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THE PHILOSOPHICAL DISCOURSE OF MODERNITY

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ROBERT MUSIL'S OTHER POSTMODERNISM:
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Mark M. Freed

Die ganze Aufgabe ist: Leben ohne Systematik aber doch mit
Ordnung.

—Robert Musil, *Tagebücher*, 1921–23

Modernisms

Modernism, like all terms designating periods of intellectual or literary history, harbors a number of ambiguities. Chief among these, perhaps, is that occasioned by the chronological as well as the thematic disparity between so-called aesthetic modernism (in literature, a phenomenon principally of the early twentieth century—Proust and Joyce in fiction and Pound, Valéry, and Eliot in verse, for example) and what might be termed *philosophical modernism*, which refers to what arose in the first part of the seventeenth century and eventually became the Enlightenment: Bacon, Descartes, Newton, Kant, Hegel, and so on. Despite their different genealogies, these two senses of modernism occasionally exhibit points of convergence. One exemplary case of this intersection is the writing of Austrian novelist Robert Musil, whose literary work is not only configured by the tensions between aesthetic and philosophical modernism but also points toward cultural theoretical resources that emerge from it.

In terms of content, Musil's literary modernism reveals itself in his treatment of the dissolution of habitual forms of social interaction attend-

ing the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the resulting search for new forms of subjectivity. The historical setting of the novel is the relatively late emergence of Austrian culture into the modern world: not only the perpetuation of Habsburg aristocracy in the twentieth century but also its general cultural lag behind the rest of Europe that, for example, the Secession movement sought to remedy. In terms of form, Musil's literary modernism is evident in his abandoning the conventional narrative structure of the *bildungsroman* for an experimental technique in which numerous, unsubordinated plots provide a series of occasions for discursive meditations on a range of topics from a range of perspectives.

Balancing his place in the development of modernist fiction—and helping configure his participation therein—is Musil's role in the early twentieth-century critique of philosophical modernism. Initially trained as a mechanical engineer, Musil earned a doctorate with a dissertation on Ernst Mach's positivism before beginning a career as a literary journalist and novelist. Musil's intellectual production is never far from the intersection of these scientific, philosophical, and literary commitments, and they combine and interact in ways that overcome the individual limitations of these discourses. Thus, Musil's critique of Machean positivism, as well as the thematic and formal analogues of that critique found in his fiction, are instances of an engagement with characteristic features of modern philosophical thought, chief among them the tendency toward what Stephen Toulmin has termed "the hidden agenda of modernity," i.e., method, certainty, and universality.¹ As early as 1905, Musil expresses a dissatisfaction with both artists and philosophers—the former being insufficiently philosophical, and the latter being insufficiently human.² Later, in *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften*, he formulates the limitations of science as well as art by asking: "Ein Mann, der die Wahrheit will, wird Gelehrter; ein Mann, der seine Subjektivität spielen lassen will, wird vielleicht Schriftsteller; was aber soll ein Mann tun, der etwas will, das dazwischen liegt?" ["A man who wants the truth becomes a scholar; a man who wants to give free range to his subjectivity may become a writer; but what should a man do who wants something in between?"].³

With the form of the essay, Musil begins to carve out a discursive space between science and art to compensate for the inability of conventional systematic thought to comprehend the complex, chaotic phenomena of human experience. Far exceeding the genre conventions of his career as a literary journalist, *Essayismus* [essayism] becomes for Musil the distinctive narrative technique of *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften*, the experimental novel on which he worked for more than twenty years and is essayistic in a far deeper sense than its provisionality. Even more than configuring the narrative technique

of his life's work, *Essayismus* develops within Musil's oeuvre as a strategic discursive alternative to the modernism of late Enlightenment philosophy. Seen in this light, Musil's work can be ranged with other so-called postmodern attempts to address the limitations of philosophical modernism. Articulating Musil's place among critiques of philosophical modernism suggests a number of resources for engaging the problematics of postmodernism itself or, rather, for preventing the aporia of modernism from developing in the direction of canonical versions of postmodernism.

The task of the present essay, then, is to read Musil into the philosophical discourse of modernity as a way of exploring new contexts for his reception within debates about postmodernism. Those new contexts provide loci at which to gauge Musil's attempts within the cultural project of modernity to create normativity out of his own moment without, however, recurring to subject-centered reason. Reading Musil into the philosophical discourse of modernity reveals his affinities with and distance from both the Frankfurt School's critique of instrumental reason as well as poststructuralism's radical critique of the subject and points to what, following Bruno Latour, might be called their nonmodern alternatives.⁴ Because Musil tries neither to lift himself outside the philosophy of the subject with the lever of antiscience, nor to destabilize it from within, but reimagines the moment of modernity without modernity's own self-privileging, the discursive strategy he develops exhibits features significantly different from the versions of postmodernism already on offer. To evaluate that distance, it is first necessary to characterize Musil's participation in the cultural project of modernity and its entanglements.

The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity

Recognizing that Musil's contributions to aesthetic modernism are intertwined with his dissatisfaction with philosophical modernism, we can begin to gauge the quality of his response to the intersection of these inheritances by first clarifying, provisionally, what is meant by philosophical modernism. Jürgen Habermas begins *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* by articulating modernity's consciousness of time: its sense of rupture with the past occasioned by the discovery of the New World, the Renaissance, and the Reformation as "three monumental events around the year 1500 [which] constituted the epochal threshold between modern times and the middle ages."⁵ The enduring cultural problematic that is modernity is

launched by this sense of rupture: breaking from the past, “[m]odernity can and will no longer borrow the criteria by which it takes its orientation from the models supplied by another epoch; *it has to create its normativity out of itself*” (Habermas, *Philosophical Discourse*, 7). Put another way, the goal of the cultural project of modernity is to generate criteria of the good, the true, and the beautiful without reference to either transcendental authority or past historical configurations.

