Excess Baggage: A Modern Theory and the Conscious Amnesia of 
Latin Americanist Literary Criticism
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Abstract

*Excess Baggage* is a study of modernity's supersessive, paradoxical attempts to out-think thought. This methodology, never autochthonous to any context despite its claims, is traced through one of its more extreme moments, the Enlightenment, and then through the work of Freud, Nietzsche, and Marx (and their more recent postmodern acolytes) to the Reformation. Although these thinkers are self-differentiating, the divisions are artificial, for each, even in present formats, references a preternatural origin that is subsequently projected into the future, disavowing history's ability to perceive itself as anything other than revolutionary.

If this theory is dangerous in Europe, never equal to either reality or culture, never explaining its own past or exceptions to its hegemony, it is at least as dangerous in Latin America. Latin American literature, however, perhaps because it came of age internationally in the Paris of the 1960s, has become almost uniformly susceptible to the same discourse's single approach. Visit any conference, read almost any secondary / tertiary text, and discover that a disillusioned Latin America is engaged in a paradoxical quest for an origin, an outside to thought, that its culture is at its best when it exemplifies the latest in philosophy. In contrast, I trace Latin Americanism, post-1960, through readings by its critics-cum-theorists, as dictatorially assigning a univocal reading to a continent's cultural production, regardless of how ethical the theory may seem to itself. Though a predominantly metacritical work, a reading of philosophy and its Latin Americanist manifestations, there is also much comparative reading of European, North and Latin American literature.

Meaning has always existed in all such contexts, but is either eradicated or misread by the premises of our critical equipment. In
reality or fiction, I am for an admission of contextualised mnemotechny, inevitable in thought regardless, and the real danger in the present milieu.
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Preface

At least some remarks on methodology, beyond the word limit of an "Abstract," are surely in order. This text began as several possible texts, via manifold propositions, all of which flaunted some form of argument regarding modernity and Latin Americanism. Their common denominator became the ensuing pages. For years, the colleagues I most respect have maintained that Latin Americanist criticism is weak, and I may only hope that this contribution assists in explaining why.

It is an aphorism of academic book-writing that the writer's expertise outstrips the reader's within just a few lines, but herein I have attempted to sustain the reader's active involvement, selecting accessible, mainstream exempla. I have no objection to more pedestrian scholarship, practised amidst the dust of the archives, and implicitly write on its behalf, but I have not searched for gaps in the criticism - the criticism itself is the gap. Rather than seizing on the work of the few real detractors, I have attempted to read modernity's theories, or its theory, from the inside, in its own terms, through its archetypal thinkers and defenders. There may be those who do not consider the Abbé de Condillac or Roberto González Echevarría to be sufficiently zealous, sufficiently representative. I concur with Jacques Derrida's reading of Condillac as a proto-deconstructionist, but he is also a monarchist, an obviously institutionalised modern who thus permits a similarly lucid writing of modernity's institutionalised threats. González Echevarría requires no defence. If the selection seems arbitrary, if the reader knows of others who would carry the argument more forcefully, then my point on the ubiquity of the theory is made. Less significantly, the second chapter is predominantly philosophical, for I had no desire to continually reformulate the theory with every instance of Latin Americanism in the third.
In Plato’s words, Socrates avows that “the individual is not self-sufficient” (The Republic 58), or, in Stephen Greenblatt’s more recent version, “There is no such thing as a human nature independent of culture” (Renaissance Self-Fashioning 4). Both have informed my endeavours herein, and are a rebuttal to Harold Bloom’s passionate recreation of the culture of Latin America in The Western Canon, neatly summarised by his citing of Pablo Neruda’s “It is easier for us to be surrealistic because everything we know is new” (479). In the absence of such novelty, of a recourse to a cultureless zone, Greenblatt’s statement begs the question of what we are to do with the culture on which we are necessarily dependent. I hope, again, that the following is a response. It is inherently contradictory, of course, to experience an aversion for modernity while simultaneously living and working very much within it. Philip Sherrard, another Englishman who experienced a similar aversion, subsequently converting to Orthodoxy and moving to an Aegean island, suggests that artists who live this contradiction “are simply deluding themselves when they talk of being in the front line in a cultural battle against the domination of machines, the depravity of taste, the vast inhumanity that typify our contemporary societies: they are the servants and victims and instruments of exactly the influences that have shaped these societies, whatever gesture of defiance or cry of anger they may make against them” (34). My own cries may, therefore, be forlorn, but they are cries from within, for a future within, nonetheless. I am indebted, beyond the possibility of repayment, to those who have made this life of contradiction not only bearable but wondrous. They each have their theses, though not all are composed in double-spaced Courier 10. I thank, however inadequately, Mark Slater, Jason Wilson, Stephen Hart, David Henn, Gonzalo de Montis Kramer, Heather Martin, Marcelo Guimarães, Catherine Davies, Lucille Kerr,
Simon Davis, Roberto Ignacio Díaz, Martin Potter, Paul Ilie, Ramón Araluze, the late Revd. Peter Hale, Gordon Minter, Annella McDermott, Charles Presberg, Moshe Lazar, Tapan Mehta, César Bolívar Linares, Ángel Toribio, Mary Clements, Olive Watts, Robin, Veronica, Michael and Simon Pitcher, and Olivia, the future of our past. The flaws, in a text that invites fragility, are entirely my own.
For Sam
Even the simplest corporeal entity — a perceptible drop of water, for instance — proves to be more than a molecular aggregate; it exceeds the physical domain, not in a quantitative sense, to be sure, but categorically. Quantum theory, thus, entails an ontological limit theorem: it discerns the transcendence of the corporeal domain vis-à-vis the physical.

"Science and the Restoration of Culture." Wolfgang Smith (89)

There remains but one course for the recovery of a sound and healthy condition — namely, that the entire work of the understanding be commenced afresh, and the mind itself be from the outset not left to take its course, but guided at every step; and the business be done as if by machinery.

The New Organon: Or True Directions Concerning the Interpretation of Nature. Francis Bacon (34)

Poetry is to be diagnosed as ‘dangerous’ because it evokes and recalls, is a kind of anamnesis of, i. e. is an effective recalling of, something loved. In that sense it is inevitably ‘propaganda,’ in that any real formal expression propagands the reality which caused those forms and their content to be.

The Anathemata: Fragments of an Attempted Writing. David Jones (21)
One
A History of Unreason

Among the testicle-hunting Danakil in the leopard-coloured lands of Ethiopia, tracking his way 'par des routes horribles rappelant l'horreur présumé des pays lunaires,' a country of tearing thorns, black acacia trees, glinting schists, and shimmering white salt pans, he found himself again. In his search for mental calm, Rimbaud found that he was a small-time honest provincial bourgeois from Charleville. This is what he was. This he could not change.

Bruce Chatwin

There are very few, if any, genuinely new ideas in the world. The more ethical among us occasionally confess that the ontological choice is one of latching on to one or two preexistent trains of thought and, process of refined tinkering firmly in hand, set off in relentless pursuit. A more common approach, however, is to posit the refinement itself as a moment of peripeteia, as some form of eschatological methodology which in fact merely masquerades as the key to breaking with a dull-witted past and forging a more rational future. Perhaps amidst the prevailing currents of blind devotion to the whims of the progressive imagination, apprehending the present via disciplined and frequently dogmatic prior ideology seems cerebrally numbing, or at best delusively conservative. I would suggest that for centuries our solipsistic imagination has run amuck but only in a single, absurdly uniform direction, so disdainful of all alternatives that the latter are so devoid of tedium as to be almost unrecognisable. Yet, if any of the following errs towards repetition, then at least it is striking home.

Let us begin specifically, microcosmically, for the field is strewn with nebulous attitudes. Étienne Bonnot, Abbé de Condillac, tends to be perceived as a behavioural analyst. According to the translators' introduction to his Philosophical Writings (PW), "From the first psychiatrist Philippe Pinel's use of observation of the mentally
infirm to the application of Maria Montessori's sensory training of the child, the social sciences have explicitly relied on Condillac's genetic theory of mental operations" (xi). Briefly, the Abbé, a Grenoblois, was born into the French nobility in 1714. His father, Gabriel, the Vicomte de Mably, served as an advisor to the royal family. Condillac himself, despite a visual impediment which hampered his early education, was taken under the wing of a local priest, continued his studies at the Sorbonne, was ordained in 1740, and ultimately tutored Duke Ferdinand, the grandson of Louis XV. By the time of his election to the Académie Française in 1768, the Abbé had published extensively though rather exclusively on sensationalism, thus introducing the French public to Bacon's and subsequently Locke's theories on the material nature of thought. The relevance of this profile here is simply that biographically Condillac was not a socially marginal figure, someone who was subsisting in an intellectual vacuum, resisting the conventions of civilisation at every turn. He was neither disowned by his contemporaries nor lacks more recent disciples.

Condillac's persistent thesis relies on debunking distortive philosophy. Owing to a supposedly natural genealogy which defines the history of thought as pretentiously abstract, linguistic over-signification, almost all philosophy becomes distorted, and there is little room for stylistic pleasantry within these parameters. You may experiment for yourself, but the frank delivery is my primary motive for selecting this particular Enlightenment figure from a plethora of viable candidates, as any random page will yield a surfeit of unashamedly blatant axioms. "A Treatise on the Sensations," for example, begins with the following précis: "The main purpose of this work is to show how all our knowledge and our faculties come from the senses or, to be more precise, from sensation" (PW 155). The
replacement or rather displacement of philosophy will enable our prelinguistic and therefore uncorrupted consciousness to regain a foothold. "Good metaphysics began before languages, and they owe it to the better part of their nature. But this metaphysics was then less a science than an instinct. Nature guided men without their knowing it" (PW 396). Condillac is convinced that he has discovered a primordial, latent truth, that he has succeeded in divesting himself of manifest yet false learning in order to return to a purely ingenuous, quantifiable knowledge. If the word "knowledge" seems inappropriate, then we begin to behold the specious beauty of this system, for such is its destructive magnitude that in sweeping away the years of thought it robs us of the terminology to either describe or counter it. There is a lucid attempt here to pronounce the final word, not only in terms of ontological stances, but literally the final word. Any opposition to the theory will prove inherently superstitious, naïve, unquantifiable. As usual, Condillac is explicit on this last point, decreeing that "We have not invented this method, we have only found it" (PW 355), thus precountering any potential rebuttals as mere invention, as complicit with the biased, superstructural voice of artificial authority, since "those in power want the abuses and prejudices to continue" (PW 386).

This strategy, however pragmatic it may seem, becomes a precarious undertaking, for even within its own logic, even within the pages of the Abbé's own works, two quandaries repeatedly present themselves, both derived from the same source. The latter may admittedly be implicit, but it is nonetheless evident that in practice Condillac is unwilling to cast off the perception of the social superstructure, select a suitably primitive weapon, and stride down his deconstructive telos to the archae of his genealogy alone. Having defined the positivist cornerstone of the argument, the theory of
sensationalism, Condillac must now overtly establish his credentials as a man of his time. Amidst a spate of alleged altruism, therefore, the theory receives a rationalist, systematic veneer of objectivity, as we are proffered a blueprint for potentially communal action, thus prompting the genesis of our own path to similar enlightenment.

Firstly, how is it possible “to forget everything that we have learned, to take up our ideas again at their origin” (PW 386) or, as Condillac would have it, “how is the proper control of the senses learned?” (PW 347). The key here is to recognise that in childhood we have all already experienced a true beginning, an unfettered procurement of the theory of correct observation, precisely because we were wholly unaware that we were procuring it. Children “acquire knowledge without our help” (PW 348), indeed “in spite of the obstacles we put in the way of the development of their faculties” (PW 348).

Whether Condillac is cognizant of the paradoxical nature of remembering oblivion is certainly questionable, but at least he has rescued oblivion from the remote annals of history, resetting it within a more immediate, tangible past. Although the claim is that “hardly do we begin to emerge from childhood than we have already formed a multitude of judgements about which nature no longer informs us” (PW 349), infancy is a universal stage, a stage when all have glimpsed the purity of the senses, when “Everyone has chanced to control them well, at least sometimes” (PW 347). This conjectured ubiquitous accessibility is insufficient for Condillac, however, for perhaps his entire methodology may still be mistaken as a somewhat vague, regressive folly. The notion of allowing us to rediscover our nature unguided is simply too laissez-faire, too animalistic, and humanism is unable to cope with the lack of an assurance that we are progressing towards scientific domination, towards the perfection of the human. As Ernst Cassirer suggests in The
Philosophy of the Enlightenment. "The value of system, the esprit systématicque, is neither underestimated nor neglected; but it is sharply distinguished from the love of system for its own sake, the esprit de système" (8). In the Abbé's case, we may read esprit de système as the distortion of presumably conventional erudition and, sure enough, he is only too eager to exhibit his alternative esprit systématicque, his second quandary, the correction of language.

Despite Condillac's misgivings regarding our propensity for linguistic giddiness, for taking "words devoid of sense for principles" (PW 356), this is supposedly due to our own semantic fiddling as opposed to the now utterly commonplace assumption of the existence of a flaw, intrinsic to language as a symbolic system which can only represent, not be, reality. Although there are undertones of Saussure here, therefore, and certainly the two men are not at odds in relation to semiotic fickleness, Condillac believes he has solved this dilemma via language itself, and is therefore the more optimistic yet less theoretically dramatic of the two. If the pure evolution of analysis is to continue, then we continue to require a means of communication, though the latter must conform to similar standards of purity, thereby eliminating the gap between the perceived verbal eccentricities of the eighteenth century and true, constant metaphysics. It will come as no surprise to learn that the Abbé has a penchant for the language of gesture, and that once verbalised "Languages were precise as long as men spoke only of things related to their primary needs" (PW 393). Such precision proves entirely acceptable and thus, as with his social theory, Condillac quests after the recapture of a simpler age, after the same archæ, yet he must also remain consistent in portraying the regression as a twist of sophistication, as a forward thrust: "[S]cientific progress depends solely on the progress of languages"
(PW, 410) or, if you prefer, "the development of our ideas and faculties unfolds only by means of signs" (PW 418). The paradox is encapsulated, and unfortunately the following is no fabrication on my part, in the exactitude of algebra, to which ontology may apparently be reduced. This does not mean some algebraic form of French, for example, with Condillac paring down the vocabulary or curtailing nuances, but literally mathematical algebra, "a work of genius" (PW 395) owing to its status as "the simplest of all languages" (PW 406). Indeed, the chapter entitled (typically monotonously, which is the point) "How Reasoning is Simple When Language Itself is Simple" (PW 405-11) contains several bona fide algebraic equations, via which we are able to calculate an unknown from a set of knowns. The fact that these computations are only too clinically resolved is difficult to refute in mathematical terms, for their knowns are derived from the movement of tokens between hands. Even here, of course, it remains arguable that symbols such as "x" and "y" are fundamentally still signs, just as words are, and that scientific jargon is subject to the same arbitrariness as any other language. Whether algebra narrows the gateway to superstition or distortion is irrelevant, for the gap still exists. Condillac, however, is loathe to promote such absolute, a priori, semiotic negativity, since the dichotomous nature of his polemic rests on reining in the misuse of language whilst simultaneously exhibiting its potentially lucid or material function. Thus, with the caveat that metaphysical propositions must be reduced to their most basic form, to knowns, before calculation, "like the equations \( x - 1 = y + 1 = 2y - 2 \), go through different transformations to become \( y = 5 \) and \( x = 7 \), sensation likewise goes through different transformations to become understanding" (PW 414). Given its artificiality, is this manoeuvre constructive or, for that matter,
possible, either outside or even within the bounds of Condillac’s text? Here begins Jacques Derrida.

Whatever your preconceptions apropos the viability of the Derridian agenda, *The Archeology of the Frivolous: Reading Condillac*, initially an introduction to the Abbé’s “An Essay on the Origin of Human Knowledge” though subsequently reprinted in its own right, bears the protective tone of most prefaces. Derrida is quick to unmask the sullied history of the linguistic tools at Condillac’s disposal, redefining philosophy as “the science of origins and true beginnings” (34), immediately eschewing any lingering abstract connotations in favour of “the new metaphysics” (35) of the “Essay”. This second stab, which both men prefer to describe as primary, as the dawn of metaphysics, is now “the true generation of knowledge” (35), for “an actually inaugural practice of analysis can finally dissolve, destroy, decompose the first first philosophy” (35-6), the latter being a pseudo-knowledge based upon professedly Aristotelian principles of presumptive generalisation with which we have hitherto engaged in self-deception. Decomposition is one of the “Essay”’s pet rationales, but if the verbs in the preceding quotation seem to be pilfered from the manual of post-structuralism rather than Derrida’s paraphrasing of Condillac, this is not by coincidence. Although the *Archeology* is principally an informative as opposed to a tyrannical work, with Derrida intermittently priming his reader for a littering of extensive quotations from the “Essay”, the two respective lexicons are bound to overlap, since one forms a theoretical precursor of the other. The Abbé may be less blustery, less of a liberal extremist, but his interlocutor is doggedly emphatic that in the entire opus “Condillac will never have affirmed that the sign is first in experience in general” (94). The more recent project’s modus operandi is to present a
suitably disillusioned, and therefore modern figure, rather than a fanciful ideologist who simply replaced one chimeric system with another. The thought that Condillac somehow failed to perceive the representative fallacy inherent in algebra must be negated, whilst underscoring the empowering humanist conception of a symbology which "bears our freedom the highest, the one of which we are the greatest 'masters'" (94). This, for Derrida, is the "Essay"'s contribution, which arguably lies in its author's intention, in the methodical infusion of meaning into the algebraic system, as opposed to stemming from the algebra itself. Both men seem propelled by the image of an unsuspecting public which has anabolically absorbed a set of inherited cultural norms without question, a process which has clandestinely eclipsed the individual's will to power, or native, singular, rightful truth. It is Condillac's "institution of arbitrary signs which are entirely at our disposal or control" (110; the emphasis obviously being Derrida's) that arouses his later reader, for all meaning is man's here (from whence it is but a small step to man is all-meaningful), and we may reassert our desired lack of authoritative restraint.

Admittedly, the twentieth-century text indulges in more excessively emancipated flurries, beginning with the statement that the "Essay" "should have opened the doors to a nameless science" (33), thus specifically alluding to Condillac's predicament with words such as metaphysics and philosophy but also manifesting the Abbé's proximity to the most liberated position of disowning language altogether. Similarly, whilst Derrida approves of the move to divest the signifier of its vanity, its surplus, he is explicitly all-encompassing in identifying the source of such uselessness:

This frivolity does not accidentally befall the sign. Frivolity is its congenital breach: its entame, arche, beginning, commandment, its putting in motion and order-if at least,
deviating from itself, frivolity, the sign's disposability, can ever be or present itself. Since its structure of deviation prohibits frivolity from being or having an origin, frivolity defies all archeology, condemns it, we could say, to frivolity. (118-19)

Thus, frivolity becomes an inevitable yet interminable end unto itself. Is this an alternative proposal? Perhaps, if we are able to live with a wholly negative definition of semiotics, if revelling in the unbridled joy of throw-away subjectivity constitutes a replacement programme.

Unlike Condillac, who is under positivist pressure to suggest some semblance of an objective course, to combat the frivolity with his own esprit systématique, Derrida has no such moderating qualms. The point is that yes, the Archeology, with its occasional shock tactics, tends to transcend the "Essay", but only via the latter's preexistent path. These are by no means two mutually exclusive theories, and it is precisely the lack of this exclusion which proves contradictory, since both men begin from a position which claims marginality, distance from the superstructure, as its sine qua non.

Although this uneasiness stems from ideology, its implications are entirely practical and far from frivolous. If Condillac's fundamental method is to divest himself of the successive layers of fatuous erudition, then invoking precursors such as Bacon and Locke, neither of whom are run-of-the-mill, monosyllabic or preferably grunting backwoodsmen, is surely a dubious manoeuvre. Indeed, if the only means of apprehending the theory is to "have learned it from nature" (PW 419), how is Derrida's classical education, and in fact Derrida's reading of Condillac (both the physical act and any subsequent intellectual pondering) either ideologically consistent or even healthy? Despite the claim of universal rejuvenation, anyone with a modicum of education is excluded from such consensus due to the exposure to falsehood, yet it is the latter which initially led to a
comprehension of the claim. No matter how truncated the Abbé’s style becomes, it never borders on algebraic discourse. Condillac’s conviction that his work is intended “only for the uninstructed” (PW 419) is unfounded, for this ideal audience is nonexistent. Whilst the Philosophical Writings themselves are apparently shielded from the system in spite of their patent debt to it, the very fact that I am writing this paragraph and that you are reading it becomes complicit in the overriding process of verbal prevarication, an act of perversion performed by those “whose nature has been corrupted by bad habits” (PW 420).

The translators of the Philosophical Writings are only too aware of this excessive pragmatism, asserting that it resulted in Condillac’s “official status as metaphysician for the acute critics of the French Enlightenment” (xi). Cassirer, on the other hand, never tires of downplaying the hitherto customary magnification of a “wholly intellectualistic” (105) movement as “a too narrow conception of the idea of enlightenment” (104), paraphrasing one of Condillac’s colleagues in the following quotation:

According to Diderot, anyone who is not satisfied with the visible and seeks the invisible causes of visible effects, is no wiser than a peasant who attributes the motion of a clock whose mechanism he does not understand to a spiritual being concealed in it. (67)

The Abbé used to meet with both Diderot and Rousseau at the Palais-Royal, and the above is by no means at odds with the essence of his own work. My contention is that it is impossible to evade such peasantry all the time, while simultaneously craving the presence of a supposedly indoctrinated society. Regardless of how persuasive a thesis on the radical overhaul of the superstructure may be, there is an awkwardness in marrying this revolutionary intellectual life with the disciplined work of a tutor, the acceptance of accolades from the Académie
Française, or even such mundane tasks as buying a newspaper or a baguette. To Condillac’s credit in terms of theoretical consistency, he succeeded in recognising at least one aspect of potentially glaring peasantry in the form of Catholic dogma, a system of thought founded on the inadequacy of the human and developed via ecclesiastic instruction. The Abbé never practised his religious vocation. The notion of a Divinity, however, pervades the Philosophical Writings, and although it is more the Protestant God of Bacon, a God whom we may only perceive intuitively rather than through contemplation or even algebraic discourse, this remains a blindly fideist position at which Diderot would doubtless have sniffed. The difference between Diderot and Condillac though, is merely one of degree, for nobody is capable of straddling the incompatibility of these two worlds in anything other than an unflattering fashion. There is an intrinsic dissatisfaction in living within the system yet attempting to continuously disrupt it. At best, the jarring itself becomes perpetual, never attaining the transcendence of absolute frivolity. This dilemma would ultimately be known as Mannheim’s paradox, which Paul Ricoeur synthesises with his usual aplomb: “We speak about ideology, but our speech is itself caught up in ideology” (160). As paraphrased by Ricoeur, Karl Mannheim laboured under the illusion that he had discovered an out-clause in “this reciprocal process of suspicion” (162) by postulating sociology to be a science of pristine impartiality, and the sociologist as an “absolute observer” (166), a “null point” (166). Appropriately, Ricoeur acknowledges the study of a veritable enigma but presents the potential chink as part and parcel of the paradox, as an example of such self-referentiality’s insidious, pervasive nature, rather than as an objective, meta-ideological statement. It is simply semantic tomfoolery, regardless of whether the effort is genuine or the
trickster perceives himself as such, to propose a "nonevaluative judgment" (166) since "to judge is to use a system of norms, and each system is in some sense ideological" (166). Ricoeur praises the attempt, albeit somewhat underhandedly, as "perhaps the most honest failure in theory" (166), a remark which we may apply, probably too euphemistically, to those other unwitting purveyors of the paradox expounded upon above.

It is not my intention to limit this predicament to the French Enlightenment. Even Condillac is capable of corroborating its prior existence, Mannheim's principal focus is Marxism, and no doubt Derrida will not be its last associate. The second half of the eighteenth century, however, with its conclusion in a particularly material revolution, does represent one of the argument's fiercer, more obvious displays, and consequently provides its skin and bones. By then, the theory had been reduced to such an easy mark that any would-be philosopher with a quill was able to reinscribe it under the guise of a mildly different genealogy. Condillac, and he is not alone here, fails to see that the ramifications of dismissing virtually all past thought include the possibility that the theoretical door is left so conspicuously open that anyone may waltz in. If acquired knowledge is surplus to requirements, or in fact detrimental to them, it is surely erroneous to acquire that of Condillac himself. The theory designed to end all theory, therefore, becomes instead an interminable chain of ideological supersession. The purity (however illusory) of the origin is paramount here. The cavemen tend to become uglier, grunting and clubbing with evermore alarming severity or frivolity, yet very few readers, if any, succumb wholeheartedly to this practical impetus, settling instead for the aforementioned position of an awkward straddle between civil being and feral lusting. They are, after all, still
readers. It is arguable that this process of succession must be finite, for at some point frivolity must exhaust itself, when at last we will conjure up the insuperably unblemished, ultimate beginning. The terminology of these perpetually more radical hypotheses, however, remains permeated by that of the superstructure, of academia, ensconced in Mannheim's paradox to such an extent that the end result is little more than the posited obsolescence of an immediate precursor and the adoption of the given philosopher by the seemingly critiqued superstructure itself. What if the methodology becomes so domesticated, so frequently recurrent, that the uneasy proposition of progression via regression is axiomatic, all the while defining convention though (or through) deceptively railing against it?

Simon Schama's *Citizens: A Chronicle of the French Revolution*, tenders much material substantiation of precisely this scenario. In the preface, Schama himself admits that his brand of history, with its aggressively forged emphasis on the immediacy of contextualisation as opposed to the acerbity of more overtly vicarious, sepia-tinged studies, "runs the risk of being seen as a mischievously old-fashioned piece of storytelling" (xvi). The unashamed bid "to bring a world to life rather than entomb it in erudite discourse" (xix), a sentiment which pervades all Schama's work, has assuredly led to a certain ostracism from his supposedly most erudite audience. According to the Daily Telegraph's John Coldstream, within the academic community "Schama has been variously dubbed 'the dilettante don', 'the Oliver Sacks of history', 'a stuntman, a complete show-off'" (A5). Despite the fact that Hayden White is cited as one of *Citizens* primary influences, with explicit reference to his theory on history's need of a fictitious narrative structure in order to vouchsafe intelligibility, a theory which is hardly at odds with our postmodern cynicism in relation to the
subject’s potential veracity, Schama’s status remains that of a wholly non-analytical, pragmatic member of the glitterati. At Graduate School, you are far more likely to be served up with Michel Foucault’s Discipline and Punish, or some other seemingly more sophisticated, more genuinely expository work, than to even hear of Citizens. The latter, therefore, via such logic, because (rather than in spite) of its readability, must be erroneous. Since it “fell out of the shops, garlanded with fabulous reviews and an N.C.R.2 award” (Coldstream A5), it must surely, as “one critic would write, ‘leave us with an anecdotal, formless blur’” (Coldstream A5). Whilst I would affirm that the book is indeed stylistically anecdotal, it is paradoxically this biographical, often disrespectful stance which lends it a coherent theoretical edge. In concentrating on the cult of personality, Schama evinces a churlish superstructure of aristocratic factions, each striving to outstrip the others not in terms of allegiance to the past, to the ancien régime, but instead to evermore radical versions of Condillac. Yes, the notion of a seedy overworld, with power limited only by the subjective whims of whichever egocentric clique happens to portray itself with the most nascent purity, is certainly at odds with academic interpretations of the Revolution. There is no room here for some nationally endorsed, disaffected bourgeoisie, struggling to enact its self-evident yet hitherto abstract rights. Nor does the concept of an inherently honest, politically active proletariat carry much weight. The fact that the aristocracy was already hurtling towards modernity before 1789 is, nonetheless, a thesis, or, if you will, ideological, regardless of Schama’s preference for displaying it in practice. My purpose in selecting Citizens is simply to illustrate how impractical or even irrational it is to live Condillac, which is essentially to say Bacon, Locke, Mannheim, Diderot, Derrida, or Rousseau.
In my soft-back copy, Schama’s chronicle is over nine hundred (albeit they accessible) pages long, so the following is but a severely synthetical indication of a far more fundamental absurdity. As a prominent example, though merely one of many twists of hamartia, the voice of would-be citizenry, of the impulse towards an authentic, equalising archae, resonated within the royal family itself:

Indeed the King's father, the Dauphin, was said to have been so moved by Rousseau's praise for simple artisanal crafts that it was he who provided the education of a locksmith for his son. Guided by her dressmaker Rose Bertin, Marie-Antoinette made no secret of favoring the relatively simple costumes, much strewn with fresh flowers and bucolic affectations, that the cult required. Her friend Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun obliged further by painting her portrait in this startlingly informal manner, complete with straw baskets and bonnets. The creation at the Petit Trianon of the "Rustic Village" (Hameau Rustique) for the Queen by the landscape architect Mique, complete with beribboned cows, Alpine sheep and water mill, was a sincere if disastrously misjudged attempt to cultivate the innocence of rural life amidst the pomposity of court protocol. (155-56)

The fact that the monarchy was so zealously swayed by Rousseau is a testament to how innocuous, how healthily natural, this theory may seem. Marie-Antoinette, in a lunge to portray herself as communing with an assumedly earthy People, a manoeuvre entirely compatible with the intellectual spirit of the time, remained oblivious to any erosion of her public position, or at least failed to identify the source of such erosion as the very theory adopted to counteract it. Of course, lusting after some form of lost innocence, which entails a blanket expulsion of any system of thought between the origin of such innocence and the time when that origin is rediscovered, is at odds with the idea of a monarchy. In redefining the concept of a Queen as no longer tied to education, tradition, or indeed any link with the past, Marie-Antoinette had unwittingly signed her own death warrant, but in revolutionary terms. Schama’s constant refrain is that the Revolution was auto-instigated by the upper echelon of French society, thus
representing the Queen as culpable for "The deconstruction of her image . . . . She had stripped herself of the mask of royalty in the interests of Nature and Humanity" (226). It is surely possible, however, given the above argument regarding Condillac, to transcend Schama and perceive Marie-Antoinette as only another naïve though infamous victim of supersession, of an inherent flaw in an apparently reasonable, benign, all too accessible theory. By 1793, the consequences of an excessively enlightened monarchy acting upon the recommendations of Rousseau were extreme and visible, but the ideology was and is open to all, with essentially the same mental and social repercussions.

Perhaps some may consider "recommendations" to be too strong a word, for the aura cultivated around Rousseau is one of a benevolent, sincere, paternal figure who, devoid of Condillac’s proclivity towards a comprehensive algebra for example, offered no communal modus operandi. The position is not unfounded, for it is this figure, the solitary wanderer, who stalks the work of both Wordsworth and Emerson, and there is no obvious diagram for revolutionary mass violence in Rousseau. A claim that La nouvelle Héloïse was directly responsible for the self-perpetuated guillotining of successive layers of the aristocracy would hardly stand up in court. Whilst there is no utopian ethic here, however, it is a mistake to overemphasise this benignity, since in metaphysical terms the methodology of a treatise such as A Discourse on Inequality is consistent with the prevailing train of philosophical thought. Marie-Antoinette did not misinterpret Rousseau, but rather learned the modish lesson of accepting her congenital liberty as merely another member of humanity a little too well. The Discourse’s negative polemic may consist of the antisocial bewailings of a single individual, and the anonymous preface to the Penguin
translation may parrot the commonly accepted supposition that the work contributed to Rousseau's "new note of defiant independence" (1), but imagine its elite readership undergoing similar trauma while attempting to embrace a series of simultaneously yet individually divined origins. Even if we assume that the book staked out some truly virgin territory, it would only remain entirely independent for as long as no one read or lived it. In reality, Rousseau's project, which by now may sound only too familiar, is to outthink thought via his conviction that "the state of reflection is a state contrary to nature, and that the man who meditates is a depraved animal" (85). This invective is not merely directed against Catholic or Buddhist contemplation, but against contemplation itself, since all "abstract thinking is a painful and not very natural process" (94) which has tamed man's apparently nobler, more instinctive qualities, and rendered him "feeble, timid, servile" (86). Thus, via Rousseau's logic, the history of so-called civilisation becomes instead a history of savagery, a superstructural crime perpetrated against humanity which the Discourse solves through exposing a visceral and therefore veritably civilised origin. There may be no explicit endorsement of the guilelessness of childhood here, but examples of this paradigm, this inversion of our conventional vision of the civilised, are nonetheless still palpably discernible. Apparently the soul of the Carib Indian "dwell only in the sensation of its present existence" (90), and his race "has not the intelligence to wonder at the greatest marvels" (90). In fact, as Rousseau would have it, anyone who has evaded the intrinsically praetorian "gaze of the rest of the world" (136) has also evaded the similarly corrupt development of man's "faculty of self-improvement" (88), a process which includes any acquisition of non-physical learning, endows man with an intellectual sense of both the future and the past, and
therefore contaminates our potentially dignified seizure of the immediacy of the moment. This appropriation is not limited to the conjecture of some soporific Caribbean idyll, and Rousseau, though diplomatic in his articulation, is by no means adverse to shock tactics. Consequently, even when the supposedly harmless, self-evident benefits of such seizure are externally enforced, the results are preferable to (more primitively authentic than) the alternative status quo. The following quotation appears at the end of the paragraph on "self-improvement" (88), and I shall leave the reader to determine the extent of how rhetorical the suggested terror may be:

It would be a terrible thing to be obliged to praise as a benefactor he who first suggested to the inhabitants of the shores of the Orinoco the practice of flattening the foreheads of their infants, and so preserving at least a part both of their imbecility and of their original happiness. (88-89)

It is but a small step from flattened body parts to the guillotine, and no step at all from Rousseau to Condillac and the latter's kindred spirits. The Discourse is often defined as the advent of theory in France, or words to that effect, and such statements are constructive with regard to a boorishly consistent line of succession, though this is never their intended meaning (i.e. the advent of a theoretical movement renowned for its innovation). An unconditional presumption of the text's novelty in 1755, however, is dubious, for there is such a wealth of precedent that Rousseau may at best be described as a parasitic regenerator of a hackneyed idea. We may simply take the word of Rousseau himself for this, since the passages on the exploitative nature of private property are explicitly indebted to Locke, who is lauded as "wise" (115), just as those on the genesis of language are prompted by a more recent predecessor: "I might content myself by citing or reproducing here the researches that the Abbé de Condillac has published on this problem, all of which abundantly
confirm my own thoughts and which perhaps indeed gave me the original idea of them" (92). If it seems paradoxical to rely upon the erudition of other scholars in the quest for Dionysian innocence, this is precisely because Rousseau's unoriginal thesis must rudimentarily confront the same unoriginal, inveterate incongruities as Mannheim Inc. As in the latter's case, the Discourse is not written in the terminology of the average Orinoco-dweller, nor will it be read by such an audience, but instead is couched in both the language and the ideology of the culture it is attempting to subvert. Furthermore, as yet another contribution to this ever-burgeoning crescendo of antilogy, Rousseau's reliance upon sources such as Locke, sources which themselves presented trajectories to similarly wholesome moments of epiphany, not only violates these forerunners' intentions to be the eternal, impenetrable clasp on a subsequently non-existent theoretical chain, but must raise questions regarding the Discourse's ability to perform the same trick. At best, Rousseau's Orinoco-dwellers, Carib Indians, and his predilection for "the cry of nature" (93) over the language of mathematics are perhaps more emotive examples of the theory, thereby ensuring his position within Condillac et al.'s coterie, but only as another purveyor of an infinite process of intellectual insurrection. Even the likes of Wordsworth, whose desire for a metaphorically flattened forehead is undeniable, were incapable of living within this vision of an isolated, wholly self-serving, perpetual present all the time, and it is from this dualism that much Romantic yearning stems. Wordsworth, lest we forget the obvious, was a poet writing from within civilisation, a job description which is hardly compatible with a life without words. Although the highest stratum of French society was indeed susceptible to the notion of this embryonic, unfettered, innocent present, and performed what may only be
described as the ungainly straddle between such supposed self-liberation and the residue of the past with Rousseau-esque fervour, it was still a straddle. Marie-Antoinette did not move to the banks of the Orinoco, but continued to exist and even rule from the confines of a world founded on the communal evolution of learning (and I do not mean the "Rustic Village"). Anyone who is capable of reading Rousseau, or indeed capable of reading, regardless of whether you happen to be the Queen of France, is subject to the same history of cerebral surplus. This is no less true of the philosophers themselves. If we are unable to forget the surplus, or if we perceive any merit in it whatsoever, the two systems will coexist in an uneasy symbiosis, with the vitriolic practicality of Rousseau and his colleagues incessantly tugging on or pretending to outstrip the dichotomy though never entirely eclipsing it in a blaze of physical, violent glory. Nobody is either willing or able to instigate this revolution in its totality. Some, however, straddle less uncomfortably than others.

Beneath the specificity, Schama's version of late eighteenth-century France is a chronicle of how clumsy, how infeasible, this position may become. Other than a Queen's newly discovered sensibilité, a more fundamental feature of a so-called enlightened culture is its profound suspicion of language, and the latter's consequent literalisation. Whether or not Condillac is credited explicitly, the dictionary of the Revolution was gleaned from the semiotics of seemingly objective, honest science as opposed to that of potentially distorted beauty. Louis XVI himself, perilously swept up in the physics of ballooning, for example, permitted the Montgolfier brothers to stage their spectacle at Versailles and contributed to the widespread sentiment that the pursuit "was an aspect of the Sublime and that its practitioners were Romantic demigods" (Schama 128). The King may simply
have been inarticulate, and certainly preferred hunting to oratory, but even if we assume the bumbling elocution to be indicative of a genuine lack of facility rather than some bucolic façade, the fact that "Nothing gave him more pleasure than mechanics and as much as possible he chose to live in a world of numbers rather than words, lists rather than utterances" (Schama 54), transformed Louis into merely another theoretically militant activist. In even superficially accommodating the nobility’s reflex asseveration that "the language of citizens was meant to be transparently sincere, direct and unmediated" (Schama 591), the King automatically exposed himself to the same impending usurpation as any advocator of modernity. Rather predictably, therefore, the existence of the monarch became paradoxical, since there would always be other Rousseaus (though they went by the names of Lafayette, Mirabeau, or Robespierre) who would claim to be more militantly transparent, more oblivious to any form of antecedent, more adept at the straddle. The debate becomes one between Condillac’s blissfully ignorant children, "the cry of nature" (Rousseau 93), Diderot’s visibility, and Derridian frivolity (to name but a few of its disputants), which is to say between competing renditions of an identical theory. It was not by coincidence that the France of Robespierre was at least as unstable as that of Louis XVI, for the two men were simply offering variations on a theme, a theme anchored (or rather adrift) on such instability. No matter how radical the variations became, the fact that governing via Rousseau is oxymoronic, either with or without a monarchy, would ultimately dawn on the theory’s successive interpreters. The latter were forced to confront the actual irrationality of the nominally rational stripping of an entire culture of the vestiges of the past, of its existence as a social body. It was not merely that these interpreters failed to fully
convince the populous to cast off its civilised trappings and to seize
its guttural, Dionysian glory, but more significantly the recognition
of their own lack of conviction, of their own inability to forget, of
their inherently fragile, temporary status once empowered. Even
Mirabeau, who owed his high standing within the Constituent Assembly to
a reputation as the allegedly unmediated, plain-speaking voice of the
common man (which is the same as saying to Condillac et al., albeit
indirectly), was eventually intimidated by the more militant Jacobins
and would attempt to broker a deal for a constitutional monarchy. In
order to circumvent the constant threat of supersession, in order to
occupy the void created by the supposedly desired absence of an
established evolution of thought, this schizophrenia, intrinsic to any
interpretation of such enlightenment, is invariably expressed or rather
disguised through a fixation on legality.

