On Style

An Atelier

Edited by Eileen A. Joy and Anna Kłosowska

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with assistance from M. Sparkles Joy

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for Roberta Frank and Alain Renoir (1921-2008)

PREFATORY NOTE

Style, more than species, is what distinguishes the howl of the wolves saluting the moon from the songs of the neighborhood dogs rising over fences and alleyways.

~Valerie Vogrin

Aesthetic form is a spellbinding (or not) attempt to transmit and circulate affect, without which not much happens at all.

~L.O. Aranye Fradenburg

Scholarship in medieval studies of the past 20 or so years has offered some provocative experiments **in**, and elegant exempla of, style. Medievalists such as Anne Clark Bartlett, Kathleen Biddick, Catherine Brown, Brantley Bryant, Michael Camille, Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, Carolyn Dinshaw, James W. Earl, L.O. Aranye Fradenburg, Roberta Frank, Amy Hollywood, Cary Howie, C. Stephen Jaeger, Eileen Joy,

Anna Kłosowska, Nicola Masciandaro, Peggy Mc-Cracken, Paul Strohm, David Wallace, and Paul Zumthor, among others, have blended the conventions of academic writing with those of fiction, drama, memoir, comedy, polemic, and lyricism, and/or have developed what some would describe as elegant and arresting (and in some cases, deliciously difficult) prose styles. As these registers merge, they can produce what has been called a queer historiographical encounter (or in queer theorist Elizabeth Freeman's terms, "an erotohistoriography"), a "poetics of intensification," and even a "new aestheticism." The work of some of these scholars has also opened up debates (some rancorous) that often install what the editors of this volume feel are false binaries between form and content, feeling and thinking, affect and rigor, poetry and history, attachment and critical distance, enjoyment and discipline, style and substance. To whit:

In his essay, "The Application of Thought to Medieval Studies: The Twenty-First Century,"[1] D. Vance Smith worries that some medieval scholars' desire for "relevance has come at a cost of a creeping anti-intellectualism," and in the work of certain scholars, such as Carolyn Dinshaw in her book *Getting Medieval* (1999), who are interested, especially, in self-reflexivity, affect, and the haptic, Smith worries further that, although Dinshaw's work possesses scholarly "rigor," its style and method is ultimately "inimi-

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[1] D. Vance Smith, "The Application of Thought to Medieval Studies: The Twenty-First Century," *Exemplaria* 22.1 (2010): 85–94.

table" (because a "scrupulous adherence" to its call for the importance of incommensurability would render imitation impossible, as if *that* would be the point of following in Dinshaw's footsteps, *anyway*). What Smith is really concerned about, it appears, is that "the danger of valuing affect so highly is that doing so attributes to it an epistemological and even ontological difference so radical as to exclude other categories of representation—that is, to deny these other categories the difference necessary to their work of identification and representation." *As if feeling has to be opposed to, or forecloses, thinking* (when in fact there is no such thing as thinking that is not also feeling—please consult with your closest neuroscientist and get back to me in the morning). And further, "the installment of affect as an historiographical mode" might even be "insidious," a product, ultimately, of our own "self-interest" and "narcissism." But who says this is exactly the case—that affect's epistemological and ontological difference is so "radical" that it excludes other categories of representation? Certainly not Dinshaw, nor, really, *any* of us who work on affect, the haptic, queer historiographical modes, etc. And regardless, as Anna Kłosowska writes in her contribution to this volume,

> The question of style, as it applies to medieval studies, is precisely the overcoming of that dichotomy between Nature and Man: a third element. And when the critique proceeds through the denunciation of the inimitability of someone's style, as if it were the third sex, ungenerative, queer, sterile, sodomitic, lesbi-

an, etc., the critic unconsciously puts his finger on exactly what style is; but that critic is mistaken about the style's supposedly non-generative powers. In fact, style, neither fact nor theory but facilitating the transition between the two, is . . . the generative principle itself.

Ultimately, the question of style—and isn't affect itself a style, a mode, or mood, a way of inhabiting and moving, artfully and creatively, through the world, of sensing one's, or anyone's, place at any given moment in a way that helps us to thrive (and we're to be *on our guard* against this)?[2]—asks us to consider the ways in which, as much as one might want to insist otherwise, everything is hopelessly (and yet somehow also marvellously) entangled: self and Other, sense and articulation, form and content, figure and ground, personal self and scholarly self, observer and observed, past and present, and so on.

What, then, can be said about the 'style' of academic discourse at the present time, especially in relation to historical method, theory, and reading literary and historical texts, especially within premodern studies? Is style merely supplemental to scholarly (so-called) substance? As scholars, are we subjects of style? And what is the relationship between style and theory? Is style an object, a method,

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[2] On this point, see L.O. Aranye Fradenburg, *Staying Alive: A Survival Manual for the Liberal Arts*, ed. Eileen A. Joy (Brooklyn: punctum books, 2013). Indeed, Fradenburg's entire body of work is invaluably instructive on this point.

or something else? These were the questions that guided two conference sessions initially instigated by Anne Clark Bartlett and organized by the BABEL Working Group in 2010 (in Kalamazoo, Michigan and Austin, Texas), out of which this volume was developed.

On Style: An Atelier gathers together medievalists and early modernists, as well as a poet and a novelist, in order to offer ruminations upon style in scholarship and theoretical writing (with *exempla* culled from Roland Barthes, Carolyn Dinshaw, Lee Edelman, Bracha Ettinger, Charles Fourier, L.O. Aranye Fradenburg, Heidegger, Lacan, Ignatius of Loyola, and the Marquis de Sade, among others), as well as upon various trajectories of fashionable representation and self-representation in literature, sculpture, psychoanalysis, philosophy, religious history, rhetoric, and global politics. As you are reading this volume and dwelling in its atelier, please remember to wear your tenses lightly and to always, always, *be fierce*.

Eileen A. Joy
Washington, DC

Table of Contents

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On Style
A Reader's Guide

Anna Kłosowska

When George-Louis de Buffon, naturalist and mathematician—calculus, probablility, Buffon's needle—devoted to style his 1753 acceptance lecture at the French Academy, he said that "well-written works are the only ones that will be passed on to posterity. . . . small objects [such as] knowledge, facts and discoveries are easily taken up, transported, and even gain from being put together by more nimble hands. These things are

outside of man, the style is the man himself."[1] In the coda to this volume, Valerie Vogrin reminds us that Victor Hugo, in his *Function of Beauty*, fulminates against small bourgeois minds that relegate style to the background: "Style is ideas. Ideas are style. Try to tear away the word: it's the idea that you lose. . . . Style is the essence of a subject, constantly called to the surface."[2] It seemed to us that the question of style, cognate as it is to the question of the role of the humanities, needs to be asked about theory in medieval studies. In this collection, style is instantiated (we have assembled a breathtaking cast) as well as thematized and theorized. Christine Neufeld writes in the conclusion to her essay in this volume: "Perceiving this aesthetic relation to the past does not free us from a sense of accountability to the delicate, tattered fabric of history that both touches us and exceeds our grasp." In other words, we study style in this collection because it instantiates and theorizes the relation we have to the past, our subject. These are (again, via Neufeld), "the issues the Style project represents for medieval scholars: how to contend with the 'immaterial' intensities of our scholarship, the effects and affects of being touched by the past." We wanted the volume that resulted from our collaboration

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[1] George-Louis de Buffon, *Discours sur le style et autres discours académiques* (Paris: Hachette, 1843, 11). All translations are mine unless otherwise indicated.

[2] Victor Hugo, *Oeuvres posthumes de Victor Hugo. Post-scriptum de ma vie* (Paris: Calman-Lévy, 1901), 24–25, 52.

to be as stylish as it is functional: our "Guide" offers a map of the contributions as well as wardrobe suggestions. But—to cadge from Hugo again—each author has "a way of writing that one has alone, a fold that imperiously marks all writing, one's own way of touching and handling an idea."[3] So, reading this Guide is a bit like reading the label on a pint of gelato.

Valerie Allen, in "Without Style," focuses on the definition of style as an arrangement and, especially, as "an ethical disposition effected by that arrangement." She maps "formative turns" in the history of the concept of style: the opposition between Plato (philosophy) and the Sophists (rhetoric) that privileges the former, the sixteenth-century splitting of the five canons of rhetoric (invention, arrangement, style, memory, delivery) into two, philosophy (invention, arrangement) and rhetoric (style and delivery, "shorn of content"), a model associated with the French humanist Peter Ramus (Pierre de la Ramée), and finally the logical turn, both in positivist philosophy and mathematical logics, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Allen quickly shows that this last turn, privileging rigorous notation over always indeterminate language, provoked a correction in the guise of pragmatics, with J.L. Austin showing that "ordinary words" have complex claims on agency just as well as the formalized meta-language does. Although the plain, non-rhetorical style of critical writing de-

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3 Hugo, *Oeuvres posthumes*, 45.

pends on numerous shortcuts—abstract, index, specialized lexicon, allusions, footnotes—this does not cancel the fact that academic writing, too, is for an audience, including "loved ones, as if our words were gifts," as well as "the ghostly audience of absent authors" who marked us. Like the hoarder who collects old newspapers, in case they come in handy, we, too, aren't quite in control of our word-hoard; we, too, have the experience that the language speaks us. When working on her essay, Valerie Allen wore a black georgette de soie YSL pantsuit embroidered with stylized white cabbage roses, reminiscent of fine Southeast Asian mid-century decors. Her perfume is Comme des Garçons *8 88*. We invite the readers to try the same.

Ruth Evans's essay, "Lacan's *belles-lettres*," on "the new aestheticism" in literary studies, examines the diagnosis that the more theoretical and hermetic writing is a symptom of exhaustion or the waning of the discipline. Psychoanalysis suggests a way to understand the relation between obscurity and beauty: "the moment when the theoretical text presents itself as obscure, sightless, like the analyst who remains silent in analysis, allows desire to emerge in the subject, and thus allows for the production of something new." She opens with a reflection on Jacques Lacan's *litterature* ("trashy reading"), her brilliant translation of *pou-bellication*: a suitcase word, a mashup of "wastebasket" and "publication" with hints of "embellishment" and "bellicosity"; the last two words sum up Lacan's style. Evans recalls Roland Barthes's *mot*,

"when written, garbage doesn't smell," in order to remark that Lacan reverses or complicates Freud's pellucid explanation of trashy, thorny cases. In Lacan, on the contrary, it is psychoanalysis that reads as trashy and thorny. If Lacan's style can be called beautiful, Evans says, it is only on Lacanian terms: "beauty and desire are intimately related and densely contradictory." Beauty is closer to destruction than goodness: it is mesmerizing, terrible, queasy. One might add that Lacan's *la belle*, the round of the match that decides who proceeds to the next round, is always followed by *la consolante*, the round played only for pleasure. We can reframe the question of style as the question of pleasure, the "opposition between scientific discourse and the discourse of the Other, that is, the unconscious," linked to the opposition between science and the humanities. But Evans reminds us that the opposition is false: the same desire motivates scientific research as any other pursuit. We invite the readers to enjoy this essay while wearing black skinny jeans, stiletto boots, a cashmere leopard-print top, and D.S. & Durga's *Burning Barbershop*.

My own essay in the volume, "Style as Third Element," assimilates style to Charles Fourier's third element. The early nineteenth-century utopian famous for his *phalanstère*—a commune big enough that every individual's forms of desire find their complementary individuals who want nothing more ardently than to fulfill that particular desire (melon eaters and melon growers, and so forth)—Fourier defines the third element (in-

between, neuter, neither solid nor liquid, hybrid) as the principle of generation. This was of interest to Barthes, who in his book *Sade Fourier Loyola* reflected on three structural *perpetuum mobile*: Fourier's utopia, Sade's *120 Days of Sodom*, and Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises.* It is Barthes's genius not to take the presupposed opposition between Sade and Loyola for granted: in both the algorithm of perversions and the manual of spiritual exercises, memory lapses and errors of execution provide a built-in openness to the system. Both Sade and Loyola worry about having forgotten something: the more conscientious the exercitant, the more reliably s/he produces errors that are the condition of an infinitely extended reparation: an inexhaustible source of fuel for the *perpetuum* machine. In the same way as error operates in Sade and Loyola, the neuter (a concrete category mistake) makes the Fourier machine go. Compared to Sade, Loyola, and even Fourier, a medievalist has different pleasures on her mind, and a different sort of need to exhaust her subject animates her as she writes her book. And yet, just as Fourier, the eternal though inept sponger who lived off his nieces, just as Sade in the narrow confines of Bastille filling both sides of a 39-foot-long, five inches-wide scroll with the account of a fictional world of omnipotent predators collecting and cataloging the humiliations they inflict on their prey, and just as Loyola anticipating that—unlike stand-up comics—penitents never run out of good material, the medievalist, too, lives off of others. All this is to help illustrate how

absurd it is to distinguish (never innocently, always hierarchically) between critical theory and elegant style, between rigorous historicism and queer studies, and so forth. For this occasion, readers should consider pink, my signature color, and Dominique Ropion's *Carnal Flower.*

Kathleen Biddick's essay, "Daniel's Smile," on the Old Testament prophet Daniel's smile carved into a medieval cathedral, queer theory, the death drive, and futurity, reflects on the "intimate vulnerability of style" and its connection to Michael Snediker's "style as smile," "a mysterious, collective force as a serial trope."[4] From the opening autobiographical confession on the cruel orthodoxies of early 1960s teen magazines—"my heart would sink when I discovered that some accessory of mine, beloved to me for its vibrant charm, was, in fact, deemed by the style editors to be the latest sign of abjection"—Biddick draws a line from personal style abjection to Snediker's and Lacan's thinking about the master signifier. She asks whether incarnation or psychosis are the only two options for the master signifier: incarnation when we follow an inborn, uterus-formed "style" and psychosis when we don't? Do all humans have one master? Biddick leads us through Lee Edelman's critique of Lacan and his definition of the death drive to Snediker's D.W. Winnicott-based optimism. This is not a Leibnizian mega-optimism, nor a naïve future-bound opti-

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[4] See Michael D. Snediker, *Queer Optimism: Lyric Personhood and Other Felicitous Persuasions* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008).

mism that Edelman denounces in his opposition to heterosexual procreative absolutism with its emblem, the "poster child."[5] Rather, Snediker invents a queer optimism whose emblem is "an aesthetic person." And Biddick suggests that this "aesthetic person" can be understood from the vantage point of Bracha L. Ettinger's matrixial borderspaces.[6] Ettinger, a "new Euridice," does not have to be hemmed in by the Lacanian choice of incarnation or psychosis. She visits these options and the borderspaces they disallow, and yet "lives to tell the tale." And Ettinger's style! As Biddick details, "Her text blossoms with what she calls 'eroticized aerials,' receiving and transmitting the incipiencies of a co-poesis. Habits of explication falter at such incipiencies." Ettinger proposes transmissibility (relating without relations) along acoustic and tactile synchronies, emergence (dynamic and partial), and transubjective affects (not subjectivity). The link Biddick establishes between Snediker's queer optimism and medieval "exegesis, sculpture, performance, juridical execution, and liturgical lamentation" understands the sculpted medieval Daniel's enigmatic smile in a new light: "the 'tender love' of Daniel's young days in the palace of the chief eunuch that somehow persisted as a trans-traumatic encounter in the stony remainder" of his portray-

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[5] See Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004).

[6] See Bracha L. Ettinger, *The Matrixial Borderspace*, ed. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004).

al in the wall of a medieval cathedral. For this essay, one should wear kindness and white linen, and Santa Maria Novella's *Opopanax*. More than the clothes, though, it's the place that matters: try a deep, green, clear, early summer night, under enormous trees that soften the sound.

Michael Snediker's response to the preceding essays by Allen, Evans, Kłosowska, and Biddick, "To Peach or Not to Peach," focuses on the ways style works—that is, on seduction. Takes one to know one. As D. Period Gilson says in a review of Snediker's poem "Ganymede," Snediker's poems are "like the most alluring of men."[7] One of the most seductive poets and thinkers today, [8] Snediker is also one of the most important readers of Emily Dickinson and Americana. As I was reading his beautiful essay in this volume, I was thinking about what Gilson says about that "2013 Ganymede" who accessorizes with a Luis Vuitton clutch to go to a sandwich shop: "that mortal so utterly beautiful Homer tells us, like the Louis bag the speaker carries here, and yet, still mortal, not

[7] D. Gilson, "The Last Poem I Loved: 'Ganymede,' by Michael D. Snediker," *The Rumpus*, July 13, 2013: http://therumpus.net/2013/07/the-last-poem-i-loved-ganymede-by-michael-d-snediker/.

[8] As Daniel Tiffany said recently of Snediker's book of poems *The Apartment of Tragic Appliance*s (2013), "We have been missing poems like these for a long time. It's as if one were overhearing the grotesque and beloved 'Matthew mighty-grain-of-salt O'Connor' coming through James Merrill's Ouija board. Michael Snediker is one of the most original and affecting poets of his generation."

divine, like the speaker himself waffling between ordering the turkey or meatball sub." Here, in a nutshell, is the importance of the style of "Ganymede": it is a grand poem, and in Gilson's words, "the poem carries this intellectual weight in a sexy handbag to Subway, where it orders a sandwich." Yes, and yes: an intellectual poem, a poem that carries the weight of Western philosophy and literary tradition in an LV *pochette* into the most mundane and sadly lit interiors. What is style to Snediker? It is a line between the Actual and the Imaginary "where style lies. In as many ways as you wish." Of course, this piece must be read when one is more than six feet tall, dressed in slim Armani and long-tipped shoes that one can only see often on the Paris *Métro*, devastatingly beautiful, and drenched in Santa Maria Novella's *Angels of Florence.* Yes, drenched: given that 5% of the proceeds benefit the restoration of Florentine monuments after the flood of 1966. That is what, in my mind, Snediker's style is doing: saving the world, one eternal city at a time.

In "The Aesthetics of Style and the Politics of Identity Formation," Gila Aloni reflects on the blurred boundaries between past and present. Aloni begins with Carolyn Dinshaw's *Getting Medieval*,[9] and its concept of the past as a means to "build selves and communities now and into the future," then moves to historian Daniel Smail, whose interest centers on the ways tradition

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[9] Carolyn Dinshaw, *Getting Medieval: Sexualities and Communities, Pre- and Postmodern* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999).

shapes the brain,[10] and to Aranye Fradenburg's concept of "atemporal historicity,"[11] to conclude with a reading of Chaucer's "dream within a dream" in his rewriting of Hypermenstra in the *Legend of Good Women*. Although Aloni does not follow this direction, her reading reminds us that the single most important confluence of medievalism and present concerns, in terms of what has made medieval studies relevant, was without any doubt queer studies and the phenomenon of Dinshaw's *Getting Medieval*. And by the way, let us not forget Dinshaw's pantsuits at job interviews in the 1980s when women were still only expected to wear skirts, and later, her black leather trousers at the "Knights in Black Leather" session at the MLA in the 1990s, or her retro-1970s geometric print polyester shirts at Kalamazoo in the naughts. Of countless others, let us only mention Anne Clark-Bartlett, the punk rebel of medieval studies who originally conceived the idea of this *Style* volume, and her "Reading it Personally: Robert Gluck, Margery Kempe, and Language in Crisis," which is one of the reasons Eileen Joy wanted to be a medievalist.[12] For those who favor a statisti-

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[10] See Daniel Lord Smail, *On Deep History and the Brain* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008).

[11] Aranye Fradenburg, "(Dis)continuity: A History of Dreaming," in *The Post-Historical Middle Ages*, eds. Elizabeth Scala and Sylvia Frederico (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 87–116.

[12] "Reading it Personally: Robert Gluck, Margery Kempe, and Language in Crisis," *Exemplaria: A Journal of Theory in Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 16 (2004):

cal approach, we recommend Steven F. Kruger's study of the internet as "an archive for American medievalism and pornographic and erotic medievalism." [13] It is recommended that one read Aloni's chapter in the shadows of Issey Miyake's studio in the apartments of the Place des Vosges while drinking Sancerre and applying Smashbox's "Fade to Black" lipstick.

In "Renegade Style," Jessica Roberts Frazier looks at the shopping scene of *The Renegado* (1624) to see how this set piece combines classical mythology and the "material efficacy" or agency of objects (plates that self-destruct if served with poisoned food, for example) to cast the Oriental "improper orientation towards things" as a historical as well as geographical Othering, a trait that links 'Oriental' characters to the *démodé* past that the West has supposedly already outgrown. A reversal in the second act shows the return of the repressed. A catastrophe (in drama, this term simply means *dénouement*) in the last scene echoes the "gruesome wardrobe malfunctions" (Dejanira's robe, Marsias's cries, Daphne's laurel) of Ovid's *Metamorphoses.* No doubt, this piece is best read in Versace's Byzantium collection (Fall 2012) or Chanel Pre-Fall 2011, or anything by Mary Katrantzou. For the conservative reader, we recommend Faye Toogood's (of studiotoogood)

437–456.

