subjects research to literary-theoretical discussions of character and personification.

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[1] There are a few exceptions (e.g., Howes; Love, "Close Reading and Thin Description").

At the beginning of *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno observe that, in the wake of Baconian science, the dominant sense of *empirical* changed. Where it had once referred to knowledge derived from the senses, it now referred to knowledge derived from tools and calculations (*DE* 1–2). The scientific experiment was no longer an extension of experience; it was the "objective" agent that put mere experience in its place. Numerous commentators, European and American, saw in this gesture the beginning of a modernity that kept the realm of concepts apart from the inhabited world.[2] In scholarship that has come out of identity-based social movements, experience (or "lived experience") has been a privileged term, as against formalistic scientific laws or historical generalizations.[3]

In recent years, literary critics, philosophers, and intellectual historians have turned to American pragmatic and proto-pragmatic writings to heal the divide that Adorno and company complained of (e.g., Posnock; Richardson). Emerson's meditations on experience and composition, William James's "radical empiricism," and Gertrude Stein's writing in a "continuous present" are said to furnish alternative ways of thinking about factuality, in which the object of inquiry is always within a matrix of spatial and subjective relations. Stanley Cavell and Branka Arsić suggest that Emerson's writing of experience/experiment avoids the pitfalls of Enlightenment rationalism, reclaiming

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[2] Intellectual historians have since refined that narrative, fleshing out both the various connotations of *experience* and the subtlety of Bacon's thought (see Daston and Galison; Jay, *Songs*; Poovey; Walls).

[3] I am thinking rather generally of second-wave feminism (especially the consciousness-raising and "standpoint" varieties), black feminist thought, and some currents in critical science and disability studies. Some contemporary versions of the appeal to experience, though certainly not all of them, position themselves against "theory" (E. P. Thompson-style British Marxism is one example). Joan Wallach Scott, Martin Jay, and Marianne Janack have each synthesized the political and philosophical discussions. The phrase *lived experience* has different connotations depending on the discourse and the original language.

Emersonian self-reliance as an awakening to exteriority or co-creation. Other theorists have marshaled the same American literary history to make a seemingly incongruous argument. For the late media theorist Friedrich Kittler, as for Avital Ronell, the organizing principle for the late nineteenth and early twentieth century was not experience/experimentation, but the test. Literary writing is understood to work in tandem with new recording instruments, physiological psychology, and state policies increasingly organized around prediction and control. Kittler argues that twentieth-century hermeneutics, with its reverence for lived experience and autobiographical forms, was little more than a reaction-formation against the new physiological psychology and the attendant transformation of the education system (213–15; D. Wellbery, foreword to Kittler, ix–xi). Despite the different worldviews these readings indicate, there is no definitive difference between *test* and *experiment*.

In all of the works I examine, testing and experimentation acquire their meanings differentially and within a hierarchical system of values. To live one's life as an experiment (or in search of "pure experience") is quintessentially modern and, some have claimed, quintessentially American (e.g., Nietzsche, *Gay Science* §356). Life as a test is an older story, the stuff of Abrahamic legend or Kafkaesque nightmare (see *TD*). By selecting the older, more ominous term, I mean to add a note of caution to the Bergsonian optimism surrounding *expérience* (experience and experiment), which has seen a resurgence of late. In short, testing takes the aura out of experience. That phrasing should evoke Walter Benjamin's discussion of art in the age of its mechanical reproducibility in the essay by that name. Benjamin attributes the waning of the aura (the cluster of associations which constitute any object as authentic and historical) to "the desire…to

bring things ‘closer’ spatially and humanly,” along with a trend “toward overcoming the uniqueness of every reality by accepting its reproduction” (Benjamin, *Illuminations* 223). The test is a procedure for reading that expects to be reiterated and welcomes the suggestion of being undermined. That is a central premise of Ronell’s *Test Drive*: a test is designed on the assumption that the future will be basically like the present, but it would not be a test without the possibility of unpredicted results or a wholly alien future. For that reason, Ronell connects testing with the deconstructive concepts (technically “para”-concepts, that is, the conditions or limits of conceptuality) of temporality and irony (*TD* 43–47, 156–57; “On Testing”). Those demanding concepts of testing would seem to have little to do with the mundane personality test. Indeed, the ways in which the experimental shades into the rote and obligatory is one of my persistent themes.

This is not a study of personality types or typologies. At certain points, an author under consideration will intimate that he or she has arrived at a set of classifications which correspond to the objective structure of the world. “Man puts things in a row / Things belong in a row / The showing of the row is Science,” Emerson thought (*JMN* 5: 168 [1836]; quoted in LaRocca, *Emerson’s English Traits* 83). More frequently, though, the ordering of things into rows is a matter of historical necessity or personal preference. Here is Emerson, once more, in a lecture he delivered around the same time:

> There is great difference between men in this habit or power of classifying. Some men united things by their superficial resemblances, as if you should arrange a company by the color of their dress, or by their size, or complexion. Others by occult resemblances, which is the habit of wit; others by intrinsic likeness, which is Science. The great moments of

> scientific history, have been the perception of these relations. ("Humanity of Science" [1836/1847], quoted in LaRocca, *Emerson's English Traits* 83–84)

Even though the completed lecture includes the same argument for intrinsic order that we find in the journal, Emerson here is preoccupied with the characterological principle of selection underlying multiple orders of analogy. Eve Sedgwick has characterized these as "projects…of *nonce* taxonomy, of the making and unmaking and *re*making and redissolution of hundreds and old and new categorical imaginings concerning all the kinds it may take to make up a world" (*EC* 23). Like Sedgwick, I take it as given that many personality traits and clinical descriptors were once euphemisms for gender, sexual and racial difference, that some of those associations have been recalcitrant (e.g., hysteria and femininity) and that others have been nearly reversed (masculinity and sensibility). My method differs from the methods of analytic and historical epistemology, in that I do not try to ascertain the validity of particular "kinds" (as against or despite their historical constructedness) or define personality itself.[4] I depart as well from studies of the ways modern writers deployed the ideologies of eugenics, psychiatry, or self-help culture, or on the way new technologies of identification contributed to the development of realism.[5]

I introduce two clusters of 'real' psychological tests, therefore, not exactly as the contextual scaffold for my readings. As the chapters progress, personality testing will seem to be more literal at some points and more allegorical at others. First, I provide an

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[4] Significant works employing those methods include Danziger, Hacking, and Daston and Galison. On historical epistemology, see Rheinberger (the term is his) and Dosse.

[5] With this characterization, I do not wish to melt a wide variety of reading practices into a vat of "social constructionism." On racial and eugenic thinking, see English and Seitler; on pop psychology and its relation to liberalism at large, Lutz and Salazar; on technologies of identification in Poe, Melville, and Twain, see Ginzburg and Samuels.

overview of the transition from psycho-physics to psychology, during which scientists and nonscientists alike were preoccupied with the formation of habits, reflex actions, and the thresholds of perception. After a few observations about the way that laboratory culture played itself out in the field of literary criticism, I describe the development of projective testing as an eccentric melding of associationist, psychoanalytic, and hermeneutic ideas.

II.

By the 1860s, European pathologists and animal physiologists had begun to express disregard for "found" specimens and single case studies. One could not reliably prove a causal hypothesis in an "experiment made by nature," in an oft-cited phrase from neurologist John Hughlings Jackson (Sadoff 88).[6] Mere observation lacked the sensational appeal of a clinical trial. Descriptive paradigms based upon bodily examination or touch, particularly physiognomy and phrenology, were refuted for being speculative and superstitious. Claude Bernard's *Introduction to the Study of Experimental Medicine* (1865) galvanized Emile Zola and Henri Bergson with its demonstration that, in Zola's words, "the spontaneity of living bodies is not opposed to the employment of experiment" (Zola 105). As the names of Bernard's followers should suggest, his influence extended far outside the channels of physiology.

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[6] This value judgement persists despite the fact that the nineteenth century's most dramatic experiments were "made by nature," or at least by accident: Phineas Gage's injury, Paul Broca's aphasic patients, and so on.

The first psycho-physical experiments were about the way the body converted stimuli from the outside world into quantifiable units of sensation. Physiologists showed that the laws of electricity also governed the nervous system, striking a dramatic blow to Cartesian anthropocentrism. These findings added fuel to ongoing theological and psychiatric quarrels over the nature of the will (as opposed to, say, "horsepower" [*BB* 401]).[7] Thomas Huxley concluded that consciousness did not cause movement or chemical secretions to occur; it merely "accompanied" those changes (Phillips 558). By contrast, William James postulated that conscious and automatic functions worked in tandem. He interpreted J. S. Mill's definition of character as a "completely fashioned will" to mean that one could consciously cultivate the right sorts of habits (*PBC* 148). A degree of automatism made life bearable. Being free to make important decisions, he reasoned, would be a fair trade-off for the loss in lower consciousness, for experiences that were somewhat less "lived."

Around the same time, German aestheticians turned against the Kantian paradigm of disinterestedness and began to theorize about the perceptual experience of the artwork. Robert Vischer coined the term *Einfühlung* ('feeling into') as a counter to the psycho-physicists' narrow concepts of stimulus and response. In 1903, German aesthetician Theodor Lipps used the same term to describe the condition of "aesthetic imitation," in which the spectator feels "totally identical" with the art object and yet "free, light and proud" (Jahoda 153–55; see also Wimsatt 28–31). Lipps's ideas were widely adapted; by the mid twentieth century, Edward Titchener translated *Einfühlung* as *empathy*, bringing the word into closer association with the Smithian discourse of moral sentiments.

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[7] On the will, see Arsić's discussions of Jonathan Edwards and Lemuel Shaw (*Passive Constitutions* 11–33, 40–42), Fleissner, and Ricoeur (280–337).

Early developments in the psychology of reading emphasized the subconscious, rote aspects of bodily mimicry and ignored most of the discourse's idealistic overtones. At least as early as the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, poets had long surmised that rhythm and meter imposed themselves on the listener, and that, aside from being an aid to memory, rhythm could have an ideologically deforming effect (Wordsworth 609–10). William James was innovative in his characterization of rhythm as constitutive of everyday speech, as well as the language of thoughts (*PBC* 163). Yet his functionalist training often led him to describe linguistic meaning as another reflex arc.[8] He warned against "indulging" too much in novels, plays, and symphonies, in something of a reversal of the Aristotelian defense of theater for its cathartic effect. If the spectator received too much emotional stimulation without discharging it (for example, converting moral sympathy into an act of charity), James argued, she would become fixed in an "inertly sentimental condition" (*PBC* 149).

Educators who valued literature more highly took up the same premise that the word entered the body as an "action potential." I. A. Richards characterized poetic response as a peculiarity of the human animal, for, like any other stimulus, the poetic line produces a "state of readiness for action," even though "the full appropriate situation is *not* present" (*Poetries and Sciences* 28). His interest in readers' response extended beyond the immediacy of stimulus and discharge, though. A poem would be "suitable *bait*" for anyone who wanted to draw out current opinions on the events of the day "for the purpose of examining and comparing them" (*Practical Criticism* 6). Richards, who had trained as a Pavlovian behaviorist, styled his Cambridge classroom as an

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[8] He departed from reflex-arc psychology in his conception of the stream of consciousness, where he considered the way we understand sentences, i.e., as more than a chain of words (*PBC* 159–67).

"experiment." His undergraduate students recorded their responses to a selection of poems without knowing who the authors were. What became apparent were systematic factors that interfered with the adequate comprehension of a poem: sentimentality, inhibition or hard-heartedness, "doctrinal adhesion" or a "diseased mind." He describes habituated emotional associations with certain kinds of poems or rhythms as a flaw on both the reader's and the poet's part. It is as though a switch is flipped inside the reader's brain: "And then the author's work is done, for immediately the record [the reader's associations] starts playing in quasi- (or total) independence of the poem which is supposed to be its origin or instrument" (*Practical Criticism* 15–16). In a subtler but more pervasive way, the conception of literature as literary experience—as an instrument to alter the reader—was disseminated by Progressive-era educators such as Dewey and Louise Rosenblatt (Trask, *Camp Sites* chap. 3; Liu chap. 2).

The 1880s also saw the emergence of a secular hermeneutics, or *Geisteswissenschaften* (roughly, 'human sciences'). Practitioners rejected psycho-physicists' narrow scope along with totalizing Hegelian systems. In the eyes of Wilhelm Dilthey and others, one could only study history by understanding participants' attitudes and recollections, with particular attention to the literary and speech genre of autobiography. The word *projection*, irreducibly metaphorical, arrived at the juncture of associationist psychology and hermeneutic theories of interpretation. In aesthetics, the term was aligned closely with concepts of physiological mimicry or *Einfühlung* (Danziger 167; Worringer 5). Dilthey described the way one necessarily used one's own "psychic nexus" to understand another person using language alternately rendered as

projection, *transfer* and *empathy* ("Understanding of Other Persons" 159; *Historical World* 235).

In 1921, the Swiss psychiatrist Hermann Rorschach printed a set of ten inkblots. He imagined that a patient's whole mental apparatus would come to light when she confessed what she saw there, and explained what led her to that assessment. Central to his thinking was that perception and apperception could not be separated rigorously. Where raw perception shaded into interpretation depended "on individual factors, not on general ones." He wrote, "We do not know [the subject's] experiences; we do know the apparatus with which he receives his experiences of subjective or objective nature, and to which he subjects his experiences in assimilation of them" (quoted in Galison 277, 281). In his *Psychodiagnostik*, he revealed that the subjects' interpretation of the blots revealed them as belonging to one of two "experience types" (*Erlebnistypen*), introversive and extratensive.[9] Introversives concentrated on the sense of movement within the inkblots. Their intelligence and "inner lives" were more developed, but they were clumsy and could not adapt as easily as their extratensive peers to change. Extratensives, who had a stronger response to the color of the blots, were charming but superficial. The Rorschach test and its American derivatives, which range from the standardized to the essentially unrepeatable, have been grouped under the rubric of *projective methods* since the late 1940s. The conception of projection at work tends toward the watered-down Freudian (Sigmund- and Anna-) variety: in short, projection occurs when the subject locates an

[9] Rorschach probably adopted those words from a 1903 monograph on intelligence by Alfred Binet. *Introversion* formerly had a religious connotation; even Emerson used it once or twice (Ellenberger 356).

internal threat in something or someone else.[10] I devote considerable attention to the Thematic Apperception Test and the Draw-a-Person Test the second half of this dissertation.

The projective methods are compact, reflexive experiences for the subject. As one mid-century psychoanalyst wrote in defense of the projective methods, the subject is required to "attend and concentrate, survey and abstract, remember and anticipate, organize and judge, create fantasy and test reality, move and talk." Sometimes he or she has an opportunity for "creative regression," that is, an opportunity to explore fantasies of omnipotence, destruction and disintegration in a controlled setting (Schafer 197, 100). This description is surely more optimistic than most cultural critics' might be. In practice, most personality tests are trite and dull; many are conducted under duress; and they conflate acts and kinds in all sorts of pernicious ways.[11]

My emphasis on the tests' imbrication in aesthetic and hermeneutic ideas has meant that I have passed over the more scandalous moments in human subjects research, such as Jean-Martin Charcot's exhibitions of hysterics, B. F. Skinner's radical behaviorism, or Henry Murray's "stressful interpersonal situations" tests.[12] It has also diverted my attention from various parasitical connections among academic social

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[10] Didier Anzieu, one of the few psychoanalytic theorists to have considered projective methods at length, compares the implicit meaning of projection in the TAT and similar devices to that in Freud's *Psychopathology of Everyday Life*. In other words, a person might be projecting any unconscious idea, not necessarily a repressed erotic fantasy (Anzieu and Chabert 20–21).

[11] That phrase is intended to evoke Foucault's description of the transition from sodomy as a "practice" to the homosexual as a "species" around 1870 (see Sedgwick, *EC* 9, 44–48).

[12] Writer Alston Chase has devoted considerable energy to exposing Murray's role in the "creation" of Theodore Kaczynski, the "Unabomber." In 1962, Murray and his team conducted a series of humiliating mock interrogations on Kaczynski and his classmates at Harvard (see Chase; Murray, "Studies of Stressful Interpersonal Disputations").

science, urban poverty, and aesthetic innovation.[13] At the same time, concentrating on the experiential dimension has allowed me to discern the differences between experiments, from subjects' and administrators' perspectives (and variously as a woman, a Jew, or a gay or queer person). Under other heuristics, all of the exercises would be flattened into technologies of the self—not incorrectly, of course. Rather than take the perspective of a post facto Institutional Review Board, I ask, what were the imaginative conditions under which such-and-such a test—or living one's life as a test—seemed like a good idea? I suggest that, in addition to established frameworks for addressing knowledge and power, we ought to consider the legacies of transcendentalism, pragmatism, and literary tropes such as the reflex and chiasmus.

III.

The most elegant formulation available to critics of human experimentation (the real thing, or social relations that resemble it to an uncomfortable degree) is romantic: "We murder to dissect" (Wordsworth 131). In the twentieth century, the most sophisticated form this charge has taken is the Marxian concept of reification, as developed by Georg Lukács. Reification describes the process by which a relation between people, which has the potential to change over time, is disguised as an objective and unchanging "thing." A person's labor-power would be the sole measure of his or her

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[13] Literary-historical discussions of the author as doctor or ethnographer include Clifford, English, and Trask (*Cruising Modernism*).

worth, and it would exist relatively independently of the person, even in her mind. Instead of inhabiting or identifying with one's activity, one could only sell, contemplate, or test it. In the Marxist humanist tradition, scientific experimentation has been cited as an instance of reification, even a cause thereof. Lukács argued that "artificially abstract" scientific methods misrepresented historical phenomena "ruled by chance" as manifestations of "rational" laws (quoted in Porter 23–30).

Members of the Frankfurt School of critical theory use reification as a heuristic to describe the effect of constant testing in schools, clinics, and the workplace; latter-day members contemporary exponents add Internet dating to the list (Honneth, *Reification* 82–83). The subject learns to apprehend others, and eventually oneself, in terms of disparate faculties, traits, or aptitudes. As early as 1944, Adorno wrote: "Because thought has by now been perverted into the solving of assigned problems, even what is not assigned is processed like a problem…." If thought is treated always and only as a measure of thought, a test of how the mind works or whether it *can* work under such-and-such conditions, then what will count as thinking is severely constrained. In any case, "the right answers must be already recorded" (*MM* 196–97 [§126]). This particular aphorism's title is "I.Q." It is one of a very few words in the collection that Adorno printed in English, as though to suggest that the American idiom is part of the offense. His words are as prescient as ever in the era of No Child Left Behind, the Common Core Curriculum, and "teaching to the test." Those 2000s developments coincide with widespread cuts to the arts, humanities, and foreign languages in schools and universities, and to the dismissals of the liberal arts in mainstream political discourse.

As a counter-current to the widespread dismissal of the liberal arts in mainstream

political discourse, some public intellectuals have declared that a humanistic education is valuable precisely insofar as its value cannot be quantified or tested.[14] Although I sympathize with these positions, my dissertation will question the oppositions which underlie most of them: between the humanities and its instrumental others, between the coldness of skepticism and the warmth of mutual acknowledgement. Some of the same romantic, antinomian works that make challenges to the stultifying order possible have instilled in us the imperative to test. Furthermore, many of the purported objects of humanities scholarship (especially "experience") emerged from an ongoing quarrel about experimentation, its purview and limits.

IV.

Projection is an object of scientific inquiry and a recognizable literary figure. Usually, it means that I perceive human intention where there is none at work, or impose my feelings or preconceptions on another object. Despite the generality of the term, *projection* is a point of convergence between deconstruction, new historicism, and more recent engagements with ordinary language philosophy and object relations theory. Since the 1970s, personification has overwhelmingly been treated as a rhetorical ruse. De Man in particular showed how common and vacant were the romantic tropes of interiority and reflection, of face and voice, which, as tropes, are reversible and unhistorical (see *RR*).

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[14] See, e.g., Nussbaum and Roth. More challenging discussions include those by Derrida ("University"), Aravamudan, and Liu. Maurice Lee has given an illuminating presentation about nineteenth-century measures of pupils' understanding of literature (MLA, Chicago, Jan. 2014).

Subsequent critics reoriented de Man's argument that persons are posited in language in order to examine literary texts' rehearsal of historical performatives—Manifest Destiny, marriage contracts, or shifting medical criteria for personhood, for example (e.g., Dimock; Wald). Others refer to Louis Althusser's allegory of being "hailed" into the social order as an ambivalent scene of personification. Subjectivation is always partially in error, in that it names as given something that will only exist by virtue of the naming itself, on the condition that the naming succeeds (Althusser 115–20; Butler, *Psychic Life* 96–97).

Of late, however, there has been an affirmative strain in literary theory which effectively reverses the postulates of both the rhetorical critique of prosopopoeia and the psychological charge of projection. Reading becomes an occasion to posit and acknowledge personality and mutual relation, in spite of, or because of, the unverifiability or unevenness of the attribution. The sources of this turn are various. I focus on the writings Stanley Cavell here, given his prominence in the study of American romanticism and his abiding interest in experience/experiment.[15] Cavell is concerned with the ways in which we convince ourselves that other persons exist, a decision which, he says, we cannot ground or test logically. Since there is no necessary and sufficient quality of personhood (unlike, say, chairhood), there is no use worrying about whether anyone is actually a person. From an anti-foundational or even queer perspective, Cavell's conciliatory theory of acknowledging and relating is distinctly appealing. It attests above all to the intersubjective dimension of self-experience, without disqualifying "personality" or "soul" from the game altogether. He renders any standard based upon

[15] D. W. Winnicott's object relations theory, and contemporary empirical research in that domain, comprise another significant source (e.g., for Snediker in *Queer Optimism*).

race, sex, age, or ability moot by disallowing all criteria for personhood.[16] Yet his readings of Emerson, in particular, are struck through with a kind of inoffensive normativity.[17] To be sure, I am not opposed to "empathic projection" (as though one could be opposed to it), but, to paraphrase Lee Edelman, the absence of an anti-empathic lobby concerns me.[18] In my readings of Emerson, Stein, and others, therefore, the test drive is that which will not be content with acknowledgment, which will not "live" its skepticism (cf. Cavell, *CR* 451; Terada, "Philosophical Self-Denial" 468–69).

I attempt to draw a connection between culturally specific testing practices and as a predilection or compulsion and recent theoretical work on the "perverse attitude toward reality." Freud and his readers make the following tentative distinction: whereas the neurotic represses his wish because of the reality principle ('If I live out my fantasy, I will get hurt'), the pervert alters or modulates his perception of reality to accommodate the wish (Grossman 423). Perversion on this account is linked with the refusal of reality testing. Yet what Rei Terada describes as "falling in love with reality testing" is often a perversity, if not a perversion, in itself ("Thinking for Oneself" 93). Like the pervert's eroticizing the wrong objects to in order to evade terms of sexual difference, the test

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[16] Oren Izenberg sees Cavell as offering a way out of those judgments of worth as they appear within analytic philosophy, while Amanda Anderson argues that Cavell's "Emersonian" perfectionism helps to advance the cause of anti-foundationalism onto the plain of ethics (Izenberg 20–22, 197n.55; Anderson 289).

[17] Hence Cavell's usefulness to theorists who use very literal pathologies, character types, and test data to explain aberrations of development and the cruelties of capitalism alike (e.g., Honneth, *Reification* 47–52). Stephen Mulhall clarifies Cavell's conceptions of normal, natural, and pathological (*Cavell* 114–22).

[18] "Not that some anticompassionate lobby takes arms against the emotion, mounting a campaign of aversion therapy meant to bring out the latent 'ouch' in compassion's electric 'touchap.' What makes compassion so touchy is, rather, the *absence* of such a lobby, the fact that every hardening of the heart against compassion's knock presents itself as hard-headed reason intent on denying *false* compassion to keep the way clear for the true" (Edelman 64).

functions as a way to defer having to accept either social or disciplinary formations as given.[19]

V.

My dissertation opens during the Transcendentalist moment, and extends into the later modernist period. This is not a literary period by any conventional definition. To the extent that I begin by describing literary and philosophical renderings of testing, and I end with psychological tests that trade in the same literary devices, there is an allegorical shape to the project. By that I mean that a narrative is produced out of successive readings and substitutions among signs—*projection* will be a recurring one—rather than according to a logic of sequence (see de Man, "RT"; T. Davis). William James, who does not have a chapter of his own, may be the invisible center to the work. James is largely responsible for the recuperation of Emerson and other late romantic thinkers as proto-pragmatists or radical empiricists, and one of the main American champions of "experience" with all of its connotations. Even though he spent many years trying to evade the trappings of disciplinarity, James is also a figure of institutionalization.[20]

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[19] The psychoanalyst Joyce McDougall suggests that all sexual perversions can be explained by the "relatively simple proposition that there is no difference between the sexes. More precisely put… *there are perceptual difference between the sexes, but these are without significance*; and above all this difference is neither the cause nor the condition of sexual desire" (69; quoted in Whitebook 336). Occasionally, and rather enigmatically, Cavell makes perversion and skepticism analogous (*CR* 470; "Postscript" 286).

[20] James was uncomfortable with the neoclassical Emerson Hall, which was built to house Harvard's philosophy department (Bordogna 246–50). Commentators speculate that he would have hated William James Hall (designed in 1963) even more.

The first chapter responds to an increasingly canonical assessment of Emerson as a proto-pragmatic thinker, an assessment that relies upon the link between *experiment* and *experience*. Absent from in these accounts is each author's attraction to the test, in the sense of a trial that does not have the implication of experience or immediacy. Stanley Cavell has shown that Emerson, having no definitive way to prove that other minds existed, found it therapeutic to treat persons (in Emerson's words) "as if they were real." Yet Emerson often refuses to treat personality as given. In his *Second Series* of essays, pseudo-scientific measures such as phrenology and physiognomy serve less as reliable knowledge than as attacks upon the primacy of experiential or intersubjective knowledge.

Cavell has argued that Henry James's "The Beast in the Jungle" was a rewriting of Emerson's "Experience," that is, that it tells of the American philosopher grappling toward the acknowledgment of others in the face of grief. This framing suffers from the same limitation I detected in his approach to Emerson, that is, from a failure to engage with the negativity of testing. I discuss gendered performances of skepticism and grief in "The Beast," Cavell's writing, and Sedgwick's *Epistemology of the Closet*, and ask whether the Emersonian manner of partial reading and nonce taxonomy has any place in a late Victorian discourse of sexual types.

In "How Experiments End" (chapter 2), I revisit one of the most famous laboratory scenes in American literary history. Gertrude Stein studied physiological psychology under William James and Hugo Münsterberg as an undergraduate at Radcliffe College. There, she asked whether she could train her arm to write without any conscious intention. Decades later, the behaviorist B.F. Skinner claimed the experiment had never "wore off" and that all of Stein's literary output had been produced mindlessly.

I find Skinner's suggestion of an endless test elaborated in *The Making of Americans*, which promises to be a history of everyone and a complete list of kinds of people. The 900-page novel raises the question of whether the act of "looking and comparing and classifying" could become just as automatic as eating, sleeping, and other elements of what the narrator appreciatively calls "repeating being." The narrator is distraught over her inability to identify with the people she is documenting, but she cannot bring herself to stop. Her endless test represents a symptomatic relation to authority (scientific or patriarchal): an experiment, once critical, had become habitual. *The Making* reveals an irony of William James's ideal of "pure experience," for experience can only be verified by mechanical means.

The second half of the dissertation deals with the literary sources of, and reactions to, the projective test movement in the mid twentieth century. The discourse surrounding projective tests provides a window onto the ambivalences of Jamesian pluralism (for instance, the charge that liberals flattened class stratification into differences of character) and the institutionalization of American literary studies following World War II.

"Shocks of Recognition: The Thematic Apperception Test and the Melville Revival" (chapter 3) begins with the curious fact that Henry A. Murray, who designed numerous personality tests for psychiatric and military use, was also one of Melville's earliest biographers. Murray and his colleagues' appropriation of Melville and Hawthorne unsettles the conventional history of American Renaissance scholarship, as well as commonsensical distinctions between a close (or even "queer") reading and a reductive or instrumental one. In this chapter, I compare the meaning of *projection* in *Pierre*, which Murray edited, to the more frequently analyzed *Billy Budd*. I do so in light

of the differences among tests that Murray conducted or supervised: the TAT, which was loosely inspired by Melville; the "Minister's Black Veil" test, based on the Hawthorne story; and a galvanic skin response test which recalls *Billy Budd* in its conflation of words and physical force. Since Melville and Hawthorne incorporate the reading process into their allegorical figures of self-deception and paranoia, they may have already established the conditions for all interpretation to become a personality test. Yet Melville and Hawthorne had already cautioned against the comfortable, open-ended conception of meaning that Murray and his colleagues adopted.

"Method and Mimicry: Adorno with Nabokov" (chapter 4) finds Theodor Adorno and Vladimir Nabokov, émigré writers with conflicting ideologies, responding to the tests I discuss in the previous chapter. Adorno was one of several German Jewish exiles who believed recent developments in Freudian and social psychology could explain Nazism and U.S. racism. Generically, *The Authoritarian Personality* is closer to Murray's *Explorations in Personality* or Gordon Allport's *The Nature of Prejudice* (1954) than to canonical Frankfurt School writings. For that reason, most critics often separate Adorno's empirical work from his essays on Marxism and aesthetic forms. Yet his experimental endeavors inform and arguably contaminate *Dialectic of Enlightenment* and *Minima Moralia*. Conducting tests on the way individuals responded to cartoon gags or voices on the radio forces Adorno to confront the possibility that some of the "administered" experiences he rails against were an outgrowth of the same imitative posture he tries to recover.

Nabokov, too, tries to defend a conception of individual genius against scientific practices that looked like bad copies of art interpretation. In *Pnin*, a pair of child

psychologists cannot learn anything about the young boy they study. Ironically, the psychologists and their personality tests allow characters to stop being themselves. Their Rorschach inkblots and geometric shapes attract more attention, and endure longer, than names or genders. Nabokov introduces a certain queerness into the experimental situation, albeit not a queerness reducible to a type of person or a political stance.

1. Other than Experience: Emerson's Unpragmatic Styles

At Half past Three,
a single Bird
Unto a silent Sky
Propounded but a single
term
Of cautious melody -

At Half past Four,
Experiment
Had subjugated test
And lo, Her silver
Principle
Supplanted all the rest -

At Half past Seven,
Element
Nor Implement, be seen -
And Place was where
the Presence was
Circumference between -
(Dickinson, *Poems* 444–45)[1]

Das war die Probe. Um halb fünf
gings über sie hinaus…
(lines 5-6, trans. Paul Celan, 400–01)

Halb Fünf, da hatte
Der Versuch die Prüfung abgeschlossen
(trans. Gunhild Kübler, in Kübler and Habegger 74)

[1] This is Franklin's 1998 variorum edition (F1099A), upon which Kübler based her translation. Celan and Forgue used Johnson's 1955 edition (J1084), which printed the poem in ballad stanzas (thus, "At half past Four, Experiment / Had subjugated test").

Quatre heures trente—l'expérience
A subjugué l'essai…
(trans. Guy Forgue)

When read as an allegory of experimentation's triumph (or, even stronger, the triumph of *expérience*), Dickinson's poem rehearses an increasingly common story about nineteenth-century American writing. Contemporary critics of a neo-pragmatist bent stress the equivalence between experience and experiment, reading a certain ethic into the English and French (but not German) etymology. By this account, various writers staked a new claim on experience by lashing it to a process of *experimentation* (a word associated, after Emerson and Montaigne, with Friedrich Nietzsche, John Dewey and Stanley Cavell) or *composition* (associated with Henry James, William James, Gertrude Stein, and Cavell once more). I shall address several variations on this argument in this and the following chapters. In this body of writing, the close bond between experience and experimentation accompanies a thickened concept of experience itself. In short, experience is not something a subject "has" of an object, then conceptualizes or recollects later on. Instead, experience encompasses the progressive loop through an object or an event (water on a leaf, bumps on a skull, the death of a child), one's mental appropriation of it, and the act of recording the situation or elevating it to the status of art.[2]

Yet that is only a partial description of this milieu and its relation to experimentation. To return to Dickinson's poem: Suppose for a moment that "Experiment" subjugating "test" represents a real change in the world. That would bring

[2] I am condensing numerous arguments, most of them in conversation with Emerson and with one another (see W. James, *WPE*; Meyer; Arsić, *On Leaving*; Grimstad). "Experimental loop" is Grimstad's phrase (1).

the second stanza into agreement with the first, where the clarion call of a "single Bird" breaks the silence. Someone conquered the test of her timidity, and, with time, the world becomes livelier. Gunhild Kübler, the most recent German translator of Dickinson, evidently reads the poem that way (Kübler and Habegger 72). That reading is convincing enough for the first two stanzas, but it seems to require that we ignore the third. In the last stanza, "element" replaces "experiment," to be opposed, superficially, to "implement." But what is the ground of opposition? The difference is indiscernible and apparently irrelevant. Stationed between opposite poles, "experiment" and "test" must be suspended between a world of action and a world of interchangeable abstractions.[3] Paul Celan's translation, which is earlier and looser than Kübler's, preserves that suspensive quality. He renders *experience* and *test* as a single instance of *die Probe* ('test' with the connotation of 'rehearsal' or 'test run'). The next line, similarly, is vaguer and less decisive than Dickinson's "subjugated." Something—the test and/or "her"—crossed over or went beyond it(self). *Experiment* and *test* either make up a single concept, or their differences are neutralized by virtue of a shared non-being or disappearance (parallel to *Element* and *Implement* in the third stanza). The French translation preserves the ambiguity in the difference between terms. Unlike Celan, who poses the equivalence by compressing the two terms into one, Guy Forgue selects another pair of near-synonyms. *L'expérience* means experience and (scientific) experiment; *l'essai* means trial, as well the genre of writing associated with digression and self-fashioning.[4] *Essai* has been

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[3] Appropriately, Geoffrey Hartman thought the poem sounded "as if a computer had been given a number of words, and instructed to produce a minimal narrative" (Hartman 136; see also Cameron, *Lyric Time* 176–77).