According to Habermas, modernity’s task of generating normativity out of itself becomes the very problem of philosophy per se: “The anxiety caused by the fact that a modernity without models had to stabilize itself on the basis of the very diremptions it had wrought is seen by Hegel as ‘the source of the need for philosophy’” (16). Accordingly, Hegel is the first to treat the problem of modernity as a specifically philosophical problem. Forced to derive normativity out of itself, modernity—more specifically, modern philosophy—takes the form of self-consciousness. According to Habermas, “Hegel sees the modern age as marked universally by a structure of self-relation that he calls ‘subjectivity’: ‘The principle of the modern world is freedom of subjectivity, the principle that all the essential factors present in the intellectual whole are now coming into their right in the course of their development’” (16). Modernity thus seeks the criteria for the good, the true, and the beautiful through self-reflection, giving rise to its structural principle, namely, subjectivity—that is, the activity by which the subject makes an object of itself for itself. Habermas points out that the self-conscious structure of modernity is “grasped as such in philosophy, namely, as abstract subjectivity in Descartes’s *cogito ergo sum* and in the form of absolute self-consciousness in Kant. It is the structure of a self-relating, knowing subject, which bends back upon itself as object, in order to grasp itself as in a mirror image—literally in a ‘speculative’ way” (18). On Habermas’s reading, modern philosophy, therefore, instantiates the principle of subjectivity while configuring itself as the philosophy of subjectivity. Put slightly differently, philosophy, in becoming modern, reifies itself as subject-centered reason.

Habermas points out that Hegel was troubled that this new “religion” of reflection reproduced the very same kind of positivities Enlightenment philosophy was meant to counteract in orthodox religion. Thus, “Hegel contends against the enlighteners that the pure religion of reason is no less an abstraction than the fetishized beliefs, for it is incapable of interesting the heart and of having influence upon the feelings and needs. It, too, comes down to a private religion because it is cut off from the institutions of public life and arouses no enthusiasm” (26). Neither orthodox religion nor Enlightenment reason, it turns out, is capable of “shaping religion into the ethical

totality of an entire nation and of inspiring a life of political freedom," which is necessary for carrying forward the project of modernity's self-grounding (26). For this reason, Habermas characterizes the paradox of the Enlightenment by pointing out that "the principle of subjectivity engenders positivity, which, however, calls forth the objective need for its own overcoming" (17). The result is the so-called dialectic of Enlightenment: the self-overcoming of subject-centered reason.

Hegel's own understanding of this paradox took shape as a concern that modernity's structure of subjectivity generates subject-object relations that fragment the ethical totality of a society, thereby elevating the finite self above the unified collective. Habermas characterizes this ascendance of the individual subject by pointing out that for Hegel, "in the modern world emancipation became transformed into unfreedom because the unshackling power of reflection had become autonomous and now achieved unification only through the violence of a subjugating subjectivity" (32–33). That is, the principle of subjectivity expresses itself as an activity of reflection which gives rise to subject-object relations in which all not-self entities are subsumed under the objectifying power of a finite subject. According to Habermas, Hegel's solution was to replace such a subjugating subjectivity with an "absolute self-relation of a subject that attains self-consciousness from its own substance and has its unity within itself as the difference between the finite and the infinite" (32–33).

It is worth recalling this history in order to recognize that the problem of domination occasioned by subject-centered reason continues to be at the center of critiques of philosophical modernism. According to Habermas, the critique of a reason grounded in a principle of subjectivity holds that such a version of reason

denounces and undermines all unconcealed forms of suppression and exploitation, of degradation and alienation, only to set up in their place the unassailable domination of rationality. Because this regime of a subjectivity puffed up into a false absolute transforms the means of consciousness-raising and emancipation into just so many instruments of objectification and control, it fashions for itself an uncanny immunity in the form of a thoroughly concealed domination. (56)

The domination of a subjugating subjectivity persists as long as one remains committed to carrying out the project of modernity along the path of subject-centered reason. This awareness has occasioned attempts, beginning with Nietzsche, to step outside subject-centered reason (e.g., Foucault's archeol-

ogy of madness) or disable subject-centered reason from the inside (e.g., Derrida's attempts to deconstruct the transcendental foundations of certainty in Western reason). Habermas maintains, however, that the former involves Foucault in the performative paradox of using Western reason to carry out a critique of Western reason (247) while Derrida's effort to deconstruct the transcendental subject at the center of subject-centered reason, discovering archewriting at the bottom of Being, is itself no less an *Ursprungsphilosophie* than the other monuments of the Western philosophical tradition (181).

While he shares Foucault's and Derrida's concern about the dangers of subject-centered reason, Habermas is deeply skeptical about so-called postmodern attempts to overcome philosophical modernism by either an archeology/genealogy of discursive formations or a critique of metaphysics: "Even on methodological grounds I do not believe that we can distantiate Occidental rationalism, under the hard gaze of a fictive ethnology of the present, into an object of neutral contemplation and simply leap out of the discourse of modernity" (59). In general, Habermas remains suspicious that "postmodern thought merely claims a transcendental status, while it remains in fact dependent on presuppositions of the modern self-understanding that were brought to light by Hegel" (4). Reluctant to abandon the project of modernity, Habermas's effort is to work back through the discourse of modernity to identify paths not taken. The paths to which he turns his attention have to do with versions of non-subject-centered rationality—those that necessarily involve intersubjective considerations—insisting that "the paradigm of the knowledge of objects has to be replaced by the paradigm of mutual understanding between subjects" (295).

It is beyond the scope of this essay to evaluate the cogency of Habermas's criticisms of Derrida and Foucault or the viability of the counterdiscourse of intersubjective reason he seeks to recover. While there may be reason to disagree with Habermas's critique of postmodernism, his account of the themes and trajectories of modern philosophy remains reliable. The value of Habermas's reading of postmodernism thus lies in the way his critique opens the questions of postmodernism to further interpretation with the consequence that a continuation of the project of the Enlightenment along the lines that Habermas indicates may not be the only way of avoiding the impasses of postmodernism to which he points. The postmodernisms of Nietzsche, Heidegger, Foucault, and Derrida are not, in other words, the only ones to be found within the philosophical discourse of modernity. Another alternative that emerges against the background of Habermas's account is Robert Musil's effort to engage the problem of normativity without recourse to subject-centered reason.

