

Nicholas Brown

The Eidaesthetic Itinerary: Notes on the
Geopolitical Movement of the Literary Absolute

Whoever hasn't yet arrived at the clear realization that there might be a greatness existing entirely outside his own sphere and for which he might have absolutely no feeling; whoever hasn't at least felt obscure intimations concerning the approximate location of this greatness in the geography of the human spirit: that person either has no genius in his own sphere, or else he hasn't been educated yet to the niveau of the classic.

—Friedrich Schlegel, *Critical Fragment* 36

What is Anglophone literature? The question has two parts, and it is only apparently the first that is easier to answer. *Anglophone* would, if taken absolutely *à la lettre*, mean something quite other than the signification it takes on in ordinary usage. The *-phone* suffix refers to speech, not writing; writers like Chinua Achebe, who has “spoken more words in Igbo than English but [has] definitely written more words in English than Igbo,” testify to the fact that this linguistic quibble has actual content.¹ Often it seems that the *-phone* suffix does not primarily refer to language at all but instead functions as a kind of shorthand for referring to the

The *South Atlantic Quarterly* 100:3, Summer 2001.
Copyright © 2002 by Duke University Press.

old colonial geography: thus a nation may be Francophone, Anglophone, or Lusophone without having a majority of French, English, or Portuguese speakers. This *-phone* suffix, then, is originally bound up with a colonial ideology that viewed diverse geographic spaces as (asymptotically) culturally coterminous with the metropole.² Thomas Babington Macaulay's famous call for a "class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect" demands, in essence, the kind of world that would be necessary for the *-phone* suffix to be strictly accurate.³ The *anglo-* prefix, meanwhile, is an ethnic determination before it is anything else. Although the meaning of *Angle* as distinct from *Jute* or *Saxon* is largely forgotten, the trace of this origin remains in other common uses of the prefix, which seems indissolubly bound up with the creation of an ethnically distinct administrative class—"Anglo-Irish," "Anglo-Indian," "Anglo-Arab"—by the British imperial project. "Anglo-American" has a somewhat different genealogy, but its usage confirms the point.

This etymological moment is, perhaps, trivial. We all know what we mean by *Anglophone*, and it plainly includes writers like Achebe who fit neither half of the word perfectly. (This does not mean, however, that the word is ideologically neutral: we must consider, for example, the extent to which the institutional form of "Anglophone literature" is a cultural by-product of a Cold War-era attitude of benevolent stewardship over the nonsocialist third world, and thus the direct inheritor of Macaulay's to us shocking and absurd idea.) Nonetheless, this moment serves as the occasion to question the differential insertion of texts—the second question, that of "literature," which we have not yet begun to address—into an apparently uniform "Anglophone" space.

The most efficient way to stage this question might be to rehearse a much older formulation of the problem, which has, despite the vicissitudes of the field of the literary, lost none of its currency. It is commonly said that the theory of world literature, *Weltliteratur*, originates with Goethe:

For some time there has been talk of world literature, and properly so. For it is evident that all nations, thrown together at random by terrible wars, then reverting to their status as individual nations, could not help realizing that they had been subject to foreign influences, had absorbed them and occasionally become aware of intellectual needs previously unknown. The result was a sense of goodwill. Instead of isolating them-

selves as before, their state of mind has gradually developed a desire to be included in the free exchange of ideas.⁴

It is not difficult to discern the traces of this cosmopolitan multiculturalism in our own current discourse, where preexisting cultures develop a sense of good will in the “free exchange” of the mysteriously neutral ground of the university. Goethe himself was more discerning than this, as can be seen from the continuation of this fragment (whose explicitly mercantile overtones are excised from the contemporary edition), where the purpose of developing a world literature is to “acquire from it, as must always from any kind of foreign trade, both profit and enjoyment.”⁵ For Marx, of course, the economic will be more than a metaphor when *Weltliteratur* puts in a surprise appearance in the *Communist Manifesto*:

The need of a constantly expanding market for its products chases the bourgeoisie over the whole surface of the globe. It must nestle everywhere, settle everywhere, establish connections everywhere.

The bourgeoisie has through its exploitation of the world market given a cosmopolitan character to production and consumption in every country. To the great chagrin of the Reactionists, it has drawn from under the feet of industry the national ground on which it stood. . . . And as in material, so in intellectual production. . . . From the numerous national and local literatures, there arises a world literature.⁶

Here the “peaceful coexistence” of nations, cultures, and texts has an identity: imperial expansion. As plainly as we can see the legacy of the Goethean conception in contemporary multicultural discourse, it is just as clear that the Marxian narrative, where particular cultural forms colonize territory along with economic ones, represents the truth of Goethe’s metaphor.

If world literature does not spring spontaneously from a host of freely developing cultural equals, but rather represents the exploitation of geographic and cultural diversity by a limited ensemble of economic and cultural forms, we might ask to what extent “non-Western literature” is a contradiction in terms. The question would not be whether the most vital writing of the second half of the twentieth century was produced by third world writers: it was. The question is rather what we mean by *literature* and what we mean by *West*, what agendas reside in those words, and whether they have any meaning at all. *Petals of Blood* by the Kenyan novelist and

playwright Ngugi wa Thiong'o offers no apparent resistance to being understood as a realist novel.⁷ Can we say of the *Al-Inkishafi* (a verse meditation occasioned by the passing of the city-state of Pate in what is now Kenya, by the late-classical Swahili poet Sayyid Abdallah bin Ali bin Nasir) that we do not work a benevolent but nonetheless violent transformation by understanding it with reference to the concept of *literature*?⁸ What we usually call non-Western literature is never the expression (like the *Al-Inkishafi*) of some other culture, if by that we understand some other set of norms and rules that has developed purely along its own internal logic; rather, it must be thought of in terms of the positions that economically, ethnically, sexually, and geographically differentiated subjects occupy within the single culture of global capitalism—a culture that has more or less ruthlessly subsumed what was once a genuinely multicultural globe.