[4] Emerson describes Montaigne, the great theorist of the essay, as one who "likes pain, because it makes him feel himself, and realize things; as we pinch ourselves to know that we are awake" (*E&L* 701).

championed as the errant humanist's answer to the tyranny of the scientific method (see Adorno, "Essay" 157–58). Between Dickinson's English and Forgue's French, the triumph of *l'expérience* may point to a certain lively errancy lost, regained, or neither.

Distilling the translations, we are left with a Venn diagram in which *experiment* overlaps with *experience* on one side with and *test* on the other, while *experience* and *test* stay separate. Most of the confusion is a matter of translation and preference, yet there is a shade of connotation that evades either the English/German or English/French differential. If I tried to walk on a bed of hot coals, I might call it an experiment or a test, among other things; alternately, when my computer sends a "ping" to test the strength of a network, I would hardly call it an experiment.

The distinction I am sketching bears some resemblance to the recognizably philosophical distinction between pragmatism and transcendentalism. It was William James, after all, who noted Emerson's inconsistency in preferring "action" at one moment (the work-yard over college in "The American Scholar," for example), and asserting "the superiority of what is intellectualized" the next (quoted in Carpenter 43–44).[5] But the two sets of terms do not entirely line up. Testing, in what follows, will sometimes seem to give priority to reason, but at other times it will seem mindless, stubborn, or cruel.

Where experiment and experience are mutually imbricated, they have an invigorating, individuating effect on the actor. In many theorizations, the prominence of an experimental type of person is said to herald the arrival of modernity. Nietzsche, under Emerson's influence, predicted that the modern, theatrical type was likely to be an American. In *The Gay Science*, he wrote, "Everybody experiments with himself,

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[5] James was irritated by the passage in "Self-Reliance" attesting to a divine and unknowable "way," which "shall exclude example and experience" (Carpenter 55; "SR" 271).

improvises, makes new experiments, enjoys his experiments; and all nature ceases and becomes art" (Nietzsche, *Gay Science* §356; Ronell, *TD* 208–12).[6] Experimentation was the watchword for the becoming-art of life and becoming-science of art. As invigorating as I too find this thought, I am troubled by certain organicist, utopian versions of it.[7] I understand the test, Dickinson's "subjugated" term, as the persistent negative underside of experimentalist discourses. Of course, the opposition being something of a fiction, the test will be seen to flow into the livelier current of *expérience* on a regular basis.

One version of test-not-experiment I find congenial to the works at hand comes from the sociologist Luc Boltanski and his oftentimes collaborator, economist Laurent Thévenot. By their account, every new situation calls for a consensus as to the qualification of a particular object (person, thing, or convention), based upon a standard of either justness or fitness. The sociologists apply this logic without modification to scientific protocols, domestic life, and diplomatic affairs. They eschew the distinction between subjective and objective: "Every nature has its objects, and all objects can be used for testing [*éprouver*]" (Boltanski and Thévenot 41). With uncertainty relieved there comes an almost instant demand for meta-justification, in which the general test criteria are assessed for their pertinence to a particular situation. Perhaps workplaces in general ought to be measured on efficiency, but not *this* one (say, a school). If a person believes she has been unfairly disqualified, society is expected to test the virtue of the plaintiff (might she be mad?) and the generalizability of her case (Boltanski 6). Boltanski and

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[6] *Gay [*gai*] science* is a phrase Nietzsche adopted from Emerson's 1854 lecture "English Poetry" (Grimstad 33).

[7] One example is Richardson's contention that Emerson's practice of compiling, paraphrasing, and re-ordering quotations resembles the transcription of genetic code by RNA, or the emergence and differentiation of cultures in Darwin's theory (chap. 3). Steven Meyer makes a similar gesture in his Whiteheadian gloss of "Nominalist and Realist," though to my mind a more persuasive one (174–77).

Thévenot presume all members of a society have the ability to define and renegotiate their criteria of worth, without the need for an absolute standard of truth or merit. In that sense, they are pragmatic.[8] Echoing liberal social theorists such as Habermas and Rawls, they also ascribe to social institutions an underlying rationality and a tendency toward self-improvement.[9] In Emerson's essays, the orientation toward testing is not quite as reasonable or progressive; in James, it is often less so. Nonetheless, I find Boltanski's model useful for describing the test as self-perpetuating cycle rather than a Cartesian exercise (as in the dominant Cavellian interpretation of Emerson). Since testing does the work of justification, it is primarily rhetorical rather than epistemological.

Another concept which clarifies the broader meaning of testing is the performative. According to J. L. Austin and those he influenced, a performative utterance does not refer to anything except itself, at the moment when it does something. It might be a promise, a bet, or an apology. Cavell has called Emerson's "Experience" a "founding" of America, a performative which is ongoing and which requires the reader's recognition: "Emerson's writing…is a wager, not exactly of itself as the necessary intellectual preparation for a better future, but rather of itself as a present step into that future, two by two. It cannot be entered alone" (*ETE* 223). At the same time, Emerson, and Nietzsche following him, will undercut these verbal transactions by recalling their economic and coercive character. Thus, in "Experience," Emerson callously nulling promises and vitiating contracts enables him to imagine a relation outside the circuit of

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[8] I am thinking of William James's usefulness theory of truth and Dewey's so-called "Test-Operate-Test cycle of perception" (Brandom, quoted in Grimstad 9). Confusingly enough, Boltanski's sociological cohort is also referred to as pragmatic, in part reflecting the influence of twentieth-century American theorists (Dosse 37–41 and passim; Lemieux).

[9] That is the case even though Boltanski was influenced by Lacan's reading of paranoia, and believed it applicable to political structures as well as psychic ones (Dosse 39).

testing, contract, and reciprocity.

For the remainder of this chapter, I will concentrate on two authors who have been claimed more often for the neo-pragmatist lineage—that is, into a quietly optimistic narrative about experimentation as a way of life—than has Dickinson.[10] My reading of Emerson builds upon a sizeable body of work on "Experience," mourning, and skepticism. In that light, I offer some elaboration upon the Freudian reality test. This, of course, has little bearing on popular personality tests, though it is implicated in Cavell's themes of avoidance and acknowledgement. According to Freud, grief is what initially sets the ego's reality testing in motion. The ego only begins reality-testing once "objects…have been lost which once brought real satisfaction" (*SE* 14: 247, 19: 238). "Experience" raises further questions about the ego's authority to prove or to persuade. "Nominalist and Realist" shares many concerns and tropes with "Experience," although it has received far less attention.[11] There, Emerson proposes that there is no obligation to distinguish one person from the next. We personify, or do not personify, as a matter of temperament. The dubious science of phrenology links the two essays to one another and to Emerson's private reflections. In this cluster of writings, I find that testing is not identical to experience, nor full of the anguish of losing touch with it. Finally, I show that Cavell's narrowing of experience to a problem of recognition, when transplanted from Emerson onto Henry James, ultimately colludes with the epistemology of the closet.

My final stance regarding the pragmatist vocabulary, and its mobilization of the language of experience and experimentation (and character, to a lesser degree), will be ambivalent. In my approach to Emerson, I find myself generally sympathetic to readers

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[10] Readings of Dickinson along those lines include Howe, Martin, and Lee.
[11] At least two textual scholars believe Emerson intended the two as companion pieces (Van Leer 272–73).

such as Cavell, Branka Arsić, and Paul Grimstad. However, I want to press these critics' account of experimentation to include a more conflictual idea of "relations" and a less assured bond between language and experience. I am less persuaded by pragmatist readings of Henry James, in which *la vie expérimentale* tends toward compromise and balance. James's fiction shows an equally strong tendency to reject common sense, to put consciousness and habit at odds, and to aestheticize everyday relations to a perverse degree. Ultimately, I want to suggest that certain versions of queer or antisocial formalism have the potential to show the "experimental" tradition its blind spots, and vice versa. In this respect, Emerson has something to add to the queer polemic against reproductive futurism. I do not mean that Emerson reacts to the death of his son in a transgressive way, or that the essay "Experience" is opposed to renewal. For good and pragmatic reasons, Edelman maintains that his attack upon the nation's futural promise is aimed at "the image of the child, not to be confused with the lived experiences of any historical children" (11). Not to be confused? Is that not the critical work of figuration (and queerness), to dwell in and exacerbate our confusion? Waldo's position in "Experience" shows how speciously we placate our skepticism by naming it as figure or analogy.

II.

Of late, critical polemics have traded in the image of Emerson as a scientist, or, at minimum, an artist with a scientific method. This refashioning counters an ingrained

image of the author as "genteel," oblivious to worldly things, and having indulged a naïve theory of mind-world correspondence.[12] Among the most spirited revisionists, Laura Dassow Walls paints Emerson as "a tough-minded survivor, dedicated to facing down tragedy and evil with the keen-edged weapon of scientific truth" (Walls 2).[13] These and likeminded critics have examined Emerson's response to developments in natural history, meteorology, physics, statistics, and race theory. I shall not be contesting these accounts, though, as I have said, I am reluctant to concede the equation of experience and experiment, or the idea that Emerson's writing absorbs all the contradictions of those terms.

According to Walls, Lee Rust Brown, Joan Richardson, Grimstad, and David LaRocca, Emerson found his method when he visited the Jardin des Plantes, in Paris, in 1833. Of particular importance was Georges Cuvier's comparative anatomy exhibition (or "cabinet") there. The elegant spatio-temporal form of "natural history" seemed not to suffer the limitations of either empiricism or idealism, that is, the disjointed particularities of the former or the world-shrinking *a priori*s of the latter. In the wake of this trip, Emerson began to reconceive writing as a "method of nature." He concluded that the poet and the essayist, no less than the encyclopedist, had been tasked with arranging figures in the most correct intuited order. *Composition* became shorthand for that labor of

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[12] George Santayana placed Emerson in a "genteel tradition," which contributed to Emerson's being held in low regard by T. S. Eliot and other academic modernists.

[13] "Tough-minded" is the empiricist type in one of William James's characterologies (*Pragmatism* 491). James himself would probably put Emerson, his godfather, in the tender-minded camp. See also James's *Varieties of Religious Experience*, his address at the Emerson centenary, and Carpenter. For the contrary argument—that Emerson was a spiritual thinker in scientific garb—see Ronald Martin (10–15) and the early critics cited by LaRocca (*Emerson's English Traits* 34–44; "Not Following Emerson" 123–24).

arranging, a term with which Emerson, and subsequent critics, aligned writing with organic processes.[14]

Composition, *experiment*, and *experience* are mutually constitutive for Cavell, though he is less committed to representing Emerson as a scientist. (His particular disciplinary ambition is claiming Emerson for philosophy, or making America philosophical.) He also relies on notions of testing and certainty that do not always coincide with the intellectual-historical contexts offered by Brown, Walls, and Richardson. According to an increasingly canonical account, Emerson was preoccupied with what Cavell, following Wittgenstein, calls the search for criteria—"the means by which the existence of something is established with certainty" (*CR* 6). Cavell has a particular something in mind: the necessary ground or criterion of someone's being a person, and of the existence of "other minds" in general (that latter phrase is associated with Wittgenstein and Anglo-American analytic philosophy). On his account, modernity brings with it the realization that we cannot prove beyond a doubt that other minds exist. Cavell regards Emerson as paradigmatic in opting to live with his skepticism, to believe in certain things—personality, in this case—for pragmatic, therapeutic reasons. A representative example comes from "Experience": "Let us treat the men and women well: treat them as if they were real: perhaps they are" ("Exp." 479). Cavell calls this treatment-as-though *acknowledgement*, in contrast to knowledge, which aims for verification.

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[14] All five critics cite the notebook entry of July 13, 1833: for example: "How much finer things are in composition than alone" (in Walls 84). Also frequently cited is the essay "Spiritual Laws," where Emerson, paraphrasing Coleridge, writes, "A man is a method, a progressive arrangement; a selecting principle, gathering his like to him, wherever he goes" (*E&L* 311).

The essay "Experience" plays a central role in the Cavellian reception of Emerson. "Experience" is Emerson's only public reflection on the death of his son, Waldo, at the age of five. Emerson's grief showed him that the world was "scene-painting and counterfeit," that "souls never touch their objects" ("Exp." 472–73). "Experience" is exemplary for its preoccupation with science and measurement, and for a skepticism that indicts itself: "It is very unhappy, but too late to be helped, the discovery we have made that we exist. That discovery is called the Fall of Man. Ever afterwards we suspect our instruments" ("Exp." 487). In Emerson's version of the biblical allegory, the first "instrument" is self-consciousness itself, and with it comes an understanding that describing an experience is tantamount to losing it.[15]

The essay understands mourning as the rudimentary way of moving from an interior to an objective, shared world.[16] For that reason, Cameron has noted an affinity between "Experience" and Freud's "Mourning and Melancholia," and Cavell accepts her reading in most respects (*Impersonality* 65–75, 221n.6; *ETE* 116). But it is worth pressing on reality-testing in the original psychoanalytic theory, for it bears at best an ambivalent relation to Cavell's themes.[17] The ego's reality test is not a search for criteria, but merely for the perceptible outlines of an object. Reality-testing in "Mourning and Melancholia" was nothing more than the "contrivance" by which consciousness "must

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[15] Variations on this theme are elaborated by Arsić (*On Leaving*), Cavell (*ETE*), Cameron (*Impersonality*), François, and Van Leer. On "anti-self-consciousness" in the European romantic tradition, see Hartman (181–84). For a reading of these lines which replaces the fall-from-Eden thematic with a model of progressively expanding observational systems, yet arguably does so by overlooking loss and negativity, see Wolfe (261–62).

[16] Cavell is indecisive about whether there is any truth to that, although Emerson's believing it so makes him less of a pragmatist to his mind (*ETE* 216–17).

[17] Cameron is not too concerned with reality-testing. She reads "Experience" in line with the challenges that Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok, Jacques Derrida, and others have posed to the mourning/melancholia distinction.

have at its disposal a motor innervation which determines whether the perception can be made to disappear or whether it proves resistant" (14: 233). Writing on "Negation" a few years later, Freud proposes that reality-testing is the more sophisticated half of a faculty of judgment which develops in two phases. The first phase characterizes the infant whose mental life is preoccupied by swallowing (introjecting) that which is good and ejecting that which is bad. Reality-testing occurs later, with the development of an ego, a sense of reality, and a sense of loss (the items are notoriously difficult to order): "It is now no longer a question of whether what has been perceived (a thing) shall be taken into the ego or not, but of whether something which is in the ego as a presentation can be rediscovered in perception (reality) as well" (19: 237). The faculty becomes an empiricist, not a Kantian. Moreover, by Freud's admission, reality-testing does not always work. There does not seem to be a fixed relationship between the truth value of the test's findings and its persuasive ability. Once completed, the test has its "demands" (*Aufforderung*, which also has the weaker meaning of 'request') for the ego, which obeys the demands on its own time or not at all (14: 244, 252).[18] Likewise, Emerson finds the cognitive work of adjudicating reality ultimately powerless over his feelings. Waldo is gone from the world, in short, but he is everywhere in "Experience" (Cameron, *Impersonality* 70).

As Cavell absorbs Cameron's reading of "Experience" into his own, he subsumes the narrow Freudian understanding of reality-testing into a more involved quarrel with experience. Cavell would replace Emerson's initial search for bearings ("Where do we find ourselves?") with a narrative of "founding" or conversion. For Freud, by

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[18] *Realitätsprüfung* (always a noun) is figured as an "institution" within the ego, and more closely resembles a bureaucracy than an experimental site (14: 233; see also Weber).

comparison, it is a more banal matter of "re-finding" (19: 237). Cavell links the etymology of *experience* to Emerson's progress from philosophical uncertainty to practical acknowledgement (*ETE* 128). This particular gloss of experience-as-experiment is very different from the reality test, which evaluates but cannot persuade reliably. The difference between the two is, essentially, the difference between constative and performative utterances (see Austin). When Emerson advises us to treat others "as if they were real: perhaps they are," by this logic, he is making a godlike proclamation: let there be persons ("Exp." 479). The speaker does not have an experience *of* an already existing person; he conducts an experiment that will ("perhaps") bring him or her into being.

This way of thinking about experience is seductive, and allows us to see some vital points of connection between Emerson, William James, Nietzsche, and others. Still, testing and measurement never leave "Experience," or any other essay in which one would expect Emerson to dismiss them in favor of a more affirming style. Moreover, the speaker's pragmatic appeals to conduct do not silence his nagging doubt concerning the existence of others. Treating the people "well" and treating them "as if they were real" are not the same thing. Neither one entails or necessitates the other. And Emerson's aphorisms are forever ironizing and testing themselves against the erosion of time and the shifting of moods.[19] This particular piece of advice—or is it a "joke"?—is delivered from one of multiple perspectives to which the essay gives voice (Brown 255). Nineteenth-century printings divided "Experience" into seven themes, one for each "lord of life," and the advice to treat people as real falls under the heading "Surface." Tellingly, this most ethical and pragmatic gesture on Emerson's part occurs in the section where he eschews

[19] On irony as the test of time, see Ronell (*TD* 156–57). I will say more about changing moods and shifting referents in my discussion of "Nominalist and Realist."

any thought of the future (a point on which I will say more later). There is an anti-prophetic implication, as though "perhaps they are" were followed by, 'but I won't stick around to find out.'[20]

Another limitation of the Cartesian/Cavellian framing of "Experience" is that, when Emerson sets up tests, he is not always trying to ascertain the existence of other minds. Often he tests a person's worth or the strength of an attachment. When he asks, "How many individuals can we count in society," he is merely expressing disdain for the un-self-reliant ("Exp." 472). Nor does his son fall victim to the "radical" skepticism flickering through the essay. For all Emerson broods over the shallowness of grief, the fact of Waldo's having been real is not in question. What is left to be measured is how much the child actually changed his father, regardless of how much Emerson wishes he had been transformed.

Early critics accused Emerson of being glib and callous toward Waldo. Indeed, Emerson mentions the child's death only briefly, comparing his loss to losing a "beautiful estate." The deprivation is expected to "leave me as it found me,—neither better nor worse" ("Exp." 473). *It*, in the last clause, refers almost indifferently to a hypothetical "loss of property" (the subject of that sentence) and the real loss. This is still a reality test. We might say, in a Winnicottian vein, that both the speaker of the essay and Waldo prove themselves real by being exposed to destruction. Only the speaker survives, of course

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[20] Cf. Michael Snediker's offhand remark from a recent book review: "Emerson, queer theorist and early defender of the analogic, leads us to the edge of imagining clutching less hard." He refers to one of the most famous lines in "Experience": "I take this evanescence and lubricity of all objects, which lets them slip through our fingers then when we clutch hardest, to be the most unhandsome part of our condition" (Snediker, "Surface Reading" n.p.; "Exp." 473).

(Winnicott 90–91; see also Johnson, *Persons and Things* 101–03).[21] But Emerson's economic metaphor hints at our alternative understanding of testing, theorized within pragmatic sociology, which concerns the value of things. This is an uglier test than the philosopher's search for stable ground. It is closer to the everyday sense of evaluating people, and, perhaps, to the primitive fantasy of incorporation which precedes the "objective" reality test (see Freud's "Negation," 19: 237).

Emerson's declarations of radical uncertainty are interspersed with far more prosaic questions about people. Whereas grief lifts skepticism into a higher, ethical register, digressions on phrenology and humoral psychology deflate it**.** The essays hold those conflicting motifs in close proximity. Emerson switches between foundational questions and judgments of temperament almost seamlessly, though these analytics lead him to different conclusions regarding experience. When he is grappling with the realness of persons, as we have just seen, experience is world-making curiosity. The sciences of character, on the other hand, make experience into a problem or a source of doubt: one is doomed to be forever asking if it counts, if it really happened.

Emerson invoked physiognomy and phrenology in order to shift between registers for describing personhood. Johann Lavater, whose *Essays on Physiognomy* (1770s-98) had been disseminated across Europe for about a century, was a devout Swiss Protestant who believed the goodness of God could be discerned in physical details. At least one historian has characterized his thinking as equal parts pseudoscientific and proto-romantic: Lavater insisted that every person is unique, every part or trait is a microcosm

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[21] Emerson moved the remains of Waldo and his mother to Sleepy Hollow in 1857, at which point he looked into Waldo's coffin. He did not state why, or what he saw inside (Cameron, *Impersonality* 64; *JMN* 14: 154).

of the whole, and the person is an indissoluble unity (Graham 563). As the nineteenth century progressed, however, physiognomy evolved into a science of races rather than individuals, and body morphology was used to justify the slave trade, eugenic science, and early criminology. Physiognomic ideas continued to circulate by way of pamphlets and lessons on self-improvement, physical education and other middle-class "character-building" efforts (see, e.g., Salazar).

Phrenology, originally called craniometry, originated in late eighteenth-century neuroanatomy. It captured the popular imagination almost instantly. Numerous influential Boston clergy, including Emerson's friend William Ellery Channing, looked to phrenology as proof of "true religion" (Modern 147–81). Walt Whitman, who borrowed his trademark word "adhesiveness" from phrenological jargon, had his skull examined in 1849 and treasured the notes for the rest of his life. The physician-author Oliver Wendell Holmes called phrenology a pseudoscience that nonetheless contained shards of insight (Holmes 249–54). His sometime neighbor Herman Melville, versed in Gall and Spurzheim's original writings, found in phrenology an evocative emblem of everything from fate to scientific charlatanism to the claims of the "psychological" novelist.[22] Emerson's second wife, Lydia (Lidian) Jackson, was enchanted by all the new spiritualist practices and "sciences of mind." Emerson was more doubtful. Journal entries include it along with physiognomy, hypnotism, and demonology as examples of crude materialism, of practices separating "the soul's things from the soul" (*JMN* 7:162). In "Experience," he calls physicians and phrenologists "theoretic kidnappers and slave-drivers" ("Exp."

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[22] The latter is in *The Confidence-Man* (chap. 14). Melville's treatment of phrenology is discussed at length by Samuel Otter and Christopher Lukasic; Whitman's, by Arthur Wrobel and Jay Grossman.

475). As the inflated language suggests, Emerson's objection to the sciences of character is moral and ultimately metaphysical.

The "witty physician who found the creed in the biliary duct" in "Experience" was Gamaliel Bradford, a superintendent of Massachusetts General Hospital. A few years earlier, Emerson had quoted Bradford in his journal saying that Calvinists had "the liver complaint," or melancholy, and Unitarians did not. Emerson had quipped in response that Calvinism must be merely "complexional" (*JMN* 8:173; quoted in *Annotated Emerson* 230n.26). Within "Experience," the anecdote serves two rhetorical purposes. Emerson provides an example of scientists' baseness, and, not contrarily, embellishes the point that one's faith might be material in origin. Even though he scoffs at humoral reductionism, he grants the idea that one's opinions follow the fluctuations and cycles of the physical world. Men like Bradford only err in restricting the personality's "secret dependency" (that is, its heteronomy or "whim") to a bodily interior. To Emerson, by contrast, we are not-so-secretly subject to "the seasons of the year" and "the state of the blood" alike ("Exp." 474).[23]

For Emerson, temperament itself does a better job of trumping metaphysical ideas about personhood than any science. Temperament was the minimal consistency underlying disparate moods or states of health, the "iron wire on which the beads are strung" (474). It was also the governing power within a personality conceived on the model of the state, and the "capital exception" to any moral law (474-75).[24] Accounting for temperament caused one's sense of time to dilate or contract. What looked like a new

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[23] On weather and contingency in Emerson, see also Cadava and Arsić.

[24] On the metaphor of the state as applied to the personality in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century American writing, see Castiglia (*Interior States*), who reaches a different set of conclusions than I do here.

sign of life, put in the context of a year or a whole lifetime, "turns out to be a certain uniform tune which the revolving barrel of the music box must play" (474). Our being creatures of temperament and habit meant that any glimmer of genius or spontaneity was unverifiable. In these passages, Emerson is not making a romantic argument against materialism like the ones in his journal entries. He is posing a question about the reliability of induction and probabilistic thinking. That line of inquiry kept many nineteenth-century writers and poets occupied, including some who, like Emerson, would never be considered utilitarian or calculating (see, e.g., Poovey chap. 7; Lee).

Emerson's contention that habit (usually others') tampered with his (the observer's) ability to judge a person in lived time goes as far back as his earliest lectures. In "Self-Reliance," he constructs an analogy between spatial perspective and the longer expanse of time one would need to separate false acts from true:

> For of one will, the actions will be harmonious, however unlike they seem. These varieties are lost sight of at a little distance, at a little height of thought. One tendency unites them all. The voyage of the best ship is a zigzag line of a hundred tacks. See the line from a sufficient distance, and it straightens itself to the average tendency. ("SR" 266)

An action that was "genuine" might look like an anomaly in the moment, but would eventually fall within a certain standard deviation. Setting "conformity" and the "average" in opposition to one another is an unexpected rhetorical move in light of cultural histories stressing the period's obsession with the norm (see, e.g., L. J. Davis). Emerson probably had not heard of *l'homme moyen*, the statistically average man, by this

point.[25] Here, self-reliance is conformity to the self, albeit a self that only exists as the potential of its eventual coherence. Human agency takes an ironic cast in these passages, as though any meaning produced by a person (or tentative criteria for personhood, such as "seeming alive" in "Experience") might suddenly mean the opposite.

Because there was no way to tell at any given moment whether an act was genuine, one might have to exclude action altogether as a measure of character. In place of measures, the Emerson of "Self-Reliance" offers a profession of faith: "I ask primary evidence that you are a man, and refuse this appeal from the man to his actions…. Few and mean as my gifts may be, I actually am, and do not need for my own assurance or the assurance of my fellows any secondary testimony." As Cavell reads "Self-Reliance," Emerson saves himself and his followers from languishing in ineffability when he makes the injunction to "do your work, and I shall know you." For Emerson's reader, the "test" of reading this line, in particular, is "that you will find yourself known by them, that you will take yourself on in them" ("SR" 263–64; *ETE* 97). Cavell, Van Leer, and others have understood these contracts as Emerson's move in a pragmatic direction, away from eternal proofs and toward the emotional necessities of the moment. But "Experience" differs from "Self-Reliance" in that Emerson does not follow his refusal of skepticism with a promise to recognize and affirm the other. On the contrary, "Experience" will imply that individuals and their works (in the Christian sense) are dismissible, and that treating people as if they were real is a modest burden. The language of testing evolves, too. It comes to look less like philosophical doubt and more like contractual speculation.

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[25] The pioneering statistician Adolphe Quételet coined the term in 1835, in *A Treatise on Man and the Development of His Faculties*. Emerson did not read Quételet until 1845, though he may have been exposed to his ideas in the interim (Brown 147–48, 271–72).

Emerson weighs the adventures of "fortune," "genius," and "experiment" against the inborn limitations of the person: a "cold and defective nature," an ocular organ that is not curved for seeing the range of daily life (in a pessimistic literalization of *Nature*'s transparent eyeball), or a neurasthenic condition in which one is too reactive to properly respond to the outside world, for "the web is too finely woven, too irritable by pleasure and pain, so that life stagnates from too much reception, without due outlet." He devalues the fortuities critics most often associate with the "Emersonian" (the influx of alterity, life as experiment) one by one, repeatedly asking, "Of what use," and "Who cares…?" ("Exp." 474). Emerson is not simply irked by people who temperamentally break their promises, like Don Juan incessantly promising to marry (to use Felman's example). He is also disappointed by promises that seem to be diluted by the character of the promisor, regardless if he or she carried out the act. "Of what use to make heroic vows of amendment, if the same old law-breaker is to keep them? What cheer can the religious sentiment yield, when that is suspected to be secretly dependent on the seasons of the year, and the state of the blood?" The first example concerns a pledge that can be broken; the second, a pledge that may be kept, but for the wrong reasons. The promise is neutered by its "secret dependency": in effect, by having a body in it.[26]

According to speech-act theorists, a promise is "designed for use by persons having certain thoughts or feelings, or for the inauguration of certain consequential conduct on the part of any participant" (Austin 15). When the appropriate thoughts and feelings are not present, the performative is said to misfire. But what if one party decides he does not care? Emerson is expected to judge people by whether they fulfill their

[26] Compare Felman, who adopts the Lacanian premise that sexuality consists in the body's persistent failure to "speak" itself (76–80).

promises and keep their debts, but he opts not to. It is an uncommon sort of contact that expects no reciprocation. Promising establishes the sense of continuity which allows one to speak of a will or a self, as Nietzsche will write in the second essay of *On the Genealogy of Morality*. In order to make or hear a promise, one must have "learnt to distinguish between what happens by accident and what by design, to think causally, to view the future as the present and anticipate it." To be thus identified with a past and "answerable" to a future is the effect of physical pain, Nietzsche says, which we have internalized as a guilty conscience (*Genealogy* 39).[27] But if the ability to make a promise is one criterion of personality, in both Emerson and Nietzsche, it also sets a constraint upon the personal power of "self-reliance." The "iron wire" of temperament ensures the experience of the present and the future will be continuous. A generalized promise or debt makes people reliable, though it makes their acts less true.

Where people appear in the guise of promise-makers and debtors, their value lies in the future implementation of their present potential. This premise is at least implicitly religious.[28] And it is intimately linked with the way scholars have described the installation of a middle-class, heterosexual norm at the heart of the national project, namely in terms of "reproductive futurism" (Edelman) or "chronobiopolitics" (Luciano 9). Emerson's temporalizing of temperament entails a normative program for life. As with "the voyage of the best ship" in "Self-Reliance," every segment will eventually have

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[27] Although Cavell catches a whiff of "Experience" at the beginning, he insists that the nihilism in the *Genealogy* was Nietzsche's own (*ETE* 228). This is not to say that he turns down the challenge posed by Emerson's anticipation of Nietzsche. Indeed, I share his sense that the Emerson/Nietzsche overlap poses a "terrible difficulty"—of the useful sort—"for the process of absorbing Emerson into the image of a proto-pragmatist" (*ETE* 232).

[28] "An act in itself has no probative interest. It has value only to the extent that it is capable of revealing some power in the person who carries it out—that is, some disposition that is more durable than the act and that is thus capable of manifesting itself anew in future acts. The persistent character of the power revealed by the act is thus what confers on the act its character of being a test" (Boltanski 65).

been going in the right direction ("SR" 266). In "Experience," however, he contends with mismatched causes and effects—a boy who does not grow into a man and a man (Emerson) who grieves that he had not been a mother, or that he did not suffer enough in childbirth.[29] Here, as in the earlier essay, he would rather not appeal to men's future actions in casting a judgment upon them. Whereas he enters into a new pact in "Self-Reliance" ("do your work, and I shall know you"), he does not make the same gesture in "Experience." In "Self-Reliance," he chose a performative "test" over any empirical one, as Cavell says (*ETE* 97). In "Experience," he refuses a certain pact, or anticipates its failure. *Who cares?*

Phrenology claimed to make a person's temperament legible through the medium of the skull. Emerson has been bemoaning the lack of such transparency in the people he meets, and yet he turns down the phrenologist's bargain. The "Temperament" section closes with a complaint about the "contracting influence" of those people who describe heads for a living. This is one of two dialogues in "Experience" (the second is between a mother and her child [477]) in which it is unclear whether the people involved are real or composites. Significantly, the dialogue revolves around a refusal to communicate.[30] Emerson produces a phrenologist (or phrenolophile) interlocutor only so that he may dismiss him:

> I saw a gracious gentleman who adapts his conversation to the form of the head of the man he talks with! I had fancied that the value of life lay in its

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[29] "Some thing which I fancied was a part of me, which could not be torn away without tearing me, nor enlarged without enriching me, falls off from me, and leaves no scar" ("Exp." 475).

[30] Pamela Schirmeister's reading of this section supports mine. As she observes, "The inescapability of temperament might, like that of death, seem to guarantee community itself. Oddly enough, however, the very tropes designed to guarantee this possibility foreclose it" (128).