Musil and the Cultural Project of Modernity

We can begin to articulate Musil's position within the philosophical discourse of modernity by identifying the principal features of his participation in modernity's effort to create normativity out of one's own self/moment. Musil's *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften* is an encyclopedic critique of pre-WWI Vienna, making the case that an ossified and collapsing Habsburg culture led to the conflagration of Europe in 1914. A more explicit diagnosis of the dystopia of that historical moment is found in Musil's 1922 essay "Das hilflose Europa": "[S]o muß man hinzufügen, daß es sich nicht (nämlich nur scheinbar) um den Zusammenbruch einer bestimmten Ideologie und Mentalität handelt [...] sondern um das periodische Zusammenbrechen aller Ideologien" ["[W]hat is at issue here is not . . . the collapse of a particular ideology or mentality . . . but rather the periodic breakdown of all of them"].⁶ The solution, he maintains, is not an increase in what was before lacking: "Die Lösung liegt weder im Warten auf eine Ideologie, noch im Kampf der einander heute bestreitenden, sondern in der Schaffung gesellschaftlicher Bedingungen, unter denen ideologische Bemühungen überhaupt Stabilität und Tiefgang haben. Es fehlt uns an der Funktion, nicht an Inhalten!" ["The solution lies neither in waiting for a new ideology nor in the clash of the ones that are quarreling today, but in the creation of social conditions that safeguard the stability and depth of ideological endeavors in general. What we lack is not substance but function!"] (*Gesammelte Werke*, 2:1091; *Precision*, 130). What remains is a difficult organizational problem: the deliberate interaction and linking of ideological elements, for which function is provided exclusively by the sciences.

Musil thus approaches the problem of modernity not in terms of inappropriate, outdated, or "un-modern" normative content, but as a search for new techniques for engaging the problem of normativity itself. His sense that science alone is capable of performing an organizing function with respect to ideologies signals his alignment with the modernist ethos of critique as opposed to a retreat to an un- or prescientific humanism like that typical of the expressionism in Vienna in the first decades of the twentieth century.

Musil's quest for new discursive techniques with which to engage the problem of normativity emerges most clearly in a distinction he makes between "morality" and "ethics" that is in turn grounded in the different modes of rationality associated with each. For Musil, the moralist systematizes existing precepts while the ethicist investigates new content.⁷ This distinction between morality and ethics is further elaborated in terms of the

individuality of ethical experience. Thus, in addressing the question “What is ethical experience?” Musil notes that there are generally two groups of experiences: those that can be both fixed and transferred, and those that cannot. Musil’s appeal to the notion of transferability recalls his work in experimental psychology under Carl Stumpf in Berlin demonstrating that the stimuli of sense impressions can be quantitatively fixed even when their subjective experiences are different: “Ein Rot von $x \mu\mu$ ist subjektiv gewiß verschieden, aber es ist fixiert” [“A red of $x \mu\mu$ is certainly different subjectively, but it is fixed”] (*Tagebücher*, 1:646; *Diaries*, 313). Ethical experiences, Musil maintains, cannot be fixed in this sense precisely because the source of ethics is the (subjective) individual.

In insisting that ethical experience arises in the individual, Musil reenacts the modernist gesture of generating normativity out of one’s own self/moment; however, he remains suspicious of a finite subjectivity raised via false methodological certainty to an overblown objectivity: “Hier heißt es, aus der Logik u. Erkenntnistheorie ohne Fehler herauskommen!” [“Here the issue is how one goes beyond logic and epistemology without making an error.”] (*Tagebücher*, 1:645; *Diaries*, 313). He is thereby not only engaged in the cultural project of modernity; he is entangled in its enduring contradictions as well. The discursive strategy Musil develops to negotiate these entanglements—*Essayismus*—breaks the pattern of subject-centered reason by abandoning the model of a finite subject elevated to false objectivity by reconfiguring both its subjective and objective poles. Thus, while Musil maintains that the individual is the source of ethics, the individual he has in mind is crucially not the Cartesian subject of subject-centered reason but a textual subject instituted through the discursive praxis of *Essayismus*. Similarly, *Essayismus* reshapes the operations of subject-centered reason itself, dispensing with its quest for certainty and universality while preserving a kind of rigor central to critical instincts of modernity.

Essayismus and Textual Subjectivity

Though difficult to isolate, Musil’s *Essayismus* is shaped in two dimensions: as a discursive strategy for engaging the complexities of human (primarily ethical) experience and as a mode of subjectivity (dramatized, for example, in the character of Ulrich). Both arise in, though are developed far beyond, a conception of the essay as a form of writing.⁸

For Musil, the essay occupies the space between what can be systematized and what cannot. This distinction isolates and addresses those sides of human experience not strictly governed by logic. Musil refers to these domains, respectively, as the *ratioïd* and the *nicht-ratioïd*:

Dieses ratioïde Gebiet umfaßt—roh umgrenzt—alles wissenschaftlich Systematisierbare, in Gesetze und Regeln zusammenfaßbare, vor allem also die physische Natur; die moralische aber nur in wenigen Ausnahmefällen des Gelingens. Es ist gekennzeichnet durch eine gewisse Monotonie der Tatsachen, durch das Vorwiegen der Wiederholung, durch eine relative Unabhängigkeit der Tatsachen voneinander [...]

War das ratioïde Gebiet das der Herrschaft der “Regeln mit Ausnahmen,” so ist das nicht-ratioïde Gebiet das der Herrschaft der Ausnahme über die Regel. [...] Die Tatsachen unterwerfen sich nicht auf diesem Gebiet, die Gesetze sind Siebe, die Geschehnisse wiederholen sich nicht, sondern sind unbeschränkt variabel und individuell. Es gelingt mir nicht, dieses Gebiet besser zu kennzeichnen als darauf hinweisend, daß es das Gebiet der Reaktivität des Individuums gegen die Welt und die anderen Individuen ist, [...]

[Roughly delineated, this ratioïd territory embraces everything that science can systematize, everything that can be summarized in laws and rules; primarily, in other words, physical nature. It succeeds with moral nature, however, in only a few cases. The ratioïd area is characterized by a certain monotony of facts, by the predominance of repetition, by a relative independence of facts from one another. ...]

If the ratioïd is the area of the domination of the “rule with exceptions,” the nonratioïd area is that of the dominance of the exceptions over the rule. ... In this region facts do not submit, laws are sieves, events do not repeat themselves but are infinitely variable and individual. There is no better way to characterize this region than to point out that it is the area of the individual’s reactivity to the world and other individuals. ...]