All of this should be obvious, even if our entire mainstream multicultural discourse is built around its explicit denial. But the recognition of what multiculturalism denies should not be taken to signify a celebration of, or acquiescence to, the power of some henceforth inescapable “Western” tradition. Indeed, the capitalist monoculture dissimulated in multicultural discourse is not strictly speaking “Western” at all. It is true that the notion of a specifically “Western” hegemony was once useful as a heuristic for describing the Manichean superstructures of classical imperialism. But the concept of the West has no purchase in causality, no *explanatory* power. Now that these Manichean structures are generally understood to have dissolved in favor of more complex ones, the concept has outlived its usefulness. As Neil Lazarus reminds us in his *Nationalism and Cultural Practice in the Postcolonial World*,⁹ the identification of capitalism with “the West”—the elevation of a heuristic into an explanatory concept—is a mystification that serves to moralize what is an essentially systemic phenomenon. The disequilibrium intrinsic to the function of capital can be kept under control only by the expansion of capital itself: as Marx puts it in the *Grundrisse*, “The tendency to create the world market is directly given in the concept of capital itself. Every limit appears as a barrier to be overcome.”¹⁰ As industrial capitalism expanded from southeastern England it subjugated, incorporated (unevenly), or obliterated noncapitalist modes of production and ways of life, and this process continues not only on the terrain of the former colonies but over remaining enclaves of as-yet-unrationalized labor—for example, cattle ranching, higher education—in the dominant countries.

In this context, the *forms* imposed by global capitalism limit the interpretive possibilities available for any concrete cultural contents, even contents of putatively ancient origin. (A particularly concrete example would be the museum, which only becomes necessary in a society predicated on the tentential annihilation of all other cultural forms—and which is therefore not essentially an institution for preservation but a symptom of eradication. But we are not primarily concerned with institutions of this sort here, and the museum in this sense can stand synechdochally for whole genera of discourses and mental structures.) Resistance—which is given in the concept of capital as one of its constitutive limits, always “to be overcome”—takes on an infinite variety of forms, some of which are refunctionalized out of bits and pieces of older cultural pathways. But to take resistance to capital as a basis for discussion is very far from multiculturalism as it is generally practiced, which functions in the main to discourage any attempt to theorize the monoculture. To begin, then, with an analysis of this striated capitalist monoculture is not (unlike discourses from either left or right that fetishize “the West,” for ill or for good, as the fundamental source of “modernity” or “development”) Eurocentric. Quite the contrary, it provides the only ground for discussing cultural differences without turning them into fetishized substances.

What has become clear then is that the question concerning Anglophone literature opens rather quickly onto that older matter of a *world* literature. Without the apparently empirical referent *Anglophone*, which would seem to contain the question within the scope of an at least theoretically delimitable set of texts, the question of world literature demands at once a conception both of literature and of globalization. Plainly, it would be both impossible and presumptuous to think through either of these terms with any rigor within the limited scope of the current context. What I’d like to offer instead is, in the spirit of the fragment from Schlegel that heads this essay, a speculative cartographical sketch, in broad strokes, of a certain movement within the global history of the literary.

It is well known that *literature* in its current sense, with all the privilege and ontological weight that it now enjoys or is burdened with—what Jean-Luc Nancy and Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe call its “eidaesthetic” function¹¹—appears for the first time not long before the beginning of the nineteenth century. Dr. Johnson’s *Dictionary of the English Language*, completed in 1755, mentions only its older and more general meaning, defining literature as

simply “Learning, skill in letters.”¹² Nancy and Lacoue-Labarthe suggest that the modern concept of literature emerged in Germany almost exactly at the turn of the nineteenth century. Paradoxically, the fact that literature as we know it is invented in the nineteenth century does not at all mean that the literary tradition begins then; rather, it is precisely the retroactive invention of a literary tradition that makes the romantic conception so powerful. Rather like the essential terms—*labor, life, language*—in the epistemological mutation that Foucault pursued almost obsessively to precisely this historical moment, the instant literature comes to exist, it is discovered always to have existed.¹³ It should come as no surprise that in Foucault, too, literature, “constituted and so designated on the threshold of the modern age,”¹⁴ appears with the dawn of the nineteenth century. Nancy and Lacoue-Labarthe, however, are considerably more specific than Foucault about the origins of literature (even if this specificity does not alone do anything to explain it), tracing literature’s origins not only to a historical period but to the work of a group of friends; indeed, principally to one of that group, and in particular to a portion of his work produced during a very restricted span of his creative life. Essentially it is Friedrich Schlegel who emerges as the hero of *The Literary Absolute* as the text traces his itinerary from 1797 to 1804. What is at stake here is not simply German Romanticism or even Romanticism in the sense of a literary period or a closed set of texts. Rather, romanticism is “our *naïveté*,”¹⁵ the very ground of post-Romantic thought, even as its later mutations—Modernism and Postmodernism—continue to define themselves against it. “A veritable romantic *unconscious* is discernable today, in most of the central motifs of our ‘modernity.’”¹⁶

Nancy and Lacoue-Labarthe point out that this henceforth “romanticomodern” conception of literature as it develops in Schlegel’s writings is not simply a mutation in a preexisting field, but a complex and dramatic reshuffling of discourses:

It is precisely what determines the age we live in as the *critical age par excellence* or, in other words, as the “age” (almost two hundred years old, after all) in which literature . . . devotes itself exclusively to the search for its own identity, taking with it all or part of philosophy and several sciences (curiously referred to as the *humanities*) and charting the space of what we now refer to, using a word of which the romantics were particularly fond, as “theory.”¹⁷

Literature here emerges as the middle term in a temporal and logical series, sandwiched between two apparently extraliterary discourses as it *takes up* philosophy on one hand, and *opens up* the space for theory on the other. Schlegel expresses the first moment quite clearly in his *Ideas*: “Where philosophy stops, poetry has to begin.”¹⁸ The second moment emerges from Schlegel’s *Athenaeum* fragments. First, “poetry should describe itself, and always be simultaneously poetry and the poetry of poetry.”¹⁹ In other words, poetry—understood in the broadest sense—must also always be a theory of poetry. Conversely, however, critique must always be “poetical through and through and at the same time a living, vibrant work of art.”²⁰ Thus theory and antitheory are generated at a single stroke: poetry is to produce the most adequate theory of poetry, but a subtle reflexive bifurcation is now *required* of poetry, so that poetry itself cannot exist without the critical moment, either immanent to the text itself or exiled to an initially intimate symbiosis.