[13] Steven F. Kruger, "Gay Internet Medievalism: Erotic Story Archives, the Middle Ages, and Contemporary Gay Identity," *American Literary Identity* 22:4 (2010), 913-944.

recycling of the Hermès collection's rejects (their *Petit h* initiative, a *très* Lacanian label), all slathered in latex blood.

Christine Neufeld observes in "Always Accessorize: in Defense of Scholarly *Cointise*," that style is almost always taken as provocation. In her essay, she traces the confluence and resonance between three constituencies—"the queer community, the New Narrative school, and the medieval scholarly community," which so powerfully came together in Dinshaw's *Getting Medieval* and Bartlett's 2004 *Exemplaria* article (cited above). Neufeld's "sumptuary semiotics" points out that accessories are a symptom of the way style works: "as 'excess,' an effect that is greater than the sum of its parts, whose creative power depends precisely upon its inimitability, its mystery." She notes that accessories are gendered: "[b]eginning with patristic texts, the ubiquity of Christian sumptuary injunctions, against women's clothing and fashion consciousness in particular, link anxieties about costume's expressive power to the persuasive power of women's speech." Decorative speech is gendered as well: every reformer urges his audience to curb the "feminizing force of rhetoric's persuasive cadences in favor of more 'penetrating' logical analysis." From the Wife of Bath's ornaments to the realization that with Margery Kempe, "the immaterial discourse of her soul [was] expressed most provocatively through her white clothes and her endlessly spilling tears," Neufeld guides us through a fantastic recovery of a dense, stylishly tactile past. She takes us further

still, to the New Narrative School (New York and San Francisco, late 1970s and 1980s), to chart the "response by queer writers. . . to the disembodied poetics of the Language School." In the Narrative School's refusal to "choose between affinity and critique," Neufeld maps the resonances with medievalist criticism, whose historical subject is both endlessly alluring and endlessly elusive. Oh, and one more thing: Neufeld has possibly the best shoe collection in medieval studies, a competitive field (may we mention Catherine Karkov, or our own Eileen Joy), where shoes have been known to cause the demise of academic journals (it was bruited that one publisher within medieval studies embezzled funds to keep his better half in Manolos). And let us not forget the late medieval *poulaines*, shoes with one or two-foot-long tips, sometimes tied by a string to the leg under the knee to facilitate maneuvers.

As Neufeld observes, "[if] exploring the Middle Ages now means we can or must acknowledge the unrecorded effects and unanalyzed passions, formerly deemed supplemental, accessory, to our critical discourse then, like Margery Kempe, we also are in search of idioms that allow us to articulate the ineffable." The abundance of things—these "intensities," as Gilles Deleuze or Michel Foucault would call them—reminds us that interesting relations can take forms other than oppositions or linear hierarchies. As Deleuze says in *Difference and Repetition,* "[o]ppositions are roughly cut from a delicate milieu of overlapping perspectives, of communicating distances, divergences

and disparities, of heterogeneous potentials and intensities. . . . Everywhere, couples and polarities presuppose bundles and networks, organized oppositions presuppose radiations in all directions."[14] For Neufeld, then, the turn to style is a natural theoretical consequence of the autobiographical turn, what she (citing the 2004 *Exemplaria* article by Anne Clark Bartlett, mentioned above) tags as "a new mode of so-called 'confessional' criticism [that] has emerged recently [and] unsettles the dichotomy of 'expressivism and objectivity,' intersecting *petite histoire* and *grand récit* to generate a new ground for the 'transaction between text-as-subject and reader-as-text.'"[15] In other words, it is a result of our autobiographical turn that we are "in search of idioms that allow us to articulate the ineffable." And the result of that autobiographical turn is also a paramount movement to create communities, affinities and kinships: communities brought together by style, like the wink and the sartorial hint of alliances doomed to secrecy in the context of the persecuting past.

Valerie Vogrin, fiction writer, editor of the literary journal *Sou'wester*, and Director of Peanut Books, gives us a fireworks show of a last essay, each passage bold enough to stand by itself— and un-summarizable. Faced with this impossibility, I will only mention a couple of favorites: "Style, more than species, is what distinguishes the howl of wolves saluting the moon from the

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[14] Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (London: Continuum, 2004), 51.
[15] Bartlett, "Reading it Personally," 437–456.

songs of the neighborhood dogs rising over fences and alleyways." And: "The myth of a neutral style. As if knowledge was a substance to be displayed on a glass specimen slide. The challenge isn't to see things as they are, but to see things at all." Politics of style. Specific style as a philosophical proposition. Economy, as in: conciseness. But also as in: Marxism. Style as the generative principle itself. I could go on: Vogrin mentions Queneau's *Exercices de style*, but she herself is the great encyclopedist of style in this volume, examining it in its different dimensions. Of course Vogrin's piece is best read wearing vintage threads, preferably from Casablanca in Cincinnati, Ohio. It has three floors of clothes, from the 1870s on, and you can probably find there Nerval's smoking jacket and the underpants that Verlaine tore off Rimbaud, and of course, Emily Dickinson's umbrella. Failing that, try any Americana—jeans, cowboy boots, Pendleton blankets—recycled as girl clothes for the City of Lights (if it worked for Isabel Marant, think what it will do to you); accompanied by a custom scent from Christopher Brosius. Better still, go to a souk after dark on a spring night and have one made for you.

01: Without Style

Valerie Allen

ABSTRACT

As its etymology reminds us, style mediates communication and arises out of whatever technology of communication characterizes an era. Style presents itself as the "how" as distinct from the "what" of communicated thought, and the relationship between the two has always been marked by attempts to subordinate form to content or vice versa. In the academic disciplines, the substantive (the "what") traditionally takes precedence over the procedural (the "how"). Academic style paradoxically deprivileges style by making it subservient to substance and, in doing so, helps construct disciplinary boundaries, which differentiate themselves both by subject matter and by mystifying their processes of communication—that is, their style. A foregrounding of style in academic dis-

course, however, lays bare its own procedures and thereby opens up its audience; for style—unlike substance—is all about audience, about being situated, directive, and intentional. By equalizing style's footing in the style/substance binary, we achieve better awareness about the boundaries of our disciplines.

A trip to the *Oxford English Dictionary* will tell us that the word *style*, in currency in English for over 700 years, comes to us via Old French from Latin *stilus*, meaning a stylus or nib, as if we could speak of someone being entirely "without nib" or rather "nibbish." By a synecdochal move, style comes to name the words that emerge from beneath the nib as it moves across the page and then, by another conceptual gathering, the inked words and the slant of the nib that penned them come to refer to "how they ought to be expressed"—I modify this phrase from Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, which translated very literally reads: "it is not sufficient to have what (things) ought to be said but also necessary [to have] how such (things) ought to be said."[1] Style is not an ineffable *je ne sais quoi* but a function of words arranged visually or aurally in certain ways, an ethical disposition effected by that arrangement.

[1] Aristotle, *The "Art" of Rhetoric*, ed. and trans. John Henry Freese (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1925), III.1.2 (1403b), 344–345.

We are doubly reminded of style's "word-ness" by the terms in the Greek and Latin that we translate as "style": *lexis* and *elocutio*. The etymology of the word thus shows that style is medium: the words in which the thought emerged or the scratched page on which the words emerged. Moreover, that medium is a technology of communication. If the traction of a nib over a page, the flow of ink, and the *ductus* (flow, direction) of a hand in its movement across a page together once produced style, style today arises out of a different configuration of and different physical processes of producing and distributing words.

What sort of balance do we as scholars in humanities seek between, as Aristotle pitches it, "what we ought to say" and "how we ought to say it"? The question is thousands of years old, yet into its broad picture are etched choices we make daily. How we resolve the balance between substance and style bears decisive consequences for scholarly reputations and for audience. Their long tussle begins at least with Plato and the sophists in their respective claims for philosophy and rhetoric, and, while this is not the place for sketching their history, we may note as we go a couple of formative turns that in each case ruptures connection between the substantive and the procedural. The first asserts the claims of substance over style. In the sixteenth century, Petrus Ramus splits the five canons of rhetoric—invention, arrangement, style, memory, delivery—into two groups: he assigns invention and

arrangement to philosophy and leaves rhetoric, now shrunk to style and delivery (memory being quite sidelined), shorn of content.[2] Emptied of truth-value, transformed into a neutral how, style under the Ramist logical turn seeks to fashion itself into the most effective form for content that philosophy had already ascertained to be correct. The legacy of this impoverishment of rhetoric persists in critical scholarship, where content habitually trumps form, where *inventio* comes before *elocutio*.

A second formative turn asserts the claims of form over content and is articulated in the mathematical logic developed in the nineteenth century and associated in the twentieth with the logical positivists. Such work operates on the assumption that ordinary language is too equiv-ocal to denote accurately and thus aims to achieve a purer notation, emptied of content, with a truth-value abstracted from the words of the sentence. Although in reaction to the claims of mathematical logic, ordinary language has found many defenders—not least J.L. Austin, who remarks that "our ordinary words are much subtler . . . than philosophers have realized"—we retain an abiding belief in the usefulness and attractions of notation, if not of actual symbols, then at least of a special use of words, a rarefied terminology (put less politely, of jargon).[3] If

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2 Walter J. Ong, SJ, *Ramus: Method, and the Decay of Dialogue from the Art of Discourse to the Art of Reason* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 270.

3 J.L. Austin, *Sense and Sensibilia* (Oxford: Oxford

academic discourse is inflected by a formalist attachment to special language, it is paradoxically and equally so drawn to a realist preference for thesis over persuasion. These compass points, from which we aim today to get our bearings as we ask how to write as we ought, indicate the breadth of the terrain. In our little, daily way, we join debates between means and end, appearance and reality, rhetoric and philosophy, form and content that have been around for as long as there has been style.

Academic discourse generally assumes a form that consistently swallows itself by subordinating itself to content.[4] Let's call it the Scholars' Paradox: "We are without Style. Our business is Substance." And if the substance of the argument should posit the precedence of form over content, then only deeper runs the performative contradiction. The best scholarly sentence flexes its nouns, no flabby passives or stranded prepositions in sight, quite naked of the frills that the garment of eloquence fusses about in. Of course, it requires some training to write like that, so to be without style more accurately means to have mastered the plain style, a "non-rhetorical style" that emerges in Ramist thought from out of the classical three styles (high, middle, low), and

University Press, 1962), 3; reconstructed from the Manuscript Notes by G.J. Warnock.

[4] The term "self-swallowing" is used by Douglas R. Hofstadter, *Gödel, Escher, Bach: An Eternal Golden Braid*, anniversary edn. (1979; New York: Basic Books, 1999), 20.

which shapes English into an apt vehicle for sound empiricist common-sense.[5] Plain style aims for "clarity" of "ideas," invoking a metaphor of vision it denies is there because, by definition, one sees straight through the medium. This critical writing aspires after such plainness that it masquerades as absence of rhetorical style. It aims for what Russian Formalist Jan Mukarovsky calls "standard language," which measures style or poetic language as deviance against the norm, which is itself. Ultimately, standard language is the language of science, the purpose of which is to communicate "subject matter," drawing attention to what is said rather than how it is said.[6] Problems arise, however, in measuring stylistic effect as deviation from a norm that in the final analysis is inexpressible, for where can an utterance be found that is stripped quite bare of rhetorical color?[7] Not even the language of science is entirely without style. By taking more seriously the style of its own plainness, critical writing can more safely admit its "deviations."

Critical writing's non-rhetorical style—its

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[5] Ong, *Ramus*, 212–213, 283–284.

[6] See Jan Mukarovsky, "Standard Language and Poetic Language" (1932), in *A Prague School Reader on Esthetics, Literary Structure, and Style*, ed. and trans. Paul L. Garvin (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1964).

[7] As Jacques Derrida suggests in "White Mythology: Metaphor in the Text of Philosophy," in *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 207–271.

abstraction of substance from diction—results in a different kind of reading. We read critical scholarship for content rather than form, taking a shortcut into the body of ideas through the wormholes of abstract and index.[8] Leave to creative writers storytelling that obliges one to read every page to the last for the dénouement; scholars require the spoiler of a thesis statement or abstract (as above). For Bruno Latour, such shortcuts function like "black boxes," which process information without the mechanism by which it does so being available for analysis.[9] In this way, the processes by which we produce scholarly writing are mystified, and the distinction between creativity and critique is enforced. In context here, a black box denotes any of the scholarly moves that mark the boundaries of a professional discourse community: a dedicated

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[8] As academics, Jane Gallop observes, "We have been trained to read a book globally: that is, to think of the book as a whole, identify its main idea, and understand all of its parts as fitting together to make up that whole": Jane Gallop, "The Ethics of Reading: Close Encounters," *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing* 16 (2000): 11 [7–17]. Richard Klein speaks of the occasional need in reading to suspend "your need to know in advance where you're going" and of a book being shaped like a mandala, frustrating any forward progress of linear reading. See Richard Klein, *Eat Fat* (New York: Pantheon, 1996), xiii–xiv.

[9] For discussion of the centrality of the term "black box" to Latour's work, see Graham Harman, *Prince of Networks: Bruno Latour and Metaphysics* (Melbourne: re.press, 2009), 33–47.

lexicon; an ordinary word or phrase given special meaning; a glancing allusion to something the audience ought to know; an analytic method; a footnote reassuring your audience that you know more about the subject than your argument strictly needs to demonstrate.

In contrast to critical writing without style, take a lesson from Latour's ANT, the acronym of Actor Network Theory, which, although a mouthful of jargon if ever there was, has one redeeming feature. "Alas . . . ," remarks Latour, "a name . . . so awkward, so confusing, so meaningless that . . . I was ready to drop this label . . . until someone pointed out to me that the acronym A.N.T. was perfectly fit for a blind, myopic, workaholic, trail-sniffing, and collective traveler." He says further, "[T]he ANT-scholar has to trudge like an ant, carrying the heavy gear in order to generate even the tiniest connection."[10] The lesson of the ANT is this: no black-box shortcuts; no hitching a ride from jargon.

What are the consequences and desirability of opening up the borders—insofar as it is possible—of one's discipline by writing with(in) style? Is it possible to develop an academic style that can hold simultaneously the interest of expert and novice? Or must one always choose between boring the specialist with a scenic route and mystifying the newcomer with a shortcut? Latour's own sly and deceivingly easy style—fore-

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[10] Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 9, 25.

shadowed by a "private fondness" for Nietzsche—suggests it might be.[11] What Schoenburg does to musical notes with a pantonic scale that democratizes the relations between "tonic," "dominant" and so on, Latour does to academic prose with his leveling style that flattens the contours of difference between the vocabularies of specialist and newcomer, and turns everyone into a worker ANT on the scenic route. Would we as scholarly ants be unable to say as much by not wielding terms of art as if a kind of symbolic logic? Does the scenic route mean we travel less far? Most likely yes, but the travelling companions of one's audience are as important as the destination. In the phrase *quo vadis,* the *quo* can function adverbially to render "where are you going?" and also pronominally "with whom are you going?" If journey and arrival go by the same name then style and substance similarly equivocate.

So central is this issue of travelling companions, that being without an audience (even if only composed of oneself) leaves one without style. This is because style is less a self-standing thing than it is relationality. I am making an effort here to avoid substantivizing style, but it is virtually impossible to avoid grammatical nominalization, to "name" style as a thing in its own right. Yet in an attempt to do so, let's return to the paraphrase of Aristotle, to speaking of style in terms of "how words ought to be expressed." Phrasing style thus takes refuge in the subjunctive

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[11] Harman, *Prince of Networks*, 11.

and casts style as mood, a grammatical function of the verb-system that orients a verb toward reality in a certain way (declarative, hypothetical, etc.).

Mood identifies the mode in which the verb "is," in the existential sense. Mood and mode derive from the same word (from Latin *modus*), so we can think of grammatical mood in terms of musical mode and vice versa. Style disposes words (or notes) to be in a certain way. Metaphor or analogy is perhaps the only way of getting access to style as a general concept, for it is impossible to speak about style without style (in the archaic sense of "outside").[12] Style or mood and existential being are conjoint: "in every case Dasein always has some mood," writes Heidegger;[13] being is always in a mood—"we are never free of moods," he says.[14] Heidegger's word for mood (*Stimmung*) is a musical term, meaning the tuning of an instrument.[15] All communicative acts have modality. At the most fundamental level, beneath its complimentary meaning as elegance, beneath its formalist meaning as deviance from a norm, style pervasively imbues all language. By conceiving it as grammatical

[12] See *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. *without*, prep., 1a; also *OED*, s.v. *outwith*, prep., 1a.

[13] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), §134 (173).

[14] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, §136 (175).

[15] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, §134 (172 and translators' footnotes).

mood that orients a verb's action, or as a musical mode that tunes notes into relationships with each other, we disclose style's situatedness and directionality. Style always has a particular situation or audience in mind.

Such directedness is a feature of all linguistic acts, quite obviously so in the case of the professional words we make public. Publishers routinely ask prospective authors in their proposal forms—"who is the book aimed at?"—as if it is about to hit someone looking in the opposite direction, yet there is a question underlying the market-speak that is hard to answer well: "for whom do we write?" We write for an idealized audience that includes ourselves, those in our discourse community, students, even loved ones, as if our words were gifts. Perhaps less consciously and more profoundly we also write for those we have read whose words have mattered to us, a ghostly audience of absent authors. To lean on Heidegger again: being in the world entails having things matter to us.[16] The intentionality of style is not unidirectional, allowing only us to have designs upon our audience; it allows audience and place to so matter to us that they shape our diction. If saying so implies that discourse communities determine academic style (and they do), it also reasserts the classical adage that style is formed through habits of reading, that writing is at heart a kind of *imitatio* of all the word-smiths who have mattered to a writer. To

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[16] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, §137 (176).

ask "how do we write as we ought?" entails asking also "whom ought we to read?" The answer to that question in part determines the boundaries of a discipline.[17]

The purposiveness of our style calls on our not inconsiderable analytic skills to understand it better. I have cast style as a kind of linguistic choice, the "tendency of a speaker or writer to consistently choose certain structures over others available in the language."[18] Many of these choices are made for us and are unavailable to change, yet many fall within the scope of deliberated action, perhaps being by now so habitual they go unnoticed. Style is worth talking about, for change does not come easily, as William Ian Miller attests:

> Certain tics characterize my writing. . . . I start too many sentences with *but* and then try to vary them by changing some of them to *still* or *yet*. . . . But actually get rid of them and structure my writing so as to avoid them? . . . I

[17] The question is linked to debates about the canon, especially to the choice of texts according to their complexity and artistic value. See Gerald Graff, "Why How We Read Trumps What We Read," *Profession* (2009): 73 [66–74]. "[S]erious education means assigning texts that possess intrinsic richness, complexity, and value" if only to give the readers a conceptual framework sufficiently complex to critique those very texts.

[18] Elizabeth Closs Traugott and Mary Louise Pratt, *Linguistics for Students of Literature* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1980), 29.

just can't find a way to do it. I also get anxious that I am using too many *justs* and *evens*. . . . I undertake global searches to see whether I can eliminate some of them. I manage to exchange a couple of them for an *only* or a *mere*, but then I fear my *onlys* and *meres* are starting to get ticlike. A tough-minded editor would strike out maybe half of these *justs* and *evens* because they often do not affect the core sense of the proposition. But I cannot get myself to cut more than one or two because they add an indescribable justness, either just enough of a hedge or just enough emphasis, to situate my level of commitment to my own statements . . . [I]t is as if I were excising a part of me. Incredible that words that mean virtually nothing mean so much.[19]

More than idiosyncratic tics, such discourse markers say much about the rhetorical protocols of academic writing. There might be some merit in a calculative analysis of our scholarly scratchings, for a "distant reading," as Franco Moretti calls it, that cares not a whit for argument but only counts the *justs* and *evens*, the *not only/but also* and the *howevers* that sit in the academic landscape as markers of our discourse communities and as bridges between "they say" and "I say."[20] To change our style—if that is what is

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[19] William Ian Miller, *Eye for an Eye* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 12.

[20] Franco Moretti, *Graphs, Maps, Trees: Abstract Models for Literary History* (New York: Verso, 2007), 1.

desired—comes at a cost, which is not to say that the cost might not be worth it.