(*Gesammelte Werke*, 2:1026–1028; *Precision*, 63)

Musil’s focus on “reactivity” embraces the fact that human engagement with the world is not governed by logic alone:

Der Mensch denkt nicht nur, sondern fühlt, will, empfindet, handelt. [...] Wenn uns ein Gedanke ergreift, umstürzt usw. so tut er auf dem senti-mentalenen Gebiet das, was eine revolutionierende Erkenntnis auf dem rein rationalen tut. Die Tiefe seiner Wirkung ist ein Zeichen wie große Gefühlsmassen in Mitleidenschaft gezogen sind.

[Man not only thinks, he feels, desires, senses, acts. . . . When a thought seizes us, bowls us over, etc., it does in the area of feelings what a revolutionary insight does in the purely rational area. The depth of its effect is a sign of how great masses of feeling are empathetically involved.] (*Gesammelte Werke*, 2:1336; *Precision*, 49–50)

The interaction of thought and feeling results in a constellation of cognitive functions complexified and particularized beyond universalizability and thereby necessitating a mode of discursive engagement that does not insist on subordinating individual phenomena to universal laws: a mode of discursive engagement, in other words, significantly different from the “method” of modern philosophy.

Musil’s understanding of ethical experience in terms of a complex interaction of thought and feeling is dramatized in the character of Ulrich, the protagonist of *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften*, for whom

Der Wert einer Handlung oder einer Eigenschaft, ja sogar deren Wesen und Natur erschienen ihm abhängig von den Umständen, die sie umgaben, von den Zielen, denen sie dienten, mit einem Wort, von dem bald so, bald anders beschaffenen Ganzen, dem sie angehörten. [...] Es entstand auf diese Weise ein unendliches System von Zusammenhängen, in dem es unabhängige Bedeutungen, wie sie das gewöhnliche Leben in einer groben ersten Annäherung den Handlungen und Eigenschaften zuschreibt, überhaupt nicht mehr gab. [...]

[The value of an action or a quality, and indeed its meaning and nature, seemed to [Ulrich] to depend on its surrounding circumstances, on the aims it served; in short on the whole—constituted now one way, now another—to which it belonged. . . . In this way an open-ended system of relationships arises, in which independent meanings, such as are ascribed to actions and qualities by way of a rough first approximation in ordinary life, no longer exist at all.] (*Gesammelte Werke*, 1:250–51; *Man*, 270)

One consequence of this open-ended system of relations is that moral determinations appear provisional at best to someone with this attitude. Conceptualizing ethical experience as constellations of feelings and thoughts abandons the idea that moral precepts have a fixed, absolute validity. It is in part this sense of provisionality that gives rise to Ulrich's (Musil's) connecting such an attitude with the essay:

Die Übersetzung des Wortes Essay als Versuch, wie sie gegeben worden ist, enthält nur ungenau die wesentlichste Anspielung auf das literarische Vorbild; denn ein Essay ist nicht der vor- oder nebenläufige Ausdruck einer Überzeugung, die bei besserer Gelegenheit zur Wahrheit erhoben, ebensogut aber auch als Irrtum erkannt werden könnte [...] sondern ein Essay ist die einmalige und unabänderliche Gestalt, die das innere Leben eines Menschen in einem entscheidenden Gedanken annimmt.

[The accepted translation of "essay" as "attempt" contains only vaguely the essential allusion to the literary model, for an essay is not a provisional or incidental expression of a conviction capable of being elevated to a truth under more favorable circumstances or being exposed as an error ...; an essay is rather the unique and unalterable form assumed by a man's inner life in a decisive thought.] (*Gesammelte Werke*, 1:253; *Man*, 273)

In addition to naming a discursive strategy for engaging the irregular complexities of human experience, *Essayismus* characterizes the condition of a subjectivity suspended amid a network of determining forces. This mode of subjectivity is that of a textual subject.

The disconnection of a free-floating complex of feelings and ideas from the protagonist is given by the novel's title and even more clearly by the title of chapter 39: "Ein Mann ohne Eigenschaften besteht aus Eigenschaften ohne Mann" ["A Man Without Qualities Consists of Qualities Without a Man"]: "[S]o mußte [Ulrich] wohl auch glauben, daß die persönlichen Eigenschaften, die er dabei erwarb, mehr zueinander als zu ihm gehörten" [Ulrich "[h]ad to suppose that the personal qualities he had achieved in this way had more to do with one another than with him"] (*Gesammelte Werke*, 1:148; *Man*, 157). Read in this light, the novel's titular and central theme, *Eigenschaftslosigkeit*, is textual subjectivity.

Elsewhere in Musil's work the condition of textual subjectivity is explained as *der andere Zustand* [the other condition] (*Gesammelte Werke*,

2:1392). In the ordinary condition, Musil explains: “[E]ine Strebe, eine dünne Linie verbindet den Menschen mit seinem Gegenstand und heftet sich an diesen wie an ihn bloß in einem Punkt, während das ganze andere Wesen unberührt davon bleibt” [“A thin line connects the individual with his object and attaches itself to both the object and the person at only a single point, while all the rest of the person’s being remains untouched”] (*Gesammelte Werke*, 2:1392; *Precision*, 185). In all such “objective” relationships, Musil argues, the self is *ausgeschaltet* [bracketed] in a way that produces a kind of *Entfremdung* [alienation] (2:1393; 186). No such alienation obtains in the case of *der andere Zustand*. What is common to all instances of *der andere Zustand* is that “die Grenze zwischen Ich und Nicht-Ich weniger scharf ist als sonst” [“the border between self and non-self is less sharp than usual”] (2:1393; 186). Instead of being alienated, “Man hat Teil an den Dingen (verstehen ihre Sprache). Das Verstehen in diesem Zustande ist nicht unpersönlich (objektiv), sondern äußerst persönlich wie eine Übereinstimmung zwischen Subjekt und Objekt” [“One participates in things (understands their language). In this condition understanding is not impersonal (objective), but extremely personal, like an agreement between subject and object”] (2:1393; 186). Musil goes on to characterize the other condition as “eine Entdinglichung des Ich wie der Welt” [“a dereification of the self as of the world”] (2:1394; 186).