This series—philosophy, literature, theory—can be given a more specific history. To begin with, it is Kant who opens up the possibility of this first moment, the emergence of poetry from philosophy, the peculiar philosophico-artistic or eidaesthetic hybrid of literature in the modern sense. Georg Lukács understood this perfectly. The critique of aesthetic judgment—principally the analytic of the Beautiful, but it can be shown equally of the analytic of the Sublime—is originally meant to mediate between the “otherwise irreconcilable opposites” that characterize the Kantian impasse.²¹ But, for Lukács, these antithetical moments do not originate purely in philosophy, reflecting rather the “antinomies of bourgeois thought,” whose ultimate determinant is the dominance of the commodity form. Therefore, it is not surprising that an *aesthetic principle*, originating from *within* thought—the integrative notion of beauty developed in the third *Critique*—should be elevated beyond the sphere of aesthetics as such. The aesthetic, philosophically resolving antinomies whose origin lies outside philosophy, emerges to bear the responsibility for overcoming all of the contradictions produced by capitalism itself: for “salvag[ing the contents of life] from the deadening effects of reification.”²² After Kant, the “aesthetic” becomes necessarily philosophical and, within the limited sphere of thought, Utopian. And indeed, this dual exigency, to “realize the kingdom of God on earth” precisely through the philosophical operation of literature, is present everywhere in Schlegel’s fragments: “The French Revolution, Fichte’s philosophy, and Goethe’s *Meister* are the greatest tendencies of the age.”²³

As for the second moment, the emergence of theory, it is easy enough to see that the subtle, reflective bifurcation of literature itself—the demand that each work develop along a purely internal dynamic of which it must in some sense also be aware—has a built-in tendency to become an absolute rupture and to engender theory as a separate discourse. The concept of literature demands, at one and the same time, both what is commonly called romantic “organicity” quite apart from external determinants, *and* a distinct discourse that would be able to recover that organicity from the necessarily fragmentary nature of any particular literary work—which then becomes merely an occasion, incidental to the project of recovery itself. But this logical exigency for theory, as we know, unfolds in history, and Fredric Jameson has described the “emergence of Theory, as that which seemed to supplant traditional literature from the 1960s onwards” as completing an earlier Hegelian premonition of the “end of art” that had appeared hopelessly wide of the mark.²⁴ (This subsumption, of course, cannot be attributed solely to the autonomous unfolding of the Idea of criticism; we will have to return later to its precipitating determinants.) This late “end of literature,” postponed for two centuries by the romantic epicycle, would not refer to the actual disappearance of literature, which would maintain itself in a kind of decorative afterlife, perhaps with occasional isolated re-efflorescences of its original power. Rather, the “end” of literature would refer to the migration of its philosophical excess, the Absolute to which each work refers without ever managing to contain, over into theory once and for all.

The other name for the structure of the unrepresentable Absolute is, of course, the Sublime. Jameson, among others, has identified the Sublime with Modernism, and we shall shortly see the justice of this observation. But, as Nancy and Lacoue-Labarthe amply demonstrate, the “literary absolute” emerges first with early Romanticism, a full century prior to the emergence of a distinctively Modernist literature. Indeed, the genre of the fragment, as practiced by Schlegel’s circle at Jena, mobilizes precisely the same logic that we will see in the Modernist Sublime. The difference between Romanticism and Modernism—within the single, romantico-modern conception of literature—might be identified, perhaps too schematically, with the difference between the mathematically and the dynamically Sublime, the shift from the thought of the infinite itself to the confrontation with its embodiment in the sublime object.²⁵

Criticism, unsurprisingly, registers this shift. T. E. Hulme’s 1914

“Romanticism and Classicism,” for example, repudiates the “Spilt religion” of Romanticism in favor of a literature of “small, dry things.”²⁶ It almost goes without saying that the terms of Hulme’s repudiation are, in the sense that the term is given here, thoroughly romantic. The philosophical excess carried by art in Hulme’s anti-Romanticism is precisely that put into play by the Kantian impasse: if reality “could come into contact with sense and consciousness, art would be useless and unnecessary . . . the function of the artist is to pierce through here and there . . . the veil placed between us and reality.”²⁷ (It may serve as a measure of the ubiquity of precisely this movement to Modernism that Victor Shklovsky’s rejection of symbolism—almost exactly contemporary with the Hulme essay—in favor of a practice that would, famously, “make the stone *stony*,” unfolds along lines that are rigorously congruent with Hulme’s.²⁸) The metaphor of the veil is, of course, unmistakably romantic.²⁹ What occurs here is not a radical break with Romanticism but a more subtle shift in emphasis onto *matter* as such as the means of access to the absolute experience beyond the veil: Hulme’s poetry of “finite things,” John Crowe Ransom’s “physical poetry,” or Shklovsky’s poetry of the “artfulness of an object.”³⁰

This critical tendency, whose philosophical counterpart would be phenomenology’s slogan “To the things themselves!” resonates profoundly with a tendency that was already deeply inscribed in Modernist practice.³¹ In James Joyce’s *Stephen Hero*, written just after the turn of the twentieth century, Stephen’s aesthetic theory hinges precisely on the apprehension of the thing-in-itself: first as something discrete, then as something with a form, and finally as something that is, mutely, stubbornly, and infungibly, “that thing which it is.”³² Ezra Pound wrote that the first principle of modern poetry was “the direct treatment of the ‘thing.’”³³ William Carlos Williams’s famous line from *Paterson*, “no ideas but in things,”³⁴ can be taken as a manifesto-in-miniature, reaffirming the value of “seeing the thing itself without forethought or afterthought but with great intensity.”³⁵ And so on.

What is clear, then, is that while the absolute *as such* becomes in the Modernist period an object of ridicule—Hulme’s “circumambient gas”—the *problematic* of the absolute, of the fragmentary representation of the unrepresentable, remains as central as ever, only now condensed into *matter*. This historical shift mirrors the movement from the mathematically to the dynamically Sublime—from the ability to postulate the infinite without being able adequately to present it to a kind of shock at the confrontation

with brute materiality—from the radical inaccessibility of the supersensible Idea to the radical inaccessibility of the *Ding an sich*—from symbolism to defamiliarization, from “Romanticism” to “Classicism” or Modernism. Doubtless the dynamically sublime undergoes a certain domestication, however, as it makes its way into Modernism: from “shapeless mountain masses piled on one another in wild disarray, with their pyramids of ice, or the gloomy raging sea”³⁶ to, say, a red wheelbarrow.