For the discursive shape of scholarly prose, see Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein, *They Say, I Say: The Moves that Matter in Academic Writing,* 2nd edn. (New York: W.W. Norton, 2010).

02: Lacan's *belles-lettres*
On difficulty and beauty

Ruth Evans

Ever since the Sokal affair, humanities scholarship in some quarters stands accused of unintelligibility, emptiness, or absurdity.[1] Sure, there's some bad theoretical writing out there. But not all of it is willfully unreadable. A familiar set of

[1] See *The Sokal Hoax: The Sham That Shook the Academy*, ed. *Lingua Franca* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000).

binaries runs through and across these accusations: not only clarity/obscurity, but wonder/pessimism, aesthetics/politics, and affect/the hermeneutics of suspicion. But these oppositions are far from being rigidly distributed along either side of the fault line dividing the "two cultures." The turn to what has been called "the new aestheticism" within literary studies, for example, involves a radical rethinking of beauty and affect, not just in the way we read literary texts—including medieval ones—but in the way we write about them.[2] A less familiar assumption made by the accusers is that the beautiful leads us to truth—what the philosopher Denis Dutton describes as "aesthetic insight"—whereas the unreadable is the sign of a certain exhaustion in the humanities: an endless self-referentiality, a "process of text in/text out."[3] Within such a

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[2]See, for example, John Joughin and Simon Malpas, eds. *The New Aestheticism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003); Isobel Armstrong, *The Radical Aesthetic* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000); John Frow, "On Literature in Cultural Studies," in *The Aesthetics of Cultural Studies*, ed. Michael Bérubé (Malden, MA. and Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), 44–57; Simon Gaunt, "A Martyr to Love: Sacrificial Desire in the Poetry of Bernart de Ventadorn," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 31.3 (2001): 477–506 [479–81]; L. O. Aranye Fradenburg, *Sacrifice Your Love: Psychoanalysis, Historicism, Chaucer* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002); and L. O. Aranye Fradenburg, "Beauty and Boredom in *The Legend of Good Women*," *Exemplaria* 22.1 (2010): 65–83.

[3] See, for example, John Brockman, "Introduction: The

schema, research in the humanities merely recycles existing authorities and thus fails to produce new knowledge. Psychoanalysis, however, provides some fruitful ways of thinking about the relationship between obscurity and beauty, and why they matter in academic discourse. Moreover, the moment when the theoretical text presents itself as obscure, sightless, like the analyst who remains silent in analysis, allows desire to emerge in the subject, and thus allows for the production of something new.[4]

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I can't do more here than sketch out some preliminary thoughts, but let's start with the way in which Jacques Lacan likes to make it tough for us. He defiantly admits that his 1966 collection

New Humanists," in *The New Humanists: Science at the Edge*, ed. John Brockman (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2003), 1–11; responses to the essays can be found on pages 363–400. Online version: http://www.edge.org/books/new_humanists.html. Dutton's remark is quoted on 391. For "text in/text out," see Brockman, "Introduction," 3.

[4] My argument here is very much influenced by Parveen Adams, "The Art of Analysis: Mary Kelly's Interim," in *The Emptiness of the Image: Psychoanalysis and Sexual Difference* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 89 [71–89].

Écrits was "not meant to be read,"[5] having already warned us that his writing is distinguished by "a prevalence of the *text*," leaving the reader with "no other way out than the way in, which I prefer to be difficult."[6] The structure of this coercive style is a Möbius strip, where the outside continues the inside,[7] so that the reader is forced to exit from this writing only by being forced to enter into it, to travel out of the unconscious only on the condition of entering into it. By presenting the analysts he is training with signifiers that are "difficult to read," that are "read awry," or that are unreadable,[8] Lacan aims to provoke and engage their desire. Their demand—for intelligibility, for knowledge—"by being articulated in signifiers, leaves a metonymic remainder that runs under it, . . . an element necessarily lacking,

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[5] Jacques Lacan, "The Function of the Written," in *On Feminine Sexuality: The Limits of Love and Knowledge, 1972-1973; Encore, The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XX*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Bruce Fink (New York: W.W. Norton, 1999), 26 [26–37].

[6] Jacques Lacan, "The Agency of the Letter in the Unconscious or Reason since Freud," *Écrits: A Selection*, trans. Alan Sheridan (1977; New York: Routledge, 2002), 161–162 [160–197].

[7] Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Penguin, 1979), 156. For a critical examination of Lacan's style by a French professor of linguistics, see Georges Mounin, "Quelques traits du style de Jacques Lacan," *La Nouvelle Revue Française* 193 (1969): 84–92.

[8] Lacan, "The Function of the Written," 37.

unsatisfied, impossible, misconstrued, . . . an element that is called desire."[9] Designed also to mime the talking cure, in which the patient produces a stream of signifiers to which the analyst must give a reading that is different from what they signify,[10] the purposive int-illegibility of Lacan's writing not only underlines the fact that it is our captation by signifiers that produces desire but also makes desire central to its field of inquiry.

One of Lacan's signifiers that captures my attention is *poubellication*, his playful neologism for the "bringing out" of his difficult *Écrits*. As the translator Bruce Fink notes, this word "is a condensation of *poubelle*, garbage can (or dustbin),[11] and *publication*, publication," and it can "perhaps also be seen to contain *embellir*, to beautify, and other words as well"[12]—"bellicose," perhaps, which certainly figures the aggressive jouissance of the *Écrits*. To tarry with Lacan's idiom for a moment, one English translation of the style of *Écrits* might be *litter-ature*, the letter as litter, writing as rubbish, just as one translation

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[9] Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts*, 154.

[10] Lacan, "The Function of the Written," 37.

[11] The British English translation of poubelle is "waste-paper bin" or "dustbin."

[12] Lacan, "The Function of the Written," 26n2. On *poubellication*, see also Dany Nobus and Malcolm Quinn, *Knowing Nothing, Staying Stupid: Elements for a Psychoanalytic Epistemology* (London: Routledge, 2005), 155.

of *poubellication* might be *rubblishing*. But there is beauty in there too. I also hear in Lacan's neologism the pun *poo-belle*, operating across English and French, a pun that points to the trope of writing as the transformation of shit into beauty: as Roland Barthes has it, "When *written*, *shit does not smell.*"[13] By insisting on its status as garbage, Lacan's difficult writing refuses to purge language of its dirt by an act of *ablootification*. If Dominique Laporte, in *History of Shit*, aims, in the words of one of his translators, "to reverse the deodorization of language by means of a reeking syntax,"[14] then we might think of Lacan's punningly irreverent and intermittently recalcitrant style as an attempt to reverse the intelligibility of Freudian discourse by means of a profusion of int-illegible signifiers: garbage spilling from the *poubelle*. And since garbage is a sign of the human,[15] Lacan poses a question not only about our rejection of the difficult—are we rejecting part of ourselves?—but also about the beautiful that might be contained within it.

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[13] Roland Barthes, *Sade, Fourier, Loyola* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1971), 140; translation in Dominique Laporte, *History of Shit*, trans. Nadia Benabid and Rodolphe el-Khoury (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2002), 10.

[14] Rodolphe el-Khoury, "Introduction," in Laporte, *History of Shit*, ix.

[15] Jacques Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis, 1959-1960; The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book VII*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Denis Porter (New York: Routledge, 1992), 233: "the pile of garbage is one of the sides of the human dimension that it would be wrong to mistake."

So is Lacan's style beautiful? Rather than seeing the beautiful as the sublimation of desire, Lacan insists that beauty and desire are intimately related and densely contradictory.[16] For Lacan, beauty is both the barrier to the realization of our desire and what points us towards it:

> On the scale that separates us from the central field of desire, if the good constitutes the first stopping place, the beautiful forms the second and gets closer. It stops us, but it also points in the direction of the field of destruction.[17]

So in Lacanian terms, a beautiful style—a style that exhibits one of Freud's three requirements of civilization, namely, cleanliness, order and beauty[18]—acts on the one hand as a disciplinary mechanism that holds our desire in check, like Beaute in Chaucer's *Parliament of Fowls*, "withoutyn any atyr" (l. 225), one of the many figures that surrounds the temple of Venus and who mesmerizes the dreamer. But on the other hand, the function of the beautiful is to indicate our most radical *jouissance*. This is Yeats's "terrible beauty" or Chaucer's Venus, less an icon of beauty than a queasy reminder of the link

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[16] Lacan, *Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, 238.

[17] Lacan, *Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, 216–217.

[18] Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, chaps. 3 & 4.

between beauty, aggressive destruction, and desire, as she lies on a golden bed in the flickering gloom of her tent surrounded by two suffering lovers, the broken bows of Diana, and images of famous, dead, unhappy lovers. Moreover, her beauty, glimpsed by a sudden burst of light, reveals to the dreamer "the site of his relationship to his own death," and "reveal[s] it . . . only in a blinding flash":[19] in other words, our love of beauty is driven by the death wish. Our desire has no final resting place. The effect of beauty splits desire, on the one hand extinguishing or tempering it (as in Thomas Aquinas), but on the other hand, as in Kant, bringing about "the disruption of any object."[20] Fascinated, we fail to see anything in the object—in the style—except our delight in looking at it. It's one of the effects that the eerily beautiful style of Aranye Fradenburg's *Sacrifice Your Love*[21] has on me: its difficult, artful prose succeeds in making both present and absent the beautiful object that we call the Middle Ages. We are a long way here from the beautiful as morality, as truth, as sublimation, as stylistic ornament or accidents, as consolation, or as the object of dispassionate contemplation.

Finally, in *poubellication* there is also *la belle*, the beautiful woman, the figure that the analyst must speak to at the moment of transference, when the "healthy part" of the subject "closes the

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[19] Lacan, *Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, 295.
[20] Lacan, *Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, 248–249.
[21] See footnote 2 above.

door, or the window, or the shutters [*volets*], or whatever," concealing "the beauty [*la belle*] with whom one wishes to speak."[22] Lacan does not identify this "beauty" because he refuses to substantify the unconscious.[23] Perhaps she is *la belle au bois dormant* (Sleeping Beauty), waiting to be awoken from apparent death, or *la belle dame sans merci*: the courtly lady, in her various "inhuman,"[24] Thing-like, (w)hole-like, or good incarnations. In the language of sport, *la belle* is "the decider": the game that will decide who goes forward to the next round or who wins. Perhaps a part of the patient is playing the deciding game, just as the analyst must decide on the right moment to begin her interpretation if the shutters are to be reopened. I cannot decide which meaning Lacan intends here. This *belle*, this beauty, this decider, is that part of the subject that is "magnetized," charged to such an extent that she is split, dissociated from her desire.[25] Beauty here is not what deflects desire or opens on to it but the mark of a radical dissociation of the subject from her desire as the unconscious

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[22] Lacan, *Four Fundamental Concepts*, 131.

[23] Lacan, *Four Fundamental Concepts*, 134.

[24] Lacan, *Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, 214.

[25] Lacan, *Four Fundamental Concepts*, 134: "What there is beyond, what a little while ago I called the beauty behind the shutters, this is what is in question. . . . It is a question of mapping out how some-thing of the subject is, behind the screen, magnetized, magnetized to the profound degree of dissociation, of split."

closes upon itself but nevertheless remains *outside*.[26]

To think of as the *belle* in the *poubellication* of *Écrits* as this *belle* is to pull the question of difficult style into the discourse of the transference and hence of sexual reality. Lacan's claim that the reader is "not obliged to understand my writings"[27] of course directs our attention to the effects—*and* affects—they are intended to produce (and there is no change without affect).[28] The reader is positioned vis-à-vis Lacan's text, with its intermittently impenetrable style, like the analyst before the analysand, awaiting the crucial moment of the transference when they must decide to speak to the shuttered beauty of the writing, to allow desire to emerge in the subject. And since the reality of the unconscious is sexual, the question of style is necessarily also one of sexuality.

In debates about abstruse style in the humanities one element at stake is the opposition between scientific discourse and the discourse of the Other, that is, the unconscious. I want to link this to the opposition that is sometimes drawn between invention in the sciences and self-referentiality in the humanities. Science, declares

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[26] Lacan, *Four Fundamental Concepts*, 131.

[27] Lacan, "The Function of the Written," 34.

[28] "Representation without affect is . . . sterile": Bruce Fink, "Knowledge and Jouissance," in *Reading Seminar XX: Lacan's Major Work on Love, Knowledge, and Feminine Sexuality*, eds. Suzanne Barnard and Bruce Fink (Albany: SUNY Press, 2002), 22 [21–46].

Jacques-Alain Miller, "sets out to establish with the unconscious a relation of non-relation. . . . Yet the unconscious does not disappear, and its effects continue to be felt."[29] Desire has not been banished from scientific discourse, as Fradenburg argues about historicism within medieval studies or as the theoretical physicist Carlo Rovelli argues when he admits that "[t]he scientific quest for knowledge is deeply emotional in its ways and motivations."[30] But it is the movement of desire within particular styles of literary criticism that stops them from being merely self-referential, by allowing new things to emerge.

In the transference, the analyst must vacate the place of "the subject supposed to know" in order to demonstrate to the patient that she, the analyst, does not possess what the patient wants, does not have an answer to his demands, and cannot validate him as a subject. Faced with the analyst's refusal to offer herself as an object to fill out his lack, the patient comes to recognize that the Other is also lacking, and that his desire is not completely bound up with the Other. Because the place of the object is now empty, there is room for the patient to move beyond the deadlock of identification with the analyst. For Lacan this separation is also the condition for what he calls "reading."[31] In other words, in so far as it enacts a

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[29] Lacan, *Four Fundamental Concepts*, 160.

[30] Carlo Rovelli, quoted in Brockman, *The New Humanists: Science at the Edge,* 375.

[31] Lacan, *On Feminine Sexuality*, 67.

necessary break with transferential reading—
where the text appears to offer itself as the ful-
fillment of the reader's desire—the unreadable
text can enable the production of new objects of
research in the humanities. Once the supposedly
masterful object (whether analyst or text) is
desupposed of its knowledge and is no longer the
object that fulfils desire but rather the *objet petit
a*, the cause of desire, then desire can emerge in
the subject/reader. Things can move on. The
work of reading is never concluded.

As Parveen Adams argues about the
powerful transferential effects on the viewer of
Mary Kelly's extraordinary artwork Interim: "The
empty place of the object will come to be occu-
pied by new things among which may be the
work of art itself."[32] If a text refuses—through its
stylistic obscurity—the role of the object of desire
but rather becomes the cause of desire, this can be
the basis for a model of work in the humanities
that counters that of self-referentiality. In this
model, unreadability is not the ingest-and-excrete
model of "text in/text out," nor the production of
"slag," but the production of a "fruitful remain-
der,"[33] the remainder of desire: something that
cannot be signified but that continues to provoke
new meanings.

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[32] Adams, "The Art of Analysis," 89.

[33] Lacan, *Four Fundamental Concepts*, 134: "In human
destiny, the remainder is always fruitful. The slag is the
extinguished remainder."

03: Style as Third Element

Anna Kłosowska

Medieval studies are not the only discipline to seasonally reiterate the distinction between forging truth in virile debate[1] versus being seduced by style.[2] It is Spring, and the image of besotted Philosophy seduced by vain blandishments, muzzled and ridden like Aristotle, is again

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[1] On "[c]ontesting and oppositional discourses" unyielding to "manufacture of urgency and relevance," see D. Vance Smith, "The Application of Thought to Medieval Studies: The Twenty-First Century," *Exemplaria* 22.1 (2010): 85 [85–94].

[2] . . . and its progeny, "creeping anti-intellectualism" (Smith, "Application of Thought," 85).

trotted out with the sordid intention of policing value. The distinction between style and substance is brought up in many personal, network, subfield, and disciplinary sorting practices that, in a cynical moment, can be reduced to a form of policing. For instance, in history, this contest can translate into differentiation between processing archival materials versus original narratives based on already edited sources. In queer studies, this plays out as history of ideas versus history of affect, or documenting same-sex acts versus hypothesizing same-sex desires. Such distinctions are as absurd as they are persistent, and there is a dispositional and structural reason for that, as I hope to demonstrate. But first, I want to point out their intrinsic weakness. To take the last example, acts versus desires: in strictly historical terms, same-sex acts and desires are not discrete, but rather belong on a continuum. Sticking to acts doesn't make same-sex any more historically factual than talking about desires, because sex, unlike real estate, is not traceable in acts—in either sense of the word: no one proposes, in the felicitous formulation of my colleague Sven Erik Rose, to measure the amount of genital friction or the decibel level of the cries of passion. No one, that is, except the Marquis de Sade, that accountant of the ass, *le comptable du cul*.

As Roland Barthes has shown in *Sade Fourier Loyola*, Sade and Ignatius of Loyola organize the field of vice in strikingly similar ways to produce what may be seen as diametrically opposed results: in the case of Sade, a wide-ranging algo-

rithm of perversions and, in Loyola's case, a manual of spiritual exercises.[3] It is the genius of Barthes not to take the presupposed opposition between Sade and Loyola for granted. In both the algorithm of perversions and the manual of spiritual exercises, memory lapses and errors of execution provide a built-in openness to the system. Both Sade and Loyola worry about having forgotten something, and in Loyola's case, that worry produces a penitential *perpetuum mobile*. The more conscientious the exercitant, the more reliably s/he produces errors that are the condition of infinitely extended reparation. The more field you clear in your life for penitence, the more opportunity you have to make errors, and the more errors you make, the more penitence you need to atone for them.

The third figure of Barthes's comparison, Charles Fourier, merits an introduction. A utopian socialist philosopher who coined the word feminism, he had a following in the United States (Ohio's Utopia, Brooks Farm in Massachusetts, described in Nathaniel Hawthorne's 1852 novel *The Blithedale Romance*, and other devotional sites in New York and New Jersey), as well as in France and Belgium. Jean-Baptiste André Godin's 'familisters' in Guise, Laeken, Brussels and Texas, built on the pattern of Fourier's phalanster, or large commune, proved very successful when

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[3] Roland Barthes, *Sade Fourier Loyola*, (1971; Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1980); translations are mine. All subsequent citations of this text made parenthetically, by page number.

associated with a viable industrial product, the ubiquitous Godin stove. Predictably, they were critiqued by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in the 1848 "Manifesto of the Communist Party" (incidentally, Marx and Engels's "Manifesto" follows very closely one of Godin's main collaborators, Victor Considerant) as yet another example of bourgeois philanthropy, a capitalist attempt to undermine the workers' solidarity. After Godin's death, the Guise factory became, at 88 years, the longest-lived employee-owned company, only dissolved in 1968. Fourier's own life followed the path of the more numerous unsuccessful ventures. As Barthes mentions, when Fourier's inherited fortune dissolved, he sponged on relatives, but because he was devoid of mercenary motives, he did so very unsuccessfully. Some popular recognition accrued to Fourier thanks to Walter Benjamin and Hakim Bey, but he is best remembered today as a failed visionary, whose best known idea is the one reprised by Hawthorne in his novel: that the world's improvement on his system will reach such a pitch of perfection that oceans will turn into lemonade.

As in Hawthorne's novel, this example summarizes Fourier's main idea well: utopias that work—Fourier called his Harmonia—should not repress but rather amplify people's natural tendencies. The greater good does not lie in repressing self-love and the love of pleasure, but on the contrary, in making them into the motor of activity that will generate the public good. In particular, Fourier focuses his intensification of

pleasures on the "third element," the in-between, the extra, the starter, "passage, mixture, transition, neuter, triviality ['neglected by scholars'], ambiguity"; "it's the kind of lubricant that the combinatory mechanism needs so it doesn't squeak. . . . Neuters . . . cushion transitions" (110, 113). That "leftover" category includes the third sex—the consistency that is neither liquid nor solid, the nectarine (plum-and-peach), "compote," "twilight," and so forth (119).