The law, in the form of a written constitution to which all
manner of tinkerings may subsequently be appended, seems to meet all
the necessary post-revolutionary criteria. Its discourse may be simple,
systematised, thus ensuring its genuine consistency with the semantic
ideology of the likes of Condillac, and maintaining at least a veneer
of self-evidence, of accessibility. When couched in suitably liberating
phraseology, which would preferably include the mention of certain
inalienable rights, laws may even become virtually autonomous, seeming
to embody "Freedom" with a very capital "F," while simultaneously
shoring up the authority of the legislature itself, thereby comforting
the government with the knowledge that its citizens have somehow
managed to escape Mannheim's paradox, that somehow these brethren are
existing socially, as always, yet are unanimously guided by
revolutionarily transparent principles. Such is the art of governing
via Rousseau. The fact that a culture may already possess an entirely
evenhanded, communal sense of morality is of little consequence, for this system must surely be tainted by years of sinister mediation, so tainted that from now on the people must be entirely reliant upon their omnipotent lawyers to define the benchmarks for right and wrong, as opposed to thinking for themselves. I am not denying that the new legislative code will sometimes overlap with the preexistent modes of thought, and am far from proposing some utopian free-for-all, but the act of continually referencing a pandect which is always more susceptible to a given individual’s distortion than the system it seeks to replace, is not an act of liberation. In practice, the replacement is often more arbitrary, more transient, and devised with less of a consensus than its antecedent. However, providing the patrons of this superficially enlightened, freer, less superstitious code are effective in their peddling, then sooner or later the governed will indeed attempt to suspend all mental activity and allow it to dominate even the most trifling aspects of their lives. The law, in turn, must cover all such trifles, thus justifying its presumptive status as the universal creed of emancipation. It is of little wonder, therefore, that even in the early days of the tumult Schama’s archetypal foreign traveller in France, the steadfast English farmer Arthur Young, “found himself having to deal with passport-obsessed petty officials far more obstructive and obtuse than anything he had experienced under the old regime” (436), or that the long-heralded scheme of mathematically dissecting the nation into uniformly proportioned jurisdictional zones finally transpired:

. . . France was to be rationalized; the ‘hexagon’ - France’s six-pointed shape - to be cubed. For the root 3 seems to have been an obsession of the revolutionary legislators, probably under the sway of Masonic axioms. . . . there were to be eighty-one departments, each measuring 324 square leagues, the addition to the grid being made for Paris. Each would then be conveniently
divided into nine districts and then by a further nine into
communes. (Schama 475)

Ultimately, due to geographical and political nuances, there would be
eighty-three departments, but regardless of such details the underlying
ontological framework here is pure Condillac. The law of Reason, is
merely algebra in action.

It is highly questionable, however, to begin from the only too
common premise of interpreting the imposition of such legal machinery
as the unbridled cockcrow of high science, as the inception of man's
willful subordination of the self to the machine, an act which marked
the brilliance of our intelligence yet simultaneously compromised our
very sense of being. Via this argument, generations of literati would
thereafter struggle to escape the imposition through Romanticism,
Naturalism, Modernism, and whichever other "-isms" we care to perceive
as subsequent to the Enlightenment. Since the vocabulary of
codification tends to be mechanical, it seems to be written against the
primitive soul, against Art. As anyone who has ever striven to teach
even the relatively simple Saussure to students of literature will
testify, with the divergence of academic disciplines the mere mention
of mechanics becomes threateningly inhuman to the non-scientist, and it
thus becomes conceivable to read Rousseau as against, rather than
paralleling, Condillac or Robespierre, as an initially lone voice of
virtuous dissent. This platitude is dispensed at nigh on any conference
in any field. Even an adequately informed analysis such as Richard
Lehan's The City In Literature: An Intellectual and Cultural History,
which predictably establishes the Enlightenment's espousal of "science
and technology" (83), but also acknowledges a marriage of convenience
between this aspect and "the right to pursue, relatively unencumbered,
a sense of self" (83), remains grounded on the assumption that any
literary vision of the city after the eighteenth century must naturally be a reaction against that union. Indeed, in the opening lines of the very next paragraph, Lehan asserts that, rather than defining Rousseau, "Such faith in the new scientific process created on both sides of the Atlantic its own opposition, much of which was codified under the name of romanticism" (83). The possibility that the implementation of a Condillac-styled, utilitarian accidence may in fact be intended to communicate the noble depths of humanity, and that this is as close a simulation of "the cry of nature" (Rousseau 93) as civilisation will probably muster without the literal flattening of foreheads, has passed by almost unnoticed.

Although the terminology may leave a greasy aftertaste compared to that of unsullied Nature, "machine thought," both semantically and in its application, does not represent the subordination of the self but instead the latter's rampant expression. Excessive passport checks are a symptom of a legalised suspicion of privacy, and the patently mathematical demarcation of territory manifests an intellectual thrust towards similarly ostensible translucence, a thrust away from the purported abstruse disingenuousness of the past. The wholesale superstructural adoption of sensationalism, of a shift towards the proposed origin, is evidently difficult to perceive from within the dynamics of sensationalism itself, for the rhetoric of the theory is that of opposition, of continual change, and in confronting the realisation of its ideal the theory would necessarily confront its own extinction. Admittedly, as with the theory, the adopted legal code is always subject to the potential revision of even less mediated, more radically liberated voices, whose positions range from an insistence on an even more lucid, debased form of codification, to suggesting the impossibility of attaining such lucidity through language. These are
arguments over degree, however, over the most efficient method of eradicating any residual intellectual distortion, indeed any intellect, whilst maintaining some skeletal framework of social integrity. The question is one of how to implement Bacon’s legacy, (which includes Rousseau and Romanticism) rather than one of querying the implementation itself. The superstructure, now founded on “Good metaphysics” (FW 396), becomes adept at accommodating the more bellicose pursuers of lucidity, of the archae, often lauding them as heroes of epic proportions, since its own ontology is responsible for producing them, and its philosophical apparatus will always prefer a more emancipated, more innocent version of itself to an entirely different system. To return to my epigraph, even if the arch-marauder Arthur Rimbaud had elected to remain a nomad in Ethiopia, to seize the perpetual moment, he would still have been both intelligible to and esteemed by any “small-time honest provincial bourgeois from Charleville” (Shakespeare 164), for these are simply different versions of the same code. Bruce Chatwin presents the two worlds in a typically dichotomous fashion, and the revelation of this reading is intended to stem from our sudden realisation that Rimbaud’s wanderlust was but an illusion, that at heart the poet was less reactionary, less sensationalist, than is conventionally assumed, and ultimately quested after the safe haven of civilisation. Rimbaud’s own perception of his literary methodology, therefore, as per the following excerpt from a letter written in Charleville (not Ethiopia) in 1871, merely contributes to the supposed façade:

But the problem is to make the soul into a monster, like the comprachicos, you know? Think of a man grafting warts onto his face and growing them there.

I say you have to be a visionary, make yourself a visionary.

A Poet makes himself a visionary through a long, boundless, and systematized disorganization of all the senses. All forms of
love, of suffering, of madness; he searches himself, he exhausts within himself all poisons, and preserves their quintessences. Unspeakable torment, where he will need the greatest faith, a superhuman strength, where he becomes among all men the great invalid, the great criminal, the great accursed - and the Supreme Scientist! (115-16)

This mission statement is, of course, one of extreme wantonness, but in order to take Chatwin at his word we would have to assume that Charleville, in the second half of the nineteenth century, offered an alternative, that there is a philosophical divide between the above statement and the adoption of Condillac et. al’s theory. In order for Chatwin’s Ethiopia to be the natural sanctuary of the theoretical outlaw, the Dionysian stalker, Rimbaud’s Dionysian tendencies would have to be outlawed in France, which means that his methodology must differ from France’s legalised endorsement of the translucent simplicity of “machine thought,” of experience above all else, of sensationalism. The fact that Rimbaud perceived no such difference, that he had no need to mask his aspiration to become “the Supreme Scientist” (116) from his native country, is borne out, only a few lines later in the same letter, by the poet himself: “This eternal art will be functional, since poets are citizens” (117). The non-reactionary vocabulary here is telling, for it is that of a conscientious upholder of enlightened codification. From this perspective, Chatwin’s interpretation is less revelatory than banal, since it becomes obvious that a “bourgeois from Charleville” (Shakespeare 164) would find his essence “Among the testicle-hunting Danakil” (Shakespeare 164), and would be similarly at home on the banks of the Orinoco, or amidst the ignorance of children. Rimbaud’s work may indeed be seen as intellectually corrosive, yet it is entirely in line with his society’s expectations of not only its poets, but its
citizens, and never transcends the latter's metaphysical frame of reference.

The common people, whom the Revolution both invoked and manipulated so freely, were less adept at discerning this frame, and even less capable of living within its parameters. It was not that the urban working class or the rural peasants were illiterate, but that they were not vacuous enough. As Schama asserts, "The 'little schools' promoted by the Catholic missions of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries had evidently done their work well" (180), for "literacy rates in late eighteenth-century France were much higher than in the late twentieth-century United States" (180). The form of education imposed by such Catholic missions, however, with its emphasis on learned ecclesiastic precedent, was at odds with the superstructural plunge into modernisation. Even though Condillac, as but one example, was the recipient of a similarly indoctrinated tutelage, even though it was only via attaining such erudition that the Abbé was able to read Bacon and then, paradoxically, to propose the end of erudition itself, it was this proposal which had transformed the philosopher into the supplier of professedly true, disillusioned intelligence. Although the peasants were therefore indebted to Catholicism for empowering them to read Condillac (or whichever form of the theory trickled down through the ranks), Condillac himself now urged them to become illiterate again, to read only algebraically, to transfer their devotion to a secular, elementary code. These were the underdogs on whose behalf the war was allegedly waged, a hitherto disenfranchised populous whose embodiment of rustic simplicity would be uniformly emulated by any enlightened society. It was surely fantastic to think that such idols would continue to shoulder the burden of years of mediation, to live naively, benightedly, even after they were ushered into the now
effulgent light, into a state of legitimate innocence. Nevertheless, though "the Third Estate wanted, very often, to return to the cocoon" (Schama 322), this cocoon is that of the seemingly stagnant culture of the ancien régime, rather than some yet more animalistic metaphor for the primordial origin. As Schama never tires of illustrating, these potentially most ardent of citizens remained "overwhelmingly royalist" (423), continuing to solicit the omnipotent yet compassionate guidance of (in some cases even fomenting mob violence on behalf of) "a king-father who might redress their grievances" (314), despite the niggle that the current King happened to be Louis XVI. All the inhabitants of a backwater such as Cabrerets were anticipating from the pervasive atmosphere of modernisation was "a decent road and a church" (Schama 314). This is hardly a revolutionary request. It is, however, reactionary, assuming requests of a revolutionary nature are de rigueur, and is far more nefarious from a superstructurally endorsed, Baconian perspective than Rimbaud would ever be. The commonalty was no doubt unaware of its treachery, that by advocating two (though conjoined) archaic systems of thought it was contravening the theoretical agenda of kaleidoscopic supersession towards non-thought, and condemning itself to straddle more uncomfortably than most. Still, these were not yet Rousseau's Orinoco-dwellers, or Chatwin's "testicle-hunting Danakil" (Shakespeare 164), regardless of their apparent material propinquity to such suggested origins, but rather Diderot's intellectual bumpkins who believed in "the invisible causes of visible effects" (Cassirer 67).

This label of cerebral impoverishment is not limited by social status. Not all monarchists or Catholics either were or are paupers, in the economic sense, but Condillac et al.'s non-ideological ideology must portray them as both mentally and physically ignoble, as an
anachronistic freak show. The impulsive vitriol is by no means restricted to monarchism, or Catholicism, but instead encompasses all prior systems of intellectual meaning. It is of little consequence that the only possible exit from Mannheim's paradox is to value, as opposed to befouling, some form of precedent, to assume that at least someone was at least partially constructive. With time, or force, and with a sufficient number of esteemed, ostensibly sophisticated philosophers penning sufficiently convoluted treatises on the joys of "the cry of nature" (Rousseau 93), any past doctrine may be passed off as an illusory, creaking, worm-ridden crutch, which ought to have been discarded long ago. Like Rimbaud, you too may and indeed ought to become an enlightened bourgeois from Charleville. Against this backdrop, the very act of remembering is a precarious proposition, for to think any more than algebraically is to be a clodhopper. Even algebra may be too excessive. Everyone, of course, is subject to the perils of surplus thought at least some of the time, so the conscientious agent of frivolity must always be on guard against the intrusion of any form of distortion, constantly redefining the code in order to vouchsafe its transparency. This ever-multiplying breed of ontology, which requires no desire for edification from its subscribers, was ingrained in Western consciousness long before Derrida, to the extent of ousting all others as empirically indefensible. Its current masters, the heroes of our age, are merely preaching to the converted.
The terms 'deconstruction' and 'structuralism' are not invoked as regularly today as they once were; but the fundamental ideas about language, truth and morality that they express are more widespread than ever. Indeed, deconstructive themes and presuppositions have increasingly become part of the general intellectual atmosphere: absorbed to such an extent that, like the ideas of psychoanalysis, they float almost unnoticed, part of the ambient spiritual pollution of our time.

"Experiments Against Reality." Roger Kimball (207)

Perhaps there are no completely foreign countries any more. Certainly the anthropologists now think so: no matter how far they travel, it is said, they always find that a Coca-Cola salesman has got there before them. There is no culture at present that is completely alien to us.

But the culture of the past is alien to us, and we need to realise this.

An Introduction to Medieval Philosophy. C.J.F. Martin (12)

It is all too easy to assume, hubristically, that the Rimbauds of the world, along with the theoretical bent hitherto described, always have and continue to represent a fringe element, but then our capacity for inventing artificial divisions is boundless.

My local, "themed" coffeehouse probably looks much like yours, since despite its location in a twenty-first century strip mall it is straining to become a simulacrum of its less homogenised Umbrian equivalent and thus embody a conjectured Italian earthiness. The theme is certainly repeated with little or no differentiation in even minor, steadfastly conservative North American and European communities, and perhaps by now has succeeded in reinterpreting or consuming its origin with the opening of a franchise in Umbria itself. Already therefore, purely in terms of design, in the mathematical precision of such places, we experience a uniformity which can, admittedly, become reassuring. Regardless of where we happen to wind up, though Umbria is as good an example as any, there is always the possibility of obtaining an identical cup of coffee, brewed via a known, hegemonically preordained formula, amidst pseudo-Umbrian surroundings which are so
cheeringly similar to our pseudo-Umbrian surroundings in Seattle. Furthermore, at a linguistic level, in order to participate in the formula unscathed, the assurance of its parameters must not be transcended. There must be a tacit acceptance of the relinquishing of thought, a caveat for entrance which dictates that both employees and customers will remain within the prescribed terminology, only exchanging phrases such as "Grande Frothaccino" in the most mechanical of fashions. To suggest even a petty deviation from the code, to inquire as to the definition of the term "Bar Drinks," is to mark oneself as unenlightened, as a philistine who is still labouring under the illusions of a fatuous, Old World brand of erudition which modernity must ostracise.

This sense of estrangement is by no means limited to the contemporary coffeehouse, but rather may be recognised pervasively, as a norm, and its masking as a requisite social skill. At some point in the past the word "water" was perhaps a sufficiently obtuse simplification, as close to a one to one relationship between signifier and signified as society could muster without reducing reality to its chemical constituents. In a restaurant equipped with computerised ordering, however, "water" is merely a number, and it is frequently obvious that staff would prefer patrons to confess to their complicity, to order numerically instead of distorting the system with their antiquated, suspicious verbiage. All fast-food chains operate on this basis, and although they tend not to rationalise the procedure to themselves in the terms above, on occasion, in a fit of ostranenije, employees may be forced to confront the vacuum between the latest corporate ideology and an ashamed elderly couple who have no idea what a "McTasty Junior" is, or that if they had simply requested a "No. 4" it would have arrived with free fries and a soft drink. It must be
emphasised that at such moments of estrangement it is the elderly
couple, despite the presumed benefits of their vocabulary, who are at
best embarrassingly and somewhat patronisingly indulged, often by their
fellow consumers. Although the elderly may have assimilated and even
advocated prior supersessions in the code, they have now been
marginalised by its subsequent devolution. It seems difficult to deny
that the ubiquitous fast-food enterprises, these outlets of modernity,
are mainstream phenomena, and that to question their modus operandi is
to question the superstructure itself. Although this structure has a
precultural, preconscious base as its objective, it nonetheless
presents itself as sophisticated, as technologically unfathomable, and
hence places the scrutiniser in a far more precarious, bedazzled
position than the scrutinised. It is easier to muck in and forget, to
keep pace with the so-called advancements and wallow in the comfort of
the code, thereby evading estrangement altogether.

This is precisely the perspective of Danielle Crittenden, a
British cultural commentator who returned from a recent tour of the
United States with the assertion "that few things now gladden my heart
more than the sight on some deserted road of a looming, 20-storey,
illuminated McDonald’s arch" (22). If the imagery here, that of a past
desert and a future, irradiating sustenance, proves inadequately
reminiscent of the quasi-religious nomenclature of the Enlightenment,
Crittenden obliges several lines later, characterising an assembly of
such illuminations as “a shining city on the horizon” (22). Appearing
in the main section of a traditional, broadsheet English newspaper,
these observations are both common and acceptable, for they represent
the advantages of a shimmering, formulaic progress over a less
transparent prior alternative, now conceived of as ramshackle, as
hopelessly archaic. They also represent the legacy of Bacon and his ilk
in action. Perhaps, if Condillac owned a coffeehouse franchise, he would consider our ordering system to be insufficently numerical, still a symptom of a belittled yet manifest false-consciousness, and if Derrida were running the fast-food outlet next door the dismantling of perceived deception would swing with a little more vim, a little more jouissance. Ontologically, the egalitarian lustre, the physiological gratification, the lascivious reevaluating of and then craving after innovatory techniques in order to regress to a more primitive archaie, and the curtailing of language to ensure its immediate intelligibility to a public which may harbor memories of other less palpable civilisations, are all lifted from the Derridian handbook, which in turn was pilfered from its previous, more overtly violent owners. Of course, some rudimentary form of semiotics is still required, for the formula must retain at least some degree of lucidity in order to be apprehended and thus perpetuated ad infinitum, just as the theory's masters have proved unable to wholly divest themselves of words, of the compunction to write; quite the opposite is the case. One would hypothesise that at some moment prior to the construction of yet another restaurant, there was indeed a discussion regarding the potentially wholesale erasure of thought (not to mention the past, community or land) which consisted of more than a mere "No. 4, please." Perhaps not, for as with the purportedly universal idealism of the French Revolution, the ethos behind the proliferation of these outlets does not interpret itself as a wanton, counterfeit force, but rather inherently demands its own repeated, natural manifestation to those ignorant of its apparently sincere delights. Via its own internal methodology, any other theory would be less gratifyingly self-evident, more subject to delusion and therefore in need of enlightenment. Any critique would be folly. The only distinction between now and then is
that this time the universality is by no means purported, but genuinely dominant far and wide. Crittenden is explicit on the compulsion to export such elemental superiority:

And it is even worse in poorer countries. I've been poisoned in China, presented in central Europe with 'regional specialities' that turn out to be embalmed slices of cucumber sitting in pools of vinegar or petrified sticks of breaded chicken. In these places, a McDonald's seems like a miracle of Yankee ingenuity: imagine being able to supply huge quantities of US-grade chicken, beef and potatoes to cities where you can't safely drink a glass of tap water – then teaching the local population to cook a Big Mac so it will taste exactly as it does in Des Moines, Iowa! (22)

Whether all central Europeans consider the transposition of Des Moines to be miraculous is debatable, as is their appreciation of the superficially philanthropic pedagogy required to cook the uniform burger, but parts of central Europe do indeed already resemble at least the "shining city" (Crittenden 22) section of a Midwestern town, and ultimately so will their behaviour.

More significantly, for the impetus emerges at an ideological level, if we accept that the uniformity of these cities constitutes an acknowledged, or even desired global superstructure, then we must also accept that the Condillacs, the Rimbauds, and by implication poststructuralism, through not only their complicity in but also their imposition of this structure, are by no means a fringe element. Although the responsibility for the depersonalising, decivilising nature of modern or postmodern consciousness is almost always attributed to a rampantly avaricious corporate culture, this is simply an artificial philosophical division, for the corporate element is secondary to culture itself. It may be more comforting to categorize North American or Parisian radicals as subscribers to a munificent liberalism, spearheading an intellectually edifying resistance to a brutally right-wing capitalism, yet in reality the latter is and always
has been but a more honest version of the former. Poststructuralism is only semantically, or attitudinally countercultural, since both its ontology and its praxis have presided over the general social flux for centuries. If we insist on remaining with the confines of the left-wing / right-wing dichotomy, then either the radical liberals are in fact neo-fascists, or the right-wing materialists are practising compassionate, liberal reformism. Whilst the factions may present themselves as mutually exclusive, as alternatives within a modern and therefore diverse political spectrum, they are merely two manifestations of the same theory within a similarly theorised field.

This field is so prevalent that is difficult to think outside it, to conceive of any alternative at all. When French farm labourers rebel against a North American conglomerate’s cultural and physical usurpation of the countryside, Parisian radicals, professed defenders of the underclass, are nowhere to be found, for ideologically they have more in common with the conglomerate than with their own retrogressive rural proletariat. The peasantry’s most acrimonious constituents tend to be older, and therefore more estranged, and as the spiritual (sometimes biological) descendants of counterrevolutionaries are representative of a real, constructive, though long-discarded alternative. Instead, such obstacles to France’s modernisation must be dismissed as reactionary, as a maniacal, visceral response. Even if this dismissal were substantiated, all that modernisation is offering is viscera behind a sophisticated veneer, in fact a more sanctimonious position given that modernity claims transparency as its supposedly non-sanctimonious cornerstone. It is more probable, however, that the menace of campestral revolts stems from an intellectual proximity to the past, which is to say to a cultural rather than precultural origin.

When it is rationalised at all, by now, the majority will say, surely
we have consigned such proximity to the realm of the harmless, ushering it away as a quaint curiosity for tourists. Arguably, we lack the critical apparatus to assess it in anything other than somatic terms, since the apparatus itself has been so correspondingly reduced as to discern the gift of fast food as a moral act, one of altruism. Although the rhetoric of poststructuralism is that of opposition, of ressentiment, the continued existence of an institution such as the British monarchy, despite its lack of functional potency (far less than that of Louis XVI) and for all its blundering antics, is more sinister to the superstructure than the likes of Derrida.

The above is not intended as some "holier-than-thou" critique, but rather the contrary, inasmuch as we are all, to a lesser or greater degree, complicit in modernity. This complicity is in the air, osmotic, and therefore inevitable, though often only manifesting itself during those moments of defamiliarisation, of sensing that civilisation, which has retained just enough of its past, its repudiated linguistic prosthesis, to rub along, is paradoxically devoid of civilisation. My suggestion here is simply that we are ever-vigilant suspecters of the arbitrariness of language, and now perhaps even the arbitrariness of life. When we attempt to rectify matters through excessive, petty legal impositions, and subsequently assume that crossing the street at an unofficial point at the dead of night is a gesture of iniquity, whilst the fact that we are simultaneously carrying a loaded Smith and Wesson is, instead, an inalienable right, the codification of barbarism may disclose itself. Of course, though the reduction of language is pushing towards its dissolution, its irrelevance, in the meantime, in case of any lingering discrepancies between thought and reality, an army of sue-happy legal sentinels is required, more professionally suspicious than ourselves. Abroad, in still autochthonous restaurants, when
reality remains divorced from its codified representation on the menu, we beneficiaries of enlightenment must occasionally confront the anachronism of ambiguity single-handedly, which tends to mean irately, but this is easily disposed of as the naïveté of the foreign. When the automated voice on the telephone offers a numerical selection offering gateways to further numerical selections, it is Condillac calling, never to be placed on hold, and possibly a flash of alienation crosses our minds. When nothing is trusted to discretion, to knowledge if you will, it is indeed the superstructure but also radical poststructuralism at work.

This portrayal, however, may be an underestimation of modernity’s pull. If facets of past, non-enlightened authority persist in slipping through the cracks, if they are now descried as illusory yet loiter as at least somewhat imperative, then becoming oblivious to moments of schizophrenia is a necessary evil in order to avoid depression. At a recent academic conference, one Earl Grey-sipping Professor of Comparative Literature informed me that his guiding dictum to students was (and the citation is verbatim) “to produce and to live wantonly,” proceeding shortly thereafter to tender photographs of his wedding, wife, and two children, apparently desensitised to any incongruity between these commitments. If the ideal is open licentiousness, or experience, then of course marriage constitutes a transgression, along with other deviant covenants such as an unwritten pastoral responsibility to educate. The students’ final examination was not an experiment in living wantonly, regardless of whether the latter happened to be an essay topic; nor was their attendance of the Professor’s class at three o’clock every Tuesday afternoon. An academic’s disciplined administrative and pedagogical duties, not to mention the pressure to publish, have little to do with reckless
production, and it is disingenuous if not somewhat absurd to postulate such recklessness as a more authentic version, yet it is this version which evades rupture, entitling the profession to appear less stagnant, more germane. The idea of a scholarly conference where the majority of the participants preach the benefits of living wantonly is contradictory, but if erudition is an embarrassment, then we require illusion (interpreted as authenticity), either osmotic or willful, to obscure the shame of a merely conjectured illusion.

The compunction of conforming to non-conformity is far from limited to my examples, or indeed limited at all. It is the thrust behind David Brooks’ best-selling Bobos in Paradise: The New Upper Class and How They Got There, with the word “Bobos” designating an amalgamation of bourgeois bohemians. The thesis is that at some point in the nineteen-nineties the rampant consumerism of the eighties gelled with sixties’ free-spirited antimaterialism, thus forming a happier medium which had sandpapered the rougher, vainglorious edges of both movements and resolved any philosophical inconsistencies between the two. In Brooks’ own words, “I found that if you investigated people’s attitudes toward sex, leisure time, and work, it was getting harder and harder to separate the antiestablishment renegade from the pro-establishment company man” (10). The book is at its best when revelling in life’s minutiae, when detailing the dissimulation of a multinational uniform, still fundamentally capitalist corporation such as Toyota, whose advertising must now “appeal to our idealistic hopes” (100), featuring “a slogan for its line of trucks that reads, ‘Haul some concrete. Move some lumber. Save the world’” (100). In the pursuit of the innocence of Rimbaud’s Danakil, Bobos fetishise the products of such innocence, hence “Across the developing world there are factory workers busy beating up the goods they have just made in
order to please American consumers" (Brooks 94), and while at the
office the Bobo is supposedly in touch with this same precultural
energy: "Listening to management gurus who tell them to thrive on chaos
and unleash their creative potential, they’ve reconciled the spirit of
the imagination with service to the bottom line" (Brooks 42). Chaos
sells, and if that seems oxymoronic, less than an ingenious synthesis,
then perhaps we are still burdened by ideas of order which are at odds
with this common or garden institutionalisation of unreason. It is,
nonetheless, a veritable depiction of the mechanics of contemporary
modernity, overtly driven by praxis rather than theory, which is one of
the book’s understated, unwillingly conceded arguments. Although Brooks
is neither this system’s victim nor one of its many doxic absorbers
(the book itself is evidence of his conscious participation), but
instead its professed apologist, he too glimpses a lack of mental
integrity behind its conciliatory, urbane façade. In the commingling of
chaos and capitalism, "an ethos that celebrates, actually demands,
endless innovation, self-expansion, and personal growth" (Brooks 227),
the resultant hybrid existence may in fact be nothing more than a
pseudo-intellectual brute corporeality, either disparaging or
destructive of anything which is not itself. The purchase of a truck
under the premise that it will assist in world-saving activities does
not alter the actuality of a non-idealistic, non-world-saving truck. At
one point, Brooks’ self-deprecatingly quotes Wallace Stevens’
"Happiness . . . is an acquisition’” (101), and later, in the
“Spiritual Life” chapter, suggests that “Maybe our heaven is grounded
in a piece of reality” (251), that Bobo death is the opportunity “to
exist forever amidst all this glorious materiality” (254). Given that
these bourgeois bohemians have been allotted “maximum freedom to live
their own best lives” (Brooks 235) it would surely be forgivable to
wonder if the Bobo is not simply the übermensch in disguise, questing after a form of radical, pragmatic individualism, and that the whole business would be expedited if, in a fit of collective amnesia, we cast off the encumbrance of a disingenuous society altogether to enjoy our personal appropriations of immediacy. If so, the book becomes but a festooned restatement of Condillac, subject to an ideological embellishment which, though inevitable, Condillac strove to prove superfluous and therefore eradicable. As Brooks progresses, there is an ominous sense that his own political milieu is less an alternative, intellectual concord than "if anything, anti-ideological" (257), a giddy, ineffectual palimpsest of other, more abrasively direct materialisms, and its purported defender becomes its critic:

Some days I look around and I think we have been able to achieve these reconciliations only by making ourselves more superficial, by simply ignoring the deeper thoughts and highest ideals that would torture us if we actually stopped to measure ourselves according to them. Sometimes I think we are too easy on ourselves. (246-7)

Such moments of hamartia stem from Brooks’ status as a product of the relentless innovation, of deceptively countercultural attitudes which necessitate a presumption of historical and philosophical myopia for their own survival. In order to swallow the nineteen-nineties as an intelligent substantialism, a reconciliation, there must be an a priori acceptance of the hypothesis that Kerouac’s narcissism, which luxuriates in its own physicality, in fact constitutes the restitution of scholarship. It is the salacious idealism of the “Beats,” the doyens of sixties’ bohemia, as the basis of thought. Furthermore, if there has indeed been a reconciliation, it is also requisite to posit the Anglo-Saxon, Protestant work ethic, which putatively culminated in the extremes of the eighties, as a staid, conservative force, devoid of the “restless rebelliousness” (Brooks 24) of the bohemian other. It must be
predicated that the supervisors of this ethic, of this banality, were hitherto incapable of spawning and then assimilating the neo-Baconian restlessness of the sixties, though they had invented religions, embodied revolutionary humanism, become the example par excellence of the individualistic, pioneering spirit and the paradigm of free trade, of freedom itself to the point of cliché, all of which is overtly endorsed in such platitudes as "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" (Morison 157). This is not to say that the bourgeois / bohemian superstructure is non-existent, but that it is everywhere, and has been for some time. As with Rimbaud and the inhabitants of Charleville, the divisions are artificial; words such as reconciliation, alternative, or counterculture but misnomers. Brooks' postulated "centuries-old conflict" (84) is hallucinatory, since there is no conflict at all, and perhaps a more cognisant, though admittedly less sensational subtitle would have been _A Variation on a Centuries-Old Theme_. In fairness, amidst all the details of the contemporaneous, such cognisance is not wholly swept under the pseudo-layers of ideological supersession:

> Thoreau bought and sold provisions but believed in living 'simply and wisely' because 'I wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life, and to live so sturdily and Spartan-like as to put to rout all that was not life.' . . . 'The land,' Emerson wrote, 'is the appointed remedy for whatever is false and fantastic in our culture. The continent we inhabit is to be a physic and food for our mind, as well as our body. The land, with its tranquilizing, sanative influences, is to repair the errors of a scholastic and traditional education, and bring us into just relation with men and things.' (Brooks 71-72)

These are intimations of a very different tale, that of the collapse of false dichotomies, that of the historical, real prevalence of the _tabula rasa_ mentality.

For Brooks, and he is in distinguished, multitudinous company here, another, more primary criterion for the postulated reassertion of
intellectualism in the sixties was the acceptance of a scientific
Sigmund Freud, whose "writings . . . were at the peak of his [sic]
influence" (27). Louis Breger's more thorough biography, paradoxically
and therefore tellingly entitled Freud: Darkness in the Midst of
Vision, suggests that this acceptance was already a given in the wake
of the madness of the Great War, ballooning throughout the nineteen-
twenties: "Psychoanalysis more and more permeated the Western world;
many educated persons took it up – in New York it became fashionable to
be 'psyched,' to undergo an analysis – and Freudian concepts made their
way into newspapers, novels, plays, and, eventually, the movies" (270).
Whenever the zenith of such popularity in fact transpired is of little
consequence, however, as is a preference for the successive, imitative
hermeneutics of a psycho-Marxist Louis Althusser or a psycho-linguistic
Jacques Lacan. Indeed, in the presence of successors, it is arguable
that the zenith remains unwitnessed, as yet indeterminate, for as much
as we may attempt to define ourselves, our modern condition, against
Freud, the terminology and yes, the ideology, regardless of theoretical
prejudices, still belong to him. As with the preceptors of the
Enlightenment, it is precariously difficult to outthink this master of
our doxa, to avoid plagiarism, for his claim is always to have cordoned
off the bedrock, the base of any future, dissenting thought. Freud is
the field, perhaps the underwriter of modernity. Although the theory
wishes to perceive itself as progressive, the only viable progress must
emerge from within its own parameters, and even then it is only
hospitable to a more extreme, elementally biological version of itself.
Anything less seems false, unscientific, or, most embarrassingly,
prudish. Critique will always be subject to the accusation of
repression.
Frederick C. Crews, the editor of a vitriolically entitled collection of essays, Unauthorized Freud: Doubters Confront a Legend, begins his admittedly incredulous introduction with the tale of a Library of Congress Freud exhibition originally scheduled for 1996, but ultimately materialising in the autumn of 1998. The interim period saw the mounting of a petition by Peter J. Swales, "regarded by analysts as a blasphemer against Freud's gospel" (Crews xviii-xix), a move designed to shift the exhibition's initially univocal focus on "the enduring discoveries of [Freud's] revolutionary genius" (Crews xvii) to a more tolerant position which would include, in Swales' words, "'the present state of knowledge and adequately reflect the full spectrum of informed opinion about the status of Freud's contribution to modern intellectual history'" (Crews xix). Such resistance was interpreted as delusion, of course, as must always be the case within the totalising nature of the Freudian hermeneutic, for psychoanalysis has preempted the notion of resistance itself, recasting it as a disfiguring appendage of an endemically perverted culture. All knowledge is mediated, yet outside the theory all knowledge is unsuspectingly mediated, which is to say that there is no knowledge outside the theory at all. In case the petition were misinterpreted (i.e. interpreted unpsychoanalytically), therefore, Elisabeth Roudinesco, a biographer of Lacan and thus explicitly reliant upon Freud's bedrock, emphasised the magnitude of the delusion. As Crews would have it, "Roudinesco began recruiting international signatures on a rival petition to the library denouncing the 'unheard-of violence' of the critics and characterizing them as 'puritans' and 'inquisitors'" (xx), insinuating that they "could be understood not just as allies of the Christian far right but as latter-day Nazis hunting down 'Freudian Jews' . . . - a considerable surprise to the many Jewish signers of Swales's petition, including at least one
refugee from Hitler’s terror” (xx-xxi). Roudinesco prevailed, authenticated by the grand doubter whose doubt, as the vehemence of the epithets illustrates, continues to outstrip our own. Whether it is possible to be both a puritan and an inquisitor simultaneously is debatable, but my submission of this anecdote is prompted by its manifestation of the rancorous, normalising confidence Freud still inspires, of the extent to which he precontains any response, particularly resistance, conditioning knowledge to such a degree that even the mildest of rebukes becomes an unknowledgeable aberration.

Even Harold Bloom, who in The Western Canon infamously devotes an entire chapter to Freud the aesthete, the writer of fictions who “will survive as a great essayist like Montaigne or Emerson, not as the founder of a therapy already discredited (or elevated) as another episode in the history of shamanism” (3), is nonetheless obliged to concede in the same book that this shaman “is the mind of our age” (375). Aware of modernity’s philosophical malaise, Bloom has his own agenda, his own alternative, which is simply to deny philosophy altogether in favour of an elitist, solipsistic aestheticism. The task at hand is to disown both conservative morality and the radical ideology of the “School of Resentment” (4), to decontextualise, thereby restoring literature’s sanctity, its intrinsic beauty which is available to the almost extinct, supreme reader of the ivory tower. Since this is the supposedly hoary and therefore shockingly belated criterion upon which Bloom’s canonical selection rests, the lonesome ivory bastion is propped up again and again, with support from such notions as “reading good books is bad for the character” (16), “the reader not as a person in society but as the deep self” (10), “Art is perfectly useless” (16), and the following passage from the same initial chapter, melancholically entitled “An Elegy for the Canon”:
To read in the service of any ideology is not, in my judgment, to read at all... The mind’s dialogue with itself is not primarily a social reality. All that the Western Canon can bring one is the proper use of one’s solitude, that solitude whose final form is one’s confrontation with one’s own mortality. (29-30)

It is worth mentioning here that although Bloom cuts an imposing figure as the last defender of the sublime, he is far from alone in recognising a certain lack of artistic sensitivity in contemporary theory, nor in proposing an introspective, “literature for the most literate” solution. This undercurrent of New Criticism, now but an eddy of its former self in the United States, was the approach upon which I along with generations of other probable British skeptics were raised, surging to such a degree that to mention theory at all is a potential breach in social etiquette, to extrapolate fiction beyond its literary study an exercise in futility, in cultural estrangement. The question is one of whether this non-ideological, Parnassian, personally pleasurable approach constitutes a solution, a genuine alternative to the paradox of non-thought, or instead whether it is complicit in the paradox, but another form of nominally civilised delinquency and therefore intellectually impossible to sustain. For Bloom, our apprehension of reality, expressed in both fiction and theory, is fable, the only distinction being that fiction is more sincere and, at its best, more aesthetic in its intentions. Though reading may endow us with the means of expression, it is a process of acquiescing to our brute, empirical mortality; a process, when adequately performed, of cultural disillusion, of social unknowing.

In the context of Freud, whilst the latter would claim that a wholly ignorant belief in the stories of literature, in social myth, has indeed constructed an efficacious (however delusional) citizenry, and that neurosis occurs when lurking reality is insufficiently
repressed, there is precious little in Bloom’s exposure of ideology as fiction, of reading as a private, desocialising act of onanism, within which the mind is at liberty to conduct its own self-analysis and thus explore neurosis, which has not been prefigured by the master mythmaker himself. In a sense, though this will be of scant consolation to the upholders of a scientific Freud, in the conversion of the would-be scientist into the chronicler of myth, Freud the fabulist is paid the highest of aesthetic compliments: that of an enduring, canonical aestheticism. His fable is also Bloom’s. Again, in the absence of much terminological, often oxymoronic back-tracking, regardless of the extent to which we wish to distance ourselves from Freud’s theory, it is all too easy to become preconditioned by it, thus confounding any affirmation of a debunked Freud. Should the evidence above prove lacking, then in the paragraph immediately following Bloom’s assertion of “shamanism” (3), he submits that the common denominator of certain canonical works “is their uncanniness, their ability to make you feel strange at home” (3), a statement which is hardly subliminally indebted to Freud’s concept of the strangely familiar, the unheimliche. More broadly, if modern ideology is straining to portray itself as non-ideological, to posit its own destruction, then surely Bloom’s professed status as a non-ideologue, even if we assume that he has transcended the impossible paradox of un-thought, is less an alternative, elitist stance than merely more of the same, the product of modern ideology. These are but introductory remarks, and Freud’s civilised delinquency has yet to be examined here via his own work. The two men’s fates, however, are intertwined, for in both means and ends, in either desiring the expulsion of philosophy or claiming it as a fait accompli, the therapy (which is to say the resentment) on offer is the same.
The inherent obstacle to apprehending Freudian theory as therapeutic, indeed as knowledge, stems from its necessary opposition to its own theoretical equipment. It is premised upon genealogical access to a true, proto-reality, an origin available via an overarching telos connecting now and then, Freud and his source, thus lancing the metaphysical dross of everything in between. Undeniably, as the following core components of *Totem and Taboo: Resemblances Between the Psychic Lives of Savages and Neurotics* (TT) substantiate, there is an entrancing intrepidity in the creative expanse of this incision.