Or perhaps not. In Joyce’s *Ulysses*, Stephen Dedalus condenses in a phrase what is presumably something like Joyce’s early theory of the epiphany: “God is a shout in the street.”³⁷ This is, on one hand, a reformulation of the romantic theory of the fragmentary work of art touched on briefly earlier in this essay. But it might also remind us, in its equation of altogether incommensurate registers of Being, of a similar paradox in Hegel: “The being of Spirit is a bone.”³⁸ Here (in the discussion of phrenology in *Phenomenology of Spirit*) the representational problematic of the Sublime is understood in a different way. It is not that the skull somehow actually embodies the truth of the subject (that the “sublime object” somehow allows us to be aware of that essence that cannot be represented); rather, the skull represents the absolute impossibility of representing the subject at all—the inertness and absurdity of the skull only reminding us that it might as well be the skull as anything else. If we read the Modernist Sublime in this way—as Slavoj Žižek puts it, converting “the lack of the signifier into the signifier of the lack”³⁹—then the privileged signifier of the Modernist *thing*, rather than presenting in the humbleness of objects an unrepresentable Being, signifies a lack, the absolute absence of a certain kind of content.

But what is this lack, and why the *thing*? With the Hegelian example, the movement between the lack of the signifier and the signifier of the lack is metonymic: the skull assumes the dimensions of Spirit just because it happens to be convenient and suitably empty. If we remember that in the Modernist era, the “age of mechanical reproduction,” the *thing* has acquired a whole new and mystified mode of being on the assembly line, it may not be too much to say that the unassuming *thing* comes to represent metonymically the entire system of productive forces, the economic totality.⁴⁰ Or rather, as we saw earlier, it precisely *does not* represent this system, but stands in for its lack. The real object of (representational) desire is—as in the Lacanian explication of the “perverse fixation”—metonymically displaced.⁴¹ As with the skull, there could not be a less promising signifier than the mass-

produced thing, which, as is well known, is systematically deprived of all traces of its production. It should come as no surprise, therefore, that self-conscious attempts to theorize the *thing*—in Heidegger, for example—are led into a rather marked nostalgia for an older form of production, and precisely for the set of cultural pathways that went along with this older mode and whose modern analogon is steadfastly refused. (In fact, compared to the new subjectivities born with the mass-produced object world, the old feudal Master of the Hegelian narrative, whose distinguishing trait was his utter alienation from the reality of his material existence, appears positively earthy by comparison—as a reading of many of Ford Madox Ford’s novels will attest.) The *thing* does not represent or provide some kind of mystical quasi-representational access to this new productive totality; instead, merely convenient metonymically to the great mutation in productive power, it signifies the impossibility of representing the field of productive forces from within the field of commodities.

Needless to say, this representational dilemma is not faced uniformly by everybody; in its Modernist form it is proper to a certain mode of subjectivity and a certain position within the economic order. And with this realization we find ourselves suddenly free of the claustrophobic atmosphere of the logic of Modernism and able to consider a quite different set of approaches to the same problem, namely—to get ahead of ourselves—the literature of decolonization, where, in a rather different sense than Frantz Fanon had in mind, “the Third World . . . faces Europe like a colossal mass whose aim should be to try to resolve the problems to which Europe has not been able to find the answers.”⁴² No doubt it would be possible to think of other, European late avatars of the romantico-modern conception of literature, not least in the postmodern condensation of the newly global and instantaneous forces of production into the relatively puny figure of the individual body, its pains and pleasures, and its decay. But this would be a relatively static and essentially external mutation, in every way less dramatic than the seizure of the literary itself at the very moment that the colonized world breaks free of the colonial yoke.

But first, we must remember that the Modernist Sublime was, within the terms set out by Lukács, Utopian. That is, it fulfilled the function of uniting—at the level of thought—subject and object, phenomenon and noumenon, through the sublime object that was supposed to represent the unrepresentable totality: the shout that signifies God, the wheelbarrow that

signifies “so much.” But the trick lurking in the aesthetic is that it is Utopian “only *insofar* as these [contradictions] become aestheticised.”⁴³ This is not a quibble but an absolute reversal, a cancellation that repeats, in quite other terms, the Hegelian reduction of the Sublime outlined earlier in this essay. The secret truth is that the Kantian noumenon is fictional through and through; that the very condition of access to the Idea is that it originate in ideology; that the aesthetic Utopia comes into being only at the expense of aestheticizing the problems it resolves; that the Being or Totality to which Modernism promises access is precisely a mystification. At this point it might occur to us that, historically, Modernism’s aesthetic Utopia has a counterpart in the quite different (specifically, socialist) political Utopia imagined by the great wave of European political struggles following the Soviet revolution. But, precisely to the extent that canonical Modernism puts into practice the Lukácsian structure outlined above, it becomes, regardless of any particular politics, antagonistic to politics as such. Modernism is Utopian only insofar as it refuses Utopia.

This antagonism is, of course, a kind of complementarity, as Lukács makes very clear, in that both aesthetic and political Utopia represent solutions, incommensurate with each other and originating from different positions within the economic order, to the same set of problems. If the deep bifurcation between aesthetic and political Utopia in Modernism marks the radicalization of a more ambiguous dual impulse in the romanticism of Schlegel’s circle (which develops, quite consciously, in the shadow of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic reorganization of feudal space), then we should not be surprised to discover this ambiguity once more in the literature of decolonization, which unfolds in a third revolutionary moment.