As both discursive strategy and mode of subjectivity, Musil develops *Essayismus* as a way out of subject-centered reason by reconceptualizing both poles of the classical epistemological paradigm of subject-object relations. On the one hand, textual subjectivity replaces the Cartesian subject. On the other, such a textual subject is understood to exist not in ontological opposition but rather in intertwining engagement with its objects. Musil indicates that all his work could go under the title *Versuche einen anderen Menschen zu finden* [“attempts to find an ‘other’ human being”], indicating the quest for an alternative mode of subjectivity (*Tagebücher*, 1:663, 667; *Diaries*, 324).

Critique Without Method

In the combined senses of discursive strategy and mode of subjectivity, Musilian *Essayismus* simultaneously engages the contingency of knowledge as well as the contingent ontology of the subject. This dual engagement with contingency distinguishes *Essayismus* from the modern practices of subject-centered reason. By instituting a textual subjectivity figured as

an *Entdinglichung* [dereification] of subject-object relations, *Essayismus* decouples knowledge production from a Cartesian subject and thereby obviates the subjugating subjectivity Habermas identifies as the enduring problem of subject-centered reason. In neither the case of knowledge nor that of the ontology of the subject, however, is the contingency too irregular or subjective to be calculable. For Musil, the engineer-turned-novelist, some kind of ordered approximation of these complexities remains the goal: "Die ganze Aufgabe ist: Leben ohne Systematik aber doch mit Ordnung" ["The whole task is life without systematizing but, nonetheless, with order"] (*Tagebücher*, 1:653; *Diaries*, 318). Musil answered the requirement of "Ordnung," an important feature of the critical project of modernity, by drawing on his training in philosophy and experimental psychology. Thus, Musil's sense of ethical experience as a complex constellation of reciprocally interacting forces corresponds closely to the conceptualization of natural phenomena he engaged in his doctoral dissertation on Ernst Mach's positivism. A good case can be made that Musil's understanding of ethical phenomena receives its conceptual modeling from the notion of functional relation that emerges in Mach's critique of causality and physical concepts in the natural sciences.

The overall theme of Mach's positivism is the elimination of metaphysics from the natural sciences.⁹ Mach understood this to entail above all abandoning explanations of phenomena by reference to universal laws in favor of direct descriptions of phenomena themselves. Therefore, among Mach's targets are the so-called physical concepts (heat, mass, force) and the concept of causality. In general, Mach contends that talk of cause and effect results from inexact observation in which one supposed cause is abstracted from a whole complex of circumstances: "eine genauere Analyse die sogenannte Ursache stets nur als ein Komplement eines die sogenannte Wirkung bestimmenden Komplexes von Tatsachen erweist" ["a closer analysis invariably reveals the so-called cause to be only a complement of the whole complex of facts which determine the so-called effect"].¹⁰ Mach concludes:

[T]he concepts of cause and effect ... describe a state of affairs in what is at best a rather provisional and imperfect fashion because they are insufficiently precise ... As soon as we can characterize the elements of events by means of measurable quantities ... the mutual dependence of elements is much more completely and precisely represented by the concept of function than by those of cause and effect.¹¹

Musil glosses Mach's concept of functional relations more specifically as "Beziehungen [...] welche die quantitative gegenseitige Abhängigkeit der

meßbaren Bestimmungsstücke der Erscheinungen voneinander ausdrücken” [“relations expressing the reciprocal quantitative dependence of the measurable components of phenomena”].¹² The concept of function, then, allows for the figuration of the network of mutually determining relations in which a given phenomena is suspended with the advantage that it makes possible a more complete analysis of the phenomenon under investigation without involving abstractions that correspond to nothing real in nature.

While for Mach the adoption of functional relations makes science more exact by redirecting inquiry away from explanation of phenomena by reference to a hypothetical underlying reality toward the description of phenomena in terms of one another, for Musil functional relations allow one to account for ethical phenomena without recourse to an abstract, hypothetical (Cartesian) subject, the supposed possessor of specific moral qualities, the *Eigenschaften* of the novel's title.

One of the most important things Musil took from his study of Mach is the understanding that constellations of phenomena have determinate structure even if their highly individualistic configurations are not reducible to instances of universal laws. Musil references this kind of chaotic behavior in a variety of complex phenomena:

Es ist der *Weg der Geschichte* eben nicht der eines Billardballs, der abgestoßen, eine bestimmbare Bahn durchläuft, sondern er ähnelt dem Weg der Wolken, der zwar auch nach Gesetzen der Physik verläuft, aber ebenso sehr als durch diese beeinflusst wird von etwas, das man wohl nur ein Zusammentreffen von Tatsachen nennen kann.

[The path of history is in fact not that of a billiard ball, which, once struck, follows a predictable course, but resembles rather the path of a cloud, which also follows the laws of physics but is equally influenced by something that can only be called a coincidence of facts.] (*Gesammelte Werke*, 2:1374; *Precision*, 169)

In terms of *Essayismus* as a discursive strategy within the critical project of modernity, Musil's approach to ethical experience aims for a precision paralleling the “quantitative gegenseitige Abhängigkeit” Mach advocated in describing natural phenomena.

In another parallel to Mach's attempt at placing scientific knowledge on the most rigorous foundation possible, and beginning from an awareness that human experience is too chaotic to be reduced to universal laws, Musil

adopts a functional understanding of ethical phenomena within the discursive strategy of *Essayismus* as “das Strengste des Erreichbaren auf einem Gebiet, wo man eben nicht genau arbeiten kann” [“the strictest form attainable in an area where one cannot work precisely”] (*Gesammelte Werke*, 2:1334; *Precision*, 48). Through a functional understanding of phenomena, Musil approaches a *Genauigkeit* [an exactness] configured differently from that produced by the method of modern philosophy yet still capable of critique and, therefore, still recognizable as a part of the critical effort of modernity. A functional understanding of ethical phenomena allows Musil to respond to the problem of how to go beyond logic and epistemology without making an error. Musil’s concern for avoiding error signals an important feature of both the project of modernity itself as well as its postmodern developments: the effort to lay bare the conditions of possibility that emerge from and constitute immanent or self-critique.