Fourier bases his "radical epicurianism" (*eudémonisme radical*) on the assumption that the problem of happiness is not that people want too much, but too little. The solution is to multiply, not suppress, desires. He calls the opposite proposition "simplism." Simplism is defined as the "use of the marvelous without reason or of the reason without marvelous," and Fourier attributes to it all failures: simplism "made Newton miss the discovery of the system of nature and Bonaparte, he conquest of the world" (106). Simplism is the "censoring of Need or of Desire," while the foundation of Fourier's Harmonia is a "conjugated science of one with the other" (106). Fourier, the "industrialist of attraction," imagined philanthropic communities large enough that each individual's desire would be fulfilled by his companion or homologue's equally strong hunger to fulfill it—melon eaters and melon growers, and so forth—where, as Fourier explains, taxes would be paid "as urgently as a mother hastening to fulfill the foul but disarming needs of her newborn" (87). Barthes

observes that Fourier is exactly complementary to Marx, a bit like Rancière is exactly complementary to Lacan: "Marxism and Fourierism are like two nets with mismatched mesh size. . . . Fourier lets through all the science, which Marx catches and develops; from a political point of view . . . Fourier is completely *off*: unrealistic and immoral. But at the other end, the other mesh lets through pleasure, which Fourier collects. Desire and Need play catch" (91). Desire and need are not complementary; rather, "they are *supplementary*, each one is *the excess* [*le trop*] of the other. The excess: what does not get through" (91).

From "excess elements," Fourier assembles a category that collects everything impossible to categorize, and he ascribes to it the generative ability. Like the zero in mathematical notation, the neuter brings numbers to their next decimal level. The superfluous element ensures the flow of transactions. Just as with error in Sade and Loyola, the neuter (a concrete category mistake) makes the Fourier machine go. Barthes observes: "it is a purely qualitative, structural notion," fulfilling the transfer function as opposed to the signifying function, as if it were an equivalent of mitochondria in the cell, or the philosopher's stone (112). Barthes illustrates the effect of this economy that assumes a different point of departure for human activity than we usually assume—that proposes pleasure, not sacrifice, as a motor of society—by the image of the hand that pulls on the corner of the tablecloth that covers the table

all designed in the predictable fashion. If you pull the corner, everything on the table falls: "the first operation of the creator of a language [*logothète*] is to dig into [*mordre*] the tablecloth/the surface [*la nappe*], to be able, then, to pull it (remove it)" (99). Echoing Nicola Masciandaro's interests, we must add spice and fragrance—the almost intangible addition to a meal that effects a most dramatic change in our experience of that meal— to the list of Fourierist incarnations of the third element: like the nervous system is both body and mind, spice and fragrance is both material and immaterial. [4] Apropos of this, Barthes reminds us that Fourier's parents were cloth and fragrance vendors: for Fourier, "commerce [was] despised, and fragrance [*aromate*], adored as a 'subtle matter' [*corps subtil*]" (189). And, as Barthes also points out, "Fourier lived off *leftovers*; ruined"— by a ship that sunk off the coast of Livorno, like in Shakespeare—"he lived off his cousins and friends."[5] According to Fourier, it is no wonder that the principles of pleasure that in his utopian Harmony are harnessed for the greater good, are precisely those that the turbulent, unsafe society of his own age wants to curb and repress. In closing off the possibility of experiencing these rules of the game, these formal distributive passions that Fourier identifies as the motor of his future Harmony, society gives—according to

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[4] See Nicola Masciandaro, "Becoming Spice: Commentary as Geophilosophy," *COLLAPSE* VI: Geo/philosophy (January 2010): 20–56.

[5] Barthes, *Sade Fourier Loyola*, 190.

him—further proof that he has, in fact, put his finger on the right problem. For Fourier, the repression is the indication that the pleasure principle is in fact society's forgotten and long-buried potential. When society refuses the pleasure principle and its vehicles, the excess elements (and it's the very sign of their excellence), "the figures that are accused of corruption and that are named libertines, debauched, etc." (105). As in Sade, it is the syntax, only the syntax, that produces the highest degree of immorality.

Compared to Sade, Loyola, and even Fourier, a medievalist has different pleasures on her mind, and a different sort of need to exhaust her subject animates her as she writes her book. And, like Fourier living off his nieces, like Sade in the narrow confines of Bastille filling both sides of a 39-foot-long, five inches-wide scroll with the account of a fictional world of omnipotent predators collecting and cataloging the multifarious humiliations they inflict on their prey, and like Loyola anticipating that unlike comics, penitents never run out of good material, the medievalist, too, lives off others. Carolyn Dinshaw's beautiful new book, *How Soon Is Now?*, has much to contribute for those who wonder where the pleasures of this activity lie.[6] Still on the subject of proliferation and profusion, Barthes says: "In Nature, things repeat, but that repetition is never abstract: there is no 'etc.' Man, however, is always

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[6] Carolyn Dinshaw, *How Soon Is Now? Medieval Texts, Amateur Readers, and the Queerness of Time* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012).

trapped in the same movement: figuration, repetition, abstraction, gregarity, disgust, rejection."[7] Like nature, a great artist always creates that which gives ground to pleasure: in this specific instance, the artist is Saul Steinberg, whom Barthes reviewed. As Barthes notes, this principle of always fresh wonder, the principle of nature and art, is first articulated by Paul Valéry: "Nature knows no etc."

Returning to the work of Carolyn Dinshaw, Vance Smith has written that, "The irony of her work is that a scrupulous adherence to its mode would make it inimitable, because incommensurability is precisely the point of identification."[8] I think the question of style, as it applies to medievalism, is precisely the overcoming of that dichotomy between Nature and Man: a third element. And when the critique proceeds through the denunciation of the inimitability of someone's style, as if it were the third sex, ungenerative, queer, sterile, sodomitic, lesbian, etc., the critic unconsciously puts his finger on exactly what style is; but that critic is mistaken about the style's generative powers.[9] In fact, style, neither fact nor

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[7] Roland Barthes, *Oeuvres Complètes*, ed. Eric Marty, 3 Vols, (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1993-1995), 3:406; cited by volume and page number, translation mine.

[8] Smith, "The Application of Thought," 86.

[9] The fact that style is one object of Smith's critique of a supposed "creeping anti-intellectualism" in medieval studies (especially in work on affect) is another touchstone of it's functioning as the system's generative element: it is the "vice of the civilized genius" for

theory but facilitating the transition between the two, is Fourier's nectarine, the generative principle itself.

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society to refuse the generative principle (Barthes, *Sade Fourier Loyola*, 105–106).

04: Daniel's Smile

Kathleen Biddick

When Eileen Joy (gadfly extraordinaire) invited me to join this volume, she encouraged me to get over my fear of style, first contracted during my anxious pubescent scrutiny of those thumbnail photographs of fashion "don'ts" featured in teen magazines of the early 1960s. My heart would sink when I discovered that some accessory of mine, beloved to me for its vibrant charm, was, in fact, deemed by the style editors to be the latest sign of abjection. But, voila, after all these years, here I am today discussing "style" and still working through those fears.

   What strikes me now as I look back on those

early magazine days (as clichéd as they were) is the intimate vulnerability of style. I am wondering if my enduring sense of such vulnerability might have something to do with Michael Snediker's optimistic investigation of the *smile* in his gorgeous reading of lyric poetry—style as smile: a "mysterious, collective force as a serial trope"?[1] More about this to follow.

What I would like to stake out roughly for our roundtable are some issues haunting the current debate in Queer Theory over the death drive and futurity. I want to ask what the so-called "master signifier" has to do with this debate. Can we imagine a *beside and beyond itself* of the master signifier? What would that mean and what might it have to do with style? By the master signifier, most Lacanians imagine an ontological concept that is supposed to decide meaning through foreclosure of the primary impressions of intra-uterine experience, a matrix shared by all mammals. The master signifier can figure thinking (and as medievalists, it is important to recall the lively medieval tradition that imagined figuration as a superseding theological temporality: Jews [as they were then] figured Christians [as they are now]).[2] Or, the master signifier decides linguistically—"a refers to b." Neither figural thinking

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[1] Michael Snediker, *Queer Optimism: Lyric Personhood and Other Felicitous Persuasions* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 36.

[2] See Kathleen Biddick, *The Typological Imaginary: Circumcision, Technology, History* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003).

nor linguistic theory is able to imagine a *beside and beyond itself* of the master signifier, a *beside and beyond itself* of the Phallus, since such a borderspace would disturb the incarnations of figurality or break the chain of signification, the result of which would be psychosis (as Lacan obsessively warned). Are these then the only options of the master signifier: incarnation or psychosis?

In his undeniably brilliant and deeply controversial study *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive*, Lee Edelman takes up the question of the master signifier and the death drive.[3] Rather than deconstruct the incarnational impulse of figural thinking, Edelman defends against it in an act of hypostasis (to borrow a term from Michael Snediker).[4] Like a medieval thinker, Edelman produces a superseding figural typology of sexuality: queer subjectivity incarnates a "this is now" that supersedes heteronormativity as a "that was then," and, in so doing, he ends up smuggling in, I think, a version of the very messianic temporality which he set out to critique.

In his thoughtful response to Edelman, Michael Snediker swerves away from a Lacanian politics of the signifier. He draws upon the work of the British psychoanalyst D.W. Winnicott in order to argue for the importance of the afterlife of the object—its survival of destruction by the

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[3] Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004).

[4] Snediker, *Queer Optimism*, 23.

subject:[5] "The destructiveness that an object can withstand, for Winnicott, demonstrates not just the object's own integrity (an integrity from which the subject might subsequently learn), but its own capacity for loving in spite of feeling damaged, or even repelled, by the subject."[6] Snediker's swerve toward Winnicott enables us to think productively of queer optimism along non-futural lines. As he engages in this thought experiment, Snediker excavates what he calls "an aesthetic person."[7] An aesthetic person, he clarifies, is not a psychoanalytical, deconstructive, or queer theoretical entity. It is not a subject, subjectivity, nor ontology. I love this concept of the aesthetic person. Snediker, I think, is inviting us to broaden the concept of the Symbolic beyond the chain of discursive signification, beyond the master signifier.

I understand Snediker's aesthetic person as a threshold vibrating with the matrixial borderspaces explored by the Lacanian psychoanalyst and painter Bracha L. Ettinger. In her study *The Matrixial Borderspace,* Ettinger has risked both the incarnational impulse of figural thinking (which always produces the phallus) and the threat of psychosis (the imagined punishment for breaking the taboo of phallic foreclosure), and she has lived to tell the tale as an aesthetic person

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[5] See D.W. Winnicott, "The Use of an Object and Relating through Identifications" (1968), in his *Playing and Reality* (New York: Routledge, 2005).

[6] Snediker, *Queer Optimism*, 10.

[7] Snediker, *Queer Optimism*, 127.

(a kind of Eurydice who repeatedly appears and fades).[8] Ettinger understands that one cannot really know what survival means and yet she lives on in "crazy hope."[9]

Reading Ettinger is like diving into to a coral reef and carefully observing the myriad creatures whose filtering of sustenance secretes the reef. Her text blossoms with what she calls "eroticized aerials," receiving and transmitting the incipiencies of a co-poesis. Habits of explication falter at such incipiencies; thus, in a few sentences I will try to gesture toward her project and then share with you a transubjective encounter of mine when I read Ettinger with Snediker. Ettinger imagines a psychoanalytical borderspace, a matrix, in which partial objects and partial subjects do not "come about as a result of separation from organs such as the mouth or anus (understood as regulated parts)."[10] Prior to such cuts (the cut of the drive), she argues for dynamic partial linkages. Thresholds emerge and fade across vibrating, emergent fields. Transmissibility (relating without relations) is rhythmic (acoustic, tactile). Ettinger cautions that the matrix is not the opposite of the Phallus—it does not destroy nor replace the master signifier. Her project is to "retune" the Symbolic to deform its edges through a "supplementary co-shaping-not-quite-

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[8] Bracha L. Ettinger, *The Matrixial Borderspace* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2006).

[9] Ettinger, *The Matrixial Borderspace*, 169.

[10] Ettinger, *The Matrixial Borderspace*, 226n15.

logic."[11] The transubjectivity Ettinger proposes
works like a tuning fork that vibrates with ravish-
ment. For Ettinger, ravishment is a spreading of
the effect across the entire severality, rather than
an act performed by a subject on an object or its
effect.

Ettinger thus swerves from Winnicott's theory
of the survival of the object after aggression. Her
sense of timing is different, is trans-serial,
emerging and fading partial effects. Subjectivity is
never whole but distributed as transubjective
affects. Ettinger's serial paintings of Euridyce
explore such trans-seriality, especially in terms of
what she calls the trans-traumatic. In her words:
"The matrixial borderlinks allow the articulation
of a meaningful space between living and non-
living, which has nothing to do with the notion of
the abject and with the binary opposition
between life and death."[12]

Ettinger's writing works like a tympanum
stretched across matrixial border spaces and thus
defies easy explication; by way of conclusion, I
would like to engage in a transubjective thought
experiment. I am sending a smile from a trans-
medieval borderspace to Michael Snediker as an
act of queer love for his wonderful book. Recall
Snediker's reflection on the smile of Hart Crane
as a "mysterious, collective force as a serial
trope."[13] The smile may be found on the beautiful
face of the Old Testament prophet Daniel [Fig. 1]

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[11] Ettinger, *The Matrixial Borderspace*, 6.

[12] Ettinger, *The Matrixial Borderspace*, 180.

[13] Snediker, *Queer Optimism,* 36.

carved in the Portico de Gloria of the Cathedral of St. James at Compostela. The Master Mateo sculpted this portico sometime between 1173-1188 C.E. Paul Binksi, a medieval art historian, counts this smile as the earliest in what would become a poetics of the Gothic smile.[14] Within a century, Northern European cathedrals would be filled with choirs of smiling angel-musicians.

Figure 1. The smile of Daniel, Portico de Gloria, St. James Compostella (last quarter of the 12th century).

Daniel, as you see, is young and beardless. He bears his scroll of prophecy inscribed with the

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[14] Paul Binksi, "The Angel Choir at Lincoln and the Poetics of the Gothic Smile," *Art History* 20 (1997): 350–374.

words (*Ecce Enim Deus Quem Colimus*) spoken by his optimistic friends, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, on their way to death in the fiery furnace. They tell King Nebuchadnezzar: "If it be so, *our God whom we serve* is able to deliver us from the fiery furnace and he will deliver us out of thine hand" (Daniel 4:17). We know from the Book of Daniel that the prophet was a smiler. Words for the smile (usually constructed as "let your face shine on the other") are rare in the Hebrew Bible. According to the Book of Daniel, the prophet smiled twice at King Cyrus (Daniel 14:6, 14:18) as he advised him about the bottom line of his idol, Bal. Jewish exegesis assumed that Daniel and his three friends were castrated when the chief eunuch of Nebuchadnezzar selected them to be taken captive back to Babylon after the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem. When Jerome (d. 420) wrote his influential Christian Commentary on Daniel he knew these Jewish debates and cited the arguments for Daniel being a eunuch (thus accounting for a wide dissemination of this argument in medieval Christian exegesis). The Book of Daniel has its own story to tell about Daniel and Nebuchadnezzar's chief eunuch: "God had brought Daniel into the favor and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs" (Daniel 1:9). By the tenth century, Byzantine theologians used the shining example of Daniel and his friends to argue in favor of eunuchs as members of the upper clergy and court.[15]

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[15] Kathryn. M. Ringrose, "Reconfiguring the Prophet

Daniel's smile opens us up to an investigation of pain with what Snediker calls a "solicitous openness to scrutiny."[16] Jewish and early Christian exegetes had wondered how Daniel had gotten separated from his friends on the way to the fiery furnace (they reunited after the young men miraculously survived their ordeal with the aid of an angel). Some thought it was because he was a eunuch, but other exegetes argued that the three boys were eunuchs, too. By the time the medieval sculptor carved his face, Daniel had become more radically cut from his Hebrew friends. He had been claimed by medieval Christians as a major prophet of Christ's coming. Contemporary Christian liturgical drama (contemporaneous with the Compostela portico) had put in his mouth the words of juridical condemnation of Jews. Take for example, his recitation in the mid-twelfth century *Play of Adam*. He opens with a proof text taken from the pseudo-Augustine polemic *Sermo contra Judaeos, Paganos et Arianos* and proceeds to renounce Jews as felons: "I shall tell you what I think, O Jews, you who are guilty of such a grave crime (felon) against God. The manuscript "play book" for the *Play of Adam* breaks off abruptly as Nebuchadnezzar condemns the young men (now subsumed as Christians by their Christian audience) to the fiery furnace, a

Daniel: Gender, Sanctity, and Castration in Byzantium," in *Gender and Difference in the Middle Ages*, eds. Sharon Farmer and Carol Braun Pasternak (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2003): 73–106.
[16] Snediker, *Queer Optimism,* 89.

stage prop located in the nave of the church, or perhaps on the church portico (all the better for the stone Daniel at Compostela to have to watch again).

But the transtraumatic links of Daniel's smile transmit even more widely in another contemporaneous encounter. In 1171, when the Count of Blois condemned 32 members of the Jewish community to burn for an alleged ritual murder accusation, those condemned Jews (male and female) imagined themselves in the fiery furnace and sang in the fire (just as the three boys had done in the fiery furnace in the story of Daniel). The rabbis who, in liturgical hymns, lamented the deaths of their neighbors, declared their deaths to be miraculous. Their bodies did not burn even though their life force had been incinerated (a "divine electrocution," as Susan Einbinder has called it). [17]

Thus the links between, exegesis, sculpture, performance, juridical execution, and liturgical lamentation distribute themselves along the matrixial space of Daniel's smile. I like to think that it is something about the "tender love" of Daniel's young days in the palace of the chief eunuch that somehow persisted as a trans-traumatic encounter in the stony remainder of the Portico de Gloria at Compostello.

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[17] Susan L. Einbinder, *Beautiful Death: Jewish Poetry and Martyrdom in Medieval France* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 55.

05: To Peach or Not to Peach
Style and the Interpersonal

Michael Snediker

In his lyric persuasiveness over Hades and Persephone, Orpheus—Pindar's "father of song"—suggests an especially lovely instance of what Kathleen Biddick invokes as "master signifier." The story of Orpheus likewise describes the break of Lacanian ligature. As dyad, Orpheus and Eurydice are most heart-breaking, not in their inseparability but in that inseparability's irrevocable turn (another form of Biddick's "swerve") to irreparable singleness, the fact of bereft linkage. And as though this pathos of singularity were not enough, the Maenads rip Orpheus to pieces.

My sense is that the Orphic head, bobbing

down the Hebrus, was not smiling, though what if it were? Floating through Bracha Ettinger's trans-temporal river, the smiling Orpheus enacts its own queer-optimistic gesture, its own invective against Lee Edelman's wish for figuration at its least traherent. Less admonition or elegy of Orpheus read along and across such lines suggests that figuration achieves its own particular exquisiteness in a mythology of fracture. Bereft linkage and its compensations, Emersonian and otherwise, arise as well in the love we hold for Valerie Allen's "ghostly audience of absent authors." This is fracture less as bereavement than the wish to solder bereavement, to forge new repertoires of engagement along a Ouija board of stylist lines.

Aesthetic persons are not necessarily more whole than ideological subjects; rather, aesthetic persons catechize us in the lessons of non-traumatic fracture. The smiling Orphic head hypothesizes fracture's nearness to trauma and grief as inevitable, only if frozen in that river which floods but doesn't freeze. Lyric fracture marks the contingency of style (if we can reckon contingency and myth as compatible, and I think we can). Lyric fracture as style reminds me of Dickinson's metaphorical errancies, the way in which scrupulousness brought to extremity loops into ostensible attention deficit disorder. One can't always follow Dickinsonian figures, per se. Certainly not in the goosestep manner of following orders.

I think of style's relation to fracture largely on account of Biddick's beautiful account of the lap-

idary Daniel, smiling from the tympanum of the Cathedral of St. James at Compostela. The "stony remainder" smiles as though remainder were enough. The remainder, as having weathered and suffered, exceeds the neatness of division. The suffering of neatness, as its own innoculated style, is that to which one might aspire or into which one might feel coerced. Apropos the aspirational, we might think, following Biddick's opening gambit on fashion, of Jil Sander or Narciso Rodriguez, for whom sartorial austerity is its own exorbitant architecture, which is to say that style's extravagance can arise where least expected. There's nothing nibbish, following Allen, about Rodriguez or Sander (whom Barneys NY, in a recent very personal email to me, advertised as "fabulously architectural," a recourse to Hawthornian Romance to which we shall return).

Likewise, Allen reminds us that austerity can count as its own speciality, above and beyond the vitiating misnomer of our "specialities," which invariably conjures a dusty CV rather than anything connotatively special, per se. "Our speciality" speaks less to our singularity than our declension into taxidermy. How can a word so full of possibility have migrated into its own melancholic wish to return to what truly we find special, which of course we ought. Alongside aspirational neatness, against figurative quarantine, we find a durability of style that speaks to the extremity of singularity wishing for ideal or gentle readers. A style, like Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's brilliant theorization of kitsch, becomes beloved and admired

in the phenomenon of sympatico.