Four overlapping series: within the larger series (philosophy-literature-theory, to which we will return shortly), lies a narrower literary sequence (Romantic-Modernist-Postcolonial), which corresponds to a representational shift (mathematically Sublime to dynamically Sublime to, as we shall see shortly, the evaporation of the Sublime) and ultimately to a series of historical crises (the French, Russian, and anticolonial revolutions). It needs to be remembered of this third and final moment that postcolonial literature *is* literature in precisely the romantico-modern sense: postcolonial literature bears a specific ontological burden that differentiates it both from other art forms in formerly colonized countries (it is no accident that there is no such field as “postcolonial music,” for example, even though much of the world’s most interesting and culturally important music is produced on

postcolonial territory), and from the status that quite “literary” texts like *Al-Inkishafi* would have had in precolonial times. That postcolonial literature is Literature should go without saying. But, as Gayatri Spivak has pointed out in a quite different context, the “theoretical sophistication” that is taken for granted in European texts, which demands that a specific hermeneutic be devised for each work (this exigency is precisely what is implied by the Romantic invention of theory) is all too often denied to postcolonial cultural production, which is reduced—not only for a relatively naïve audience but also in academic multicultural discourse—to mere raw material, “the repository of an ethnic ‘cultural difference’”⁴⁴ or, one might add, of the specifically local or subjective effects of a “clash of cultures.” Postcolonial works, no matter how complex, are almost exclusively submitted to the hermeneutic norms of documentary or ethnographic realism and judged according to their deviation from that representational standard. Such a literal-minded mode of reading is, of course, possible as one approach among others; one could easily read, say, Joyce’s *Dubliners* or Ford’s *Parade’s End* in precisely this way. As the dominant approach to postcolonial literature, however, the assumption that one already knows how to read it inflicts a flattening violence. More importantly, this violence, as benevolent as it may believe itself to be, cannot be innocent: it is not merely a blindness, but a *refusal* of the properly eidaesthetic project of postcolonial literature, a refusal to recognize its appropriation of the problem of the Absolute, understood now as the social totality.

That said, we need to pay attention to the specific difference imposed by the anticolonial *prise de parole*. It is perfectly reasonable to anchor this difference initially in the Hegelian Master-Slave dialectic and the epistemologically mutilating position of the Master vis-à-vis his laboring Bondsman (which mutilation would also explain the metropolitan containment of postcolonial writing within a hermeneutic of cultural expression), as long as we understand that this dialectical unity *is* the totality that each seeks to represent, though in quite different ways and with quite different possibilities of success. The “mimetic purchase” or apparent representational immediacy of much postcolonial literature may also be situated in this dialectic, but this does not then allow us either to mistake representational urgency for naïveté, or to abdicate the responsibility, having felt Schlegel’s intimation that one “might have absolutely no feeling” for the resonance of the text before one, to search patiently for further allegorical registers.

It could be shown that as postcolonial literature takes over the project of

the literary, it also takes over and refunctions many of the tropes and topoi of European Modernism. If we restrict ourselves to the field of African literature, the obvious example in a Francophone context would be the relationship between *négritude* and surrealism. But we might also think of the Modernist roots of the existential nausea of Ayi Kwei Armah's novels or the relationship between Wole Soyinka's and Ford Madox Ford's strategies for narrating the predicaments of social classes suddenly deprived of a vocation, or of Ngugi wa Thiong'o's quite explicitly Brechtian theater experiments. Part of what is most interesting about African literature, in fact, is its profound reworking of Modernist form. It does not seem very useful, therefore, to describe the difference between Modernism and the literature of decolonization in terms of some relative lack of interest in form or in some real representational immediacy, if this is understood as a kind of naïveté or obstinacy—however bracing or salutary. Instead, we might think of this difference as marking the emergence of a new kind of consciousness, a shift similar in form to Hegel's "end of art" but *within* the literary itself: a shift from the "poetry of the imagination to the prose of thought."⁴⁵ I would suggest that what is new in the anticolonial *prise de parole* is its refusal or evacuation of the whole problem, central to Modernism, of the thing-in-itself: the evacuation, that is, of the whole structure of the Sublime.

We must remember that this problem, the very mainspring of Modernist defamiliarization and so-called difficulty, is ultimately the symptom of a certain position in the economic order and represents a mutilated but real striving after the Utopian representation of the absent Totality.⁴⁶ The literature of decolonization takes over this striving, the eidaesthetic project itself, but from a quite different position within the global division of labor; and in so doing, it hollows out the equivocal structure of the Sublime. The Totality is no longer to be thought of as a mystical substance, accessible in quasi-religious form through the fetishized "host" of the fragment or the thing-in-itself, but rather as no more than a *necessary fiction* in a globalized world—a world, that is to say, where the truth of any event resides more or less outside itself. To fail to attempt a strategic map of the social totality, to pretend that one could possibly narrate the particular without providing some account of the universal, would be more profoundly ideological than any (necessarily) flawed attempt. Could we imagine, for example, Achebe's brilliant *Arrow of God*, the story of what might be called the "nervous breakdown" of a village priest, without a simultaneous narration of the intimate rhetorical interfer-

ence offered by the Christian narrative.⁴⁷ This narrative, in turn, could not be introduced without depicting the conflicted ideology of the British imperial project; which could not be depicted without representing capitalism in the form of extraction of raw materials and the introduction of a cash economy; which itself entails a sketch of the crisis in capitalism occurring in Europe concurrent with the narrative; which itself leads back to the (secret) delicacy and impermanence of cultural forms in general and to a genuinely Utopian possibility. But it should be clear that now Utopia no longer takes its positive, potentially totalitarian form—the mystical City of God, the ideal of the Harmonious Man, the impossible solution to a world of conflicts. Instead, it is a version of Utopia only available in genuinely political moments, Utopia stripped down to its bare, contentless essence: the thought that things might be otherwise.

Let us turn to an example, by way of Schlegel's maxim that "Novels are the Socratic dialogues of our time."⁴⁸ The fact that this maxim is played out in formally virtually identical ways by Joyce in *Stephen Hero* (or for that matter in the "Scylla and Charybdis" episode of *Ulysses*) and by the Senegalese writer Cheikh Hamidou Kane in his 1961 *Ambiguous Adventure*⁴⁹ should alert us to a certain identity between the projects of each of these semi-autobiographical novels. In each case the content of the dialogue portions is explicitly philosophical. In the case of *Stephen Hero*, the content is precisely the working out of the Modernist Sublime through the notion of the epiphany, which we noted earlier, while the dialogues of *Ambiguous Adventure* are concerned in a much more direct way with the relationship between Europe and its colonies. *Ambiguous Adventure* does not seem to be as commonly read as it once was, and this is unfortunately not the time to summarize the novel in detail. For now, then, I'd like to suggest quickly that *Ambiguous Adventure* is generally read one of two ways: either in terms of our own cultural politics, as a commentary on the value of cultural conservation in the face of the increasing hegemony of Western European cultural norms; or as an allegory of the subjective experience of a generation of African intellectuals (as proclaimed on the back of a French edition, of "l'angoisse d'être noir," which is very quickly subsumed as merely a special case of "l'angoisse d'être homme"⁵⁰). The first approach is basically ethnographic; it mines the text for testimony about "Diallobé" cultural pathways and raises the usual questions about the paradoxes of cultural authenticity, thereby refusing to think the largely "positional" or material and historical