On the basis of its ability to function as “immanent critique of intellectual constructions,” Theodor Adorno regards the essay as “the critical form par excellence,” citing its departure from the “method” of modern philosophy set out by Descartes in his *Discourse on Method*.¹³ In general, Adorno praises the essay’s resistance to the modern philosophical practice of subordinating particulars to universals, pointing out that “the academic guild accepts as philosophy only what is clothed in the dignity of the universal and enduring” and that “it gets involved with particular cultural artifacts only to the extent to which they can be used to exemplify universal categories” (Adorno, 3). In particular, Adorno addresses Descartes’s requirements that the object be divided into “as many parts as possible, and as might be necessary for its adequate solution”; that one conduct one’s thoughts “in such an order that, by commencing with objects the simplest and easiest to know, [one] might ascend by little and little . . . to the knowledge of the more complex”; and that “one should in every case institute such exhaustive enumerations and such general surveys” that one “is sure of leaving nothing out” (14–15). Descartes’s rules of method are designed to guarantee thought’s arrival at certainty. Against this background, “[i]t is not so much that the essay neglects indubitable certainty as that it abrogates it as an ideal” (13).

The essay’s abrogation of the requirement that objects be divided into as many parts as necessary is grounded in a reluctance to reify as elementary the categories with which conceptual schema attempt to comprehend their objects. The essay refuses, in other words, to accept as a priori the categories with which thought carves up the world. Similarly, the essay dismisses the rule of proceeding from simplest to more complex in the awareness that the world

is more complex than the conceptual systems that attempt to comprehend it. Finally, according to Adorno, the essay abandons the goal of exhaustive enumerations on the grounds that such a survey “would be possible only if it were established in advance that the object to be dealt with was fully grasped by the concepts used to treat it”—in short, that the concepts to be applied anticipated all features of the object with nothing left out (15).

Adorno’s conception of the essay as an immanent critique of intellectual constructions is thus built around the observation that it uncovers the discursive conditions of possibility of those intellectual constructions—namely, the relation between conceptual categories and the objects they engage. In disclosing and holding these categories at arm’s length, the essay keeps in the foreground the contingency of the practices by which intellectual constructions are shaped in the first place. Adorno’s example reveals that the essay has built into its discursive operation a sense of its own contingency and that of the objects it engages.

One way to read the postmodern critique of philosophical modernism is as an awareness of subject-centered reason’s inability to recognize its own contingency. This inability is famously characterized in Foucault’s discussion of Velázquez’s *Las meninas* in *The Order of Things*.¹⁴ Failure to recognize one’s own contingency is also the theme of Derrida’s insistence that solitary mental life in Husserl’s phenomenology does not exhibit the self-sufficiency of self-presence but is, in fact, inscribed with a structure of difference.¹⁵ In this same sense, Musil’s *Essayism* also belongs to the postmodern critique of subject-centered reason that makes up the final chapters of the philosophical discourse of modernity. The textuality of the subject and the functional understanding of cognitive objects, both instituted by *Essayism*, configures that discursive practice as an ongoing remembrance of the contingency of the subject and its objects of knowledge. Musil’s *Essayism* thus effects a reconfiguration of subject-object relations that obviates the “subjugating subjectivity” occasioned by the Cartesian subject at the center of subject-centered reason.

Modern, Postmodern, and Nonmodern

The term *postmodernism* may harbor even more ambiguities than *modernism*, beginning with the relation to modernism signaled by *post*. At least two senses of *post* can be found at work in the term: (1) as that which follows modernism, therefore its developmental continuation, and (2) as that

which tries to overcome modernism, therefore its supersession. Habermas contends in a precursor essay to *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* that modernity took shape as the separation of the spheres of culture and the subsequent specialization of the forms of rationality inherent to each: cognitive, moral-practical, and aesthetic.¹⁶ The project of the Enlightenment became the pursuit of research in each of these spheres according to their internal logics and the application of the results of that research to society for a more rationalized lifeworld ("Modernity," 9).

The trajectory of modernism, however, stalled at the specialization of the spheres of culture, failing to connect the results of research with everyday life. Habermas contends, therefore, that "a reified everyday praxis can be cured only by creating unconstrained interactions of the cognitive with the moral-practical and the aesthetic-expressive elements" ("Modernity," 11). This is the goal of his effort to continue the project of the Enlightenment on the basis of a critique of the ascendancy of instrumental reason which prevents the interaction of the cognitive, moral, and aesthetic spheres. Habermas's effort to supplant instrumental reason with a more intersubjective reason recovered from paths not taken within the philosophical discourse of modernity, therefore, represents a kind of developmental continuation of modernity (i.e., another cycle of the dialectic of Enlightenment). Paradoxically, and in an admittedly extended sense, Habermas's effort to rectify the hegemony of instrumental reason by reworking the dialectic of Enlightenment fits the description of postmodernism in the first sense—that is, as a developmental continuation of modernity. On this ground, for example, he is criticized for perpetuating the universalizing tendencies of modernity.

The version of postmodernism oriented toward the supersession of modernism has historically taken two forms. One is characterized by Nietzsche's and Foucault's genealogical attempts to step outside modern philosophy by working back to a point before the classical *episteme* takes hold. The other is Heidegger's and Derrida's efforts to destabilize modern philosophy from the inside. Collectively, they typify *postmodernism* in the second sense, the supersession of the modern. We can finish reading Musil into the philosophical discourse of modernity by triangulating the location of his "other" postmodernism in relation to the navigational points Habermas, Derrida, and Foucault represent. I certainly do not wish to propose that Musil holds anything resembling a solution for the problems of modernity and postmodernity. But reading Musil against the background of some general features of postmodernism helps us reimagine the contours of that landscape.

Like Habermas, though anticipating Frankfurt critical theory by a number of decades, Musil perceives the problems of modernity in terms

of separated domains of culture and the hegemony of a problematically reified instrumental reason. In “Der deutsche Mensch als Symptom,” he characterizes the age as one dominated by facts: “Die Ungläubigkeit unsrer Zeit heißt, positive gefaßt: sie glaubt nur an Tatsachen. Ihre Vorstellung von Wirklichkeit erkennt nur das an, was sozusagen wirklich wirklich ist” [“Put positively, our time’s lack of faith means: The age believes only in facts. Its conception of reality recognizes only what is, as it were, really real”] (*Gesammelte Werke*, 2:1382; *Precision*, 176). This conjuncture comes at the end of a sequence of intellectual historical events recognizable as the Enlightenment’s “disenchantment of the world,” culminating in the hegemony of instrumental reason understood as positivism:¹⁷ “[E]s habe erst eine Zeit gegeben, die einfach u fest an Gott glaubte. Dann kam eine, die sich ihn durch die Vernunft beweisen mußte. Dann eine, die sich damit begnügte, wenn die Vernunft bloß nichts gegen ihn zu beweisen vermochte. Und endlich unsre, welche an ihn nur glauben würde, wenn sie ihm in einem Laboratorium immer wieder begegnen könnte” [“First, there was a time that believed in God simply and unequivocally. Then came a time that had to demonstrate God’s existence through reason. Then a time that was content as long as reason was unable to disprove God’s existence. And finally our own, which would believe in God only if it could encounter him regularly in a laboratory”] (2:1382; 176).