Although impressed by "the Darwinian hypothesis about the primal state of human society" (TT 121), Freud determines that the basic exposition of "only a violent, jealous father who keeps all the females for himself and drives away the growing sons" (TT 121) has omitted "a deeper understanding" (TT 121) of the genesis of our forbidding cultural apparatus, of totemism. This presumed lack is aphoristic within psychoanalysis, for the latter's stated objective is always depth, and Freud is riven with references to it. Since any formerly prescribed technique was necessarily unpsychoanalytical, it was predestined to omission, to probe only the shallows, to fail in its half-hearted regression to the latently true. As an extension to Darwin, therefore, or rather as a further retrospection, the ultimate prober conjures his own admittedly hypothetical framework, "which may seem phantastic but which has the advantage of establishing an unexpected unity among a series of hitherto separated phenomena" (TT 121). This shot in the dark is cited here at length, for if the theory itself is omnipotently reductive, this is the null point, and hence all of Freud:

One day the expelled brothers joined forces, slew and ate the father, and thus put an end to the father horde. Together they dared and accomplished what would have remained impossible for
them singly. Perhaps some advance in culture, like the use of a new weapon, had given them the feeling of superiority. Of course these cannibalistic savages ate their victim. This violent primal father had surely been the envied and feared model for each of the brothers. Now they accomplished their identification with him by devouring him and each acquired a part of his strength. The totem feast, which is perhaps mankind's first celebration, would be the repetition and commemoration of this memorable, criminal act with which so many things began, social organization, moral restrictions and religion. (TT 122)

In the mental archeology of humanity, we have now transcended Rimbaud's Danakil, and certainly Condillac's algebra, for here it is only the first father who is heroically independent of culture, whilst the primal horde, however primal, is reliant upon social cohesion and possibly the deceit of intelligence. Following the parricide, the insidious fraternal pact continues, for though the murder itself was emotionally cardinal and therefore real, secondary residual admiration becomes guilt and necessitates denial. Thus, totemism (or civilisation) is born, initially prohibiting both any future parricide and incest, still the true impulses, though now ambivalently repressed, of the populous. In the wake of this speculative arche, even during the first days of animism, at the inaugural imposition of the taboos, psychoanalysis became the essential appliance in any subsequent thrust at social decryption. Civilisation is to be exposed as a construct, reduced to its now embarrassingly irrational origin: "Under the dominance of an animistic system . . . each rule and activity should receive a systematic motivation which we to-day call 'superstitious'" (TT 83), yet "If we get behind these structures, which like a screen conceal our understanding, we realize that the psychic life and the cultural level of savages have hitherto been inadequately appreciated" (TT 83). These savages, already too semiotic, naively projected their own inevitably anthropomorphised meaning onto the world, a projection which doomed them to live forever removed from reality, from the truth.
of their two basic drives, the implication being that until the advent of psychoanalysis our more sophisticated versions of this same projection had removed us still further. Via Freud’s logic, it is only in the isolated case of the preanimistic primal father, the only entirely non-pathological patient, that his methodology has ever been wholly irrelevant.

As a rule, and *Totem and Taboo* is no exception, Freud the writer is perpetually tactical, spuriously unassuming, shaping the composition to oscillate between introductory false modesty and the promise of certainty, with the latter progressively gaining the upper hand. Whilst the preamble to the anecdote of the ontogenetic horde is expressed conjecturally, a manoeuvre which offers both writer and reader the preapproved out-clause of dismissing its hypothesis as a mere flight of fancy, it is surely obvious and later explicitly, repeatedly stated that this is the original version of the Oedipus complex, which is tantamount to saying of psychoanalysis’ own theoretical footing. The victorious offspring, in Freud’s own words, “created the two fundamental taboos of totemism out of the sense of guilt of the son, and for this very reason these had to correspond to the two repressed wishes of the Oedipus complex” (*TT* 123), “the nucleus of all neuroses as far as our present knowledge of them goes” (*TT* 134). Even here, with the implication that perhaps there are further depths yet to be plumbed, we are left hovering on the threshold, an ungainly position given that this nucleus must be true, at least for Freud, since it is the truth upon which his method rests, and against which it defines all else.

As further evidence of the sine qua non status of this nucleus, the more protuberant doubts regarding psychoanalysis all stem, though often understatedly, from its indebtedness to the horde genealogy.
Briefly, to name but two, Frank Cioffi’s “Was Freud a Liar?” details the earliest days of seduction theory (the notion that the parent physically committed an incestuous act with the child), a theory still in practice today yet refuted by Freud himself upon his recognition that the abuse, the actual fruition of an Oedipal longing, had never occurred. Instead, the now counterfeit seductions became the product of infantile fantasy, still Oedipal in nature, via which the patient demonised the parent in order to alleviate any lingering memory of self-initiated desire in childhood. As Cioffi viably proposes, the backtracking from the first diagnosis was necessarily apathetic, only half-accomplished, since “Freud was searching for the sources of neurotic disorders in the sexual life of his patients before he began practicing psychoanalysis” (37), and if the seductions were not at least patient-impelled fictions, “the alternative was that they had been suggested by Freud, or worse, arbitrarily imputed by him” (37), a fact which would negate the alleged primacy of his two universal, essential drives.

Malcolm Macmillan’s “Why Can’t a Woman Be More Like a Man?” is similarly though more overtly symptomatic of Freud’s loyalty to his archetypal parricide. Prior to the murder the women were merely submissive to the father’s urges, and their participation in the murder itself, in the beginning of civilisation, is limited to the role of an inactive prize which is then forbidden. Under this premise, as Macmillan tenders, “civilization was solely a male creation” (138), but even the prepsychic, non-illusory archae is a scene of masculine dominion. If this is the base, then any consequent theory of sexuality, whatever its semantic nuances, is obliged to frame the phallus as presence, as abundant, and the absence of the phallus as a negation (a pledge, incidentally, which induces psycho-theory’s inevitable
hostility to feminism). The Freudian female, therefore, and this is Macmillan's purview, is defined as the vacuum of the male, for "the mother was the first sexual object for both sexes" (135), which is to say that all children are initially subject to the Oedipus complex, and where the male need only "erect the barrier against incest" (134), his inverted, incomplete counterpart must suffer "her acceptance of castration as 'an accomplished fact'" (136), repress her still desired masculinity, and transfer her affections to a more appropriate recipient. Paraphrasing Freud, the ever-skeptical Macmillan recapitulates the female's predicament "as attempting to compensate for the assumed loss of her penis by symbolically transforming her wish for that organ into a wish for a baby and turning to her father for its gratification" (137). This doubter's valid objective is to render such "supposed inadequacies" (140) as "much more a result of his [Freud's] postulate that her infantile sexuality is masculine than because of any supposed anatomical deficiency" (140), but the postulate itself, more latently, is substantiated by the so-called hypothesis of the primal horde.

Despite Freud's absolute dependence upon this hypothesis, however, in the closing pages of *Totem and Taboo*, when the magnitude of the horde teleology has already been unveiled, and his avowals of its import have become evermore grandiose, the exposition remains tentative, or at worst, by now, ludicrously oxymoronic:

The only claim made is that a new factor has been added to the already known or still unrecognized origins of religion, morality, and society, which was furnished through psychoanalytic experience. The synthesis of the whole explanation must be left to another. But it is in the nature of this new contribution that it could play none other than the central role in such a synthesis, . . . (135)

This passage, brushed aside in a footnote, reads simultaneously as both a disclaimer and the most bombastic claim of all. Following a synthesis
which undercuts all of civilisation, surely no further synthesis is possible, for Freud has annexed the groundwork with his "new contribution" (TT 135). The only more reductive option would be to posit the preexistence of a more primary materialism than that of the primal father, a plagiaristic argument given that Totem and Taboo has already appropriated its vocabulary. In lieu of a coup de grâce, the obliteration of thought, Freud once again sells himself short. Notwithstanding such ambivalence, the same hypothesis is aired anew in Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego (GP), with the addition of a more specific culprit for the subsequent act of expiation, "the first epic poet" (113). The latter’s transposition of idealism for the genuinely heroic father to the sons justifies the murder, a devilishly linguistic defence with which the artifice of consciousness begins: "This poet disguised the truth with lies in accordance with his longing. He invented the heroic myth" (GP 113). Nevertheless, even here, at this second stab, as if to deflate any confidence in a more sanguine authority (a plausible presumption by dint of the repetition itself), the yarn is rendered penumbral from the off, defined as "only a hypothesis" (GP 90), and later allotted no more factual status than the contrivances of the first poet, retaining its oxymoronic contingency as "the scientific myth" (GP 112).

The Freudian impasse, both in these two texts and in the remainder of his corpus, is that of a perpetual caesura, a netherworld within which nothing may be affirmed, where nothing is real. If indeed our always inorganic thought has wrought a mendacious unity of the world, a mystification which is necessary for our sanity yet remains at the endless mercy of a less harmonious but authentic version, then civilisation, constructed and understood via this synthetic appurtenance from the inception of the primal horde, is in fact an
exercise in obscurity, in the absence of knowledge. To think otherwise, to sense anything but Freud's version as reality is, like Diderot's peasants, to believe in totemism, to buckle under a system which "helped to gloss over the real state of affairs and to make one forget the event to which it owed its origin" (TT 124), to mimic an age when (and the blending of tenses here is particularly telling) "men mistook the order of their ideas for the order of nature, and hence imagined that the control which they have, or seem to have, over their thoughts, permitted them to have a corresponding control over things" (TT 71). Psychoanalysis' contention is framed, therefore, as a poststructuralist therapy, as a means of cathartically annunciating resentment and accessing a prototypical jouissance. Success is an apprehension of the herd mentality's stranglehold, an enlightened knowledge "of the normal constitution of human society, of how little originality and personal courage are to be found in it" (GP 82). The impediment to accessing such enlightenment, however, and this is also the rub in absorbing Freud as either minstrel or therapist, is that the expository devices at the project's disposal are not those of some primary empiricism, but rather those, in the project's own terms, of an imaginary control, of the duplicitous society which it promises to expose. The methodology is itself utterly dependent upon ideological mediation. Even if the horde teleology were true, Freud's thesis is self-defeating, for the means of intuiting the origin may never be material, or other than illusory. The act of acknowledging the latent reality, and thus renouncing society, predicates thought, the imposition of an idea, as essential. Freud's own system, therefore, is totemic, and if totemism is a fallacy, then so is Freud. Given this core ambivalence, it is paradoxically imperative that when the theory is required to be at its most vociferous, in the disclosure of its core tenet, "the scientific myth"
(GP 112), it is in fact at its most crepuscular, manifesting a suspicion of its own method, and ultimately its own contrivance, as if on the point of simultaneously positing its obsolescence. If the hypothesis is touted, in Totem and Taboo, as “establishing an unexpected unity among a series of hitherto separated phenomena” (121), and reasserted later, in Group Psychology, “to bring coherence and understanding into more and more new regions” (90-91), then there is also an inherent vulnerability to all the words of disenchanted negation elsewhere: “An intellectual function in us demands the unification, coherence and comprehensibility of everything perceived and thought of, and does not hesitate to construct a false connection” (TT 81). With this apparatus as a backdrop, any claim psychoanalysis may have as therapy is precluded, for although civilisation is reinterpreted as neurosis, as unreal, both this allegation and its presumptively non-neurotic alternative may only be grasped via civilisation’s interpretive techniques, as equally unreal. The only affirmation in evidence here, the only reality, is the primacy of civilisation, which is denied. If Freud’s patients, neurotics in the eyes of society, have indeed botched the communal act of repression, and are thereby closer to the truth of the first father, exhibiting symptoms of “an atavistic remnant in the form of an archaic constitution the compensation of which in the interest of cultural demands entails the most prodigious psychic efforts on their part” (TT 57), all that Freudian analysis offers is an empathetic, more aesthetically pleasing version of that same unreality, that gesture of unknowing. Via this logic, the analyst’s rehabilitation of such recurrences of the archae would be a repression of truth. It is of little wonder, therefore, that the curative properties of Freud’s method are dubious at best, for its prerequisite is a belief in an
empiricism which empirically disproves itself, far more than a leap of faith.

Although the victim of modernity's spurious epistemology, Freud, and this requires no leaping, is also one of its prescribers. As another diagnosis of modern consciousness, or non-subliminal yet fantastic yearning, psychoanalysis both was and is conformist, its dynamics predictably superstructural, though it may never discern itself as such. The scientific aura, the progressive idealism which is convinced of its natural transparency, that it is operating non-ideologically, the language of opposition, the postulation of a more veritable, asocial freedom and the necessary devolution of thought are all imitative of the Enlightenment, itself imitative of earlier models. Generally dismissive of precedent, however, since any intellectual precedent would be a sham, the shelf-life of such theories is merely reliant upon their immediate intensity, the extremity of their claim to truth, the will to power. The Freudian opus is, implicitly, but a more extreme version of Bacon's mechanics or Condillac's "new metaphysics" (Derrida 35), the predecessor of Brooks' Bobos, of the prerecorded telephone message, and of the crudity of fast food, but analogy would dent its extremity, its claim to theorising the end of reason and hence to conclusivity. Recognising the value of impact, of the shock of the new, Freud himself was zealously protective of this extremity, for biographically, as Breger appropriately comments, "The scientists he admired were not Louis Pasteur or Robert Koch - whose work did so much to control the spread of disease - but Kepler and Darwin, men whose theories turned the world upside down" (2). It is arguable that Darwin was the most revolutionary of such heroes, and yet, as mentioned above, the Darwinian analysis of the primal horde was recast as superficial. Indeed, to even hint at a less radical, less sexually driven analysis
would be to admit a more acculturated technique, potentially unmasking Freud's use of similarly acculturated tools and thereby revealing the internal, cardinal fallacy of his ontology. Magnanimity is prohibited, for it is tantamount to demise. Alternatively, from the other end of the ideological spectrum, though it may be difficult to imagine a more excessive version, the latter is always a skulking, external threat, since in spuriously positing the existence of an epistemological void, in ransacking history and staking all on an apogee of discontinuity, there is a sense of vulnerability, a twitchy glance over the shoulder for a glimpse of the next, more discontinuous ransacker. The field is divested of authority, in part by Freud himself, so the latest theory must be on the defensive from its inception, or else await the erosion of its previous radicalisation by another novel deployment of its own method, thus admitting its irrelevance.

In practice, as if to at least semi-substantiate the myth, in order to safeguard his fundamentalism and with it the future of the theory, Freud became his own first father, the grand renouncer, creating a microcosmic horde of at least initially like-minded analysts, some of whom would ultimately manifest their resistance yet be ousted by their brethren for a parricidal, criminal lack of fanatical insurgence. Such internal squabbles are now notorious, overblown, documented at greater length by both Breger and François Roustang's "Sons and Killers," but they all stem from attempts to relativise the primordial origin. Alfred Adler, the victim of a sickly childhood and consequent masculine anxiety, would become a threat to his fellow, more orthodox Freudians, for "He saw sexual drive interpretations as subsidiary to struggles within personal relationships, particularly those involving inferiority feelings and the masculine protest" (Breger 201), a theory which sidelines male
supremacy and with it the supremacy of the Oedipus complex. Similarly, Carl Jung, once "the favorite disciple" (Breger 217) who "would be the Aryan to bring psychoanalysis out of the Jewish ghetto" (Roustang 249), proved to be rather less fervent than anticipated, admonishing the Freudian defensive for "its neglect of the healing force of the therapeutic relationship - 'personal rapports' - and its exclusive emphasis on sexuality" (Breger 222). It is feasible, moreover, to read the horde myth less as a natural, necessary invention than as a petty reaction to Jung's own simultaneous, mythologically devised text, *Symbols of Transformation*, which heretically accentuates the significance of the mother. Under this premise, as Breger ventures, "The conclusion of Totem and Taboo was foreordained" (228), a precautionary measure, its success contingent upon Jung's exile. These victims of dissent were far from exposing psychoanalysis as a science of unknowing, a theoretical impossibility. Their own work, which countenances a more inclusive amalgam of remedial techniques, was indeed thus maligned, reviewed in the light of the Freudian filter as a desultory concealment of the only substructural core. Whether or not the likes of Adler and Jung were in fact the objects of repression, however, it is Freud's repressive tactic, his expectation of the cult's civil deference, that is most conspicuous in the banishments. The oxymoronic status of the theory is replicated in practice, for in order to disclose civilisation's complacency a clique of would-be rampant individuals must cling to the ideal of loyalty and present a uniformly mediated front, absurdly aware, all the while, that within their own doctrine this constitutes the adoption of a false position. Again, as with the exegesis of the founding myth, the only reality in evidence is that of an essential civilisation. The hypocritical imposition of these tenets of mediocrity is Roustang's ambit, and he verifies that its grip
reached beyond the inner circle to the International Psychoanalytic Association, a similarly conformist fraternity which operated, at Freud's behest, under "statutes of which not even the most traditional societies would disapprove" (256). The following is Roustang's summary of the contradiction between the Association's regulated unity and the supposedly primal but now repressed desires of its members:

Freud would have founded a church if the association had had the mission of spreading a new gospel. Instead, as he himself said when he arrived in America, he was bringing the plague, that is, among other things, the discovery of the compromises that are the cement of all societies. Thus, the International Psychoanalytic Association, whose aim was to promote mutual aid and the doctrine of submission to the leader, could only be a misunderstanding. Only when it sees itself as a gang of killers, as an assembly of madmen, or according to Freud, as a savage horde, does a psychoanalytic society take on the only form suited to it, the only image that it can uphold without misrepresenting psychoanalysis. (258)

In these terms, the flaw is the misrepresentation of an actually fragile solidarity, Freud's blindness to the immediate relevance of his own theory as manifested by the inner threats. For Roustang, therefore, the Association is an ill-advised dalliance, whilst the hypostasis, the theory itself, remains sacrosanct, borne out through the minions' restlessness yet missed by its inventor who becomes the victim of his own repression.

This one instance, however, is again only symptomatic of the endogenous Freudian double bind, for the promises of a methodology which requires the remembrance of oblivion are thwarted by paradox from the off, ineluctably leading to such moments of organised mayhem. It is a methodology predicated upon its own inability to know even itself, the flotsam and jetsam of an ocean which it claims not to exist. Still, within the confines of modernity, the Freudian project continues to exert a very conscious pressure, a loathing of our own ambivalence, a true definition of our non-ideological thought. There is nothing
artificial in the influence of the definition, in its real effects, and
to nullify this influence is also to nullify the modern. More
fraudulently, it may indeed be the case that an ostensible suspicion of
Freud’s legacy is now at least an attitudinal given, and he is to be
cast aside by later, more disenchanted forays as the scapegoat of all
casuistry. The skepticism is not without cause, but in crediting
Freud’s protestations of discontinuity or uniqueness and singling him
out as an easy mark, in failing to read this successor to the
Enlightenment and forerunner of poststructuralism as part of a modern
tradition, many of these forays are merely the casualties of
enantiodromia, determining the sell-by date of such hocus-pocus while
unwittingly condemning themselves to similar, yet more plagiarised,
putrefaction.

In fact, amidst the master hypnotist’s claims to reaccessing the
nobility of the first criminal act when “satisfied hate and painful
tenderness struggled with each other” (TT 57), in the stated self-
deifying ability “to be in possession of this power” (GP 96), to be
heroic enough to conclude that “In the beginning was the deed” (TT
138), one sufficiently extreme precursor presides. The most obvious
e xample of this indebtedness, the ominous sense that all of Freud was
pretheorised elsewhere, is that of the primal father, whose “will
needed no reinforcement from others . . . . He, at the very beginning
of the history of mankind, was the Superman whom Nietzsche only
expected from the future” (GP 93). To confine oneself to such explicit
acknowledgments, however, is an underestimation of Friedrich
Nietzsche’s influence here, for both the conceptual vision and often
the vocabulary are so comparable as to render the other tautologous. To
cite but sparingly here, since Nietzsche is nothing if not repetitive,
in Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future, “herd
timidity" (Basic Writings of Nietzsche [BW] 304) or "herd animal morality" (305) is repeatedly indited, and whilst psychology, in liberated hands, may become "the path to fundamental problems" (222), thus far it "has got stuck in moral prejudices and fears; it has not dared to descend into the depths" (221), a predicament which Freud would paraphrase and attempt to remedy. Similarly, On the Genealogy of Morals: A Polemic includes the following eulogy to action: "[T]here is no 'being' behind doing, effecting, becoming; 'the doer' is merely a fiction added to the deed - the deed is everything" (BW 481). Of course, as the belated rehasher, this debt is Freud's dilemma, and it is arguable that the later version attempts to redistribute Nietzsche within a watered-down, scientific framework which Nietzsche himself would have more consistently dismissed as illusory, but ideologically, at the very least, a reference to either is a reference to both.

Whilst the mere mention of Freud tends to prove divisive, perhaps because of the embarrassing mask of science, Nietzsche is particularly relevant in the context of artificial theoretical boundaries, since he has become the fulcrum of modernity, a coalescence of all subsequent schools, the icon of both the Far Right and, more prevalently now, the New Left. This is not to say that these inheritors all read their legacy identically, in their own minds, but that beyond the rhetoric the readings may be identical nonetheless. Rather than meaning all things to all men, the legacy may mean the same thing to all men, yet synthesis is obscured due to excessive tweaking. The latter is understandable, in the wake of Elizabeth's less than sisterly handling of the estate, including the nefarious publication of the Nachlass and the selling of her brother's work down the anti-Semitic river, thereby flirting with the danger of his becoming "Wagnerised" for all eternity. Walter Kaufmann, as both critical defender and translator, redressed
the balance in the post-Nazi era, but the result tends to be an overly explicated version of the most adage-ridden of writers. As with Freud, the theory is so reductive, both in content and form, that it is possible to open any given text at random, yet still be confronted with a summary of the book's thought. In Kaufmann, however, at the moments when Nietzsche hits the peak of his sloganeering concision, when he is about to become sound bite fodder, rest assured that the translator will assert his presence with a footnote to guard against misinterpretation. In his Preface to Beyond Good and Evil, Kaufmann offers pointers to "relevant" (BW 187) sections, suggests that "it might be helpful to read the editor's note for section 250 at the start" (187), and even concludes with "One final caution. Beyond Good and Evil is not a collection of aphorisms for browsing" (189). Whether Nietzsche would have preferred to be consigned to the annals of history as the catalyst behind the horrors of nationalism or preserved via such pusillanimous mediation is debatable. Perhaps yet more dubiously, the body of R. J. Hollingdale's classic biography, Nietzsche: The Man and His Philosophy, recently republished in a revised edition, reads like a series of footnotes, an exercise in political correctness, with lengthy citations from Nietzsche interspersed with Hollingdale's often briefer commentary. There are additional footnotes in the customary sense. Presumably, the intention was to allow the philosopher pride of place, to speak for himself, but the surfeit of absolving protestation is so giddying that not only is the opposite the case, it also induces or even forgives the notion that Elizabeth may not have been entirely misguided. For the Hollingdale of a newly appended Postscript, the way ahead lies in "a renewal of that interest in the politically leftist possibilities in Nietzsche" (258); more specifically, in the "tendencies . . . which view him as a philosophical paradigm or
starting-point in relation to modes of thought characteristic of the twentieth century, and of these the one that seems the most securely based is the deconstructionism associated chiefly with Derrida" (259). Alternatively, the aforementioned, anti-ideological Harold Bloom, who has little time for "certain Parisians" (30), is nonetheless similarly riven with Nietzsche. The canon is to become the product of "individual enterprise, self-reliance, and competition" (20), and since "There is always guilt in achieved individuality" (24), a guilt which may cloud the purity of aestheticism, such snivelling must be devalued as superficial. Bloom’s cry, like that of the primal father, is carpe diem, his battle that of a noble mortality, the anxiety of a genius which is valueless beyond itself, beyond its solitude, and he recognises a former prescriber of this agony: "Longinus would have said that pleasure is what the resenters have forgotten. Nietzsche would have called it pain" (18). It is a pitiless, plebeian-loathing version of the canon, for "Workers have anxieties enough and turn to religion as one mode of relief" (38), a relief which for Bloom is non-existent, a distraction. "An Elegy for the Canon," the chapter in which criteria are established for the ensuing selection of the West’s literary heritage, concludes with "only strength can join itself to strength, as Nietzsche perpetually testified" (41). This is heady stuff, and as such is closer in tone to its source, apparently incompatible with Hollingdale’s Derridian spin, yet here, in the waft and weft of the same Nietzschean aftermath, there must be at least a hint of correspondence, the suspicion that the subdivisions are feigned, that Nietzsche may instead be one of the points at which nationalism, poststructuralism, aestheticism and psychoanalysis most overtly commingle. Peter Gay’s Introduction to the Basic Writings compiles a handy though glib list of the subdivisions, along with the more
conventional assertion that "They cannot all be right; in fact, most of them are wrong" (ix). It is this kind of reading, another all too common pseudo-resegregation designed to redefine Nietzsche in one’s own terms, which obscures potential analogy. What if they can all indeed be right? It seems paradoxical, particularly in the case of this philosopher, to engage in reciprocal accusations of misuse, to restrict a more universal impact, when surely the most obvious, objective feature of the debacles is the ubiquity, the similarity, of the influence itself. In the absence of some a priori attitude, of affected limitation, Nietzsche is at liberty to become a distiller, another conflux of the modern, a further indication that his successors are nothing more than interchangeable ciphers, the hypophyses of a single body.

Given the fanfare, the most peculiar feature of the Nietzschean bequest is the extent to which it hinges upon semantic idiosyncrasy, on a plea of 'not guilty' via a legal technicality. In the linguistically impelled essay “Truth and Falsity in an Ultramoral Sense” (“TF”), man’s knowledge is recapitulated as “A mobile army of metaphors, metonymies, anthropomorphisms” (636), a matrix of analogy which suffocates the individual, or difference, a defence mechanism against a substructural multiplicity which would prove too vast for our meagre reasoning. Intelligence, therefore, is a superfluous addendum, the vain invention of poltroonery in which wretches nevertheless need to believe, “for it is by dissimulation that the feebler and less robust individuals preserve themselves, since it has been denied them to fight the battle of existence with horns or the sharp teeth of beasts of prey” (634). The citation here is, once again, somewhat capricious; notwithstanding our political agenda, or their race, such petty connivers are always the Nietzschean target. Ideology has been a safe haven hitherto, and it
is this presumption of safety, the "shelter from ensnaring and sudden
attack" (639), which must now be devalued as falsehood, exposed as
vulnerable. Through the semiotic, doxic milieu, everything becomes
equivocal, nature "is not known in itself but only in its effects, that
is to say, in its relations to other laws of nature, which again are
known to us only as sums of relations" (638). Thus far it may be argued
that Nietzsche is at worst nothing more than spewed Saussure, or at
best the prefiguring of structuralism, that he has simply recognised
the already pedestrian "truth" that language is a lie which has meaning
only with regard to other language. Despite the claim in Beyond Good
and Evil that "Bacon signifies an attack on the philosophical spirit"
(379), and Nietzsche's general disdain for British empiricism, it is
fairer (though less limitless) to say that the likes of Bacon, Locke,
and by extrapolation the algebraic Condillac, had at least embarked on
the same path whilst lacking the same venom. Ever more extravagant,
this new version recapitulates algebra, indeed all of science, as yet
another construct, a further metaphor added to the enervation of the
pervasive will to truth:

... science works irresistibly at that great columbarium of
ideas, the cemetery of perceptions; builds ever newer and higher
storeys; supports, purifies, renews the old cells; and endeavors
above all to fill that gigantic framework and to arrange within
it the whole of the empiric world, i.e., the anthropomorphic
world. (638)

Rather than countering with an elucidated, more scientific system,
therefore, Nietzsche writes against such substitution, following but
then superseding prior models, disavowing the influence of former
disavowers and rejecting their work as the meta-illusion of
wretchedness. In the process of intellectual devolution, this theory
reappropriates extremity, the ultimate disappropriation, reconstituting
the debate under the headline of Nietzsche or nothing, whilst in other
terms it is simply the Enlightenment unleashed, driven by the same impulse and target though more fearlessly propelled towards its natural outcome. Condillac must indeed yield to the censure of naïveté, of estrangement, but Nietzsche's individualising excesses only function within modernity's preimposed internal dynamic (in spite, or rather because of, protestations to the contrary) which demands the drama of all out revolution.

Once the presence of an inherently debilitating symbology is unveiled, and in the following Nietzsche is more sincere, more realistic, than his cohorts, as an alternative to the impossible nihilism of silence, or to the paradoxical postulation of some Rousseau-esque, preternatural utopia, language is instead turned back on itself. There is an acceptance of the thesis, summarised by Paul Ricoeur in the context of Clifford Geertz's thought, "that where human beings exist, a nonsymbolic mode of existence, and even less, a nonsymbolic kind of action, can no longer obtain" (12). Nietzsche scoffs at the will to truth, but only dismantles its structure, allowing the latter to linger as evidence of its own inadequacy, and redefining its fragments as baubles with which to trifle, the malleable, meaningless trinkets of which a future, more frivolously opulent culture will be moulded. As an example of exorbitant fictiveness, the duplicity of language continues, but it is now an honest transgression, an honest lie, a system without external purpose, unnecessary and therefore beyond the grasp of the needy, a potential marker of sensory truth in a game of linguistic falsity. The essay was originally published in 1876, but its final page may as well have been written yesterday:

That enormous framework and hoarding of ideas, by clinging to which needy man saves himself through life, is to the freed intellect only a scaffolding and a toy for Its most daring feats,
and when It smashes it to pieces, throws it into confusion, and then puts it together ironically, pairing the strangest, separating the nearest items, then It manifests that It has no use for those makeshifts of misery, and that It is no longer led by ideas but by intuitions. (639)

This is a semiotics for the successfully violent, for those with no reason to lie. It reaccommodates the primal father as the puppeteer of language, but also drafts Bloom's subjectivist puissance and, most patently, even terminologically, Hollingdale's desired manifesto of poststructuralism. Nietzsche's semantic trompe l'oeil is that this manoeuvre, the switch to "a playing at seriousness" ("TF" 639), is apparently accomplished without loss, or denial, but simply reconfigures a former sham as an affirmation. If we trust in such phraseology, then a defunct civilisation may still become its own deconstructive act and thus redeem itself, unashamedly, in the service of a positive, heroic spirit. Inside the reconfiguration, which is expressed as a will to power rather than a will to subversion, there is no self-doubting Freudian embarrassment, no oxymoronic hostility towards accessing an archae, towards the theory's own tools, for the hostility is now a positive, the tools themselves indicative of a preliberated, perpetual irony, a "directness of dissimulation" ("TF" 639).

Beyond the ludic nonchalance of this self-analysis, however, the inherent conjunction between thought and being is once more revised in favour of the latter, for the desire to think coherently, which is to lie deviously, is more or less compulsive in proportion to the weakness of one's constitution. The least frail will be the most self-assertive, the most transparently disruptive to the collective episteme, since they have no instinctual need for thought's dissemblance. Classically grounded, Nietzsche does not claim to be acultural, to hazard a guess at the original tribe, and yet ultimately, abetted by knowledge, he
preaches a blissful superficiality, confident in its physical sturdiness. It matters little how this is rationalised, that the genealogies are real, if the purpose in referencing the Greek, Roman, Viking or Japanese aristocracies, the successive reassertions of Nietzsche's classical ideal or "good," is merely to define a latent though nonetheless universal penchant for aculturalism. At their best, these races "go back to the innocent conscience of the beast of prey, as triumphant monsters who perhaps emerge from a disgusting procession of murder, arson, rape, and torture, exhilarated and undisturbed of soul" (BW 476). The end result is no different to Freud's primitivism. However deployable the linguistic theory may seem within the hermetism of an academic setting, as an intellectual posture, in practice it becomes a guide to gratuitous brute force. This is Nietzsche's value-creation, his avowal of life, and it is persistently driven home in all its glorious bravura. The opening pages of On the Genealogy of Morals trace the real, classical etymologies of the terms "good" and "evil," feasibly if somewhat predictably reimposing them as the aristocratic will to power and the plebian will to truth. Such scholarship sanctions Nietzsche's later reappraisal of the Christian "good" as a mutation of these terms, a lie of necessity, a "Slave morality" (BW 472) which defines itself reactively, against the noble, with a "No to what is 'outside,' what is 'different,' what is 'not itself'; and this No is its creative deed" (BW 472). Ethics is but an overestimation of pity, a negation of life which is to be replaced by the slave's fear of the noble, a more primary and therefore preferable position for the underclass, since "who would not a hundred times sooner fear where one can also admire than not fear but be permanently condemned to the repellent sight of the ill-constituted, dwarfed, atrophied, and poisoned?" (BW 479). Of course, with the realisation of the Nietzschean
The initial etymology, the scholarship, would be unnecessary, for the status of the “good” would become a palpable truth, a given which would be resplendently obvious and intuited by all, both the fearsome and the fearing. The theory’s end, in typically modern fashion, is to overhaul its means. There is no restriction on its extremity, and it is not simply Christianity which is recast as denial, but also atheism, which knows itself only via the valuation of a former will to truth, and is thus as reactive as its nemesis. Anarchism is dismissed as one more “religion of pity” (BW 306), an endorsement of politics, and logically nihilism becomes another offshoot of belief.

The alternative, though it may not perceive itself as such for that again would imply reaction, is the spontaneous, unwarranted, criminal act, “to live dangerously” (The Gay Science 283), a phrase which may pass as a summary of summaries, the eventual residuum of the opus. In the end, Nietzsche’s aristocracy, in its self-sufficient guiltlessness, will be incapable of knowing anything beyond its own ever-excessive immediacy. The last lines of “Truth and Falsity” define an ideal heroic subject who “cannot learn from experience, but again and again falls into the same ditch into which he has fallen before” (639), a miniature yardstick for modernity’s process of incessant unknowing. For all the theory’s aesthetic packaging, its inversion of language which promises the loss of one civilisation yet aims to replace it with a more gloriously “civilised” vision, this is less an alternative than a redundancy, another rendition of visceral supersession, or, less euphemistically, meaningless change. Although Nietzsche professed only disdain for the French Revolution, consistently presenting it as a reactive, common struggle, spurred by “popular instincts of ressentiment” (BW 490), it is possible, as in the
opening chapter of my text, to read both the radical cognitive reductiveness of its ideology and its ultimate physical ramifications as an earlier manifestation of the same will to power. The Revolution certainly interpreted itself as an affirmation of being, with its own intuitive values, yet rather than recognising the irrationality of its project of cultural amnesia, Nietzsche simply rewrites it with more gay abandon, as a cackling, latter-day Romanticism. However limited this theory is in the field of thought, where it acts out a gesture of permanent ridicule, it is unconditionally fetterless as actual aggression, open to any hare-brained plot. Indeed, the more unfounded the offensive, the better, since the extent of its flagrancy measures its potential as demystification. For the violent, self-determining reinvention of the world, no IQ test is required. Whilst Hollingdale’s expansion of this project beyond a single race to a generic “life-acceptance” (190) is concordant to the universality of the source, the rush to cleanse Nietzsche of his fascist aftertaste, to prove that “He had no special interest in racism and nationalism . . . since his philosophy supposes both to be delusions” (176), is in fact counter-productive from a pro-Nietzschean stance. It is a diluted version, borne of perceptual concerns, whereas if this philosophy is to be genuinely amplified, driven to its natural conclusion, then all becomes delusional and simultaneously available for all, regardless of whether the intention is nefarious. Arguably, Nietzsche, as with any other modern theorist, is particularly deployable for nationalism, for such movements tend to portray themselves in terms of present action, via supposedly visceral truths, rewriting their history as a series of moments when other similarly “honest” forces were marshalled. The point here, however, is that if Nietzsche is to be given his audacious, unqualified due, then we are in no position to pick and choose.
Certainly, from both a biographical and philosophical perspective, there is legitimate evidence of Nietzsche’s philo-Semitism, and to bandage the wound Hollingdale permits himself the following quotation from the dubious Nachlass: "The anti-Semites do not forgive the Jews for having 'Geist' - and money" (225). Before congratulating ourselves on redressing another race as übermenschen, before tendering this rectified Nietzsche in good conscience, it may be worth mentioning that the Geist on offer, the content of the now apparently less odious "life-acceptance" (Hollingdale 190), remains the same as ever, riddled with such extremities as "no injury, assault, exploitation, destruction can be 'unjust'" (BW 512). On occasion, though ever more frequently as modernity ripens, such overt wantonness, deeds of unchecked hostility, make the headlines. These deeds are the logical but implicit acme, prefigured by Nietzsche, of Freud, Bloom, and poststructuralism, trapped for the most part in intellectual affectation. Even the munificent Hollingdale acknowledges that the ideal of the gratuitous, the notion of an aristocracy which forgets and reasserts itself without foundation, continuously auto-superseding, is an "unreality" (191). Instead, more commonly, Nietzsche seeps through as an unfulfilled desire, an anti-epistemological loathing which nonetheless remains ensconced in knowledge. It is a painting, meticulously crafted after years of apprenticeship, then daubed in excrement; a mass-produced T-shirt which reads "Just Do It." In short, the appetite for individualism is now socially cultivated, and we too may own our little piece of Nietzsche, quite acceptably, though he would no doubt be alarmed at how domesticated, how oscillatory, his nobility has become.

Rather than apprehending our assimilation of a potty-trained Nietzsche as a semi-success, and recognising that sporadic eruptions of naked power coupled with our more insipid, doxic, mental impulse
towards minor acts of similar "truth" is as practicable as this project will or has ever become, instead the asymptosy continues, assuming that at some point its theoretical line will ultimately penetrate the societal circle more resonantly. The modern is a process of perpetual becoming, an unrealisable project which views itself as merely unrealised. In the eyes of its disciples, therefore, dissatisfied with an inactive cultural apophasis, the aforementioned semi-success is a semi-failure, a domestication which always leaves the field open for further contributions. Nietzsche's most efficient reanimator, or unleashed, at least at a conceptual level, was and remains Michel Foucault, an overhauler whose impact persists in mocking Hayden White's prophecy, forecast as recently as 1978, that work of such grandiose scope would "not attract the ardent interest of the Anglo-American philosophical community" (255). Now, far beyond the confines of the hautes écoles, and for that matter those of philosophy, the ardeny may be verified by simply turning on even the baser forms of panel discussion on TV. Inserting himself within a paradigm which had already demystified God, and killed the King, an act which is sensed symbolically by even the still extant monarchies as they struggle with their own incongruity, forced to defend themselves in modernity's terms, Foucault switches, subtler strategy in hand. The targets are less conspicuous, all backed by the same humanist Reason which had served to expose the previous atavistic superstructures, though now superstructural itself. Succinctly, as the admiring Lawrence Kritzman has it in his own introductory comments, "Foucault articulates an unquestionable suspicion toward any order which knowledge is transformed into power and vice versa" (Politics Philosophy Culture [PPC] xvii), but more broadly there is proof here that if the wait is sufficiently long then this sole theory of modernity, with essentially
the same methodology despite its successive manifestations, will implode in the attempt to escape itself, while salvaging enough of its rudimentary structure for the kindling of future implosions.

Oddly, the fact that much of Foucault is born of resentment at the housebreaking of Nietzsche has proved disconcerting for those (such as Bloom) who prefer the supposed spontaneity of the original, since this a priori griping runs counter to the self-evaluating ideal. To Foucault's credit, however, his approach, whilst devoid of pandering, is more intricately historical, given that the alternative is to await the impossible advent of the Übermensch from a void. In the absence of visible objectives, real, Olympian exempla of the "good" who by the nobility of their physical presence would trivialise the life of the mind and thus disrupt normality, the focus becomes the reappraisal of our internal methods of interpretation, a recontextualisation of the writer of "Truth and Falsity," of man as "a manifold, mendacious, artificial and opaque animal" (BW 420). Where Nietzsche is often extempore, and always apophthegmatic, Foucault deals in mechanics, rerendering the specifics of history with an immediate, novellesque, Schama-like aplomb, restoring the relevance of an otherwise neutered vision. Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison (DP) begins with the details of a public execution from 1757, reproduced from newspaper reports, then juxtaposed with a more "humane" timetable from the enlightened rule-book of a Parisian prison. In the tradition of the best of secondary schoolmasters, Foucault continues to incorporate the dramatisation of a plague-ridden town in the historic present, and unearths Jeremy Bentham's model of constant reformatory invigilation, the Panopticon, a plan which had hitherto "received little attention . . . regarded as not much more than a bizarre little utopia, a perverse dream" (DP 224-25), but which has nonetheless been realised, many times
over, as corroborated by a present-day photograph of the interior of a penitentiary at Statesville, Illinois. Although perhaps not the most memorable characterisation, it is possible to defend Foucault as the steady academic, a researcher of particularly the last two and a half centuries with a knack for creative revision and synthesis. Such content, however, is all too often but a contextual veneer, at the beck and call of the same, elementary philosophical agenda which prefigures the needlessness of the research, as if the latter were simply interchangeable between the works, for Foucault is always rewriting the same book, unoriginal from the first. In the following, therefore, the selection of *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason* (MC), and *Discipline and Punish*, published over a decade apart with several major works in the interim, is arbitrary; any comparative reading would bear similar fruit.