A style risks dismissal if not disapprobation in being lonely, in its weathering of itself. We return here to Allen's understanding of a stylistic subjunctivity not only as mood, but as an inhabiting of possibility, of not knowing (following Dickinson) where we might go. To think of style, then, is to think of persons attached to the interpersonal no less than to the idiosyncratic. The personificatory and interpersonificatory resonances of style reverberate in Allen's gestural account of words "arranged in certain ways," as though words were asked, with or without cash-bar cocktails, to learn from and flirt with each other. Content makes these interactions less anxiogenic. *How's the weather*, anent Allen—an especially non-stylish version of Allen's opening citation of Aristotle. Style entails words themselves on a limb and, more importantly, words learning. Or as importantly, acknowledging the ethics in not understanding each other, let alone themselves.

Allen's invoking of Heidegger's understanding of lexical moodiness is gorgeously generous. Whether in the musical or psychical register of Orpheus, the moodiness of words opens us to the possibility of style as its own phenomenological terrain, and vice versa. *Living in style*, some more ennobling version of the glitzy accounts of life as *Real Housewives of Whatever Cit*y. Insofar as narcissism produces its own interpersonality, some styles are happy to reflect on themselves. Others—or rather, even those narcissistic ones—hope, secretly and otherwise, for companionship.

Style describes less Orphic eloquence than Orphic risk, the moment of turning simultaneously away and toward, in relation to oneself and whom one loves more than any other. And following Whitman: those by whom one might be loved without even knowing.

The *do I dare* or *double dare* of stylistic venture can be heard in Kłosowoska's penultimate gesture toward Fourier's nectarine. Nectarine, as queer love-child of nervousness and desirability: J. Alfred Prufrock's *dare I eat a peach*, reconciled with a plum's alluring plumminess. The result is both peachy and plummy all at once, as though Prufrock's amorous equivocating required a supplement to understand its playful relation not to a plum, but to itself. A word finding a cognate in the divagations of its own vernacularization, its hesitant relation to what it nearly could become. We've returned, in nectarine-as-remainder, to a particularly sanguine supplementarity, the narcissism of a word's self-enabling, its own foray into lexical fruitiness. T.S. Eliot's poem extends a meditation on affect and its absence, the contemplation of what it would *mean* to feel.

Prufrock is affectively compelling even in his vitiating distance from his own affective possibilities. Which is to say that style in Eliot is in fact an historical method, a mode of supplemental auto-affection, compensation, and the sublimation of affective discomfiture into stylistic bravado. At the same time, one might say that style *is* affect: a text's stylistic abdications as a fantasy's affective abstaining, the degree to which critical affect's

vulnerability dovetails with that of critical *style*. Prufrock cozens the collapse of affect into ideas, the salubrious blur of queer acts and queer desires. Prufrock's action *is to desire*. His ontologically saturated *peach or not to peach* renders the distance between the two as asymptote.

Etymologically (which is to say, in a fashion, historically), the asymptotic speaks to a "not falling together"; whereas on the level of style, of affective turn, the asymptotic falls together, like Orpheus and Eurydice, in the subtle tenterhooks of a pre-lapsarian counterfactual. If style isn't affect, it is asymptotic to affect, rendering all the more salient element's relation to desire. This is why we disavow, flirt with, adore or abjure. As they said in elementary school, if he bullies you, he might likely be infatuated. The over-protesting of a "given critic" in relation to the "problematic" inimitability of another critic unsurprisingly opens the possibility, to differently paraphrase Shakespeare, of too much protestation.[1]

What do we critique, by what are we embarrassed, what do we love (sometimes or often) as guilty pleasure? We move, here, from Klosowska's fruity meticulousness to Evans's ebullient spinning of Lacan's *poubellication*, the *litter-ature* of literature, which is to say trashy reading. Trashiness, in this context, makes me first think of bodice rippers, avec Fabio (would Lacan in a

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[1] D. Vance Smith, writing about the work of Carolyn Dinshaw: "The Application of Thought to Medieval Studies: The Twenty-First Century," *Exemplaria* 22.1 (2010): 86 [85–94].

pirate shirt have the same effect?), a Harlequin. *Nota bene*: I first hoarded Harlequins as a child from the laundry room of my grandparent's apartment complex, the closest I could get to loins or manhood being the cheap paperbacking of them. The trash of stylistic difficulty isn't so different if we think of the cheap romance as analogously contingent on its audience. I got something from those musty, curled paperbacks that I wouldn't necessarily get now. But, on several registers, I once got it. And plenty of people continue getting it.

The erotics of stylistic impenetrability—versus the exorbitant euphemisms of Harlequin's penetrabilities—suggest that textual interiority never completely can be separated from exteriority. Were I inclined toward further graphicism, I could more fully describe the happy *frisson* between the two. As it is, style is what lures one in and out at once. I have to admit, in this airport bar, where I wrote the previous line, I conjured a high school jock's gesture for both whacking off and doing, as they said, the deed. Style does the deed, and Evans, like Kłosowska, makes luminous the false distinction between doing the deed and gesturing it, all the more so, when the latter is an efflorescence of the former's distillation, the former's own Hawthornian version of ghostly auto-affection. Style is full of phantom limbs. Hawthorne spends a life assaying the threshold of the Actual and the Imaginary, and this, perhaps, is where style lies. In as many ways as you wish.

06: The Aesthetics of Style and the Politics of Identity Formation

Gila Aloni

A lack is continuously re-emerging where identity should be consolidated. . . . the politics of identity formation, can only be understood as a politics of impossibility.

> Yannis Stavrakakis, *Lacan and the Political*

"Come, let us go down and confound their speech."

> Genesis 11:5–8

A real state of emergency and catastrophe is not new to anybody living in the Middle East, in the middle of things. Troubling intellectual inquiries about "the end" and what is "after the end" become *real* as they are embodied in a site where past, present, and future encounter one another, where ends are beginnings and beginnings are ends—Jerusalem. Many of my memories are from the Western Wall in Jerusalem, which at the time of my childhood was believed to be only about 60 meters long. But a summer's visit to the most recent excavations of the Western Wall's Tunnels reveals that the majority of the wall is hidden underground; the tour under the old city of Jerusalem exposes the Western Wall in its full length. The end of the open-air Western Wall is actually the beginning. Maybe it is not without insignificance that a wall, the sign of a barrier, an end to a space, has revealed itself as a beginning.[1] It is this problematization of boundaries that my essay explores so as to discuss questions of "ends." Questions about endings and "what is after" unravel deeper questions about psychic structures and our search as medievalists for identity formation in a new world-order where boundaries receive new meanings.

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[1] For a discussion of stone that is "supposed to be inorganic," yet is "flowing," see Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, "Stories of Stone," *postmedieval* 1.1-2 (2010): 56–63.

Discourse about "ending" is entwined with a discussion about binary oppositions, such as between the body of text and margins, intellectual research and autobiography, external and internal, public and private, and life and death. Kellie Robertson, in her "Medieval Materialism: A Manifesto," sums up the origins of such philosophy of binary oppositions in her survey of "Cartesianism," and/or "mind-body dualism."[2] By now, scholars in various fields have rejected the traditional divisions and suggest alternative ways to examine such relationships. In 1992, art historian Michael Camille, who investigated the cognitive play of marginality in medieval culture and spaces (sites of power such as cathedrals and courts, books and art) in the production of meaning, suggested we see the traditional polarization between center and edge as a dynamic locus of dialogue. *Marginalia* (*corrigenda, bas-de-page* in books but also in sculptural compositions in the capitals and tympana of churches) is not seen as isolated from the text, but integral to its meaning: "gothic marginal art flourished from the late twelfth century to the late fourteenth century by virtue of the absolute hegemony of the system it sought to subvert."[3] According to Camille, "margins" are not, as a Bakhtinian analysis would have it, areas of resistance to the

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[2] Kellie Robertson, "Medieval Materialism: A Manifesto," *Exemplaria* 22.2 (2010): 100 [99–118].

[3] Michael Camille, *Image on the Edge: The Margins of Medieval Art* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 160.

official order. Nor is it the space for Marxist-inspired class rivalries.[4] Camille states rather that "gothic marginal art and images at the edge work to reinstate the very models they subvert."[5]

Camille's understandings of margins are illuminating, as they reestablish our understanding of what has been conceived as boundaries. Yet these conclusions are confined to the realm of artistic creation, to art and to writing. Such an insight and diffusion of boundaries take place in other disciplines, such as among the study of the brain and the nervous system and history. Daniel Smail, in his book *On Deep History and the Brain*, makes a case for bringing neuroscience and neurobiology into the realm of history so as to create a new way of looking at the past: "the new science of the brain cannot make sense without history"—we want to follow the histories of women and men and their pattern of sexuality. However, we also want to understand why our brains and bodies work the way they do. *That* understanding is impossible without history."[6]

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[4] See Mary Carruthers' review of Camille's book, *Image on the Edge: The Margins of Medieval Art*, *The Medieval Review* [TMR] 94.04.02: https://scholarworks.iu.edu/dspace/bitstream/handle/2022/3956/94.04.02.html?sequence=1. I would like to thank Mary Carruthers who some time in a past conversation introduced the text to me without knowing the impact it would have on my future writing.

[5] Camille, *Image on the Edge*, 31.

[6] Daniel Smail, *On Deep History and the Brain* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 201; emphasis in original.

"Culture is wired in the brain," Smail writes, and "cultural practices can have profound neurophysiologic consequences."[7]

It is this blurring of boundaries between disciplines that we also see in the style of academic discourse. Carolyn Dinshaw derives the title of her book *Getting Medieval* from a line in a male-on-male rape scene in Quentin Tarantino's 1994 film *Pulp Fiction* where the victim, after being rescued, looks at his rapist and says, "I'm gonna git Medieval on your ass."[8] Dinshaw's use of this line from Tarantino's script as the basis for a scholarly method that brings present and past into tactile contact with each other is relevant to my essay because Dinshaw sees "getting medieval" in the sense of "creating relations with the past . . . in our efforts to build selves and communities now and into the future."[9] As Ruth Evans suggests, "Carolyn Dinshaw's *Queer History* is about the desire to touch the past and for the past to touch us."[10] Much like Dinshaw, who ends her book with apprehensions about chronology, Daniel Smail ends his book with the

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[7] Smail, *On Deep History and the Brain*, 201.

[8] Carolyn Dinshaw, *Getting Medieval: Sexualities and Communities, Pre- and Postmodern* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), 184.

[9] Dinshaw, *Getting Medieval*, 206.

[10] Ruth Evans, "Historicism, Sexuality Studies, Psychoanalysis," in *Forum I: Historicity without Historicism? Responses to Paul Strohm*, ed. Holly Crocker, *postmedieval FORUM* (2011): http://postmedieval-forum.com/forums/forum-i-responses-to-paul-strohm/.

assertion that "the deep past is also our present and future."[11] If the past is our present and future, then the "post" "is simultaneously present, future and past, and the past is correspondingly folded into the 'post.'"[12] This concept of the past in its "atemporal historicity," in Aranye Fradenburg's astute words,[13] is the underlying perception from which this essay is written.

Such view of the past carries a comforting message for medievalists looking from the past into the present and the future. Yet the real good news is that the origin of the concept of the Middle Ages as a "mobile category,"[14] as the nucleus of this "traffic" between past/future, science/history, or autobiography/research rather than fixed in a certain time in the past, is in deep psychological structures theorized by Jacques Lacan in his study of topology. I am referring to the "Moebius strip" (*bande de Moebius*), which, studied by Lacan in his use of Topology, "is

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[11] Smail, *Deep History and the Brain*, 202.

[12] Ruth Evans, "Our Cyborg Past: Medieval Artificial Memory as Mindware Upgrade," *postmedieval: a journal of medieval cultural studies* 1.1/2 (2010): 65 [64–71].

[13] Aranye Fradenburg, "(Dis)Continuity: A History of Dreaming," in *The Post-Historical Middle Ages*, eds. Elizabeth Scala and Sylvia Federico (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 87–116.

[14] Kathleen Davis, "The Sense of an Epoch: Periodization, Sovereignty and the Limits of Secularization," in *The Legitimacy of the Middle Ages: On the Unwritten History of Theory*, eds. Andrew Cole and D. Vance Smith (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 41.

necessary in order to escape the common ravings about a psychism supposedly located in a biopartition between interior and exterior."[15] The Moebius strip," as described by Lacan, "is a three-dimensional figure that can be formed by taking a long rectangle of paper and twisting it once before joining its ends together. . . . Locally, at any one point, two sides can be distinguished, but when the whole strip is traversed it becomes clear that they are in fact continuous."[16] Moreover, "it is only because the two sides are continuous that it is possible to cross over from inside to outside."[17] Thus, oppositions are seen to be as continuous with each other.

Such oppositions manifest themselves in one of the fundamental activities of human beings: waking and sleeping, reality and dream. Geoffrey Chaucer, who lived through the nightmare of his era and through one of the worst catastrophes humanity has known, the Black Death, wrote a poetic dream that helps us to grapple with ques-

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[15] This explanation is part of the course that Jacques-Alain Miller gave during the 1985-1986 academic year at the University of Paris VIII. See Jacques-Alain Miller, "Extimité," in *Lacanian Theory of Discourse: Subject, Structure, and Society*, eds. Mark Bracher, Marshall W. Alcon, Jr., Ronald J. Corthell, and Françoise Massadier-Kenney (New York: New York University Press, 1994), 75 [74–87]. Also, see my article: "Extimacy in *The Miller's Tale*," *Chaucer Review* 41.2 (2006): 163–184.

[16] Dylan Evans, *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psycho-analysis* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 116.

[17] Evans, *An Introductory Dictionary*, 116.

tions of boundaries. I am referring to the dream in the "Legend of Hypermnestra," one of the legends following Chaucer's oneiric Prologue in *The Legend of Good Women*. Chaucer's personal childhood experience that exposed him to the effects of the plague makes him relevant to a discussion about catastrophes in the sense of the famous declaration by Michel de Montaigne: "I am myself the matter of my book." Chaucer's experience of living through one of the nightmares of the Middle Ages may have reproduced in writing a "literary nightmare," a symptom of a stress level he experienced in his early life during the plague.[18] In other words, a life threatening experience in Chaucer's past may have reproduced an anxiety manifested in the nightmare produced in the legend that (significantly?) appears as the last one in the oneiric *Legend of Good Women*.

In the "Legend of Hypermnestra," Hypermenestra's father, Aegyptus, orders his daughter to kill her newlywed husband on their wedding night because of a bad dream, a nightmare he had, foreboding her son would kill him:

"I nil," quod he, "have noon excepcioun;"
And out he caughte a knyf, as rasour kene;
"Hyd this," quod he, "that hit be nat y-sene;

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[18] Sigmund Freud, *Interpretation of Dreams (First Part),* in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. 4, ed. and trans. James Strachey and Anna Freud, 1–338 (1900; repr. London: Hogarth Press, 2001).

> And, when thyn husbond is to bedde y-go,
> Whyl that he slepeth, cut his throte a-two.
> For in my dremes hit is warned me
> How that my nevew shal my bane be."
> (2656–2659)[19]

Initially, Hypermnestra, in order not to arouse her father's wrath, chooses to tell him she will obey his command to kill her husband and put him into an eternal sleep:

> She graunted him; ther was non other grace.
> And therwith-al a costrel taketh he,
> And seyde, "herof a draught, or two or three,
> Yif him to drinke, whan he goth to reste,
> And he shal slepe as longe as ever thee leste."
> (2665–2669)

The dream here initiates a chain influencing a number of people. A dream motivates Aegyptus to order Hypermnestra to kill her husband. Hypermnestra initially responds to this oneirically motivated order. And she responds by promising to carry out this order with "narcotiks and opies" (2670) in a way that will transport her husband into the domain of sleep. Within the "Legend of Hypermnestra," the text folds into an oneiric *mise-en-abyme*.

   In the "Legend of Hypermnestra," Hypermnestra initially obeys the order emanating from

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[19] All quotations of Chaucer's works are from *The Riverside Chaucer,* gen. ed. Larry D. Benson, 3rd edn. (Houghton Mifflin, 1987), cited by line number.

her father's dream. Similarly, in the prologue providing the framework for the entire *Legend of Good Women*, the poet presents himself as writing the legends in a response to an order he receives from the god of Love in a dream. The two responses in waking life to orders emanating from a dream suggest an oneirics more radical than Freud's in which dream-thoughts determine waking cognition in addition to being conditioned by this cognition.[20]

I would like to conclude my discussion with the beginning, that is to say, why we are all here in this volume and how it all started: we were assembled in November 2010 by the BABEL Working Group because, to use Sara Ahmed's wording in her critique of the so-called "New Materialism," "things got messy"[21] in the catastrophic era and in the world in which we live, as well as for us as medievalists. We were assembled in Austin, Texas to answer questions such as, "what can be said about the 'style' of academic discourse?" Thus, I would like to remind us of the origin of the name "Babel." It is derived from

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[20] For an elaborate discussion on Chaucer's poetic dream, see my article "Chaucer's Marguerite and the Dream of Good Women," *Bulletin des Anglicistes Médiévistes* 80 (2010): 7–30.

[21] Sara Ahmed, "Some Preliminary Remarks on the Founding Gestures of the 'New Materialism'," *European Journal of Women's Studies* 15.1 (2008): 23–39. Ahmed states, "Things usually happen, when the objects of our theoretical work fall apart, when things get messy" (35).

ancient Hebrew, "balal," meaning "to jumble." That's when things "got messy" in the world: God's punishment for the hubristic act of building the Tower of Babel was to confound human speech. Ever since the Great Flood, we are no longer a united humanity speaking a single language. So God said, "Come, let us go down and confound their speech."[22] Our academic discourse and research are unique just because we each bring in our individual style. "Style" can be seen not as supplemental to scholarly substance, but as the "prism," the optical device, the method with which each individual approaches scholarly substance. The style of a scholar is a part of the individual identity of a scholar, an identity that, by definition, is always in the making and a neverending process as long as we remember that, as it is stated in *Lacan and the Political*: "A lack is continuously re-emerging where identity should be consolidated. . . . the politics of identity formation, can only be understood as a politics of impossibility."[23]

Chaucer's style of merging the personal exper-ience of dreaming (and potentially subcon-sciously the anxiety he experienced as a child during the plague years) with the professional anxieties of being a poet is not merely returning

[22] Genesis 11:5–8.
[23] Yannis Stavrakakis*, Lacan and the Political* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 35.

to the Aristoteleian dialogic nature of matter and form. Such style as we have seen in the analysis of the bad dream within a dream in *The Legend of Good Women* can be theorized. It is what Chaucer produces in his work centuries before Lacanian psychoanalytical theory that allows me to end this essay with an invitation to view ending as a beginning, as a site of possibility and potency to define and redefine ourselves as medievalists.

07: Renegade Style
Fashion and the (Non)Modern Subject-Object in Massinger's *The Renegado*

Jessica Roberts Frazier

In Act 1, Scene 3 of Philip Massinger's *The Renegado* (1624), the Turkish princess Donusa browses through the goods on display at the Tunisian market shop of the Venetian Vitelli. As Jonathan Gil Harris has noted in *Sick Economies*, such luxury outlets, with their attendant brand-

ing, had become almost set pieces of the stage by
the early seventeenth century.[1] Like runway spec-
tators at Fashion Week, Renaissance theater-
goers received previews of the latest trends in
everything from tobacco paraphernalia to fea-
thers. And Vitelli's inventory, with Venetian
mirrors and glass, certainly would have proffered
a bit of caché, as Harris suggests.[2] But Vitelli
employs an unanticipated marketing strategy,
coupling his offerings with classical imagery. He
hawks his goods through the promise of their

For this paper, I give much credit to conversations with
the participants of Holly Dugan's seminar entitled
"Past Intimacies: Taste, Touch, and Smell in the
English Renaissance" (George Washington University,
Spring 2010), as they enabled me to begin to (re)-
consider the "market" scenes in *The Renegado*. And I
am immensely grateful to Jonathan Gil Harris for his
suggestions for clarification of thought and wording. In
February of 2010, I presented a paper examining the
Frenchness of Vitelli's Turkish turn at a George Wash-
ington University Medieval and Early Modern Studies
Institute seminar, "Orienting Europe," at which
Michelle Warren served as a respondent. Bruno Latour
identifies and develops the concept of *nonmodernity* in
We Have Never Been Modern, trans. Catherine Porter
(Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993). The
"subject-object" of my title alludes to the Latourian
quasi-subject and *quasi-object*.