This “*Philosophie der Tatsachen*,” which Musil regards as the unofficial ideology of the age, corresponds in a number of ways to the instrumental reason attacked by Habermas—most important, in its inability to facilitate the integration of cognitive, moral, and aesthetic spheres of culture. Musil is similarly critical of positivistic rationality’s inability to embrace more than the world of natural phenomena:

Teils aus sich selbst, teils wegen der Nachwirkung des klassischen Widerstandes, teils aus Gründen, die später erst erörtert werden können, hat sich die neue mit dem Kennwort Tatsachengeist versehene Denkhaltung bis heute auf dem Gebiet der Lebensphilosophie als unfruchtbar erwiesen. Unsre Dichter, Künstler, philosophischen Pathetiker sind ihr fremd und sehen an ihr vorbei rückwärts. [...] Die vorbildliche Synthese fehlt. Wie aber soll bei solchem Mißverhalten die Anschauungsweise des wissenschaftlichen Denkens u. praktischen Lebens in die Sphäre der Lebensbetrachtung erhoben werden?

[Partly out of itself, partly because of the aftereffects of Classical resistance, and partly for reasons to be discussed later, the new way

of thinking signified by the catchword “philosophy of facts” has, up to now, proved unfruitful in the sphere of the philosophy of life. Our poets, artists, and philosophical pathetics feel alienated from it, and look past it as they look backwards. . . . The exemplary synthesis is missing. But how, in the midst of such confusions, should the perspective of scientific thought and practical life be raised to the sphere of observation of life?] (*Gesammelte Werke*, 2:1386; *Precision*, 180)

If the philosophy of facts is the unofficial ideology of the age, despite its inability to rise to an observation of life in the form of an integration of science, morality, and art, Musil's solution is not simply to catapult oneself backward out of modernity. First, Musil is critical of “die Gegner der Tatsachen,” “welche die Tatsachen leugnen und das Denken nennen” [the opponents of facts “who deny facts and call that thinking”] as well as those “welche die Schuld unsrer Rationalität geben und verlangen, daß wir weniger rational sein sollen” [“who blame our rationality and desire to be less rational”] (2:1391; 184). Moreover, he insists: “Wenn ich eine Weltanschauung haben will, muß ich die Welt anschauen. Das heißt, ich muß die Tatsachen feststellen” [“If I want to have a world view, then I must view the world. That is, I must establish the facts”] (2:1359; 155). Conversely, he rejects those diagnoses of the present that complain against mechanization, calculation, and irreligion, explaining that “[d]en Sozialismus ausgenommen, wird die Heilung ganz allgemein regressiv gesucht: in der Abkehr von der Gegenwart” [“[e]xcept for socialism, the remedy is nearly always sought regressively in turning away from the present”] (2:1382; 186).

At the end of “Der deutsche Mensch als Symptom,” in which Musil discusses the inability of the philosophy of facts to rise to a philosophy of life, he gives the fullest account of *der andere Zustand* as a disposition fundamentally opposed to rationalizing, calculating, goal-oriented activity, estimating, pressure, craving, base anxiety. And as we have already seen, *der andere Zustand* is Musil's term for the textual subjectivity instituted via *Essayismus*. *Essayismus* is, in other words, Musil's discursive strategy of *Entdinglichung*. But it does not come, as with Habermas, as a reworking of the dialectic of Enlightenment (even though it properly belongs to the project of modernity).

Instead of working back through the philosophical discourse of modernity to recover paths of intersubjective reason not taken, and then working those forward as a counterfactual completion of the project of Enlightenment, Musil's strategy is to situate himself, as it were, in the space between the advent of modernity and the point at which the Cartesian rules of

method are institutionalized into what becomes the philosophical discourse of modernity. Musil's *Essayismus* aligns itself with the project of creating normativity out of one's own self while its "antimethod" holds itself at a discursive moment antecedent to the institutionalization of the Cartesian rules, which eventually give rise in the course of the Enlightenment to the hegemony of instrumental reason.

Musil's position relative to the other version of postmodernism (that of supersession) is equally illuminating. The textual subjectivity instituted by *Essayismus* bears close resemblance to the textuality of poststructuralism, such as that captured by Derridean *différance* or that described in Roland Barthes's "From Work to Text."¹⁸ For Musil, the textuality of both subject and object is occasioned by *Essayismus* by virtue of the functional relations *Essayismus* is designed to capture. Musil's concept of functional relations exists as an analogue to the concept of textuality that emerges amid the network of phonic or graphic difference in Saussurean linguistics from which poststructural textuality descends.¹⁹ In other words, Musilian *Essayismus* exhibits a distinct though perhaps parallel genealogy to that of poststructuralism.

One way to conceptualize that difference is to see Musil as offering an alternative to the path of following *différance* all the way down to the bottom of Being. In this sense, *Essayismus* does not seek to supersede modernism by dialectically working through the aporia of Western Reason (its logocentrism, for example) in the manner of deconstruction. Whether *différance* escapes logocentrism by not being a concept (signified) because it is discovered as the condition of possibility of everything including Being, it has something like transcendental status.²⁰ On the basis of the transcendental status of archewriting, for example, Habermas regards deconstruction as an *Ursprungsphilosophie* [first philosophy] (*Philosophical Discourse*, 181). In its abrogation of the ideal of indubitable certainty, by refusing to participate in the privileging of the universal over the particular by which modern philosophy strives for that ideal, *Essayismus* harbors nothing like the aspirations of a first philosophy, contenting itself in offering only provisional, *Partiällösungen* [partial solutions].²¹

In its movement to a moment antecedent to the institution of the Cartesian method, Musilian *Essayismus* does have something of the temporal structure of Nietzschean and Foucauldian genealogy. However, the nature of its deliberate incorporation of elements of scientific reason complicates that similarity. On the one hand, it is the *Genauigkeit* afforded by functional relations that keeps Musil aligned with the critical spirit of modernity. The technical means to that *Genauigkeit* (i.e., functional relation) are appropriated, moreover, from the evolved form of Enlightenment reason itself, namely

positivism, even if they are detached from the goal of certainty to which Mach originally oriented them. On the other hand, the overall tendency of Musil's work is toward alternatives to the hegemony of the *ratio* associated with positivism. *Essayismus*, therefore, is best understood as neither "science" nor "antiscience" but as a dereification of the discursive boundaries of these domains.