Whatever the temporal span advertised on the back cover of the book, which is generally 1500 to the present, these texts are far more contemporary than they would like to be, tending to emphasise the last two hundred and fifty years (i.e. post-Enlightenment) at the expense of the former. In the case of madness, Foucault references the late Middle Ages or the early Renaissance only as a prescientific era when “the madman comes from the world of the irrational and bears its stigmata” (MC 58), a period when the insane were something other, untouched by knowledge and visibly ostracised though not confined through their unfathomable being. The vision is not that of remedievalisation, or Restoration, which would mean the endorsement of a past, unified culture in its entirety. Such references are delimited, included less as an indication of what was, than what was not, for this is an anti-project, always impelled against the rationalised, quantifiable madness of modern medicine, which has recouched a former glory as a privation,
"as unreason, that is, as the empty negativity of reason" (MC 116).
Rather than fashioning the eighteenth century as the death of the idea,
or at least as its mutilation via a reduction to algebraic thought,
Foucault simply repeats the typical view of the Enlightenment as the
dawn of sophistication, of ever more non-corporeal progress. Far from
liberating the body, science has enslaved it “in the neutralized
transparency of psychological notions” (MC 129), and it is this
neutralisation, more prevalent now than at any prior point, produced
through figurative, linguistic structures of supposed intelligibility,
which must be manifested as but a delusory trick of the mind:

If mania, if melancholia henceforth assumed the aspects our
science knows them by, it is not because in the course of
centuries we have learned to ‘open our eyes’ to real symptoms; it
is not because we have purified our perceptions to the point of
transparency; it is because in the experience of madness, these
concepts were organized around certain qualitative themes that
lent them their unity, gave them their significant coherence,
made them finally perceptible. (MC 130)

The rephrasing of Reason as construct is Foucault’s great thesis, an
inherent epistemological cynicism which invariably forms the bulk of
his pages, propped up by mere substitutions in content. Of course,
given the context of my previous chapter, to oust even the sparsest of
languages is in fact the culmination of Condillac, and in this sense
Foucault is a testament to the Abbé’s success, the continuation of
positivism, a product of the milieu he critiques. Certainly, the
Enlightenment ideologues allowed the last vestiges of the structure to
remain standing, and these are now to be bulldozed once and for all,
yet there is a real affinity here with an antecedent which, instead of
simply passing undisclosed, is now targeted as the source of present
angst. It has morphed from hypostasis to further distortion. In order
to accept Foucault’s counter-argument, we must first accept that with
each passing day, with every second, the world has become a more
refined exercise in anagogy, that the already anti-mediative modern is not only a reappropriated form of mediation but the latter's paragon. Without the backdrop of this process of evolution, setting itself up for a fall, *Madness and Civilization* would not only be unoriginal, but also, since none of the earlier sorties in the same direction have materialised in a fully liberated format, Foucault would be compelled to admit that his work is nothing more than the reiteration of a failure, and indeed implicated in the trend towards mathematicalisation which he claims to expose. The entire plan hinges upon cementing a distance between the models which are in fact most similar to one's own, on radicalising the future to such a degree that it apparently bears no resemblance to even (or particularly) its most obvious, floundering past.

The asylum, as a microcosm of Enlightenment codification, of life regulated via supposedly "value-neutral language" (White 252) which for Foucault is continually more pregnant with false meaning, "concealing to the practitioners of the human sciences the extent to which the constitution of their field of study was a poetic act" (White 252), now becomes the arbiter not of madness but normality. Once hospitalised, the insane were (and are) "controlled, not cured" (MC 244), "kept in a perpetual anxiety, ceaselessly threatened by Law and Transgression" (MC 245), all so that "madness would never - could never - cause fear again; it would be afraid" (MC 245). Confronted with a society which has switched "from the noble deed to the secret singularity" (DP 193), where individualism is swamped in a mass of conventionalising paper, Foucault rediscovers Nietzsche's nobility in the outsider, in the potential fear of the "de-formed," a fear more primary than the code. It is like buying a computer on the premise that its encrypted regularity will eliminate the residual, purportedly malevolent vagaries
of thought from life, only to find that someone considers this reductive form of intelligence to be the height of sophistication, more specious than even last year’s model, apotheosising its capabilities while simultaneously instructing his less professorial cohorts (escapees) to smash it to pieces, and claiming this act of violence to be the polar opposite of the manufacturer’s philosophical intention.

Beyond the coercion of the asylum proper, moreover, a similar, less discernible but omnipresent coercion permeates in even the most unlikely of places. Romanticism, and explicitly Rousseau, a movement once touted as shockingly emancipated in its own right, with the ontology of a proto-Madness and Civilization, is now remoulded as a fainthearted, programmatic physiocracy. No longer the “return to the immediate” (MC 196), nature is but a sterilised, puritanical presence, a taming force which Foucault reads like an advertisement for prune juice: “The pressures of the healthiest needs, the rhythm of the days and the seasons, the calm necessity to feed and shelter oneself, constrain the disorder of madmen to a regular observance” (MC 194).

Most jeopardously, despite Romanticism’s mutation into “day job,” “an immediate . . . mediatized by morality” (MC 196) and cultivated in the steady work of the honest labourer, it was and remains configured, in the communal mind, as an ingenuous, asocial liberation, lacking the obvious positivist walls of the asylum. This absence now adds a further layer of disguise, a yet more internalised ethics, to its restraint. Where once the danger of Rousseau stemmed from his proximity to the wilds, he was instead put out to pasture, and the danger becomes his proximity to knowledge, to a repression of “the violence of desire” (MC 196). By the same token, Freud, who had already written much of Foucault’s argument and, given the latter’s title, is perhaps its most overt theoretical source, receives just two brief passages which at
best constitute only a semi-ratification. Since Freud's archeology bypasses positivism, at least in its own terms, seeming to circumvent any obstacular propitiation between an alpha madness and access to this origin, Foucault's rearguard thrust towards similarly unfettered contact sanctions the former lunge as "the sovereign violence of a return" (MC 198). Having recognised that the requisite project was one of demystification, however, Freud then designed further window dressing, reconceptualising his access through another scientific framework which only served, despite its claims of release, to protract the confinement of the insane within a more hazardously individualised, less apparent institution:

But on the other hand he exploited the structure that enveloped the medical personage; he amplified its thaumaturgical virtues, preparing for its omnipotence a quasi-divine status. He focussed upon this single presence - concealed behind the patient and above him, in an absence that is also a total presence - all the powers that had been distributed in the collective existence of the asylum; he transformed this into an absolute Observation, a pure and circumspect Silence . . . . (MC 277-78)

Despite Freud's radically simplified ontogenetics, therefore, and his perception of the latent, he remains a doctor, with all the oppressive etymological paraphernalia that title confers, and transmutes from master debunker to another fabulist of reconstruction. The psychiatrist contacts Foucault's madness, only to reregulate it, more clandestinely, into cowardice. The technique, that of an authority derived from deauthorising supersession, is the same in both Foucault and Freud, although now the latter is to be hoisted on his own petard, by a newer author of his method, a redefinition of depth. In Foucault's case, the installment of this artificial division ensures that once again the veritable continuity of the same theory will be obscured, which is the point, for it lends his work a more liberated sensibility, an edgier assumption of potential freedom, unwittingly awaiting its own future
deauthorisation. Both men are apparently ignorant of the possibility that such manoeuvring may make a mockery of the technique itself, the promise of which is never fulfilled.

To read nothing but Foucault is still to read this general lack of gratification, for his own opus acts as a microcosm of the semi-failed process of modernity. Unlike Nietzsche, who was the victim of genuine impediments to publication, between *Madness and Civilization* and *Discipline and Punish* Foucault became chair of the philosophy department at Vincennes' experimental university, was elected to the Collège de France at the tender age of forty-two, perfected the art of the interview, and, above all, sold books. The fundamental critical apparatus, the suspicion that "beneath every set of figures, we must seek not a meaning, but the coherence of a tactic" (*DP* 139), was hardly covert. Perhaps insanity had proved too esoteric a subject, and the world at large had missed the implication apropos its own affected existence as mental hospital. From this premise, the flaw would lie in content and emphasis, but not methodology. *Discipline and Punish*, however, though indeed more emphatic, seems counter-productive. The words "crime" and "prison" are interchangeable with "madness" and "asylum" respectively, to the extent that a series of "cf." notations would suffice to force the later work into obsolescence, a mere restatement which, in the need for its annunciation, confirms rather than contradicts the unreality of the earlier argument. The limitless escape, either from the asylum or from meaning, had not materialised, and now, beyond Romanticism and Freud, an inadvertently weaker, grasping Foucault attempts to reanimate his own reverie.

The plot is familiar. Once, prior to the "instantaneous" (13) guillotine, a mechanism which "takes life almost without touching the body" (13), punishment as public torture was more obviously painful, an
experience of manifest power unashamedly satisfying its desire for physical vengeance. Apparently, for Foucault, there was a brash, translucent relationship between the crime and its penalty. In the course of the last two centuries' crescendo of abstraction, this former "visible intensity" (9), "redefined by knowledge" (22), has been subjected to a less visible plan of social rehabilitation, "intended not to punish the offence, but to supervise the individual, to neutralize his dangerous state of mind" (18). Rather than standing up and taking our punishment literally on the chin, the penalty is now "analogical" (105), "the 'pain' of the idea of 'pain'" (94), based on an assessment of the transgressor's curriculum vitae and inflicted, via the daily, quasi-monastic regularities of imprisonment which are the same for both the murderer and the thief, upon "the workings of the conscience itself" (238). The length of a sentence is designed to churn out upstanding members of the community, although that community will continue to monitor their progress even after their release, all in the name of a far more torturous but furtive compassion, disguising norm as law and thereby "rendering as discreet as possible the singular power to punish" (302). Again, as with madness, there are mid-paragraph moments amidst the Enlightenment-bashing when Foucault seems to be on the point of reintroducing an older episteme, as if he has excavated the pavement to discover not a beach but other, perhaps preferable, layers of pavement. The Ancien Régime, for example, is cast as forgiving, a time when "The least-favoured strata of the population . . . benefited, within the margins of what was imposed on them by law and custom, from a space of tolerance" (82), a space which was illegalised by the arbitrary arithmetic of the new code. Once more, however, in typically modern, schoolboy fashion, this past is invoked for its supposedly less mediated being, as though the further the historian
regresses the less idealised civilisation becomes. Foucault never perceives that his own ruinous modus operandi is but a more excessive form of the Enlightenment; all his work is predisposed to deny such a connection. Certainly, in the sheer quantity of this denial, in the unintentional shrugging off of his own theory, there are bound to be glimpses of a constructive alternative, but, like Nietzsche's invocation of real aristocracies, Discipline and Punish's use of a royalist past tends to be confined to the body, a means with which to oppose the idea's conjectured usurpation of power. For Foucault, public torture at its best was a synergy of terror, the sanctioned yet uncontrolled release of "momentary saturnalia" (60), "a whole aspect of the carnival, in which rules were inverted, authority mocked and criminals transformed into heroes" (61). The old order, therefore, simply means the mobilisation of the mob, the latter's potential as a disruptive force, caught in a mass pyretic spasm through which power becomes most obviously somatic and attainable. It is this moment of fear, on the part of the executioners and the structure they personify, when "there is always, even in the most extreme vengeance of the sovereign a pretext for revenge" (61), that Foucault regards as the political motivation behind our current preference for a carceral, surreptitious punishment, suited to "attenuating the effects of revolt" (303). Even here, the Enlightenment's adroit stimulation of precisely such turbulent moments seems to have predetermined and consummated the same argument. Even within Foucault, moreover, the subdued fate of the criminal is predictably the same as that of the insane, for once inside this theory, having mastered the terminology of neutralisation, it is difficult, indeed illogical, to conceive of any other. The process becomes one of painting by numbers, where the colours are at the artist's discretion but the shape of the template remains constant. The
theory itself demands the preclusion of further conception, yet must be presented, over and again, regardless of how flogged its half-dead horse seems, with the appearance of a revelation.

Ultimately, Foucault’s only distinction, more urgent by Discipline and Punish, lies in a practical endgame, which he played with an honest insouciance. Often overlooked, or perhaps deliberately omitted as embarrassingly vulgar, this contribution proves troublesome to incorporate within an academic milieu, to assume as a purely critical attitude. Commonly, though unjustly, Foucault is dished out piecemeal, by both detractors and proponents alike, as nothing more than “Mr. Anti-Construct.” In a recent essay written against the contextualisation of history, solely mentioned here by dint of its typicality, this atrophied persona is condemned via the perennially popular “I have never written anything but fictions’” (Windschuttle 138) quote, a line now available at most coffee shop book readings. It is not a miscomprehension, but misleading, for it only tells half the story. What of a non-fictitious response? In a similar but more thorough, complimentary vein, Edward Said’s acclaimed Orientalism, a text which attempts to expose the real domination of the West through the latter’s archive of deceptively represented alterity, although explicitly Foucault-driven, is unintentionally something of a hatchet job. Again, there is no theoretical blunder, for Said simply replaces the asylum or discipline with another structure, a different content, but if representation is inherently misrepresentation then how is the subculture’s archive preferable to that of Sir Richard Burton or T. E. Lawrence? There is a gap, on almost every page, as to the possible emergence of an alternative epistemology, which is to say an alternative power. Amidst the generally combative, revelatory approach, inherited from Foucault, Said hints at a selection which is never
substantiated: "Psychologically, Orientalism is a form of paranoia, knowledge of another kind, say, from ordinary historical knowledge" (72). Having established the field of opposition, it begins to appear that there may be degrees of knowledge, but how this other knowledge differs from Orientalism, how it evades comparable pitfalls in its construction, remains nebulous at best. If "Truth in short becomes a function of learned judgement, not of the material itself, which in time seems to owe even its existence to the Orientalist" (Said 67), then how is this material to be accessed and thereby activated? Such post-critique inertia, a gingerliness in the face of alternatives, is characteristic of the application of modern theory, and whilst such neutralisation is not present in Foucault, its inevitability stems from his work.

The ever-sanely structured Madness and Civilization closes with a poetic flurry, linking its proposition to the likes of Van Gogh, Artaud, and, of course, Nietzsche. Indeed, these final pages present a most faithfully and therefore most absurdly neo-Nietzschean Foucault, forcing an arrant, ex nihilo spontaneity to the point of mysticism as a deliverance from nature. Goya's Caprichos, once Rimbaud’s route to similar carousal, become instead a gesture of sobriety, mere landscape painting, ousted in favour of the Disparates which are seemingly "borne out of nothing: they have no background, in the double sense that they are silhouetted against only the most monotonous darkness, and that nothing can assign them their origin, their limit, and their nature" (280). There is no diagram here, no genealogical qualification as to when madness ceases to be man’s repossession of an original, Rousseausque condition and shifts into Goya’s self-referencing nothingness. As with Nietzsche’s envisioned though unsustainable ideal, Foucault may only intuit a non-reactive out-clause, a non-argument
beyond counter-argument which remains illusive in its irreality.

Although the critique of the asylum and of a more pervasive sanitarian power is as deployable as any form of structuralism, it is difficult to grasp how this preferable yet unjustified, unintelligible insanity made sophistry is to be known, to be accessed even individually, much less how it would constitute a distinct knowledge to either imperialism or other archives. The most readily functional example in the elite handful of madmen is that of the Marquis de Sade:

Actually, for Sade there is no return to the natal terrain, no hope that the first rejection of social order may surreptitiously become the reestablished order of happiness, through a dialectic of nature renouncing and thus confirming itself. The solitary madness of desire that still for Hegel, as for the eighteenth-century philosophers, plunges man into a natural world that is immediately resumed in a social world, for Sade casts man into a void that dominates nature in a total absence of proportion and community, into the endlessly repeated nonexistence of gratification. (283-4)

In practice, however it is couched, Foucault’s version of madness remains a materialist project, to a degree only implied by a Bacon or a Condillac, and his genuine contribution is to realise this disproportionate gratification, regardless of dialectic, in all its boorishness. It is the gratification of the Freudian patient before Freud’s rationalised pathology. Just as “Through Sade and Goya, the Western world received the possibility of transcending its reason in violence” (285), a dehermeticised, street-tough Nietzsche is set in motion, the untenable will to power compromised but activated through transient, aleatory political associations as a means to this violent end. The latter’s unabashed celebration is ultimately all Foucault has to offer, but he is realistically prepared to hang it on “the ideology of the month,” exploiting the paradox of being and thought in order to fulfil modernity’s constant promise of limitless vulgarity. Unlike Hollingdale’s antiseptic Nietzsche, there is no sifting of the causes
here, no ringing endorsement of the Left by whom Foucault is so often invoked, but a comprehension, for all its inconsistency, that the fruition of the theory will require some form of external, ideological resistance, however petty, resentful, or indeed artificial the theory considers that resistance to be. If it tends to favour the hoi polloi, this is simply because they are supposedly most ostracised by the current, furtive exercise of power and those most capable of seizing Sade's ideal regalement, or as near an approximation of such experience as possible. Sade himself, of course, was neither socially nor politically one of them. It is understandably perilous to dispense this negligence, or disorder, which is essentially "rent-a-mob," borne in any direction the theoretical wind happens to blow, as a counter-Orientalism.

In the wake of the 1968 student riots in Paris, the governmental motive behind the new university at Vincennes was to entice the more malevolent miscreants, along with their fanatical neo-Communism, away from the instability of the Latin Quarter. Foucault, as Windschuttle and Said's "Mr. Anti-Construct," would surely consider this fanaticism to be as manufactured as any other, remain above the fray, and appoint his faculty accordingly. Instead, all the junior appointees at the Department of Philosophy had been participants in the riots, forming, in James Miller's biography, "a critical mass of self-styled Maoists, affiliated with the Gauche Prolétarienne" (176) or, in David Macey's version, "a political hornets' nest" (225). Within a month of the university's opening, the GP incited an occupation of the administration building, ostensibly out of solidarity for a similar event at the Sorbonne, with Foucault providing tips on barricade construction and "gleefully lobbing stones" (Miller, 178-79) at the police from the roof. However, to suggest that this cooperation was
anything more than a convenient, ephemeral alliance, the best prospect of a real outlet, is to misframe the debate.

In a round-table discussion originally published in *Actuel* in 1971, the questioners are the victims of such misconception from the off, inspired by the quixotic formulae of militant socialism, and expectant, on the assumption that the bias is mutual, of a few scraps apropos the specifics of their own ideology. Discussion is perhaps too resolute a word, for it reads as though the recordings of two soliloquies have been spliced together. When asked "what replaces the system?" (*Language, Counter-Memory, Practice* 230), Foucault replies "that to imagine another system is to extend our participation in the present system" (230), a consistent refrain both here and elsewhere, and one which confirms the unconditional obsolescence of the past, not to mention that of the question itself. Still, moments later, and the following is typical of the incongruity of the conversation, the need for "a utopian model and a theoretical elaboration" (231) is restated, as if the earlier question had passed unanswered and such an elaboration remained a possibility, thus forcing Foucault into another predictable retort: "Why not the opposite? Reject theory and all forms of general discourse. This need for theory is still part of the system we reject" (231). It is not my contention that the agenda of these radicals is identical to that of Said, but that there is a common missing of the plot, an underestimation of or indeed prudery towards the sheer extremity of Foucault's desire for actual wantonness, to the extent that this replacement has no point of contact, beyond the experience of stone-throwing, with positions which would otherwise be considered fanatically materialist in their own right. The most practical of nihilisms, which in its most perfect, universal form would mean a suspicion of everything we think but none of what we do,
attaches itself, though only epidermically, to its closest, always contradictory, expression.

By Discipline and Punish in 1975, the writing is more macrocosmic, a series of vertiginous, universal moments which underscore the omnipresence of Bentham’s scheme of observation, outside the prison, the army, or the hospital, in a “movement that stretches from the enclosed disciplines, a sort of ‘social quarantine,’ to an indefinitely generalizable mechanism of ‘panopticism’” (216). As the content is expanded, and the normalisation of the plague-stricken town is manifested beyond the town’s borders, becoming a plague in itself, so the exit becomes less fastidious, less the product of non-theoretical purism. “The gaze is alert everywhere” (195), and it is now the same vigilance as that feared by Rousseau, the former supervisor now implicitly forgiven and reliberated, with Foucault as little more than the next broker of an isomorphism, countersigning the same Romantic, Freudian strategy of indiscipline, “‘... the life of the savage, living from day to day and with no tomorrow’” (292), “the great crimes not as monstrosities, but as the fatal return and revolt of what is repressed, the minor illegalities not as the necessary margins of society, but as a rumbling from the midst of the battle-field” (290). This field is literal, and the book a call to arms. The proposal, the alternative, is one of a brutal, mass criminality, which though inevitably mediated in its transmission may supposedly become unmediated and certainly apolitical in its execution. As a discursive posture, the posture itself is ultimately gratuitous, for Foucault is prepared to dirty his hands, both in theory and practice, revealing a crudity which necessitates the academic abbreviation of his work to a sanctimonious critical stance. The inconsistencies, or the compromises, of Discipline and Punish, as before on the rooftop at Vincennes, are
those of a modus vivendi, the requisites of inhabiting modernity's endgame most faithfully, conscious of its paradoxical consequences yet heedless of them nonetheless.

In 1978, a supportive Foucault covered the Shi'ite revolution in Iran for the Corriere della Serra. Without digressing into all the ideological clutter of this uprising (for modernity's coup de grâce is that these concerns are ultimately irrelevant), although it may once have presented itself with all the elements of an anti-monarchical liberation, a stand against the authoritarian Shah and his secret police, the replacement exhibited its own brand of fundamentalist inhumanity which the Left regarded and continues to regard, at best, with some ambivalence. Such political partitioning becomes absurd. In an interview with two fellow Western journalists the following year, both of whom seem at least superficially revolutionary and therefore empathetic, Foucault answers a concern over the status of women with the claim that radicalism is always compelled to attach itself to something, and in the Iranian case to "institutions that carry a charge of chauvinism, nationalism, exclusiveness, which have a very powerful attraction for individuals" (PPC 224). There is a lucid comprehension, both in the reporting and the interview, of the theoretical tenets of change, and yet there is also a point, which marginalises all theoretical discretion, where the Nietzschean ideal must defile and thus semi-reveal itself in the probity of motion: "The very word demonstration must be taken literally: a people was tirelessly demonstrating its will" (PPC 216). This, again, is the alternative, less attitudinally chic than bellicose.

Even Foucault himself, however, despite his later acquiescence, was unable to sustain such shows of force beyond the transitory event. Amidst the more lascivious biographical details, the experimentation
with LSD, sado-masochism, or classroom circle jerks, all forms of a
more intimate rebelliousness which acts as a counterpoint to the
broader arena of the books, the most consistent portrait is always that
of a sedulous, ascetic scholar. After the occupation of Vincennes, for
example, Foucault’s lectures became the focus of “the insane harangues
of the various ultra-left sects” (Miller 181), an insanity predicated
upon academic inertia, and “He spent as little time as possible on
campus, concentrating instead on his research and reading in the
Bibliotèque Nationale” (Miller 181). Whilst the promise and the
intermittent enactment of modernity’s only, perpetually deferred
conclusion are more present here than before, with all the concessions
such presence entails, there remains the artificiality of the
occasional prankster, the scholarly Bobo. It is a predicament, and a
legacy in the hands of the contemporary intelligentsia, which is
ironically reminiscent of Foucault’s own assessment of Lacenaire,
another dabbler in delinquency, or controlled, trivialised crime, who
became a bourgeois celebrity in the days before his execution:

... what was being celebrated was the symbolic figure of an
illegality kept within the bounds of delinquency and transformed
into discourse – that is to say, made doubly inoffensive; the
bourgeoisie had invented for itself a new pleasure, which it has
still far from outgrown. (DP 284)

Although there is a certain probity to Foucault’s resistance, the
weight of his argument, the will to power, is servile to the sporadic
gestures of a supposed counter-authenticity. If the theory is to be
anything more than otiose critique, it must hitch its wagon to forms of
counter-appropriation, to ontologies it may otherwise question. For the
neo-Nietzschean purist, such servility in reappropriation is too high a
price, even when the counter-argument remains merely implicit as in
Orientalism, the solution of course being to supersede once more, to
deny its predecessor’s terms, its theoretical footing, through
consultation with the original. Gianni Vattimo’s The End of Modernity: Nihilism and Hermeneutics in Postmodern Culture, is one of the more trenchant examples of such purism, claiming to reassert Nietzsche’s “accomplished nihilism” (19). The latter’s distinction is that it is non-reactive, whereas all prior philosophy, either through the postulation of resistance or the redressing of history with secular, onto-theological meaning has defined itself via the past, even if this collusion is disowned. Now, having at last exhausted these epiphenomenal lunges, all burdened by the same “pathos of authenticity” (23), as contemporaries of capitalism’s maturity “we begin to be, or to be able to be, accomplished nihilists” (19). Instead of inverting our values, replacing the established hierarchy with “a grandiose metaphysical appeal to other, ‘truer’ values (for example, the values of subcultures or popular cultures as opposed to dominant cultures, the rejection of literary or artistic canons, etc.)” (25), we must accept a general flux towards the debasement, the meaninglessness of value itself. There is total freedom in Vattimo, a freedom which is close at hand, already assumed and inhabited to at least some degree, for his theory is “the reduction of everything to exchange-value” (26), in other words to fiction, which simply requires our yielding to the dominant capitalist hermeneutic. In the language of the commodity, in the a priori lacuna between the object and our apprehension of it, knowledge must inevitably cede to myth, the only question being our worthiness of the challenge, whether we recognise and exploit this already extant process of mythopoiesis “in all its vertiginous potentiality” (21). Vattimo thus theorises the coup de grâce to the will to truth, still within the Enlightenment’s heritage of suspicion yet attempting to extend its purview, for even that most rudimentary form of positivism, “a dehumanizing technology” (29), manifests itself
as a "a fable or sage" (29), a form which has but masked its fabulous status hitherto, a dangerously anodyne placebo which has tricked us into ascribing real effects to its pseudo-scientificity. Again, in order to be the last, the end of history, and Vattimo's title allows for little doubt as to his intent, the postmodern née modern must debunk even or particularly those theories which are closest to it. Such previous forays are to be feared since they have only semi-completed Vattimo's task, and may detract from the shock of his present, all-consuming fictitiousness. It is not merely positivism, perhaps an easy target by the close of the twentieth century, which is reinscribed as falsely palliative, but even the telos of Being, the latter's material existence, now negated as another mode of appropriation. This "consumption of Being in exchange-value, that is, the transformation of the real world into a fable" (27), is Vattimo's endgame, not only suggesting the death of matter as a metaphysical possibility but also that matter itself lies, an extremity that eclipses the alternative substrata of the likes of Foucault or Said, tacitly portraying them as reactionary.

Beyond these pages, in practice, the "fictionalized experience of reality" (Vattimo, 29) may be too much to ask. It is arguable that the social enactment of a poststructuralist linguistics will never be perpetually able to rationalise itself as ficticity, to think while simultaneously undercutting itself, and even if this contortion were possible language will always be more than a noumenal void, at least somewhat pregnant with meaning, referencing a past which is obviously not present and yet more than mere fable. From this perspective, Vattimo's methodology seems more artificial and hence more vulnerable than the former appropriations he critiques. Of course, the project may claim that such artificiality is precisely the point, that its
universalisation of contingency, including auto-contingency, would laugh in the face of any surviving fragments of other specious realities, but jumping on one’s own shadow is harder in practice than on paper. Was Nietzsche, the master source of this text, part of the “fictionalized experience of reality” (29)? More persuasively perhaps, Vattimo’s rhetoric inherits something of his predecessors’ flair for the dramatic, his prose littered with apocalyptic finales which bear the hallmark of appropriation (necessarily unstated) despite all protestations to the contrary: “The accomplished nihilist has understood that nihilism is his or her sole opportunity” (19) begs the question “for what?,” “An accomplished nihilism is today our only chance” (20) merits an “of what?,” “the necessity of ‘forgetting about Being as foundation’ if we are to leap into the abyss” (29) (a paraphrasal of Heidegger) at least a “why leap?,” and “An accomplished nihilism . . . calls us to a fictionalized experience of reality which is also our only possibility for freedom” (29) surely requires some definition of the freedom sought. Perchance this freedom is fictitious, a false catharsis, as it must be if we are to follow Vattimo into the abyss. If so, then not only are we bereft of a rationale for following at all, but also of a rationale for Vattimo’s inclusion of this hypothetical freedom. Betraying the precarious nature of even writing its own argument, there are lapses in the conjectured shrug of the shoulders here, in the “fictionalized experience” (29), replaced by some textual transcendence which may be described as another lunge at appropriation. Whilst Vattimo’s apolitical reassertion of Nietzsche emancipates this precursor from pettier concerns, re-opening him to any and all postmodern schema, and whilst The End of Modernity does indeed pursue its subject to one of its theoretically apt conclusions, far from undermining prior appropriations, it is simply one of them, the
latest in a line which would expose the weakness and even the impossibility of its logic. There is certainly an apodictic case for a commodified, dehumanised lexis' collaboration in the creation of a more rather than less anoetic culture, regardless of the sophistication with which such anoesis sometimes presents itself. From another angle, although difficult to imagine, Vattimo has no doubt sanctioned enough of the Romantic philosophical structure, enough of a mechanised lexis and the postulation of a more profound freedom for someone to attempt a future superannuation of Vattimo himself, someone, perhaps, who views the Internet as a form of Gnosticism in urgent need of demystification.

This parody of thought, pervasively accepted though sometimes undiscerned, is perhaps most conspicuous in the world of modern art, prompting some of its former advocates to abandon ship. A brief visit to even a mainstream modern gallery is enough to witness the Nietzschean fury, ultimately the jouissance of Vattimo's ficticity, screaming or perhaps giggling from the walls, and sooner or later even the more sophisticated among us, the docents of this captiously esoteric world, were bound to miss a phase in the accelerated supersessions (maybe they were sick that day), to admit to a certain lack of comprehension, and then question its soluble status. In Has Modernism Failed?, Suzi Gablik, critic, lecturer, and modern artist, a privileged observer of the arcane, turns on her own field. The premise is an impudent appeal to the philistinism of common sense, daring to suggest that in its rampantly individualising neoterisms, in the midst of "yet another stylistic breakthrough, yet another leap into radical form" (11) (the vocabulary of Vattimo), the "overturning of conventions has become routine" (11), a far from polysemic end unto itself, devoid of all but the most obtuse reference, thus prompting the opening gambit "does postmodernism offer even greater scope for freedom, or is it
merely the effect of what Hegel called the bad infinite - which claims to comprehend everything but is, in reality, a false complexity that merely covers up a lack of meaning?" (11-12). As but one in a depressingly long list of examples, when the artist Chris Burden was asked for clarification as to his objective in being shot in the arm, the reply was simply "'It’s something to experience. How can you know what it feels like to be shot if you don’t get shot? It seems interesting enough to be worth doing it" (49). The sheer quantity of such grisly fanaticism is necessary, for it dovetails with Gablik’s idea of modern art as a complacent, mass aporia which may only be assessed and indeed may only define itself quantitatively. The book’s broader, philosophical point, also corroborated by the amplitude of its exempla, is that whereas once modernist innovation was a genuinely marginalised, vital stance, a substratum from which to critique a capitalist bourgeoisie, now it is the dominant hermeneutic, “muddling along with the status quo” (18), gesture after gesture of affected rebellion producing nothing more radical than “a sterile monotony” (32), part of “the gradual triumph, under advanced ‘late’ capitalism, of a bureaucratic, managerial type of culture characterized by mass consumption and economic self-seeking” (16). As I have tried to illustrate through Condillac, Freud, Nietzsche, and Foucault, Gablik identifies this postmodern pose of revolution as an inside job, a movement in cahoots with the superstructural flux regardless of its assumed alterity, offering us the choice of a single, totalitarian theory, which is no choice or freedom at all. In the micro-dystopia of modern art, Has Modernism Failed? (to which the short answer within its pages is obviously “yes”) confronts the same impossible reasoning as Vattimo, the same always frustrated desire towards incognizance, a guiding fiction with very real effects, omnipresent and impervious to
destruction, since it has staked destruction out, ab initio, as its stomping ground. Here, there is no joy at the prospect, for such specious limitlessness, "The reflex of negation, in the effort to perpetuate itself as a mode of thought, has ended up destroying not only tradition, but also the art of the previous avant-garde" (Gablik, 116), a litotes which only resolves itself in further negation.

This identification of postmodernism's fifteen minutes (Andy Warhol, the glitzy financier-cum-artist par excellence, "fits into the culture as if he were made for it" [87]) as a moment of complicity between supposedly competing theories is the backbone of Gablik's argument, an altruistic defiance of her primary material. There is something in the propaedeutics of modern art, however, a departmentalised solipsism which dictates that we are trapped inside its historical myopia even as we begin to search farther afield for alternatives. At its most significant, with the contemporary understood as the atrophy of thought, Gablik's thesis is unwilling to yield altogether, to be left without content, and she begins a rescue operation of at least part of her now fragmented subject, a precarious, confused sifting of the still recent past which ironically substantiates her central point. Postmodernism, apparently, "is a phenomenon with a very short history" (32), spanning only the second half of the twentieth century, and whilst this may be strictly true for its artistic or literary schools such a limitation, given Gablik's aforementioned exposure of its philosophical vacancy, seems artificial. Despite a sure-footed recognition of the theory of almost instantaneous supersession at one of its more heartless moments, therefore, the continuity of the theory remains lost here, as if it were non-existent before a certain point in the last century. This frees up even modernism, a school against which the same accusations may legitimately
be levelled without changing the vocabulary, as a period instead of authentic insurgence, for Gablik's real target is not the insurgence against thought, "another leap into radical form" (11), but the fact that this insurgence now marries so neatly with the bourgeoisie: "The steady displacement of radical consciousness by the forces of professionalism, bureaucracy, and commercialism has caused avant-garde art to lose its power of rebellion and has crippled its impact" (56). This is modern art's mantra, still within the same hermeneutic, since it must posit itself as a form of anachoresis, a genuinely marginalised, destructive force, which precludes all attempts at syncretism, even though the success of its rebelliousness, inherited from former successes, is responsible for that of a postmodernism which Gablik derides. Rather than reproaching capitalism as some right-wing conspiracy which subverts "radical consciousness" (56), it would be preferable to begin with the implications of "radical consciousness" (56) itself, for its inherent, self-cancelling progressions were bound to be superannuated in kind, by their own logic, and are not unlike those of any bourgeois society. The fact that capitalism and this consciousness have now recognised their complicity, that the likes of Chris Burden may deal openly with the art market or exhibit their work in conventional museums, is merely the overt fruition of a similarity which was always there, and such artists are less a travesty of modernism than its worthy heirs. In other words, away from the political dogma of the art school, modernism has succeeded, and Gablik is rightly averse to its success. The subsequent mis-theorisation of such aversion is simply a testament to the strength of the victory, exemplifying the difficulty of grasping out-clauses, of thinking beyond modernity's own terminology and ruptured history, even when the hope of doing so is affirmed. More specifically, Gablik's cases of modernism's
alleged difference are Kandinsky and Malevich, defenders of "art for art's sake" (21) and "a theodicy of individual being" (21) (i.e. Nietzsche / Bloom / Burden within my broader context). Their legacy may be viewed in graffiti art or "the vandalism aesthetic" (113) (Foucault / Burden), and Anselm Kiefer, "almost Wordsworthian in his nature mysticism" (124) (Bacon / Rousseau / Wordsworth / Emerson / Burden). Although our present versions may sometimes be meiotic imitations of their antecedents, this is by no means always the case (Foucault was more physically revolutionary than Nietzsche, and the final effects of Vattimo's consumerism have yet to be witnessed).

Gablik's much heralded distinction never materialises, even via her own definitions, and the a posteriori, blanket claim that "the modernist assertion of self . . . sought to improve the ethical image of our world" (73) must therefore meet with a similar end.