> inscrutable possibilities; in the fact that I never know, in addressing myself to a new individual, what may befall me…. Shall I preclude my future, by taking a high seat, and kindly adapting my conversation to the shape of heads? … 'But, sir, medical history; the report to the Institute; the proven facts!'—I distrust the facts and the inferences. ("Exp." 475)

Emerson disregards empirical facts in part because he is saving himself for real experience or a future unknowable by induction.[31] He would prefer to arrive "at the feet of my lord, whenever and in what disguise soever he shall appear." Adaptation to the other would mean he was not receptive enough. Compounding his skeptic's distrust of inferences, Emerson makes a willful decision to interrupt the person who supplies them. It is more than skepticism that compels him to declare that "the doctors" could not "buy me for a cent," for Emerson is as emphatic in silencing the gentleman as he was in conjuring him (475). The child and the phrenologist (along with Dr. Bradford *et al*) each pose a choice between calculating and not calculating. Emerson refuses the calculation in both instances. However, only in the encounter with the phrenologist does his choice take the comforting form of (Cavellian) acknowledgment.

Emerson's tendency to brush off other minds coincides with the expression of his grief. As we recall, Waldo is said to vanish from the essay after its first section, only to persist as the negativity of experience itself. Emerson launches into his discourse on temperament after presenting Waldo's death as an event at once abstracted ("it does not

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[31] The lord Temperament coexists with the lord Surprise, who commands a later section of the essay: "In the street and in the newspapers, life appears so plain a business, that manly resolution and adherence to the multiplication-table through all weathers, will insure success. But ah! presently comes a day, or is it only a half-hour, with its angel-whispering, — which discomfits the conclusions of nations and of years!" ("Exp." 482). In this passage, experience is firmly on the side of the calculable.

touch me") and all too quantifiable (as losing an estate) ("Exp." 473). He writes, "Very mortifying is the reluctant experience that some unfriendly excess or imbecility neutralizes the promise of genius" (474). Saying "Who cares?" to all those promises is a way of refusing to be mortified, meaning humiliated or dead. In this context, it registers as a refusal of the reality principle and hence a refusal to mourn. At the same time, the essay redeems something of individuals precisely in not holding them to their promises and debts. Too many men who "owe" us something "die young and dodge the account," Emerson observes, in an economic metaphor which recalls Waldo being compared with an estate a few paragraphs earlier. In opting out of the exchange, Emerson leaves these lives, if not incalculable or self-evident, uncalculated for the time being.[32]

Emerson's journal entries from early in the child's life explore some viable alternatives and gradations of acknowledgement. As scholars have documented extensively, Emerson mined years' worth of journals in order to construct his longer works.[33] I am struck by one domestic scene, which has been discussed in relation to phrenology but not in relation to "Experience." When their son was nearly two, Lidian wondered what a phrenologist would "pronounce on little Waldo's head." Emerson replied that, on the contrary, the child's head "pronounces on phrenology" (Stern 214; *JMN* 7:43 [6 Aug. 1838]). The next sentences proceed in an associative fashion from the study of heads to characteristics in general to that favorite theme, the shallowness of empiricism: "The senses would make things of all persons; of women, for example, or of

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[32] As critics have remarked, Emerson's calling the spirit self-evident is tantamount to saying it does not exist or that it is inconsequential (in "Exp." 475; Van Leer 173; Cavell, *ETE* 96–97). On the difference between uncounted and incalculable in romanticism and historicism, see François (*Open Secrets* 30 and passim).

[33] This process inspired Grimstad to theorize the intimate link between "composition," "experiment," and "experience" discussed earlier (20–24; see also Brown 29f).

the poor." So much for phrenology. Still, I am inclined to read the quip about Waldo's head alongside an entry he made a few weeks later, an indexed entry titled "Teeth":

> The greatest expression of limitation in the human frame is in the teeth. 'Thus far,' says the face; 'No farther,' say the teeth. I mean that, whilst the face of the child expresses an excellent possibility, as soon as he opens his mouth, you have an expression of defined qualities. I like him best with his mouth shut. (*JMN* 7:83 [21 Sept. 1838])

Perhaps Emerson is being ironic, or perhaps he has forgotten that a child's first set of teeth does not stay.[34] In any case, the entry could only have read as uncanny when Emerson revisited it after Waldo's death. His reluctance to see "defined qualities" in his son anticipates his complaint, in "Experience," that every living promise disappoints him. In willing Waldo to shut up, Emerson would seem to flout the Transcendentalist approach to education, in which all child were held to be potentially Christlike.[35] Conversely, he may have been following his peers' faith to its logical conclusion. The child can only stand for pure potential before he shows any particularity, be that in physiognomic predisposition or the first inroads of association and habit.

The humor of this entry lies in its misplaced sense of proportion. Emerson flouts the expectations pertaining to the general assessment and qualification of people. According to latter-day pragmatists such as Boltanski or Habermas, in order to fulfill my social obligations, I must believe in my culture's tests. I must trust that this (any "appeal

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[34] See also critics' elaboration of the word *caducous*, used to describe Waldo in "Experience": it can mean "a purely transitory body part, such as baby teeth" or, "in Roman law, 'the refusal or failure to accept an inheritance'" (Luciano 266, 319n.14; "Exp." 473).

[35] See Elizabeth Palmer Peabody and Bronson Alcott's *Record of a School* and Alcott's "Doctrine and Discipline of Human Nature" (in Buell), as well as Barbara Packer's historical background (55–61). Theo Davis argues that Alcott shows the same "contradictory investment in and evident neglect of [particularized] life" that Emerson would exhibit in "Experience" (132).

to action") is an adequate way to evaluate what someone can do or what she is worth. Yet I should also feel that even the best test does not capture a subject's full potential.[36] In other words, I should not say my son's character is expressed in full as soon as he begins to speak. Since we do not think it fair to determine someone's worth based on a single factor (the class someone is born into, whether she can memorize a verse), we are compelled to widen the "range of probative acts" through which someone might make herself known. As a consequence, more and more aspects of daily life are bound to fall under the domain of testing (Boltanski 66). Thus is born an economy of humaneness which must be perpetually secured by new contracts and calculations.

This economy has more than one conceivable outside. Boltanski proposes the theological idea of *agape*, or the love of God for humankind, as a basis for mortal relations without any tests, demands, or expectation of reciprocity.[37] People acting under the sign of agape address themselves to others with no adjustment for how the other might respond. In other words, they cease to be promising animals. Of course, no recognizable social system fulfills that ideal. A long-term state of agape would require a world in which resources were distributed evenly and language had no tropes of comparison or speculation (Boltanski 110–14, 125, 149). Yet one can find evidence of brief, asymmetrical encounters wherein a person under the sway of impersonal love crosses paths with someone guided by a principle of justification, and perhaps disarms the tester momentarily. Emerson plays both parts in "Experience." He takes a more modest view of unconditional attachment, premised upon the breaking of contracts, the

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[36] I call it a feeling to parallel Cavell's definition of acknowledgement as an emotional need, not a certainty.
[37] The analysis belongs to a large body of theorizing about the gift, hospitality, and other transactions which have the potential to exceed the economic (e.g., by Mauss, Bourdieu, and Derrida).

rejection of inductive reason, and not a small amount of nastiness. In overcoming two skepticisms—the high kind concerning the status of other minds, and the matter of returns on what one is owed—he seems at once to sacralize his relationships and to trivialize them. This finding is in line with François's characterization, which she applies to Emerson and Dickinson, of "a passiveness that has nothing to do with being determined from without by external causes"—those would be the physical facts Emerson ignores—"but with the little one has to do, the little one's loving amounts to" (François, *Open Secrets* 212).

"Nominalist and Realist" poses the question of how much one owes, privately, to others in a different tenor. For some critics, the difference between the essays is negligible or primarily one of tone (e.g., Van Leer; Goodman). To my mind, however, "Nominalist" underlines the range of options Emerson makes available as regards reality-testing, real testing (scientific or pseudo-), and social accountability. Most of these suggestions were already present in "Experience," though Emerson and his readers downplay their less-than-sociable implications, or express a certain anxiety about them. For the Emerson of "Experience," raw perception is ethically fraught. He worries that subjectivity effaces the object viewed, or fails to honor what the other person sees and feels. That concern moved to the fore in his relatively few remarks on marriage in "Experience" and a few contemporaneous essays (Arsić, *On Leaving* 222–24). By comparison, "Nominalist and Realist" takes a prosaic attitude toward other people. What relations between people exist in the concluding chapter of *Essays, Second Series* have none of the solemnity of marriage, nor the sting of Waldo's death. The bodies in

"Nominalist" more closely resemble "Experience's" gentleman phrenologist. In other words, Emerson treats people as rhetorical props, and even in that capacity, one suspects, he perceives them as a bother. The speaker of "Nominalist and Realist" will imply that accepting other people is a matter of preference or character, and that one's preference in this regard (rather like temperament in "Experience") is too stubborn to be countered with moral arguments.

The title situates the piece within a relatively obscure debate in medieval philosophy, a context most of Emerson's contemporaries would likely miss.[38] But Emerson's scholastic framing is somewhat deceptive. In comparison to the medieval realists, his "universals" are not so universal. The original debate concerned whether, for example, the correctness of a geometrical theorem proves that circles and right triangles exist in nature. Emerson is concerned with the legitimacy of national character and the immortality of certain literary works, ideas which he rarely endorses without admitting their contingency and imperfection.

The beginning of the essay is devoted to what Platonic and medieval logicians called mereology, the relation between parts and wholes. Predictably, Emerson believes persons and collectives are more than the sum of their respective parts. There is something to either an individual or a group that is "not accounted for in an arithmetical addition of all their measurable properties" (577). But that extra something is not transcendental; it has not been "accounted for," but that does not make it unaccountable. This modesty stands in contrast to the overt idealism of Emerson's earlier writing: for example, his insistence in the Divinity School Address that the moral law could not be

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[38] On nominalism, see Goodman (50–52), Hacking (80–84), and Rodriguez-Pereyra; on mereology, see Varzi.

expressed in words (*E&L* 76). Here, there are personality traits that arise independent of the person, as "a pure intellectual force, or a generosity of affection," and other cases where the essence is incidental to the parts, existing in the form of an "atmospheric influence" ("NR" 575, 577). No citizen corresponds to his national character, though this makes the French or the Spanish type "not the less real" (577-78).[39]

The first extended metaphor in the essay is challengingly partial, both in the sense of lacking a whole and in figuring "character" as unique yet indistinguishable. Emerson writes: "We have such exorbitant eyes, that on seeing the smallest arc, we complete the curve, and when the curtain is lifted from the diagram which it seemed to veil, we are vexed to find that no more was drawn, than just that fragment of an arc which we first beheld" ("NR" 575). This statement apparently supports the same premise we read in "Experience," that we have altogether too high expectations of "each other's faculty and promise," yet it makes for a strange, clumsy piece of evidence. The image of the arc is recognizable as a self-citation and as an echo of the medieval logicians. In "Spiritual Laws," the partial arc, soon to be drawn into the whole, stood for the power of deduction. In "Intellect," by comparison, the fact that worldly knowledge does not cohere into a closed circle is what distinguishes human learning from a mechanical system (Van Leer 190). And in "Character," the eventual completion of the circle was an argument for the world-encompassing personality: "Nor does he tend to lose himself in vastness, but, at how long a curve soever, all his regards return into his own good at last" (*E&L* 498). This time, however, Emerson carries it off sloppily. His repetitive circular figures (the arc, the

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[39] A longer study of the dynamics of representativeness in Emerson would discuss the book-length *Representative Men* and *English Traits*, too. Pertinent studies of those volumes include Manning, LaRocca and Schirmeister.

curve, the orbit in "exorbitant") create an impression of metaphorical coherence where none exists. But is that not the point, that there can only be incomplete and imperfect representatives of notions like character ("which no man realizes")? The complexity of the figure is out of proportion to what it explains. In that regard, it is the opposite of a diagram. Diagrams represent and clarify things, and are rarely put behind veils. A diagrammatic representation could exclude some detail or inconsistency: that exclusion is a sticking point in the essay, though it is not at issue in this passage. What is actually unveiled here is that there was no diagram. The "fragment" was the whole. Gliding from pen markings back to persons in the next sentences, Emerson reminds us, "Exactly what the parties have already done, they shall do again; but that which we inferred from their nature and inception, they will not do" ("NR" 575).

Two complaints can be heard: one about the inauthentic character who does the same thing day in and day out (as in "Self-Reliance"), and one about predictive efficacy, or generalizing from induction (as in "Experience"). But there is no doubt as to whether there is a whole person hidden, as it were, behind a veil of habit.[40] Emerson approaches the thinness of personality from two sides, geometrically speaking. He will extrapolate something greater than he can see, or he will interpolate, a constancy and average tendency amongst disparate acts. Eventually, he will try to do both: "What is best in each kind is an index of what should be the average of that thing. Love shows me the opulence of nature, by disclosing to me in my friend a hidden wealth, and I infer an equal depth of good in every other direction" ("NR" 585). Russell Goodman, in a Cavellian move, reads

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[40] Later in the same paragraph, Emerson will have concretized the metaphor in successive stages, so that "we" mentally complete a portrait of which we see only "one fine feature" and then assume a public figure has a "private character," which he turns out to be lacking. This public man is called "a graceful cloak or lay-figure for holidays" (576). In other words, his character is the concealment, not what is concealed.

this passage as an act of epistemological "charity" (Emerson's word) toward putative whole persons (54). But Emerson's attribution of psychological depth is suspiciously shallow. He has just inferred it "in every other direction" (not, say, 'to everyone I pass'), as though he is still more interested in rounding out a geometric form than in realizing the minds of others.

Whereas the speaker of "Experience" fantasized about spontaneous, self-evident signs of life, "Nominalist and Realist" argues that habitual gestures are truer to life than disruptive, impassioned ones: "The acts which you praise, I praise not, since they are departures from his faith, and are mere compliances" (576). This longitudinal perspective comes with age. Gradually, we begin to pay less attention to specific traits in the people we meet than to "the impression, the quality, the spirit of men and things." We realize the person as a compositional whole by making him or her less determinate, more effect than cause. To make an observation resembling one of Theo Davis's remarks about experience in Emerson, the highest valued mode of personhood is that with the fewest remarkable features (T. Davis 109–11, 123–25).

Concentrating on partiality—rather than self-consciousness or experience—prompts Emerson to revise some of the postulates of the essay titled "Experience." Why should an incomplete circle lead us to question someone's personhood, or to think about personhood at all? If I see a man from the left, I assume the right side of him looks more or less the same, and I do not ask further proof that he is real. That is an optimistic assumption, as Emerson continually reminds us. Even knowing that parts do not always coalesce into wholes, and that, as Cavell says, I am "almost certainly sometimes projecting humanness where it is inappropriate," it does not follow that I must forever be

trying to deduce or rediscover the entity. Cavell has admitted as much, but that was before he made Emerson's "Experience" into a paradigm of modern skepticism (*CR* 425). I presume there is a difference between the radical skeptic's question, 'How can I know for sure that this is a person?' and the nominalist's, 'Is this character (which looks, for the moment, sufficiently person-like) an instantiation of something larger or more abstract than itself?' Emerson compounds that nominalist's question with another one: roughly, 'If I say yes, what's in it for me?'

He observes that we possess "two sets of faculties, the particular and the catholic," and that we "adjust our instrument for general observation, and sweep the heavens as easily we pick out a single figure in the terrestrial landscape." These sentences sound like the better known passage from "Experience" about suspecting our instruments ("NR" 577; "Exp." 487). Here, however, the revolving lenses of our instruments or our subject positions do not represent a crisis of verification. Empiricism does not remind us of the biblical Fall or make us wonder if we really exist. On the contrary, it affirms that we are "amphibious creatures," part of nature. Nor is it insinuated that we adjust our instruments to see the world as it really is. The nominalist, who sees only fragments, has no trouble with personality. He perceives individuals insofar as it is "a conveniency in household matters." Emerson's realist goes along with him out of a sense of "due decorum" ("NR" 580). But this way of seeing is an "effort," and it nearly puts the speaker to sleep. The alternative, which is the vantage point of the "divine man," is seductive. One might opt to notice persons only en masse, melting and rippling like the elements, but that would run contrary to experience and to nature (which "resents generalizing, and insults the philosopher…with a million of fresh particulars" [581]).

Someone might be a realist for extrapolating a whole person from visible parts (call her a 'personal' realist), but she would be equally or more of a realist to discount the person as a meaningful unit of history or of force:

> The magnetism which arranges tribes and races in one polarity, is alone to be respected; the men are steel-filings. Yet we unjustly select a particle, and say, 'O steel filling number one! what hard-drawings I feel to thee! what prodigious virtues are these of thine! how constitutional to thee, and incommunicable.' Whilst we speak, the loadstone is withdrawn; down falls our filing in a heap with the rest, and we continue our mummery to the wretched shaving. Let us go for universals; for the magnetism, not for the needles. Human life and its persons are poor empirical pretensions. ("NR" 576–77)

Call this an argument for trans-personal realism. Steel fillings are not unreal, though the meager power of any individual filling is disproportionate to all talk of incommensurability. His scorn for language, as "mummery," runs contrary to a pragmatist poetics which insists the compositional method be wholly continuous with experience, indeed with life itself.

Speaking mistakes the part for the whole. That is the ostensible reason Emerson spends so much of "Nominalist" recusing himself from conversation. In rejecting mummery, he implicates himself and his oratorical style (even though he rarely addressed "great men" in the second person).[41] It is no accident that the preceding paragraph concluded with the word "self-reliance" ("NR" 576). He has already dismissed "public

[41] Representativeness is more pressing for Emerson than is the status of personification or apostrophe, which has long preoccupied readers of British romanticism and of Melville (see, e.g., de Man, *RR*; Wald).

debate," in the earlier section comparing persons to fragments of an arc (575). A speaker can only represent his thoughts "imperfectly" on the podium because he himself is not representative of the "faculty and promise" he is supposed to stand for. The respondents and the audience would be too self-absorbed to register most of the speech, anyway. Emerson's meditation on subjective projection is less searching than it had been in "Experience." Muted, too, are the earlier essay's aggressive promises on behalf of body parts and isolated acts.

Even though the individual cannot speak himself, much less the spirit of an age, his language is a whole of wholes. Emerson writes: "We infer the spirit of the nation in great measure from the language, which is a sort of monument, to which each forcible individual in a course of many hundred years has contributed a stone" (578). But how can two negatives (a non-representative individual offering up a stony fragment) make a positive? First, *monument* is a loaded word. The stone corpus is not the dynamic, living vocabulary of *Nature* or "The Poet." Moreover, the integrity of the language relies upon its being severed from experience. Bodies of knowledge seem to have been authored by the same person, "a wit like your own." This would seem to be a watered-down rehearsal of the argument from "Self-Reliance": "In every work of genius we recognize our own rejected thoughts: they come back to us with a certain alienated majesty" ("SR" 259). But this later essay takes that specular moment out of the scene of reading, and replaces it with something that is, among other things, a test: "I read Proclus, and sometimes Plato, as I might read a dictionary, for a mechanical help to the fancy and the imagination. I read for the lustres, as if one should use a fine picture in a chromatic experiment, for its rich colors" ("NR" 579).

Proclus's doctrine of the One—the totality from which particularity sprang—is one of the main sources for the Realist position. Yet the holism these passages propose is relatively inhospitable to the realist as a character, or an experiencing subject. Here we might recall that after Emerson visited the comparative anatomy museum in Paris, he took up the natural-historical method as a way to describe his reading and revising practices. He reclaimed the metaphor of nature as book. Shortly after his visit to the Jardin des Plantes, he wrote of a "natural alphabet," a "green and yellow and crimson dictionary on which the sun shines" ("The Uses of Natural History," quoted in Brown 116). Seeing as the watchword that emerges from Walls's, Brown's, and Grimstad's discussions of Emerson's post-Jardin writing is *composition*, I would suggest that "Nominalist and Realist" reverses some of the organic/methodological terms, and makes reading into a labor of decomposition.

Among writers of the Enlightenment in Europe, it was usually the encyclopedia, not the dictionary, that was said to join sensory detail and deduced categories under the same covers (see, e.g., Brown 114–17). Although most critics treat Emerson's "dictionary" and the Enlightenment encyclopedia as interchangeable, the dictionary in "Nominalist and Realist" is a more ambiguous metaphor. There is certainly the implication of a singly authored book of world history ("I am very much struck in literature by the appearance, that one person wrote all the books" ["NR" 579]), that is, the Realist impulse to divine wholes from parts; but equally present is an inclination to cut the parts into smaller parts.

Emerson had available at least two competing discourses about dictionaries, alphabetization, and aids to memory. One was a predominantly European reaction against

the rise of dictionaries and primers, and the increasing emphasis on alphabetical memorization in the education of children. Goethe, Coleridge, and other major romantics were anxious to distinguish the profound workings of the imagination from "mechanical" poetic productions, the effects of which could be attributed to accidental contiguities and rhymes. A diverse crew of Romantic and Puritan thinkers attempted to re-naturalize the alphabet in the face of its arbitrariness (see de Man, "RT"; Kittler; Crain). In the early 1800s, Noah Webster cast the study of etymology as a theological project, a way of following a Babelized dialect back to the Garden of Eden (Richardson 272n.86).[42] In spite of this potential resource, Emerson's calling the dictionary "mechanical" distinctly alludes to Coleridge's theory of signs. Referring to the dictionary as a mechanical aid is antithetical to the neo-Platonic view that new knowledge was actually *anamnesis*, the recovery of immortal truth.[43] Importantly, the speaker in "Nominalist and Realist" alludes to reading the dictionary, not writing it. This is not the visionary act of naming, such as those in *Nature* or "The Poet," nor even the impersonal piling-on of another stone. The order of items in a dictionary bears minimal relation to the particularities of the content. As though reflecting the unmotivated order of items in the dictionary, the objects of Emerson's reading tumble out of order and proportion. Proclus, the Neo-Platonist, comes before Plato.

The sentence that follows is a grammatical sibling of the preceding one, beginning the same way ("I read for…as…") before branching off. Emerson is surely composing, or putting-into-relation, with these subtle variations. But he is de-composing,

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[42] Incidentally, Webster is one of the men whom Emerson accuses of not living up to his name ("NR" 577).
[43] It appears that Emerson was juggling various aspects of Coleridge. Contemporary critics who emphasize Emerson's organic experimentalism stress his affinity with Coleridge on the theme of "man as a method" (e.g., Grimstad 20-22).

too. “Lustre” has only a tenuous connection to the analogy that preceded it. Lustre is the sheen added to an object by the sun, a glaze, or a special fabric: in short, it is not an object or a color in itself. According to Brown, “reading for the lustres” was Emerson’s solution to a problem in literary and biblical hermeneutics. Whereas Coleridge, in particular, worried that any work of criticism could only amount to a new and private heap of fragments, and could never restore the integrity or full meaning of a text, Emerson allowed that “wholeness dwells in the reader’s prospects” (Brown 29). Even accepting this premise, the disorder within the sentence itself counteracts the holism Emerson generally prescribes. We do catch a glimpse of the “fine picture” under the lustres, but only as the picture is “use[d]…in a chromatic experiment.”

One possible reference point for said experiment is Goethe’s *Theory of Colors*, from 1810.[44] Previously, Isaac Newton had explained color phenomena as the reflection of light waves by different substances. Goethe’s intervention into optics was to put the seer back in. Controlled experimentation served a similar function in the *Theory of Colors* as it would in William James’s philosophy of consciousness: in each body of work, atomized units of experience made a larger argument for the constructive role of

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[44] An English translation was published in 1840. *Theory of Colors* was not in Emerson’s library, and he did not allude to Goethe’s optics until 1850’s *Representative Men*. However, Michaela Giesenkirchen has proposed that some of the skeptical passages in “Experience” (“[W]e have no means of correcting these colored and distorting lenses which we are, or of computing the amount of their errors. Perhaps these subject-lenses have a creative power…”) be read in light of Goethe’s optics (Harding; Giesenkirchen, “Still Half Blending” 18; “Exp.” 487).

experience at large.[45] Indeed, a few years after "Nominalist and Realist," in *Representative Men*, Emerson would praise Goethe for having "rejected the artificial theory of seven colors, and [for having] considered that every color was the mixture of light and darkness in new proportions" (*E&L* 753). Goethe's contribution to what latter-day Emersonians call the compositional aesthetic is most famously exhibited in the paintings of J. M. W. Turner and in *Moby-Dick*'s dazzling play of oppositions. Yet Emerson's appropriation of optics in "Nominalist" does not draw out the same effects, or at least not without ambivalence. Art, he says, requires "a habitual respect to the whole by an eye loving beauty in details," but this essential virtue of "proportion" is "almost impossible to human beings" ("NR" 579). In order to assess the universality or the Realist appeal (not to be confused with realism) of this image, the perceiver must jettison her own sense of proportion, judgment, or identification. Thus Emerson concentrates not on the composition of a whole picture, but its decomposition into colors and aspects; and instead of the synthetic power of the imagination, its performance on anesthetic tests.[46]

Having recourse to the paring away that is the chromatic experiment allows Emerson to avert a trap he drew in "Experience." There, too, reading is said to be like looking at pictures, but only insofar as both are 'like' the death of a child. This analogical chain occurs in the paragraphs on moods, after he has defined moods as the beads on Temperament's iron wire. Whereas temperament represents what is continuous (albeit automatic) in each of us, changing moods make us restless in our sensation-seeking and fickle in our loves. Emerson confesses that Montaigne had once been the only "book" he

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[45] Meyer suggests that Goethe's color theory more closely resembled twentieth-century phenomenological and neurological perspectives than it did nineteenth-century physiology (335n.22).

[46] Compare de Man's remarks about "apathetic" formalism in relation to Kant, as well as Terada's comments on "meta-perception" (*AI* 127–28; Terada, *Looking Away* 187).

"needed," but now reading him no longer brings the same spark or satiety. Likewise with Plotinus and Shakespeare, or with pictures: "When you have seen one well, you must take your leave of it; you shall never see it again" ("Exp." 476). What follows is a series of recursive tests à la Boltanski and Thévenot: We ought to be able to measure the significance of a book or an event by the opinions of "the wise," but said opinions are tinged by moods: so we ascertain the judge's mood and, by triangulation, gather "some vague guess at the new fact."[47] If Emerson is indeed anticipating William James-style pragmatism and trying to know things "in relation," this foray down the rabbit-hole of perspectives and meta-perspectives does not satisfy him (cf. *PBC* 22). Whatever he "deduces" from the wise critic is "nowise to be trusted as the lasting relation between that intellect and that thing" (476-77). This seems to me the central flaw in Emerson's so-called epistemology of moods: he registers the knowledge that comes of exposure or "ravishment," but he disqualifies it as reportable knowledge.[48]

In "Nominalist and Realist," therefore, reading "as if" he were looking in a dictionary or doing an optical experiment allows Emerson to conceive of a reality untinted by moods (as a source of official knowledge) and still convey a preference for the tinted view. More significantly, he defers to mechanistic methods so that he will not be confined to the earlier lecture's narration of experience, which is a "plaint of tragedy" ("Exp." 477). The idle succession of moods, whether in falling out of love or prosaically watching one's attention drift, brings with it the feeling of belatedness in relation to one's

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[47] Cf. the "distinction between person-states and persons themselves" in *On Justification* and Wolfe's discussion of second-order observation in Emerson (Boltanski and Thévenot 15; Wolfe 250–63).
[48] "Epistemology of moods" is Cavell's phrase (*ETE* 11; see also Mulhall, "Epistemology of Moods"; Goodman 43–44). Whereas Cavell and Arsić read Emerson's subjection to moods and other impersonal forces as an ethical way of being in the world, Cameron views him as unaccountable to the experience of ravishment (*Impersonality* 106–07).

'own' experiences. Emerson tells of a child (Waldo?) who does not enjoy "the story" as much as he did yesterday. "But will it answer thy question to say, Because thou wert born to a whole, and this story is a particular?" The answer to that rhetorical question must be no (we are left with diffuse pain), since the speaker might have said the opposite: The child has discovered that he is irremediably partial, whereas the story is *the* story (the possibility of story being its severance from the living). "Nominalist," then, forces the Plotinus-and-pictures argument out of its trajectory. Perversely, Emerson prefers the dictionary and the test to the story and "experience." Finding oneself partial is no longer the tragedy of being un-whole.

What Emerson describes as a cultivated aesthetic valuation of the whole over its parts, he carries over into the pursuit of knowledge. It is with a particular kind of "intellectual integrity" that we "study in exceptions the law of the world" ("NR" 580). Integrity evidently means something other than exactitude, closer to the idealism which characterizes the realist temperament. Here Emerson alludes to phrenology for the first time in the volume since "Experience." He pairs it with homeopathy—the sympathetic or mimetic science par excellence—and the "never quite obsolete rumors of magic and demonology" (580). Phrenology and homeopathy are linked by a conviction that the shape of a thing discloses something of its function, and that its parts (bumps on a skull, trace amounts of a substance) bear a meaningful relation to the whole. Emerson treats this conviction as honorable if misguided, for, as he says, the "abnormal insights of the adepts[] ought to be normal" (580). Presumably they are not. It would seem that the sciences of character are more closely aligned with the Platonic ideal than the average tendency of Mill's ethology or Quételet's mathematics. Accordingly, exceptionality does

not lie in people or their heads. Phrenology does not serve as a test of worth or a constraint on conversation, as it had in "Experience," and it has nothing to say about moods.

The opposition sketched is not between the law and the individual subjected to it, as was the case in Emerson's quarrel with the "slave-driver" phrenologist in the earlier essay, but between a marginal science and science as such (see "Exp." 475). Phrenologists and homeopaths have the potential to shake up the assumptions of current medicine for the same reason the Swedenborgians and Fourierists unsettled mainline Protestantism: that is, they occasionally say something that sticks.[49] Emerson's insight is recognizably pragmatic. He implies that facts borrow their authority from institutions, and that bodies of knowledge, like individuals, are made dull by routine. What systems theory-inspired pragmatists would describe as a conflict between modalities of testing, or as second-order observation, Emerson casts as an organic process in which an ossified science is restored to *hygeia* by an invigorating exception ("NR" 580; cf. Wolfe 250–63). At the same time, he also links phrenology with "rumor" and persuasion. In that regard, it is more akin to "mummery" in praise of a steel filling than to the Goethean chromatic experiment. Its claim to have unlocked the secret of representativeness (skull to man, man to culture) is dubious.

Whereas "Experience" links physiognomic measures with performative tests (promises, wagers and debts), "Nominalist" posits a science free of the partiality of words and moods, as, for example, the demonstration of magnetism and the chromatic

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[49] Of course, in the 1830s and '40s, phrenology's standing between science and quackery was still up in the air (Johann Spurzheim, who spread awareness of Gall's neuroanatomy in England and the U.S., was lecturing at Yale); and Emerson's religious views were often more radical, and more Swedenborgian, than he grants here.

experiment. In "Nominalist and Realist," speakers are not held to the truth or felicity of what they say: "I am always insincere, as always knowing there are other moods" ("NR" 587). These words resonate with Cameron's point that Emerson "does not take the responsibility a person should take for his words" (*Impersonality* 107). But is he not creating something—a style—by excusing himself in advance for the words which have already ceased to represent him? Cameron suggests as much with some trepidation. She accuses him of using style as "a validation of propositions in lieu of logic," "evidence in lieu of evidence" (91, 99). To my mind, however, Emerson is not committing solecism so much as he is seeking a way out of the evidential routines that so imprisoned him in "Experience."

Here is the way he converses, in "Nominalist," without regard for criteria or acknowledgement:

> I talked yesterday with a pair of philosophers: I endeavored to show my good men that I love everything by turns, and nothing long…; that I was glad of men of every gift and nobility, but would not live in their arms. Could they but once understand, that I loved to know that they existed, and heartily wished them Godspeed, yet, out of my poverty of life and thought, had no word or welcome for them when they came to see me, and could well consent to their living in Oregon, for any claim I felt on them, it would be a great satisfaction. ("NR" 587)

Even though his longing "to know the men existed" recalls "Experience," this anecdote has little of the somber, doubting quality of that work. Would that I could acknowledge your personality, he seems to be saying—or, by extension, make the acknowledgement of

personality into the basis for a democratic system—but I do not trust my words of acknowledgement; who cares? The philosophers in question were Charles Lane and Bronson Alcott, who were soon to found the Fruitlands commune. As David Mikics notes, Emerson distrusted their "desire to make different human types embrace one another and form a communal whole" (*Annotated Emerson* 275n.56). Even recognizing temperaments and moods as the basic units of inter- and intrapersonal difference, Emerson may be reluctant to turn "mood" into a transcendental system. "Nominalist and Realist" has been called the comic answer to the tragedy of "Experience" (Van Leer 189). That levity arises from the fact that it takes "spirit" to be "its own evidence," a notion "Experience" could only entertain as grief ("Exp." 475).

Postscript

Emerson's flashes of negativity and counter-experiential arguments are easy to dismiss as a break from form, especially where that departure confirms a deeper principle about moods and whim. This is especially the case where Emerson turns the same metaphor to different purposes, variously optimistic or pessimistic, in different essays. The fragment of an arc is one example; the dictionary is another. It is harder to dismiss the austere, cruel, and uncommunicative currents in Henry James's prose. Yet that is what critics who are invested in James's pragmatism, most of whom are scrupulous readers in other respects, regularly do. I close this chapter with a gesture toward "The

Beast in the Jungle" (1903), as it encapsulates much of what is seductive and misleading about allegories of experience and skepticism.