[1] Jonathan Gil Harris, *Sick Economies: Drama,
Mercantilism, and Disease in Shakespeare's England*
(Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004),
178–179.

[2] Harris, *Sick Economies*, 179.

similitude to the décor of Greek gods: "Here crystal glasses, such as Ganymede / Did fill with nectar to the Thunderer / When he drank to Alcides" (1.3.116–118).[3] As a result, Vitelli's "looking-glass" (1.3.108) and "crystal" take on a patina of antiquity rather than the gleam of novelty.

What are we to make of such démodé shop-talk? The relatively easy answer would be to point out that Vitelli is a merchant in name only. He has come to the Ottoman outpost of Tunis in search of his sister Paulina, who has been kidnapped by the renegade Grimaldi and sold to Asambeg, the city's viceroy. Vitelli avails himself of the disguise of a merchant to keep his presence secret. Thus, we could simply term Vitelli a failed merchant, ignorant of desirable commodities and the talk of the trade. Yet, even if Vitelli lacks mercantile bonafides, he nevertheless markets his goods in a language that he believes will resonate with his Eastern customers. To this end, not only does Vitelli lace his sales pitch with references to Greek mythology, but he also guarantees his Turkish clients agentic objects. He peddles a diamond-decked "Corinthian plate" as a metallic loyal retainer, capable of actions usually attributable only to humans (1.3.120). The would-be

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[3] All citations of Philip Massinger's *The Renegado* from Daniel Vitkus, ed., *Three Turk Plays from Early Modern England* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 240–344, by act, scene, and line numbers. I do, however, cross-reference with Michael Neill, ed., *The Renegado* (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2010).

merchant promises:

> . . . this pure metal
> So innocent is and faithful to the mistress
> Or master that possesses it, that, rather
> Than hold one drop that's venomous, of itself
> It flies in pieces and deludes the traitor.
> (1.3.121–125)

Dependent upon a blurring of subject and object, the Christian Vitelli's methodology suggests that he associates these Eastern, Muslim buyers with an investment in objects that is possibly "idolatrous," but certainly "superstitious[ly]" fetishistic, as William Pietz defines these terms in his work on object fetishism.[4] According to Pietz, the "Fetisso," unlike the "Christian idol," was not an "image" or medium through which a god worked, but rather a rigorously "material" embodiment, "a radically novel production associating things and pur-

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[4] William Pietz, "The Problem of the Fetish, II: The Origin of the Fetish," *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 13 (1987): 30 [23–45]. See also Jane Hwang Degenhardt, "Catholic Prophylactics and Islam's Sexual Threat: Preventing and Undoing Sexual Defilement in *The Renegado*," *Journal for Early Modern Culture Studies* 9.1 (2009): 62–92. Degenhardt underscores Islam's dismissal of "idolatry": "Part of the irony of Asambeg's validation of the relic's talismanic qualities lies in the fact that Islam condemned the practice of idolatry just as vehemently as Protestantism did" (74).

poses."[5] This kind of belief in material efficacy would relegate its adherents to the past. In *We Have Never Been Modern*, Bruno Latour posits that the very notion of modernity is predicated upon an erroneous, rigid distinction between active subjects and inactive objects. For Latour, the narrative arc of modernity depends upon a movement away from material potential. With evident skepticism, he writes, "The obscurity of the olden days, which illegitimately blended together social needs and natural reality, meanings and mechanisms, signs and things, gave way to a luminous dawn that cleanly separated material causality from human fantasy."[6] Within the discourse of object fetishism, such pastness bears the mark of the "non-European." As Pietz notes, "The superstitious misunderstanding of *causality* is understood to explain the false estimation of the *value* of material objects. From this developed a general discourse about the superstitiousness of non-

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[5] Pietz, "The Problem of the Fetish," 45. Pietz's study examines the interactions between West African peoples and the Portuguese and Dutch respectively.

[6] Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, 35. See also Jonathan Gil Harris, *Untimely Matter in the Time of Shakespeare* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009). Harris elegantly and succinctly articulates Latour's theory: "Latour argues that the fantasy of modernizing time, in which the present progresses from a primitive past toward an improved future, is enabled by a mapping of the supposedly insurmountable split between subject and object onto a sharp partition between now and then" (143).

Europeans within a characteristically modern rhetoric of realism, which recognized as 'real' only technological and commercial values."[7] And in *Untimely Matter in the Time of Shakespeare*, Harris draws our attention specifically to the "West's" recourse to time and space in its positioning of the "East": "the Henriad's 'orient' does not just participate within a synchronic logic of *othering*; it is equally cast as the west's point of temporal and geographical *origin*."[8]

A "temporal" and "geographical" dimension exists then not only in Vitelli's deployment of mythology but also in his insinuation of Donusa and Mustapha's improper orientation toward things. Vitelli's advertising ploy seems to target a temporally displaced consumer base who have yet to jettison a belief in material agency, who have yet to recognize an absolute distinction between subject and object. Vitelli thus adopts the imperative of *translatio imperii*, which figures the East, with its traditions of Islam and Judaism, as the

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[7] Pietz, "The Problem of the Fetish," 42 (emphasis in original). Latour likewise observes that anthropology largely adopts as its only purview non-"Western societies" due to the assumption that unlike "modern" Westerners these "premoderns" understand the world through networks of what he terms "nature-culture" or humans and nonhumans (7).

[8] Harris, *Untimely Matter*, 75. In his meditation on the handkerchief from *Othello*, Harris offers a lucid discussion of the way in which writers like Marx linked fetishism to the temporal displacement of "primitive" (frequently African) cultures (*Untimely Matter,* 176).

left behind of a teleological trajectory realized in the proto-capitalist, Christian West.[9] Certainly, as scholars like Richmond Barbour, Nabil Matar, and Daniel Vitkus have convincingly argued, in the early modern period such proto-imperialist ploys prove little more than imaginings: "Before the latter half of the seventeenth century, England's 'colonial' discourse was merely the premature articulation of a third-rank power."[10] If Vitelli's Venice is, to an extent, a veiled England, then this is an England frequently overshadowed not only by its European coun-terparts but also by the powerful empires of the East. Nevertheless, within Vitelli's fantastic

[9] Discussions in Jonathan Gil Harris's seminar, "Renaissance Orientations: Ethnicities, Objects, and Sexualities in Early Modern Orientalist Drama" (George Washington University, Fall 2009) helped to formulate my thinking about the translation of empire and Christian proto-capitalism. The phrase "left behind" alludes to the Christian fictional book series by that name. Kathleen Biddick and Harris both contend extensively with temporal supersession in their respec-tive works, *The Typological Imaginary: Circumcision, Technology, History* (Philadelphia: University of Penn-sylvania Press, 2003) and *Untimely Matter*.

[10] Daniel Vitkus, *Turning Turk: English Theater and the Multicultural Mediterranean, 1570-1630* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008), 3. See also Richmond Barbour, *Before Orientalism: London's Theatre of the East, 1576-1626* (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge Univer-sity Press, 2003), and Nabil Matar, *Turks, Moors, and Englishmen in the Age of Discovery* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).

schema, the hopelessly passé Muslim shoppers of Tunis would buy on the empty promise of objective agency, while the proto-capitalist, Christian salesmen would recognize his commodities as empty signifiers valuable only for fiduciary exchange.[11]

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[11] Of course, following the Reformation, Catholics frequently faced similar charges of an inappropriate engagement with and dependence upon materiality, as scholars from Pietz to Peter Stallybrass and James Kearney have observed. And some literary critics, like Michael Neill and Jane Hwang Degenhardt, attend carefully to the role of Vitelli's Catholicism (and for Degenhardt specifically, "Catholic objects" [63]) in Massinger's play. I do not mean to be reductive in figuring Vitelli as a kind of Christian everyman salesman. However, in this moment, Vitelli does seem to mobilize a rather dichotomous and totalizing paradigm of Christian and Muslim, regardless of his particular spiritual persuasion. As Neill writes of Massinger's play in comparison to John Fletcher's *The Island Princess* (1647), "Massinger, by contrast, imagines the conflict between European and Turk as a war of opposed civilizations": Michael Neill, "Turn and Counterturn: Merchanting, Apostasy and Tragicomic Form in *The Renegado*," in *Early Modern Tragicomedy*, eds. Subha Mukgerji and Raphael Lyne (Rochester: D.S. Brewer, 2007), 161 [154–174]. And even if we take quite seriously a Catholic Vitelli, we must acknowledge that he would in all likelihood argue for a distinction between what Pietz terms "the empowering of the ["sacramental"] object through the intercessory agency of the church" and an aberrant belief in the agentic potential of "the sacramental objects of superstition and idolatry" ("The Problem of the Fetish," 30).

However, in Act 2, Scenes 3 and 4, Massinger presents a kind of parallel market scene that challenges the binary of a "premodern" Muslim East and an "early modern" Christian West, differentiated by a proper orientation to fashion things. As Michael Neill writes, "Vitelli is summoned to meet her [Donusa] in the palace, where she tempts his sight with an array of treasure laid out on her table: looking for all the world like a more sumptuous version of the 'commodities' displayed on his own shop-counter."[12] In Donusa's chambers, the doors to a fashion house seemingly more dreamscape than reality open before the masquerading merchant and the audience. Here contemporary spectators would have discovered some of those foreign novelties looked for amongst London's most stylish, like covetable Indian pearls (2.4.85-86). They would have smelled the "[p]erfume" and heard the "music" that mingled in the air (2.3.10). Might they also have gazed upon desirable Turkish carpets and fabrics of vibrant silk and taffeta then covering the floors and bodies of fashionable English aristocrats and wealthy merchants? Certainly, the response of an "overwhelmed" Vitelli (2.4.90) registers the glamour that Massinger intends: "That I might ever dream thus!" (2.4.14). Faced with such luxuries, the Christian Vitelli pronounces himself "ravished" (2.3.12) before he even encounters

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[12] Neill, "Turn and Counterturn," 169.

their Muslim proprietress. The Venetian capitulates. Following a sexual interlude with Donusa, Vitelli emerges a few scenes later fashioned in the height of a French couture possibly embellished by diamonds, as Vitkus argues in his edition of the play.[13]

I do not mean here to fall into an eroticization of the East by suggesting that the Turks in *The Renegado* acknowledge the capacity for an agency in non-human matter. Indeed, Mustapha terms Vitelli's goods "toys and trifles not worth your observing" (1.3.103).[14] And admittedly, Marxist feminists would perhaps be rightly concerned about the location of the counter-market in Donusa's chamber. The space of the bedroom and the sexual transaction that later takes place between the Turkish princess and the Italian merchant suggest the female body disconcertingly turned into commodity. Jane Hwang Degenhardt, Neill, and Vitkus have all articulated the way in which the desires circulating in the Eastern market of Tunis here map onto the Muslim female body. Degenhardt writes, "It is fitting that

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[13] Vitkus, *Three Turk Plays*, 342.

[14] Mustapha's language here resonates with the way in which Pietz describes European attitudes toward the Africans with whom they traded and their prizing of supposedly worthless objects: "While it was precisely such 'false' estimation of the value of things that provided the desired huge profit rates of early European traders, it also evoked a contempt for a people who valued 'trifles' and 'trash'" ("The Problem of the Fetish," 41).

the Christian hero's seduction by the Muslim princess begins in the Tunisian marketplace, where the purchase and sale of commodities constitutes an analogy for religious and bodily conversion."[15] Yet what I find fascinating about these juxtaposed "market" scenes in *The Renegado* is that the sexual penetration Vitelli experiences, as much as enacts, in Donusa's rooms ultimately proves less orgasmic than his ravishment (a word continually echoed throughout the play) by the objects within that space. I would submit that the sexual penetration Vitelli experiences as much as he enacts in Donusa's rooms ultimately proves less orgasmic than his ravishment (a word continually echoed throughout the play) by the objects within that space. Indeed, the "early modern" Vitelli finds himself breeched and boarded by *renegade* fashion things. Thus, Vitelli's turn is not necessarily one into Turkishness, orchestrated through the potentially castrating contact with the Muslim woman's body (with Donusa's luxuries serving the role of the Freudian fetish). Instead, Vitelli turns toward materiality—a materiality capable of moving the subject's body in unexpected ways.[16]

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[15] Degenhardt, "Cathlic Prophylactics," 67.

[16] Vitkus too investigates the potentiality of the eastern marketplace to transform the English, incorporating them into transcultural networks. Yet he primarily focuses upon mutual exchange with foreign subjects as the agents of turning: "In one sense, this cultural difference, based on blending and variety of peoples, stood apart in contrast to Englishness, but in another

As Jane Bennett writes in *Vibrant Matter*, "One moral of the story is that we are also nonhuman and that things, too, are vital players in the world. The hope is that the story will enhance receptivity to the impersonal life that surrounds and infuses us, will generate a more subtle awareness of the complicated web of dissonant connections between bodies."[17] This vibrant "web" of "dissonant" materiality, as Bennett herself implies, shares much with Latour's actor network. Thus, in his turn toward materialism, Vitelli becomes but one actant within a transnational network of animate actors. As Vitelli reaches out to touch the objects in this second market space, he too is touched by them.[18] Granted, Renaissance stage properties prove notoriously ephemeral. But we can imagine the syncretic possibilities of Vitelli's new daywear: the molluskan accretions of Indian or even Persian pearls, the carbon arrangements of Indian diamonds, the glandular trace of oriental silk or tafetta. But we can imagine their syncretic possibilities: the molluskan accretions of Indian or even Persian pearls, the carbon arrangements of Indian diamonds, the glandular trace of

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sense it insistently offered to accommodate and absorb English subjects, by making them participants in the Mediterranean marketplace" (Vitkus, *Turning Turk,* 16).

[17] Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 4.

[18] I am grateful to Lowell Duckert for his insight that to touch is to be touched.

oriental silk or tafetta. The accessorizing gems turn Vitelli partly into stone (and here, I am thinking of the work of Jeffrey Cohen[19]). The threads of new clothing that the English actor as Italian gentleman receives onto his body weave him into a pulsating web. And all, to channel Sara Ahmed,[20] affect the way in which Vitelli extends into space. Indeed, Vitelli's lackey Gazet notices the alteration in the movement of his master, now part of a Turkish, Indian, French material train. In response to Francisco's befuddlement at the turned Vitelli's entrance, Gazet remarks, "One, by his rich suit, should be some French ambassador; / For his train, I think they are Turks" (2.6.9–10).

Admittedly, in Act 3, Scene 5, Vitelli rails against the "poison" that he has "received into my entrails / From the alluring cup of your [Donusa's] enticements" (3.5.46–47). And Massinger does couple this castigation with stage directions for the hero to give back "*the casket [of jewels]*" (3.5.48) and wrench from him "*his cloak and doublet*" (3.5.50; brackets and italics are the editor's). Thus, one might argue for Vitelli's

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[19] See, for example, Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, "Stories of Stone," *postmedieval* 1.1-2 (Spring/Summer 2010): 56–63, and "The Sex Life of Stone," in *From Beasts to Souls: Gender and Embodiment in Medieval Europe*, eds. E. Jane Burns and Peggy McCracken (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2013): 17–38.

[20] Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).

material turn as a momentary lapse into the allure of crass materialism, here corrected by its renunciation. It would then seem that Massinger straightens out the course of a play that could have gone dangerously awry. Vitelli resumes the linear path of Christian anti-materialism. Wayward characters, like Donusa and Grimaldi, are incorporated into a future-oriented trajectory of Christian eschatology and Western supremacy. The redeemed crew set sail for a European horizon, leaving catastrophe for Asambeg and Mustapha, the synecdochical stand-ins of the Ottoman Empire. However, before privileging the play's seemingly salutary and/or disastrous ending, we might wish to return to the actual moment of *dramatic catastrophe*. As the *OED* reminds us, the principal definition of *catastrophe* is "'The change or revolution which produces the conclusion or final event of a dramatic piece' (Johnson); the dénouement." And in Massinger's *Renegado*, that "change or revolution" is Vitelli's wardrobe change, his striptease before Donusa and the audience.[21]

As he flings his cloak, doublet, and jewels to the floor, Vitelli recalls the figure of Alcides, that marketing maven whose endorsement was earlier supposed to con "premodern" Eastern buyers. [22]

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[21] I am appreciative for Jonathan Gil Harris's urging to follow the etymological trail of the word *catastrophe*.

[22] I follow Massinger and employ *Alcides* when referencing the mythological figure's emergence in the play. As the entry for *Heracles* denotes, "Heracles was originally called Alcides, a patronym formed from the

Excoriating his jilted lover, Vitelli spits:

> . . . Or thus unclothe me
> Of sin's gay trappings, the proud livery
> Of wicked pleasure, which but worn and
>   heated
> With the fire of entertainment and consent,
> Like to Alcides' fatal shirt, tears off
> Our flesh and reputation both together.
> (3.5.49–54)

Vitelli, of course, refers to the gruesome wardrobe malfunction detailed in Book Nine of Ovid's *Metamorphosis*. Tortured by rumors of her husband's infidelity, Deianira takes recourse to a shirt steeped in the blood of the centaur Nessus, as she is convinced by the dying creature of the garment's capacity to restore Alcides to her love. Yet the warp and woof of the fabric has been dyed with the poison that coursed through Nessus's blood—venom introduced by the very arrow with which Alcides killed the jealous centaur. Like the runway mishaps of Miuccia Prada's platform-heeled models,[23] Alcides's fitting goes terribly wrong. Ovid writes:

name of his grandfather Alceus": Pierre Grimal, *The Penguin Dictionary of Classical Mythology* (New York: Penguin, 1991), 183. Under the entry for *Hercules*, we receive the following: "A latinized form of the Greek Heracles" (196).

[23] "It's a devil to wear Prada . . . Models topple off heels at show": *Daily Mail*, October 1, 2008: http://dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-1060909.

> He went about too teare
> The deathfull garment from his backe: but
>   where he pulled, there
> He pulld away the skin: and (which is lothsum
>   too report)
> It eyther cleaved to his limbes and members
>   in such sort
> As that he could not pull it of, or else it tare
>   away
> The flesh, that bare his myghty bones and
>   grisly sinewes lay.
> (9.203–208)[24]

Ovid's tale denies a ready distinction between the self-fashioning subject and the fashioned object. Thus, in Massinger's second allusion to the

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[24] This citation derives from Arthur Golding's 1567 English translation of Ovid's *Metamorphosis*. I make recourse here to Golding's translation because of its appeal during the period, evinced through its repeated republication, with a final print date of 1612. See Jonathan Bate, *Shakespeare and Ovid* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 29. As Bate writes, "Golding is characterized by his robust vernacular vocabulary . . . and his bustling narration of the stories, which was probably the main reason for the popularity of his translation (it was reprinted in 1575, 1584, 1587, twice in 1593, 1603, and 1612)" (29). More research is necessary to determine whether Massinger would have been familiar with Ovid's work in Latin or in translation: I am grateful to Jonathan Gil Harris for his guidance on this point. I also made recourse to Allen Mandelbaum's 1993 translation for its narrative clarity.

mythological figure, the images of Vitelli and Alcides flicker back and forth, both burned by a nonrefundable item. In this moment, the "premodern" Alcides of Ovid and the "early modern" Vitelli of Massinger touch, their bodies conjoined in a nonmodern network of human and non-human actants—a sartorial space that eschews a linear trajectory predicated upon a slash between subject/object.

After this moment of catastrophe and before Grimaldi's repossessed ship disappears from sight, Alcides again appears—a catwalk turn of Jove's crystal, centaurian blood, rebellious fabric, Italian tears, and an English actor's sweat. In the last scene of the play, as the Tunisian viceroy Asambeg anticipates the carnal pleasures of a "turned" Paulina, Alcides emerges on his Turkish tongue. Describing his impatience, Asambeg alludes to the desire that brought Alcides into existence, Jove's three nights of lovemaking with Alcmena:

> . . . though this night to me
> Appear as tedious as that treble one
> Was to the world when Jove on fair Alcmena
> Begot Alcides.
> (5.8.1–4)

As Neill observes in his gloss on this passage for the recent Arden edition of the play, Jove drew one night into three for a prolonged sexual

escapade.[25] Alcides results from this temporal disorientation—day become night, night become day.[26] Thus, Alcides's very ontological state seems one predisposed to stylish Madeleine L'Englian *wrinkles in time*.[27] Asambeg speaks the hero's name and the possibilities of conception precede consummation, and Alcides's figuration in Massinger's *Renegado* ends in the moment of his beginning. The absent present fashionista, Alcides thus rips at the seams of a play, seemingly invested in neatly stitching over moments of asymmetry—futures that don't line up, objects and subjects that inevitably style each other.