Habermas's well-known charge that Foucault's critique of the classical *episteme* entails a performative paradox involves the claim that Foucault maintains something of the methods of classical *episteme* while seeking to escape it, noting that "Genealogical historiography can only take over the role of a critique of reason qua antiscience if it escapes from the horizon of just those historically oriented sciences of men whose hollow humanism Foucault wants to unmask in his theory of power" (*Philosophical Discourse*, 249). Given Habermas's commitment to completing the project of the Enlightenment, he is, of course, eager to specify the precise location of that horizon and guard against its transgression. (The whole of *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* can be read as a defense of that very border.) Similarly, it is pretty clear that Foucauldian genealogy also needs that boundary (discursive formation) in order to imagine its outside.

Musil's engagement with the problems of modernism does not involve the spirit of containment/escape shared by German critical theory and French poststructuralism. It involves, rather, a complex, simultaneously historical and methodological dereification of the border between science (subject-centered reason) and its alternatives. *Essayismus* is precisely the discursive effort to imagine and occupy the space that is opened by the dereification of science and its others. It constitutes itself as an alternative configuration of discursive modalities to those of modernism and postmodernism by reimagining the moment of modernity not as the transcendence of reason over its other, nor as the return of the repressed other, but without modernity's own self-privilegings—that is, without the reifications (reason/faith, culture/nature, human/nonhuman) on which modernity grounded itself.

The pattern of this reimagining is neither properly "modern," "anti-modern," nor "postmodern." As I have tried to show, Musil's engagement with the problems of modernity aggressively avoids the method, certainty, and universality characteristic of modern philosophy since Descartes. On the other hand, Musil's response does not involve a turning away from the philosophy of facts that makes up an important part of philosophical modernism's genome. Because it seeks a discursive strategy for adopting a degree of *Genauigkeit* in a domain not ordinarily susceptible to systematic ordering, Musilian *Essayismus* is, therefore, not exactly a version of antimod-

ernism either. Nor, yet, as discussed above, does it quite conform to either a strategy of developmental continuation or that of supersession associated with the term *postmodern*. How then can we conveniently indicate his place in the philosophical discourse of modernity? Provisionally, a number of the features discussed above are better captured by Bruno Latour's account of the nonmodern: a refusal to perpetuate the aporia of modernity by replicating the intellectual practices that gave rise to them. For the time being, then, we can think of Musil's other postmodernism as a species of *nonmodernism* while we use his example to explore new paths through the problems of modernity.

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Notes

1. Stephen Toulmin, *Cosmopolis: The Hidden Agenda of Modernity* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1990).
2. Robert Musil, *Tagebücher*, ed. Adolf Frisé (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1983), 1:149.
3. Robert Musil, *Gesammelte Werke*, ed. Adolf Frisé (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1978), 1:254; Musil, *The Man Without Qualities*, trans. Sophie Wilkins (New York: Vintage, 1995), 274.
4. Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1993), 55–66.
5. Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, trans. Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1987), 5. Hereafter cited in text.
6. Musil, *Gesammelte Werke*, 2:1090; Robert Musil, *Precision and Soul: Essays and Addresses*, trans. and ed. Burton Pike and David Luft (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1990), 130.
7. Musil, *Tagebücher*, 1:645; Robert Musil, *Diaries*, trans. Philip Payne, ed. Mark Mirsky (New York: Basic Books, 1998), 312.
8. Marie-Louise Roth provides a general, largely expository overview of Musil's concept of the essay in "Essay und Essayismus bei Robert Musil," in *Probleme der Moderne: Studien zur deutschen Literatur von Nietzsche bis Brecht* (Tübingen: N. Niemeyer, 1983), 117–31.
9. Ernst Mach, *Analysis of Sensations*, trans. C. G. Williams (New York: Dover Publications, 1959), 35.
10. Mach summarized by Musil. Robert Musil, *Beitrag zur Beurteilung der Lehren Machs* (Berlin: Dissertationenverlag Carl Arnold, 1908), 58; Robert Musil, *On Mach's Theories*, trans. Kevin Mulligan (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1982), 45.
11. Mach, *Analysis of Sensations*, 92.
12. Musil, *Beitrag zur Beurteilung der Lehren Machs*, 62; Musil, *On Mach's Theories*, 47.
13. Theodor Adorno, "Essay as Form," in *Notes to Literature: Volume I*, trans. Shierry Weber Nicholsen (New York: Columbia UP, 1991), 18. Hereafter cited in text. For a detailed analysis of the correspondences between Adorno's and Musil's conception of the essay, see Barbara Neymeyer, "'Utopie und Experiment': Zur Konzeption des Essays bei Musil und Adorno," *Euphorion* 94 (2000): 79–111.
14. Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Vintage Books, 1973), 3–16.
15. Jacques Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena: And Other Essays on Husserl's Theories of Signs*, trans. David B. Allison (Evanston: Northwestern UP, 1973), 60–69.

16. Jürgen Habermas, "Modernity Versus Postmodernity," *New German Critique* 22 (1981): 8. Hereafter cited in text.

17. See Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. John Cumming (New York: Continuum, 1989), 3.

18. See Jacques Derrida, "Différance," in *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1982), and Roland Barthes, "From Work to Text," in *Image Music Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (London: Fontana, 1977), 155–64.

19. See Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, trans. Wade Baskin, ed. Charles Bally and Albert Sechehaye (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966).

20. For Derrida's discussion of the nonconceptual status of *différance*, see "Différance," 11.

21. See Marike Finlay, *The Potential of Modern Discourse* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1990), especially 58–64.