The plot of "The Beast" is sparse. John Marcher and May Bartram meet in England. They had met once before—she remembers it, he does not, and in any case it had not been as much of an event as it might have been. From the beginning, there is the sense of an "occasion missed" (308). At some point, Marcher confided in May that he had a secret and that he could sense something looming in his future. The fact that she knows and does not tell is the glue of their friendship, their pact against "the stupid world" (315). They age; May falls ill, and dies. A year afterward, Marcher returns to the cemetery, where he has a wordless confrontation with another male mourner and then concedes that he has "utterly, insanely missed" life and May (338). The specificity of what Marcher has not experienced is the center of Sedgwick's reading and Cavell's partial rebuttal. Sedgwick, according to her own terms, places Marcher at the intersection of a minoritizing and a universalizing theory of sexuality. The character is not definitively homosexual, but he is inside an imaginary edifice, the "closet," which exists to govern and contain "the homosexual secret" (*EC* 205). Cavell opts for a universalizing model based upon Freud's writings on innate bisexuality. I shall not pursue their psychoanalytic arguments much further—be it as I may that I find Sedgwick's argument more convincing, more of a "founding."[50] Nor do I have a connection to draw between early nineteenth-century philosophies of experimentation and the psychologizing of homosexual types.

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[50] For a cogent defense of Cavell's reading, see Mulhall (*Cavell* 316–43).

I confine myself to the palimpsestic feat (I am not sure if it is more Emersonian or Jamesian) whereby Cavell reads Sedgwick's reading of James, in order to make the claim that "The Beast in the Jungle" was actually a rewriting of Emerson:

> I cite a last case by which to measure James's text, especially the idea that he comes together with Marcher and relegates May Bartram to the cause of 'a stylish and "satisfyingly" Jamesian formal gesture': '"He had been the man of his time, *the* man, to whom nothing on earth was to have happened"' [(Sedgwick, *EC* 201; H. James 339)]. The text is Emerson's 'Experience,' of which 'The Beast in the Jungle' appears to me as a kind of Jamesian rewriting. ("Postscript" 288)

He goes on to provide a condensed analysis of "Experience," describing it as a work of double mourning (for Waldo and for proper grief) and as an episode in which philosophy has to mount a not-quite-philosophical argument in favor the efficacy of words and deeds.

Cavell repeats the phrase *formal gesture* twice more in the commentary on James. Each time, one is led to assume the phrase refers to Marcher's not acknowledging May's mindedness, her happening to him. But Sedgwick was not, in fact, harping on May being treated *as if she were real*. For her, the scandalous formalism of "The Beast" was its denial that Marcher's secret "had a content" (*EC* 201). Cavell elides the content (or is it form?) of the Jamesian gesture. Sedgwick would probably say that he repeats it. Sedgwick's concern with the erasure of feminine desire does not manifest itself as moral outrage over reducing persons to style or paradox. A few pages earlier, she wrote: "Clearly at least the story has the Jamesian negative virtue of not pretending to present

[May] rounded and whole" (*EC* 199). Any virtue in impersonal formalism would have to be ruled out to ensure the valorization of experience, acknowledgement, and so forth.[51] The character of Marcher is undeniably projecting onto May, and it is not empathic projection (the only kind Cavell speaks of in *The Claim of Reason*).

Assuming that May's opacity is an indignity (to other minds, to the feminine in Marcher) overlooks the power her character has by virtue of its imperceptibility: "She had beautifully not done so [i.e., laughed at him] for ten years, and she was not doing so now"; "…there was no moment at which it was traceable that she had, as he might say, got inside his condition, or exchanged the attitude of beautifully indulging for that of still more beautifully believing him" (309, 314). May infuses grace into actions that are not actions. She gives form, and only form, to Marcher's experience of himself. I am reminded here of Arsić's extraordinary reading of Emerson, which develops a conception of something like acknowledgment without personification. Emerson defined marriage in the essay "Love" as "training for a love which knows no sex, nor person, nor partiality" (*E&L* 335; quoted in Arsić, *Passive Constitutions* 117). Arsić observes: "Marriage can be maintained only if it succeeds in not determining another…. However, if the subject is (by definition) the process of its own appropriation then in order for it not to appropriate another it would have somehow to function without appropriating itself" (*Passive Constitutions* 116–17). May and Marcher, each not doing what the other needs her or him not to do, have a similar though asymmetrical tie. This may be the negative (in the sense of a film reel), but not the opposite, of acknowledgement in Cavell. A positive kind

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[51] For an extended consideration of impersonality and style in "The Beast," see Bersani (chap. 1); his reading is elaborated by Ohi (19–20).

would be too caught up in the banalities of recognition in "the stupid world," even if it did not take the form of marriage as such (H. James 315).[52]

Cavell is correct to characterize Marcher as faced with mourning in its non-cathartic, non-educative blankness, or what the character himself calls his "double deprivation" (H. James 333). Needless to say, there is something disconcerting about the conviction that "missed" experience demands to be counted (cf. François, *Open Secrets*). As a Victorian-era bachelor, Marcher lives under a regime of self-accounting, "character building," and so forth, to a greater extent than Emerson had. Celibate nothings were increasingly legible as homosexual somethings in the late nineteenth century (*EC* 201–04; see also Seltzer). At May's burial, Marcher grieves less "that grief can teach [him] nothing" than that his grief could not be put to trial ("Exp."; quoted in Cavell, "Postscript" 288). James writes, "There were moments as the weeks went by when he would have liked, by some almost aggressive act, to take his stand on the intimacy of his loss, in order that it *might* be questioned and his retort, to the relief of his spirit, so recorded…" (333). Marcher imagines a spectacle of homosocial competition, as though he had to prove his intimate possession of May and his technically correct performance of grief.

Sedgwick insists upon the specificity of late nineteenth-century homosexual panic to the figure of the man who experiences nothing (as opposed, perhaps, to a man who does not have experiences). According to her, to say that "The Beast" evokes homosexuality among any number of closeting agents "is to say worse than nothing," for it would complete the Victorian-era transformation of homosexuality into a known and

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[52] Transcendental "marriage" cannot take place under civil law or the law of the father. According to Arsić, Melville realizes that in *Pierre* (*Passive Constitutions* 116–17).

bounded entity (*EC* 204). For Cavell, conversely, the subject of "The Beast" may be the Freudian subject, the philosopher (for whom skepticism is the closet), or America. I find myself wondering if this is not a case of nominalist and realist—those oscillating positions that can usually agree to disagree, where minoritizing and universalizing discourses of sexuality (or any other kind of kinds) usually cannot. Yet I cannot sustain that view. The tension hinges upon pragmatism's faith in experience/experiment as something both aesthetically and socially edifying (see, e.g., Cavell, *ETE* 216–17 [on Emerson and Dewey]). The works under consideration here tell a stranger story of the jerky, circuitous, and incomplete transition from the gay science to the paranoid trials of modernity.

2. How Experiments End: Gertrude Stein

Let me begin with a few premises, which I shall extend and challenge over the course of my discussion of Gertrude Stein and William James. The premises are: repeating is not critical, and testing is.

Repeating is not critical.[1] In Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, the nymph Echo is cursed to repeat the words of others. Yet Echo also "makes possible the ironic" by opening gap between assenting and parodic repetition (Riley 155-56). This potent myth of feminine complicity is pertinent to Stein in several respects: as a woman subject to experiments in which she was expected to write automatically, or without volition; as a modernist whom editors at the *Journal of the American Medical Association* diagnosed with palilalia, perseveration, or verbigeration (neurological or obsessional conditions causing one to repeat words); as the narrator of *The Making of Americans*, who sometimes wishes she could stop describing everyone; and, after her death, as the subject of critics' desire that her recitation of cultural scripts be subversive (Stafford 134–35). At the beginning of a chapter in *The Making*—one of many beginnings in the novel—Stein announces "[T]his is then, now and here, a description of the loving of repetition" (*MA* 290). "The loving," the gerund, refers both to the narrator's keen observations and to the pleasure her subjects take in their own semi-automatic motions. Loving what is most predictable and boring about people, and describing gender- and class-bound routines more or less without judgment, is not associated with the avant-garde. Routine was the life measured out in

[1] For a wide-ranging discussion of repetition in Stein's prose and its political implications, see Morris.

coffee spoons, or the alienated reflex actions of the industrial worker.[2] Yet Stein loves repetition, she loves the rhythms of middle-class life, and she loves that people come in kinds.

As an undergraduate at Radcliffe, the women's college of Harvard, Stein studied under James, the psychologist and film theorist Hugo Münsterberg, and other luminaries in experimental psychology. Scholars have been understandably eager to frame Stein as a critic of the institutions that shaped her.[3] Priscilla Wald has shown that *The Making of Americans* lays bare the violence implicit in James's psychology of self-ownership (261–65). In view of the polymorphous pleasures in the same text, moreover, Lisa Ruddick maintains that Stein adopted Freudian ideas in order to stage a covert murder of her intellectual "father," James (93–99, 104). To complicate matters further, Stein and her brother both spent more time reading Otto Weininger's *Sex and Character*, a misogynistic and anti-Semitic tract that aspired to the status of psychoanalytic theory, than they did reading either James or Freud.

Stein's "theme" for her college composition class on December 19, 1894 was called "In a Psychological Laboratory." She recalls being part of one of those automatic writing experiments: it felt like "silent pen [was] writing on and on forever," producing a record she could not read or control (Stein in R. S. Miller 121). Numerous critics have

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[2] T.S. Eliot, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" (1915); on mechanized labor, see Lukács (88–90) and Benjamin (*Illuminations* 176–78).

[3] The converse of this desire, especially as it reflects biographical rather than textual interpretation, is to accuse her of collaborating with the Nazis in Vichy France (see Morris). Cf. Robert Chodat's argument against Stein as any kind of psychologist or radical empiricist: in brief, we convince ourselves of intentionality and meaning however we can, usually through biography (602–03).

cited or reproduced this document without comment, as though it were self-explanatory. Indeed, it is not hard to register the pathos of restraint and bodily surveillance in Stein's description of a "vehement individual" (herself) "requested to make herself a perfect blank while someone practices on her as an automaton" (Stein in R. S. Miller 121). One immediately thinks of other spectacles of female hysteria from the period—the Salpêtrière, most famously, with its patients expected to "consent to repeated poking, hammering, and hitting [and] to laboratory hypnosis, suggestion, and documentation" (Sadoff 98).

Still, it is difficult to read Stein's paper as a straightforward protest. The daily theme was a pedagogical genre defined by imitation and dissociation. Stein's composition instructors (poet William Vaughn Moody among them) assigned "forms" and "models" for students to emulate. Many of Stein's exercises are parodies, with targets ranging from her brother Leo to Andrew Marvell. The signifiers of hysteria—alternating, imitative moods and personalities, repetitiveness, the production of a "record" for judgment on high—were endemic to the genre. In this particular entry, the conventional passive voice alternates with gothic caricature, as the researchers change from "earnest youths" into "mocking fiends." Stein describes the depersonalizing rituals of psychology at the same time that she mocks the conventions of writing about them.

Famous reports of mesmerism from the nineteenth century emphasized the bond between the hypnotist and the (usually) female subject, a bond which by nature went beneath consciousness. This intimacy defied the principles of scientific experimentation as they had been set forth by animal physiologists and psycho-physicists. Hypnosis was too contingent, too personal, to be reliably repeated. Scientists feared that hypnotism only

produced “trained subjects,” people who moved from the side of the experimental subject to the side of the researcher by virtue of a secret complicity (Borch-Jacobsen, “Simulating the Unconscious”; Sadoff 89–97). Alfred Binet and Sándor Ferenczi called this secret pact *auto-suggestion*. Further, the subject’s suggestibility worked against her. Crudely put, a hysteric could be hypnotized because she was irrational, but if being hypnotized meant being complicit in the doctor’s agenda, she could not have been irrational enough to be hypnotized in the first place. This serious comedy of agency and passivity will come to characterize Stein’s relation to scientific authority.

As the feminist philosopher of language Denise Riley reminds us, “Echo makes possible the ironic” (155). The word *irony* comes from the character of the *eiron*, the “smart guy” who pretends not to know as much as he does for the edification of the other. In the end, of course, it is the dumb and impassive one who controls the situation (Ronell, *TD* 228; *Stupidity* 126–28; [citing *AI* 165]). All of these ironies came into play when Stein attempted to write in an anesthetized or unconscious state. They were further entrenched when she described the experiments in writing, and further still when others (Skinner, in this case) began to read her statements.

Premise number two: testing *is* critical. At least, it is not complacent. I have already described some of the valences of this theme in the last chapter. Emerson and Nietzsche took up the experimental posture in opposition to custom and restraint (e.g., in Walls; Ronell, “On Testing”). Cavell, as we saw, views the acknowledgment of other minds as a therapeutic gesture which puts the skeptical operations of philosophy to a rest.

Finally, I noted that reflecting upon the conditions of one's knowledge, conceived as a defining feature of modernity by theorists such as Habermas and Boltanski, is widely viewed as a buttress against ethical lapses and dehumanizing practices in the human sciences. Some historians of psychology look to William James's laboratory, in which there was no strict division between researchers and test subjects, as a model of ethical science (e.g., Morawski 82–84, 95).

Yet reflexivity can itself become automatic. The word's dual connotation of critical thinking and of unwilled motor action (reflex) is telling. The sociological theorist Michael Lynch counters the assumption that reflexive description always "*does* something," or that that it prods some un-reflexive, hence pre-critical, statement of fact into enlightenment (27, 36). He and other commentators observe that the routine of self-interrogation does little more than produce uncertainty and bolster the prestige of the social scientists who thrive on that uncertainty (e.g., Simpson; Mizruchi, "Cataloging" 285–88). A challenge to the primacy of reflexive criticism more familiar to literary critics is the contemporary suspicion toward the (apparently univocal) "hermeneutics of suspicion" (Ricoeur's phrase, re-introduced by Sedgwick, *TF* 124–25). As my phrasing should suggest, there is a certain automatism in the critique-of-critique, as worthy as any individual offering might be.

A few literary critics have looked to historical practices of memorizing, chanting, and transcribing in search of an alternative to the hermeneutics of suspicion. These forms of labor are associated with women and children, and, at various points in the later nineteenth century, they have been duplicated in the séance parlor or the experimental

laboratory or the séance parlor.[4] The subjects of those activities make themselves vessels for someone else's words. As Emily Ogden and others have observed, clairvoyants and hysterics occupied a position of equivocal authority, simultaneously possessed by other wills and in control of when and before whom their dispossession would take place (169–71). In the first part of this chapter, I will show that Stein uncoupled repetition from the stigma of powerlessness in the early documents of her experimental training. Yet any mastery she may have achieved over the scene of writing was undercut by the behaviorist B. F. Skinner, who claimed Stein was unable to "stop" writing—or stop testing, which had come to mean the same thing (Skinner 54).

Around the time Stein wrote the theme "In a Psychological Laboratory," she was working in helping the doctoral student Leon Solomons understand what the human body could do in states of distraction or weakened volition. Many of their foundation-setting experiments had something to do with reading. A subject might read from a book at the same time that an experimenter read aloud from something else. Afterward, one recalled "having read something at the beginning of the paragraph and suddenly find[ing] himself at its end. All between is a blank" (Solomons and Stein 503). Clearly, this was not the procedure of high-modernist close reading. Many of the subjects experienced a small degree of self-division, beginning, for instance, to "hear" what they were reading in a voice that "seemed as though that of another person" (504).

Automatic writing posed more of a challenge. A subject would lay a hand lightly on a Ouija-style planchette with a pen attached, and the experimenter would distract her, or give dictation, or guide her into tracing a shape on the paper. Rarely were meaningful

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[4] On the imbricated histories of spiritualism and psychology, see Bordogna, Thurschwell (chap. 5), and Thrailkill (chap. 6).

words produced: that facility, it seemed, was reserved for hysterics and spirit mediums. Solomons published some of their findings in an 1895 journal article, "Normal Motor Automatism," which he attributed to both himself and Stein. According to the article, he and Stein experienced automatic writing as a kind of abstracted watchfulness: "The writing is conscious, but non-voluntary and largely *extra personal*. The feeling that the writing is *our* writing seems to disappear with the motor impulse" (Solomons and Stein 498). Nearly forty years later, *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* refuted that story. The narrator reports that Stein "never had subconscious reactions, nor was she a successful subject for automatic writing." She recalls, affectionately, that James did not strike her negative results from the record of their experiments (*Alice* 79).

Stein wrote and published a paper of her own in her senior year, on "Cultivated Motor Automatism" (1898). This sequence of experiments did not yield any thoroughly dissociated states, but two types of Harvard students seemed to come closest. Type I was creative, attentive, and easily agitated, while Type II was pliant, having an "automatic" personality that lay closer to the surface of her everyday personality (Stein, "CMA" 297–98). As she reflected later, though, attention and motor phenomena interested her only insofar as they were "reflexes of the complete character of the individual" (*LIA* 137–38). The typological endeavor owed more to Münsterberg, her primary instructor in the laboratory, than it did to James (Bordogna 167, 246; Giesenkirchen, "Adding Up" 121-22).

In 1934, when Stein had become an international celebrity on the basis of the *Autobiography*, a young psychologist named B. F. Skinner published a scathing article about her in the *Atlantic Monthly*. He argued that *Tender Buttons* (1914) was produced in

the same dissociative state that Stein and Solomons had described in the article, and that what lay beneath Stein's conscious mind was not even a full-fledged second personality. If there was a personality behind *Tender Buttons*, it must be "intellectually unopinionated," "emotionally cold," and "as easily influenced as a child" (Skinner 53).

Let us take Skinner at his word for a moment, and suppose that Stein is not entirely self-present in her work. Nearly all of Stein's documents of her training enact some form of perspectival dissociation. When she described an automatic-writing exercise for her composition instructor, she does not use the first person, and toys with various levels of parody and self-dramatization. When Solomons reported on the same experiments, or comparable ones, he writes on behalf of himself and Stein. He reports that "all knowledge of the experiment disappear[ed]" in the laboratory subjects, presumably including himself and Stein, thus casting doubt on all of Stein's subsequent testimonies (Solomons and Stein 495). Eventually, Stein took up quasi-automatic writing as a "method." She enjoys writing at crowded gatherings and drawing the letter *m* in chains. She writes in pencil and then copies the work into ink, often twice, before delivering it to a typist to copy it again, letter by letter, without regard to words and meanings (*Alice* 52–53; cf. "CMA" 296). Of course, she reports on that method in the persona of Toklas. There may be a story of feminine empowerment, or of critical "disempowerment," to be found in Stein's trying out successive degrees of self-divestiture (see Ogden 169). Yet what appears to be a trajectory of increasing authorial consciousness is, in Skinner's eyes, a progressive loss of control. If we accept his premises, Stein did not completely react to her stimulus (the "experimental situation" itself) for more than a decade.

Skinner was not the first person to claim *Tender Buttons* was nonsensical, nor the first scientist to diagnose her with a neurological disorder based upon her writing (see, e.g., "The Psychology of Modernism in Literature"; Stafford).[5] What was unique was the etiology he proposed for Stein's hysterical symptoms: it was the experiment that was to blame. Any intelligent person should have a "natural resistance" to producing reams of gibberish. But in the case of Stein, "the resistance had been broken down" by those hours at the planchette in the same laboratory where Skinner conducted his own research. The test dragged on, he implied, even though "the artificial character of the experimental procedure has completely worn off" (Skinner 55). Factually inaccurate and aesthetically hostile as it may be, "Has Gertrude Stein a Secret?" ventures into the murky space between naïveté and knowingness that all self-experimenting scientists must occupy.

Irony at its most radical leaves the reliability of meaning or reference permanently suspended: in practical terms, one doesn't know when one doesn't know (see Ronell, *TD* 223–29). In *Everybody's Autobiography*, Stein returned to the scene once more and insisted she and Solomons were perfectly lucid while they maneuvered the automatic pen. "We always knew what we were doing how could we not when every minute in the laboratory we were doing what we were watching ourselves doing, that was our training," she wrote, partly in response to Skinner (quoted in Meyer 226). Barbara Will argues that Stein's ability to watch herself behaving unconsciously amounted to a sort of passive, non-transcendental mastery, as distinct from hysterical splitting (Will 25–26). I am more inclined to think that "doing what we were watching ourselves doing" indicates further,

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[5] Stein's Marxist contemporary Michael Gold called her a "literary idiot" but a "brilliant psychologist." Rhetorically, Chodat asks why we are so invested in saying Stein was not as "idiotic" as she sounded to "so many intelligent readers" (Chodat 580, 603).

conscious entrenchment in the self-observing machine.

Even if *Tender Buttons*, the text Skinner regarded as a mechanical operation, was composed partly in imitation of the method Stein learned in the psychological laboratory, it was also largely a reaction against her person-centered studies.[6] Around 1909, roughly, Stein turned her attention from "the insides of people" to "the rhythm of the visible world" (*Alice* 119). In a lecture called "The Gradual Making of the Making of Americans," she elaborated upon why she had traded the exhaustive characterology of *The Making* for the depopulated, crystalline style of *Tender Buttons*:

> When I was working with William James I completely learned one thing, that science is continuously busy with the complete description of something…. [R]elatively few people spend all their time describing anything and they stop and so in the meantime as everything goes on somebody else can always commence and go on. And so description is really unending. (*LIA* 156)

There is a grain of truth in Skinner's designating James's laboratory as the site where a writing machine was set in motion. Indeed, Tim Armstrong shows that Skinner prefigures Friedrich Kittler and other media theorists, for whom stimulus-response psychology set the stage for a (post)modern conception of language as an unintentional, material, affecting force (Armstrong 188–207).

I have alluded to a critical tradition of narrating Stein's development as a gradual movement away from James's authority or his pre-radical empiricism (e.g., in Ruddick,

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[6] Archival scholarship by Ulla Dydo, Steven Meyer, Linda Wagner-Martin, and many others has thoroughly debunked the idea that *Tender Buttons* was a "sub-personal" product. The same goes for *The Making of Americans*, whose episodes and movements Stein arranged painstakingly over the years.

Wald, and Meyer). The appeal of Skinner's psycho-criticism lies in its serious comedy. There is a paucity of ways to describe a young woman leaving any institution to which her access had been hard-won. It is unsatisfying to imagine that the only options were submission and revolt, or that Stein's only way out was to leave her "father's" house for her brother's (as choosing Freudianism, by Ruddick's account, would imply). Oedipal narratives no doubt misrepresent Stein in her attraction to her next major scientific role model, that is, Weininger.

While James's influence on modern literature is a topic of continued debate and contestation, Weininger is relatively easy to pin down. Early critics explained Stein's interest in Weininger as a lapse into self-hatred or a more generalized capitulation to her culture's racism. Today, they are more likely to understand the Weiningerian echoes as parodic and to recognize the ways Weininger's system resonated with Stein (e.g., Wald 675; Will 62–66). Weininger's misogyny was paired with a fluid conception of sexual difference. He thought homosexuals superior to their heterosexual counterparts: lesbians because they were masculine in nature, and gay men because they were not tainted by intercourse. Those dimensions of his work have been more or less exhausted. I suspect that Weininger's own conflicts with psycho-physical researchers, and with James, may illuminate the less scandalous factors which drew Stein to his work.

Weininger rejected the idea that what was worth knowing about people could be discerned with a galvanometer and a tuning fork, concurring with Dilthey that most psychology "*completely fails to reach* those problems normally described as eminently psychological, the analysis of murder, of friendship, of loneliness" (Weininger 72). He admired James for having surpassed the associationist premises of the German psycho-

physicists. Like James, he did not believe there was such a thing as an isolated unit of sensation, or that simple experiences combined to form complex ones. Yet he refused to conceive of the self as a mere "stream of thought." There was an integral personality, a transcendental "I am," that permeated the body from birth. "'All that a man does is physiognomical of him,'" he wrote, quoting Thomas Carlyle's essay "On Heroes and Hero-Worship": every cell and every twitch contained the entirety of a personality (Sengoopta 55; Weininger 72). Weininger's expansive conception of the psychological, combined with his physiognomical conception of self, helped Stein accomplish what, according to Ashton, she had been struggling to do: to define a self that was not identical to its experiences.[7] When the narrator of *The Making of Americans* resolves to describe everyone, she refers to "their living, loving, eating, pleasing, smoking, thinking, scolding, drinking, working, dancing, walking, talking, laughing, sleeping, everything *in them*. There are whole beings then, they are themselves *inside them*…" (*MA* 290 [emphasis added]). Stein catalogues the Whitmanesque splendor of daily life, without dissolving the "whole being" into the contingencies of experience.

Weininger was excited to discover that the human embryo was not sexually differentiated in its early stages, and that there were anatomical variations among creatures of the same sex. In an imaginative reworking of the endocrine theory of the early 1900s, he surmised that each cell contained male and female plasma, in differing proportions. One might be more or less male or female over the course of one's life, or even the course of one day (Sengoopta 47–48). While Weininger's notion of sexual difference was surely not Stein's, he offered a repertoire of images with which to

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[7] According to Ashton, Stein finally decided that any empirical description was going to be insufficient to that goal.

describe her characters' life courses. *The Making of Americans*' patriarch David Hersland, for instance, expresses a mixture of kinds.[8]

When Hersland reaches middle age, the narrator declares, "There was in him then all that would later break down into repeating." Even though David's "business living" is of a piece with his character, his actions are still more deliberate than habitual. A life "broken down into repeating" would seem to imply that its component gestures have settled into a fixed trajectory. For David, who has many bombastic "beginnings in him," this would mean his beginnings would look no different from his end(s). Not surprisingly, the thought of a mixed-up kind is something most people can only accept in theory. David's relatives take note of his entrepreneurial beginnings and beginnings-again, unsure of "which kind of a way this would work out in him." His mixture will be settled according to the standards of middle-class life (139-40).

As readers, we describe the perceptible marks of a personality in or upon a text as idiomatic. Idiom is the property that allows some people to identify an author, painter, or composer without recognizing the work or the subject matter. It is intangible, a fact for which we often compensate by lodging it in bodily metaphors (an author's voice or signature) or in the spirit world. A psychoanalytic concept of idiom was proposed by Christopher Bollas, who defined it as the form or style that binds together a person's choice and handling of objects. An object, following Winnicott (to whom Bollas is the literary executor), could be the mother's breast, a piece of string, or a national hero: in short, anything in which one invests and disinvests libidinal energy. Bollas describes the idiom as "aesthetic intelligence," a vacant form whose "work" is to "collide with the

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[8] Quite literally: one sees another person's aspects when they "come out" of him, as though moods and actions cycle through a person like shit or labor-products.

structure of the objects that transform it, through which it gains its precise inner contents" (*Bollas Reader* xix, 240). Because it has no content or value unto itself, the idiom cannot be repressed, or accessed by way of introspection. It is unique to each person, but it can only reveal its symmetries and consistencies later in life.

Antecedents to the idiom concept can be found in a wide range of pre-psychoanalytic documents. James believed the stream of consciousness consisted in our embodied sense of rhythms—our "heartbeats, our breathing, the pulses of our attention, fragments of words or sentences that pass through our imagination" (*PBC* 267). But thanks to the spread of psycho-physical technologies into classrooms in Europe and anthropological expeditions in the Pacific, rhythm came to be associated with humankind's evolutionarily primitive past and with "barbaric" peoples (Golston 11–39; E. Martin 151–53). The "repressive meaning" of *rhythm* quickly spread from the specialized realms of biology and musicology to public campaigns for family planning and industrial efficiency (Barthes 8; Fleissner chap. 6).

Unlike electro-mechanical rhythms or the stream of consciousness, however, Bollas's idiom is only partly phenomenological. It can manifest itself in the effects of object-use, like the imprint a body leaves on a pillow or the way someone's presence can be felt in a room long after he has departed. Bollas compares the idiom to a household ghost "whom we can see only as objects are stirred or moved around the room"; put less figuratively, the contents of the form are supplied partly from outside of it (*Being a Character* 55).

Something akin to Bollas's ghost can also be conjured in the psychological experiment, and not only because turn-of-the-century laboratories were full of spirits

(see, e.g., Bordogna; Thurschwell). Solomons and Stein's experiments alluded to everyday automatism from within an artificially sparse world. Fastening someone to a piece of laboratory equipment is the opposite of watching household appliances drift around (Bollas's scenario), but it has a remarkably similar effect. The electric pen brings a latent ghostliness to the fore, transposing the subject (whether conceived as memory, soul, or object relations) onto dead matter (see Kittler 207–11). That which is unique about us may be easiest to transcode or to abstract, for it is purely formal.

Stein, it is said, grew impatient with the "impoverishment of experience" in the psychological laboratory (Meyer 211). I presume she would concur. As I will show, however, *The Making of Americans* sometimes makes an argument for avoiding experience or evaluating it by mechanical means. Stein's ambivalence toward experience, and the introduction of testing as a counter-pressure in *The Making of Americans*, draws her into conversation with the proto-pragmatist writers I discussed in the first chapter.

II.

The Making of Americans begins as a saga of two families. Julia Dehning is the granddaughter of European immigrants, fully entrenched in bourgeois life, but still "born too near to the old world to ever attain quite altogether that crude virginity that makes the American girl safe in all her liberty" (*MA* 15). She marries Alfred Hersland, at which point the focus of the novel shifts to Alfred's sister Martha. Martha survives a lonely childhood as one of the four children of David Hersland, a power-seeking businessman.

She eventually marries Phillip Redfern, a showily progressive professor at a liberal arts college. The union is unhappy, and Redfern has an affair with Cora Dounor, who is also in a lesbian relationship with the dean.[9] Martha returns to her elderly father. Her other brother, David, earns an education and serves in the military but feels perennially indecisive and cut adrift from the culture at large. A lost-generation icon of sorts, he dies before he reaches middle age.

By the end of the first chapter, Stein's purview has expanded beyond the family unit. She settles on two fundamental kinds of people: the "independent dependent" kind of people, and the "dependent independent" kind. One of the manifestations of independent dependence is "servant girl being." Seeing as the bourgeois Martha Hersland displays it, servant girl being should not be read as a simple class marker. "Women with servant girl being inside them," Stein says, have "the grimy scared little girl lying as the bottom of them" (*MA* 173 [sic]). Servant girl being must also be distinguished from something called "servant queerness," which several of her actual servants exhibit. These observations give way to the narrator's grandiose promise of "a history of all of them who ever were or are or will be living" (297). She announces, halts, and defers this history over and over; she begins, digresses, and begins again. In the last chapter, the narrator absents herself from the story, which tells of David's "coming to be a dead one" and of the ways in which successive generations remember their histories.

Stein began *The Making of Americans* in 1903, after *Q.E.D.* (which she did not publish). She completed it in 1911, after publishing *Three Lives* in 1909. In the passages

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[9] This sequence is a remnant of the roman à clef origin of the novel. Redfern is based on Alfred Hodder, a professor who was friends with Gertrude and Leo Stein; Dounor is Mary Gwinn, for whom Hodder left his wife; the dean is M(artha) Carey Thomas. On Stein's rearrangement of real-life names, see Wald (288).

written earliest, the conventions of literary naturalism are on display.[10] One finds characters straining against their origins, which are painfully evident in their home décor, and one learns the advantages and dangers of "mixing" across class lines. In contrast with *Three Lives*' triptych of the Good Anna, Melanctha, and the Gentle Lena, most of the characters in *The Making* are middle-class, second- and third-generation Americans from Europe. Many commentators on Stein's experimentalism during this early period note her affinities to Zola and the Darwin-inspired naturalists, or the physician-poet William Carlos Williams (Williams, incidentally, called "Melanctha" a "thrilling clinical record" [English 515]). While it may be true that Stein "exerts the greatest clinical authority precisely where she appears most formally experimental," as Daylanne English says of *Three Lives*, *The Making* is less confident in its authority and draws less of a distinction between the narrator and its subjects (English 515).

Insofar as *The Making of Americans* takes on the psychological experiment—not just the current understanding of habit and consciousness, but the very notion of studying people, individually and en masse—it defies common critical positions. *The Making of Americans* does flirt with the romantic notion that too-intricate study of anything is "cruel," like "killing things to make collections of them" (*MA* 489). The taxidermist is an identifiable figure in a long-running critique of naturalism, representing the writer who, as Lukács wrote, transforms people into "inanimate objects" and clinical specimens (Fleissner 47). One finds a continuity between this passage in *The Making* and *Q.E.D.*, in which the naïve Helen (commonly read as May Bookstaver) confesses that she had "tried to be adequate" to Adele's (Stein's) "experiments":

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[10] For the order of composition, see Dydo (*A Stein Reader* 19–22).

> ‘You were not content until you had dissected out every nerve in my body and left it quite exposed and it was too much, too much. You should give your subjects occasional respite even in the ardor of research.’ […] ‘Good God’ cried Adele utterly dumbfounded ‘did you think that I was deliberately making you suffer in order to study results?’ (*Three Lives and Q.E.D.* 195; Giesenkirchen, “Ethnic Types” 69)

One can also draw an analogy to Jeff Campbell, the African-American doctor in “Melanctha,” whom Melanctha accuses of never “stopping with [his] thinking long enough ever to have any feeling” (*Three Lives and Q.E.D.* 83). The scientist for whom experimentation and observation stood in for holistic experience was clearly a “type” that resonated with Stein. Critics have argued convincingly that Stein’s understanding of experience evolved from that of Adele to that of Campbell and finally beyond the perspective of both (e.g., Ruddick 12-41).