It was only a matter of time before an erudite art criticism, finding itself over-qualified, excessively clever, for the poverty of meaning of its source material, would confront its own disparity head-on. Perhaps at an evening lecture, with an audience buoyant on wine and cheese, the linguistic and ideological wizardry of the critic may seemingly span this void, endowing the objets themselves with some of its learning, as if the latter were not an imported product of another world but an intrinsic attribute of the work itself. In the less giddy light of the following day, without fanfare or commentary, the same work loses its lustre, and the critical process becomes one of entropy. In the gradual stripping of the veneer, Gablik's book is but one act of apostasy, and T. J. Clark's Farewell to an Idea: Episodes from a History of Modernism, will probably not be the last. Clark, a Professor of Art History at Berkeley, publishing fifteen years after his
predecessor's defection and bearing all the lugubrious weight of the
fin de siècle, is yet more scathing of the present:

'Modernity' means contingency. It points to a social order which
has turned from the worship of ancestors and past authorities to
the pursuit of a projected future - of goods, pleasures,
freedoms, forms of control over nature, or infinities of
information. This process goes along with a great emptying and
sanitizing of the imagination. Without ancestor-worship, meaning
is in short supply . . . . (7)

This project remains a rescue operation, of modernism over modernity,
the former apparently obscured by its aftermath, but Clark's ambitions
for the rescue are less sanguine. Whilst a contemporary, postmodern
antisepsis hampers our comprehension of even its immediate precursor
(the latter now "a ruin, the logic of whose architecture we do not
remotely grasp" [2]), and the argument thus rests on a similar
divisiveness to Gablik's, such blindness to the continuity of history
is only one-way, limited to the present. As Clark suggests, "This has
not happened, in my view, because we have entered a new age" (2), but
because of at least some prediction, some proposal of an imminent
modernity from within modernism's own domain, a complicity in the
current emptiness of its own decay: "Modernism is unintelligible now
because it had truck with a modernity not yet fully in place" (3) or,
more floridly, "The counterfeit nature of its dream of freedom is
written into the dream's realization" (10). Given such awareness of the
potential deficiencies in its material, the study is more cautious, for
although it hopes to salvage more of the past than the handful of
figures selected from the French Revolution until today, it does
proceed on an admittedly partial basis, consigning the vast bulk of
that period to "a crude voluntarism and an equally crude positivity"
(10) which may be explained but not justified. In theory then, Clark's
filter is more exclusive than Gablik's, informed by a healthy
skepticism which should result in the partial excavation of the ruin,
in a series of exceptions who may never be absolutely exceptional but will represent that which is least explicable in modernity's terms. It seems that the position of the contemporary art historian, however uncomfortable, is a reactionary one; a feasible one too, surely, for in over two hundred years of thought there must be someone who did not either endorse or hint at the base materialism scorned in the present, even if their work was subsequently forgotten or misinterpreted, swept along in the materialist tide. Here, though, the obvious uneasiness of the modern art critic's reactionism reimposes itself, a flailing amidst the ruins, since Clark's exception, a modernism to counter modernity, is, like Gablik's before him, the "wish for a truly gratuitous gesture" (8), upheld by the following sources: "Wilde and Nietzsche are this agony's spokesmen, Rimbaud's its exemplary life" (8). Whilst one may never accuse Oscar Wilde of crudity, he is certainly one of the self-serving heroes of Harold Bloom's neo-Nietzschean canon, and "voluntarism" (Clark 10) is hardly the last word to spring to mind regarding this trio. It is a consistent grouping, in relation to each other, modernism and, as I have argued at length herein for both Nietzsche and Rimbaud, with a materialist modernity. Clark promises reactionism, an alternative to the present, claiming that "the thought of belonging and serviceability haunts modernism" (8), yet only delivers revolutionism, which is simply to say more of the same. An entire chapter is devoted to Camille Pissarro, guardian of anarchism, a man whose contact with Seurat, "the Nietzsche of painting" (109), "taught him the power of the negative" (110). Clark is "sure that part of anarchism's appeal to him was its continuing love affair with eighteenth-century materialism" (107), all of which is reliable scholarship, but quite how this Pissarro / Condillac is therefore inscrutable to late twentieth-century materialism, to Vattimo's
consumerism, remains truly unintelligible. The admirable intention, again, is to recontextualise the past, thus shaking the complacency of the current art world, and whilst the intention alone may mean fewer invitations to lecture on the wine and cheese circuit, the latter’s "voluntarism" is in fact exonerated by this particular version of the past. There is even another chapter on Malevich; yes, he of Gablik’s "theodicy of individual being" (21). The assumption that the meaning of Nietzsche, or of Nietzsche-driven art, may be slipping from the communal mind, is simply an indication of how rigid, how real, the artificial divisions have become. It is easy to mistake a sense of disillusion with the present bottling and selling of our older ideals for disillusion with the market, with the process of bottling and selling itself, whereas this is but a belated case of sour grapes, a reaping of the sown which finds its harvest too bitter to swallow. It seems unlikely that Nietzsche himself would have found anything objectionable in Vattimo, in the actions of Burden, or in the fact that Burden’s work is socially accepted and desirable, even de rigueur. Clark becomes the victim of his own problematics, therefore, since he attempts to salvage a meaning which is already, albeit implicitly, pre-salvaged in the contemporary milieu, however unsatisfactory that milieu may be. The point on present emptiness is confirmed in the emptiness of the avowed escape. Rather than a now cryptic modernism being "our antiquity, . . . , the only one we have" (Clark, 3), it is the only one we are sometimes capable of seeing, though its putative obscurity is nothing more than a façade, disguising, to use a word which has only negative connotations in the realm of modern art and the one position from which its partisans are forbidden to argue, an all too obvious tradition.
Both Gablik and Clark's predications of the market as hypostasis as opposed to attribute are informed by yet another kind of supposedly anachronistic idealism, Marxism, and its eponymous creator must be rescued via their counteractive reassertions of the past. There is some irony, of course, in the anachronistic status of Karl Marx and his project, in the deconstruction of fables made fabulous itself, requiring *ex post facto* defences and restoration. Again, the very process of excavation, the need for a protective historicism, is alien to anyone inclined to practice less constructive, more Marxist, procedures. For those accustomed to bulldozing and the subsequent shock of the new, acknowledging an affiliation to the ruins is to court vulnerability. As a critical technique, Marx's suspicion of the superstructure remains pervasive, far beyond the dogmatic assertions of his content, and yet our connection to him is paradoxically impeded by the same technique, the weltanschauung he championed. Whilst I would contend that any study of modernity, any modern theory, must at least come to terms with Marx, however superficially rusty he may seem, and thereby come to terms with the vulnerability of its own argument, there is enough counter-appropriation, often described as a secular Messianism, in his project, for us to discard him as a wide-eyed innocent, superseded long ago, now wholly other to the present. By the same token, the same alterity, there is even a sense that we have never read Marx, that the project only gained ground sporadically, and that therefore he still represents a possible out-clause, an ostracised position which we may still assume as a counter-argument today. It is certainly a testament to the efficiency of modernity's auto-supernuation that Marxism may now be postulated as a soft, conservative option. For Vattimo, this option is a nostalgic, onto-theology, part of a defunct history of use-value against which his
impossibly fictionalised world, his not so noble lie, is at liberty to declare itself. Gablik supplies a relatively unread Marx, one in the process of being read by modernism until postmodernism stormed the building, and one who, along with her other alternatives (graffiti art, Kiefer), may yet restate his tale as salvation: "Marx felt the supreme value of a work of art . . . is achieved along with and through other values: social, moral, and religious" (29). Neither of these renditions suggests any collusion with the present. Vattimo takes an earlier version of his own theory, which has the real benefit of being almost possible, and dismisses it as irrelevant, whereas Gablik, whose desired values are indeed pre-modern, genuinely alternative, is still misdirecting her search, unaware that Marx is less some deus ex machina out-clause than complicit in postmodernism's vacancy. At best, the last two of her values would not even exist under communism. Although Vattimo's revision is in the spirit of its precursor, in the sense that it abuses the past and leaves it for dead, both are premised on rupture, on our lost connection. Apparently at some point, for better or for worse, we had the hope of Marxism, of an alternative, a point which is now over, and yet was this an alternative at all? Clark, like Gablik before him, countersigns socialism, or at least a belief in "the myth of socialism" (408), as the virtuous exit from modernity rather than one of its sources, his vocabulary indicative of the fact that once more, in desperation, we may be conjuring an exit, a difference, from the oddest places, one which was never there: "The myth will survive its historic defeat. The present is purgatory, not a permanent travesty of heaven" (408). Clark does couple the recapture of socialism to the neo-Nietzschean overtones of his thesis, however, realistically proposing that "Anarchism is an aspect of socialism that those of us wishing socialism, or some comparable form of resistance, to survive
will have to think about again, this time without a prearranged sneer" (9), and here, in this concord, there is just an inkling of thought beyond rupture, a hint that the myth was only ever nominally defeated, that perhaps more than its vestige has always survived.

With this last exception, Marx would not recognise himself in such definitions. There is little which may be recast as quaint in his work, and still less as religious, moral, or even social. In Foucault's exposure of history's discontinuity, another unleashing of the past from the conciliatory, unifying effects of ideology, Marx's "decentring" (The Archaeology of Knowledge [AK] 13) assumes pride of place: "This epistemological mutation of history is not yet complete. But it is not of recent origin either, since its first phase can no doubt be traced back to Marx" (AK 11-12). Foucault is a fitting reader, for whilst his claim of genesis may be hyperbolic, Marx does present all the same hallmarks of a fragmented modernity. In this "first" variation on the theme, once again, ideas do not have their own objective structure, yet appear autonomous, still deceptive in their ostensible naturalness. At the advent of consciousness, in primitive communism, the idea was bound and subordinate to praxis, but with the initial division of labour, and the subsequent dominance of a mental labour over the material, the lie of ideology began: "From this moment onwards consciousness can really flatter itself that it is something other than consciousness of existing practice, that it really represents something without representing something real" (Marx, The German Ideology [GI] 43). The prior moment, when cognizance was servile to reality, is the Marxist archae, a moment to which we must return through the erasure of all cognizance between now and then. It is certainly a radical manoeuvre, but one devoid of all the naiveté of a noble, pre-linguistic savagery, for Marx clings on to the barest
lexical framework, "the language of real life" (GI 37) or a "real, positive science" (GI 38) which does rightfully validate humanity's ascendance over nature. If ideology is too strong a word for such use-language, there is at least some semblance of logos here, a principle of basic intelligibility required as an impetus to resistance. However brutal the erasure of the past may be, however Spartan the reduction of thought, this is Marx at his quaintest, as the rather obvious creation of the Enlightenment, implicitly of Condillac, and in the hope of a renewed one-to-one relationship between signifier and signified poststructuralism must part company from him. The separation is affected, as to some extent any poststructuralist project owes its methodology, its predilection for effacement, to Marx, and indeed the latter's thug of a language, his refusal to deny consciousness entirely, remains the only possibility for the actual success of such projects. Instead of poststructuralism's theorisation of itself as evermore ectypally fictitious, however, against Marx's at least semi-realistic intelligibility, this forerunner becomes archaically vulgar, not because he reduced language to praxis, but because he did not reduce it enough. In fact, beyond Vattimo et al.'s spin, the reduction of language itself may be described as vulgar, in which case its further reduction only increases the vulgarity. Here, then, is Gablik and Clark's Marx, relatively meaningful in comparison to modern art's present yet just a lesser (rather than counter-) vacuity. On a similar note, hundreds of The German Ideology's pages are devoted to the lampooning of the Young Hegelian Max Stirner, advocate of the ego's annihilative subjectivity, its potential corrosion of meaning, and therefore ridiculed as a desultory idealist who lacks all Marxist grit. Anyone with even a passing knowledge of poststructuralism's terminology will recognise it in this pasquinade: "And now, of course, it only
remains for him [Stirner] zealously to admonish people to select for
themselves the destiny of absence of any destiny, the vocation of
absence of any vocation, the task of absence of any task" (318).
Stylistically, Marx and Engels are by no means averse to bathos, and
the satire often resorts to plain old name-calling, thus facilitating a
dismissal of Stirner as nemesis, truly deviant to the harsher reality
of their revolutionary praxis. In the above quotation, however,
poststructuralism will recognise itself less in Marx than in Stirner,
for the latter is, by Marx's own perceptive definition, a purveyor of
"absence" (318), a proto-Vattimo, and a preexistent superseder of "the
language of real life" (37). This is not some lesser form of socialism,
but its theoretical conclusion, a deconstruction which is impossible to
state without paradox let alone practice, but one which would exceed
Marxism via its own terms and which we remain unable to elude. The
portrayal of Stirner as a difference of degree rather than kind is too
much to expect of The German Ideology, for the text would thereby
forsake its claim to radicalness, to the future, and would even have to
posit its own irrelevance before it had begun. Like any theorist of the
modern, Marx is eager to be both original and the last, the ultimate
relevance, whereas in fact he is merely dismantling the gate through
which Stirner's horse has already bolted. The discontinuity has a
pattern, but this is continuously denied by the internal demands, the
apparent hermeticism of the pattern's expressions, and just as Gablik
and Clark are misled into predicing Marx as an alternative to
poststructuralism, so Marx must predicate Stirner as wholly dissimilar
to himself. To suggest such a division is to credit the false
divisiveness of The German Ideology's own thesis, a deliberate act of
astigmatism, for once the gate was opened others were bound to stumble
upon its absence, and Marx could hardly have expected them to stay
within the now invisible parameters of the stable, asking his permission before sallying forth. In practice, Marxism's "real, positive science" (GI 38), the truncation of consciousness into use-value, may be all we are capable of attempting, and Vattimo will remain a dream, but even here for the majority of us the project has been absorbed, in kind, and is now known by other names. Capitalism would be a better word.

When Marxism is touted as a political attitude, as a laicised creed, its relationship to capitalism tends to be one of binary opposition, its revolution waged against the dominant power. Whilst Marx has no faith in bourgeois abstraction, the revision of "the whole of history into an evolutionary process of consciousness" (GI 86), and targets so much of his invective against the commodity, that abiogenetic creation which we have reified to the point of becoming its slaves, capitalism’s devolution of thought, its exhaustion of idolatry, is the necessary final phase for the subsequent shift to an enlightened socialism. It is not that the uniform industrialisation of society will recede under this enlightenment, but that it is currently impeded, realising itself with insufficient speed and universality. Yes, an accomplished Marxism predicts itself as "the most radical rupture with traditional ideas" (The Communist Manifesto [CM] 41), but this does not discount the non-traditional devolution already underway, a supreme faith in fundamental, anthropological development, in Darwinist evolution, manifested in the continued advancement of technology via an evermore progressive, positivist science. The Marxist utopia is a place where the more industrialised tomorrow will always be superior to today, which is why it sounds forced when attached to left-wing ecological or postcolonial critiques. History, therefore, is simply determined by inevitable, material supersession, by the actual, ever
modernising mode of production surpassing the artificial restrictions of its superstructure: "In the place of an earlier form of intercourse, which has become a fetter, a new one is put, corresponding to the more developed productive forces and, hence, to the advanced mode of the self-activity of individuals - a form which in its turn becomes a fetter and is then replaced by another" (GI 90). This version is far from ambitious, for Marx is working within capitalism's own revolutionary, demystifying hermeneutic, and although the proletariat is indeed submitted as the null space, the dissolution of bourgeois society, it is less an ethical counter-class than an alienated bourgeoisie, not quite so adept at manipulating the last remnants of consciousness but with the same "self-activity" (GI 90) as its objective. Since the abiding Marxist ploy is to supplant the question of truth for one of interest, the proletariat's view of its own abnegation is expedited by the fact that the bourgeoisie is forthright with regard to its rapacity, or at least as forthright as any pre-Marxist consciousness: "... for exploitation, veiled by religious and political illusions, it has substituted naked, shameless, direct, brutal exploitation" (CM 20). Such directness is beneficial, as both catalyst and objective, for the benevolent capitalist, overpaying employees and caring for the poor, striving to enact political reform and perhaps even believing that Marx's heart may be in the right place, is the worst enemy of communism, still seduced by the pretence of transparency, akin to Nietzsche's pseudo-atheists or Vattimo's "moderate" precursors. Humility, indeed any form of altruistic impulse, capitulates to a declaration of all interest as self-interest. After assisting the bourgeoisie "whenever it acts in a revolutionary way" (CM 57), a relatively blissful period of the "uninterrupted disturbance of all social conditions, everlasting uncertainty and agitation" (CM 21),
the Marxist revolution will simply hoist it on its own petard, with the proletariat, the more immediate archae of primitive consciousness but now in possession of the means to dominate nature, as the defender of a heterogeneity of self-interests. The dilemma is not how to convert a capitalist Enlightenment’s ethos, but how to universalise it, to offer it to an underclass which never received an invitation to the party and then, in the post-revolutionary dissolution of class, to all. This “all” is neither communal nor even social, but a series of individuals, for capitalism’s only mistake was in the lacklustre execution of its brutality, its shamelessness, failing to subsume itself entirely to an absolute individualism where such terms would become reconceptualised into meaninglessness, where morality would become non-existent. Marxism is not the innocent alternative to capitalism but its natural resolution, “the communists by no means want . . . to do away with the ‘private individual’ for the sake of the ‘general,’ self-sacrificing man” (GI 272), but to deregulate this same privacy, thus hypothesising a paean to caprice, to a dilettantism which “makes it possible for me to do one thing today and another tomorrow” (GI 45), to “the development of individuals into complete individuals and the casting-off of all natural limitations” (GI 85).

Ultimately, in this whimsical, rather nebulous futurity, where Marx recaptures something of Stirner’s egoism, oxymoronically becoming a Nietzsche for peasants, psychoanalyst to the ventings of the masses, the socialist reconstruction, neatly described as a “continual tension between the English, humanist, labourist faction and the ‘theoreticist,’ structuralist, new left tendencies” (Bhabha 26), would find unstable (by far the best kind in this context) grounds for hope. Much of the reconstruction depends on an a priori, contra mundum partisanship, in again denying the evidence of history. After all, the
proletariat never became a locus of final attrition, the negative of a negative which would find its expression in a vacant present, but instead objectified the durability of the past. In the two World Wars, the presumed blankness of the workers was mocked as an overstatement, a theoretical chimera, for this underclass elected neither fascism nor communism, both extreme manifestations of modern theory (as the socialist Clark suggests, "Better even fascism than technocracy" [7]), uniting behind the "obscure," protectionist idea of justice against a fellow underclass. Just as Marx was flummoxed by the enduring relevance of Greek art and poetry, failing to see how these ideologemes from a less developed society still held a fascination for us, except as "the child's naïveté" (Grundisse [G] 111), so he underestimated the ideological paraphernalia of the proletariat, degrading rather than extolling its intellectual gravitas. For orthodox Marxism, this mediated justice is merely proof that industrialised capitalism, like the previous stage of agricultural production which "never drove the peasants to seek emancipation" (GI 211), was as yet underdeveloped, that the workers had yet to receive a sufficient beating at the hands of "an intolerable power" (GI 46) for their position to seem palpably inequitable, which means that Marxism was never tried and tested, never even an option. A similar feat of strained back-peddling is required in relation to the communism of the Soviet Union, since of course the immediately pre-revolutionary phase must meet the two criteria of a multinational capitalism, unifying the most advanced countries, and an intolerably dispossessed, multinational proletariat, neither of which presented itself in a parochial Russia in 1917. Marx's intention is laudable here, for his conjecture is that in an international marketplace "National one-sidedness and narrow-mindedness become more and more impossible" (CM 22), and perhaps one should be thankful that
both wings of contemporary Marxism consider the Soviet Union to have been an aberration, but although modernity certainly perceives its modus operandi as the transcendence of such boundaries, apparently enabling it to speak beyond them, as an exoteric diaspora, when an evaporated past’s dust has settled this often means that nations have little left, other than a still uglier, more visceral nationalism. It is the trite hubris of the modern to assume that its latest manifestation is free of this ugliness, that at last we may begin anew, when in fact the new is nothing more than an ever impoverished version of the old. In an oft-quoted passage from The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte [EB], Marx acknowledges this process, and yet still considers his own theory to be above it:

The tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living. And just when they seem engaged in revolutionizing themselves and things, in creating something that has never yet existed, precisely in such periods of revolutionary crisis they anxiously conjure up the spirits of the past. . . . In order to arrive at its own content, the revolution of the nineteenth century must let the dead bury their dead. (15-18)

In both the case of the Western proletariat and the Soviet Union, only the first of these possibilities rings true. This does not mean that Marxism passed unheeded, however, that it was never an option, but that it remains an overestimation of our capacity for oblivion. If communism dictates an absolute rupture from the past, then a grimly nationalist Soviet Union is its semi-accomplishment, perhaps its most viable accomplishment, as opposed to its failure. It seems more than a tad hypocritical to offer the present a carte blanche only to deny any involvement in the particular brand of shamelessness or “content” (EB 18) it delivers. As a melancholic, supersession-weary Igor Stravinsky tenders in regard to his homeland, “she has always sapped the foundations of her own culture and profaned the values of the phases that have gone before” (117), which is precisely the Marxist stratagem,
and to which I would only add that she is far from alone, for it is precisely that of capitalism as well. Instead of alienating a bona fide proletariat, one which never existed beyond Marx and Engels' pages, bourgeois development created a still burgeoning middle class, one which has not transcended the commodity but has at least reduced itself to it, offering its own algorithmic superficialities, revolutions, individualism, and supersessive materialisms, the brilliant attractions of which, as Gablik, Clark, or the computerised voice at the other end of the telephone sometimes inform us, we have yet to entirely consume. If we are not bona fide Marxists, it is not for the lack of trying, but because the superstructure was not as superstructural as Marx would have us believe, for he underplayed the attractions of its own brutality, its ability to digest even his suspicion on its own terms. Of course, like any modern theory, Marxism's end negates its means, bludgeoning the consciousness with which it might actualise itself, and in this sense it remains an abstraction. For the activist Henri Lefebvre, the half-life of any counter-cultural resistance "manifests itself between the time when a concept begins to perturb dominant tendencies and the time when it begins to promote these tendencies" (323), and in the case of revolution, "both the theory and the project involved here have degenerated into an ideology of growth which, if it is not actually aligned with bourgeois ideology, is closely akin to it" (422), all of which implies that Marxism is unable to actualise itself, that it must forever be a critical abstraction, carping from the sidelines, no longer original or even practicable as soon as it has a chance of success. The possibility that there may be no inherent value in the minority, in the mere assumption of a critical posture, often escapes activism, as does the possibility that amidst a general, counter-cultural flux Marx's version is less the exception than the
rule, not decaying into dominance but always “closely akin to it”
(Lefebvre, 422). For the reconstruction of a purer suspicion, however,
an ideal, reverie of individualism, the fact that Marx has indeed been
tried and tested, at least to the best (or the worst) of our ability,
must be contradicted, a denial of the past which modernity now performs
with consummate ease. The abstraction is obligatory, surely a
paradoxical obligation for such a supposedly “real” schema, but it does
have the potential to keep both the humanist and the structuralist
camps in business indefinitely.

Terry Eagleton’s optimistic vision is one example of the humanist
variety, focusing on the liberal, jocular aspect of Marx, the latter’s
promise as Arcadian idyll rather than the harbinger of mechanised
incubi. Much of this optimism is reliant upon the process of rewording
itself, on the nuances of salesmanship, an amplification of the
empowering attractions of a decadent Marxism, for production is now “a
richly capacious concept, equivalent to ‘self-actualization’; and to
this extent savouring a peach or enjoying a string quartet are aspects
of our self-actualization as much as building dams or churning out
coat-hangers” (Marx 26). Against such imagery, heavily in debt to
Romanticism’s own definition of itself, it might be suggested that the
peach would no doubt be a simulation (assuming there were any peaches
left after everyone else had asserted their individualism), that the
string quartet would be that of bygone era, now flickering from a
large-screen television in a long-forgotten corner of the room, that
the reality would be less a Wessex tale with a continual surfeit of
hot, buttered crumpets for tea than Aldous Huxley’s nightmarish Brave
New World. Eagleton remains true to Marx’s Epicurean penchant, however,
writing the liberty of projected dilettantism as a self-help guide,
combining pastoral utopia with an ethos which would not sound
incongruous in the mouth of the pretentious host of a late nineteenth-century salon: "We are free when, like artists, we produce without the goad of physical necessity" (Marx 27). Here, Nietzsche's Übermensch meets empirical understatement, his availability to any and all nationalisms obscured, reinscribed as a chipper, Popperian faith in the future, with Eagleton's wonderfully deflated comment that "If we were asked to characterize Marx's ethics, then, we might do worse than call them 'aesthetic'" (Marx 20) only outdone by the later "Marx's final vision would thus seem somewhat anarchistic" (Marx 55), revealing a gradual honing of editorial restraint to the point of oxymoron, a resubmission of anarchism as if it were just a relatively harmless, Sunday afternoon activity. This humanist communism, "a self-fulfilling energy for the mere sake of it" (Marx 21), is close to the aestheticism of Bloom, however much the latter would prefer to posit himself against Marx the secular messiah, and again, close to the fervently anthropocentric, Darwinist Wilde, who renders socialism as a model of evolutionary sophistication, synonymous with an idyllic individualism, devoid of "any hideous cant about self-sacrifice" (155). Clark is also analogous, in his reavowal of Pissarro's peasants at their socialist leisure, his own pusillanimity when hinting at an anarchist collaboration yet hinting at it nonetheless, but the distinction of Eagleton's version is that it lacks these tacit intertexts' countercultural venom. Whilst many of us are not yet "scrumping" peaches and supping ambrosia, and though Eagleton is considerate of the fact that the Marxist undercutting of consciousness is "like trying to jump on one's own shadow" (Marx 4), an impasse which ensures that the theory itself may never be more than Lefebvre's critique, heralding a new world with "strikingly little to say about what that future state of affairs would actually look like" (Marx 16), the question is no longer
how to impose this philosophy of praxis on a previously ideological
superstructure, but "why it is that the fine ideals we already have,
have proved structurally incapable of being realized for everyone"
(Marx 43). Some of us, as the beneficiaries of bourgeois humanism, the
heirs of Condillac, are already emancipated Marxists, and although
further emancipation may necessitate further revolution, such defiance
will be more of a nudge than a shove. In other words, Eagleton writes
for Marx within a favourable tradition, the same tradition which,
despite its apparent discontinuities, I am attempting to trace less
indulgently, without the same affiliation to its own positive terms.
Rather than assuming that the project failed, or remains unread in its
true form and thus still a counter-cultural possibility, Eagleton
assumes that via its genealogical concordance it is at least semi-
accomplished, and that our assimilation may therefore be taken for
granted. Indeed, as an indication of the strength of that assumption,
its matter-of-fact smugness, Marx ends on the aforementioned "somewhat
anarchistic" (55) note, assuring us in its final sentence that this
conclusion is "not one, after all, very sinister or alarming" (56), as
if we will all sleep safer with that in mind.

There is a point, therefore, particularly evident in the
theoretical recovery of Marx, when some of my work is already done by
the oddest assortment of others, when modernity begins to recognise its
own theory as ominously fictitious, as a position which is ultimately
counter-productive, one of inertia rather than activism, and it must
begin either to assume itself as semi-incumbent, a theory with a track
record which has indeed been positively received though still with much
left unaccomplished, or to redramatise its own hermeneutic in projects
with a realistic chance of more than textual success. Derrida was
always aware of this vacuum in his own methodology, acknowledging that
"The only weakness of bricolage . . . is a total inability to justify itself in its own discourse" (Of Grammatology 138), and although I am by no means predicting the end of poststructuralism, of modernity (the briefest visit to any academic convention would assure us otherwise), there is the constant danger that its logic will argue itself beyond argument, that the bricoleurs may still receive invitations to the conference table but their participation will be limited to an en masse twiddling of thumbs, an act which was once considered elaborately disillusioned, but which may become but a hackneyed gesture, a parody of itself, and perhaps one day the invitations will no longer arrive. In either case, the track record or the suggestion of an exit from modern theory in its own terms (a post-secular philosophy or immanentism), bricolage is dragged back from the brink of possible extinction, kicking and screaming, from an apparently invulnerable, perpetually superseding predisposition, to its own complicity in ideology, in reality, thus reframing the debate between the formerly indestructible, destroying modern and the destructed non-modern as one between metaphor and metaphor. For Foucault the exit was stone-lobbing, of one kind or another, and for Eagleton, who was never an absolute bricoleur, this seat at the table, his relevance in the debate, is the existence of a humanist Marx in a superstructural bourgeois materialism, which has yet to become absolute bricolage, seeming to preserve at least the trace of a principle of intelligibility. Even this trace, however, with its emphasis on a reductive ontological humanism, is enough for Eagleton to deem himself "reactionary" (Literary Theory [LT] 206), inimical to Althusserian, structuralist neo-Marxism, which he reads as devoid of "the realities of ideological struggle" (LT 173). Certainly, Louis Althusser himself, now synonymous with this modern by-product, claims that his "Marxism is not a (new)
philosophy of praxis, but a (new) practice of philosophy" (68), levied against the anti-theoretical bent of the French Communist Party up until the nineteen-sixties, a party which had more overtly in common with Eagleton and, it should be added, with Marx. Again, as with the Nietzschean recasting of anarchism into a solely reactive option, still within and subordinate to the schema of a preexisting, insidious pseudo-power, Althusser supplants Marxist inversion, The German Ideology's camera obscura via which the given truth of infrastructural authenticity will simply replace the alienating relations of production, with a new theoretical position, a yet truer hypostasis beyond the basic antinomy.

As an indication of this new suspicion's pretended difference, Marx himself is superseded here, for every text which even hints at post-revolutionary consciousness or anthropology, any whiff of humanism, is now discarded, which means that Marx's own oeuvre up to and including The German Ideology is no longer legitimately Marxist, although Althusser considers himself to be furthering the anti-bourgeois, Marxist cause. The later Capital, in contrast, is eulogised as an analysis of a scientific structure, erasing man from the equation altogether, a work which necessitates the theorisation of a meta-scientific philosophy in order to expose the machinations of other, similar structures, to prove, once and for all, the fallacy of our being. Althusser is indebted to "the light that structural linguistics throws on its object" (207), and explicitly to Lacan's "imaginary," the supposition that through our narcissistic desire for recognition we have conjured up an anthropomorphomorphic prosthesis, the illusion of linguistic meaning, to ease the pain of our real insignificance. In fact, and this version is no less averse to shock value than any other modern theory, we were only ever insignificant, in even our
preconscious, embryonic form, a truth which may be deceptively refuted by our posterior subjectification to an array of "Ideological State Apparatuses" (143) or "ISAs" (143)—religion, education etc., and even the "trade-union ISA" (143)—but a now revealed, desubjectified truth nevertheless: "Before its birth, the child is therefore always-already a subject, appointed as a subject in and by the specific familial configuration in which it is 'expected' once it has been conceived" (176). Ideology is omnipresent, inevitable, and until this point, in the disclosure of false reassurances now reclassified as an overall "structure of misrecognition" (219), ideology corresponds to Freudian "civilisation," the Nietzschean will to truth, or Rousseau-esque vanitas, rewritten in the vocabulary of a physics textbook. Althusser's essays always seem to end half-way through, however, missing the physicality of a primal father, or a will to power, for such efforts would no doubt be considered as dichotomously bourgeois as the earlier Marx. If "there is no practice except by and in an ideology" (170), "no ideology except by the subject and for the subjects" (170), then there is also no out-clause, just an absence, not only of thought but of praxis, as we must distrust our apprehension of even our own matter, and any statement beyond a critique of the ISAs, beyond recognising the misrecognition, would be mistakenly positive. Structuralist Marxism, therefore, is most comparable to the pre-Discipline and Punish Foucault, before the latter discovered that simply because he had theorised the previously clandestine prevarication of humanism's apparatuses these apparatuses did not actually disappear, and reality demanded a less theoretically pure, actual militancy.

The utter lack of appropriation in Althusser, a philosophical void, ensures that he is the one acceptable Marxist in Vattimo's impossibly fictionalised world, which Vattimo assumes we are almost
inhabiting but one which seems precariously difficult to write, let alone occupy. The critique itself does not escape modernity’s paradox, for within its own argument, it is necessarily under the universal influence of ideology, and even if this were not the case, if it has in fact accessed a disenchanted, objective position, it has also ceded so much ground to ideology that after its successful reduction of being to critique there would be little left to do but refine the art of thumb-twiddling (though perhaps even this act is too non-reductive, the whisper of a positive statement). In Althusser’s own words, “Ideology has a material existence” (165). Our earlier, pre-structuralist lurches at philosophy, however wayward they may be, have imposed substantial consequences, their legacy “a null trace whose effects are real” (63), which is to say that we really are misrecognising each other, and yet Althusser, with only his reductive critique in hand, has divested himself of the philosophical accoutrements required to interact with this reality, to reshape it, vacating his seat at the table. A smidgen more reductive in its thought, more codified, the world muddles on, happy or indeed happier in its humanism. Even theoretically, the critique is impossible to annunciate in all its supposed purity, for whilst meaning is but a distortion, and “What is represented in ideology is therefore not the real relations which govern the existence of individuals, but the imaginary relation of those individuals to the real relations in which they live” (165), Althusser must at least imply, in the writing of his own argument, a preference for another set of relations, “real relations” (165) which are undistorted and extant, but which he is theoretically prevented from embellishing.

If sincere, every modern theory must confront these relations, and although this Althusserian Marxism may not seem analogous to the bourgeois variety of Eagleton, superficially closer to the latter’s
definition of poststructuralism as a licence “to drive a coach and
horses through everybody else’s beliefs while not saddling you with the
inconvenience of having to adopt any yourself” (144), Eagleton’s
humanism simply fills the structuralist gap, substantiating the
necessity of a real alternative to mere critique. There should be no
artificially divisive, “continual tension” (Bhabha 26) between the two
wings, between The German Ideology and Capital, for Althusser, like any
structuralist, has difficulty remaining as structuralist as he would
claim to be, implying the same necessity as Eagleton, “real relations”
(165) which would surely resemble some form of anarchist, bourgeois
Marxism if he were not self-censured on their content.

From within Marxism, this form of censorship, supersession taken
to the point of erasure, is dangerous, a point where Marxism, if it is
to reposition itself as something more positive than structuralism, as
more than the former exposure of lies made fable, and indeed different
to bourgeois humanism, needs to be rescued from itself. As but one stab
among many, Fredric Jameson’s The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a
Socially Symbolic Act (PU), therefore attempts to synthesise and indeed
contain all subsequent Leftist thought “within the unity of a single
great collective story” (19), Marxism, for “Only Marxism can give us an
adequate account of the essential mystery of the cultural past” (19),
and now Marxism itself, absurdly given the fact that it is part and
parcel of the supersessive flux or discontinuity by which it has been
displaced, becomes the new archae, the focus of our nostalgia which is
blurred through a ruptured telos, and our task is to reactivate the
truth level of this absolute subject. With a pseudo-Augustinian,
gingerly proleptic methodology in hand, the structuralists must be
reinscribed with a humanist edge, and vice-versa. Accordingly,
Althusser is salvaged from his extremity, from “his availability to
post-Marxisms for which History is simply one text among others" (35),
the via negativa of Derridean deconstruction now defined, along with
all other post-structural theory, as “second-degree” (53), merely
reactive. The reclaiming of a Marxist History is Jameson’s sine qua
non, which necessitates an emphasis on history as “the formal effects
of what Althusser, following Spinoza, calls an ‘absent cause’” (102),
rather than just an absence, on the assumption that both the cause and
its effects “are real” (Althusser 63), and that consequently Althusser
never became intemperately poststructuralist, for he “never draws the
fashionable conclusion that the ‘referent’ does not exist” (35).
History still awaits an appropriately theorised method, one which
recognises, in the wake of Althusser, that history is neither
experienced “directly as some reified force” (102), nor as a pre-
propositionally deconstructible text, but instead “through its effects”
(102), “that as an absent cause, it is inaccessible to us except in
textual form, and that our approach to it and to the Real itself
necessarily passes through its prior textualization” (35). In order to
gain access, Jameson suggests a knowingly mediated criticism, a
properly Marxist reading of history’s existence as text, which, in its
a priori admittance of ideology, is surely more intellectually honest
than Althusser’s relative silence, and has the additional benefit of
allowing Marxism, as a discursive, academic technique, to participate
beyond thumb-twiddling. In other words, in the re-annunciating of a
Marxist, alternative, political unconscious, Jameson de-censures
Althusser, implicitly elaborating the aforementioned void between the
obvious existence of “real relations” (Althusser 165) and the
theoretical interdiction to comment upon them, a move which Althusser
would not have sanctioned and indeed ridicules, but one which is to
some extent inevitable even within the declaration of his own argument.
Even structuralist Marxism, for Jameson, is engaged in "a practice of mediation" (41), requiring at least some form of hermeneutic, and indeed we may respect its deconstructive tendency, its collusion with the likes of Vattimo, in our newly determined textual analysis, with the caveat that it remain within the bounds of "the dialogue of class struggle" (84), the dichotomy of "oppressor and oppressed" (20; CM 18), "restoring to the surface of the text the repressed and buried reality of this fundamental history" (20).

At the same time as this move is designed to rescue Marxism from a poststructuralist, noumenal vacuity, a re-unleashing of its earlier form, Jameson must also structuralise humanism, to safeguard his project against the materialist back door. Although the impetus is to recontextualise history, to reread the canon as the reality of the oppressed, thus offering "a whole new framework for the humanities, in which the study of culture in the widest sense could be placed on a materialist basis" (96), it is one with a comprehensible narrative via which "the empirical textual objects know intelligibility" (97). An unenlightened materialism, without the philosophical backdrop of the political unconscious, is but another supersessive peril, and would simply culminate in thumb-twiddling by another route, a non-noumenal, vulgar emptiness. As Jameson has it, this brute empiricism, the subsumption of all to matter, is the non-Marxist "mirage of an utterly nontheoretical practice" (58), "the hallmark of bourgeois ideology from the eighteenth-century materialisms all the way to nineteenth-century positivism" (45-46). If we are prepared to accept this broader ideological spectrum, a happy, Marxist mean between a less poststructuralist Althusser and a more intelligible reality, this curtailing of similarities whilst maintaining a certain resemblance, a kind of use-value, then a host of other modern schools may be read
within its version of history. Desire, transgression, all the demons of
psychoanalysis, with their unifying themes of "repression and revolt"
(67), may be re-incorporated into Marx's supposedly more collective,
master narrative, no longer trapped in an individualising, privative
condition. Anarchism, until now an isolated form of sedition, may also
be de-individualised within the broader recontextualisation, along with
nationalism, for "a Left which cannot grasp the immense Utopian appeal
of nationalism . . . can scarcely hope to 'reappropriate' such
collective energies and must effectively doom itself to political
impotence" (298). Postcolonialism, indeed the recapture of the other in
general, "the reaffirmation of the existence of marginalized or
oppositional cultures" (86), may similarly find its theoretical footing
in the renewed Marx, in a mass, cathartic anagnorisis. Jameson's one
criterion for inclusion is simply recalcitrance, an inherently anti-
hegemonic, "polemic and subversive" (86) position, which means that
even the English, Protestant revolution of 1640 is embraced until that
same Protestantism became hegemonic, one of a series of voices,
analogous to Foucault's "de-formed," all of which have either been
silenced or harmlessly diffused into the superstructure because
hitherto they were non-Marxist, because of course the "true," global,
socialist revolution has yet to emerge.

The process of amalgamation, the rewriting of various modern
theories with at least a sense of common coherence, thus rejecting
their own inter-negating claims of solipsism, does seem both relevant
and urgent, and many of my earlier pages detail such operational
mimicry in the face of the bombasts regarding originality. We may
perhaps find some solace in Jameson, as in Eagleton, that a tradition
of sorts, a single idea, does subsist. To offer this compound as an
out-clause to the modern, however, as a method with which to contain
subsequent supersession, is contradictory at best, and a sign of modernity’s desperation when it is confronted with its own need for relevance, when it hopes to reactivate its less deconstructed past. The stifling notion of privileging one modern theory over all others, moreover, of cramming them all back into Marx’s Pandora’s Box and assuming that they will line up in an orderly fashion behind one master narrative (lest we forget, these are all necessarily subversive tendencies), and that this is meaningful resolution, is merely symptomatic of the debilitated point we have reached, of modernity’s inability to think in anything other than its own terms. The cautionary gesture of containment, like Marx’s admonishing of Stirner, is hypocritical from the first, for at a theoretical level the Althusserian / Derridean reduction of the world to critique is the culmination of a superseded Marx, his own suspicion intensified, and at a practical level bourgeois materialism out-revolutionised him. Artificially, Jameson only permits the postmodern’s theoretical and materialist similarities so much room before his protection of a Marxist archae intervenes. If we deem this artifice to be real, there remains the question of whether the still untested utopia of post-revolutionary Marxism will not be more of the same, whether this new “positive hermeneutic” (285) does not suggest its own version of individualism, materialism, and industrial shamelessness. If we continue to believe in the utopia, which requires confidence in a very indulgent reading of Marx’s own work, then as a modus operandi Jameson proffers homogeneous subversion, a given contrarianism which, as in the example of a non-hegemonic Christianity becoming hegemonic and thus losing its insurgent potential, places little value on ideology, even of the subversive variety, for the emphasis is not on the integrity of the oppressed’s polemic but on the act of subversion itself. The
particular, marginalised ideologies are not to be respected or represented as counter-ideology, for this is a protection Marxism only reserves for itself, they are simply alternative by dint of their marginalisation. As a means to cultural apprehension, to revocalise alterity, Marxism, whether "neo-" or orthodox, is not only inadequate but destructive, since it is based on rupture, and condemns any rendering of the past which is not its own as superstitious, recasting the present in terms of its present.