Off-stage somewhere, a ship is on the move. As it travels on the waves, a network of bodies, both human and non, circulate within it: "—With all their train / And choicest jewels are gone safe aboard. / Their sails spread forth" (5.8.26–28). A spreading forth of canvas and un-renegade pirates; silks and converted princesses; gemstones and imprisoned Turkish soldiers; turning Italians and the fibers of a torturing shirt. Perhaps the vessel's prow points toward the vanishing point of Europe and England. But perhaps not. For Massinger does not deliver us into that harbor. The text's lines of navigation ultimately do not

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[25] Neill, *The Renegado*, 232.

[26] Neill surmises in a footnote that Massinger might have been familiar with the account of this episode given in Plautus's *Amphitryon* (*The Renegado,* 232).

[27] I am of course referring here to author Madeleine L'Engle's novel *A Wrinkle in Time* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 1962).

straighten out into a definite future. Instead, we stare after a wake of possibility in which all moderns—pre, early, and post—bear both the burden and the pleasure of contingency with things. And in doing so, we stare into the post-catastrophic wardrobe of a (non)modern fashion.

08: Always Accessorize
In Defense of Scholarly *Cointise*

Christine Neufeld

Perhaps because of my own upbringing in a Protestant culture which, in my youth, still contended to some extent with Pauline injunctions about cosmetics and hairstyle, I perceive behind the question of style in medieval studies the imputation that style is a provocation. Anna Kłosowka's observations on the topic (in this volume) highlight some of the anxieties attendant when style becomes an issue for scholars:

> I think the question of style, as it applies to medievalism, is precisely the overcoming of that dichotomy between Nature and Man: a

third element. And when the critique proceeds through the denunciation of the inimitability of someone's style, as if it were the third sex, . . . the critic unconsciously puts his finger on exactly what style is; but that critic is mistaken about the style's generative powers. In fact, style, neither fact nor theory but facilitating the transition between the two, is . . . the generative principle itself.

Anna's words came back to me in Florence, Italy in the summer of 2010 when, wayward and worldly Mennonite that I am, I made a pilgrimmage to the Salvatore Ferragamo Museum and discovered its exhibition: "Greta Garbo: The Mystery of Style."[1] It seemed appropriate that the fashion house built by the "Shoemaker of Dreams" could parse the sumptuary semiotics of the Great Garbo. In the discourse of fashion, who better than the purveyor of accessories to celebrate style as "excess," an effect that is greater than the sum of its parts, whose creative power depends precisely upon its inimitability, its mystery?

The concept of style in scholarly discourse, however, is haunted by a less celebratory sense of the "accessory" implied in its definition: "An accessory thing; something contributing in a subordinate degree to a general result or effect; an adjunct, or accompaniment."[2] That the definition

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[1] "The Exhibitions," *Museo: Salvatore Ferragamo* [website]: http://www.museoferragamo.it/en/mostre.php.

[2] *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "accessory," http://

goes on to gender the accessory as "the smaller articles of (esp. a woman's) dress, such as shoes, gloves, etc." belies a much more ancient classical tradition that links the ornament, both sartorial and linguistic, to femininity. Beginning with patristic texts, the ubiquity of Christian sumptuary injunctions, against women's clothing and fashion consciousness in particular, link anxieties about costume's expressive power to the persuasive power of women's speech. Both generate an excess that entices audiences. In 1415, Jean Gerson, Chancellor of the University of Paris, observes: "There is hardly any other calamity more apt to do harm or that is more incurable [than the unbridled speech of women]. If its only consequence were the immense loss of time, this would already be sufficient for the devil. But you must know that there is something else to it: the insatiable itch to see and to speak, not to mention . . . the itch to touch."[3] Gerson's paradoxical denigration of women's speech as simultaneously

www.oed.com. Accessory: "A. Of things: Coming as an accession; contributing in an additional and hence subordinate degree; additional, extra, adventitious. B. n. 1. An accessory thing; something contributing in a subordinate degree to a general result or effect; an adjunct, or accompaniment. spec. (in *pl.*): the smaller articles of (esp. a woman's) dress, as shoes, gloves, etc.; minor fittings or attachments for a motor-car, etc. Occas. in *sing.*"

[3] Gerson, Jean, *De probatione spirituum* (1415). Quoted in Karma Lochrie, *Margery Kempe and Translations of the Flesh* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991), 1.

utterly inconsequential (a loss of time) and compelling (an itch) appears as part of his advice to fifteenth-century confessors confronted with an increase in women's mystical fervor incited by Bridget of Sweden's canonization. However, he draws on an ideological distinction inherent in Western philosophy, with medieval inheritors of classical tradition urged to check the feminizing force of rhetoric's persuasive cadences in favor of more "penetrating" logical analysis.

While much could be said about contemporary scholarly accusations of stylistic obfuscation—particularly when aimed at scholars considered "too theoretical"—in relation to anxious medieval denunciations of vestimentary hypocrisy as social fraud, I want to focus on the idea of style as "excess." This is not "excess" in the sense of scandalizing gratuity, as described, for example, in Chaucer's Parson's denunciation of individuals whose "wrappynge of hir hoses" make their "buttockes . . . faren as it were the hyndre part of a she-ape in the fulle of the moone" (X.423).[4] Instead, I want to draw attention to the provocation of superfluity. Chaucer's Parson echoes medieval homilists and patristic sources like St. Gregory and Peraldus when he states that style is not just "cowpable for the derthe of it," but also for "his softenesse, and his strangenesse

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[4] Chaucer, "The Parson's Tale," in *The Canterbury Tales*. All references to Chaucer's works are from *The Riverside Chaucer,* gen. ed. Larry D. Benson, 3rd edn. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987), cited by fragment and line number.

and degisynesse, and for the superfluitee . . . of it"
(X.414). In terms like "curious" and "strange," we
encounter Anna's concept of style as a "third
element," identifiable as a supplement of the
Derridean sort, confounding the "dichotomy of
Nature and Man." The dangerous supple*men-
talité* of style appears already in Tertullian's att-
ack on women's ornamentation, as is evident in
this summary by Howard Bloch:

> To decorate oneself is to be guilty of "mere-
> tricious allurement," since embellishment of
> the body, a prideful attempt "to show to
> advantage," recreates an original act of pride
> that is the source of potential concupiscence.
> . . . It is as if each and every act of clothing an
> original nakedness associated with the sanctity
> of the body, and not the weakness of the flesh,
> were a corrupting recapitulation of the Fall
> entailing all other perversions. . . . If clothes
> are at once the sign, the effect, and a cause of
> the Fall, it is because, as artifice, they, like
> woman, are secondary, collateral, supplemen-
> tal. Dress is unnatural since, like all artifice, it
> seeks to add to, to perfect, the body of nature
> or God's creation. . . . A recreation, the
> artificial implies a pleasurable surplus that is
> simply inessential.[5]

Later medieval texts, both sacred and secular,
elaborate this theme, indicating that the inessen-

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[5] Howard Bloch, "Medieval Misogyny," *Representa-
tions* 20 (1987): 12–13 [1–24].

tial is nevertheless tremendously conse-quential. The *Roman de la Rose's* Mal Marié laments that he was seduced by his future wife's stylish appearance, what he terms her "*cointerie.*"[6] While he is content to wear, as he states, "just enough clothing to protect [himself] from the heat and the cold," his wife insists on accessorizing. "What use to me," he rants, "are these headbands, these caps striped with gold, these decorated braids and ivory mirrors, these carefully crafted golden circlets with their precious enameling, these coronets of purest gold which never cease to enrage me, being so fair and finely polished, studded with such beautiful stones, with sapphires, rubies and emeralds, and which make you look so joyous"?[7] The rhetorical tension in the husband's itemization of what is, after all, his personal property suggests that these accessories are less significant as signifiers of his portable wealth than as manifestations of the immaterial discourse of his wife's inner life and the seductive power it might exert on those who perceive her "joyousness."

Of course, Mal Marié's wife is not the only female character who dresses for effect. Chaucer describes his Wife of Bath explicitly in terms of her soft, elaborate, and curious accessories: her

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[6] Guilliame de Lorris and Jean de Meun, *Le Roman de la Rose*, ed. Daniel Poirion (Paris: Garnier Flammarion, 1974), 8809–8812; cited by line number.

[7] Guilliame de Lorris and Jean de Meun, *The Romance of the Rose*, trans. Frances Horgan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 136.

shoes "ful moyste and new"; her closely laced "scarlet reed" stockings; her "spores sharpe" (I.457, 456–457, 473). In fact, Chaucer's *General Prologue* portrays the Wife of Bath as a collection of accessories that confound the tenuous distinction Mal Marié establishes between the necessary and the accessory, a collection that is in itself excessive. In addition to being "ywympled wel," Alison wears a hat the size of a shield; her "footmantel" is a riding cloak worn in addition to her regular clothing (I.470–471, 472). Foremost among the Wife's accessories is the extraordinary headdress with which Chaucer be-gins his material description of Alison: "Hir coverchiefs ful fyne weren of ground; / I dorste swere they weyeden ten pound" (I.453–454). A headcloth or veil made of fine linen and often adorned, the "coverchief" is a potent sign of the Wife's wealth and social standing in fourteenth-century England, since it would have been a specialty item affordable only to upper-class and aristocratic women.[8] The narrator's emphasis on the delicacy of the Wife's veils renders even more hyperbolic the estimated ten pounds of headdress that the

[8] I would like to thank Melanie Schuessler for patiently answering my many questions about medieval veils and for directing me to scholarly resources on clothing history. For a definition of the "coverchief," see *Lexis Cloth and Clothing Project,* s.v. "kerchief": http://lexis project.arts.manchester.ac.uk/. For the social signifi-cance of the veil, see Carla Tilghman, "Giovanna Cen-ami's Veil: A Neglected Detail," *Medieval Clothing and Textiles* 1 (2005): 155–172.

Wife allegedly dons. His repeated refer-ence to "coverchiefs" in the plural indicates that the Wife has draped layers upon layers of expensive textiles to achieve her desired effect.[9] Grouped in wills with items such as precious jewelry, veils were, in fact, among those acces-sories whose lavishness provoked social regula-tion, with

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[9] For more discussion of the sartorial symbolism of the Wife of Bath's costume, see Laura Hodges, "The Wife of Bath's Costumes: Reading the Subtexts," *The Chaucer Review* 27.4 (1993): 359–376. Hodges proposes a different explanation for the weight of the veil, sugg-esting a late fourteenth-century veil with multiple frills at its edges, "thus producing a fluted or goffered appearance" (363). This is the kind of veil depicted in the Ellesmere portrait of the Wife. I would suggest that the text's plural emphasis on "coverchiefs" may suggest a different contemporary style: that of layering and pinning several veils. One example of this can be seen in Robert Campin's *Portrait of Lady* (c. 1430) in the National Gallery, London:

My main point, however, is: while the specific type of veil remains, of necessity, speculative, scholars need to note the degree of extravagance signaled by the Wife's coverchiefs.

sumptuary laws in some regions limiting the number of allowable layers.[10] Seen in light of such historical evidence, along with disapproving references by social commentators such as Christine de Pisan, this particular accessory becomes the ultimate symbol of the social disruptiveness of the Wife's wealth, as well as her excessive artifice as a woman.[11] Laura Hodges identifies the coverchief as a particular medieval sartorial symbol equated visually with the quarrelsome wife of antifeminist satire. She explicitly links the coverchief with the concept of *cointise*—recalling the *Roman*'s *cointerie*—which, in Middle English, could shift from denoting "quaint and fanciful dress" to suggest "knowledge, elegance," as well as qualities commonly ascribed to the Wife, such as "shrewdness, skill, vanity, cunning and trickery."[12]

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[10] See Isis Sturtewagen, "Unveiling Social Fashion Patterns: A Case Study of Frilled Veils in the Low Countries (1200-1500)," *Medieval Clothing and Textiles* 7 (2011): 62 [33–63].

[11] Tilghman points out that Christine de Pisan comments disapprovingly on the expensive textiles worn by a merchant's wife in *Le Livre des trois vertus* ("Giovanna's Cenami Veil," 167). See Christine de Pisan, *Le Livre des trois vertus*, ed. C. Cannon Willard, Bibliothèque du XVe siècle, vol. 50 (Paris: Libr. H. Champion, 1989), 185.

[12] Hodges, "The Wife of Bath's Costumes," 362. While Hodges's identification of the term *cointise* with a particular type of fourteenth-century headdress could be questioned by clothing historians, numerous dictionaries confirm that the definition of *cointise* links

Even without such wordplay audiences have long aligned the Wife's sartorial lavishness with her linguistic excesses, as a weaver of texts and textiles, as scold, as self-described gossip. The portrait of the Wife as gossip represents the dangerous, pleasurable surplus of narrative, the inessential old wives' tale, the unruly utterance that cannot be contained in institutional frameworks or by "noon other auctoritee" (III.1). The Wife's confessional prologue is gossip, a self-fictionalization that spills out of confessional space-time and that exploits the very affective resonances Gerson sought to contain, aware that the boundary between the representative act and the expressive performance is not always clear. As a gossip, Chaucer's Wife makes her audience her "accessory": Alison's second person address to the "wise wyves that kan understand" supplements Chaucer's jolly company with an excess of wives, an imagined audience in addition to the Canterbury pilgrims, another frame of reference beyond the assorted expired husbands and clerks the Wife also invokes (III.225). By interpellating her audience as "wise wives," Chaucer's Wife presents the audience with the possibility of becoming her accomplices, *accessories* in the assault against an institutional discourse that privileges some voices over others. Modeled on the Wife's gossip, Alisoun, who "knew [her]

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fanciful dress with stereotypical characteristics attributed to women by antifeminist satire. See, for instance, *The Middle English Dictionary*, s.v. "cointise" or "queintise."

herte, and eek [her] privatee, / Bet than [the] parisshe preest," the "wise wives" posit an audience that responds affectively (III.530–531). Wise wives attend to Alison's secrets (her "privatee") in relation to her desires and motivations (her "herte"), considering, in other words, not just what she does, but why. Thus, by assuming that we, too, might understand—that we might, as wise wives, be interested in her "herte"—the Wife of Bath invites us to become her gossips.

The Wife of Bath's provocative *cointise*, continually in excess of institutional, not to mention interpretive, frameworks, finds its historical incarnation in unruly-tongued, sartorially-preoccupied Margery Kempe. Inspired by St. Bridget, aspiring mystic and enthusiastic confessee Margery Kempe is Gerson's fears brought to exasperating, colorful life. Margery also makes her clothing style a key to her inner life throughout her narrative. Her initial self-portrait plays on the familiar tropes found in the *Roman de la Rose* and Chaucer:

> [Sche] wold not leeuyn hir pride ne hir pompows array [th]at sche had vsyd be-fortym, nei[th]yr for hyr husbond ne for noon o[th]er mannys cownsel. And [y]et sche wyst ful wel [th]at men seyden hir ful mech velany, for sche weryd gold pypys on hir hevyd & hir hodys with [th]e typettys were daggyd. Hir clokys also were daggyd & leyd with dyuers colowrs be-twen [th]e daggys [th]at it schuld be [th]e mor staryng to mennys sygth and hir-

> self [th]e mor ben worshepd. And, whan hir
> husband wold speke to hir for to leuyn hir
> pride, sche answeryd schrewydly & schortly
> . . .[13]

Even after Margery embraces asceticism, her
request that the Bishop give her "[the] mantyl &
[the] ryng & clothyn [her] al in whygth clothys"
reveals her continued awareness of a public gaze
attentive to her costume and a renewed, if
modified, desire to "ben worshepd" (Kempe 34).
Furthermore, Margery's move from colorful,
ornamentally cut gowns and hoods decorated
with gold pipes and streamers to the mono-
chrome simplicity of the clothing that articulates
her spiritual calling does not, in fact, exempt her
from accusations of *cointise*.[14] According to
Michael Vandussen, Margery's clothing may nev-
er have been officially sanctioned not just because
of her status as wife and mother but because of its
sartorial incoherence:

> To request ecclesiastical approval for a vow of

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[13] Margery Kempe, *The Book of Margery Kempe,* eds.
Sanford Brown Meech and Hope Emily Allen, Early
English Text Society, no. 212 (1940; London: Oxford
University Press, 1961), 9; all subsequent citations of
Kempe will be from this edition and indicated within
the text, by page number.

[14] The "dagged" style of gown Margery describes is
especially targeted in sermons. Chaucer's Parson, for
instance, singles out this style in his *Tale*: see X.416–
417.

chaste marriage was one thing (a quite standard practice), but Margery seems to be going beyond this, implicating other categories of chastity as well—chaste widowhood and even virginity. White clothing was granted primarily to virgins, the mantle and ring to widows—but not to chaste wives. That is to say, the clothing she requests seems to be a patchwork of garments traditionally associated with other, and mutually exclusive, *condiciones*.[15]

Thus, given the excesses of Margery's "sartorial exegesis," even clad in simple white garments Margery appears garish to those around her.[16] Such a paradox seems only fitting for this disconcerting character, whose ambition is most evident in her acts of self-abasement, and whose desire to be an instrument for divine communication simultaneously facilitates her own self-evident need to be heard.

Like the Wife the Bath, who chooses to reveal herself to her gossips rather than her priest, Margery's breakdown and subsequent spiritual journey begins with a confessor's failure of understanding that prevents her from uttering the sin that haunts her. Margery's account of this

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[15] Michael Vandussen, "Betokening Chastity: Margery Kempe's Sartorial Crisis," *FMLS* 41.3 (2005): 275 [275–288].

[16] Vandussen defines "sartorial exegesis" as "a reading of self that corresponds to her reading of Scripture" (276).

trauma portrays the priest's error as a failure of empathy in that he attends, to borrow the Wife of Bath's terms, to her "privatee" but not to her "herte": "whan sche cam to [the] poynt for to seyn [that] [thing] whech sche had so long conselyd, hir confessour was a lytyl to hastye & gan scharply to undyrnemyn hire er [than] sche had fully seyd hir entent, & so sche wold no mor seyn for nowt he mygth do" (Kempe 7). From then on, Margery is continually in search of an audience that understands her "entent": whether it is in her speeches, her illegible manuscript, or ultimately the immaterial discourse of her soul expressed most provocatively through her white clothes and her endlessly spilling tears.

Margery's self-expressive drive makes her a palimpsest of Gerson's mystic, the *Roman's* wife, and Chaucer's gossip. Her self-fictionalization epitomizes the effect that is greater than the sum of its parts, a provocation whose embellishments we continue to finger. In fact, the mystery of Margery's style has made her a site of scholarly self-fashioning for medievalists. Margery's "singular" clothing provides the context in which Carolyn Dinshaw explores "queerness, community, and history" in her influential book *Getting Medieval: Sexualities and Communities, Pre- and Postmodern*.[17] The discourse of contagion Dinshaw identifies in historical responses to Margery's clothes as heretical—a trope one also

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[17] Carolyn Dinshaw, *Getting Medieval: Sexualities and Communities, Pre- and Postmodern* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), 144–145.

encounters, incidentally, in late medieval homiletics about French fashions like the dagged gown, not to mention the euphemistic reference to syphilis as "the French disease"—ultimately helps delineate the threat Margery poses to various medieval communities: "I focus on Margery's as the touch of the queer, a touch showing something disjunctive within unities that are presumed unproblematic, even natural."[18] For contemporary communities, though, Dinshaw shows how this incommensurability, the sense of "contiguity and displacement," is precisely what allows us to experience Margery's touch. Jeffrey Cohen follows a similar instinct when he describes how the contagion of Margery's tears "instantiates an affective model for receiving (rather than just reading) the text."[19] This recognition of affect as integral to understanding repositions the medievalist as a "wise wife" in relation to medieval texts, in contradistinction to the traditional stance of the medieval scholar as confessor to the Past's secreted interiority. In fact, as Anne Clark Bartlett observes, a new mode of so-called "confessional" criticism has emerged recently that unsettles the dichotomy of "expressivism and objectivity," intersecting *petit histoire* and *grand recit* to generate a new ground for the "transaction between text-as-subject and reader-as-

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[18] Dinshaw, *Getting Medieval,* 151.
[19] Jeffrey J. Cohen, *Medieval Identity Machines* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 184.

text."[20] This aesthetic movement is characterized by repeated invocations across generic, epochal, and theoretical boundaries in medieval studies of the possibility of and need for "intersubjectivity," revealing, I would argue, that we are finally prepared to explore the potential of our own "insatiable itch to touch."