Ultimately, however, *The Making of Americans* will not draw a Wordsworthian or Lukácsian equivalence between studying people and objectifying them. To return to the sentence I quoted earlier, which opposed “killing things to make collections of them”: An unnamed father has given these words of advice to his son, an amateur entomologist (489). He commends the boy for relenting, telling him that he was “a noble boy to give up pleasure when it was a cruel one.” But the next day, the father spots a moth and admires it, and pins it for exhibition. Within *The Making of Americans*, outlandish hypocrisy is one of the things that makes the intergenerational cycle so intractable—something like dragging one’s father across the orchard, but, in deference to him, not beyond a particular tree (*MA* 3).

The anecdote of the boy and the butterfly ends with the words, "[A]nd this is a little description of something that happened once and it is very interesting" (490). *Interesting* is quieter, so to speak, than *exciting* (as the boy perceives the butterflies) or *wonderfully beautiful* (as the father perceives the moth). Interest is a sort of punctuation mark between Stein's investigations; she, as much as James, thought that mental interest and automatism ought to work in tandem. As part of the study on motor automatism, she and Solomons told a subject to "get himself as deeply interested in a novel as possible." If he was interested enough, his arm would begin to move without his being aware of it (Solomons and Stein 494; on James, see Ashton 307). But the exercise worked best when the words in the book were familiar and "comparatively uninteresting" (503-04). A Shklovsky or a Benjamin would endeavor to make the familiar unfamiliar and the uninteresting interesting, but there is no such gambit here. What is interesting to these researchers is the way the reading subject internalizes, dissociates, or discharges the bothersome verbal material.[11] Cruelty and testing fall into the same rhythm of interest and inattention.

By the second chapter, the narrator's inquiry has extended to "all the kinds of ways there can be seen to be kinds of men and women" (290), the conditions under which one *could* know all the kinds, and what kind of "one" would emerge from the process. She replaces the independent-dependent and dependent-independent kinds with another set, called "attacking being" and "resisting being." A germ of one's "bottom nature" can be detected in infancy: Stein observes of the population at large, "Repeating of the whole of them is then always in every one" (297). This is not an expression of determinism or

[11] The dimension of interest distinguishes the exercise from procedural or computerized "surface" reading at least somewhat (see François, "Late Exercises" 45–46).

pseudo-biological essentialism, though, since what constitutes the whole of a person expands and differentiates over time. After all, there are more kinds of adults than there are kinds of babies (139). I take this to mean something like what Bollas did when he wrote that a germ of the idiom is present at birth, inscribed in the child's genetic material, but that the idiom is still flexible during the earliest stages of relating to the mother (*Bollas Reader* 241).

Attacking and resisting give rise to subtle variations: in the way the traits solidify or recede over time, in the way an action sometimes belies a contrary temperament, and in their physical substance, as in the following description of "resisting being in men and women":

> It is like a substance and in some it is as I was saying solid and sensitive all through it to stimulation, in some almost wooden, in some muddy and engulfing, in some thin almost like gruel, in some solid in some parts and in other parts all liquid, in some with holes like air-holes in it, in some a thin layer of it, in some hardened and cracked all through it, in some double layers of it with no connections between the layers of it. This and many many other ways there are of feeling it as the bottom being in different ones of them…. (*MA* 348-49)[12]

It is not surprising that Stein allows personality a material substrate, given her training at Radcliffe or, subsequently, her study of neuroanatomy at Johns Hopkins Medical School. Her concern with varying degrees of sensitivity to stimulation and reaction times ("this needs time for penetrating to get reaction" [347]) can be traced to her earliest readings in

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[12] In *Three Lives*, Stein includes Melanctha among "the kind of people who have emotions that come to them as sharp as a sensation" (*Three Lives and Q.E.D.* 116).

psychology. William James had defined neural plasticity as "a structure weak enough to yield to an influence, but strong enough not to yield all at once" (*PBC* 138). A habit was the result of a neural pathway that had been retraced over and over in order to discharge nervous excitation as efficiently as possible. In an automatic reflex action, the stimulus would be dispensed with so rapidly it would barely be perceptible. Unlike Freud in the contemporaneous, unpublished *Project for a Scientific Psychology*, James did not imagine there could be varying pockets of resistance within a person at any given time, as a matter of constitution.[13] For that qualification of difference between and within people, Stein may have preferred Weininger's speculations on the sexes and "amplitudes of oscillation" of the cells (Sengoopta 47).

The *Making of Americans* passages are more accurately described as alluding to neural structures than representing them. Nevertheless, the "bottom beings" convey a sense of facticity that the Freudian metapsychology does not. The word *substance* implies corporeal matter, whereas the incessant self-reference ("the way I feel resisting being") implies that the narrator's impressions give the passage its material quality. What has texture but is only *like* a substance? Perhaps the "ways…of feeling it," the unique sensations passing between describer and described (I will say more about these gestures toward intersubjective feeling later). Attacking-being, which is the counterpart to the type just described, is "a pulpy not dust not dirt but a more mixed up substance, it can be slimy, gelatinous, gluey, white opaquy kind of thing and it can be white and vibrant, and

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[13] In the *Project*, composed as a letter to Fliess in 1895, Freud writes: "[T]here are permeable neurones (offering no resistance and retaining nothing), which serve for perception, and impermeable ones (loaded with resistance, and holding back Qή [quantity]), which are the vehicles of memory and so probably of psychical processes in general" (Freud 1: 299–300). Cf. the "speculative" *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (18: 24–43).

clear and heated and this is all not very clear to me and I will now tell more about it" (*MA* 349). Stein's descriptions are approximate yet avoid all the trappings of the figurative. The point at which of the descriptors ("clear") leans toward metaphor is the point at which things become admittedly unclear. The solution is to shun comparison and generality altogether. The description of personality will be properly clear, the narrator suggests, as soon as it is lodged in a specific encounter with a specific person. Which person is of less consequence.

The narrator swerves between studying people expansively and studying "ones" intensively. There are three specific but nameless ones in the "Martha Hersland" chapter; all are women, though Stein prefers the neuter. The "first" and "second" ones are "two kinds of one kind of a general kind of being in men and women." Both, at bottom, have a "general resisting kind of being" (355). This new set of kinds is far more orderly than the previous ones. It is hierarchical but, notably, not evaluative. Nevertheless, one suspects the narrator wants to constrain the proliferation of queerness in the first chapter and of bottom-texture in the second. The "third one" raises a different set of problems. This one is remarkably consistent. Since "all the repeating always coming out of this one" is immediately apparent to even a casual acquaintance, the narrator decides it would not be "enough to realize all the repeating in such a one" (317-18).

Stein's third one is trapped between the desire to hold or grasp "anything that was there" (an instance of objectless object relations) and skepticism toward the same objects. "[T]here can be in such a one no real experiencing, a hand cannot be closed and open, it ends in such a one denying that a hand is really existing," the narrator reflects (318). This is a rare instance of judgment on Stein's part. She objects to the third one's denial as one

would respond to a tiresome personality trait, reminiscent of James's or Cavell's pragmatic objections to skepticism. Nevertheless, of the trio, the third one is most similar to Stein's persona (not to be confused with Stein herself).

Even though Stein's narrator loves finding that people are of a kind, she, like Bollas (and the Freud of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*), is alarmed when repetition tends toward an inanimate state. The idiom is a *presentational form*: in other words, its meaning consists solely in its completed shape, not in reference to an object or theme.[14] When a person's idiom does represent something, it must be a sign of unfreedom or a disordered personality (*Bollas Reader* 239, 243). Accordingly, in *The Making*, the "complete rhythm of a personality" unfolds over a long duration. Stein was dismayed that the rhythms she had "gradually acquired" would have to be transcribed as though she "had it completely at one time" (*LIA* 147).

A steady rhythm was at the core of what Stein loved about bourgeois domesticity, and what her bohemian friends despised about it:

> [M]iddle class is…always monotonous for it is always there and to be always repeated, and yet…a material middle class who know they are it, with their straightened bond of family to control it, is the only thing always human, vital, and worthy it—worthy that all monotonously shall repeat it…. (*MA* 34 [sic])

Her frank admiration for plodding repetition at the cultural as well as the individual level cuts sharply against her presentation of the novel as "a family's progress."

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[14] Presentational form (as opposed to *causal efficacy*) is a category of perception from Alfred North Whitehead's *Process and Reality*; Bollas adopts it from the aesthetician Suzanne Langer. On Whitehead, Stein, and Emerson, see Meyer and Richardson.

Rhythm can be a sign that "higher" mental functions have become habitual. Ferenczi—who, like James and unlike Freud, maintained a lifelong interest in hypnotism and altered states—perceived that irony could be a means of surviving an insane or abusive parent. Yet he also recognized that once-defiant gestures could become habitual, and subversive repetition would be just repetition: "The question remains of how and when the irony of the expressions becomes unconscious for the child as well. The insane 'superego,' being or becoming imposed upon one's own personality, transforms the previous irony into automatism" (Ferenczi 50 [6 March 1932]). The child grows into the caricature he had drawn of his oppressors. The superego becomes more powerful, whether it be conceived as a parental implantation or middle-class self-presentation (as, for instance, "the very best the world can ever know, and everywhere we always need it" [*MA* 34]). On the scale of the family and its progress, most of us repeat the injuries of childhood and, in doing so, up the ante. As Stein observes in two chapters, "Some out of their own virtue make a god who sometimes later is a terror to them…. Some make some things like laws out of the nature of them, out of the nature of some other one. Some are controlled by other people's virtue, and then it scares them" (443, 480). Norms and rhythms are no less monotonous when called laws or gods, but they are more insistent: James calling habit "the enormous fly-wheel of society" ignores this property of amplification (*PBC* 145).

Bollas defines *interformality* as "the way in which we are affected by the way the other forms (or transforms) a communicated axiom into his or her own particular idiomatic delivery" (*Bollas Reader* 246). The infant initially perceives the mother's "processional axiom" in her bodily rhythms, cadences of voice, and so forth. These

formal axioms are laid down before any moral code, any law of the father (*Bollas Reader* 241).[15] When Stein attempted to suggest patterns of movement to her distracted classmates in the "Cultivated Motor Automatism" experiment, she seems to have captured, among adults, the phenomenon Bollas describes among infants. The subject's motions alternate with the experimenter's, "like the struggle between two themes in a musical composition, until at last the new movement conquered and was freely continued" ("CMA" 296). *The Making of Americans* is a history of, among other things, Stein "learning to listen to repeating" (*MA* 294). There is a psychoanalytic flavor to these descriptions of listening as a discipline. "Sensitive suggestibility" may be a kind among others (the Byron/Wilde "kind," in fact), but it is also the unannounced condition for the complete understanding of anyone (*MA* 445).

However, in the "Gradual Making" lecture, listening is antithetical to scientific ways of monitoring repetition. In retrospect, it seemed that "doing philosophy and psychology," "testing reactions," discerning character types, even introspection, had all "for awhile…made me stop listening" (*LIA* 137). Listening, here tied to the weaker sense of suggestibility (i.e. being responsive or persuadable), provides a check on the objectification of the subject. More provocative, Stein claims that what she learned about others in the lab came "by experience and not by talking and listening," with the implication that "experience" was actually more limiting (*LIA* 137). She leaves ambiguous what experience consists of and to whom it should belong. Does the word refer to conducting tests on others (i.e., on experiences not one's own), or 'doing'

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[15] Cf. Barthes: "I see a mother pushing an empty stroller, holding her child by the hand. She walks at her own pace, imperturbably; the child, meanwhile, is being pulled, dragged along…. Power—the subtlety of power—is effected through disrhythmy, heterorhythmy" (9).

automatism (which by definition is not appropriated as experience)? An alternative would be a collectively experienced laboratory scene, in which the players inhabited multiple roles.[16] Accepting that, Stein's commentary becomes even stranger. The group experience would include but not be limited to "talking and listening." And whatever the extra piece was, it detracted from what Stein could learn about people—or what she wanted to learn.

In order to understand why Stein may have pulled back from experience, I want to examine to her description of learning the first one (in *Making of Americans*-speak, learning is something you do to a person). The narrator approaches this person as a "puzzle" to be solved, first gathering descriptions of her and then looking directly, until "this one was a whole one to me." In other words, a day's work. Then the dynamic changes: "Then the whole being of this one was inside of me, it was then as possession of me. I could not get it out from inside me, it gave new meanings to many things, it made a meaning to me of damnation" (*MA* 313-14). This fantasy of swallowing the "one" inverts Stein's Radcliffe-period nightmare of being trapped in a mess of tubes and restraints. It is a horror of biblical and pre-oedipal proportions, which only speech can undo.[17] The "whole" person she has conceived has set up shop inside her, and the repetitions that make up its personality interfere with Stein's repetitions. Her power to make people (by description or metaphorical pregnancy) has left her powerless. She tells people what kind they are in the hope of "a gentler possession of me," to free herself from the burden of what she has made of them.

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[16] James himself did not believe in collective experiences or shared thoughts.

[17] Significant psychoanalytic texts on incorporation fantasies include Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia," and Klein, "Manic-Depressive States." Additionally, Ruddick has argued convincingly that the "urge to swallow the sum of human history" reflects oral and anal fantasy structures (72).

The narrator reestablishes where she ends and others begin by simply "telling it." To complete the analogy between this passage and Stein's recollection of Harvard psychology in "The Gradual Making," the narrator's insistence on telling represents a triumph of the symbolic—"talking and listening"—over the mess of interlocking experiences. Stein's dispossessing herself of others, while continuing to observe them, could be read as an ethical failure on behalf of the social scientist. Nonetheless, any reading of the early Stein that presents her as a paradigm of social-scientific "detachment" would do well to consider these episodes of experimenter's panic (e.g., Mizruchi, "Fiction and the Science of Society" 212; English).

Stein calls upon the authority of the test at the moment when relationality, or the shareability of experience, becomes a problem. The following passage occurs later in the "Martha Hersland" chapter, foreshadowing Martha and Phillip Redfern's failed marriage:

> Often it is very astonishing, it is like seeing something and some one who always has been walking with you and you always have been feeling that one was seeing everything with you and you feel then that they are seeing that thing the way you are seeing it then and you go sometime to a doctor to have that one have their eyes examined and then you find that things you are seeing they cannot see and never have been seeing…and you know then that you are seeing, you are writing completely only for one and that is yourself… (*MA* 430)

Stein begins with a well-worn trope: sight as a figure for comprehension. The figure is easily extended so that the limits of sight represent the limits of understanding between one person and another, the imperative combined with the difficulty of "taking

another's view" (see Honneth, *Reification*; Butler, "TAV"). In this sentence, "seeing" is transitive and relational, reflecting an understanding that one is always seeing-with, seeing-it-then, seeing-as (Wittgenstein's term), and so on. The tenor of the passage changes at the point when seeing (formerly both literal and metaphorical) is solidly literalized in the eye examination. Gone is the transitivity of the verb *to see*. Gone, too, is the transitivity of writing. Where the narrator had once declared defiantly that she writes "for myself and strangers," she now writes "completely only for one" (*MA* 289, 430).

In the early 1880s, James studied hysterical blindness along with members of the American Society for Psychical Research. He and his colleagues tried to hypnotize some fifty students into not seeing certain objects placed before them. Once they came out of the trance, the subjects had the feeling that the objects had been seen by someone else (Bordogna 198; James and Carnochan).[18] James, of course, is also the author of "On a Certain Blindness in Human Beings" (1899), in which he argues that we must silence "the clamor of our own practical interests" periodically to inhabit the ("worthless," romantic, agrarian) perspectives of others (*Writings, 1878-1899* 851). Even if the eye examination in *The Making of Americans* is not a direct analogue for anything Stein learned from James the psychologist or the philosopher, it is an everyday test of the thresholds of perception. Yet counter to a narrative that finds Stein, like James, leaving the laboratory in search of a "more radical empiricism" (as Meyer puts it), this passage would seem to indicate a reversion from radical empiricism to the straitened kind.

In the doctor's office, glass lenses, modeled on human eyes, outshine and supplement the real thing; patients compare themselves to one another against a

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[18] Of more than 50 students, about twelve went under on the first try, and of that smaller group, two (both men) made ideal subjects and received "almost exclusive attention" (James and Carnochan 95).

prosthetic standard. The test opens up a contest over the ontology of the "things you are seeing [which] they cannot see and never have been seeing" (*MA* 430). Stein's second-person narrator assumes her friend saw the same things the same way, but evidently cannot be secure in that knowledge. The other person's vision, relative to the narrator's, has to be decided by a higher authority. "You" take the other person to be evaluated, implying her sight is already your concern. One test is enough for two pairs of eyes. Whether the power of the test lies in evidence or the proclamations of an authority (more "yours" than the doctor's, it seems) is unclear.

The loneliness of the second-person narrator following her companion's exam has little to do with kinds of eyes, or kinds of people. She suffers from the renewed realization of a difference that can never be surmounted, a difference with no concept or value. In plain speech, we may see or think like another person, according to whatever index, but never *as* that person. This difference may also speak to the reason James's psychology refused to admit thoughts without a thinker. He inferred this rather equivocally in *Psychology*, declaring that all the thoughts in a room were neither "reciprocally independent" nor "all-belonging-together," and that a "*mere* thought," belonging to nobody, would be conceivable but unrecognizable (*PBC* 153). Ironically, he was more adamant on this point during his pluralist or radical-empiricist phase. "[M]y mind is *not* yours," he says. To suggest otherwise would mean that objects of perception would have to be "felt equivocally," to be my object and yours ("How Two Minds" 1188).

After the exam, the narrator's belief that her perception overlaps with the other is compromised, as is, more devastatingly, her belief in writing as a means of

communication. Generally, Stein does not mistake writing for thought-transference. The fact that readers interpret texts differently than the author intended ("you are writing completely only for one and that is yourself then and to every other one it is a different thing" [430]) is only part of the problem. In fact, the second-person anecdote about the eye exam takes place as a digression within the story of Martha's marriage to Redfern, a marriage which dissolves because of a letter that did not reach its destination and because words, in general, lose their import with deteriorating memories or manual "copying" (440-41). Writing that exists "completely only" for the writer would be automatic writing in the old, occult sense of a spirit—or an idiom—materialized on the page. That is the interpretation of automatic writing Solomons and Stein thoroughly debunked in their "Motor Automatism" articles.

Why, then, does the difference in perception between the narrator and her friend cause such grief? (I leave aside *roman à clef*-style theories about love affairs gone sour.) Before the entrance of the doctor, seeing (with) was subtly figurative. It denoted a mode of relation to another person. The proximity of perception is more significant than any interpretation or judgment of what was perceived. Accordingly, *The Making of Americans* does not pass a final judgment on what is being looked at. These "things" are placeholders whose relation to real objects is like the relation of letters on an eye-chart to words. It is not the case that the two characters were joined until the eye test rends them apart. They were already separate, but the test makes their separateness painfully apparent. In the wake of the eye exam, seeing is no longer a balance of idioms or a contest of musical themes. Sight is reified as the quantifiable attribute belonging of one person, or parts of her.

I have narrated some aspects of the conceptual split between 'experience' and 'experiment' in chapter 1. In a turn that may remind us of Emerson, it was only when sense perception was marked as insufficient for "empirical" science that the senses became objects of explanation and experiment in their own right. With the eye exam, Stein presents a case in which common and radical empiricism are at odds. As with the story of the father and son who kill butterflies, it is easy enough to oppose the test on the grounds that it fixes the interactive labor of seeing-with into the timeless principle of sight. No one in *The Making of Americans* ever heeds those objections, though.

As an anti-dualist who nonetheless held onto the concepts of subject and character, James offers a few clues to why the test, as an affirmation of one person's experience, feels necessary. If I enter a room and see a pen on a table, I assume, correctly, that it exists independently of me. But does that assumption not reinstate the unwanted distinction between phenomenal things and things in themselves? James would argue that what existed beforehand was not a pen-in-itself, but a pen-experience which had yet to be appropriated. At times, James expresses this in a less subjective and more paradoxical, Winnicottian manner: there are "physical" objects, waiting to "get made" ("How Two Minds" 1190; cf. Johnson, *Persons and Things* 96–103). But what if this were Stein's scenario, and I was seeing the object with you? As we have noted, she was delighted to find that pairs and groups were gayer than isolates. But the real group posed a problem for James's theory of perception. In order to keep the radical-empiricist scheme intact (and to keep the individual at its center), the domain of experience has to expand, temporally and spatially. What I call my perception of the pen is really a second-degree experience: my appropriation of an inaccessible (though infinitesimally prior) past in

which I "purely," without intention or interpretation, came upon the physical object. "Virtually both objective and subjective," the pen "is at its own moment actually and intrinsically neither. It has to be looked back upon and *used*, in order to be classed in either distinctive way." At the same time that I transport past impressions into the present as memories, I am producing the same past retrospectively. Using the pen, I have, in a sense, already withdrawn from it. But the pen as a unit of pure experience repeats itself.[19] Your presence in the room would entail "a second subsequent experience, collateral and contemporary with the first subsequent one [*i.e.*, mine], in which a similar act of appropriation should occur" (1189).

The relationship between two minds, then, may simply be an externalization of the relationship between one mind and its past. James writes: "To be 'conscious' means not simply to be, but to be reported, known, to have awareness of one's being added to that being; and this is just what happens when the appropriative experience supervenes" ("How Two Minds" 1190). An experience is not complete until it has been remembered and classified, so all experience is reflection. There are glitches in the appropriative process, though. Habitual procedures are "not attended to" in consciousness (*PBC* 143; Ashton 307). Since the present tense of *The Making of Americans* forbids recollection or repetition, it would not allow experiences to be filed as experiences, either (*LIA* 177–78; Ashton 312). Therefore, a second person or device has to do the "reporting" and verification on one's behalf. To have someone's eyes examined is to have it on good authority that the person *has been seeing*, or not. Radical empiricism thus has an element

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[19] The phrasing is James's (1188). It is less precise to say that things repeat themselves 'like people' than that the repetition, or iterability, of inanimate things is one basis for understanding people (cf. *PBC* 138; *WPE* 1168–69). Iterability is, of course, Derrida's word (*Limited Inc* 7–8).

of persuasion. If we take James at his word when it comes to units of pure experience, there is a performative component to the way things and people "get themselves made," too ("How Two Minds" 1190). By this token, knowledge "of acquaintance" is an unverifiable chain, with the ensuing demand for reporting requiring its own evidence.

That said, neither James nor Stein is a radical skeptic.[20] The fact that people have mental lives of their own need not be constantly reestablished. For Stein, it is usually enough to allow the recognition of alterity to come in periodic shocks. Here is the sentence that follows the eye-examination episode:

> You know it then yes but *you do not really know it as a continuous knowing* in you for then in living always you are feeling that some one else is understanding, feeling seeing something the way you are feeling, seeing, understanding that thing, and always it is a shock to you sometime with every one you are ever knowing and many never really know it of any one that they are feeling, seeing, understanding a different way from them and this is very very common. (*MA* 430, emphasis added)

It is reasonable to assume other minds and other kinds exist (not to mention ethical, pluralistic, and so on). But it still comes as a "shock" to have the fact confirmed. As James writes, "It is only as altering my objects that I guess you to exist" (*WPE* 1177).

This passage in *The Making of Americans* suggests, contra Freud, that it can be shocking to learn that people are not automata and one's thoughts are not omnipotent (cf. *SE* 17: 226, 240; *CR* 441). What Stein calls "a continuous knowing" would be an unimpeded stream of consciousness: there is an experience followed by conscious

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[20] In "Is Life Worth Living?" James said that the feeling of faith in the other could be "its own verification" (*Writings, 1878-1899* 473; quoted in Thrailkill 233).

appropriation, followed by another experience whose content includes the prior act of appropriation. The stream is discontinuous in this case because there are too many conflicting "reports," and Stein's narrator no longer trusts herself to describe her habits of seeing to herself. Although it may seem strange that I find *The Making of Americans* a more representative Cavellian allegory than Cavell's model texts (i.e., Emerson's "Experience" and Henry James's "Beast in the Jungle"), *The Making* is a potent example of (one version of) pragmatist epistemology stretched to its limits. According to the stridently anti-phenomenological Jennifer Ashton, James overcame the shortcomings of a theory in which character is identical with experience, but Stein could not (until she discovered Whitehead's mathematical logic, that is) (Ashton 301–14).

Shock is a significant word in *The Making of Americans*. In the "Alfred Hersland and Julia Dehning" chapter, A woman named Edith writes a letter to her father telling him to stop giving her puritanical advice, for it was he who "had commenced in her the doing the things things that would disgrace her" (*MA* 489 [sic]). The words Edith's father used to justify abusing his daughter had been turned against him, and the "shock" of simply getting the letter leaves him permanently paralyzed. For many others, however, a shock will be submerged into "repeating being." The youth of David Hersland's generation find it shocking to be estranged from the culture at large, but the shock itself transforms "very slowly with constant repetition" into "a complete certain thing inside" them (484).

As we have noted in relation to Bollas's idiom, over a long enough span of time, what seemed like an aberration at the time may be part of a trend, or an idle hiccup. That was also the conclusion Emerson reached in "Experience." What remains consistent

about a person—what is "in" a person, Stein would say—elaborates itself over time, but not in the form of a narrative. A history of automatic acts (habitual or dissociative), then, can only be the story of the gaps and changes in between episodes of repeating. The narrator describes Martha Hersland as a child, playing with an umbrella until her loneliness became intolerable. Then the narrator reflects, "It is very hard telling from any incident in any one's living what kind of being they have in them." Right now, there is something "burst" inside Martha; in the grand scheme of "kinds in being," there might be anything (388).

That does not mean the novel makes no allowance for the unexpected. Stein carves out a space for "experiencing more than experiencing," which she also calls "the condition what as experience to them was without any condition" (780). The referent in that sentence is difficult to convey to those who do not know it intimately, but it is not outside discursivity altogether. It is an event that feels ("to them") entirely original, but it is readily anchorable to the known, repeating world. Stein has alluded to "spirituality and idealism" at the beginning of the paragraph, but she has treated those words as ephemisms or misnomers. Crucially, it is not subjective. The thing will continue to happen whether or not everyone is convinced of it.[21]

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[21] Cf. a late passage by James on objective reference: "Whosoever feels his experience to be something substitutional even while he has it, may be said to have an experience that reaches beyond itself. From inside of its own entity it says 'more,' and postulates reality existing elsewhere" (*WPE* 1171). Meyer reads her "what as experience to them was without any condition" as the inexplicable emergence of life, consciousness, or free will (intro. to *MA*, xxvii).

Stein shows the mark of her scientific training, and the pragmatic-modernist culture at large, when she makes this elusive happening an occasion for informal testing. Those lucky few inducted into more-than-experience explain what they went through, trying to prove it happened. The listeners reveal what kind of people they are by the way they respond: some believe the storyteller, others need more convincing, and others still wish they didn't have to listen to convoluted speeches. Furthermore, some people harbour the potential for this thing "in them," like one of the kinds of being: here is at least one condition in the realm of character.

The test impulse is not limited to extraordinary events. Outwardly banal situations regularly spin into frantic questioning. We have already witnessed this phenomenon in the story about the eye doctor. In the better-known, drawn-from-life anecdote in which Mrs. Redfern uncovers her husband's affair, we witness another slide from intuition and conviction into radical uncertainty. Mrs. Redfern (née Martha Hersland) finds a letter in her husband's portfolio, "in his writing." Finally, Mrs. Redfern "had her evidence" of what she already knew. But the evidence effectively disintegrates. The narrator reminds us that words lose their meaning and the sentiments behind them—not with the idle passing of time, but as a direct function of understanding. The emptying-out of language "happens" to the ones "having in them any real realization of the meaning of the words they are using" (*MA* 440–41). "Reality testing," according to Freud, proves to the ego that a loved object is gone (see *SE* 14: 244–45 and the previous chapter). Martha Redfern's version is torturously recursive. Evidence (unlike "seeing") is always indexical, or conjunctive; there is only evidence *of*. But there cannot be evidence that would do "full justice to conjunctive relations," since conjunction is always changing and

re-combining (*WPE* 1161 [pun unintended but fitting]). Whether the question boils down to "categories" or "hot feeling," and whether one is the addressee or a copyist, "there is in each case so complete a changing of experiencing in feeling and thinking, or in time or in something." With the dual instability of experience and meaning in mind, the narrator "begins again" with a description of Phillip Redfern, and everyone else (*MA* 441).

I am reminded of one of Emerson's self-exculpatory sayings: "I am always insincere, as always knowing there are other moods" ("NR" 587). Stein's "epistemology of moods," to revive Cavell's term, leaves her to oscillate between the flippancy of "Nominalist and Realist" and the pathos of "Experience." The narrator cannot describe the future or even the present with the breadth and precision she wishes. It is a practical paradox: a finite (because "complete") document of a population which changes continually (Ashton 296–97). Moreover, she cannot have the intimacy she had with individual ones with everyone. The typology she has constructed means that, as she says, "I can realize something of experiencing in some of them, in them as kinds of them but I am needing to have it in me as a complete thing of each one ever living and I I know I will not" (729 [*sic*]). Realizations, evidently, do not accumulate in a linear fashion like the number of kinds of people. Realizations may even be subtractive in relation to what one knows of a whole. "Knowing in a general way" is an obstacle to complete knowledge, not a foretaste thereof. Stein could only be certain about her classification if everyone repeated themselves perfectly. But repeating "always has in it a little changing" (191). Any repetition (or mental appropriation, in James's terms) is always minimally different by virtue of being a repetition, at some temporal or spatial distance from the

original. Stein invoked this principle when she told her lecture audiences there was "no repetition" in *The Making of Americans* at all (*MA* 191; *LIA* 177–80).

Perfect repetition would look the same as no repetition; that is, there would be unimaginable stasis. "Sometime then each of them will be dead and they each one will do no more repeating; there will then have been, there will then be a whole history of each one" (198 [sic]). Here, Stein offers two subtly different versions of the end of repeating. The past perfect implies some difference between the completion of the book and the future vantage point of the speaker. It implies a time after repeating or, at least, a time when *each* is no longer a meaningful unit. The formulation in the simple past is more ominous. Once repetition ends and history "has been," Stein would have erased herself along with everyone else.

The last movement of *The Making of Americans* takes up the problem of knowing someone completely when he is at the point of death. The narrator laments her failure to connect with the youngest David Hersland, or with any of the people she has watched and listened to over the years. "I cannot be feeling what way each one is experiencing," she confesses, as though she has forgotten or disavowed the earlier scenes of being possessed by ones-as-whole-ones. "I am in desolation and my eyes are large with needing weeping and I have a flush from feverish feeling…" (729). The narrator's dissociation is made literal when she gives herself a double pronoun, "I I" (the two occurrences in this passage are the only ones in the novel). It is an experience of self-abandonment quite the opposite of having a "whole being inside of me" earlier on (314).

"I am one knowing being a dead one and not being a living one," she continues. Herein lies a distinction between 'ordinary' mourning and Stein's suffering. We are far

afield of the sentimental topos of the scientist who becomes 'attached' to a research subject. As noted earlier, interformality refers to what transpires between idioms *as* idioms, below the exchange of ideas by subjects. David's history and his kind can only be decided with certainty once his life is over. Stein may be dissatisfied with the partial and general record she has managed to get, but the only way to know "in a more complete way" would be to join in his rhythms, to repeat his repeating. "Being a dead one," we can conclude, is perfectly repetitive.

Mimetic identification is the opposite of the "contemplative" stance detested by James and Lukács. Taken to its farthest extremes, it destroys the subject. Stein's monologue details the experience of not experiencing. Ironically, that experience is as vivid, haunting, and 'lived' as any other, or more so.[22] The chapter on David Hersland is a reflexive psychology, not to mention a reflexive narrative; parts of the "Martha" chapter were reflexive, as well. One wonders, though, if all that hand-wringing made the narrator any more responsive to David, or more precise in her realizations.

When Stein writes, "This then is attacking being to me, this then was the way it came first to be clear in me," the grammatical turns *to me* and *in me* produce the effect of a two-way exchange, as in her exchanges earlier in the Martha Hersland chapter (350). The present episode, however, is not intersubjective or interformal at all. The narrator is describing the brains (bottom natures, technically) of any number of people—a paradigmatic scene of "distanced observation and instrumental treatment of other individuals," not unlike the boy with his beetles and butterflies (Honneth, *Reification* 81; cf. *MA* 489–90).

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[22] In a late statement on conjunctive relations, James writes, "We ought to invoke higher principles of *dis*union also, to make our merely experienced *dis*junctions more truly real" (*WPE* 1164).

The narrator absents herself entirely from the last, shortest chapter, "History of a Family's Progress." In spite of the title, there are no character names to be found here. We find instead row upon row of ones—"some," "any" and "every"—and families, who repeat themselves together. Some are dead. Of those who are living, "It is certain that some will come to be realizing differences in kinds in men and women and will come to make lists of them and long lists of them and others will copy some of them of the lists of kinds in men and women and some will then make more lists of them…" (*MA* 909). Thus the history and classification of Americans could theoretically extend long into the future, even after the dissolution of the Dehning-Hersland clan. The next volumes would be written by will and automatism in tandem. The authors might be particular people with particular interests, but there is an impersonal force driving it all. Description happens; repetition and reproduction happen; differences among the copies call for more description. The structure of the text will take care of itself, as will the orderly configuration of kinds of people. As with any recursive writing, the only way to put it to a halt is by an act of will. Stein calls this point "where philosophy comes in" (*LIA* 157; see also Ashton 301–04). Her final decision to "stop continuing describing everything" is as much a personal, interested decision as it is a philosophical one (*LIA* 157).