This is the fundamental irony in any Marxist or for that matter any modern contextualisation of history, its paradoxical lack of contextualisation, for if, as Iris Murdoch legitimately suggests, we have already reinterpreted "the past" as a meaning-construct belonging to the present (198), the fact that "One of the first things which liberated people want to know is the truth about their past" (Murdoch 198) becomes problematic, a question to which we are only able to give a very limited, present answer. Similarly, the postcolonialist Homi Bhabha, in a passage which begins with an inventory of the more overt discriminatory practices of the Civilising Mission, adds that "there coexist within the same apparatus of colonial power, modern systems and sciences of government, progressive 'Western' forms of social and economic organization which provide the manifest justification for the project of colonialism - an argument which, in part, impressed Karl Marx" (83). The Civilising Mission is but a means to prime a now commodified other for mutation into Marxism, and it is this same other, included not as the locus of a body of knowledge but, like Marx's proletariat or Said's non-Orientalist alterity, as simply other, who becomes Jameson's subversive. The political unconscious never pledges any more than this, for in Jameson's own words "ideological commitment is not first and foremost a matter of moral choice, but of the taking
of sides" (290), yet after accepting his sophisticated, immensely
costantualised schema, a re-ideologising of Marx via which we may
apparently have our cake, eat it, send the bakery into receivership and
then repurchase it at a knockdown price, all we are offered as an
alternative is the typical, somatic, modern reassertion of a repowered
self, a false, humanist cataphasis, which is also but a regurgitated
version of Rousseau. The vulnerability of this alternative becomes
obviously reductive in its rehistoricising of texts, of the literary
canon, which is Marx's new-found stake at the academic conference
table, for whilst the notion of contextualisation itself, the rereading
of literature as socio-philosophical episteme, does not seem
objectionable, a necessary move beyond the parasitical formalism of
Bloom's criticism, this particular methodology will only ever mis-
historicise certain texts in its predetermined reduction of the past.
There are, no doubt, many texts which are either implicitly or
explicitly informed by the Marxist dialogue to keep Jameson in business
for some time, yet whence the continuing attractions of Evelyn Waugh's
Brideshead Revisited, to name but one example, the tale of the waning
of an era, the final, dog days of an oppressed British aristocracy, and
the erosion of a nonhegemonic Roman Catholicism amidst the dominance of
Protestantism? This ideologeme's televised version has proved
perennially popular with even those sections of the public Jameson
would consider to be most marginalised, but exceeds the political
unconscious' reductive pretensions, constructively, as both literature
and reality commonly do. It must either be misread as a revolutionary
novel or perhaps dismissed, along with Greek art, as "the child's
naïveté" (Marx, G 111).1

In amongst the translator's notes to Of Grammatology, Gayatri
Spivak acknowledges that "Derrida's detachment from Marxist texts is
often a ground for dissatisfaction among younger French and American intellectuals" (318), specifically naming Jameson as one of the dissatisfied. As if in response, Derrida produced *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International* (SM), a text designed, in the words of one admiring critic, John D. Caputo, “to turn deconstruction in a more decidedly ethico-political (and even oddly religious) direction” (127), to re-apply Marx but within the Althusserian / Derridean hermeneutic. From this perspective, although Marx himself contributed to the revelation of the anemic quality of a commodified life, dispelling the specious comforts of anthropomorphic sophistry and thus establishing a proto-postmodern procedure, Derrida recaptures him as “critical but predeconstructive” (170), failing to administer the same technique as self-analysis, to recognise the contingency (or spectrality) of his own work, its own latent sophistry. In a manner which is consistent with his source’s supersessive tactics, without any of Jameson’s containment, Derrida rewrites Marx as Marx rewrote all prior German ideology, still countering “the phenomenon that increasingly abstract ideas hold sway” (Marx GI 62) yet now with Marxism itself as one of those ideas. Even the presumed tangibleness of use-value, the object as simple object, is reinscribed as distorted, for this use-value is, from its origin, pregnant with the meaning of exchange-value, and thus was always an abstraction, and requires a further, more hypostatic methodology in order to unmask it. There is much in Derrida’s sub-clausal rejoinders, in his parentheses (orthographic spectrality) here, for wherever Marx attempts to banish the ghosts of exchange, to “oppose them, like life to death, like vain appearances of the simulacrum to real presence” (47), deconstruction awaits, ready to confound him with its “But how to distinguish between the analysis that denounces magic and the counter-
magic that it still risks being?” or, more bluntly, “(but is he not doing the same thing?)” (158). It is in this realm of spectre-counter-spectre, a knowingly destabilised, utterly expropriating non-position, forever insecure in its perpetual absenting of any presence, that we may encounter “Marx’s legacy” (SM 28), one devoid of Vattimo’s glee at the prospect of a world without meaning, for in Derrida’s atheological kenosis, “a condition that is itself in deconstruction” (28), we are open, without conscience or obligation, to one of the purest never present moments in all of post-secular philosophy, to “the coming of the other, the absolute and unpredictable singularity of the arrivant as justice” (28). This is ultimately the modern’s replacement of theology, the point when it confronts its alternative avatar, the profane messianicity of alterity itself, always illusive in that alterity, the possibility of deconstruction as justice. Derrida refers to his post-secularism as “une démocratie à venir” (cited in Critchley, 36), which of course is continually “à venir,” a non-locus “such as Blanchot and Levinas call the ‘rapport sans rapport,’ the relationless relation” (Caputo 14), wherein “the other remains absolutely transcendent” (Caputo 14). The argument is easier to summarise than Jameson’s, for it lacks even a hint of philosophical rescue, and is therefore sweeter to the modern ear, though there is the same sense that modernity needs more than its auto-negating, textual pretences, that somehow it must articulate Althusser’s “real relations” (165), and exactly how different is this democracy, which simply seems to substitute Jameson’s immanentist vocabulary with that of transcendence? Far from expelling the “capital ghost” (SM 175), “a general essence of Man” (SM 175), the latter’s material essence is pseudo-divinised here once more, now an unlimited, entirely non-epistemological potency, rephrased as a transcendent totalitarianism. At the moment of
liberation, the other will no doubt quite reasonably ask a version of Murdoch’s question regarding the truth of the past, for alterity, as Marxism discovered in the case of the proletariat, is not some null space, not an inherent good, yet these arrivants-cum-idols, a series of Nietzschean individuals, will not receive even the most finite of answers, for this democracy to come lacks even Jameson’s re-ideologised narrative.

Ernesto Laclau, who in his own radicalism is ordinarily supportive of the initial tenets of deconstruction, avowing that it “has immensely enlarged the areas of structural undecidability” (Critchley 53), is less than convinced of this later “openness to the otherness of the other, to a primordial ethical experience, in the Levinasian sense” (Critchley 53), since for the purist Derrida has finally sought comfort in the fabrication of “a universal principle that precedes and governs any decision” (Critchley 53), the implication being that deconstruction is risking future spectrality itself, relinquishing its previously indestructible, critical status. Whilst any modern theory will, sooner or later, if it is honest, buckle under the onus to flush out such a principle, to think outside its conventional, a priori gesture of critique, to connect its “real relations” (Althusser 165) beyond absences, it would appear that from within the modern the explication is invariably one revision or another of Rousseau’s flattened foreheads. In Specters of Marx, ever true to its source’s penchant for science, Derrida has high hopes for the Internet, its seemingly non-present representations: “In the virtual space of all the tele-technosciences, in the general dis-location to which our time is destined—as are from now on the places of lovers, families, nations—the messianic trembles on the edge of this event itself” (169). Here, at last, is the vindication or indeed the
apotheosis of the Enlightenment's positivist humanism, of Condillac's algebraic creation, the prerecorded voice with its numerical selections made God. Perhaps it should be pointed out that someone somewhere is in fact programming the Internet, quite unmessianically, occasionally breaking for a homemade chocolate digestive or a few pages of Jane Austen, wholly unaware of their promise to alterity, of a recent promotion to avatar / creator of the nullified hyperspace of the arrivant. As a further indication of the difficulty of postulating out-clauses not merely from the ruins, but from the act of ruination itself, Phillip Blond's recent editing of Post-Secular Philosophy: Between Philosophy and Theology is one of the more oddly antilogous examples, oxymoronic even within its own thesis. Blond, a student in Theology at the time of publication, invited a formidably credential-laden selection of post-secular academics to contribute chapters, including one on a Levinas-driven Derrida, as if to endorse the notion that the tide is turning, that finally the compulsion to posit more than a materialist annulment, "to show how other possibilities are now conceivable" as the cover claims, is here. The opening pages offer gratitude to the contributors, and then, in a lengthy introduction which Blond euphemistically renders as an inventory of "various reservations and refusals" (21), "not a disinterested exegesis" (21), the remaining fifteen chapters become obsolete, neither "post-," nor theological, nor even philosophical, thus failing to yield the anticipated release. In the case of Derrida, Blond is unconvinced by the actualisation of deconstruction, suggesting that "Instead of asking how things can be such that they have come to be, différance closes the question of its own origin by claiming itself to be 'already there.' As a result différance as a transcendental fails to investigate its own conditions of possibility and so fails to discern what is truly
possible" (42). In other words, deconstruction reduces the past to itself, the absolute reduction, and Blond continues to expose one modern theory after another as either immanentism or false transcendence. Ultimately, although their dictionary definitions assert polar opposition, both are forms of a very anoetic self-plenitude which is all the more ominous for its new-found existence beyond text, its attempt to annex Althusser's "real relations" (165), "a new materialism that claims both ideality and empiricability for itself in the vacated space of a universality that knows no limits" (Blond 43). The world is to some extent already shaped by this post-secularism, the Internet or the quasi-Umbrian café but two of its pragmata. Even theoretically, therefore, these projects, despite their declarations of boundlessness, of diversity, of a non-present acceptance of the arrivant, are constrained by their own autonomous subjectivity, the Enlightenment's dichotomy between thought and being, though "They will speak of thinking beyond these binaries, and not consider the possibility that these oppositions might merely think them" (Blond 3). This is the introduction / conclusion to an original desire to produce a book on post-secularism, "to show how other possibilities are now conceivable."

Still more bafflingly, G. E. Cohen's classic Karl Marx's Theory of History: A Defence, originally published in 1978, appeared in an expanded edition in 2001. Although Cohen privileges analytical philosophy, and hence analytical Marxism, a micro-scientific tactic which has far more to do with form than content but which would distinguish him in certain esoteric circles, this is for the most part a traditional study, centring on latent truth and superstructural falsehood. Written with the force of revelation, we are informed that "the labourer is not really subjugated to capital" (102) (emphatic in case of lingering mystification), that more fundamentally "The content
of the production process is unmysterious" (99), and inevitably the integrity of this "matter pierces the form" (108) in the transparency of revolution. Despite its nominal defence, this suspicion of the relations of production was axiomatic even in 1978, for Cohen is simply footnoting Marx's own work, and is only genuinely argumentative with regard to the analytical method. The notion that "Commentators have failed to remark how often he [Marx] uses 'material' as the antonym of 'social' and of 'formal'" (98) is particularly artificial, an aphorism even before Marx himself, and Cohen inhabits a post-Freudian, post-Nietzschean, even post-Althusserian world, thereby becoming, in his imitative novelty, a sacrifice to modernity's infatuation with the new, yet another casualty of enantiodromia. More significantly, however, the 2001 edition includes additional chapters on the constraints of the original, and indeed, on the constraints of Marxism.

The epigraph in both versions is a quotation from Stephen Bone and Mary Adshead's children's story The Little Boy and His House, for the latter's last lines seem to corroborate historical materialism: "For what they all said was . . . 'It depends . . . It all depends . . . It all depends on where you live and what you have to build with'" (cited in Cohen). Briefly, in order to determine his housing options, the boy in question visits an Eskimo's igloo, a Chinese houseboat etc., and, being a suburban, fashionable, English sort of chap, decides on a red-brick bungalow (petty bourgeois, but perhaps a future subversive?), all of which initially led Cohen to believe that the materials available in a given locale are always the most basic, governing factor, and that therefore Marx's theory of history was "foundationally" true. In the 2001 edition, however, Cohen admits to misinterpretation, a flaw he recognised even as the 1978 version was at the printers, for whilst the original quotation was verbatim, he was
amiss in omitting the immediately preceding lines: "So what do you think they did? They all went on building just as they'd always done" (cited in Cohen, 344). Now, via this second reading, which has the genuine advantage of reading the entire text, it becomes evident that there may be more than a hint of ideology in our decisions as to housing. Custom has a part to play, a non-supersessive, reactionary acknowledgment of the past, or, in Cohen's new interpretation, "architectural conservatism" (344), and the classic Marxist is forced into the neither contemporary nor orthodox Marxist conclusion that "to be at home," unlike 'to be housed,' is not a materialist property" (345), that "people's need for shelter is in no clear sense greater than their need for traditions which tell them who they are" (345), a truly revelatory, non-modern position. Furthermore, from this revision of the children's story, Cohen detects Marxism's artificial breaching of communal memory, its deceitfully coerced amnesia not only with regard to thought but also reality. The modern dictum of self-sufficiency becomes inadequate, replaced by the fact that man is inherently and even beneficially dependent upon "something outside himself which he did not create" (Cohen 347), something prior to capital. Marx's utopian dilettantism, the idea of multiple professions as an excess of self-fulfillment, is recast as the dystopic prevalence of the lowest common denominator, a compulsory flattening of foreheads which would mean that Eagleton's post-revolutionary string quartet would lack any comprehension of the difference between a leitmotif and a semi-quaver. Straying from his master narrative, Cohen even condemns this amateur's Elysium as "requiring an impossibly total development of the individual" (352).

Although it would seem that Marxism, both in its original form and in its paraphrasal in the 1978 Defence, is consequently but a purer
kind of late capitalism, of unchecked individuality, and that perhaps we should investigate other theoretical perspectives, instead the ultimately modern Cohen musters one last gasp, a final, protective lurch at a "restricted historical materialism" (367). After the concessions to the continued reality of the past, to the abiding relevance of an ideological, "spiritual existence" (Cohen 368), the 2001 edition ventures that Marx is still applicable, yet to be applied, but that his purview must be restricted to materialism, to economics, and that our equally necessary and historically influential reliance upon memory will persist in another sphere, unexplained by this circumscribed rendition of the theory. Cohen acknowledges that "Marx did commit himself to the inclusive variant" (374), that he is manipulating the original to suit his own restrictive purposes, even tinkering with sentences here and there as in the case of the 1859 Preface to The German Ideology, which is the other epigraph to both editions:

... the document does, I concede, contain one unambiguously inclusivist sentence about consciousness, which says that 'it is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being that determines consciousness.' If that sentence is removed, what remains is, I would claim, open to restricted construal. (376)

Rather than compartmentalising history and indeed the mind, thereby presenting a neutered Marx, which is of course essential to the republication (the latter’s desperate cleaving to at least some vestige of Marx being its only shield against obsolescence) but is also a precariously synthetic manoeuvre producing a wealth of incongruities, it would surely have been preferable to throw the baby out with the bath-water. In a sense, Cohen is honest in respect to modernity’s reduction, its limited and limiting procedures, yet in the final reluctance to think outside Marx, in the more reserved republication
which still claims that all the aforementioned compromises "should leave the socialist project more or less where it would otherwise be" (342), there is an intellectual lethargy, an obstinate assertion of "I've got my weltanschauung, which is by my own admission inapt, but I'm keeping it regardless." If the first interpretation of The Little Boy and His House is any indication of such obstinacy in literary criticism, imagine its potential misreadings of more elaborate texts.

Textual interpretation, of one kind or another, has ever been essential in our apprehension of a necessarily mediated history, whether such mediation is denied or not. As Anthony Kemp's The Estrangement of the Past: A Study in the Origins of Modern Historical Consciousness has it, "All ideologies are fundamentally descriptions not of a present state, but of a past history" (106), and "The phenomenal world [even Marx's] is little more than the idea of its own past" (106). Kemp structures the field from another angle, chronologically, beginning from the syncretism of medieval consciousness, the Christian histories of Eusebius and Augustine, rather than working from within the already fractured time of modernity which I have attempted to reconnect via unifying readings of some of its more emblematic texts. For these Christian chroniclers, "history is the absence of God" (7), and their ontologies are therefore self-consciously designed to "deny time itself" (8), to write "the necessary story that denies the abyss" (9), the same abyss from which Vattimo would subsequently struggle to wrench the last few ounces of life.

There is no claim to a non-linguistic history here, only of the past as language, mind, and indeed as determinative of the actual present, an almost incomprehensible thesis for an audience reared on modern critical theory, and Kemp includes a refashioning of the following maxim to drive the distinction home: "George Santayana's statement,
quoted to the point of cliché because it is so representative of what we believe, that, 'Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it,' expresses precisely the opposite view of history from the medieval" (54). John Wyclif, described as "the first writer to equate the pope with antichrist in plain words" (67), becomes the initial supersession to these inclusive syntheses, succeeded by Martin Luther, and the Reformation's John Foxe, all reactions to and eliminations of the inscription of roughly fifteen hundred years of history, assigning the faithful, the Mass, and the past to the void, replaced by the apparently truer, hypostatic archae of the Bible, "the disembodied text" (Kemp 81). This text, of course, and the regressive / progressive strategy (a development towards the primitive) of the likes of Wyclif, would eventually destroy itself, at least theoretically, in poststructuralism, an easy target once disembodied. I am, admittedly, reincorporating this study within the modern non-tradition, in the wake of my earlier pages, for although Kemp is optimistic regarding his analyses, trusting that the book will prove "suggestive far beyond the texts it explicates" (viii), it does deliberately have an anachronistic feel to it, and was out of print almost as soon as it hit the shelves, ousted, no doubt, by the republication of Cohen's highly suspect, now revisionist Marxism. Deconstruction is explicitly mentioned but once, in relation to the third noun of the first heading in Foxe's Acts and Monuments:

'And first, the difference between the Church of Rome that now is, and the ancient Church of Rome that then was.' . . .
'Difference,' the third substantive word in the history, preceded only by the abrupt urge to immediacy of the first two, is Foxe's own. I do not impose upon him the term of any deconstructionist theory; indeed, the opposite is true: Foxe has imposed the word and the concept on all who come after him. (84)

More specifically, Acts and Monuments, tellingly defined as "shocking in its intensity" (84), is a more sophisticated version of Of
Grammatology. To his credit, Kemp does not become the apologist for modern Catholicism, but instead for a past, constructive history, charting further revolutions in thought in both their Protestant and Catholic manifestations, for with this new strategy in hand, either one "had exclusion as its aim" (97), a strategy also evident in the Renaissance’s "self-conscious division from its own past" (99), and the dynamism, the perpetual re-inventions of religion in the New World. By the time Emerson received it as rationalist Unitarianism, it had become, as it is now, self-corroborating, having created the evermore divided plurality which it would endeavour to resolve through the simpler paradigms of nationalism or race, only fragmenting its agora still further, and offering these re-fragmentations to later supersessions. Emerson revolted "within and against Puritanism" (151), against himself to some extent, for the revolutions become pettier with time. For Marx, who is included only very briefly, "history culminated in Victorian England" (157), a vision which sees bourgeois materialism as the naturally least ignorant position and has no intention of ascribing knowledge to any phase before it. Kemp ultimately scans modernity for alternatives to this primordial flux, and, as "a late defection" (163), finds, paradoxically, the Unitarian Henry Adams.

In one of the better literary biographies on Adams, Alex Zwerdling’s recent Improvised Europeans: American Literary Expatriates and the Siege of London, this grandchild of one President and son of another is described as originally Puritan, with a firm belief in republicanism and the supersessions of North American democracy, as affirmed in Adams’ nine-volume History of the United States During the Administrations of Thomas Jefferson and James Madison (1889-91). In a 1909 letter, however, Adams has obviously turned, for he now refers to his "‘nauseous indigestion of American history, which now makes me
physically sick, so that only by self-compulsion can I read the dreary
details . . . the want of self-respect, of education, of purpose; the
intellectual feebleness, and the material greed - I loathe it all’”
(cited in Zwerdling, 112). In between the publication of the History
and this letter, Adams had travelled, first experimenting with
nineteenth-century primitivism in Tahiti2 (surely not the best remedy
for his modern malaise), and then touring the medieval cathedrals of
France. This second trip would produce Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres
(1905), which is, in both Kemp and Zwerdling, a reconnection with the
medieval, an attempt to bridge the gap between the fractured modern and
pre-Lutheran worlds. In Zwerdling’s version, the book is defined as
fabricating a “myth of unity” (114), spurred by an “intense sense of
loss in the present day” (114), with Adams imposing himself as “a
spiritual descendant of the Normans who built these masterpieces stone
by stone without a thought to their own gain” (112). For Kemp, who has
the advantage of pre-theorising the likes of Eusebius and Augustine,
the book is an effort to re-close the historical parenthesis, the void,
in a willfully mediated act: “What Adams seeks in this spatial world is
a sense of unity and completeness, an ability to reconcile all the
opposites of the world into a single, atemporal comprehension” (164),
“It is constructive and, therefore, . . . fragile” (177). Adams himself
was overtly aware of this fragility, so evident in the Gothic
cathedrals he visited, where “The equilibrium is visibly delicate
beyond the line of safety; danger lurks in every stone” (377), but more
significantly, in light of my present study, here, in Kemp, is an
adequately theorised reading of a non-modern text, a reading which
falls outside modernity’s techniques and without which Adams would be
lost. As mentioned in the case of Jameson’s Marxist master narrative,
the latter seems limited when confronted with such alternatives (and
Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres, unlike graffiti art, Malevich, or the arrivant, is indeed alternative), which means that any counter-revolutionary text (there are many defections, not merely those linking Gothic cathedrals to Augustine), will either be misinterpreted or left for dead. Adams, though marginalised by his perspective, caught between memory and modern history, is perhaps not quite what Jameson has in mind.

To conclude, in the interests of unity, as I began, with the French Revolution, Anthony Trollope’s La Vendée, his third and, as any critique informs us, “least known” (McCormack; Trollope vii) novel, is the tale of the Vendéan rebellion of 1793, waged against the Republic in order to secure the restoration of the monarchy. It is not a subtle account, nor even historically accurate, based on a royalist’s memoirs and certainly biased in favour of the reactionaries. There are spelling errors, the plot straggles along, and the loyalist faction’s desire for freedom occasionally sounds more like the republicans’. On this last point at least, history would appear to have borne Trollope out, for Simon Schama describes the actual uprising as the “product of the Manichaean language of the revolutionary war” (693), with both sides simply inverting the other’s position, though more realistically Schama also details the “indiscriminate brutalities” of the Vendéans which are entirely absent in Trollope’s novel. To even the balance a little, Oscar Wilde remarks that “To the thinker, the most tragic fact in the whole of the French Revolution is not that Marie Antoinette was killed for being a queen, but that the starved peasant of the Vendée voluntarily went out to die for the hideous cause of feudalism” (131).

The novel does contain, however, as W. J. McCormack’s introduction to the Oxford edition (comfortably the longest critique available) suggests, one passable, psychologically modern character, a saving
grace in the villain Adolphe Denot, a royalist turned republican turned royalist once again, trapped by his surname’s “negativity, lack of origin, non-being” (xii) into constant revolution: “Rousseau’s noble savage has finally taken up arms, and casts his shadow towards the nihilists of Joseph Conrad” (xii). Despite the failure of the Vendéan endeavours, and indeed the failure of Louis XVIII’s restoration (since the novel was published in 1849), Trollope ends on a note of optimism, on the hope of a further “struggle for another re-establishment of the monarchy” (442).

Instead of focusing on the theoretical problematics of a democratic history against conservatism, which seems to be La Vendée’s hopelessly one-sided, most obvious premise, and the rationale for all its factual inaccuracies, McCormack reads it, via Freudian subtext, as Trollope’s gesture towards personal independence, a move to assert his authority over Frances Trollope, his Protestant and overbearing mother: “. . . the present argument will not turn so much on the politics of rebellion, barricade, and commune, as on the politics of family and male revolt against matriarchy” (ix). Suffice it to say, without exhaustively re-airing my interpretation of Freud, that McCormack is searching for a more fundamental, physical archae, thus modernising the text in order to present it more palatably to a modern audience. Furthermore, in Robert Polhemus’ The Changing World of Anthony Trollope, a study which deserves praise for devoting three entire pages to La Vendée, the novel is stolidly defined from the first as “the worst book he [Trollope] ever wrote” (20). At least it supposedly provides further proof of Polhemus’ dominant thesis on change, that “Men must somehow recognize change and adapt themselves to it whether they want to or not” (21), that for Trollope “mutability somehow always wins” (21), which again is a curiously modern approach, seemingly
written without heed to the novel’s aforementioned, reactionary conclusion. In other words, both McCormack and Polhemus submit that the novel is crassly categorical in its assertion of a non-modern past, that it is indeed a defection, one with all the sensitivity of a contemporary French peasant demolishing a McDonald’s, and yet present their own, artificial exegeses regardless. The following sketch of Robespierre is surely telling in Trollope’s adoption of a post-secular vocabulary:

Why, instead of the Messiah of freedom, which he believed himself to be, has his name become a bye-word, a reproach, and an enormity? Because he wanted faith! He believed in nothing but himself, and the reasoning faculty with which he felt himself to be endowed. He thought himself perfect in his own human nature, and wishing to make others perfect as he was, he fell into the lowest abyss of crime and misery in which a poor human creature ever wallowed. He seems almost to have been sent into the world to prove the inefficacy of human reason to effect human happiness. (303)

Was Robespierre, as he is written here, a proto-arrivant, the pre-Marxist advent of Jameson’s master narrative? It is, of course, possible that La Vendée’s lack of renown is due to the odd spelling error, and yet, more persuasively, it is also possible that as a defection, its historical vision is one we are unwilling to describe, instead rehashing it within one redaction or another of modern theory, a theory which has the gravest doubts in relation to its own methodology but imposes itself upon us regardless, universally, as the finally real, unmediated resolution of all superstition. As semi-accomplished as this theory’s ever more drastic contraction may often be (despite its claim on an incessant becoming), there remain chinks in the chain which elude its grasp, those skeptics who are unconvinced that either the Internet or the more generally controlling process of codification are synonymous with truth, those who believe that such numerology, wherein Nietzsche et al. still snigger, is not the last,
cathartically fictionalised messiah. There remain defections, in every nagging sensation of debasement at the reduction of thought to ignorance, in every suspicion of whether this operation does in fact reconstitute reality's archae, in a rereading of The Little Boy and His House. Indeed, there remain the defections of texts, sometimes found amidst modernity itself, in the oddest places . . .
Fidel Castro claimed that Martí was the 'intellectual author' of the attack he carried out, on 26 July 1953, on the Moncada barracks, and which was planned to coincide with the hundredth anniversary of Martí's birth (Judson 236). For their part, Cubans living in exile in the United States also claim cultural ownership over Martí. In the early 1980s, for example, a broadcasting station, Radio Antorcha Martiana, operated by the Movimiento Insurreccional Martiana, began to broadcast anti-Castro political messages from Miami which reached the whole Caribbean; as their name suggested they sought to reclaim the cultural capital of Martí's work for their own use. This was followed by the founding of Radio Martí, the official United States government propaganda service to Cuba, which began transmitting anti-revolutionary messages to Cuba in 1985 (Soley & Nichols 188-89). The afterlife of Martí's work is a good litmus test of the value of literature as a cultural capital which is employed for political purposes.

A Companion to Spanish-American Literature.
Stephen M. Hart (97)

Within this simple space in which things are normally arranged and given names, the aphasic will create a multiplicity of tiny, fragmented regions in which nameless resemblances agglutinate things into unconnected islets; in one corner, they will place the lightest-coloured skeins, in another the red ones, somewhere else those that are softest in texture, in yet another place the longest, or those that have a tinge of purple or those that have been wound up into a ball. But no sooner have they been adumbrated than all these groupings dissolve again, for the field of identity that sustains them, however limited it may be, is still too wide not to be unstable; and so the sick mind continues to infinity, creating groups then dispersing them again, heaping up diverse similarities, destroying those that seem clearest, splitting up things that are identical, superimposing different criteria, becoming more and more disturbed, and teetering finally on the brink of anxiety.

The Order of Things: An Archeology of the Human Sciences [OT].
Michel Foucault (xviii)
un hombre
vuelto dios tartamudo.
Nuestros oráculos
son los discursos del afásico,
nuestros profetas
son videntes con anteojos.

Ir y venir sin fin, sin comienzo.

Palabras sin sombra.
No las oimos, las negamos, dijimos que no existían:
nos quedamos con el ruido.

Estoy en la mitad de esta frase:
¿hacia dónde me lleva?

Lenguaje despiedzado.

Poeta: jardinero de epitafios.


Octavio Paz (37-38)

Argentina’s military coup of 1976 and the subsequent “Dirty War” years under the junta’s supervision seem to present an obvious example of the “knowledge equals both autocratic and arbitrary power” equation, the product of an ordered insanity which was crying out for Foucault’s aphasics to reveal it as an ever unstable artifice. None but the most ardent nationalists now condone this regime, its purifying vision for an imminently vulnerable motherland so ostensibly dependent on a proactive, eschatological machismo as to have become burlesque. Iconoclastic critique of the junta is surely the safest, most ethical ground. In “‘Damnable Iteration’: The Traps of Political Spectacle,” Diana Taylor convincingly details the regime’s manipulation of its own imagery through poster art, photographs, speeches and the press, from the absurdly militarised ousting of the former president, María Estela Martínez de Perón (“they might just as effectively have abducted her by cab” [182]), to the lampooning of Margaret Thatcher as “Wonder Woman” (185) during the Falklands conflict, progressively fashioning a “fetishized male virility into a model of authentic Argentineness” (185). The article closes with the assertion that the junta never
transcended its original self-representations, only becoming more convinced of its primogenial authenticity, its natural right to police society, to maintain and indeed fortify the oratory of the coup itself as opposed to that of re-civilisation. On a vague, postmodern, final note, an optimistic Taylor ventures that despite the controlling discursive tactics of such public dogma and its stranglehold on the cultural imagination, “feminist and literary studies have also taught us to be resistant readers” (198), a reading which may be applied against totalitarianism, the implication being that we are now more disillusioned, cognizant of the language / power machination, and therefore the mass osmosis of such patriotism would be less osmotic the next time around, resisted in favour of “more communal principles” (197). This alternative would be some form of heterotopia, one presumes, since as Doris Sommer suggests in her prolegomena to the collection in which this essay appears, the ensuing “engagements . . . are generally heterodox, experimental” (1), proof that “postmodern probing is evidently grounding itself in history as it lifts or loosens one or another methodological mooring” (4), with Taylor’s contribution unmasking the state’s “obsessively repetitive spectacle of eliminating internal differences” (7).

Significantly, from an epistemological perspective, Taylor is entirely aware that this particular coup was the sixth in Argentina since 1930, and that it was therefore endorsed by a paradoxical tradition, its support and its rhetoric being but the next version of a hackneyed paradigm:

Just as the physical staging of this coup mirrored earlier ones, so did its language sound familiar. Each coup promised the end of the old order, the dawning of the new, and progress towards Argentina’s glorious future. Its iterability needed to be kept hidden. Each junta annulled the past by mandating a new beginning. The joke of so many new beginnings, of course, is that
each junta repeated the slate cleaning of the one before, monotonously laying claim to originality. (183)

In other words, here, within a very specific context, is the re-unleashed paradigm of the modern. Each junta, superseding its predecessor in the latter’s own, evermore prelapsarian terms, rewrites history parenthetically, distancing itself from a potentially injurious, recent past while simultaneously asserting its access to the purest past of all, however spurious, an ontology with a privileged, previously latent telos, originating in some monadic instant now made synonymous with Argentina’s present, generative potential. The erasure of history ensures that the successive juntas may claim the true rhetoric of ultimacy, that each one has bypassed contrivance in order to re-present the one national soul, a soul which is invariably figured in the most somatic imagery, thus sanctioning it to prosecute any deviance which is less manifest than itself, portraying such opposition as periphrastic, hence false. Although superficially fabricated, this genealogy is protective, for the junta is only assailable via a yet more telluric, primal origin, which is to say assailable by another junta, while in the meantime the populous is perpetually obliged to forget its own past, its principles of intelligibility, which is perpetually unfeasible – whence a cause for hope. Taylor discerns much of this reduction, and certainly the homogenising tactic which during this particular "Dirty War" meant explicit censorship: "All opposing representations or interpretations of Argentina’s national drama were prohibited by the military leaders. . . . Declaring an end to the conflict, they claimed to have put an end to the drama. ‘History,’ junta leader Eduardo Massera proclaimed, ‘belongs to me’" (196). In short, the essay renders the public iterations of this emphatically right-wing junta, which almost no-one even pretends to justify anymore,
as a fraudulent elision of both the public and the past, re-iterated in the form of recurrent grandstanding, and Taylor viably expands her purview to reinsert such supposedly unique iteration within a broader context of Argentine repetition, as the latest display of an atavistic structure which is self-prohibited from breaching its own cycle but which may be resisted via our new-found polysemy in postmodern reading.

Within another reinscription, this analysis becomes still more incisive yet simultaneously more solipsistic and self-voiding. Beyond the opposition of the latest form of liberal humanism to these successive right-wing regimes, and indeed beyond Argentina, it is arguable that this anti-episteme has been Latin American politics, on either the Right or the Left, from the Renaissance-driven Conquest through the Enlightenment-driven independence movements to the clichés of the present. In defining the rhetoric of one particular junta Taylor has unwittingly defined modernity, albeit in one of its more extreme moments. More than the ur-narrative of a single, twentieth-century nationalism, this same fundamental onto-telos, this paradoxically culted gesture of unknowing as the only genuinely progressive future, is Francis Bacon’s legacy to the eighteenth-century philosophes, and the latter’s in turn to Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud, reappropriated in still more neoteric formats by our contemporaries. As an example which may seem laughably blasé in relation to the aforementioned coup, the current British government, which happens to be the Labour party, ran under the slogan of “New Britain,” and upon election the Prime Minister’s first words were “A new dawn has come,” while the Conservative opposition’s manifesto developed into a “Common Sense Revolution.” There are quips in the press that the country has become the European equivalent of a “banana republic,” but such visions remain
a diluted version of modernity, whereas the likes of Eduardo Massera reproduce its most distilled, advanced (since most rudimentary) figurations. As Taylor has it, "Opposed to the interiority associated with subversion, the military represented itself as all surface: identifiable by its uniforms, aggressively visible, on parade for all the world to see" (190), but with the exception of the uniforms that same sentence applies with equal relevance to Freud, Nietzsche, or Foucault, of whom Massera is a more efficient reader (with the means to practise such "readings") than Taylor herself. Yes, the junta's proposed entame is impossibly ahistorical, which of course would never lead to re-civilisation, to "more communal principles" (197), but this regime, as Taylor has indited it, is the re-embodiment of Freud's patriarch, before the mendacity of the first epic poet, or Nietzsche's nobles of the "good," committing Foucault's "great crimes not as monstrosities, but as the fatal return and revolt of what is repressed" (DP 290). Although the resistance of literary studies, of "postmodern probing" (Sommer 4), seems to be an ethical, liberal voice of deconstructionist pluralism, and this has become a kinetic, even hegemonic response to dictatorial univocality, the debate is thus misconceived, for the "resistant readers" (Taylor 198) here, the aphasiacs destabilising the archive, are in fact personified by the junta itself, which perhaps accounts for the nebulousness of Taylor's conclusion, having ceded the latter's morality to the very ontology it was intended to defy. Perhaps such finales are now so predictable as to be tacitly understood, but rather than substantiating Foucault as out-clause (as a reader, Foucault is the postmodern resistor of societal surveillance par excellence), the essay innocently yet fittingly renders the military as Foucault. Furthermore, whilst Taylor's persuasive contention is that the junta was inevitably thwarted by its
own reductive ideology, that its nascent, iterative paradigm precluded any subsequent form of alternative self-representation, the "resistant" (198) conclusion is precariously close to the paradigm's re-iteration, at least at a diluted, theoretical level, thereby ensnaring the essay in "The Traps of Political Spectacle," in the cyclical, "Damnable Iteration" it aspires to evade. It would be possible, with little incongruity, to reread all the above quotations relating to the junta as referring instead to recent trends in literary studies, and yet such trends are now impulsively served up as an antithesis. The Madres of the Plaza de Mayo, as Taylor submits, "were the only group to confront the military openly" (197), and though it is difficult to conceive of a more poignant irony than these conventionally epistemic, biological mothers of Argentines, a synecdoche of memory, confronting the junta's archae of the madre patria and exposing its vapidity, the absurdity of its tabula rasa, they are now described as having "deployed the role of 'mother'," (197) a role which "also framed the women in the military's highly coercive definition of the feminine" (197) and thus "reaffirmed stereotypical binaries" (197). Would these women have fared any better with Taylor's "alternative" subversion? The politics of modernity, written in and as erasure, is surely capable of levelling almost any past and recasting it in its own image, yet postmodern resistance, the readings of contemporary literary studies, may only be capable of more of the same.

It is a commonplace (though one which bears overstatement) to assert the pandemic conjunction of politics and literature, history and fiction, armas y letras in the context of Latin America, which tends to mean that an official, antiseptic version of history is redressed or subverted by the more inclusive "dirtiness" of other histories masquerading as fiction. As Carlos Fuentes qua critic has it in La
nueva novela hispanoamericana [Lnn], invoking Bolívar, Sarmiento and Gallegos as corroboration (a comprehensive list would run into hundreds), despite the Spanish American writer’s privileged status as the voice of hitherto unrepresented inequities, that privilege itself is a guilty, parasitic pleasure, obligating “una decisión de abandonar las letras, o por lo menos compartirlas con la militancia política” (12), to become, often literally, “legislador y reportero, revolucionista y pensador” (12). The writer’s vocation then, was and remains one of a priori sedition, a confrontation with the customary tyrannies of Conquest, dictatorial independence, and a now ubiquitous US “civilisation” which Fuentes renders as superficially attractive (a technological, economic, “refrigerators and General Motors” kind of modernity) though still more alienating: “esa ‘civilización’, lejos de procurar la felicidad o el sentimiento de identidad o el encuentro con valores comunes, era una nueva enajenación, una atomización más profunda, una soledad más grave” (28). If writing, and in this case specifically the new novel, is to be counterculturally representative, a politically committed venture, then it must radicalise the latent past, pursuing in Fuentes’ words “la elaboración crítica de todo lo no dicho en nuestra larga historia de mentiras, silencios, retóricas y complicidades académicas” (30), a “resurrección del lenguaje perdido” (30) which may thus be projected into futurity, trapping the intellectual between “una historia que rechaza y una historia que desea” (29), and converting the act of writing itself from an elitist frivolity into “un hecho revolucionario” (95).

In such a refractory poetics, however, much depends upon the relative stagnation of the superstructure, its presumed a-critical, static atavism which contrasts with the dynamic, “shock-of-the-new” insurgency of more endogenous truths. Although revolution is
conventionally associated with liberal humanism, and more broadly with the Left, and Fuentes’ intention is to produce a manifesto for authorial subversion, what if the superstructure, even though nominally Rightist or dictatorial, has always already annexed the revolutionary, (non-)epistemological, hypostatic ground? The rhetorical strategy proposed by La nueva novela hispanoamericana, the notion of ridding oneself of the philosophical straightjacket of conformity in order to replace it with “la universalidad de la imaginación mítica” (22), a lost, but nonetheless authentic archae, at best approximates the same strategy as Western theory (Fuentes is explicitly indebted to Foucault’s The Order of Things), and at worst simply mimics that of Eduardo Massera. Diana Taylor’s “joke of so many new beginnings, . . . that each junta repeated the slate cleaning of the one before, monotonously laying claim to originality” (183), is now reiterated as a politico-literary gesture designed to subvert the very same erasures of such juntas. It is unlikely, moreover, given corporate North America’s penchant for precisely such revolutionary tactics, that another redaction of this same strategy has never crossed the conference table in the General Motors’ boardroom. There is nothing new or particularly Latin American about this paradigm, for it has been the mainstay of European modernity for over five centuries, though arguably the accelerations, the instability, have been more expeditious and wholesale in former colonies. It seems less than convincing, either in a European or a Latin American context, that this “revolutionary” blueprint has ever succeeded in establishing more than a kaleidoscopic, epigonal catalepsy, the steady solidification of increasingly reductive national identities and thought, which in turn ensures the increasing difficulty of thinking outside or before the same blueprint, even when the intention to expand or indeed eliminate such reduction (as in both
Fuentes and Taylor's out-clauses) is at least ostensibly voiced as a principal thesis. The paradigm's means thus become its ends, for the gradual familiarity of reduction allows anyone to either research (Nietzsche) or even invent (Freud) a parenthetical genealogy and peddle it effectively, which is why a Foucault, a Massera or a Martí are so palatable to modern tastes. It is also a rationale for Taylor's disappointment in the Madres of the Plaza de Mayo, who failed to become resistant readers, the beneficiaries of "postmodern probing" (Sommer 4), and were therefore ensnared in the junta's "obsessively repetitive spectacle of eliminating internal differences" (Sommer 7), whereas in fact this last quotation applies more appropriately to Taylor's own homogeneous strategy, to the "postmodern probing" (Sommer 4) itself.