difference between two “cultures.” The second forcibly maintains subjective anguish (which certainly is operative in the text) at the level of the *merely* subjective—something that is at every moment refused by the text—only to subsume it under a universality which refuses the positional difference that is the cause of that very anguish. In both cases the central problematic of the text is elided: the question of the *relationship* between the Occident and the rest of the globe, and the question of the *futurity* of that relationship. “We have not had the same past, you and ourselves, but we shall have, strictly, the same future.”⁵¹ No doubt the first two readings are impossible (except as moments in a more complex reading) if we read *Ambiguous Adventure* with an eye to its irony. But what I’d like to emphasize here is that two formally similar texts, *Stephen Hero* and *Ambiguous Adventure*, take up the same problem (the representation of the Totality) and the same impulse (Utopian desire) in complementary but opposite directions. The first reaches for Totality and Utopia, as we have seen, through the mystified form of the fetishized thing-in-itself; the latter does so through the activity of the underdeveloped. The global Utopian “future citadel, the city which is being born . . . must be our work, all of us, Hindus, Chinese, South Americans, Negroes, Arabs; all of us, awkward and pitiful, we the under-developed, who find ourselves clumsy in a world of perfect mechanical adjustment.”⁵²

The Utopian hope in this “city which is being born” might be seen as mere third-worldism. But in the text’s final irony, the death of the novel’s hero—and the death of the Utopian possibility he had represented to his father (“the first son of the earth”)—reminds us of the symmetrically dystopic possibility raised equally by the text: the defeat of “the last human being on this earth.”⁵³

As we all know, the Utopian trajectory mapped out by the writings of the period of decolonization was indeed hijacked, as Fanon feared it might be, by national bourgeoisies only too happy to profit through the old economic relationships and to celebrate their own mystified wealth as national triumphs. The great period of Utopian literature in Africa is followed by a literature of corruption, of stagnation—to a surprising degree, a literature of feces.⁵⁴ It is tempting to say that with the disillusionment of the postindependence period, the Utopian energies contained in Modernism by its own conditions of possibility are, in the case of the literature of decolonization, contained by History itself. But we have to ask to what extent History can be considered external at all. The literature of decolonization, as literature, does not

come with an ontological guarantee merely because it is written from the *relative* position of the Bondsman—which in any case is only an allegorical figure whose geographic representational value was already receding with the postcolonial reorganization of accumulation. The colonizer/colonized dialectic, indispensable for understanding the historical dynamics of post-World War II global politics, cannot be given foundational authority or be understood to describe even that period without excess: the domain of the colonized, like that of the colonizer, has its own “lords” and its own “bondsmen,” with greater or lesser degrees of collusion among homologous groups in each space. (If “hybridity” can be thought without contradiction it must refer to something like this structure.) The literature of decolonization, in turn, mystifies its own conditions of possibility and disassembles its interest in the ascendancy of a national bourgeoisie. If Modernism can be considered, in a sense, “genuinely” Utopian after all because it does finally yield up the secret of its own failure, the genuinely Utopian literature of decolonization already contains within itself the seeds of its own defeat.

This seemingly brings us to a kind of dead end. But we should keep in mind that “our” own sixties, and Postmodernism more generally, are the direct inheritors of the decolonization movement. The apparently independent and quintessentially American phenomena of the civil rights movement and the protest against the war in Vietnam, for example, are coordinated through and take their meaning from the worldwide expansion of the struggle against colonialism. The pan-African aspect of the civil rights movement is misunderstood if it is considered to be based solely on the valorization of common cultural roots; fundamental to such identification is the possibility of political solidarity with the decolonizing world. And we are so used to thinking of Vietnam in Cold War terms that we have all but forgotten that the Viet Minh was first an independence movement and only later a communist party; the refusal of service in Vietnam, played out in other contexts and other territories in Europe, is a refusal to recognize the legitimacy of colonial domination.⁵⁵ In more general terms, we might think of the relationship between the third world 1960s and our own postmodern, globalized moment as exemplifying a process that Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri have elaborated more generally in *Empire*, namely that “resistance precedes power.”⁵⁶ Rather than seeing capital’s positive side as its dynamism, Hardt and Negri place that dynamism in the hands of living labor, which has at every step *forced* capital to reorganize. On this model,

the current reorganization of capital called globalization is an essentially reactive regrouping after the disintegration of classical imperialism at the hands of the anticolonial movements.

Which returns us to our original, larger series: philosophy-literature-theory. The Utopian impulse that disappears in postcolonial writing reappears precisely in the emergence of Theory in the 1960s: Foucault's disappearing face in the sand or the "as yet unnameable" that marks Derrida's writings testify, if not to any particular future, then at least to the decisive end to the present. On the surface, however, nothing could seem as parochially European as theory, and indeed Edward Said and others have criticized theory for not engaging sufficiently with the postcolonial world.⁵⁷ But I would like to suggest that *all theory is postcolonial theory*: it owes its very existence to the struggle against colonial domination and its echo in the political urgency of the first world 1960s. The initial designation "poststructuralism" certainly refers to the legacy of Ferdinand de Saussure, but also and more importantly to Claude Lévi-Strauss and a crisis in French anthropology that V. Y. Mudimbe has identified as part of a more general moment of European cultural doubt when confronted with the illegitimacy of the colonial venture.⁵⁸ Derrida's classic "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences" is an exegesis of this crisis—the inability to posit any longer the difference between engineer and bricoleur, an inability which is itself the symptom of the impossibility of legitimizing the colonial project in the face of anticolonial resistance.⁵⁹ The very possibility of imagining "Western Culture" as no more than "myth today"—and it is no accident that Barthes's primary example of contemporary myth is the image of an African soldier saluting the French flag—emerges from the fissure opened up by this crisis.⁶⁰ We should not forget either that the secret determinant of everything in Foucault's *The Order of Things* turns out to be anthropology. To be sure, a specifically philosophical meaning is given to this word, but we must remember that the central point of Foucault's text, the emergence of theory and the end of humanism, arises precisely out of a crisis in ethnology, which is understood not as a purely epistemic phenomenon but in its relationship to French imperialism, the "relation that can bring [European thought] face to face with all other cultures as well as with itself."⁶¹ Foucault's introduction to Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus* draws the connection between the Vietnamese anticolonial struggle and European political developments on the first page; the decisiveness of this connection for

theory is pointed to everywhere in *Anti-Oedipus* itself, where colonialism becomes a key to understanding the imposition of both the Oedipal figure and capitalism everywhere.⁶² No doubt there are other examples—indeed, even Pierre Bourdieu, whose work perennially arouses the suspicion of a parochial Frenchness, begins from a critique of ethnography motivated directly by the Algerian war, which is also the occasion for Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*—but these will suffice to sketch the point.