Ogden, whom I cited at the beginning of this chapter, contends that American literary scholars tend to describe any given author's ties to ideological institutions (scientific, economic, and so on) as though they were describing the lingering effects of hypnotic suggestion.[23] Stein's early career helps us to reconsider the difference between experiments that are liberating and testing that is dispassionate and recursive, between the

[23] I cannot say whether this is a distinctively American or Americanist condition, or what Stein would say about that if it were the case.

ironist and the automaton (see Ronell, *Stupidity* 97–117). As an allegory of knowledge production, *The Making of Americans* teaches us that sophisticated judgments of character or method can be both conscious and compulsive (or compulsory). The literary theorist also faces resistance when she tries to write without repeating, albeit more in Sedgwick and Adam Frank's sense of avoiding "reflexive" "habits of argument" than in Stein's sense (*TF* 109; *LIA* 177–78). Thus, in a contemporary critic's portrait of herself sitting down to write, one can hear an echo of James on the neurobiology of habit: "The well-known pathways keep attracting me, despite all the will in the world" (Ogden 169).

3. Shocks of Recognition: The Thematic Apperception Test and the Melville Revival

For thousands of job applicants, troubled children, and criminal defendants every year, fate rests in the cards. The Thematic Apperception Test (TAT), like the better known Rorschach inkblot test, is one of a handful of twentieth-century psychological instruments that rely on unconscious projection. An examiner presents a set of cards to her subject, one by one. The subject to is asked describe each card or to make up a story about it. To a reticent subject, the experimenter might ask, "What would you call this story?" "How does it turn out?" or "What are the feelings of the wife?" A personality profile would be expected to crystallize in around an hour.[1] One need not have read too deeply in Freud or Kant to intuit the basic meaning of *projection*. When I project, I confuse my inner state with something outside me. Projection's equivalent in aesthetics is the pathetic fallacy, which, according to Victorian critics, marked flabby poetry and overly susceptible minds (Ruskin 158). I will be addressing the promiscuity of projection as it circles around Henry A. Murray, who was the primary author of the TAT as well as one of the most iconic Melville scholars of the twentieth century.

Murray was a conduit between midcentury social science and the burgeoning field of "American Renaissance" literary criticism. In many ways, he was a product of the

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[1] My description of TAT method comes from Henry Murray and Christiana Morgan's initial paper, "A Method for Investigating Fantasies" (in Murray, *Endeavors* 390–408) and their large-scale study at Harvard, *Explorations in Personality*. I have also consulted variations on the test by some of Murray's students and associates (Tomkins, *TAT*; Adorno et al.; Shneidman et al.) and archival research by Ellen Herman, Wesley Morgan and Lon Gieser, Rebecca Lemov and Peter Galison, as well as Murray's papers at Harvard.

same eclectic New England traditions I discussed in the previous chapters. His colleagues at Harvard described him as the successor to William James (which, during the heyday of behaviorism, was often meant as an insult); as well as scientific psychology and Jungian psychoanalysis, he was immersed in Bergson and Whitehead's theories of creative evolution.[2] Yet Murray may be more recognizable as an exponent of the culture-and-personality school of midcentury social science, even though he spent less time in those circles. The culture-and-personality school took Ruth Benedict's definition of culture as "personality writ large" as its central tenet, postulating that different types of societies produced different sorts of individuals, and stressing the role of education in establishing conventional sex roles and the like. Benedict herself used the TAT in her anthropological fieldwork.[3]

Americanist critics of the 1940s and 1950s shared social scientists' conviction that personality was a singular, endangered resource. There was a popular conception, from the Deweyan center and the Adornian left, that the Nazi or the Soviet subject was deficient in an essential reserve of individuality or creativity (Cohen-Cole; Turner). This thinking likely influenced Richard Chase, Lionel Trilling, and other literary critics who saw in Ishmael an admirable American ideologically flexibility (Castiglia, "Cold War Allegories" 223). Since the 1980s, historicist scholars have revisited and, in many cases, deflated the ambitions of the mid-century Melvilleans: thus, for instance, emphasizing Ishmael's liberalism was read as a form of American exceptionalism, and other principles behind the shaping of the canon were taken to naturalize the white masculine subject as

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[2] The behaviorist and animal researcher Karl Lashley, who never approved of Murray's direction for the Harvard Clinic, claimed that James had "done unparalleled harm to psychology" (Robinson 375).
[3] For more detailed accounts of the culture and personality movement, see Cohen-Cole, Elliott, and Herman. On the role of projective testing in the development of anthropology, see Lemov.

the national subject (e.g., Lauter; Spanos). I want to ask a different question about Murray's historical situation, vis-à-vis Melville: What happens when a textual allegory of reading is operationalized as an actual test of its readers? What does a commitment to literature as experience entail for the administration of literature?

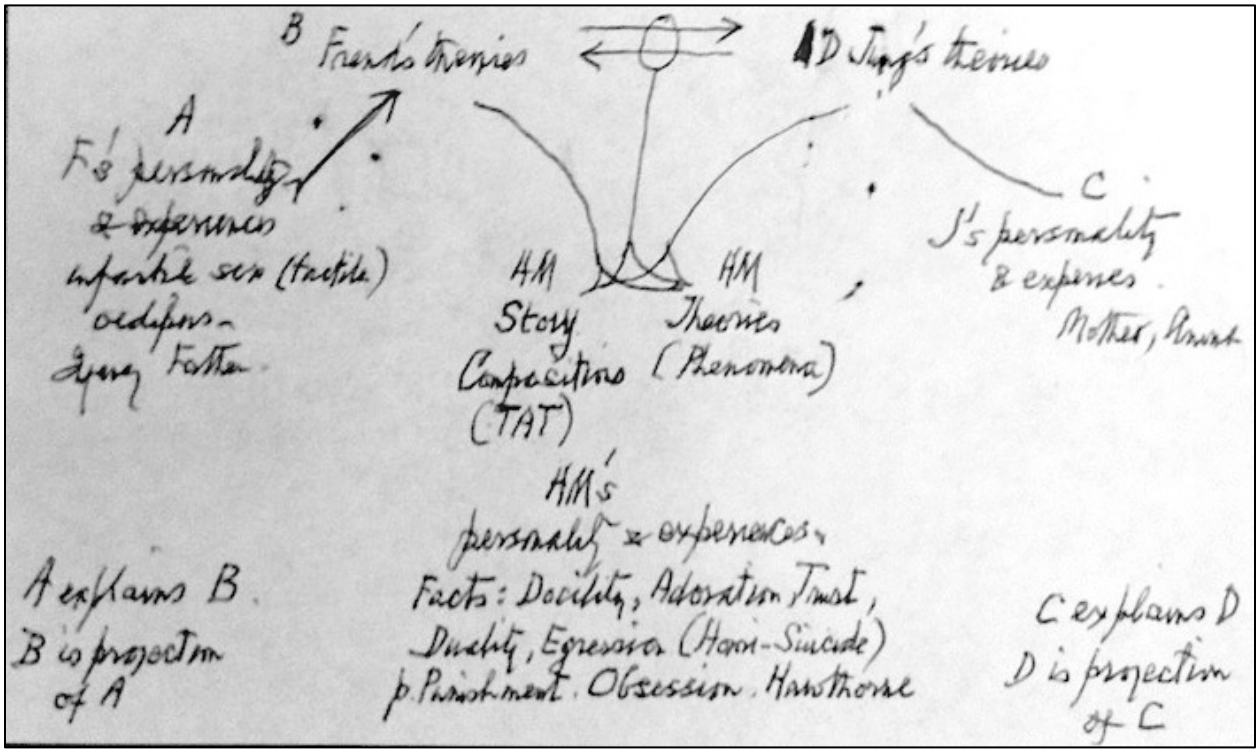

Figure 1. Card n.d. (c. 1971). Courtesy of Harvard University Archives

Murray read *Moby-Dick* shortly after finishing his medical degree, in 1924. He overwhelmingly credited *Moby-Dick* and *Pierre*, which he read the following year, with

his decision to change course from embryology to depth psychology. In 1925, he set out to write the definitive biography of Melville. But the project floundered as his career in psychology took off, and he left the thousand-page manuscript incomplete at the time of his death.

The extant papers suggest that writing the introduction was uniquely frustrating. He struggled with the introduction, in which he was to lay out his thesis, into his seventies. It was the early 1970s, and the insular field of psychoanalytic historiography had been unsettled by the cool, encyclopedic scholarship of Lancelot Whyte and Henri Ellenberger. Murray wanted to do something comparable with the Melville book. He was convinced that Melville had "invented" modern psychology, and that he could prove as much to empirically minded historians. He wrote in the double temporality of intellectual history and future-anterior fantasy. In some of the private notes in which he worked out his main argument, he resorted to reordering history: "[I]f Mardi, Moby Dick and Pierre had been ~~written~~ published a hundred years later—that is, in 1949, 1951, and 1952 respectively—scholars would be nearly unanimous in judging that Melville had plagiarized inordinately from Freud and Jung" (card n.d.).

Even more striking is a diagram he drew while he was plotting the argument of the introduction (figure 1). At the center of the index card are two sets of the initials "HM," for Herman Melville and Henry Murray (a coincidence to which he ascribed significance). Freud and Jung are on opposite sides of the card, exchanging ideas with one another and with the two HMs. Under one HM is written "Story / Compositions (TAT)"; beside it is the second HM, with "Theories (Phenomena)" appended. The implication is clear. Murray and Melville are interchangeable, as are the genres of

philosophical romance and personality test. What is remarkable here, apart from Murray's egotism, is the way the four creators are posited as influencing one another outside of time and unhindered by any problems of translation. The same way HM mirrors HM, there are two-directional arrows connecting Freud's theories and Jung's theories. Surely those two would have never have described each other so amicably. Finally, the unit "Freud's personality and experiences" is paired with Freud's theories (B), with a note that the former can explain the latter, and (or? whereas?) the latter is a projection of the former.

According to psychoanalytic lore, Murray came up with the idea for the TAT from a passage in *Moby-Dick* (Bollas, *EOW* 54). That was probably not the case.[4] Nevertheless, chapter 3 of *Moby-Dick* is a compact metaphor for the test as he represented it. An aimless Ishmael stands in the entrance to the Spouter-Inn in New Bedford. He contemplates a smeared, obscure oil painting—"enough to drive a nervous man distracted," though possessed of a sublimity "that fairly froze you to it, till you involuntarily took an oath with yourself to find out what that marvelous painting meant." All of a sudden, the likeness of a whale comes into view and brings the whole tableau, in *Gestalt* fashion, into clarity: "But stop; does it not bear a faint resemblance to a gigantic fish? even the great leviathan himself?" (*M-D* 13). What five glosses the narrator had previously suggested for the painting, rife with literary and mythical allusion, are

[4] Murray also said the idea for the TAT came from a scene in Thomas Wolfe's *Look Homeward, Angel*; at other times, he attributed it to a female graduate student, or to Morgan (Evans; Douglas; Gieser and Morgan 57–59). He claimed on another occasion that the doubloon in chapter 99 of *Moby-Dick* had been his inspiration (McAdams, foreword, *Explorations* xvi).

dismissed as "fancies."[5]

However, this passage only prefigures the TAT to the extent that it invites "you" to make of it what you will, with self-knowledge as a goal. Critics otherwise at odds with one another have shown the way Melville resists any cozy plurality of meanings (e.g., Johnson, "Melville's Fist"; Spanos). Today, we would be more likely to say that Murray's comparing the Spouter-Inn scene to a personality test was itself symptomatic. It might recall a pre-New Critical paradigm associated with I. A. Richards (whom Murray knew and admired), or a Deweyan pedagogical method, with its appeal to singular experience and to the practical applicability of literary works. A critic as adamant as Walter Benn Michaels might argue that the TAT is the logical conclusion of any system that appeals to readers' impressions of a text. For Michaels, any attempt to interpret a work without consideration for the author's intention amounts to interpreting the differences between readers: "The relevant question…will not be whether any individual response is right or wrong but whether it is normal or abnormal" (73). (His fear is of a toothless identity politics, not psychiatric power.) Apart from Murray's cultural position, the genre of the philosophical romance is not incidental to the construction of reading as a test. New formalist scholarship has shown that apparently subjective domains—experience, affect, attention, and so forth—are formal predicates of any given work (at least partly so), and that the values associated with those terms evolved in tandem with nineteenth-century genres.[6] As I will show, certain historicist and formalist thematics intersect around the idea of the test or the test-like in Melville.

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[5] The word echoes Samuel Taylor Coleridge's denigration of fancy as a conventional copy of the living, symbolic imagination (304–05). On the American reception of the symbol/allegory distinction, see Matthiessen.

[6] See, for instance, Theo Davis, Grimstad, and Ngai.

Queer theory has been one domain where the reader's projections have not been regarded as transparent, nor as trite, as they were within the New Criticism or the New Historicism. Whereas one application of Foucault insists upon the difference between time periods or epistemes (i.e., before and after psychiatry's "invention" of the homosexual), another cautiously admits cross-temporal analogies and fantasy. Generations' worth of these debates have taken Melville as their case in point. In the early 1990s, James Creech insisted upon "the centrality of projection and identification for gay and lesbian studies," in a volume on "gay reading" which took *Pierre* as its centerpiece (Creech 43). He argues that *Pierre* was addressed to a subculture that did not officially know itself as such, and that the city scenes were full of signs that gay men of the 1850s would have known how to read. For contemporary readers, though, these signs refer not to a definite meaning (a male brothel, for example), but to the mere existence of a code.

Since Creech's early contribution to queer theory, some practitioners have gone so far as to replace or supplement the word *reading* with something more intimate, touching the text, or engaging it in a "hermeneutic friendship" or even a "mutual pedagogy of erotics."[7] These tactile bonds abide by different epistemic rules than reading, to the extent that they do not require any decoding, or fusing of horizons, or disentangling performative from constative statements. Collectively, the constitute one version of the turn toward "uncritical" reading I mentioned in the last chapter (see Warner; Best and Marcus). Sedgwick, who is invoked most often invoked in the turn away from the

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[7] On the modalities of touch, see Sedgwick (*TF* 124–25) "Hermeneutic friendship" is Allen Grossman's phrase (quoted in Love, *Feeling Backward* 89). "Mutual pedagogy of erotics" is Anne Anlin Cheng's (quoted in Best and Marcus 9).

hermeneutics of suspicion, bears a special mention here. During what she called her own paranoid phrase, Sedgwick discerned that homoerotic desire and homophobia often share the same structure, that of a falsely imposed symmetry. Of Melville's *Billy Budd*, she writes, "'It takes one to know one' is [paranoia's] epistemological principle, for it is able…to form no conception of an unreciprocated emotion" (*EC* 100). Later, Sedgwick would observe that anti-homophobic critics often assume the same "reflexive and mimetic," takes-one-to-know-one posture (*TF* 127, 131). In the remainder of this chapter, I examine some ambiguous cases surrounding Melville and Murray.

II.

Murray's life and the broader Melville revival were dizzy circuits of projection and identification. "Herman Melville" was the imaginary third in Murray's forty-year-long affair with Christiana Morgan, a self-styled visionary and significant contributor to the TAT. Their adulterous and sadomasochistic relationship spilled over into the corridors at Harvard. Murray and Morgan's affair has already flummoxed many an attempt to write a respectable history of the test, or, for that matter, a feminist counter-history.[8] In a journal they kept together, Morgan wrote: "For a year I shall become Melville. I shall think, read, feel, know nothing but Melville. My God demands it" (25 Jan. 1938, quoted in Douglas 265). Murray, sometimes in drag, would flagellate

[8] Morgan introduced Murray to Jung and Bergson, worked in the Harvard lab as a lay researcher, and drew several TAT cards inspired by her visions. Her theoretical contributions to personality study are contentious for empirical and political reasons (see Douglas; Morgan 238–39).

"Melville" in the hope of triggering one of her visions, which, in turn, would inspire him to do better on the Melville book. When Melville was not incarnated in either Morgan or Murray, he was figured as an erotic rival: at least once, Murray "ordered [Morgan] to insist he choose between Melville and her" (Douglas 266, 306; Robinson 253–57). He never did choose, nor finish the book.

Murray and Morgan's fantasy life was an oasis within an increasingly insular and professionalized academy. Melville's presence in these fantasies, no mere eccentricity, was a sign of a larger phenomenon in the emerging field of American studies. Claiming a deep identification with Melville was a badge of authenticity among men who might have been labeled armchair critics (even if, in Murray's case, they were allied with other hegemonic institutions). Most of the genealogies of American studies and of Melville scholarship that emerged in the wake of the New Historicism and the New Americanist movement of the 1980s, present the 1940s as a repressive moment in criticism. F. O. Matthiessen's *American Renaissance*, from 1941, is still the defining scholarly work of the period. In the shadow of Matthiessen's suicide, critics could claim quite persuasively that homophobia and anti-communism were the inaugurating conditions for American studies as a discipline (Abelove 68–69). Murray was one of several conservative Freudian readers of *Moby-Dick* and *Pierre*. Even Olson, the most experimental member of the cohort, loathed Melville's "soft" and "hermaphroditical" characters (Abelove 64).

Murray's letters to Olson rivaled his exchanges with Christiana Morgan for their ardor. After reading the manuscript of Olson's *Call Me Ishmael*, Murray effused to him, "Its [sic] not only a book about him but it is written by one possessed of his spirit" (1 Oct.

1945, quoted in Spark 415–16).[9] Closer to Olson's publication date, Murray wrote, "I shall take it [*Ishmael*] in a corner, & smack my lips over it, & chew the cud, & inwardly digest it, & brood upon its magnificently uttered truth" (28 July 1946, quoted in Spark 416–17). He apologized for the slow progress he was making on the introduction to *Pierre*, comparing that essay to a fart and an emetic (1947, in Spark 505).

Olson, for his part, wrote the poem *à clef* "Letter for Melville 1951" as a paean to the older men who had sired him into the archive. The poem demarcates distinct generations of readers by way of intimacy between men, or lack thereof. But its sexual characterizations are primarily a litmus test to determine who, among a crowd gathered for the centenary of *Moby-Dick*, had the right to Melville. It was a right earned through passionate identification. The current crop of academics—fathers or closet cases, it made no difference—fussed about traffic and catering at the conference. Those who could be sincerely transformed by a book "do not come to banquets"; further,

> Nathaniel Hawthorne
>
> whom Herman Melville loved
>
> will not come, nor Raymond Weaver
>
> who loved them both because they loved each other. (Olson 239)

Weaver, Melville's first biographer-critic, is said to follow Melville (by not attending either) and invert the historical record (by making Melville the 'beloved'). An imagined fraternity across critics of different generations challenges the hypothesis of a divide between the first (liberal) and the second (conservative) Melville revivals. His take on homoeroticism in this poem departs from the tirade against "amorous" or sexually

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[9] In the same letter, Murray sketched a triangle with Shakespeare, Melville, and Olson occupying the corners, as though the three writers were joined in "an identification" (1 Oct. 1945, in Spark 415–16).

fixated critics in *Call Me Ishmael* (Abelove 64). Weaver belongs at the conference because he was an amorous reader.[10] The same goes for Murray, whom Olson does not resent for going to the conference:

> And there is he, the doctor, whom I love
> and by his presence side by side with you
> will speak for Melville and myself, he
> who was himself saved… (239)

These lines give an embellished account of Murray's discovery of Melville. A young doctor at the time, he had assisted in an emergency surgery on a leisure cruise to Europe, and been given a copy of *Moby-Dick* as a token of appreciation (see Robinson 1–2). Olson's version is a heroic conversion narrative, and one more opportunity for him and "Harry" to alternate between being Melville, representing Melville, and being Melville's lover.

These webs of affiliation and identification were erased from the academy in the postwar years, as some accounts of American literary studies would have it. Instead, they were dispersed across the disciplines. In another study of successive generations of Melville scholarship, this one attempting less of a structural and more of a personal accounting, Andrew DuBois describes some of the outliers in their respective milieux. DuBois includes Olson, but not Murray, among the ranks of critics who pushed the boundaries of scholarly writing (others include C. L. R. James, Frank Lentricchia, and Susan Howe). Those critics' presentation of Melville was meticulously researched yet profoundly idiosyncratic; as DuBois writes, their "extreme personal relationship" to the

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[10] Weaver, Melville's first biographer, was called a "dandy with a bishop's voice"; he died in 1948 (Weiss n.p.).

novelist is "manifest as a matter of style" (50). Murray belongs to this group of overly invested readers for the same reason he could be identified with the "formalism" Sedgwick associates with "becoming a perverse reader," and with the same caveat (*Tendencies* 3–4). That is, Murray stylized his personal relationship with Melville most compellingly in his psychological tests.

III.

Murray produced the first scholarly edition of Melville's *Pierre; or, The Ambiguities* in 1949. The pragmatist in him surely approved of Melville's declaration that "nature" is "the mere supplier of that cunning alphabet, whereby selecting and combining as he pleases, each man reads his own peculiar lesson according to his own peculiar mind and mood" (*P* 342). That conclusion comes as the antithesis to an Emersonian theory of correspondence which held that one could access divine laws by intuition alone. Murray's reading of *Pierre* hovers between these two concepts of unconscious creativity, just as, methodologically, he hovered between being a Jungian and a process philosopher. According to him, *Pierre* exhibited "the basic type of apperception, a consequence of the narcistic [sic] and egocentric orientation of every living creature" (Murray, Intro., xxxii).

When the young, idle Pierre Glendinning glimpses the woman who will claim to be his long-lost sister, her face attracts him for its very lack of qualities. Pierre's curiosity "did not so much appear to be embodied in the mournful person of the olive girl, as by some radiations from her, embodied in the vague conceits which agitated his own soul"

(*P*, 51). When Pierre learns that his dead father (also named Pierre Glendinning) may have fathered the woman out of wedlock, he cannot look at the "chair"-portrait of his father in the same way. Murray explains the transformation in light of the young man's ambivalence: "The concealed, denied, and sinister elements [of his father's likeness] come to the top; the habitually exhibited, good features are no longer apparent" (Intro., xlv–xlvii). That is half the story, for Pierre is just as much the object of others' projections. Here, he stares at the chair-portrait, which has just addressed him by name:

> Now his remotest infantile reminiscences—the wandering mind of his father—the empty hand, and the ashen—the strange story of Aunt Dorothea—the mystical midnight suggestions of the portrait itself; and, above all, his mother's intuitive aversion [to the portrait], all, all overwhelmed him with reciprocal testimonies. And now, by irresistible intuitions, all that had been inexplicably mysterious to him in the portrait, and all that had been inexplicably familiar in the face, most magically these now coincided; the merriness of the one not inharmonious with the mournfulness of the other, but by some ineffable correlativeness, they reciprocally identified each other, and, as it were, melted into each other, and thus interpenetratingly uniting, presented lineaments of an added supernaturalness. (*P*, 85)

In a "reciprocal testimony," each disclosure is the condition or the proof of the other one. Pierre's vague memories contextualize Dorothea's story about the chair-portrait, which in turn explains his mother's distaste for it; the portrait confirms Dorothea's story, and

Dorothea's story corroborates what the figure in the painting literally says. Each piece is evidence of a father's betrayal, but if any of the pieces were to be erased or discredited, the whole chain would collapse. Pierre himself is hardly present in the passage. He is one link in a chain of "ineffable" similarities and associations.

Murray's contribution to a text that so insistently unravels its own psychological plot verges on redundancy. Indeed, there is a hint of exhaustion in the text's insistence on naming projections as projections. Pierre accepts Isabel as a sister largely on the evidence of talking pictures and hallucinatory visions. By the end of the novel, the fact that "mind and mood" (ours and others', sedimented in the names of things) interpose between ourselves and things-in-themselves is no longer in question. Controlling and reorienting the line of sight has become the urgent matter. By inserting Hawthorne into the plot of *Pierre*, Murray finally hints at the difference between mere projection and the formalism of the test. Contrary to the textual record, he always depicted Hawthorne as the reader and "analyst" of Melville, and never the other way around. To read like Hawthorne was to be lucid and levelheaded at best (as Murray described his friend Lewis Mumford's book on Melville [Robinson 139-40]), or at worst, "pitiless," "aloof" and "voyeuristic" (as he described a Hawthorne figure in *Pierre* [Murray, intro., lxxvii-ix]). In a characteristic mix of textual scholarship and psycho-biographical speculation, Murray decided that Plotinus Plinlimmon, the mystic whom Pierre meets in his exile, was the Hawthorne to Pierre's Melville. Just as Hawthorne had drawn out Melville's darkest fantasies while revealing very little of himself, Plinlimmon sees through Pierre's façade of married life to his incestuous thoughts. Murray is almost offended by Plinlimmon's prying, though the character asks very little. Plinlimmon is "separate and apart," neither

resembling other men nor different from them in any positive aspect (*P*, 291, 293). In that regard, he is a purer surface than Isabel or the man in the chair-portrait, who mislead Pierre because they resemble too many objects. He makes other men believe they have been read, and mull over their sins with his image in mind.

A late chapter begins with a note that "accidental congeniality" is the primary reason any given painting will move someone at a given time (*P*, 350). Since *congeniality* also means being of the same *genius*, or birth, the advice to be skeptical about aesthetic judgments applies to determinations of kinship, too, especially when the determination has been based upon a painting. Lucy, Pierre's onetime fiancée, eventually joins Pierre in his exilic life and pretends to be his cousin. Isabel is still his "wife" for outward purposes, though she calls herself Pierre's sister. The doomed trio visit a gallery, where Pierre and Isabel are both taken aback by the portrait of an unknown European man. Isabel sees a resemblance to herself, and to the long-lost man whom, in her infancy, she had called father. To Pierre, the painting is a near duplicate of the "chair-portrait" he burned, though it does not remind him of his real father at all. Before that, however, each privately assumes their thoughts have converged: "Isabel's fervid exclamations having reference to the living face, were now, as it were, mechanically responded to by Pierre, in syllables having reference to the chair-portrait" (352). What passes for conversation are separate monologues, directed toward separate mental images, which cross at the site of the painting.

Moving from an "accidental" relation to a "mechanical" one represents a further straitening, a limit on even the contingency of associations. The earlier chiastic situation in which the man in the chair-portrait and Isabel seemed to "reciprocally identify" one

another before Pierre's eyes is multiplied in the gallery scene, where the painting of the European stranger seems to be talking with the painting on the opposite wall, "over and across the heads of the living spectators below" (*P*, 85, 351).[11] The architecture of the gallery is as much a scaffold to Pierre's vision as his mind or mood. Melville's warnings about projective delusions notwithstanding, the "contradiction" between Pierre and Isabel's thoughts goes unnoticed. Perhaps the narrator should be worried less about the overdetermination of the external world than the underdetermination of the interior. Melville's better known example of personality unmoored by a reflex comes in *Billy Budd*, where the angelic sailor strikes John Claggart dead because he was tongue-tied. As in the gallery scene above, a possibly mindless act is embedded in a chiasmus, so that personality in general, not just Billy's, comes unglued from persons: "Innocence and guilt personified in Claggart and Budd in effect changed places" (Melville, *BB* 380). Captain Vere reacts to Billy's contrariness by insisting upon absolute judgments. Whenever Billy acts in an "equivocal" manner, the men aboard the *Bellipotent* continue to test his character, each time with higher stakes and less room for interpretation.[12] *Pierre* does not hold its figures to nearly so high a standard of truth. The gallery scene just described inverts the scene of "reciprocal identification" in Pierre's closet (*P*, 85). It should put Pierre and Isabel's charade to an end, but it does not. Pierre silences his doubts about Isabel's identity. What little he knows of her is made to cohere by virtue of incoherence.

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[11] In this regard, Sianne Ngai's remark about the dynamics of projection in *The Confidence-Man* is apropos: Melville interrupts the imaginary circuit of sympathy and empathy "not by challenging its principle of reflexivity but by amplifying it" (82–83)

[12] Avital Ronell calls *Billy Budd* "Melville's great allegory of testing" as part of a commentary on Johnson and de Man (*Stupidity* 100).

Isabel's contrary performances "mutually neutralize" each other in his memory, suggesting, again, that the chiasmus is more powerful than its content (*P*, 354-55).

One cannot always tell whether Pierre has projected his mood onto the landscape, or, alternatively, whether a symbol required a person to flesh itself out. Michael Snediker describes this nonchalance in Melville's figuration as "pathetic fallacy in reverse" ("Non-Transparencies" 225). Snediker claims *Pierre* instantiates a concept of figure or person (but not *subject*) that would admit to the posited or derived status of personhood, yet sustain those things that make particular personalities irreplaceable. His queer formalism would differ from Barbara Johnson's reading of *Billy Budd*, for instance, in maintaining that one need not choose between the real and the projected or constructed. That playful, willfully errant spirit infuses, as well, Murray's diagrammatic union with the other HM (figure 1, above) and the intergenerational conversations in Olson's "Letter for Melville 1951."

While it is true that *Pierre* multiplies the forms and degrees personification can take (another painting in the gallery is "half-identical with, and half-analogous to" the doomed noblewoman it depicts [351]), it restricts the positions available to the reader or viewer. Murray is right to be suspicious of Plinlimmon, the passive screen who compels Pierre's interest and turns that scrutiny back upon him (see also Dimock 172). It was a motif he literalized in the projective test, with varying levels of tolerance for ambiguity.

IV.

Melville coined the phrase "shock of recognition" in "Hawthorne and His Mosses," his 1850 newspaper review turned literary manifesto ("Mosses" 249). Literary history has reversed the thrust of the article such that it is now read as a declaration of Melville's own genius, an imposition of Melville's aesthetic on the earlier storyteller, or as an unmasking of the literary nationalism the article seemed to endorse (Tompkins; Wald). The phrase "shock of recognition" has been reoriented, too. Following Edmund Wilson—another midcentury, "vulgar" Freudian—it has been widely understood to mean Melville was shocked by something he detected in *Mosses from an Old Manse*. Murray used the same phrase to describe reading *Moby-Dick* for the first time, at sea (Murray, *Endeavors* 82; Robinson 2, 111, 114). However, Melville's metaphor actually originates in a demonstration of static electricity which had been popular in the early nineteenth century. In short, a group of people would hold hands, and one of them would touch a jar made from glass and metal; the shock would move through all of the bodies (Harrison Hayford in *M-D* 861). "Mosses," then, calls upon readers to transmit Hawthorne's genius the world over and convey the shock of recognition ("those grateful impulses") back to Hawthorne. Whether the Freudo-Hegelian sense of "shock of recognition" has any bearing on Melville's oeuvre represents the classic New Critical conundrum over the intentional fallacy.[13] In this case, selecting the now commonsensical gloss (reader gets shocked) over the now obscure one (reader shocks author approvingly) is wholly in agreement with the logic of the projective test.

A story by Hawthorne himself, "The Minister's Black Veil," actually formed the basis of a projective test. It was conducted by a researcher named David Wheeler around

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[13] For the New Critical context, see Michaels (106–08) and Davis (12–19). Contrary arguments include Deming's (esp. chap. 3).

1936, under Murray's supervision.[14] The "Minister" test was part of an elaborate study of fifty young men, a mix of Harvard undergraduates and unemployed men in the Cambridge area. It was the most exhaustive study in humanistic psychology to date. For "Minister," the subjects heard the beginning of the story in telegraphic form: "A minister...appears in the pulpit one Sunday morning wearing a black veil over his face, and for a long time thereafter is never seen without it" (Murray, *Explorations* 548–50). The few who recognized the story were told to disregard what scant detail they remembered. They had about forty-five minutes to complete the story in an original prose composition.[15] Stories about the minister's sexual guilt were plentiful, as the team had expected. The authors were all assumed to be making a displaced personal confession. The out-of-work twenty-four-year-old engineer selected to be *Explorations in Personality*'s centerpiece—"The Case of Earnst"—wrote that the townsfolk lose interest in the veiled Parson Snow ("his features secluded like those of a harem beauty"), until Snow skips town, a government agent on his tail. The story ends as the agent reveals the parson's true identity: "He's 'Preacher' Dan Morgan, and is wanted by the Federal Government…. I've been after that bird a long time and I was already to gather him under my wing. My wing will reach out and gather him in, you'll see!" Dr. Wheeler noted procedurally that Parson Snow represented Earnst's father, according to the Oedipal formula (*Explorations* 681–84).

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[14] Although Murray discusses the test in one of his publications, there is no record of him conducting it (*Endeavors* 378). Lemov notes that "Minister" was used in anthropological efforts as late as the 1940s and 1950s (262).

[15] Rewriting a short story made for unorthodox psychology during the 1930s, when behaviorism was ascendant, but it would not have been out of place in a Progressive classroom at the time (see, e.g., Rosenblatt).