In fairness, unlike Taylor, Fuentes is not glibly postmodern, nor indeed merely historically parenthetical, for he not only suggests the revelation of a previously dormant "reality" of mythic origin, but also the recovery of a cultural episteme, a collective memory, "todo lo no dicho en nuestra larga historia de mentiras, silencios, retóricas y complicidades académicas" (30), and yet if, as a moral imperative, "el intelectual de América Latina sólo ve la perspectiva de la revolución" (29; my emphasis), the potential revelation of such lies and silences seems at best limited, and at worst the desire to reintegrate the past and the mnemotechnia elected to do so are mutually exclusive. This ambivalence is further manifested at a semiotic level, for in order to substantiate the new novel's burgeoning "resurrección del lenguaje perdido" (30), Fuentes predictably enlists such figures as Manuel Puig and Guillermo Cabrera Infante, which means that Latin America's unveiled lexis is now a "desorden plurívoco" (31), "El lenguaje, en suma, de la ambigüedad: de la pluralidad de significados" (32), close to Sommer's "postmodern probing" (7) or Derridean indeterminacy, though
very few Latin American intellectuals are entirely comfortable with post-structuralism in full bloom, and Fuentes is no exception:

"Nuestras obras deben ser de desorden: es decir, de un orden posible, contrario al actual" (32). In other words, the new novel is selectively deconstructive, subverting hegemony via jouissance yet at the same time offering meaning, "un orden posible" (32), to history’s silenced. The Madres of the Plaza de Mayo were unlikely to be satisfied with indeterminacy. Even if we leave aside the possibility that Latin American political hegemony, as exemplified by the junta above, may be as imminent as Derrida’s "démocratie à venir" (cited in Critchley, 36) has or will become, Fuentes intends to deconstruct the present, which is to say not simply authoritarian language but language itself, and then ideally to reconstruct or reauthorise that same atomised language (an atomisation which incidentally he was unwilling to advocate in the case of US modernisation) in order to voice his favoured, past "valores comunes" (28). Tinkering with modernity is not for the fainthearted, and this is the same weak stunt that Marx attempted to pull on Max Stirner in The German Ideology, the same as the questioners’ in Foucault’s 1971 interview in Actuel. In response to the interviewers’ pressure for a post-critique replacement, another system and a fitting theory, Foucault consistently voids the field: "Why not the opposite? Reject theory and all forms of general discourse. This need for theory is still part of the system we reject" (Language, Counter-Memory, Practice 231). Fuentes’ concluding chapter, “La palabra enemiga,” may initially imply the word itself as enemy, as if the field were on the verge of being voided once again, displaced in favour of some sub-linguistic system, a sincere postmodern position, whereas in fact it is this enemy word which will recommission the authority of the silences, endowing them with a meaning they have lacked heretofore:
En todo caso, la sociedad de consumo puede adularla en vez de perseguirla, pero sabe que la palabra del artista es enemiga, aún cuando su sentido sólo sea (y basta que tenga un sentido para ser enemiga: la base de la sociedad de consumo es la pérdida del sentido a fuerza de darle un falso sentido a todo; es la falta de la interrogación sobre el sentido) ése, claro y estricto, que Engels le adjudicó: afirmar y reafirmar que no vivimos en el mejor de los mundos: que ninguna sociedad representa la culminación de la historia. (90)

Interstitial meaning, then, is the new artist’s purview, adversarial word in hand, and yet this same word is simultaneously precluded from meaning via its superstructural critique, thereby invalidating the new novel’s defence of even its most cherished silences. Although the nullification is unwitting in La nueva novela hispanoamericana, the latter tacitly postulates aphanisis as its end, a rhetorical trope which dictates the predetermined nebulosity of both the deauthorising and reauthorising procedures, with the novel becoming but a pseudo-congeries, spuriously questing after hypostatic truth while perpetually complicit in the knowledge that it has already undermined its own quest, leading only to an ambivalent malaise. This congenital equivocality, which apparently mediates between and therefore subsumes all the more typical antinomies of Latin American culture (civilización / barbarie, ciudad / campo etc.), is forever repeatable (with the proviso that its ultimate equivocality is adequately disguised - that it portray itself as an epiphanic, rather than hackneyed, gesture), has become the only possible, thinking position, the sine qua non, not merely for the "new" novel, but for the entire corpus of Latin American literature and indeed Latin Americanist criticism alike. To say any more is simply pleonasm. That this apparatus, the quest for an unsullied oikoumene which is always already a pre-thwarted non-guest, is in cahoots with modern Western theory, with versions of Rousseau’s pre-thwarted flattened foreheads or Derrida’s fictitious, neo-Marxian non-guest for the non-knowledge of the alter, has not escaped Latin
Americanism's now canonical secondary / tertiary texts (though they render such jouissance more lovingly than the above, and certainly not in conjunction with Massera's junta), to the extent that even the briefest glimpse of a reading list for the twentieth century, a popping of the head around the door of a conference, would suffice to render the cultural production of an entire continent as little more than an appendage to Foucault. Whilst Taylor's concluding remarks vaguely reinscribe this modern paradoxy within the context of Argentina, and Fuentes does so innocently in relation to the new novel, such repetition is more commonly conscious and heavy-handed, with Latin Americanism, the criticism itself, becoming part of a supposedly difference-embracing, non-hegemonic, yet reductive hegemony, a kind of de-traditionalising tradition, which now perceives itself as possessing the methodological equipment to rewrite the continent's history and literature in its own univocal image, though the latter is successively veneered as an alternative, a revelation.

This rhetorical schema, whilst claiming a lack of contrivance and thereby ousting all other possibilities, is itself drastically constructed, which is not to say that it is inexistent, or that it has failed to hold a pervasive, bucolic sway. If the novel, and not merely its "new" or Latin American formats, has established a generic poetics of any kind, Fuentes is close to the mark. Ian Watt's now canonical version of the genre renders it as the product of "that vast transformation of Western civilisation since the Renaissance" (31), metaphysically founded on a Locke-informed philosophical realism which "has been critical, anti-traditional and innovating" (12), represented in practical terms by "the study of the particulars of experience by the individual investigator, who, ideally at least, is free from the body of past assumptions and traditional beliefs" (12). Although there
is an acknowledgement of cultural amnesia in these broad introductory comments, however, the general reliance upon Locke and the subsequent exemplification of such syntagmatic realism in Moll Flanders, Clarissa, and Tom Jones is indicative of Watt's monolingual approach, of a departmental solipsism (further evidence, incidentally, that modernity's perceived innovation is in fact restrictive rather than liberating) which precludes any mention of Lazarillo de Tormes and discards Don Quijote as synonymous with its protagonist, as consolidating "the limiting blindness of chivalric idealism" (86) and thus deficient in unprecedentedness, in the circumstantial breadth and psychological depth of the likes of Defoe. It seems that Watt respects the parameters of his object of study, for if innovation is our criterion, then eighteenth-century novels riding on the coattails of English empiricism must surely be more innovative than an early seventeenth-century, "unenlightened" text. A more inclusive tack, one which only adheres to Watt's more expansive remarks on collective memory loss and therefore privileges a typically novelesque, parodying Cervantes as opposed to reducing Don Quijote to the intellect of its pseudo-knight, is available in any of Mikhail Bakhtin's gushes on the genre. In the Bakhtinian carnival or "active polyglossia of the new world" (12), the novel becomes the dominant literary model in the Renaissance, though the dominance of any particular novel is ever precarious, for the model itself mutates, and it is this omnipresent instability which constitutes its non-poetics. From its prototypical, rogue flashes in Menippean satire to the present, the novel has always wallowed in its contrarianism, its "unofficial existence, outside 'high' literature" (4), perfecting its illegitimacy in the low and even illiterate genres, incorporating "the eternally living element of unofficial language and unofficial thought (holiday forms, speech,
profanation)” (20). This subversion, surely, is the same protean tendency that both Taylor (the resistance of literary studies) and Fuentes (the Latin American new novel) mold into a solution in their specific contexts, the supposedly multiplex, gut reaction of the modern, “la palabra del artista que es enemiga” (Lnnh, 90) which will contrapuntally deauthorise while reauthorising itself. Indeed, Bakhtin is emphatically enamoured of the tautologous “a radical revolution” (14; 30) as the novel’s intrinsic catchphrase, and his imagery in defining the genre’s modus operandi is reminiscent of both Nietzsche and Marx: “The liberty to crudely degrade, to turn inside out the aspects of the world and world views . . . to put to the test and to expose ideas and ideologues” (26). There are also moments of an implicit Romanticism as the novel par excellence, when man is portrayed non-anthropomorphically (paradoxically, of course), endowed with a natural superabundance, a “rudimentary but inexhaustible human face” (36) which even this most amorphous of literary forms is unable to capture, for to date we have devised “no form that he [man, as homo not sapiens] could fill to the very brim, and yet at the same time not splash over the brim. There always remains an unrealized surplus of humanness” (37). Despite this revolutionary backdrop, which would seem to voice Fuentes’ post-epistemic silences, the reason why Bakhtin became a doyen of postmodernism, why it was impossible to breathe the air of the Humanities for the entire decade of the nineteen-eighties without simultaneously inhaling one kind of polyglossia or another, is that the subversion, the silences themselves, are voiced but contingently, as a temporary non-truth to be almost instantly deinstitutionalised either by the very novel in which they appear or the next more radical version. The genre is “forever renewing itself, forever contemporary” (36), rapidly oblivious to even its own past,
"ever questing, ever examining itself and subjecting its established forms to review" (39), not merely promoting the low at the expense of the high but also the immediate at the expense of memory, to the extent that the novel itself becomes a genre of the ephemeral, or, in a phase which we are only beginning to prophesy, the novel (even literature) becomes as unnecessary an idea as those which it has hitherto cast aside. Here, "La palabra enemiga" is a joke, stale by tomorrow.

Whilst the Bakhtinian, less constrained definition does indeed apprehend more of the genre than Watt’s, in the former there is also an explicit assumption that such polyglossia are in fact increasingly more authentic in their dynamism, that the genre itself has eclipsed all others through its lack of affectation, and that each novel, in incessantly parenthesising history, is closer to an enlightened humanness than even its immediate predecessor. The low is favoured as more essential than the high, but more significantly the rhetorical paradigm, each supersessive upheaval in thought, every “new and heroic beginning” (40) with “closer proximity and kinship to the future than to the past” (40), is perceived as less constructed than its forebears.

Whether explicit or implicit, this is the same hope of all modern theory, that at some point we will out-thwart the self-thwarting, that the questing will eat itself, even though Bakhtin’s definition is premised upon the ambiguity, the impossibility of such an absolute aphasia, which means that the definition, once again, becomes its object, an auto-example, but also that there is nothing natural or essential here. As Taylor legitimately asserts in the case of Massera, and even the latter’s vocabulary is reminiscent of Bakhtin’s, despite the aura of inalienability which is rhetorically attached to this theory, such authenticity is a fallacy, and instead modernity may be our most violently constructed, homogeneous methodology, dangerously
masquerading as its opposite, or at least the potential of its opposite, with all too real repercussions. The novel’s *raison d’être*, via this logic, is subversion, as if subversion were an end unto itself, a bedrock truth, which then loses its edge when institutionalised, with the episteme becoming a hegemony of ever more unthinking sabotage while never annunciating itself as such. It is difficult to write this aporia and, at times, Bakhtin slips. In the novel, “One ridicules in order to forget” (23), whereas “In ancient [non-proto-novelesque] literature it is memory, and not knowledge, that serves as the source and power of the creative impulse” (15), and yet memory, whether generically low or high, is knowledge, both in the novel and elsewhere, selected and constructed to be sure, but knowledge nonetheless, which raises suspicions over the Bakhtinian novel’s apparently enlightened rubric, over the exact kind of latently more authentic “knowledge” the genre should ideally be revealing. Is this particular maieutic practice, this pullulating heterotopia, simply reducing all its elements to amnesia, and therefore not knowledgeable, indeed not a heterotopia? Amidst the overwhelming surge towards polyglossia, Bakhtin himself hints at the fact that he is eliding rather than embracing difference, for given that the genre’s only Achilles’ heel is the threat of some future, still more modern subversion, “This ‘modernity’ of the novel is indestructible, and verges on an unjust evaluation of times” (31), which is to say that the novel will read the work of previous ages in its own terms, terms which become steadily more reductive and create further reduction in perpetuity, so that the paradigm feeds on its own epigonal conduct.

The Socratic dialogues are singled out as prototypical novels here, for of course the dialectical form, the ludic self-irony, and the fact they were born of *ressentiment* at the Athenian superstructure all
seem to lend Plato a revolutionary, modern position, now reincorporated as “the first authentic and essential step in the evolution of the novel as the genre of becoming” (22). Beyond the form, however, in The Republic Bakhtinian epistemological contingency coupled with a bodily surplus is played by Socrates’ nemesis, one pre-Nietzschean Sophist Thrasymachus, with the latter staking out the supposedly non-ideological ground that “justice or right is simply what is in the interest of the stronger party” (19), whilst Socrates himself, in terms which the modern would invert, reinterprets such pragmatism as doxa, mere opinion, bearing the same relation to his own less transitory, contemplative knowledge (noesis) as illusion does to reality: “Knowledge . . . stands to opinion as the world of reality does to that of becoming” (283-84). The ideal Socratic / Platonic “republic,” furthermore, is a philosophical monarchy of sorts, which would teach an admittedly pagan yet broadly pre-Augustinian ethics via authority, hardly trapped between a Wordsworthian archae and the future excavation of this frustrated self. Understandably, given Plato’s technical innovation and his status as a seminal figure in the Western tradition, Bakhtin has no desire to ostracise the Socratic dialogues from his panoramic genre, despite their overt denunciation of such a “world of becoming” (283), but he is hooked on his modern paradigm to the extent that now only the paradigm exists. Nietzsche, more the classicist than Bakhtin, knew that Socrates was perilously integral to a stable good and evil, not beyond them, and labelled Plato “Europe’s greatest misfortune” (in Middleton, 258), which would also be a more fitting epitaph to The Republic’s presumed affinity to the “revolutionary” novel. Such modernising coercion is by no means restricted to Socrates, moreover, but an always skulking limitation. Fyodor Dostoyevsky, to name a more extensive example, is one of Bakhtin’s pet projects, and
though *Crime and Punishment*'s Raskolnikov is indeed allowed to play out his warring subjectivities against the backdrop of St. Petersburg, thus destabilising our perspective and innovatively preempts a Joyce or a Woolf, the novel's obvious philosophical schism oscillates between a Nietzschean übermensch (which incidentally Raskolnikov is far too cerebral, too plagued by self-doubt, to render with any conviction) and Sonia's Russian Orthodoxy, with the latter predictably resolving the "split" into a tidy, anachronistically moral imperative. It is even arguable that *Crime and Punishment*, by dint of its content, is not a novel at all in Bakhtinian terms. There is also a more general discomfort, outside the genre, that such a cavalier, carnivalesque tactic is sometimes inappropriate or inapplicable. The theory of a parenthetical history which dissolves the immediate past and only exists in the present equivocally, "forever renewing itself, forever contemporary" (36), is always uneasy with the process of aging, with death, almost to the point of denying biology, which hems Bakhtin into a less polyglossic position: "The dead are loved in a different way. They are removed from the sphere of contact, one can and indeed must speak of them in a different style. Language about the dead is stylistically quite distinct from language about the living" (20). The patently mnemonic process of mourning, of remembrance, is thus granted privileged status, a moment when a depraved lexis cedes to logos and a silence is indeed unequivocally voiced, although rather than suspecting the validity of the theory itself, its relevance to the Socratic dialogues or Dostoyevsky, reinterrogating it as to whether we are ever capable of muting memory and writing ourselves aculturally, either within or outside the novel, Bakhtin simply annexes a non-deconstructive moment, a glitch, and presses on in his revolutionary transience. It would take a Derrida, particularly in *Specters of Marx*,
to remain true to the theory and render mourning itself deconstructively, to rewrite it as the closure of the ghostly arrivant's non-truth in the hortatory of the mourner, a spurious exorcism or reassurance "that what one would like to see dead is indeed dead" (48), the ultimate, counterfeit moment of prosopoeia. Bakhtin has less of an agenda than Derrida, a Bloomian, sturm-and-drang quest for self which he knows is unequal to Fuentes' desired "elaboración crítica de todo lo no dicho en nuestra larga historia de mentiras, silencios, retóricas y complicidades académicas" (Lnnh 30), which may only cheapen our mediation of death, and even, most tellingly in the current climate, our mediation of alterity. Prior to the Renaissance, when the novel is a tangential form and memory dominates, the private and social selves are written together, in mutual implication, which of course Bakhtin considers naïve and non-novelesque, yet he delivers this naïveté in terms of alterity: "I see myself through the eyes of another. . . . We have as yet no confession, no exposing of self . . . . Epic disintegrates when the search begins for a new point of view on one's own self (without any admixture of others' points of view)" (34). There is a matter-of-fact admission here that we are walking amidst the ruins, trampling on them, and that our actions are ill-equipped to salvage even Bakhtin's beloved low genres, let alone alterity, for more than a moment, but these actions are performed with a resounding "So what?", with a complacency increasingly common in Latin Americanism though mercifully absent in La nueva novela hispanoamericana despite the similarity of its solution to the ontology of the Bakhtinian novel, a "modernity or bust" attitude which is self-consciously reductive yet nonetheless rather fun.

If we were to play blind man's buff in a bookshop full of Western novels, however, the chances are that Bakhtin would prove to be
orthodox, in the same sense as Massera. Just name your poison. The trademark of the picaresque novel is an obvious, physical lawlessness, with a touch of Boccaccio’s bawdy high jinks thrown in for good measure. In a meticulous study of *Don Quijote*, *Adventures in Paradox: Don Quixote and the Western Tradition*, Charles D. Presberg plausibly argues, with a specificity which I shall not pretend to reiterate comprehensively here, for Cervantes’ modernity, concluding in Foucauldian fashion that “the text invites readers to question the ‘authority’ of all human discourse” (231). In short, and that conclusion allows for some reduction, Cervantine paradoxy stems from the thwarting of the medieval tradition of *inventio* via *imitatio*, and in this case the chivalresque romance, with the knight “errant”’s frustrated quest for Dulcinea being perpetually mirrored at the level of rhetorical subversion. Here, the subversive act, close to the beginnings of the modern, requires some familiarity on the part of the reader with another, premodern episteme, of which Presberg is entirely aware, suggesting that “the measure of a writer or rhetor’s success in using the system against itself is also a measure of his or her failure to undermine that system” (2), that the parody simultaneously reinforces yet denies its model, hence the paradox, the “negative assertions” (3) of which twentieth-century theory would become so fond, dashing to replenish the void of Althusser’s “real relations” (165) with one version or another of deconstruction as justice, the *arrivant-cum-idol*. Cervantes is therefore far from Marx’s “naïveté of the child” (“ICE” 16), but rather an already sophisticated rendering of the novel, and yet in his reliance upon the chivalresque romance which few among us (the Presbergs excepted) are now able to appreciate, albeit for the purposes of parody, he simultaneously ages this work, ultimately becoming victimised in the present by its own rhetorical strategy. As
we witness the waning of the Spanish Golden Age as a subject, ousted, along with Shakespeare, for its supposed aesthetic elitism and archaic ideologemes, becoming parodied in its own right, a novelesque Cervantes is simply being hoisted on his own petard, erroneously though increasingly perceived as irrelevant. In the words of another subversive, the apex of a counterculture “manifests itself between the time when a concept begins to perturb dominant tendencies and the time when it begins to promote these tendencies” (Lefebvre 323), and it would seem, as the Renaissance is eliminated from the state school curriculum in the UK, that these texts are receiving a taste of their own medicine.

The Princesse de Clèves is another “novel” that Watt dismisses as non-Lockean and thus steadfastly classical, the backdrop against which the likes of Defoe will erupt as opposed to their precursor, for despite the attentions of Monsieur de Nemours, Madame de Clèves remains duty-bound to her husband, even in widowhood, finally exiling herself to a convent as penance for emotional impurity, with the book thereby over-confirming the etiquette of its own courtly world. A different reading, however, would mention M. de Nemours’ preter-Rousseauesque introduction as “nature’s masterpiece” (5), as the text’s entame, and de Lafayette’s exposure of courtly life as a façade, unhealthily stemming latent truth beneath meaningless tartuffery. Mme. de Chartres, de Clèves’ mother, is a dab-hand at such intrigue, advising both her daughter and of course the reader from an early stage that “If you judge by appearances in this place,’ . . . ‘you will frequently be deceived: what you see is almost never the truth” (26). Once the potential tryst is apparent to all but de Clèves herself, again her mother plays the role of disciplined mendacity, a corrupt lexis to the daughter’s impossible innocence: “It is already a long time since I
noticed your inclination; but I did not wish to speak to you of it at first for fear of making you notice it yourself. You are only too aware of it now; you are on the edge of a precipice” (39-40). Having taken all manner of pains to disguise her sentiments from an ever titillated coterie, and never in fact deviating from rectitude in action, de Clèves, through de Lafayette’s able fabrication of social claustrophobia and innuendo, is simply presumed to have acted regardless, despite all the “pretended” dissimulation: “I shall soon be regarded publicly as a woman who has given way to a wild and violent passion; . . . . Yet it was in order to avoid these very misfortunes that I risked my peace of mind and even my life!” (113). The clandestine truth, the Princesse’s revolutionary self, is hampered by way of her articulation, her representation, within a system which the novel progressively accentuates as synthetic, and the hasty, even trite exile to a convent thus lacks all verisimilitude.

Whilst my selection is admittedly limited, it is a non multa sed multum approach, for one begins to suspect that long before a Said destabilised the Western archive the latter was for the most part auto-
destabilising (perhaps a rationale for the academe’s easy institutionalisation of Said), rehashing the same ontological paradigm with the same epiphanic rhetoric ad infinitum, only constrained in this particular context by the quantity of Bakhtinian novels available. The paradigm itself is endless, or, in Bakhtin’s own words, “This ‘modernity’ of the novel is indestructible” (31), paradoxically forming a canon which is uncomfortable with its canonicity, a hegemony of subversion which is eternally self-thwarting, and yet the paradigm itself is simple, finite, violently artificial as both Taylor and Massera illustrate, reminiscent of Terry Eagleton’s remarks on criticism driven by recent literary theory: “If the point of criticism
is not to interpret literary works but to master in some disinterested
spirit the underlying sign-systems which generate them, what is
criticism to do once it has achieved this mastery, which will hardly
take a lifetime and probably not much more than a few years?" (214).
Although this statement underestimates the paradigm’s redeployability,
that it is entirely possible to reiterate the same theoretical
apparatus for a lifetime and more, it does define a critical penchant
which is paralleled in the novel. Watt does at least accomplish his
limited objective in rendering Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding as “free
from the body of past assumptions and traditional beliefs” (12), or
rather in rendering this as their inherently thwarted desire. Henry
James’ favoured plot is to pit a frail North American _ingénue_ against
nefarious, inscrutable Europeans, weighed down by centuries of
praetorian intellectualism, a legacy which would find its nexus in the
hedonism (unfettered to the point of ludicrousness) of J.-K. Huysmans’
Des Esseintes, in turn the blueprint for Oscar Wilde’s Dorian Gray. By
the time Jean-Paul Sartre’s Roquentin receives it, he is barely capable
of ordering his own days: “J’ai voulu que les moments de ma vie se
suivent et s’ordonnent comme ceux d’une vie qu’on se rappelle. Autant
vaudrait tenter d’attraper le temps par la queue” (_La nausée_ 66).
Contemporaneously, Hemingway’s generation “experiments” with clipped
prose and the “write only what you know” dictum, which tends to mean
not very much beyond immediate pragmata, without ever quite being sure
of how or why we should know even that, requiring a steady supply of
scotch and soda to dull the pain. The “Beats” would persist in clipping
the prose, and required something a little stronger. For a mild-
mannered, more lighthearted interpretation there is always E. M.
Forster, and particularly his “Italian” novels, conventionally
summarised by Frederick Crews as “embracing Italy as the home of
brilliance and passion, of emergence from the English fog of snobbery and moralism" (71), an obvious dichotomy of low-church Anglicanism turned southwards to reveal its parishioners' unmediated selves, "a lurking romanticism beneath their sang-froid" (71). In *A Room with a View*, the poles are spanned by the English Emersons, who have somehow managed to avoid the country's ubiquitous provincialism, predictably exhorting, as Crews again has it, "the pressing need for sincerity and fidelity to instinct" (82), and Forster's philosophical bent is justifiably posited as a sublime, liberal humanism. Both worlds, of course, are clichés, despite the preference for or "authenticity" of Italy (a portrayal which many Italians would doubtless consider diminishing), and furthermore, in addition to his Romanticism, Emerson was a Unitarian, another boreal, revolutionary Protestantism whence it becomes more probable to read the stereotypical Forsterian divide as two different manifestations of a nonetheless analogous, anti-epistemological impetus, very much the products of the same mind. The England coetaneous to *Where Angels Fear to Tread*’s supposedly priggish, stable Sawston was certainly indebted to a self-absorbed empiricism of its own, with Forster therefore comparing like with like while unwittingly feigning philosophical disparity. Indeed, in Brian May’s more recent *The Modernist as Pragmatist: E. M. Forster and the Fate of Liberalism*, such tautologies abound, the possible tags for Forster ranging from standard liberal idealist with a faith in a transcendent (in my context “Italian”) utopia, to modernist skeptic, an artificially divisive, category-obsessed debate *par excellence*, with May himself settling for the half-way position of ironic proto-neopragmatist or unidealistic liberal, a "Rorty / Forster affiliation" (13), which means that the sublime Italy is just provisional, another subterfuge to undercut, that “these discordant impulses [never really discordant] may
be harmonized to create the kind of pragmatism Rorty calls ‘liberal ironism,’ the kind that endorses liberalism even though it has been ironized, since no more culturally useful alternative has come along” (15). In other words, goaded by the possibility that even these stereotypes may be too erudite, Forster writes an anglicised Italy which, given his ideological predilection, is an easy though no less reductive amalgamation to believe.

Vented with more fanaticism than the Edwardian Forster would ever muster, Alain Robbe-Grillet’s manifesto for his own technique, *For a New Novel: Essays on Fiction*, first published at around the same time as Foucault’s *The Order of Things*, is both a recapitulation of Rimbaud’s problematic, “to make the soul into a monster” (308), to become “the great invalid, the great criminal, the great accursed - and the Supreme Scientist!” (308), and a prefiguring of Vattimo’s non-reactive “accomplished nihilism” (19), of Derrida’s messianic technosciences. At some point, the vocabulary of these “subversives” must seem shopworn to even the most casual observer, for again this particular “new” novel is supposedly “a rejection of any pre-established order” (73), making “a tabula rasa of the past” (134), and “the great novelist, the genius, is a kind of unconscious monster, irresponsible and fate ridden, even slightly stupid” (11). Robbe-Grillet’s contribution, imparted sub rosa to his reader, is to rehash the “meaning . . . was merely an illusory simplification” (23) argument, thus cleansing the novel of any lingering, life-denying anthropomorphisms, in lieu of which there is not a depth but a surface made manifest, for “the surface of things has ceased to be for us the mask of their heart” (24). Despite a faith in his era’s materialist science, in Condillac’s “administrative numbers” (29), therefore, Robbe-Grillet dismisses Marxian theory as an abstraction, Sartre and
Camus as reactionaries, still practising a form of "tragic humanism" (64), all "denying the world its most certain quality, the simple fact that it is there" (40). Existentialism, revolutionary in its own terms, is simply the anthropomorphisation of objects, "Calm, tame, they stare at man with his own gaze" (69), a gaze which should now be eliminated once and for all, a surveillance which is precisely the source of Rousseau’s evasion of society and of Foucault’s infamous fondness for the inverted canvas in Velázquez’s Las meninas, destabilising the perspective of both onlookers and onlooked:

... stubbornly invisible, it prevents the relation of these gazes from ever being discoverable or definitely established. The opaque fixity that it establishes on one side renders forever unstable the play of metamorphoses established in the centre between spectator and model. Because we can see only the reverse side, we do not know who we are, or what we are doing. (OT 5)

There is only the back of a frame in Robbe-Grillet, surface as surface, but more significantly the rhetorical strategy, the manifesto invoked to accomplish this rejection in the new novel is, unexceptionally by now, that "each new book tends to constitute the laws of its functioning at the same time that it produces their destruction" (12), thus generating a series of self-contained historical parentheses, with every self-cancelling supersession installing "new values... which will again be of no use, or even be harmful [to the novel’s own harm], when it comes to judging the literature in progress" (144). Indeed, by For a New Novel, this “paradoxical movement” (155) or “perpetual renaissance” (159) which shams a non-superstitious counter-truth while simultaneously manifesting itself as a sham no longer simply determines its subject, providing a rhetorical framework within which to insert content, but has itself become the subject, a hollow shell. In this most European of contexts, therefore, Robbe-Grillet’s contemporaries are urged into “jeopardizing themselves in proportion as they create
themselves" (155), and although the presumed benefits of this to and fro motion are somewhat obscure to most Europeans (of what exactly, is this a renaissance, and why are we spuriously prevented from apprehending--or compelled to obliterate--even that?), For a New Novel closes where Fuentes' desire for Latin America begins, with the foregrounding of a paradigm to the point at which all others become lost in the distance, a point which Latin Americanism would and still does consider to be both requisite and salubrious, not only to the continent's new novel but to its entire cultural corpus.

Juan Goytisolo's Señas de identidad, the consummate example of the paradoxical institutionalisation of the modern, of polyglossia, now on every undergraduate's reading list for twentieth-century Spain, teaching us to forget, also includes a caricature of Sartre and his Parisian clique as ineffectual hypocrites. Often read simplistically, as an anti-Franco rant, there is no archae here, nor even a teleology. Silences are voiced, but without privilege, in a vertiginous narrative, Fuentes' "desorden plurívoco" (Lmnh 31), which shifts between Álvaro Mendiola's aleatoric browsing of the family photo album to death squad executions or multilingual eavesdropping on tourists, all veiled in contingency. Mendiola himself, towards the end of the novel, is but the product of second-person aphasia:

Cuando la desesperanza humana te abrumaba más fuerte que de ordinario (lo que últimamente acontecía con cierta frecuencia) la evocación de la madre y la hija, del encuentro de la madre y la hija en el compartimiento del vagón de segunda clase (rumbo a París, a través de la Francia oscura) te curaba y recomfortaba de la tristeza y melancolía que (por tu culpa, quizá) constituían tu pan cotidiano. Enfrentando al desastre irreparable de una muerte que desde el síncope del boulevard Richard Lenoir sabías cierta, te dolía que su recuerdo pudiera desaparecer al mismo tiempo que tú y, sentado en el jardín a la sombra móvil e incierta de los árboles, sentías crecer en tu fuero interior una violenta e inútil rebeldía contra el destino avaro que lo condenaba para siempre, como te condenaba a ti (parecía imposible, te sentías joven aún, por tu cuerpo corría savia pujante) al duro olvido, hosco e insaciable. (391)
In spite of Fuentes’ ardent continental nationalism, disclosed most frequently in the standard abundance of first-person possessives which are an all too common feature of modern Latin American criticism, a chapter of _La nueva novela hispanoamericana_ is devoted to Goytisolo the would-be Spanish American, with explicit references to _Señas de identidad_. Here, in this European majuscule where even the shade of the trees is evanescent, written in the wake of both the Spanish Civil War and the theory of the “new” novel, Fuentes discovers his own schematised randomness, a plurivocal sifting of the past which hints at resolution while almost instantly deflating that expectation. At last, Goytisolo has rendered Robbe-Grillet’s “paradoxical movement (to construct while destroying)” (155) as his purpose, a virtue in itself, for Mendiola does indeed remember only to doubt his memories and thereby the mnemonic process, ultimately faced with either this “olvido, hosco e insaciable” (391), or the methodology, the incessantly heuristic quest for such amnesia with which Goytisolo frames the novel. In Fuentes’ synopsis, Mendiola’s fundamental question is “¿cómo arruinarte, España, si ya eres una ruina?” (83), and “Toda la novela contesta al protagonista: arruinando las ruinas mismas” (83), as if the Civil War were a political necessity for the Spanish novel, a first ruin or step on the way to postmodernity’s absolute, literary aporia and yet another example of just how extreme the theory becomes. Whilst this is surely a feasible reading of _Señas de identidad_, and Goytisolo’s subsequent work proved capable of inhabiting these ruins, of redeploying Robbe-Grillet’s typically palindromatic action, even in the same chapter Fuentes is inadvertently more ambivalent at times. Yes, the novel is defined as both a ruin and ruinous but also as an “apertura inmediata hacia un futuro que sólo puede nacer de la ruina total” (81), and Mendiola is amplified into a projected national cause,
someone who “persigue fantasmalmente a un país, a una cultura y a una esperanza revolucionaria” (79). These are not two discrete approaches, but in a sense Goytisolo has pre-read Fuentes and pre-voided him, for the latter is still dependent upon a revolutionary counter-truth, some means to voice silences of the past in a future renaissance, and is therefore unwilling to relinquish all to abstraction. Of course, in the hands of a Massera, learned in the discourse of modernity, either approach would suffice to reimpose the “obsessively repetitive spectacle of eliminating internal differences” (Sommer 7), but Fuentes’ carte is a little less blanche, his version a little more gun-shy, uncertain of whether Latin America, even in its new novel, should invite the Derridean threat of yet another “démocratie à venir” (cited in Critchley, 36). In practice, however, this new novel proves repeatedly less apprehensive.

Fuentes’ Una familia lejana is an overt metafiction, hence its pertinence here, but at its most literal it is the story of the kidnapping of the Comte de Branly, an elderly French aristocrat who invites an eminent Mexican archaeologist, Hugo Heredia, and the latter’s son, Víctor, to his house on the Avenue de Saxe in Paris. The father and son have developed an apparently innocent game perusing telephone books for possible namesakes. There is indeed a Víctor Heredia (or “French Heredia”) in the Paris book, living in the suburb of Enghien-les-bains at the Clos des Renards, whom Branly and the young Víctor determine to visit. The visitors are (or at least appear to be) inexplicably abducted by the French Heredia and his son, André. After enduring a “locked room” scenario, Branly escapes, subsequently travelling to Mexico in order to unearth the now fugitive, patently complicit Hugo Heredia to demand his rationale for such a plot. The
Comte relates these events to the initially anonymous Fuentes at the Automobile Club de France, who in turn relates them to us.

In the first sentence of the novel, our narrator introduces us to the Comte de Branly as "mi amigo" (9), implying that a certain intimacy exists between the two men. However, the aristocrat fails to reciprocate the supposed warmth of the relationship, accepting an invitation to lunch together but barely registering the narrator’s presence: "La [la cabeza] levantó súbitamente, pero no para mirarme" (9). The lack of familiar recognition continues when Branly characterises the encounter as "la oportunidad de contarle a alguien mi historia" (10), thus relegating his companion to such embarrassingly undesignated status that the narrator explicitly attempts to forge some semblance of identity: "No soy alguien, Branly" (10). Thematically, of course, Fuentes is already instigating the traditional symbiosis of Old World / New World or Civilisation / Barbarism here, and this "empire writes back" scenario, most obviously rendered by the French Heredia’s chimeric tour through a Latin American past which haunts Branly with his own colonial ancestry, is the standard binary churned out by much of the secondary criticism. Julio Ortega reads it as a "juego dialéctico entre el tiempo lineal ‘europeo’" (40) and "esa civilización precolombina en la que el fatalismo, coincidencia, e intuiciones marcan la vida del pueblo" (40), Guy Davenport as the "influx ... of an exotic, primitive, chthonic nature long ago civilized out of European culture" (239), and Julie Jones, more versed in postcolonial theory than her predecessors, "as a kind of bad conscience for Europe" (70), "an echo of Frantz Fanon’s argument that ‘Europe is literally the creation of the Third World’" (73). Whilst such visceral reactions are not groundless, and I shall return to them below, they do seem to put the cart before the horse, for Una familia lejana is plagued by its own
process of mediation, its own structure, and our reading thereof, which includes its mediation of an apparently purer, antipodal bias. In the introductory scene between our two narrators, the Comte’s aloofness is more a consequence of a compulsion to verbalise a past mystery than of any national division. Branly is simply awaiting any receptive audience, any chance to narrate, to impose a logical order upon the apparently implausible events of the Clos des Renards. In the midst of the subsequent account, the Frenchman admits that “no podré entender esta historia hasta que termine de contarla” (139), as if comprehension is inherent in the act of narrating, in the vocalised configuration of the puzzle. This investigator, described as “un francés razonable” (12), installed at one of the preferred tables within the protective walls of that most conservative of institutions, the Automobile Club de France, appears unequivocally authoritative, merely requiring the assurance of a listener and a few bemused interjections in order to initiate his reconstruction.

In a structural sense, Fuentes is positioning Branly as the voice of order from the first, a neo-Condillac with a belief in a one-to-one relationship between sign and signified, whose positivist surveillance will secure an empirical conclusion. From another perspective, this semiotic logic is already revolutionary, involving a radical suspicion of language as construct which requires the latter’s reduction to its barest, algebraic framework (Derrida, in his book on Condillac, spies a proto-ally), but for Una familia lejana’s purposes we must at least initially grasp the Comte as tritely stable.

The other (though entirely literary) stereotype of which the Branly / Fuentes pairing is reminiscent, and an offshoot of the same scientific bent, is the detective story. In the ensuing pages, the Comte attempts to respect the blueprint of detective fiction ad
absurdum, a form which combines, as Tzvetan Todorov suggests, "deux séries temporelles: les jours de l’enquête qui commencent au crime, et les jours du drame qui mènent à lui" (57). The process demands an absolute faith in language’s capacity to communicate reality, for the inquiry is an essentially linguistic exercise, dependent upon the investigator’s ability to read clues and formulate hypotheses with regard to a past event, ultimately narrating a factual version of the crime. Indeed, this version must transform experience, "les jours du drame" (Todorov 57), into speech with such fidelity as to provide "nothing less than complete resolution" (Dove 35). The first sequence of events, the crime, necessitates the second, the inquiry, which in turn resolves the first, thus closing the circle and rendering the inquiry, the story itself, obsolete. Specifically, the work most commonly credited with the invention of a formula which spawned a myriad of imitators, therefore constituting the genesis of the genre, is Edgar Allan Poe’s "The Murders in the Rue Morgue." This story is prefaced by a study of the benefits of analysis when playing draughts or cards, and then introduces a young aristocrat, Monsieur C. Auguste Dupin, "the very soul and essence of method" (315). Dupin solves the ghastly murders of Madame L’Espanaye and her daughter through a perusal of newspaper accounts and subsequent feats of logic, a primarily sedentary procedure which contrasts with the incessant physical activity of a baffled Parisian police force. The reader possesses the same factual testimony as the sleuth, but the latter’s concluding narrative in which the hitherto disparate pieces of the puzzle are omnisciently ordered outstrips our investigatory prowess. The affair is narrated by the detective’s anonymous amanuensis who defines the case "with all Paris" (326) as "an insoluble mystery" (326), a confession which serves to restrict his involvement to that of mere sounding
board. Indeed after sifting the evidence Dupin embarks on his explanation "as if in a soliloquy" (328), thereby negating the narrator's very presence. This cerebral form of detection, which Poe termed "ratiocination" (841), recurs in the two other Dupin stories, "The Mystery of Marie Rogêt" and "The Purloined Letter," together with the trappings of an odd, armchair-bound sleuth, a duped police force, a bemused narrator and a reliance upon Dupin's ultimate, vocalised exegesis. The series defined the boundaries of the whodunit, "the novel of formal limitations par excellence" (Yates 272), providing a recipe to which only "roughly a dozen plot themes" (Yates 273) would be subsequently applied. As the formula becomes more familiar, it becomes more hackneyed. Even a cursory knowledge of the genre's more renowned practitioners is sufficient to determine that the detective becomes less eccentric, the narrator more bemused, the crime less ghastly, and the solution more assured. By the Golden Age of detective fiction, this "ritualization of violence" (Dove 25) was so staid that the Detection Club of London published certain "rules of the game" (Yates 273). These included demands "that writers be respectable and law-abiding" (Lovitt 68) and that they "not violate the principle of fair play" (Dove 34), thus attempting to ensure that their readers, already aware of the forthcoming programme and their requisite role, would rest ever more secure in the knowledge that the text would endow them with at least as much information as the detective, thus guaranteeing that they would enjoy an equal chance of solving the crime. It is this sense of completion, of enabling oneself to consign experience to cathartic oblivion, a positivism played out within the confines of a literary contrivance, that the dining companions in the Automobile Club and the reader anticipate, as Branly sets the scene, encounters a deferent
narrator, and endeavours to permit his “buena razón cartesiana” (139), “as if in a soliloquy” (Poe 328), to guide the account.