But does the emergence of Theory signal, as Jameson suggests, the end of Literature? The last thing we need right now is another millenarian declaration of the “end” of something. But it seems reasonable to be agnostic about the future of literature, which is threatened not only by a kind of technical obsolescence and by an entirely complementary tendency to sink back into the merely decorative, but also, and perhaps more consequently, by the rise of other cultural forms that seem better able to carry literature's eidaesthetic project into a fully globalized world. Besides the emergence of theory, the 1960s marked the elevation of music not only to the dominant popular cultural form but to a dominant mode of political and positional identification as well. Could it be that music has somehow been able to take over the objectives of the two-hundred-year-old project of literature?

This is a speculative question to say the least. But there are indications that a pursuit of the possibility may be fruitful. Hardt and Negri suggest that we have actually crossed, or are on the verge of crossing, the threshold of the real subsumption of labor under capital, the moment when there is no longer any even hypothetical space external to “our” world system. Henceforth the concept of mediation, the lifeblood of the dialectic, is in crisis, since there is nothing left to mediate. The plane of transcendence is replaced by the field of immanence, “the absence of every external limit from the trajectories of the action of the multitude.”⁶³ Every activity resonates *immediately* with the Totality itself, and “immanence is tied only, in its affirmations and destructions, to regimes of possibility that constitute its formation and development.”⁶⁴ This is itself a speculative point, but it is easy to see that if their thesis is correct, the evaporation of the romantico-modern project of Literature is virtually a corollary. The Utopian aesthetic space identified by Lukács becomes obsolete if the epistemic fissure that it bridges is closed by History itself; and if there is henceforth no mediatory obstacle between the individual body and humanity, the function of representing Totality bleeds out into the world.

But music is not a representational form, at least not in the sense required by the concept of literature. We might suggest that music is allegorical in a certain sense, in that musical organization is related to social organization in a way unmediated by meaning. But then this would be a very strange sort of allegory that would not be read or understood, but performed. The cliché of music's immediacy thus gains a new significance:

If, on the one hand, music is sound calling attention to itself, the temptation then is to conceive of music as "pure body." . . . But what occurs in this engagement is clearly anti-Cartesian. It is my subject-body, my experiencing body, which is engaged, and no longer is it a case of a deistic distance of "mind" to "body." *The call to dance is such that involvement and participation become the mode of being-in the musical situation* [my emphasis]. The "darkness" of music is in the *loss of distance* which occurs in dramatically sounded musical presence.⁶⁵

Music is essentially that activity by which bodies are synchronized into a social body: "*Involvement and participation become the mode of being-in the musical situation.*" The global trajectory of musical forms, subterranean and unpredictable compared with the colonization of the world by Literature, may be the very substance in which the new social relationships predicted by Hardt and Negri are registered. The job of theory may be to cognize (*interpret* does not seem quite the right word) the noncognitive (*unconscious* does not seem quite the right word) performance of musical being-in-the-world. It may be that henceforth "the world . . . is not legible, but audible."⁶⁶

Notes

- 1 Chinua Achebe, "Named for Victoria, Queen of England," in *Hopes and Impediments* (New York, 1989), 34.
- 2 Though, of course, this word *asymptotically* makes, as Homi Bhabha has definitively shown in his analyses of British educational ideology in India, all the difference in the world. See especially "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse," in *The Location of Culture* (New York, 1994).
- 3 T. B. Macaulay, "Minute on Education," in W. Theodore de Bary, ed., *Sources of Indian Tradition*, vol. 2 (New York, 1958), 49.
- 4 Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Essays on Art and Literature*, ed. John Gearey, trans. Ellen von Nardroff and Ernest H. von Nardroff (New York, 1986), 228. Another collection (see next note) dates the fragment to 1830.
- 5 Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Goethe's Literary Essays: A Selection in English*, ed. J. E. Spingarn (New York, 1964), 99.

- 6 Karl Marx, *The Communist Manifesto*, trans. Samuel Moore, ed. Frederic L. Bender (New York, 1988), 58–59.
- 7 Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *Petals of Blood* (New York, 1977).
- 8 Sayyid Abdallah bin Ali bin Nasir, *Al Inkishafi* [*Revelations*], composed around 1810, translated by William L. Hichens as *Al-Inkishafi: The Soul's Awakening* (Nairobi, 1972). The point is that this is *even* the case when referring to a society that plainly does have its own authorized tradition of letters.
- It should be apparent that it would be no less violent to read *Al-Inkishafi* as anthropological or historical evidence.
- 9 Neil Lazarus, *Nationalism and Cultural Practice in the Postcolonial World* (Cambridge, UK, 1999).
- 10 Karl Marx, *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy*, trans. Martin Nicolaus (New York, 1993), 408.
- 11 Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Literary Absolute: The Theory of Literature in German Romanticism*, trans. Philip Barnard and Cheryl Lester (Albany, 1988), 37.
- 12 Samuel Johnson, *Dictionary of the English Language* (New York, 1967).
- 13 See, for example, Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York, 1970), 313.
- 14 *Ibid.*, 43.
- 15 Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy, *The Literary Absolute*, 17.
- 16 *Ibid.*, 15.
- 17 *Ibid.*, 16.
- 18 Friedrich Schlegel, *Philosophical Fragments* [*Critical Fragments*, *Athenaeum* fragments, selections from *Blütenstaub*, and *Ideas*], trans. Peter Firchow (Minneapolis, 1991), quoted material is from *Ideas* fragment 48.
- 19 *Athenaeum* fragment 238.
- 20 *Athenaeum* fragment 67.
- 21 Georg Lukács, "Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat," in *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics* (Cambridge, MA, 1971), 137.
- 22 *Ibid.*, 139.
- 23 Schlegel, *Athenaeum* fragment 222, 216.
- 24 Fredric Jameson, "'End of Art' or 'End of History?'" in *The Cultural Turn: Selected Writings on the Postmodern, 1983–1998* (London, 1998), 84.
- 25 As many have noted, the possibility of a "sublime object" does not strictly speaking exist in Kant, for whom the Sublime refers rigorously to "the attunement that the intellect [gets] through a certain presentation that occupies reflective judgment" (Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, trans. Werner S. Pluhar [Indianapolis, 1987], 106). The phrase "sublime object" therefore stands in for a formulation which, to be strictly accurate, would be something like "that object the perception of which gives rise to the sublime feeling."
- 26 T. E. Hulme, "Romanticism and Classicism," in *Speculations: Essays on Humanism and the Philosophy of Art*, ed. Herbert Read (New York, 1924), 118, 131.
- 27 T. E. Hulme, "Bergson's Theory of Art," in Read, *Speculations*, 147.
- 28 Victor Shklovsky, "Art As Technique," in *Russian Formalist Criticism: Four Essays*, ed.