More interesting than *Explorations*' trite Freudianism is the obviousness of its gambit. Hawthorne's works lend themselves to depth psychology just as easily as they lend themselves to historicist critiques thereof (T. Davis 77–78). While seemingly evidence for the primacy of the "administrator's black veil"—the institutional use of literature as a technology of confession—over and against the wiliness of figuration, what is peculiar about the scene is the inseparability of the regulatory and the rhetorical. What we might call its queerness falls between the disciplinary discourses.[16] As Johnson has observed, Parson Hooper's parishioners do not so much learn how to read allegorically as learn that they must. Believing that the veil has any meaning is the condition (Johnson's word is *test*) of social belonging ("Teaching Deconstructively" 147–48). Learning to describe a reader would be fully within the parameters of the metaphorical blindness.

In an analysis of Hawthorne's allegorical modes, Theo Davis describes the black veil as an emblem, that is, an allegorical image which explicates itself in a sequence of new, increasingly literal images. Hawthorne shifts most of the burden of literalizing the emblem to the reader, who, in retelling the story, compounds Hawthorne's figures with his or her own (80–85). Even remaining faithful to Hawthorne's allegory, one necessarily turns toward the reading experience and thus to a certain subjectivism. The original tale ends with the minister's dying words: "I look around me, and lo! on every visage a Black Veil!" (Hawthorne n.p.). Hooper "looking around" anticipates the Harvard Clinic application of the story, where the person asked to interpret the veiling becomes the final object of analysis. In line with Davis's findings, Earnst re-figures the black veil by transforming it in stages. It becomes a feminizing "harem" garment and then a wing. Dr.

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[16] "The Administrator's Black Veil" was the title of D. A. Miller's historicist critique of J. Hillis Miller's deconstructive reading of the Hawthorne story.

Wheeler, called upon to decipher Earnst's figures, refers to a different set of pictures and stories (Earnst's TAT results, as it happened). The next emblem in the series is probably the closet. Hawthorne's insinuations of secrecy and shame were gradually solidifying into a catalogue of sexual types, which would culminate in the far less pluralistic psychology of the McCarthy era. Still, one would be hard pressed to find the exercise sinister or demeaning. It may be trite, at worst. Seeing as the unfinished or endlessly reversible nature of the "Veil" defers an authoritative judgment on Earnst, it would seem that having recourse to a notion of ambiguity is a trap and an escape hatch.

That a degree of literariness is a buffer against the test's power will be even more apparent when "Veil" is contrasted with another method in the *Explorations* battery. The subjects in this "Emotional Conditioning Test" listened to disconnected words and responded with the first thing that came to mind.[17] In a Pavlovian twist on a then-common word-association test, one word, repeated at random intervals, was followed by a painful shock to the leg. In the series Murray supervised, that word was *night*. The men wore a galvanometer that tracked changes in the electrical conductivity of the skin, believed to indicate fluctuations in mood. The researchers expected to see a peak when a subject heard the shock-forewarning *night* or any other word that made him anxious. Among a few dozen men tested, Earnst had the third-strongest physiological reaction to the word *homosexual*. That was also the first word he recalled six months later. He "still resented" the exercise, as researcher Carl Smith notes duly (*Explorations* 669).

The research team had tried to get behind Earnst's conscious self-presentation by recording his immediate, somatic reactions to the words. This part of the test was

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[17] The original word list (without *homosexual*, *cheating* or *coward*) comes from a vocational test manual (O'Connor 43).

ostensibly objective. An experimenter does not mean anything in particular when he or she reads a list of stimulus words. Nevertheless, the word *homosexual* could not have done its work without referring to something (as opposed to *night*). In stripping away the trappings of interpretation and indeterminacy, the experimenters come closer to the work of Melville or Hawthorne than the gentler tests which cited those authors directly. The word *homosexual* functioned almost like the electric shock. Meanwhile, a spike on Earnst's galvanograph reading is treated as though it were a verbal answer: Earnst, like Billy Budd, "does not mean to mean" (Johnson, "Melville's Fist" 575). Those inclined to see Earnst as conned or violated by the whole affair may extend the same unease to any literary-critical paradigm that admits of non-semantic meanings, be it a discourse of affect and identification or an anti-internalist concept of performative force.[18] Yet for all the test's offensiveness, its challenge stands: it *is* hard to tell intentional and accidental phenomena apart. The sensation of meaning emerges from rapid alternation between the roles of author and interpreter.[19]

With that disturbing episode in mind, I want to return to a very different scene of reading, during the early years of contention between gay studies and queer theory. Creech explains that Melville broadcast homoerotic signs "to anyone able, precisely, to identify with them." Thus he can say without fear of anachronism that the "right audience" for *Pierre* is precisely himself (56). This heroic version of reception theory

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[18] One of the exercises the New Critics marshaled against the affective fallacy was another galvanic skin response test, sans electrical shocks (Michaels 72–73; Wimsatt 31).

[19] "Sensation of meaning" is Orrin Wang's phrase for reading-like situations that do not meet the criteria for intentional communication. Commenting on Michaels's refusal of the challenge posed by Wordsworthian—or Melvillean—speaking rocks and mechanical utterances, Wang argues that "the very instability of subjective feeling and objective world…makes the sensation of meaning something else besides the despotism of the subject position" (135). That is the case, I would suggest, even in a test aiming to impose and codify personality types.

partakes in the same reciprocal "shock" of recognition that made Melville and Hawthorne so useful to the test movement.

As one commentator observes, there is "only an affective distance" between Sedgwick's two modalities of projection, that is, between the paranoid/phobic and the identificatory/camp (François, "Late Exercises" 38). The affective distance is consequential, though, in practice if not always in theory. I have placed the galvanic skin response test alongside the TAT and the "Minister's Black Veil" test in order to draw attention to Murray's stamp (and the Clinic's *Moby-Dick*-inspired crest) on each of them, but also to convey their differences. A veil is not the same as a shock.[20] Even if Murray had not been at the helm of both operations, a large body of historicist and Foucauldian criticism would encourage us to see both modes of testing the same way. But that heuristic leaves us little room to describe the synchronicity between some, but not all, of the tests with liberal and identitarian theories of reading. Nor will a broad challenge to psychiatric norms account for the experiential difference between the tests. Earnst hated the shock exercise, but he chuckled as he recollected the TAT (*Explorations* 625–27).[21]

In this chapter, I have tried to expand the range of positions opened up in the interstice between the first wave of American studies and the personality test movement. Queer theory's expansive notion of formalism allows us to describe the way a cohort of mostly heterosexist researchers deformed literary history for their own queer purposes. At the same time, formalism (or what de Man would call formalization [*RR*, chap. 10]) is

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[20] Even a shock is not "the transparently aversive stimulus par excellence," as Sedgwick and Adam Frank observe. Silvan Tomkins, who worked under Murray and wrote an early TAT manual in the 1940s, recorded a wide variety of affective and verbal responses to the electric shock (*TF* 104).

[21] On laughter, objectivity, and feminist science studies, see Wilson's comments on Stengers ("Scientific Interest").

also the principle by which identification makes itself available as a measurable property of any document.

4. Method and Mimicry: Adorno with Nabokov

In his posthumously published *Aesthetic Theory*, Theodor Adorno quipped, "Artworks are not Thematic Apperception Tests of their makers" (*Aesthetic Theory* 7–8). The depth hermeneutic for which Henry Murray and Christiana Morgan's projective test stood could not account for aesthetic form, in which the "objective" aspect of the work of art lay. Even though psychological testing serves here as the antithesis of aesthetics, it nonetheless has a role in the *Aesthetic Theory*, as well as Adorno's other philosophical and hybrid critical works. The TAT belongs to a catalogue of administered "subjective" experiences, which also includes radio programming, the horoscopes in the *Los Angeles Times*, ego psychology and I.Q. tests. Yet Adorno and his colleagues also used the TAT seriously in *The Authoritarian Personality* (1950), capping off more than a decade of research on character profiles and aesthetic response. The test is an intertext of the Frankfurt School critical project, however instrumental or accidental its usage may appear, and however frequently it is marshaled as an antithetical or bad example.

In the last chapter, I discussed some of the contradictions surrounding the TAT and similar experiments: "type" thinking coexisted easily with romantic individualism, as did Swedenborgian correspondence theory alongside a relativistic theory of interpretation. All of those contradictions reappear in harsh light when Adorno attempts to use the methods of humanistic psychology against itself. Testing—the formal and the informal, ubiquitous kinds—made it harder to elevate the concepts of "physiognomy"

and "mimesis" using the dialectical method. Inversely, Vladimir Nabokov tries to incorporate the psychological test into *Pnin* (1957) without letting it encroach upon the novel's aesthetic values. Although the novelist is in many respects a foil for Adorno, I demonstrate that his fiction is equally troubled by the methodization of aesthetic experience, while posing the impossibility of sustaining that objection. *Pnin* also makes visible certain improprieties of the test situation—fleeting encounters associated with queerness, if not necessarily with queer personalities or with the test-work of critique.

The Frankfurt program for dialectically working through the matter one receives from the outside world tends to disavow those encounters (which I will call phenomenophilic, following Rei Terada). In Horkheimer and Adorno's "Elements of Anti-Semitism" chapter, for instance, "genuine" and self-conscious projection is nothing short of an ethical imperative toward the other. As Michael Taussig writes, the mimetic faculty "alerts one to the contractual element of the visual contract with reality" (*DE* 154; Taussig 70). Unresponsive (if not irresponsible) vision may be the only alternative where seeing or reading is primarily a test, or, more generally, an obligation under an intolerable contract.

1.

The trajectory that brought Adorno and his fellow expatriates into contact with the para-psychoanalytic movements I discussed in the previous chapter was not direct or obvious. In 1938, Adorno was hired by the Princeton Radio Research Project, an

initiative of the Rockefeller Foundation, to improve measures of audience engagement. The essays in *Current of Music* (1938-41, incomplete) document his evolution from what he would later call "administrative" research to a multifaceted investigation of the radio's role in shaping ideology and transforming the phenomenology of listening.[1] I focus here on Adorno's discussion of nonmusical radio listening, particularly a lecture he delivered to the psychology faculty at Princeton in 1938. While staying within the genre of the research abstract, he twists the language of conventional psychology and anticipates more dramatic clashes between "method" and "mimesis."

Adorno introduced his radio research under the archaic-sounding name of "physiognomics." He insisted the word was more than a metaphor, and would later resurrect it to describe an immanent (that is, embedded or self-reflexive) critique of capitalist society (*Current* 44; Honneth, *Pathologies* 55). The word's career is instructive for more than what it may reveal about the development or the regression of Adorno's social theory. Across the generic spectrum of his work, he decried as reactionary those theories which couched animistic worldviews in scientific language, including physiognomy, astrology and graphology. Yet in his more dialectical moments, he reflected that those pseudosciences could not be simply disavowed by Enlightenment science. As relics of humankind's mimetic heritage, each contained a kernel that was worthy of being sublated or "rescued." Otherwise, scientific rationality itself would lapse into ritualistic, mimetic behavior. By the same reasoning, he and Horkheimer assert that science, which demands repetition, is ritual in disguise (Horkheimer and Adorno 149).

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[1] His break with Princeton's Paul Lazarsfeld, the "father" of market research, has been discussed in considerable detail (e.g., by Jenemann, *Adorno in America* chaps. 1–2; and Rubin 77–79); John Mowitt paints a more generous portrait of Lazarsfeld and the early PRRP than most (108–14).

Ideally, the method of Adorno's radio project would be free of the naïveté of the old physiognomy, though it bore the old name. Later, as I will show, Adorno grants the same paleonymic privilege to various words for personality and experience.[2]

Physiognomy in the commonest sense—discerning character traits from physical morphology—had descended from the romantic ideas of Lavater and Goethe to proto-Nazi racial science. It was neither culturally nor scientifically viable. Nevertheless, Adorno deforms it further. He insists upon the term despite the fact that listening to the radio is the "direct opposite of [the] life-experience" upon which traditional physiognomy depended—"the immediate understanding between one living being (the studied face) and another (the student)" (*Current* 44). It is not merely that radio is a faceless medium and, consequently, an "unsuitable object"; the studying subject, too, must be wrenched from the naturalized, intersubjective physiognomic scene.[3] One can only imagine that nineteenth-century physiognomy has been idealized for the argument's sake. In contrast, as well, to the common understanding of physiognomy as a bodily sign system, Adorno carefully distinguishes his version from what he and Benjamin, elsewhere, call archaic or hieroglyphic reading. "Within our experience of live voices and faces," he observed, "the phenomenon is not a merely superficial *sign* of whatever is behind it, replaceable by

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[2] "Paleonymics" is a term associated with Derrida: "It seems necessary to retain, provisionally and strategically, *the old name*…. For example, writing, as a classical concept, carries with it predicates which have been subordinated…. It is these predicates…whose force of generality, generalization, and generativity find themselves liberated, grafted onto a 'new' concept of writing which also corresponds to whatever always has resisted the former organization of forces…" (*Limited Inc* 21). For Adorno, I am suggesting, "physiognomy" and "personality" have a paleonymic function similar to "writing" in Derrida, though not the connotation of dissemination.

[3] One can only imagine that nineteenth-century physiognomy has been idealized for the argument's sake. He also called the radio an authoritarian substitute for telephone conversation, a comparison bound to draw less resistance (Jenemann, "Flying Solo" 92 [quoting *DE* 95]).

another as well. It is connected with the content by being its expression" (*Current* 49).[4] We may recognize an individual by her handwriting or her nose, but not because those items represent anything.

Current cites Robert Havighurst, an experimental researcher in the field of education and child development, to describe the "illusion of closeness" produced by the radio. Even in the wake of the sensational *War of the Worlds* hoax (1938), listeners readily admitted to market researchers that the Lone Ranger seemed real, or that they felt close enough to the character to send him presents (*Current* 46–47). How something obviously impersonal could become an intimate companion to millions of Americans required a double-edged inquiry—part descriptive 'personality test,' part anatomy of personification. Early in the project, he proposed to analyze the way "children and naïve persons," in whom the animistic tendency is incompletely or imperfectly repressed, responded to the voices on the radio (47-48). The extant documents suggest that Adorno never undertook this survey. He opted not to draw a typology of people who identified with speaking voices the way he did for musical listening.[5] Generally speaking, his focus shifted from quasi-primitive listeners to quasi-enlightened ones: listeners who 'knew better,' but continued to humanize radio's voices or the radio itself. Thus his analysis of personification became one strand in an inquiry into the disguised mimetic tendencies of

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[4] Adorno may be alluding to a similar passage in Hegel's critique of physiognomy and phrenology in *The Phenomenology of Spirit*: "This outer…does not act as an organ making the inner visible…; for the inner, so far as it is in the organ, is the activity itself. The mouth that speaks, the hand that works, with the legs too, if we care to add them, are the operative organs effecting the actual realization, and they contain the action *qua* action, or the inner as such" (3.1, para. 312).

[5] Some of his predecessors at Princeton, including Gordon Allport, had investigated those matters empirically (Mowitt 205n.4). A footnote in Adorno's "On Popular Music" (1940) contains "a draft of a more universal typology of today's musical listeners." Among nine types of listeners and two types of non-listeners, he distinguished varying degrees of attention, technical knowledge, permeability to outside emotional influence and "rhythmic obedience" (*Current of Music* 311–19).

the technocratic age, elaborated in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*.

He argued that the phenomenon of "radio voice" was separate from the broadcasters' voices, even if one could only perceive the former ("a filter for every sound") through the latter (371). Whatever made the Lone Ranger or the conductor of the NBC Symphony Orchestra memorable to a common listener was, to the trained physiognomist, a red herring.[6] "Face" and "voice" are ubiquitous in Adorno's physiognomy, but only as metonyms for what the radio had supplanted. To some degree, anthropomorphism was a logical response to the equipment: the microphone resembled the ear in function, and the loudspeaker the mouth.[7] But the intuitive or primal response was buttressed by the language of the culture industry, which was not natural or innocent. The instrument was called a speaker, after all. A dead metaphor effectively rationalized the listener's instinct to accept what she heard "at face value," so to speak (46). Yet the same experiential metaphor was precisely what qualified his work as physiognomic.

As precedent for studying non-persons on the model of the person, Adorno cites a dialogue between Sándor Ferenczi and a minor psychoanalyst named Siegfried Bernfeld that concerned an attempt to 'analyze' human bladders and intestines based on shape and function; echoing Bernfeld, he decides that anthropomorphism is inevitable but surmountable (49). However few its merits as physiological science, Ferenczian physiognomy made sense as a figure, in which the analyst generalized from a bodily whole to its parts. The present radio project, on the other hand, did not fit into a scheme

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[6] The primacy of "radio voice" over any personal particularity is the rationale behind *Dialectic*'s hyperbolic juxtaposition of the laxative spokesman's voice with the Führer's (Horkheimer and Adorno 129, 135). By contrast, *The Psychological Technique of Martin Luther Thomas' Radio Addresses* (1934-35, unpublished until 2000) does focus on the construction of a character.

[7] Jenemann notes that "the notion that electronically transmitted sound necessarily expanded the parameters of what it meant to be human goes all the way back to Edison" ("Flying Solo" 96; see also Mowitt).

of wholes and parts. Adorno the dialectician would not allow it to, in any case:

> The 'radio voice' must finally be traced back to the subjective conditions which necessitate this illusion [*i.e.*, of closeness, of 'voice' itself]. Yet we regard the 'radio voice' as something 'given' which cannot be resolved into subjective terms before being adequately described; and one of its inherent characteristics is just that personification which we may finally have to abandon. The more successful we are in formulating it in precise 'objective' terms, the better will be the chances for subjective reduction. (49-50)

If Adorno could expand his purview from the psychology of listening to the physiognomy of culture, as he hoped, the "voice" would vanish. Where earlier he had proposed that a bad ("arbitrary and immature" [44]) method be applied to the wrong object in the wrong way, he was now counting on the temporary and timely disappearance of that method. For now, however, he felt obliged to maintain a structure of anthropomorphism and identification that he knew to be invalid.

In a 1941 report to Lazarsfeld that heralded the end of their collaboration, Adorno posed the "Problem of a New Type of Human Being." Many of the evaluations that would appear in *Minima Moralia* and *The Authoritarian Personality* can be found here in cursory form. Adorno is visibly straining against the listener-type research that had flourished under the auspices of the PRRP. He postulates a character type while at the same time taking aim at the Freudian topography of all character types. The "Radio Generation," as distinct from earlier cases of neurotic maladjustment, was too well adjusted. Individuals barely had an ego to speak of; they were incapable of complex

experience; and they spoke in the language of consumer culture, "with the voice of the radio announcer, as it were" (*Current* 464–65).

In a subtle contrast to that report, which he had written as one social scientist to another in search of Rockefeller funds, his contemporaneous "Notes toward a New Anthropology" (1941/42) blames the decline of experience on the cult of experimentation. He depicts scientific curiosity as a form of sadism:

> The cruelty, shrinking back from nothing, not even cruelty against oneself, is intimately connected with it—seeing how a person handles himself under such and such conditions, for example, when he is castrated or murdered, or how one himself reacts. The new anthropological type has become internally what earlier was true only of the method: the subject of natural science—of course also the object. (quoted in Buck-Morss 177)

We have encountered variations on this theme already, in, for instance, Stein's fable of the boy dissecting butterflies (chapter 2). Most of those scenarios dealt with particularly gruesome experiments, or gruesome fantasies underlying benign ones. In this passage, conversely, Adorno targets the indifferent reversibility of the experimental mentality. The novelty was not some people's willingness to murder or castrate, but the ease with which they could flit mentally between the roles of aggressor and victim. This charge reverses, or at least complicates, a certain Habermasian reading of Adorno in which "taking another's view" is an ethical standard (Honneth, *Pathologies* 70; *Reification* 41 and

passim).[8]

By the time Adorno published *The Authoritarian Personality*, he had muted the self-scrutinizing overtones in his thinking about character types. The scientific wing of the American Jewish Committee (AJC) interviewed about 2100 Californians for *The Authoritarian Personality*, which became the most prominent of several "Studies in Prejudice" volumes. The profiles of the people who scored high on the F scale (for fascist potential) are fairly unambiguous: the crank, the manipulator, and so on. In a singly authored chapter, however, Adorno admits that psychological typologies bear a structural similarity to the Nazis' practices of exclusion and dehumanization.[9] He soon decides that the available typologies, for all their limitations, "hit upon something"—and that they "do not necessarily do violence to the manifoldness of the human" (745-47). This openness to contingency and compromise was not the only pragmatic tendency of the project. According to Fred Turner, the significance of *The Authoritarian Personality* lay in its making the case that psychologists and sociologists should be permanent fixtures in political efforts (*AP* 57; cited in Turner 173).

I want to draw attention to the way the work literalizes some of the premises of two contemporaneous philosophical works—*Dialectic of Enlightenment*, which Adorno wrote with Horkheimer, and the aphorisms collected in *Minima Moralia*.[10] Readers anxious to reclaim *The Authoritarian Personality* for the critical theory canon maintain

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[8] Honneth cannot seem to decide the ethical status of experiments or institutions "that compel those involved to simulate particular intentions" (*Reification* 82). I would suggest that the undecidability is crucial.

[9] The resemblance was more than structural. The U.S. Office of Strategic Services adopted psychological screening tools used by the Nazis, some of them actually American in origin (Herman 44, 329; Rickels).

[10] Adorno maintained that he and Horkheimer contributed equally to *DE*, although some archival scholars argue that Adorno wrote most of it (Hullot-Kentor 24–28). Horkheimer, in the meantime, was the director of the scientific wing of the AJC and a co-editor of *AP*.

that that the works are complementary, if not equivalent. Susan Buck-Morss argues: "The mode of *Minima Moralia* was aesthetic. *The Authoritarian Personality* treated the same themes 'scientifically.' Thus the works turned on different centers but converged in their truth content" (181). Adorno himself imagined a reciprocal, even chiastic, relation between the two volumes on which he collaborated with Horkheimer. He claimed that preparing *Dialectic* was "determinative" for his and Horkheimer's later social-scientific work (*CM* 230). Indeed, the "Elements of Anti-Semitism" chapter of *Dialectic* appears in the bibliography of the scientific volume, between Hitler and Karen Horney.[11] Adorno also said, anticipating and inverting Buck-Morss's formulation, that *Dialectic*'s critiques "found their literary expression" in *The Authoritarian Personality* (*CM* 230). What he meant by "literary" in that 1968 lecture is unclear. Nevertheless, a complex transit of literary and aesthetic figures occurs between the two books.

Dialectic of Enlightenment advances a theory of projection which follows Freud, and thus anticipates *The Authoritarian Personality*'s diagnosis, but ultimately exceeds the psychoanalytic frame. Adorno and Horkheimer amalgamate more than a century's worth of thinking about subject and object in a highly idiosyncratic manner. They assume, following Kant's First Critique, that the mind imposes temporal and spatial schemas on matter, but also, drawing upon the physiology of perception and *Gestalt* psychology, that raw sensory data itself contributes "concepts and judgments." From Frazerian anthropology and Freud's *Totem and Taboo*, they adopt the same notion of magical thinking we encountered in his analysis of the radio voice. Finally, post-Darwinian

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[11] The reference would have been meaningless to many readers, given that *Dialectic* did not yet exist in an English edition (Jay, *DI* 230). Where the inverse occurs, and Adorno cites the AJC study in a philosophical essay, the citation would seem to be a straightforward, empirical supplement (see esp. "Education after Auschwitz" in *CM*).

evolutionary thinking furnishes the idea that one's reactions are conditioned by lower-order survival instincts (to devour, to defend oneself, to adapt by becoming alike). Those bestial instincts were inadequate to a world in which relations were mediated by culture and capital. Now, they argue, the impulse "must be increasingly controlled; individuals must learn both to refine and to inhibit it" (*DE* 155).

The hooked nose found in so many anti-Semitic caricatures was a metonym for what the proto-fascist state could not tolerate—individual difference, on one hand (a curved nose "writes the individual's peculiarity on his face"), and sameness or self-dissolution on the other. Smelling was dangerously mimetic: in smell, the critics contend, "we are absorbed entirely."[12] In an almost gleeful bit of role-playing, they picture the anti-Semite gorging himself on the Jew by sniffing and snorting (out of mockery, of course). But the anti-Semite fails to "return to the object what he has received from it," or, in other words, to think through his fantasy and keep the image of the Jew open to correction. Rather than be "taken over by otherness," he closes himself to it, mimicking and amplifying his cathected image of Jewishness. Nazi ritual represented the climax of this self-enclosed fantasy, the "mimesis of mimesis" (*DE* 151-56).

The Authoritarian Personality also argues that unconscious fantasies are at the root of prejudice and prudery, according to a much simpler causal scheme. "Projectivity," one of nine distinguishing traits of the potentially fascist character, is defined quite narrowly for the purposes of the F scale. The subject fears or persecutes the object that

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[12] Freud linked pleasure in smell to repressed coprophilia in his exchange with Fliess, as well as a 1910 revision of *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*. In *Civilization and its Discontents*, which Horkheimer and Adorno studied, he speculates that the devaluation of smell in favor of sight contributed to the organization of sexuality around reproduction, and ultimately to the civilizing process (SE 1: 241, 7: 155n.2, 21: 99n.1).

reminds her of something repressed, or prosaically denied. Thus the union basher might secretly want the same benefits, but see in the unruly union leader his castrating boss/father (quoted in Jäger 142). A purely defensive and un-self-reflective act, "projection" here bears only a superficial resemblance to the material cited from *Dialectic of Enlightenment*.[13] In the transcripts included in *The Authoritarian Personality*, interview subjects deemed fascistic or ethnocentric shun Jews (or African Americans or communists), compare them to animals, or harbor paranoid thoughts about them "taking over," but they do not play at being the other. The mimetic undercurrent in hatred goes unaddressed.

However, *The Authoritarian Personality* was not just a defanged *Dialectic*. The methods that constrain it on a theoretical level also amount to some of its more theoretical moments. *Dialectic* had continued Marx's and Benjamin's project of writing a history of the senses. In addition to the perceptual transformations that followed new technology (notably the camera and the radio), Adorno and Horkheimer make it clear that the ideal rapprochement between the world of experience and the world of concepts could occur only "when the powers of the human physiological constitution were fully developed" (*DE* 155; cf. Benjamin, *Illuminations*; Taussig 98). Empirical studies of perception and projection were therefore in order.[14] As I explained in chapter 3, however, projection corresponds to real phenomena but has no literal definition. "Giving back" to the object, on the other hand, sounds concrete but describes a relation that does not

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[13] For an extensive discussion of the Oedipal layout of *AP* and its divergences from the pre-Oedipal postulates of *DE*, see Hewitt (38–78). Cf. also Jessica Benjamin's introduction to Klaus Theweleit's *Male Fantasies* (Theweleit v. 2).

[14] In a letter to Benjamin, Adorno wrote, "The only possible question we must pose now, so it seems to me, is *an experimental one*: what will become of human beings and their capacity for aesthetic perception when they are fully exposed to the conditions of monopoly capitalism?" Only Benjamin, it seemed to him, had yet managed to pose that question in "diabolical and behavioristic terms" (*Corresp*. 305 [1 Feb. 1939]).

belong to the empirical plane. A common language for *Dialectic of Enlightenment* and *The Authoritarian Personality* was bound to be provisional, or, to stretch Adorno's description of the scientific volume, "literary" (*CM* 230). As in the case of "radio physiognomics," *The Authoritarian Personality*'s argumentation and testing practices occasionally lapsed into mimeticism, or into literariness, in the hope of controlling it. I am not referring to a few invocations of literature, and of Benjamin, in the margins of Adorno's diagnostic chapters.[15] In the paragraphs that follow, I focus on AJC tests that accidentally cross paths with contemporaneous, canonical Frankfurt writing on the labor of perception and the possibility of critique.

Adorno, Horkheimer, and their colleagues in Los Angeles and New York stumbled upon the "projective" test measures by chance.[16] Picture- and narrative-based testing channeled Adorno's ambition to practice a partially mimetic science, an ambition he had expressed earlier using the figure of physiognomy. When Adorno remarks that he and his colleagues forged a "characterological unity" from the fairly disparate attitudes that made up the F scale, we may recall his earlier point about anthropomorphism. As a deluded response to the radio voice, personification could only so far as a means to understand the ideology behind it (*CM* 233).

In 1941, Adorno proposed an experiment on anti-Semitism and group dynamics

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[15] E.g., using Edgar Allan Poe's "Murders in the Rue Morgue" to illustrate anti-Semitic prejudice—a rather strange analogy in which "foreignness," not animality or violence, is most uncanny (*AP* 609). In a footnote of his "Types and Syndromes" chapter, ostensibly a critique of the psychologist turned Nazi ideologue E. R. Jaensch, Adorno alludes to Benjamin in a digression about synesthetic imagery in French decadent poetry. "By clouding the division between different realms of sense perception," he writes, Baudelaire and his cohort "simultaneously try to efface the rigid classification of different kinds of objects, as it is brought about under the practical requirements of industrial civilization. They rebel against reification" (746n.1; cf. Benjamin, *Illuminations* 170–76, 180–83). Appropriately, Jameson describes the Adornian footnote as a site where theory and practice collide and generic rules are temporarily suspended (9n.2).

[16] Lawrence Frank coined the term "projective method" in 1939 to describe the inventions of Rorschach, Murray, and others.

using a series of film strips. In each short clip, a child would be beaten ("thrashed," Adorno says).[17] The boys' roles would alternate: the victim might be a gentile or a Jew, or have Jewish features and an Anglo-Saxon name. Screenings would be orchestrated to test for preexisting prejudice in the audience, as well as any intergroup relations that might aggravate or attenuate the hostility (*Stars* 214–15). Although the film was never made, the screenplay grew to incorporate lines of dialogue lifted from then-underway *Authoritarian Personality* surveys (Jenemann, *Adorno in America* 139–40). Horkheimer's Los Angeles- and New York-based affiliates also concocted simple picture-interpretation tests. One asked subjects to examine a photograph of several people in an elevator, presumably to find out whether a difference in ethnicity, facial expression, or dress (one white man is not wearing a hat) would be most noticeable. Another asked white, working-class respondents to explain the humor in comic panels about "Mr. Biggott," created for the AJC by a *New Yorker* cartoonist (*Adorno in America* 125, 212n.64; for the originals, see American Jewish Committee). Unfortunately, numerous respondents identified with the cone-headed, cobweb-encrusted WASP rather than point out his ignorance. As David Jenemann remarks, "The inability of the large majority of adults to understand [the cartoons'] simple satirical elements casts into question the critical faculties of all levels of the population" (125).

The TAT was a logical complement to these early experiments, real and hypothetical. A few Berkeley Group recruits were already using it in their research; two, Nevitt Sanford and Daniel Levinson, had been students of Henry Murray. Sanford and another researcher, Betty Aron, embellished the TAT to direct the conversations toward

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[17] So to speak (see Freud, *SE* 17: 175–204). Cf. *AP*'s suggestions of Jewish and/or liberal masochism, the imprint of Fromm and perhaps Bettelheim (*AP* 639; Jay, *DI* 96–106).

racial difference. They supplemented nine cards from the original Murray-Morgan set with four new ones, designed to attract racially charged projections—a pair of "zootsuiters or young jitterbugs," a man and woman in a city slum, a foreign-looking man in a jail cell, and a black child with his mother or grandmother (494–95 and inset).[18] Aron, who wrote up the test findings, remarked that fascistic individuals "project onto members of minority groups" the "primitive, unsublimated forms of expression so often found in their fantasies" (*AP* 526).

While it would be an exaggeration to claim Adorno and Horkheimer's entire "projective" theory of prejudice rests upon that *bricolage* of lurid magazine-fiction scenes and dream images, the test did serve a more than instrumental role in the finished *Authoritarian Personality* project. The Berkeley group declared that the test findings were among the "most important" contributions in the construction of the fascist personality type. Even the atmosphere at the research facility seemed lighter, less laboratory-like, when Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Daniel Levinson and Sanford allowed themselves to adapt some tests they found in "American magazines." Surely this was not *positivism* (*AP* 225; *CM* 233). More forceful still, Buck-Morss and Jenemann have argued that these earlier experiments constituted *The Authoritarian Personality*'s theoretical, "constellational" moment (Buck-Morss 181–84; Jenemann, *Adorno in America* 42–44).

The "indirect" studies employed by the AJC were positioned to do the work of mediation and refinement, albeit in a standardized format that counterweighed their

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[18] The TAT designers' apparent focus on white-on-black racism, compared to the project's overall focus on anti-Semitism, is hard to explain. There was already a market for "black-themed" projective tests, applied mostly to African Americans (Lemov 262; "X-Rays").

critical power. Experimenters performed the TAT on about eighty men and women, most of whom they had already deemed unusually ethnocentric or unusually tolerant. The first card the men looked at depicts a younger and an older man. It was from Murray's original set and, predictably, designed to elicit the subject's feelings about his father. In her write-up, Aron compares the interpretations by Larry, *The Authoritarian Personality*'s exemplary liberal, and by Mack, who had already scored high on the "E scale" (for ethnocentrism) and would become the study's paradigmatic all-American proto-fascist:

> Although both express, through their heroes [*i.e.*, the man in the drawing with whom they identify], strong underlying hostile feelings toward the world, Larry identifies more closely with those feelings and makes stronger attempts to understand them. Mack, on the other hand, describes a more primitive type of aggressive fantasy and tends to reject the hero of the story…thereby disowning responsibility for the expression of hostility. (*AP* 538)

There is a noteworthy parallel between these two exercises and *Dialectic*'s plea for reflection and self-consciousness, and its diagnosis of, in a therapeutic-sounding phrase, "the subject's faulty distinction between his own contribution to the projected material and that of others" (*DE* 154). It is easier to show the administered character of thought and identification, in general, with reference to an obviously pre-arranged mental gymnastics course. That said, *The Authoritarian Personality* does not propose that Mack or any other subjects attained enlightenment by being tested and interviewed. Even in this most practical volume, theory and practice do not quite meet.