If exploring the Middle Ages now means we can or must acknowledge the unrecorded effects and unanalyzed passions, formerly deemed supplemental, accessory, to our critical discourse then, like Margery Kempe, we also are in search of idioms that allow us to articulate the ineffable. The perceptual shifts made possible by our embrace of Dinshaw's "queer historical impulse" also potentially introduce the need for a discursive shift that can account for these immaterial effects in our scholarship. Dinshaw's turn to Robert Glück's 1994 novel, *Margery Kempe*, as an instance of the "queer historical touch" proves instructive here. [21] Observing that Glück is drawn to Margery's "excessiveness," Dinshaw explores Glück's act of historical identification, which alternately registers and collapses historical difference, as a "profound act of (and resource for) community building."[22] Glück's own account of the challenge he faced in engaging history with

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[20] Anne Clark Bartlett, "Reading it Personally: Robert Glück, Margery Kempe and Language in Crisis," *Exemplaria* 16.2 (2004): 439–440 [437–456].

[21] Robert Glück, *Margery Kempe* (New York: High Risk Books, 1994).

[22] Dinshaw, *Getting Medieval,* 170.

integrity ("How to use historical matter and be true?—true to what?") reveals the role of community in the creative act itself rather than merely emerging as a result of the work's reception:

> How do you not lie in fiction? Some modernist (and pre-modern!) answers: to "bare the device," to assert the reader's present-time, . . . to fragment linear time, to expose the writer's point of view, to meld figure and ground. Then how to use historical matter? I pressured the genre by bringing my relation to the historical matter into the book. I developed an aesthetic relation to historical matter by continually reframing it—say, with historical longshots, or my own autobiography—and by questioning our ability to know the characters. . . . There is usually an element of collaboration in my books; in this case I asked about forty friends for observations and memories about their bodies. Those intimate details are applied to—that is, stitched into—remote fifteenth-century characters.[23]

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[23] Robert Glück, "My Margery, Margery's Bob," *Shark* 3 (2001), 3 [36–41]. Like those medievalists before me who have contacted Robert Glück, I have been touched by Bob's generous responses to my inquiries. I am grateful to him for sending me his typescript, "My Margery, Margery's Bob." My citations are drawn from this typescript.

Glück's use of the term "stitched" is not coincidental given his use of aesthetic details, especially fifteenth-century clothing, in the novel. In fact, the novel confirms, even elaborates, this ideological link between clothing and sensory experience when Bob the narrator observes: "I asked my friends for notes about their bodies to dress these fifteenth-century paper dolls."[24] While Glück explains his strategic use of clothing details to establish an "aesthetic relationship to history," his identification of Margery with material culture paradoxically provides a sensory conduit for the reader: "Margery identified with fabrics: she wore a cranberry silk grown with a flat white collar and trailing funnel-shaped sleeves, cinched above the waist with a soft milk-chocolate belt. . . . The silk moving around her body created an environment to walk through."[25] As the "soft," "strange" accessories let readers feel a kind of access to Margery, Glück replicates this effect in the *mise en abyme* of her mystical life. The presence of the accessory registers contiguities between Margery's spiritual and mundane realities, as well as between various biblical moments and her medieval present, even as it also signals to readers the potential for disjunctions of understanding, of perceptual focus:

Margery was too surprised to move and wondered what had chipped and dirtied Mary's nails. Mary was naked beneath the thin

[24] Glück, *Margery Kempe*, 90.

[25] Glück, *Margery Kempe*, 8.

chemise of a bathhouse attendant; a sheer scarf loosely hooked to her crown floated downwards with her golden hair. "Saint Stephen wore green tippets . . . when we stoned him . . . ."[26]

The act of anachronistic imagination that dresses St. Stephen in fourteenth-century garb is recognizable to medievalists familiar with tendencies in medieval dramatic and visual arts to depict biblical scenes in local settings and to clothe their characters in present-day costumes. Rather than chastising medieval artists for historical ignorance, scholars tend to acknowledge such imaginative acts as strategic. Speaking of the non-biblical characters that appear in medieval mystery plays, Robert Weimann observes: "such figures were capable of exploiting the dramatic potential of anachronism because they established a broad range of links with, and realized the most affective tensions between, the world of biblical myth and the world and time of contemporary England."[27] This medieval model of "intersubjectivity" finds its modern instantiation in Dinshaw's description of Glück's queer historical impulse:

Pre- and postmodern subjects are in this view

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[26] Glück, *Margery Kempe*, 62.

[27] Robert Weimann, *Shakespeare and the Popular Tradition in the Theatre: Studies in the Social Dimension of Dramatic Form and Function* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), 65.

disaggregate, indiscrete, without origin; identities are built up of crossings "back and forth between yourself and world"—built up, that is, of relations between aspects of individual existences and other, ineluctably textual phenomena . . . : creatures, books, people, religions, eras. Intensities, as Deleuze and Foucault put it.[28]

To acknowledge these "intensities" as the strange excesses of our own scholarly discourse is thus not a dilution of our analysis—as if we could, like Mal Marié, neatly differentiate between the relevant and the recreational, the objective and the expressive. Instead, the shift signals a willingness to acknowledge that our relation to the Middle Ages has always already been an "aesthetic relation" where all discourse about the medieval is at once the sign, cause, and result of its withdrawal from us. And implicit in this understanding of ourselves as "accessories after the fact" lies a sense of the creative communal act that brings the medieval into being, expanding our diachronic attentions to the past with a synchronic awareness of the communities we address.

Perceiving this aesthetic relation to the past does not free us from a sense of accountability to the delicate, tattered fabric of history that both touches us and exceeds our grasp. The figures we've invoked here, the Wife of Bath and

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[28] Dinshaw, *Getting Medieval,* 170.

Margery Kempe, are as troubling as they are inspiring, just as the intensities evoked by my anachronistic imagination do not prevent my needing to point out that tippets in the Middle Ages would not have been green.[29] Nonetheless, while significant scholarly ink has been and should continue to be spilled on negotiating our relations to the medieval past with ethical and intellectual integrity, the synchronic function of style as generating a social space merits more attention. The fact that the two medievalists to have engaged in print with Glück's *Margery Kempe*—Carolyn Dinshaw and Anne Clark Bartlett—are either invoked or involved with this Style project invites us to consider the inter-subjectivity of medieval studies with the other contemporary community in which Glück's novel participates, the poetic community of the New Narrative School.[30]

New Narrative emerged as a movement in San Francisco in the late 1970s and 1980s, largely as a response by queer writers Glück and Bruce Boone to the disembodied poetics of the Language

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[29] See Robin Netherton, "The Tippet: An Accessory after the Fact?" *Medieval Clothing and Textiles* 1 (2005): 115–132.

[30] Carolyn Dinshaw was invoked in the call for papers for the session in which this paper was originally presented, "Calling Time Out: Style and Scholarship in Medieval Studies": http://www.siue.edu/babel/BABEL AustinConferenceProgram_Saturday.html. Anne Clark Bartlett was the co-organizer, with Eileen Joy, of this session.

School.[31] Poet Rob Halpern's description of the
New Narrative movement in his preface to
Boone's *Century of Clouds* describes New Narra-
tive as rejecting "the rupture of writing and
desire," refusing to choose between "affinity or
critique."[32] His description of *Century of Clouds*
as "stories still navigating the unmapped space
between bodily sensation and critical thought,
stimulating so many intensities,"[33] applies well to
the double helix of desire Glück charts in his
eroto-biography of Margery and Bob. Moreover,
the investments of New Narrative articulated by
Halpern resonate powerfully with the issues the
Style project represents for medieval scholars:
how to contend with the "immaterial" intensities
of our scholarship, the effects and affects of being
touched by the past. There is an historical point
of contact between these communities: Glück
acknowledges Carolyn Dinshaw as a critic who
carries on the work of the New Narrative School
in his "Long Note on New Narrative."[34] But,
rather than trace a genealogy of influence, I am

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[31] Other members of the initial New Narrative literary
movement are: Dodie Bellamy, Kevin Killian, Sam
D'Allesandro, Dennis Cooper, Kathy Acker, Camille
Roy, and Steve Abbott.

[32] Rob Halpern, quoted from Bruce Boone, "Preface,"
Century of Clouds (Callicoon, New York: Nightboat
Books, 2009), x–xi [ix–xx].

[33] Halpern, "Preface," *Century of Clouds,* ix.

[34] See Robert Glück, *Long Note on New Narrative*
[website]: http://www.sfsu.edu/~poetry/narrativity/issue_
one/gluck.html.

more interested in calling attention to the historical confluence, affinities and overlaps between three communities (the queer community, the New Narrative school, and the medieval scholarly community) to trouble our historical sense of our isolation as academics, both as readers and as writers. Finally, this kinship with New Narrative aesthetics suggests that our own experiments in style are more than just a reorientation to the material we study—a choice that could otherwise be cast as the inevitable result of periodic philosophical shifts that force us to renegotiate the grounds of our scholarly authority. What this connection to a queer poetics allows us to see is that our current experiments in style also represent a reorientation towards each other, as speech acts that call into being a community that can "understand." Thus as medievalists, if we now accept our itch to touch and be touched by the past, perhaps it is time to admit that as scholars we also long to touch one another.

09: The Unceasing Call of Style[1]
A Novelist's Perspective

Valerie Vogrin

First, I'll dispense with the obvious: that style is often seen as a quality a writer puts *on* a writing product as she herself might put on a snug purple leather jacket—to enhance her message, her appeal.

As a writer, you can put on a different coat, but you cannot not wear a coat. Rather, your

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[1] The title of this paper refers to Victor Hugo's statement that "Style is the substance of the subject called unceasingly to the surface."

non-coat-wearing will not go unnoticed. That is, you are kidding yourself if you think your style is transparent. It is as obvious as a sunbeam striking a chrome bumper.

—ᗯ—

Style makes a claim. Style has a reserved spot in the company parking lot.

—ᗯ—

Style, more than species, is what distinguishes the howl of wolves saluting the moon from the songs of the neighborhood dogs rising over fences and alleyways.

—ᗯ—

The style of mincing steps, of near-assertion.

The style of screens, of veils.

The myth of a neutral style. As if knowledge was a substance to be displayed on a glass specimen slide.

The challenge isn't to see things as they are, but to see things at all.

—ᗯ—

I recently introduced a class of undergraduate fiction writers to "Growing Sentences with David

Foster Wallace"[2]—a step-by-step guide for emulating Wallace's distinctive prose (what *The New York Times* calls his "Hysterical Realist Style").[3] The guide instructs students to begin with a string of ideas, such as "The little boy threw his mother's purse in a puddle. The mother was angry."

Students are directed in an overall strategy of elaboration and grammatical complexity, each step urging the addition of various modifiers and clauses. So much to be imagined! Students soon realized that an elaborate style is not possible without considerable and intricate invention. Thus students did not so much "put on" Wallace's style as discover its generative powers.[4] A

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[2] Found variously around the web, perhaps first reprinted at James Tanner, "A Primer for Kicking Ass Being the Result of One Man's Fed-upped-ness With 'How to Write' Books Not Actually Showing You How to Write," *Growing Sentences with David Foster Wallace* [website], March 16, 2009: http://www.kottke.org/09/03/growing-sentences-with-david-foster-wallace.

[3] Blake Wilson, "Elements of Hysterical Realist Style," *Art Beat: The Culture at Large* [website], March 18, 2009: http://papercuts.blogs. nytimes.com/2009/03/18/elements-of-hysterical-realist-style/.

[4] This is the final, playful result from one of my students, Abby Souza: "The troublesome young male human sneakily slipped his exasperated mother's hand-knit cranium covering and Gucci purse from the cast iron seat of the garden bench and threw them into a murky puddle, which caused a glorious show of water displacement—his cherubic countenance and softly-

barely-conceived notion is given shape like a blob of Play-Doh pressed through an assortment of Hasbro fun factory plastic molds.

—⁓—

Style as an ontological gatekeeper: a writer places a first sentence on the page, and in so doing eliminates a legion of possible second and third sentences.

Here is the staid first sentence of my novel, *Shebang*: "Fin sometimes stood across the street to take it all in."[5]

This first sentence fastens Fin to the spot, the syntax as unrelenting as a lepidopterist's pin. She is affixed to the past both by tense and that resourceful adverb *sometimes*, its suggestion of the other times she has stood there, times she has stood elsewhere, and times she has taken less than all of it in.

Next: "Face to face with the house she'd lived in since she was four days old. The house was white with bright red shutters and red trim and a green front door and from where she stood it looked pretty and glossy as hard candy or new

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ringed golden filaments belied his mischievous disposition, but he'd loved vexing his maternal unit from the moment he'd mastered bipedalism—and, since this was her favorite receptacle, its flawless exterior delicately crafted from the finest Italian leather, this caused her to grow full of ire."

[5] Valerie Vogrin, *Shebang* (Oxford: University Press of Mississippi, 2002).

buttons."

In these few sentences I reveal the fundamental nature of this fictional world through the inclusion of a protagonist, specific descriptive details, a metaphor, a fragment. This world is historical, nameable. Physical properties are stable and significant. Things can be *like* other things, depending on how you look at them. Things don't always add up.

—∞—

A refrain. In Raymond Queneu's *Exercises in Style*, a banal anecdote—the argument between a young man and an older man on a crowded Parisian bus—is trotted out like a runway mannequin in ninety-nine assorted linguistic outfits.

Take "Parechesis": "On the butt-end of a bulging bus which was transbustling an abundance of incubuses and Buchmanites from bumbledom towards their bungalows, a bumptious buckeen whose buttocks were remote from his bust and who was buttired in a boody ridiculous busby, buddenly had a bust-up with a robust buckra who was bumping into him"—and so forth.[6]

Are you charmed or annoyed by such silliness, this ostentatious demonstration of Oulipian technique? I suspect that *Exercises in Style* can be best appreciated only in its totality—as a spectacle

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[6] Raymond Queneau, *Exercises in Style*, trans. Barbara Wright (New York: New Directions, 1981), 97.

of unrelenting ingenuity (by both Queneau and his English translator) and as literary evidence, as John Weightman put it, that "Everything, in the last resort, is a matter of linguistic registers; all translations from life into language carry with them their own inherent philosophy . . . ."[7]

Style as philosopher. Style as perpetrator.

—❦—

Having provided cogent neurobiological explanations for Schoenberg's music never coming into favor[8] and for Hollywood blockbusters' profitable manipulation of moviegoers' subcortices,[9] cognitive scientists are currently studying how specific stylistic features affect reader response to works of fiction.[10]

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[7] John Weightman, "The Infinite Fluidity of Language," *New York Times Book Review* [website], May 17, 1981: http://www.nytimes.com/1981/05/17/books/the-infinite-fluidity-of-language.html.

[8] See Herbert Lindenberger, "Arts in the Brain; Or, What Might Neuroscience Tell Us?" in *Toward a Cognitive Theory of Narrative Acts*, ed. Frederick Luis Aldama (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010), 28.

[9] *Titanic* is used as an example throughout Patrick Colm Hogan's *Cognitive Science, Literature, and the Arts: A Guide for Humanists* (New York: Routledge, 2003).

[10] University of Glasgow scientists Catherine Emmott, Anthony J. Sanford, and Eugene J. Dawydiak found that "stylistic features involving graphical, lexical, and grammatical form and sentence/paragraph structure affect the amount of detail that readers notice as they

Will their findings change the way a novelist composes texts? My cynical self can imagine an agent uttering something along the lines of, "The stylisticians at Knopf are a bit worried about your first chapter. They'd like you to utilize more grammatical clefting, sentence fragments, and low-frequency words in order to focus the reader's attention on the early plot developments."

—⚉—

In this volume, Valerie Allen asks if it would be useful to examine "the performative contradiction . . . between now-commonplace assertions of the inseparability of form and content and a scholarly style *that consistently privileges substance over style*" (emphasis mine). An interesting contradiction indeed—one that asks us to imagine how an entity that is inseparable from another can nevertheless dominate it. I envision a diabolical Siamese twin wrestling his sister-twin, wrenching her arm behind her/their back until she calls *uncle*.

—⚉—

Style as a bully for the ruling class; style as politi-

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read": Catherine Emmott, Anthony J. Sanford, and Eugene J. Dawydiak, "Stylistics Meets Cognitive Science: Studying Style in Fiction and Readers' Attention from an Interdisciplinary Perspective," *Style* 41.2 (2007): 204–224.

cal agitator.

John Holloway observes, as have others, that "our vision of the world is dominated by nouns, by things: money, state, car, wall. . . . The doing, creating, painting, cooking, organizing, brick-laying, teaching, and so on are forgotten."[11] The done is divorced from the doing.

To his way of thinking, verbs would be primary in an anti-capitalist literature, wherein "the results of our doings would no longer have the same appearance of fixity, the world would be much more obviously fragile, much more open to changing and creating."[12]

Holloway reminds me of Borges's mock anthropological treatise, "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius." The language of Tlön has no nouns. To describe the moon rising above the river a Tlönian might say, "Upward, behind the on-streaming, it mooned."[13] So then, style as a byproduct of grammatical possibility?

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Or perhaps style is destiny, or may as well be—an unconscious gestalt of prejudices and preferences. A sum of your affection for the semi-colon, a weakness for the aside, a propensity for gerunds, a disdain for the royal we.

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[11] John Holloway, *Crack Capitalism* (London: Pluto Press, 2010), 231.

[12] John Holloway, *Crack Capitalism,* 232.

[13] Jorge Luis Borges, *Ficciones,* ed. Anthony Kerrigan (New York: Grove Press, 1962), 23.

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According to Richard Lanham, a writer's choice between two sentence styles might point to "a basic difference in how one human intelligence presents itself to another."[14] For example, what Aristotle called the *strung-together style* and Lanham calls the running style "imitates the mind in a real-time interaction with the world . . . in all its giddy unsplendor as it lurches from crisis to crisis, first tripping over one argument, then bumping into another, unbalanced and unsymmetrical. . . . The periodic style reverses all this. The mind shows itself after it has reasoned on the event; after it has sorted by concept and categorized by size. . . . The periodic stylist works with balance, antithesis, parallelism and careful patterns of repetition."[15]

These contrary styles dramatize two basic human responses to bewildering experience—the attempt to make the best of things in the moment and the effort to manufacture the illusion that we can control our circumstances.

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Style as a belief system, as a metaphysics. Style as a means of describing the world.

Modernist and postmodernist writing gave us

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[14] Richard Lanham, *Analyzing Prose*, 2nd edn. (New York: Continuum, 2003), 48.

[15] Richard Lanham, *Analyzing Prose*, 48.

the style of quantum physics: multivalent, non-linear, non-hierarchal, syntactically shattered, superficially bizarre.

In her brilliant *Living by Fiction* Annie Dillard reminds us of Robbe-Grillet's handsome idea that a writer thinks of a future novel first as a "way of writing." The narrative, he says, "what will happen in the book[,] comes afterward, as though secreted by the style itself."[16]

Finally, then, style as a gland.

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[16] Alain Robbe-Grillet, quoted from Annie Dillard, *Living by Fiction* (New York: Harper & Row, 1982), 124.

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Style, more than species, is what distinguishes the howl of the wolves saluting the moon from the songs of the neighborhood dogs rising over fences and alleyways.
~Valerie Vogrin

Aesthetic form is a spellbinding (or not) attempt to transmit and circulate affect, without which not much happens at all.
~L.O. Aranye Fradenburg

What can be said about the style of academic discourse at the present time, especially in relation to historical method, theory, and reading literary and historical texts? Is style merely supplemental to scholarly substance? As scholars, are we subjects of style? And what is the relationship between style and theory? Is style an object, a method, or something else? These were the questions that guided two conference sessions organized by the BABEL Working Group in 2010 (in Kalamazoo, Michigan and Austin, Texas), out of which this volume was developed. *On Style: An Atelier* gathers together medievalists and early modernists, as well as a poet and a novelist, in order to offer ruminations upon style in scholarship and theoretical writing (with examples culled from Roland Barthes, Carolyn Dinshaw, Lee Edelman, Bracha Ettinger, Charles Fourier, L.O. Aranye Fradenburg, Heidegger, Lacan, Ignatius of Loyola, and the Marquis de Sade, among others), as well as upon various trajectories of fashionable representation and self-representation in literature, sculpture, psychoanalysis, philosophy, religious history, rhetoric, and global politics. Contributors include: Valerie Allen, Gila Aloni, Kathleen Biddick, Ruth Evans, Jessica Roberts Frazier, Anna Kłosowska, Christine Neufeld, Michael D. Snediker, and Valerie Vogrin.

punctum books
spontaneous acts of scholarly combustion