- Lee T. Lemon and Marion J. Reis (Lincoln, NB, 1965), 12. Shklovsky's essay was first published in 1917.
- 29 See, for example, Schlegel, *Ideas* fragment 128.
- 30 Hulme, "Romanticism and Classicism," 134; John Crowe Ransom, "Poetry: A Note on Ontology," in Ransom, *The World's Body* (New York, 1938), 112–20; Shklovsky, "Art As Technique," 12.
- 31 Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York, 1962), 28.
- 32 James Joyce, *Stephen Hero*, ed. Theodore Spencer (New York, 1963), 213.
- 33 Ezra Pound, "A Retrospect," in *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound*, ed. T. S. Eliot (New York, 1935), 3.
- 34 William Carlos Williams, "Paterson," in *Selected Poems*, ed. Charles Tomlimson (New York, 1985), 262.
- 35 William Carlos Williams, "Prologue to *Kora in Hell*," in *Selected Essays of William Carlos Williams* (New York, 1954).
- 36 Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, 113.
- 37 See James Joyce, *Ulysses* (New York, 1961, 34):
- Stephen jerked his thumb toward the window, saying:
 —That is God.
 Hooray! Ay! Whrrrwheel!
 —What? Mr Deasy asked.
 —A shout in the street, Stephen answered, shrugging his shoulders.
- 38 G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford, 1977), 208.
- 39 Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (London, 1989), 209.
- 40 Considered as a *moment* in capitalist production, the *thing* does embody the whole system of social relations of which it is an expression. But to consider it as such is precisely to demystify it, to dissolve its mute symbolic presence, and to cancel in advance its potential sublimity.
- 41 See Jacques Lacan, "The Agency of the Letter in the Unconscious or Reason Since Freud," in *Écrits*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York, 1977), 166–67.
- 42 Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Constance Farrington (New York, 1968), 314.
- 43 Lukács, "Reification," 139.
- 44 Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present* (Cambridge, MA, 1999), 388.
- 45 G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on Fine Art*, vol. 1, trans. T. M. Knox (Oxford, 1975), 89.
- 46 It is worth noting that in Hegel's writings the sublime, through all its mutations, is always the sign of a fundamental contradiction arising from the misapprehension of the Absolute—until this misapprehension is overcome and the sublime is reduced to the arbitrary symbol. See Hegel, *Lectures on Fine Art*, vol. 1, 303–426.
- 47 Chinua Achebe, *Arrow of God* (New York, 1967).
- 48 Schlegel, *Critical Fragment*, 26.
- 49 Cheikh Hamidou Kane, *Ambiguous Adventure*, trans. Katherine Woods (London, 1972).

- 50 Cheikh Hamidou Kane, *L'aventure ambiguë* (Paris, 1961).
- 51 Kane, *Ambiguous Adventure*, 79.
- 52 *Ibid.*, 80 (translation modified by Nicholas Brown).
- 53 *Ibid.*, 80, 154.
- 54 One thinks of Koomson's final escape through a privy in Armah's *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* (Boston, 1968), but also of Nairobi's shit-lined footpaths in Meja Mwangi's *Going Down River Road* (London, 1976) or of the quasi-existentialist *philosophie de la latrine* of "voidancy" in Soyinka's *The Interpreters* (London, 1970).
- 55 For a similar perspective see Fredric Jameson, "Periodizing the 60s," in *The Ideologies of Theory*, vol. 2 (Minneapolis, 1988).
- 56 Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, MA, 2000).
- 57 See, for example, Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York, 1994), 41, 194, and 278. Said's insistence that "the imperial experience is quite irrelevant" for Foucault, in the light of the quote below from Foucault's *The Order of Things*, is nearly as surprising as his assertion that Marxism "is stunningly silent on . . . oppositional practice in the empire."
- 58 V. Y. Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy, and the Order of Knowledge* (Bloomington, IN, 1988).
- 59 Jacques Derrida, "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences," in *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago, 1978). See especially page 282: "This moment [of the decentering of European thought] is not first and foremost a moment of philosophical or scientific discourse. It is also a moment which is political, economic, technical, and so forth. One can say with total security that there is nothing fortuitous about the fact that the critique of ethnocentrism—the very condition for ethnology—should be systematically and historically contemporaneous with the destruction of the history of metaphysics."
- 60 It is worth pointing out that the proletariat—the absent cause of Barthes's essay, in which the one kind of speech that cannot be mythologized is proletarian speech—is displaced toward the colonies: "Today it is the colonized peoples who assume the full ethical and political condition described by Marx as being that of the proletariat" (Roland Barthes, "Myth Today," in *Mythologies*, trans. Annette Lavers [New York, 1972], 148 fn 25).
- 61 Foucault, *The Order of Things*, 377.
- 62 When Deleuze and Guattari claim, for example, that "Oedipus is always colonization pursued by other means, it is the interior colony, and . . . here at home, where we Europeans are concerned, it is our intimate colonial education" (Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Robert Hurley et al. [Minneapolis, 1983], 170), it must be understood that "colonialism" here is very far from being merely a metaphor.
- 63 Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, 373.
- 64 *Ibid.*, 373.
- 65 Don Ihde, *Listening and Voice: A Phenomenology of Sound* (Athens, OH, 1976), 159.
- 66 Jacques Attali, *Noise: The Political Economy of Music*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis, 1985).