In principle the art of "controlled projection" could be methodized. In practice, testing for personal characteristics and fantasies could not but look vulgar. Within the lexicon Adorno had constructed in dialogue with Benjamin, the tests' use of pictures and anecdotes represent nothing short of intellectual regression. We have seen, in Adorno's "radio physiognomics" as in the overarching argument of *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, various attempts to recuperate forms of magical thinking within rationality. Yet the program of reflective recuperation they prescribed was bound to fizzle out when it became just another program. That is the impasse Adorno presents in *Minima Moralia*, a collection in which the formal tests discussed here and in chapter 3 function as macrocosms of the culture.

In the aphorism "Ego is Id," Adorno rails against American ego psychology: "Suggestion and hypnosis, rejected by psycho-analysis as apocryphal…reappear within its grandiose system as the silent film does in the Hollywood epic" (*MM* 64 [§39]). Freud had indeed deemed suggestion and hypnotism to be spiritistic fraud or unanalyzed transference, and cast those practices out of psychoanalysis proper. Adorno suggests that a drawing or inkblot intended to reveal the personal unconscious, might have more to say about the unconscious of institutions. While the predominance of pre-Freudian methods is, superficially, further evidence of counter-enlightenment, Adorno's cinematic metaphor belies a more complex relation to hypnotism and suggestion. On several occasions, he and Benjamin had agreed that silent film was superior to sound film, in that the former had the potential to produce a dialectical rather than falsely immersive (that is,

mimetic) representation of the world.[19] Suggestion and hypnotism, of course, are not traditional ego psychology. Indeed, the Ferenczian, pre-oedipal metapsychology was perhaps closest to Adorno's own (cf. Borch-Jacobsen, *The Freudian Subject*; Butler, "IGI"; Honneth, *Reification*).[20]

The mimetic quality of "Test Film" or TAT images—that is, their uncritical reproduction of capitalist relations, the identificatory response they elicited from viewers, the ritualistic testing procedure—functioned as *pharmakon*, as a cure for its own poison.[21] In "Picture-book without pictures" (§92), Adorno retells the condensed world history from *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, in which modernity purportedly liberated humankind from "images" (*Bilder*). There was to have been no more totemism or cowering before the markers of royalty; society would be governed by abstract principles, such as progress, that had been arrived at through the use of reason. But life had become "abstract" independent of individuals' ability to think abstractly. This particular aphorism blames social-scientific image-making on the widespread failure to understand or describe capitalist relations. Official representations of the world mystified it by falsely cutting it down to human scale, producing "silhouettes of men or houses" which appear in demographic and regulatory briefs "like hieroglyphics." Where another critic might

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[19] Benjamin and Adorno disagreed about the political significance of cinema. Benjamin, responding to Adorno's criticism, admitted that he might have been more specific in the "Mechanical Reproducibility" essay. He surmised that the development of the sound film had been a capitalist plot to "break the revolutionary primacy" of the silent film (*Corresp*. 295 [9 Dec. 1938]). In "The Schema of Mass Culture" (written as an addendum to *DE*), Adorno expresses something of a compromise: "In the older [silent] type of film images and written signs still alternated with one another and the antithesis of the two lent emphasis to the image-character of the images. But this dialectic like every other was unbearable to mass culture" (*Culture Industry* 94).

[20] Mack, the fascist personality in *AP*, apparently felt threatened by a TAT card depicting a hypnotist. According to Nevitt Sanford, Mack's response indicated "his fear of homosexual attack" (*AP* 798; quoted in Halle 138).

[21] See Derrida's "Plato's Pharmacy" (*Dissemination* 95–117).

call the figures abstract or generic, Adorno deems them too concrete. Images from bureaucrats' desks were symptomatic of counter-enlightenment, a "second figurativeness [*Bildlichkeit*], though without images [*bilderlose*] or spontaneity" (*MM* 140; *MM [German]* 263). Mass-produced images attempted to revert to an era with no gap between the sense of a sign and its meaning (hence the metaphor of the hieroglyph), which would also be a time before commoditization or any other social abstraction.

The charge of archaism was one Benjamin and Adorno had already leveled at Jung and his notion of an ahistorical, collective unconscious. In contrast with archaic images, historical or dialectical ones came from the world of commodities. Their meaning inhered in the gap between use value and exchange value. The dialectical image, as Adorno conceived it in a famous letter to Benjamin, made room for fantasy without being subjective: "Insofar as these relinquished things [*i.e.*, commodities] now stand in as images of subjective intentional experiences, they present themselves as still present and eternal. Dialectical images are constellations between alienated things and injected meanings…" (*Corresp.* 114–15 [5 Aug. 1935]).[22] If the projective-test image bore a schematic resemblance to the dialectical image, though, the resemblance could only be a guilty one. Falsely particular and falsely "sensuous," these images drew in subjective meanings without necessitating any rigorous thought about their place in an objective world.

Adorno then turns his attention to the person on the receiving end of a joke, either on the page or in person. Where once the joke was a mode of constellational thought, in

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[22] Benjamin quoted these sentences in *The Arcades Project*'s Konvolut N (N5, 2). Admittedly, I am skimming over Benjamin and Adorno's separate but overlapping theories of the dialectical image. For an earlier formulation of the "historical image" against Jungian archaism, see Nicholsen (94).

which the personality was called to "collide with the facts and explode them," it was now narrowed to the two-beat sequence of set-up and response. The joke was effectively a test of the audience—a "challenge to the eye to compete with the situation" (in the case of a comic strip) or a rite of initiation into "the collective of laughers, who have cruel things on their side" (141). Indeed, comics serve the same function within this aphorism as I.Q. tests do in another, in which Adorno says that the culture of evaluation has led thought to "see its objects as mere hurdles, a permanent test of its own form" (196 [*MM* §126]). The fact that Adorno's affiliates were using comics as tests around the same time adds a sting to the comparison.

While the first part of "Picture-book without pictures" described the erosion of the figure into the hieroglyph, an image that has no history and requires no labor, the second half addresses those viewers who would perform that labor nonetheless. This consideration of the reader/spectator role outside of a rarefied aesthetic setting is rare in Adorno's work. It is also, as I have hinted, a passage in which Adorno's faith in mimesis wavers. In *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, reflective projection was supposed to do justice to the object; here, where there is no worthy object, the "reflective" individual fares no better than the well-trained consumer. Even the most programmatic sizing-up of a magazine gag contains a mimetic moment: what the cartoon "acts out," the viewer "reenacts." The latter verb, *nachvollziehen*, may also be translated as 'reconstruct,' which would deemphasize the mimetic component somewhat, or as 'empathize with,' which would overstate it. In any case, this viewer has no privileged epistemological or ethical vantage and shows no sign of enjoying herself. Her engaged response amounts to "unresisting submission to the empty predominance of things" (*MM* 141; German, 264).

The projective test only lays bare what jokes and advertisements have already done to understanding in general, that is, styled the scene of encounter as a question one is obliged to answer, as quickly as possible, and inevitably in the affirmative.

Adorno's methodological complicity is most apparent where he posits aesthetic experience as that which is not systematic or instrumental. As I have elaborated here and in chapter 3, psychological tests routinely cite artistic and literary works, or at least appropriate a baseline experience of responsive spectatorship. Stimulus materials were obviously derivative, casting more complex or highbrow material in relief. But kitsch and trash objects have the ability to disenchant their high-cultural counterparts, as Adorno reminds us. Kitsch's blatantly mimetic character recalls the subtler, sublimated impulse that animated 'true' works of art (*MM* 226 [§145]). The test contaminated the authentic, disinterested aesthetic experience by proximity.

The specifically aesthetic badness of the psychological test does a certain critical work. More precisely, it stops the 'work' of critique in its tracks and registers other phenomena. In the remainder of this chapter, I shall elaborate upon those, taking a detour through Nabokov's *Pnin* (1957) before returning to some of Adorno's reflections. Despite overt differences in their political views and attitudes toward scientific knowledge, both authors long to rescue "personality" from the conception imposed by personality tests and mechanical testability in general. Both, further, attempt to ground an alternative conception of the individual in some aesthetic or hermeneutic principle. As I will argue, none of the challenges are wholly adequate to the tests at their worst.

II.

In the decades following *The Authoritarian Personality*, projective tests appeared in literary and pop-cultural texts with increasing frequency. In Daniel Keyes's *Flowers for Algernon* (1966), Charlie takes the Rorschach (or "raw shok") test and the TAT at various stages of the experimental treatment designed to raise his IQ. Ray Bradbury's "Man in the Rorschach Shirt" (1968) tells of a psychiatrist who has a crisis of faith when he realizes he had been hearing some—perhaps all—of his patients wrong. He vanishes, as if into the ocean ("For what? To plumb for Moby-Dick? To psychoanalyze that colorless fiend and see what he really had against Mad Ahab?" [586]), only to reappear in a new guise. He buys about a dozen colorful, abstract "Rorschach" shirts and wanders around the country. People see what they will, and erupt into small, spontaneous celebrations of life. One of the shirts had been designed "by Jackson Pollack before he died" (593).[23] These and other countercultural-mainstream authors held predictable attitudes toward testing. The mockery was one front in a broader war on conformism in which Freud was cast alternately as villain and savior.[24] Moreover, as sociological and systems-inspired critics would probably concur, the reflexivity of the projective test method (reading the book is like taking the test is like reading) mirrors a more general reflexivity of the academic and social-scientific institutions in which authors and

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[23] Andy Warhol, Pollack's successor and critic, painted thirty-eight massive Rorschach-style blots in 1984. Warhol claimed not to know the real test images were standardized reproductions, although their mass production corresponds to his pop-art sensibility (Krauss 111).

[24] See as well Donald Barthelme, "See the Moon?" (1966) in *Sixty Stories* (New York: Penguin, 2003); Philip K. Dick, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (New York: Random, 1996 [1968]) and *We Can Build You* (New York: Random, 1972); Joan Didion, *Play It as It Lays* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1970 [cited in Trask 192-99]); Joseph Heller, *Something Happened* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1974); Kurt Vonnegut, *Slapstick: Or, Lonesome No More!* (New York: Dell, 1982 [1976]); Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons (illus.), *Watchmen* (New York: DC Comics, 2008 [1987]).

characters alike spent their time (see, e.g., McGurl; Trask, *Camp Sites*).

Nabokov's cultural conservatism makes him a more compelling interlocutor for Adorno than the authors listed above. To be sure, the two émigrés had more in common than one might suspect. They each registered their contempt for Americana and studied it in anatomical detail. While much can be said about their shared high-modernist aesthetics, for recent sociologically oriented critics, it is the triumph of postwar American institutionalism (i.e., the cultural power of the university, the Rockefeller Foundation, and so on) that best explains Nabokov or 'liberalizes' Adorno.[25] My perspective differs from the bulk of latter-day sociologists of literature, as I underscore in the coda; nonetheless, I share those critics' concern with the perverse entanglements of knowledge production. Anticipating current challenges, *Pnin* objects to the methodization of aesthetic experience, while posing in narrative form (in contrast to Adorno's twisty dialectics) the impossibility of sustaining that objection.

I have shown that for Murray and generations of gay or queer Melville scholars, a particular kind of mimetic reading created a sense of intellectual and erotic possibility. In a different context, Eric Naiman has coined the term "hermophobia" to describe Nabokov's disdain for all of the over-readers in his work. Kinbote in *Pale Fire* is the exemplar. Analogous to the place of gay male characters, the over-reader attracts the author's condescension as well as his defensiveness, and is made into a figure of guilty identification. Hermophobia necessarily entails hermophilia; as Naiman comments, the author's apparently normative imposition of meanings and genres ultimately

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[25] See, on Adorno, Jenemann, Liu (chap. 1) and Rubin (chap. 4); on Nabokov, see McGurl (1–21, 48–50) and Trask (*Camp Sites* 72–84). Susan Mizruchi also examines some affinities between Nabokov and Adorno ("*Lolita* in History" 646–48).

"exaggerates pathological interpretation and sexual activity to the point where any nervousness they inspire is overcome by delight" (118). In flickers from outside the hermeneutic/homophobic circle, however, comes the occasional hint that one might refuse the kind of legibility imposed by the test without rejecting the experience it makes possible.

In Nabokov's *Lolita* (1958), Humbert Humbert's ex-wife spends a year participating in an experiment "that dealt with human and racial reactions to a diet of bananas and dates and a constant position on all fours" (*Lolita* 30–31). The implication is plain: faith in exercises like those amounts to evolutionary regression or anal masochism. Nabokov regarded Freudianism as a particularly egregious breed of "ideological coercion" and *poshlost* (roughly, self-importance) (quoted in Olsen 118). *Pnin*, published a year before *Lolita*, advances the same position to less sensational effects. Whereas the better-known novel approaches Freudian measures with an air of mastery (Humbert boasts that "trifling with psychiatrists" means "never letting them see that you know all the tricks of the trade" [34]), *Pnin* responds with bemusement and occasional exasperation. Additionally, *Pnin* has none of the overtly transgressive behavior that made *Lolita* a household name, making it easier for readers to put some distance between practices of testing and the theme of deviance and pathology.

Loosely autobiographical, the novel follows Timofey Pnin, a bumbling expatriate professor of Russian literature as he navigates life in a smug college town. He tries to bond with an estranged son, Victor, whose mother, Liza, had abandoned Pnin for a dreary psychoanalyst named Eric Wind. Liza and Eric "impersonate Laius and Jocasta" for Victor, who plays the roles of "little Oedipus" and "little patient" for them

simultaneously (*Pnin* 88, 92). Not wanting to dilute the Freudian family romance, Eric and Liza do not let on to Victor that Pnin was his biological father. They long for the child to exhibit some trendy syndrome or some special talent inherited from Liza's (and not Pnin's) illustrious genetic line. Eric eventually decides that someone other than himself or Liza should evaluate the boy, to eliminate "the static of personal relationship" (90). He hires another husband-and-wife team, Louis and Christina Stern, to take over. The Sterns are a repetition of what had already been a bad copy of the Oedipal triangle. But what "marvelous techniques" they have in their arsenal: the Godunov Drawing-of-an-Animal Test, the Fairview Adult Test, the Kent-Rosanoff Absolutely Free Association Test, the Bièvre Interest-Attitude Game, the Augusta Angst Abstract Test, a round of (distinctly Kleinian) Doll Play, a Rorschach inkblot test, an IQ test, and more.[26] Still, the exercises reveal nothing of interest. In fact, Victor's prodigiousness as an artist interferes with the testers' ability to plumb his drawings for unconscious material.

The Winds and Sterns are unprepared for Victor's genius, which, Nabokov's narrator tells us, consists in nonconformity (89). The examiners expect Victor's output to conform to certain generic principles, comparable to "little Joe or Jane," "little Sam or Ruby," "Patrick or Patricia"— personified norms who travel, like the Sterns, in pairs (91). But more than the tyranny of the Anglo-American average, psychometrics threaten the aura of personality (and the locus of "genius") with mechanical reproduction. Finding generic resemblances among different people's scribbles was the first step to reproducing, and perhaps abolishing, all that was 'personal' in them. This defiant but

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[26] Of these, the Godunov is semi-authentic (I will say more about it momentarily), the Kent-Rosanoff Free Association Test was a 100-item word-association test from 1910, and the Fairview, Bièvre, and Augusta are fabrications. The only scholarly discussion of these names, by Barabtarlo, is unreliable.

ultimately reactionary stance also appears in Nabokov's first English-language novel, the anti-Soviet satire *Bend Sinister* (1947), in which a machine replicates individuals' handwriting. To doctrinaire "Ekwilists" (roughly, communists), the machine confirms "the fact that a mechanical device can reproduce personality" (quoted in McGurl 70).[27]

The projective tests ape the techniques of art, storytelling, and literary criticism, but they are decidedly pale replicas of those things. Nabokov clearly shares Adorno and Horkheimer's resentment of bad psychoanalysis and cultural homogenization. But his treatment of the personality test is also a defense of his wholly bourgeois theory of authorship. He insists, directly and by example, that a worthy writer or artist is as deliberate in his (almost invariably 'his') rigging of textual, intertextual, and cross-linguistic nuances as in his self-presentation. Fictions in which an "unreliable" narrator loses control over his story, including *Pnin* and *Lolita*, finally re-assert the author's own magisterial control. Nabokov expresses his contempt for modernist forms that pretended to be less than deliberate through the persona of Victor's art teacher, Lake (although not without a touch of derision toward the under-accomplished and possibly pederastic "genius"). Lake shuns work that needs a theory to supplement it. Work that aspired to represent the unconscious or the working class without mediation is contrived and sentimental. Duller still is the found-art project "created with string, stamps, a Leftist newspaper, and the droppings of doves" (96). By Nabokov/Lake's criteria, procedures like "Mind Pictures and Word Associations" would be of a kind with a Dali or a Duchamp, since the tests value Victor's spontaneous reactions and forced choices more than his deliberate statements. Still, Nabokov was always one step ahead of any belief

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[27] It may be argued that *Lolita* takes a subtler look at the relations among "aura," type (e.g., "nymphets"), and cinematic reproduction, even if the relations are inseparable from Humbert's perversion.

system, including his own. Recalling the aphorism in *Minima Moralia* (§145) about art's proximity to kitsch, in which kitsch objects are simply more honest about their mimeticism, *Pnin* eagerly deflates its own products of genius.

Victor's first test is to copy the shapes his parents draw for him. The Winds want nothing if not a mimicking little Oedipus, but this child differentiates himself from them by being too good a copier. Victor draws perfect circles from the age of two, different from his developmental peers' malformed "buttons or portholes" and seemingly untouched by circumstance or aura.[28] Nevertheless, his parents imbue the shapes with intention. Those circles he makes "lovingly." Later, in a formal exercise at age three, he "copied the researcher's (Dr. Liza Wind's) far from ideal square with contemptuous accuracy" (89, parentheses in original). In what aspect of Victor's performance do the lovingness and the contempt inhere? One could imagine a behavioral correlate of drawing circles lovingly, even if the mechanical appearance of the circles tends to make any personal context vanish over the horizon. But the accuracy of a copy is measured by its not adding any new connotations to the original.

The pair of psychometrists who study Victor are actually the second iteration of Louis and Christina Stern. Earlier, we learned that Pnin used to live next door to Louise and Christopher Starr, professors in Waindell's Fine Arts Department.[29] Although the couple switch genders from one incarnation to the next, they introduce themselves the same way: "('I am Christopher, and this is Louise')," says the professor, and "(I am Louis

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[28] In a monograph on Nabokov and science, Stephen Blackwell argues that Nabokov's studies on animal mimicry inspired his craft, and that mimicry came to represent "the natural equivalent of human artistic practice" (Blackwell 38–39, 87). While I do think some evolutionary premises are pertinent to Nabokov (as to Adorno and Benjamin), to flatten all of the mimeses into a naturalist framework strikes me as reductive and disingenuous.

[29] *Stern* is also German for 'star,' as Laura Otis pointed out to me; *starr* means 'rigid.'

and this is Christina)," says the psychometrist (63, 90). Both introductions come wrapped in parentheses, as though to convey, in each case, that the speech is mere example or evidence. Dr. Louis Stern's speech is not marked as diegetic (put in quotation marks) in the text. With the second appearance of this pair, types are speaking louder than words.

The L./C. pairs are isomorphic in their names and as readers. Each couple is armed with the credentials to contemplate meaningful documents or to confer meaning upon seemingly primitive ones. But whereas L. and C. Starr devote themselves to Fine Arts, L. and C. Stern regard Victor's singular artistic talent as a problem. "Unfortunately," they tell Victor's parents, "the psychic value of Victor's Mind Pictures and Word Associations is completely obscured by the boy's artistic inclinations" (92). Psychoanalytic depth hermeneutics, thus personified, reveals itself to be a degraded form of good old appreciative criticism.

This value judgment topples under the weight of further repetition. In the final chapter, the narrator alludes to Chris and Lew, a gay couple who rescue Liza when she tries to kill herself. Evidently, these "twittering young Englishmen" inherited their names and neighbor-function from the art professors in the Waindellville rooming house (homosexuality being, as expected, the baddest of bad copies).[30] But that is not the only chronology at work. Although Lew and Chris are the last of their set in the novel, they arrive earliest in the plotted sequence of events. In this particular chapter, the narrator has been reminiscing about his entanglements with Liza and Pnin in the 1920s. If the series of strange interlopers begins with the monosyllables "Lew" and "Chris," rather than the

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[30] On the "homophobic construction of the bad copy," see Butler ("IGI" 310).

conjugally and academically sanctioned Louise and Christopher Starr, there should be no reason to grant the hermeneutics of Fine Art any priority over the Sterns' search for phallic symbols or mandalas. As practices of reading and classification, both are mutations of a queer mistake: Lew and Chris, who lived next door to Liza in a bohemian Paris hotel, come to Liza's aid when they see a blood-red "trickle" leaking out from under her door. That trickle is actually red ink. Liza had knocked over a bottle of it after taking an overdose of sleeping pills (181-82). Behind the buffoonery lies a warning against attributing meaning to matter, be it this bottle of ink or a Rorschach inkblot). Chris and Lew are less deluded than their namesakes, in that they take what they assume to be blood at face value and not as a symbol of something else.

Regardless of whether one subscribes to a hardline intentionalist theory of literature, by the last chapters of *Pnin*, interpretation is bound to look like a dead end. In the background of *Pnin* and *Minima Moralia* alike lies a suspicion that reading might degrade the reader, revealing her to be less free and more fungible after the fashion of the Lou-and-Chris duos. Under these circumstances, reading entails a promise to respond as oneself or to materialize as a self by responding. "Getting" a joke, Adorno says grimly, means handing oneself over to the laughers and resigning oneself to the world as it is (*MM* §92).

Elaborating upon the broader Adornian contention that the normative response to appearances, in general, amounts to acquiescence, Rei Terada has investigated modes of perception that do not culminate in an answer. Such experiences would have the potential to fly under the radar of testing and other everyday complicities. The test situation can also create the conditions for the experiences it ostensibly ignores or bars, a fact toward

which Adorno and Nabokov are equally ambivalent. Terada uses the word "phenomenophilia" to describe the fleeting, solitary pleasure of sense perception for its own sake. Phenomenophilia is not a form of active resistance, nor, exactly, of skepticism. It merely "declines to affirm" (Terada, *Looking Away* 8). In these intervals, the spectator is released from the demand to give an account of her experience. Questions of reality and intention (is this real or a trick of light? does the person in front of me possess a mind?) are held at bay. It can be a queer pleasure, Terada argues, in that the person who dwells in "mere appearance" holds off on accepting the given world as the necessary or the only one.[31] The queer phenomenophile declines to have faith in the endurance of things, relations, or personality/ies. In effect, he or she refuses the logic of social reproduction (24-26, 31-32). Withholding judgment about the validity of our impressions goes against the grain of psychology, along with most other, less normative, interpretive routines of daily life. Hermann Rorschach, creator of the inkblot test, declared that perception and interpretation could not be separated rigorously in everyday life. Where perception shaded into interpretation—seeing into "seeing as," to adopt the famous Gestalt distinction—depended "on individual factors, not on general ones" (quoted in Galison 276–77). This premise informs all projective tests and many experiential or receiver-centered discussions of art and literature. It also underlies Frankfurt-style ideology critique. Thus conceived as a distortion of reality (e.g., the camera obscura in the early Marx), ideology is always, in principle, demonstrable by way of an experiment

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[31] Terada stresses the difference between *Erscheinung* (appearance) and *Schein* (appearance again, with the connotation of being unreliable or an illusion), implying that the problem is with epistemology rather than vision itself (*Looking Away* 19–21). In light of Adorno's thoughts on smell and synesthesia, I suspect the 'lower' senses, less burdened with verification, already tend toward the phenomenophilic (*DE*, above; cf. Jay, *Downcast Eyes*).

in comparative seeing.[32]

If a test runs the way it should, any experience administered to the subject will be answerable to the person in control. All of the psychological tests in *Pnin* fail by their own criteria. In other words, the Sterns do not make any of Victor's private states public. Testing triggers Victor's phenomenophilia—experiences that cannot be read as normal or pathological, because they are not appropriated as experiences at all.[33] Faced with the Rorschach cards, Victor cannot "be made to discover" anything the Sterns had been hoping for (passive-voice constructions being endemic to testing). He cannot or will not "see as," to use the Gestalt phrase again: thus no "neurotic tree trunks" or "erotic galoshes," and no opposition between hallucination and fact. Merely seeing the opaque blots is a minor pleasure: "beautiful, *beautiful* Rorschach ink blots," the narrator calls them (91-92). Excessive and embarrassing, this appreciation is oblivious to personality. The text does not mark whether the sentiment belongs to the child or the analysts.

As an indulgent and often "closeted" expenditure of attention, the queerness of phenomenophilia coincides with the perversion of over-reading, which Naiman has detected throughout Nabokov's work (Terada 25). Since the sensation-seeker is not on a hunt for codes and meanings, he is spared Nabokov's harshest satire, but still raises suspicion. Thus Lake, Victor's art teacher, wanting to harness his pupil's phenomenophilic intensity:

> [Victor] studied his mediums with the care and patience of an insatiable

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[32] From *The German Ideology*: "If in all ideology men and their circumstances appear upside-down as in a *camera obscura*, this phenomenon arises just as much from their historical life-process as the inversion of objects on the retina does from their physical life-process" (Marx and Engels 154).

[33] I am thinking of William James's claim that one's experience of an object must be recorded by a third party, be it external or internalized (see "A World of Pure Experience"). A thorough comparison is not possible here.

> child—one of those painter's apprentices (it is now Lake who is dreaming!), lads with bobbed hair and bright eyes who would spend years grinding colors in the workshop of some great Italian skiagrapher, in a world of amber and paradisal glazes. (*Pnin* 98)

Is Lake living vicariously through the child, in his dream, or desiring him, or both? Meanwhile, Victor continues to refine his sensitivities. We find him, aged around nine, observing the play of light and color in a glass of water to the exclusion of the outside world. He sets "an apple, a pencil, a chess pawn, [and] a comb" behind the glass, and contemplates: "The red apple became a clear-cut red band bounded by a straight horizon half a glass of Red Sea, Arabia Felix.… The comb, stood on end, resulted in the glass's seeming to fill with beautifully striped liquid, a zebra cocktail" (98-99). Sliding between metaphor and plain description so as to make the difference irrelevant, these visions suspend the distinction between creative intention and arbitrary association upon which Nabokov's (and Lake's) aesthetic values rest. Suspended as well is the identity behind the apparition. Since we do not know if the ephemeral Red Sea exists in Victor's consciousness, Lake's ongoing dream about Victor's consciousness, or the narrator's editorializing, the apparition is accountable to no one. It doesn't disclose the nature of either Victor or Lake's "visual contract with reality" (in Taussig's phrase), be it exceptionally mimetic or anti-mimetic, queer or straight.

The reciprocal demands placed upon subjects and objects, by critical philosophy and by administrative surveillance alike, leads to circumstances in which, as Terada writes, "the most transient perceptual objects come to be loved because only they are capable of noncoercive relation" (4). Phenomenophiles gravitate toward lights and

smudges and not, say, persons. In Victor's case, the fleetingness of any genuine sensation is mandated by *Pnin*'s ironic reversals. Phenomenal experience is tainted by association with testing even when it is not styled as a test. A few chapters after Victor and Lake's multicolored reveries, the narrator runs down a list of banal researches by Waindell faculty, culminating thus:

> And, last but not least, the bestowal of a particularly generous grant was allowing the renowned Waindell psychiatrist, Dr. Rudolph Aura, to apply to ten thousand elementary school pupils the so-called Fingerbowl Test, in which the child is asked to dip his index in cups of colored fluids whereupon the proportion between length of digit and wetted part is measured and plotted in all kinds of fascinating graphs. (138-39)

Dr. Aura is one of many dull and instrumental-thinking German émigrés in the novel, including Eric Wind, the Sterns, and Professor Hagen, who wants to replace live lectures with gramophone records. The analogy established here between him and Victor is deceptively simple. Victor stands for the one apart from the ten thousand, figurative imagination as opposed to measurement. Yet if we read Aura's test procedure as a "sublimated form of mimicry," following *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Victor's apparent foil should be read as his double (*DE* 149). Aura's Fingerbowl Test is repetitive and insistent upon correspondence and correlation. To that extent, it looks like a child's creative fancy, which, in turn, looks more like a child's exercise before the ever-present evaluative gaze.

But these episodes do not only pertain to the sublimated, noble products of the mimetic faculty, as the ambiguous but pervasive dirtiness of both cup/liquid scenes

should remind us.[34] Each of the "liquid" scenes features a man studying boys, and each is narrated in such a way as to obscure the narrator's position. Whereas Lake's fantasy had a Platonic gauziness about it, Aura's is sheer vulgarity. The free indirect discourse of the Lake chapter invites us to occupy both sides of a specular relation. Conversely, the clinical, passive narration in the Aura chapter sets up the "Fingerbowl Test" as an agentless scientific assault upon ten thousand boys (reading the generic pronoun literally). It all ends with the construction of some graphs, those most bathetic objects of "fascination."

Earlier, we saw the dichotomy between intentional and non-intentional reading undermined as one Lou-and-Chris couple succeeded another. The two water studies function in a similar manner: since Victor and Aura never cross paths, all that links one to the other is the narrative sequence. Eventually, the defensive, aura-conserving strands of the novel converge with the ironic, queer, testing ones. Even in the hands of one as intent upon closure and neutralization as Nabokov (or Adorno, in his own way), however, some of the testing mechanisms record material they cannot process and which falls outside of the testing-irony-critique system.

For instance, in *Pnin*, Victor's earliest drawings "avoid the human form altogether." His mother and stepfather will not accept his departure from their anthropomorphic order. But "when pressed by Papa (Dr. Eric Wind) to draw Mama (Dr. Liza Wind), he responded with a lovely undulation, which he said was her shadow on the new refrigerator" (90). The figure is more like light shimmering through water than a

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[34] Adorno rarely mentions the erotic underpinnings of mimetism, preferring to subsume the mimetic faculty under the banner of "adaptation to nature" in the anthropological essays, and to denaturalize it in the later aesthetic ones (see Taussig; Nicholsen).

mother imago or body-image (see Machover; Tomkins, *Shame* 241–50). As a test, as a "response," the sketch says nothing. It measures the world in a unit smaller than action or experience.[35] Liza leaves a trace on Victor's style at the same time that she casts her shadow on the refrigerator (see Bollas, discussed in chapter 2). Here we might recall that in Lake's fantasy, Victor is the apprentice to a "great Italian skiagrapher," skiagraphy being a Renaissance-era technique for drawing shadows to convey geometric perspective accurately (*Pnin* 98; *OED*).

Whereas Victor's drawing of his mother is stubbornly impersonal, Adorno weaves ghostlike appearances into what amount to impossible or catachrestic figures for personality. From the beginning of the Princeton Radio Research Project to the end of his career, Adorno stated that the Enlightenment conception of personality was outmoded and that it had been a faulty premise to begin with (e.g., *Current* 43; *CM* 162–63). Still, he would not abandon it. In 1966, he delivered a lecture over German radio titled "Gloss on Personality." He envisioned "the waning [*untergehende*, 'declining, sinking'] notion of personality and its *imago* find[ing] reconciliation in a reflected shimmer [*Abglanz*, 'reflection']" (*CM* 165; *Kulturkritik und Gesellschaft* 643). The hoped-for future of personality would be a reflection of something that had never materialized in the first place. But Adorno continues, pushing the troublesome figure aside: "There is reason to suspect that what should no longer exist, because it did not exist and supposedly cannot exist, conceals within itself the possibility of something better." He hopes that now, hemmed in on all sides by depersonalizing forces, "the organ of what was unashamedly called personality has become critical consciousness" (*CM* 165).

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[35] The distinction between *Erlebnis* (the unit of bodily movement, associated with early psychology) and *Erfahrung* (narrative, communal experience) is apropos (see Benjamin, *Illuminations* 163; Jay, *Songs*).

I am not wholly satisfied with that conclusion, be it as it may Adorno's last word on the topic. I have come to expect that, when those unjustified reflections appear, they will yield something worse than personality-as-given, then better, then worse again. Such has been the state of affairs throughout this chapter, and perhaps this entire study: from the self-devouring physiognomy in *Current of Music*, to the mimetic exchanges between *Dialectic of Enlightenment* and *The Authoritarian Personality*, to *Pnin* enabling and punishing its queer critics. The endless cycle of dis- and re-enchantment looks more like irony, linked to testing and to queerness, than the dialectic (see Ronell, *TD*; Edelman). What escapes the cycle can only do so as long as it remains useless and fascinating.

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