Initially, there are moments of detective fiction’s predicted lucidity. During the first visit to the Clos des Renards, for example, the Comte recognises a discrepancy between the summer weather and “un hondo sendero ininterrumpido de follaje seco” (37), thereby insinuating that a clue has been assimilated and will be subjected to subsequent analysis. In the closing lines of Chapter IV, the various madrigals (emanating from Branly’s own childhood in the Parc Monceau, a ravine in Cuernavaca, a gilded clock, and the woods at the Clos des Renards) are identified as a single tune. Even when entrapped and incapacitated, the Comte manages to link Hugo and his son’s relationship to “esa impunidad del feudalismo latinoamericano” (61) and remains sensitive to any potential subversion of his investigation, dismissing the French Víctor Heredia’s sinister conversation and overt vulgarity as “una máscara para desviar la atención de la verdad” (78). As a narrator, Branly strives to be considerate, providing apparently inconsequential information to maintain coherence, “para no dejar incompleto este relato e identificarlo, así, con su integridad textual” (98). Such examples, however, become increasingly infrequent as the Comte’s confidence in his narrative, in the act of narration, dwindles.

Violation requires some hope of fulfillment to frustrate, and Una familia lejana reverts to another type, mutating into Robbe-Grillet’s new novel:

And already the theories begin to take shape: the presiding magistrate attempts to establish a logical and necessary link between things; it appears that everything will be resolved in a banal bundle of causes and consequences . . . .

But the story begins to proliferate in a disturbing way: the witnesses contradict one another, the defendant offers several alibis, new evidence appears that has not been taken into account. (23-24)
Having prompted the optimistic notion that this inquiry will generate a crisp dénouement, that if Branly simply structures the story its meaning will prove definitive, Fuentes (the author) proceeds to jeopardise the narrative’s authority and to question whether the catharsis or circularity of detective fiction is ever possible, whether language ever conclusively deciphers the past.

In Chapter XIX, before Branly embarks on his metadiegetic rendition of Hugo Heredia’s defence, he issues a caveat to the narrator regarding the precariousness of linguistic truth. The Comte claims that in the course of the tale he will be compelled to employ “la imaginación narrativa, pues sólo ella es capaz de reproducir algo verbalmente, así sea incompleto, así sea aproximativo” (157) but that this reproduction will necessarily create “la única verdad posible” (157). The standard for truth, for ultimacy, therefore, in Branly’s mind, is lower when replicating a preexistent narrative than when relating his experience at the Clos des Renards, for supposedly the latter simply requires completion to assure comprehension. However, is this comprehension forthcoming? Is Branly’s narrative, filtered through Fuentes, absolved of the limitations which constrain Branly’s narrative of Heredia’s story? The Comte is not merely the vicarious investigator of the mystery but also a witness. The immediate past of the Clos des Renards and the majority of the clues which echo through history are components of Branly’s life, not simply theoretical possibilities. Fuentes allows his protagonist to attempt to fashion coherence from a content which even Sartre’s fragmented Roquentin considers to be most orderly, “une vie qu’on se rappelle” (66). The Comte is in the optimum position to resolve the enigma, to comply with “the characteristic action of all detective fiction: the restatement and restructuring of a
past event" (Hutter 191). It is all the more disconcerting, therefore, when cracks begin to appear in the account.

Chapter III, for example, which describes the first arrival at the Clos des Renards, concludes with the enticing insight that this visit "parecía ser el final de un juego y resultó ser, apenas, el inicio" (36), thus implying that there is more to tell. Instead, the opening paragraph of Chapter IV returns the reader to the Avenue de Saxe, only to proffer the residual details of the Clos des Renards sortie a few lines later. It is impossible to determine whether Fuentes (the narrator) or Branly is responsible, but an episode is misplaced here and simply inserted at whim. In addition to this slip in chronology, the Comte's or the narrator's control over the factual accuracy of the story begins to falter in Chapter IV. Upon returning to the Avenue de Saxe, before the inclusion of the misplaced episode, Branly is described as attempting to "interesar a Víctor en otros paseos" (36) which the boy declines. When the two return to Paris after the inclusion of the lost episode, however, the narrator informs us that "mi amigo no insistió demasiado en salir" (37). Although the act of returning is recounted twice, it has occurred only once, and therefore both versions refer to the same occasion. Of course, the statements contradict each other and only one may be deemed accurate. Perhaps the error is Branly's, or Fuentes', but the contradiction is never resolved. Ultimately, moreover, it is "la nueva solicitud de Víctor" (39), that of the child originally defined as "ensimismado" (36), which determines the next outing. Did Branly entice the boy or vice versa? In hindsight, it is more probable that Víctor encouraged the Comte, since the boy is always a participant in the French Heredia's subterfuge, but the reader is never certain.
The discrepancy above is but one instance of the implicit erosion of our faith in the story's veracity. Even if we fail to discern such tacit distortion of the course of events (a somewhat generous hypothesis, since it is difficult to miss the fact that the question of Hugo and Víctor's original arrival time in Paris is never clarified, and that the two companions in the Automobile Club are never wholly sure as to which of them initially proposed the invitation to lunch), Branly is often explicitly conclusive in manifesting the inconclusivity of his version. Having devoted much of Chapter IV to a description of his halcyon youth in the Parc Monceau, and having recalled specific mornings from childhood sojourns at his grandfather's castle in Chapter VIII, the Comte then informs the listener of his doubts regarding "la falsedad o certeza con las que un viejo puede imaginar su propia juventud" (73). The verb "imaginar" (73) is perhaps the most disconcerting element of the phrase, for it would seem to resolve any debate over truth and falsity in favour of the latter. Conventionally, the past is remembered or, in detective fiction, factually reassembled, whereas the future is necessarily imagined. Branly's admission reveals that the status of even his own personal history is as nebulous as an account informed by clairvoyance. Indeed, when we revisit the Parc Monceau in Chapter X, the memories or imagined memories are less idyllic, focusing on the Comte's rejection of a reclusive child in order to avoid a loss of face within his boyhood clique. The introduction of this newcomer not only corroborates Branly's previously self-confessed authorial ineptitude (the second, guilt-ridden episode obviously conflicts with the earlier recollection), but also serves as a moment of peripeteia, completing the ontological spectrum which spans Fuentes' novel. The Comte, for all his intellectual superiority, defined as "el astuto niño" (82) confronting "un bobo" (82), is unable
to ridicule the naïve outsider precisely because of that same naïveté. For both the eleven and the eighty-three year old Branly, this failure to laugh is "lo incomprensible" (82) of the encounter, a response forbidden by his awareness that the meaning ascribed to the park by the other boy is gleaned solely via "lo que dicen sus ojos" (83), a method which precludes language, thus forming an alternate, purer Monceau which, “para él [el desconocido], no tiene nombre ni historia” (83). Of course, in the less visceral eyes of our aristocratic narrator, the park is firmly embedded in history, the relic of a French imperialism which was already on the cusp of decaying at the time of the garden’s construction, a decay symbolised by the Duc d’Orléans’ (Monceau’s creator) rejection of his honorary title in favor of a theoretically classless pseudonym, “Felipe Igualdad” (79). For the stranger, who becomes another apparition of the French Heredia, another of Latin America’s hauntings which are now analogous to those of a preverbal Adam, these chronicled inscriptions are merely cosmetic, redundant when the park may be sensed intuitively, ingenuously, amidst a present which is innocent of a past.

Is this unspoken interchange between the two children in the Parc Monceau, when Branly’s principles of intelligibility are absent, the resolution of Heredia’s spectrality, the moment when the postcolonial arrivant has in fact arrived and the New World has defined its own stake upon the Old, and thus defined the novel’s anagnorisis? If so, then in a Foucauldian vein Fuentes has constructed an Enlightenment theory of positivist knowledge, linked it to a literary contrivance, and demystified this conjunction with a neo-Romantic archae, which is to say with a more radical version of itself. Via this premise, all the intricately framed displacements are materially apprehended and thus finally heard. The young Víctor, André, and the French Heredia (or, if
you will, the Víctor / André / "Heredia" amalgamation, for they are ultimately the same being) exist contingently, like the ubiquitous leather interior of the Clos des Renards, in an infinite vacuum, "en la ausencia absoluta de su propia conotación histórica" (96), but there is nothing esoteric here, no episteme to reassert. The empire writes back, its latent silence now revealed as Davenport’s "influx . . . of an exotic, primitive, chthonic nature" (239), prompting his question "Is this dispersed and returned heritage a welcome return, or is it a kind of revenge?" (239), to which the only response is neither, for the recovery is merely that of a telluric or Romantic Latin America, a stereotype returned to a culture which both invented and continues to reinvent this same paradigm. Similarly, Jones renders the eventual metamorphosis of Víctor and André into a single being as "a kind of 'journey back to the source' à deux" (71), thus parenthesising the past in favour of some obscure origin, though presumably it lies beyond the Old World. As in La nueva novela hispanoamericana, where the iconoclastic movement towards a "desorden plurívoco" (31) simultaneously annuls the desired "elaboración crítica de todo lo no dicho en nuestra larga historia de mentiras, silencios, retóricas y complicidades académicas" (30), whilst Fuentes subverts Branly’s already reductive rationalism, he also subverts his Latin American counter-truth, preventing it from becoming any more than a timeworn nostalgia for puerile innocence, which Massera manipulated with such efficiency.

This is the only Latin America, the only viable past, in the novel, and yet even this preter-natural version is precarious. The question shifts from whether or not Branly will decipher the story at its close to will the story ever end? Will this tale of "el confuso vástago de muchos lugares más que de tiempo alguno" (145), of the
The intertwining yet distinct circumstances of such ostensibly miscellaneous figures as Francisco Luis de Heredia (a speculator in the Caribbean of the nineteenth century), Alexandre Dumas (both père and fils, of course), the boy in the Parc Monceau, and the present “Heredia” amalgamation, ever be satisfactorily unravelled and thus unified? By Chapter XIV Fuentes (the narrator) informs us that his aged friend “había cancelado toda voz moderadora y conversacional como la mía” (109), for Branly benefits from at least some degree of precognition of the forthcoming episodes, progressively discerning that he is not simply chasing Heredia but the ever more illusive integrity of his own story of which Heredia is but a part. Conversely, Fuentes continues to function in the “Watson” role, still presumptuously assuming that he has already unveiled “el verdadero engaño” (100) (his friend’s conspicuous narcissism) behind the case of the Clos des Renards, and finding the Comte’s insistence on returning “las cosas a un justo medio razonable no desprovisto de humor” (143).

The younger man’s comprehension becomes more tenuous, however, following Hugo Heredia’s conjectural explanation in Chapter XX. In the typical detective story, Chapter XX would be the dénouement scene, for Víctor’s biological father appears to be the villain of the piece. Hugo planned the trip to Paris under a spurious premise, bribed Branly’s servants in exchange for their silence and allowed the Frenchman to fester at the suburban mansion. Furthermore, immediately before the Comte embarks on his account of the final confrontation with Hugo, he permits Fuentes to ask a series of rapid stock questions such as “¿Cuándo viajó Branly a México?” (153), “¿Cómo ubicó a Heredia?” (153), which promise resolution. Instead, Hugo’s version is as convoluted as its predecessor, and its narrator is similarly dumbfounded, unable to postulate a chronological structure via “las fechas que no coincidían”
(184), to anchor "todos estos cabos" (186). From his introduction, Hugo is defined as possessing "esa característica de los latinoamericanos cultos: sentirse obligados a saberlo todo, leerlo todo" (15), to procure a lettered universality with which to access the past. As such, this Mexican rests on the detective fiction side of the dichotomy, subject to the same linguistic limitations as the companions in the Automobile Club, and merely contributes one additional variation to the story which the now more perplexed Comte must attempt to absorb. The absence of a lucid confession is sufficient to induce even Fuentes' collapse, and as his previously suggested solution flutters away into a Nietzschean underworld, a desperation akin to his friend's sets in:

Las palabras de Branly por fin se asentaron en el fondo de mi conciencia; hice lo que nunca había hecho, por afecto, por respeto a este hombre de ochenta y tres años; lo tomé con violencia de los hombros, lo agité, le dije que me dijera la verdad, . . . . Mi acción era determinada por el terror súbito que me invistió; no quería ser el que sabía, el último en saber, el que recibe el regalo del diablo y luego no sabe cómo deshacerse de él. (190)

This Faustian scene between the two confidants is as close as Una familia lejana comes to a dénouement, for it is the moment when Fuentes is compelled to finally acknowledge that the story is interminable and that his status has shifted from anonymous listener to named (in the penultimate chapter) narrator or detective. In fact, there are multiple shifts, for the novel's most reprehensible crime is not the French Heredia's hostility but the story itself. In narrating the story, therefore, the Comte mutates from detective to criminal. If we accept this mutation, then Fuentes not only moves from amanuensis to detective but ultimately becomes the criminal himself, for he is narrating the story to us.

In Myself with Others, Fuentes (the author) suggests that Don Quijote "illust"rates the rupture of a world based on analogy and thrust
into differentiation" (49), in the sense that the knight has read
(existed through language) but must then confront reality and attempt
to digest it. In the closing pages of Una familia lejana, the
bibliophile Branly admits that he has lost "el poder de analogía entre
las cosas" (191), for he too has confronted reality with mere
linguistic weaponry. The difference between Cervantes’ text and
Fuentes’ is that the latter is more menacingly direct, since the
strategy of passing the story from one narrator to the next allows
little room for the reader to duck his turn in the criminals’ line of
succession. There are several explicit hints at our future role such as
the phrase “El narrador debe imaginar . . .” (158) at the end of
Chapter XIX where the word “narrador” (158) is generically ambiguous,
potentially referring to either Fuentes or the reader when as usual it
is Branly who will be narrating the ensuing scene. Similarly, during
Hugo’s exposition of Víctor’s treachery he uses the phrase “Dirá usted
al leer esto . . .” (180) when he is speaking to the Comte. Of course,
this is Branly’s version of that conversation, but Branly himself is
supposedly speaking to Fuentes. The only possible addressee is the
reader. Our own power of analogy is tested and, as it is difficult to
conceive of a genuinely complete reading of the tale, will necessarily
fail. This is not to say that some Romanticised Latin American current
prevails, for there is no facile, typically poststructuralist wallowing
in the ludic quality of language, no final statement which decrees that
everything we have just read means nothing or could mean anything so
the entire exercise should be recognised as futile. Both the Comte and
Fuentes (the narrator) receive a lesson in the constraints of
narration, but if the fragments of the story that they have succeeded
in compiling mean nothing to them then whence the cause for concern?
Fuentes witnessed none of the events at the Clos des Renards, so the
specific details of the case are of no significance to him before lunching with Branly. The same may not be said in the aftermath of the encounter. Nor, however, do we experience the utter resolution of detective fiction. There is a passage in Jorge Luis Borges' "Abenjacán el Bojari, muerto en su laberinto" which is of relevance here:

Dunraven, versado en obras policiales, pensó que la solución del misterio siempre es inferior al misterio. El misterio participa de lo sobrenatural y aun de lo divino; la solución, del juego de manos. (Obras completas [Oc] 1: 604-05)

The threat in Una familia lejana is derived from Fuentes' (the author) refusal to succumb to this "juego de manos" (Borges 605), to parcel the tale away at either one pole of the dichotomy or the other. Instead, we oscillate between the two, between intuition and rational exactitude, or between intuition and the absence of any means with which to access it, catching glimpses of both but never expressing a cathartic preference. It is not entirely invalid to focus on the politics of place, as the secondary texts are wont to do. However, although the dead leaves at the Clos des Renards may have swept in on the back of a rather clichéd, revitalising Latin American wind, disturbing a staid Paris, this is merely the icing on the cake, symptomatic of the novel’s more imperative, rhetorical tension. The oscillation itself, the self-thwarted quest for a prelapsarian archae which is an incommunicable fantasy, becomes the subject, which means that Fuentes is merely rehashing modernity’s paradigm, its paradox, in a different context, knowing that the quest will necessarily continue its suspension beyond these pages. Before Una familia lejana, this same auto-renewing aphanisis toyed with itself in Artemio Cruz’s paroxysmal mnemotechnia, "liberar, opacándolos, sus recuerdos" (219), Cumpleaños’ "Pero recordarlo todo es, nuevamente, olvidarlo todo" (89), and Terra Nostra’s “única ley invariable: el cambio” (267). It takes time and
effort, as the above indicates, to construct the impossible pursuit of oblivion, and the latter, this always deferred objective, is little more than a travel brochure’s Mexico, or Massera’s Argentina. Neither the paradox nor the entame are “naturally” Latin American, indeed they are never an “authentic” response in any context, and whether Octavio Paz revels in the mercenary truncation of his words, whether there is some virtue in the fact that his “oráculos son los discursos del afásico” (37), in his status as a “jardinería de epitafios” (38), is similarly dubious. My reading is by no means a spoof, however, and beyond Fuentes, Latin Americanism has patrolled and instituted this “modernity,” not merely as a badge of distinction, or sophistication, but also as its desire, its essence.

It is disturbingly easy, nay apophasmic, to pinpoint the definitive moment of Latin America’s literary agora, always obsessed with its own definition. This moment tends to be annunciated in terms of fecundity, of pullulation, or shock, although the “Boom” may have been nothing more than a series of texts which fed the West’s appetite for semiotic play back to itself and thus reached a different audience, a much wider market. For John S. Brushwood, and the following statement is statistically verifiable, “The Spanish American novel burst into prominence in the 1960s for readers outside the Spanish-speaking world” (ix). This version is somewhat less strident than it might be, since whilst the four authors most commonly associated with the Boom (Julio Cortázar, Carlos Fuentes, Mario Vargas Llosa and Gabriel García Márquez) are for the most part novelists, it is arguable that the surge in interest had an osmotic effect on other genres, and also that readers inside the Spanish-speaking world underwent a similar process. Both these confines are remedied in Peter Standish’s “During the 1960s, Latin American, or more precisely Spanish American literature quite
suddenly came to occupy the forefront of the international literary
stage" (133), a fact which he attributes to the Cuban Revolution,
Carlos Barral’s publishing house in Barcelona, the metaphysical
influence of Borges, “narrative experimentation, self-referentiality
and increasing demands on the reader” (133). Stephen Hart, and this
list is only limited by the number of post-Boom literary histories and
cyclopedia available, synthesises his predecessors’ vocabulary into “
... it was only in the 1960s that Spanish-American literature
suddenly burst onto the world stage” (167), though appropriately he is
more tentative, more alive to the recreant nature of attaching some
totalising, “coming-of-age” label or explicitly Latin American creed to
the period.

Borges’ Ficciones was published in 1944, Macedonio Fernández was
already experimenting with the novel’s form in the fifties, and exactly
how the Latin American intellectual’s political imperative, the reputed
subversion (whether Cuban or otherwise), blends into such
experimentation is often ambiguous at best, even if the alternative
politics on offer is assumed, a priori, to be genuinely different. As
Philip Swanson blasphemously hazards, “Robin Fiddian has commented that
‘in Latin America, ... writing and politics go hand in hand.’
Undoubtedly true. But just where is it that they are going together?”
(14). Una familia lejana, a post-Boom (1980) text by a Boom author,
hardly presents its latent American past in ethical terms, regardless
of which any and all terms, our means of access to this past, are
negated by its own rhetorical astigmatism. Moreover, although the
academic Hugo Heredia may be the product of “esa característica de los
latinoamericanos cultos: sentirse obligados a saberlo todo, leerlo
todo, no darle al europeo cuartel ni pretexto, conocer igualmente bien
lo que el europeo ignora y lo que considera propio. el Popol Vuh y
Descartes" (15), his "archaeology" fares no better than Branly's, he appears in a novel written in Spanish, dedicated to Luis Buñuel, with an epigraph from Marcel Proust, and structured via a poem by Jules Supervielle, all of which seems to privilege an intertextual knowledge of the likes of Descartes over any Latin American autochthony. Whilst José Donoso's Historia personal del 'boom' claims that "Éramos huérfanos" (26), "sin una tradición que nos esclavizara" (20), this redundant tradition is explicitly that of Azorín or Baroja, and such statements are less an endorsement of some nihilistic errancy than an insertion into an already self-destabilising Western episteme. Donoso is indebted, again explicitly, to Robbe-Grillet, to a revolutionary reading practice which devalued Spain, had little contact with Latin American works, and demanded instead a foreign stream of "novelas de todas clases con tal que estuvieran recién salidas de las prensas" (40), a twentieth-century, European practice of almost instantaneous oblivion and renewal in other words, with "modernity" as its only criterion. As Donoso has it, the Boom novel is not utterly traditionless, but rather one which imports years of an artificial though efficient de-tradition into a prefabricated orphanhood:

... se planteó desde el comienzo como un mestizaje, un desconocimiento de la tradición hispanoamericana (en cuanto a hispana y en cuanto a americana), y arranca casi totalmente de otras fuentes literarias ya que nuestra sensibilidad huérfana se dejó contagiar sin titubeos por norteamericanos, franceses, ingleses e italianos que nos parecían mucho más 'nuestros'. . . . (22-23)

Again, in less personal, even heretical words, having dismissed such immediate precursors as Alejo Carpentier and Miguel Ángel Asturias as Surrealists, and their "real maravilloso" as a European by-product, Swanson broadens his suspicion of this new-fashioned vitality, this alterity via which "Spanish American literature quite suddenly came to
occupy the forefront of the international literary stage" (Standish 133):

... in terms of world literature at the time of the Boom and after, there is nothing especially different or exciting about ambiguity and technical experimentation, suggesting that the success of the new novel in translation owes much to the exoticism factor of Latin America and its politics—despite the efforts of so-called 'Marvellous' or 'Magical Realism' to develop a non-eurocentric Latin Americanist viewpoint. (9)

Notwithstanding Fuentes' reverie of enemy words and silences counter-voiced, Latin American literature had apparently served itself up as a more extreme version of modern Western expectations.

To broaden the point still further is to reveal perhaps the only veritable newness in this saga of definition, for all of a sudden the Academe, and more specifically Departments of Spanish, discovered a preformulated vocabulary for this ambiguity, an aetiology which had originated long before in English and had now culminated somewhere down the French corridor but with which all those lurking "poor cousins" of the Humanities, the Latin Americanists, would soon become au fait. 1961 was indeed the moment when Borges was jointly awarded the Formentor / International Publishers' Prize with Samuel Beckett, and but a handful of years thence Foucault's The Order of Things appeared, a text which begins its exposure of man's speciously reassuring modus operandi with the words "This book arose out of a passage in Borges, out of the laughter that shattered, as I read the passage, all the familiar landmarks of my thought" (xv). The passage, a trademark, pseudo-encyclopedic list of incongruities, provides the stimulus for Foucault's introduction to aphasia, cited above as one of my epigraphs. Now, Latin Americanism possessed and still possesses its own, pre-institutionalised, theoretical ipse dixit (however paradoxical such institutionalisation was even for Foucault), buoyed by a corpus, a paradigm, such as Fuentes', despite his own protestations to the
contrary. Under this premise, the feasibility, the politics, of modern
theory itself is a given, hubristic in the knowledge that it is not
some other version of Massera, and the novels, the ideologemes, become
just so many exempla for the hegemonically unstable anti-philosophy of
the West, so many thwarted quests for self, exhortations to forget. The
projective aspect of this theory is understandable, for it is always
propelled by dissatisfaction with the status quo and the apprehension
of some past origin restored to a more radical future, but the
temptation is also to apply it retrospectively, which here means that
until the advent of a Foucault Latin American literature was misread,
and, if we are to salvage anything from this misguided, "constructed"
past, then it too must conform or be made to conform with our own
version of modernity, thus re-establishing a culture as the present’s
whipping-boy, one which we are apparently prepared to flog to death.
This is not to suggest the existence of some preferable, non-European,
"natural" theory out there, or that Latin American literature has more
in common with the Popol Vuh than Descartes, but simply that as a means
to reconstruct silences Foucault et al.’s brand seems counter-
productive, never intended for this purpose, and that whilst some
texts, some ideologemes, may correspond to the imposition of
postmodernism (Una familia lejana but one), others may not. Even this
last sentence, however, may have said too much, for it is difficult to
imagine an academic discipline which is quite so gratified by (or
perhaps oblivious to) having its own predetermined theoretical
expectations repeatedly read back into itself, all the while pretending
to entertain the end of the discipline within which these readings are
articulated, a kind of en masse anacoluthon.

In the "Post-Boom" years of the "new" novel, the politics
supposedly becomes more patent, coupled to the surfaced of the
popular, of Bakhtin’s low genres, most obviously manifested by the “extraliterary” qualities of transcribed testimony, and yet definition remains illusive, for the likes of Fuentes continue to publish, and neither Puig nor Cabrera Infante, the presumed bridges to such postmodern populism, are quite as “low” as they should be. I shall return to this point towards the end of the chapter, but again, these extraliterary voices are still within easy reach of modern theory, since Rigoberta Menchú is potentially a non-holder of the non-truth of the real, a Derridean arrivante, whose secrets are too precious to interpret, her latency or archae too primary to touch.

At this point, the argument becomes quantitative to a certain extent, bolstered by the sheer number of secondary studies on the cusp of the tertiary, the theoretical, a breadth which is copiously redundant, repetitive, and which is only implied below. The following texts are, however, considered seminal to Latin Americana, its post-1961 bread and butter, the wares served up on introductory undergraduate and more advanced graduate courses alike, nestling within easy reach of each other in the “PQ” section of even a weaker library, representing the physical accumulation of the study of the same idea in similar terms, available to be randomly plucked with the same result. In this eristic debate which recapitulates the continent’s cultural production as a perpetual reinvention which nonetheless always already fails in its objective, thus establishing only endless peregrination, the criticism both molds and collectively becomes its own aim, à outrance, a gross apostasy of apostasies, osmotically superseding itself as if to mirror its understanding of its sources’ reduction to a series of thwarted quests.

In the “Nota” serving as prolegomena to Paz’s *Puertas al campo* (1966), a collection of essays which predates Fuentes’ *La nueva novela*
hispanoamericana, Donoso's Historia personal del "boom", and Paz's own lamentation of aphasia in "A la mitad de esta frase . . . ," the Frenchified nature of Mexican letters is reconfigured as a liberating cosmopolitanism, ineluctably constituting a delocalised "literatura errante" (10) in phase with its macrocosmic "planeta errante" (10). Simultaneously, the supposed philosophical benefits of this hybrid are rendered as a tautological anarchy, particularly dangerous in the context of Latin America, with Paz awkwardly invoking the same oscillation as his successors, struggling to reimpose, after modernity's desired critique of meaning, Fuentes' out-clause, his post-critique "palabra enemiga," and in terms which contravene, almost verbatim, the Foucauldian dis-Order of Things:

Hoy el nihilismo de la nueva sociedad industrial, nunca soñado por Nietzsche, ha vuelto anacrónicos todos los significados, sin excluir a la rebelión contra la significación. Creo que el artista moderno - sobre todo en países como los nuestros, marginales o recién llegados a la historia - debe buscar nuevamente el sentido. El de las cosas y el de las palabras. (11)

Without ever proffering a rationale for our initial dependence upon Nietzsche, as if the latter were inherent and even salutary as a point of departure, a necessary aporia, Paz is less than convinced by nihilism's material and theoretical legacy, by either the industrial wasteland or the solipsistic "rebelión contra la significación" (11), an only apparent heterogeneity which excludes all but itself, so that now we must pull back from the abyss, from the accomplishment of a nihilism (to paraphrase Vattimo) which would exclude even that rebellion. By dint of the modern artist's given Nietzschean penchant hitherto, the new-found quest for meaning, the relationship between words and things, now lies bereft of a vocabulary, becoming instead a pre-failed project, seeking a non-revolutionary telos which its own theoretical premises preclude. Having recognised the dead end of modern
theory, therefore, the fallacy of Taylor’s further resistant readings, and indeed the particularly incongruous gratuity of such anti-philosophy in the Latin American context, Paz is unable to annunciate his poetics beyond a vague desire for recovered significance, which is to say that he, like Fuentes, is another restless inhabitor of modernity’s paradox, lacking the means to escape (or rather hooked on the very paradigm that limits any other possibility). There is no absolute acknowledgement of Nietzsche’s fraudulence here, but an attempt to navigate through it, which only leads to another self-thwarted journey, to the latter’s repeated reinscription. The first essay of the collection, “Literatura de fundación” (1961), has become a canonical synopsis of its field, almost inevitably dolled out on the first day of any course relating to the Boom, and concluding “Desarragada y cosmopolita, la literatura hispanoamericana es regreso y búsqueda de una tradición. Al buscarla, la inventa. Pero invención y descubrimiento no son los términos que convienen a sus creaciones más puras. Voluntad de encarnación, literatura de fundación” (21). The foundation or tradition, of course, falls outside Paz’s purview, projected beyond the conclusion of the essay, for his is merely a gesture or “Voluntad” (21) towards such an objective. Instead, again, tradition is now the to and fro motion of the modern, the self-truncated, historically parenthetical search for some Nietzschean palingenesy (presumably not the literal “good” of Aryan paganism) now reapplied as the common, total essence of all Spanish American literature, an essence which is recurrently stripping and reinventing itself with every new search. Whether this past / future archae is any more mediated than an ephemeral sense of intuition between a young boy and an old man in the Parc Monceau, or than Massera’s renewal of Argentine nationalism, is unlikely, and in a way beside the point, for
Paz exiles this origin to contingency, an eternal return, only to be relegated by the next, more foundational beginning, and he reads the entire field, even the work produced pre-Nietzsche, as an exercise in this same theory. In spite of the desire for an out-clause, therefore, and the melancholia of "A la mitad de esta frase . . ." regarding its own abbreviated exegesis, it seems that modernity, which is ever precarious in its internal auto-negation and will perforce taint anything to which it is applied with the same dynamic, also informs all of Spanish American literature and vice-versa, becoming the only viable reading of every text.

Tucked behind the "Literatura de fundacion" on the opening day of term may be Emir Rodriguez Monegal's "A Revolutionary Writing" (1970), which begins with Paz's broad portrayal of Latin American letters as "a tradition of tradition breaking'" (6), but focuses on the decade of the sixties as "the emergence of a new literature" (11), at pains to distance itself from its own past, to stress that "We are finished with all those epics of campesinos and gauchos" (7), to refashion itself as catalytic for French structuralism and explicitly for the likes of Robbe-Grillet. Predictably, a sanguine Rodriguez Monegal rewrites literary history around one epiphanic moment, "that day in 1961 when some of the European and North American avant-garde publishers, gathered together on the island of Formentor, divided the recently created International Prize of Publishers between the Franco-Irish writer Samuel Beckett and the almost unknown writer Jorge Luis Borges" (8). There is none of even Paz's limited suspicion regarding a neo-Nietzschean industrialism here, no wariness of the possibility that modern theory may successively dismiss all prior thought as anachronistic and thus irrelevant, no question that revolution itself, whatever its contextual circumstances, is a mark of sophistication and
hence to be desired. The piece tacitly stakes its ground within the 
ellipsis of "A la mitad de esta frase . . .," remembering in order to 
forget, but with a celebratory tone, innocent to or even inviting a 
future when it will also become obsolete. Indeed, both the decade and 
Latin America are rendered as the product of machista brutality, a 
series of tales of daring-do, of "the most fabulous utopias and 
impossible feats" (10), ever perilous and Romantic, a neo-Romanticism 
which has finally abandoned all restraint and unleashed, via a 
paraphrase of Mao Tse-Tung, "its permanent revolutionary spirit" (10): 
"Through these languages [Spanish and Portuguese] the men of this 
continent are creating a literature that makes use of the literary 
traditions of the West and which transforms them by means of a process 
of hybridization and ceaseless creative freedom, to achieve the only 
permanent revolution: that of language" (10). This post-critique 
language is yet another version of a recaptured, subversive 
significance, of Fuentes’ "palabra enemiga," the erring, impossible 
quest for revolutionary meaning which is now the only feasible motive 
for literature’s existence, and Rodríguez Monegal, to his credit, links 
such literary sedition to its appropriate reality: "A new conception of 
man is emerging from the chaos and the revolutions, the coups d’état 
and the underdevelopment, the ‘revolutions’ and the urban guerillas, 
and the Latin American novelists are (willingly or not) the prophets of 
this new man" (8). In other words, in my context, "A Revolutionary 
Writing" not only offers a free hand to the next still more post-
structuralist novelist, rapidly emancipating the exigencies of a 
Western theory which the West itself regards with some ambivalence, but 
also offers a similar tabula rasa to the next dictator, the next 
purveyor of a spurious nationalist fervour whose presence is craved as 
the essence of Latin America and is necessary for the prolongation of
its permanently self-superseding ontologies. Rodríguez Monegal is a true postmodern prober, a welcomer of the démocratie à venir, for he recognises his theoretical position as an invitation to future juntas and wallows in that promise.

Whether or not the promise would be intentionally extended to a Fidel Castro, "A Revolutionary Writing" is, if only by implication, a proselytisation of post-1959 Cuba, though both Rodríguez Monegal and Fuentes (La nueva novela hispanoamericana in particular) are portrayed as dissemblers in Roberto Fernández Retamar's Calibán: Apuntes sobre la cultura en nuestra América (1971), the essay most commonly invoked as a defence of Castro and indeed as a cardinal example of one of the continent's most lauded genres. The English translation now appears with a 1989 foreword by Frederic Jameson, who reads it as the cultural contextualisation of the political and therefore a threat to a poststructuralist Academe, the stemming of both a literal and "specifically theoretical imperialism, in which a common canon of Western modernist and theoretical texts seems slowly to cover the world" (xi). This was also the motive behind Jameson's The Political Unconscious, wherein a Marxian ur-narrative is read through a series of later theories in order to reinvigorate them with meaning (albeit univocal), though here the analogy is to a Foucault-informed successor: "... Caliban is after all, if anything is, the Latin American equivalent of Said's Orientalism (which it preceded by some six or seven years) and generated a similar ferment and restlessness in the Latin American field ..." (viii). Whilst both the points on a syntagmatically applied teoria and reading Foucault in tandem with Marxism are convincing, reflecting my own concerns herein, and the Cuban project certainly seems anachronistic, almost epistemological, in the contemporary milieu, the problem, as was the case with The
Political Unconscious, is one of whether regressing to an earlier form of modernity runs counter to current forms of postmodernity, or whether in fact this earlier version has simply been ousted in kind, a harbinger as opposed to an alternative, which is to say that Marx may not be entirely unaccountable in the thought of a Vattimo, regardless of how frivolously apolitical the latter’s work may appear.

Assuredly, Fernández Retamar is driven by the exposure of erudition, particularly foreign erudition, re- or de-incorporating Latin America as a hypostatic Caliban to a fatuous Prospero, thus loosing the Shakespearean bonds to which it is intertextually tied, and he cites George Lamming’s Barbadian identification with the creature in defence of this inversion, whose carceral terms are reminiscent of the Foucault / Jameson / Said bent: “‘Dado que no hay punto de partida extraordinario que explote todas las premisas de Próspero, Calibán y su futuro pertenecen a Próspero ... Próspero vive con la absoluta certeza de que el Lenguaje, que es su don a Calibán, es la prisión misma en la cual los logros de Calibán serán realizados y restringidos’” (27). Unlike Said pace Foucault, however, Fernández Retamar is subject to a counter-philosophy and a track record, in the form of the Enlightenment / Marxism and post-revolutionary Cuba respectively, which are both his sole means of escape and an ideological liability. Although the desire for contextualisation is undoubtedly evident, therefore, and this redressing of history is supposedly a process of counter-truth, akin to Fuentes’ much flaunted revelation of the silences of the past, Calibán’s recontextualisation of the entire continent (the subtitle engages all America, not merely Cuba) is necessarily informed by a theory which deliberately reduces this quest to a series of homologous bullet points, a list of revolutionary moments with only lacunae, illusion, between them, as if
such fledgling eruptions were Latin America’s only history, the only relevance hitherto, their meaning now manifested as but pre-Castro efforts in the light of the ultimate victory of 1959, the final demystification. Here, then, is a sample of Fernández Retamar’s history, for which the word “contextualisation,” though driven home by Jameson, would seem a misnomer:

En 1780, una fecha mayor: sublevación de Túpac Amaru en el Perú; en 1803, independencia de Haití; en 1810, inicio de los movimientos revolucionarios en varias de las colonias españolas de América, movimientos que van a extenderse hasta bien entrado el siglo; en 1867, victoria de Juárez sobre Maximiliano; en 1895, comienzo de la etapa final guerra de Cuba contra España – guerra que Martí previó también como una acción contra el naciente imperialismo yanqui; en 1910, Revolución mexicana ... Fechas así, para una mirada superficial, podría parecer que no tienen relación muy directa con nuestra cultura. Y en realidad es todo lo contrario: nuestra cultura es – y sólo puede ser – hija de la revolución ... (78-79)

In the wake of Marx and Martí, Fernández Retamar forms his continental nostos, now projected onto Cuba’s future, and he reads the past accordingly. Within this blinkered perspective, the essay is admittedly a stark example, repeatedly carving out its “latent-made-manifest” niche with the full gamut of “natural” vocabulary. Julio Antonio Mella, a founder of the Cuban Communist Party, is defined as the country’s “primer marxista-leninista orgánico” (32). Martí, precursor to “Fanon y a nuestra revolución” (48), is similarly exalted as the defender of “lo autóctono, lo verdaderamente americano” (58), whose “verdadero hogar ... era el futuro” (39). An obvious intertext of Calibán, Martí’s 1891 article, “Nuestra América,” is cited often and at length, for here Fernández Retamar spies “la situación concreta” (36) rendered “de modo más orgánico y apretado” (36), highlighting passages such as “‘No hay batalla entre la civilización y la barbarie, sino entre la falsa erudición y la naturaleza’” (47), and “‘el libro importado ha sido vencido en América por el hombre natural. Los hombres naturales han
vencido a los letrados artificiales. El mestizo autóctono ha vencido al criollo exótico" (45). Resisting the temptation to become reduced to this level of debate, from which it is easy to argue that Calibán itself, by dint of its association with Marx, the Paris Commune, and for that matter Martí, is inherently reliant upon imported ideologies and therefore to be disregarded on its own terms (a discourse with which the US was and remains familiar, effortlessly assimilating and feeding it back in an equally supersessive fashion), it is instead enough to suggest the fallacy of this natural continental ontology, the impossibility of knowing it, and indeed whether it is worth knowing anyway. Philosophical interchange is inevitable in both the Cuban and the Latin American context more generally, but to apply this single theory with Fernández Retamar’s brand of universal extremism is surely to reduce all to Marxism and to replicate, necessarily, all its congenital flaws. Of course, the hope is that some of the revolutionary predecessors’ supposed “organicity” will transfer to Calibán, that the latter will open a binary, critical space, again described as “verdadero” (81), for “la historia del opresor y la del oprimido” (81), “obra de aquellos para quienes la historia, antes que obra de letras, es obra de hechos” (81), “(operación que nada tiene que ver con leer la historia de otros)” (87). This history, which is at best the reinvocation of Martí’s solipsistically American past from the Incas to the present, is nowhere to be found within the essay, which is in fact precluded from such a history by its emphatic espousal of the modern, by the same ontology it claims as inclusive, and the last quotation is indicative of Fernández Retamar’s pervasive lack of interest in or active censuring of any and all alterity.

At the same time, Cuba’s more recent track record is progressively expunged, rhetorically suspended on a knife-edge between
a nationalist origin and the latter’s infinite reinvention, as though Castro were on the brink of success, devoid of a decade’s power, still creating “una cultura nueva, socialista” (92), “en sus albores, . . . en marcha” (77), wherein “Coherencia no quiere decir repetición” (91). Such destabilisation permits Fernández Retamar to protect himself against the threat of being ousted by some more labile, neoteric form of modernity, ever the revolutionary’s implicit fear, and also to re-radicalise the work of Martí, or Mella, and even José Enrique Rodó’s Ariel (1900). The latter’s reappraisal, the recognition that “No hay verdadera polaridad Ariel-Calibán” (35), is one of Calibán’s few contributions to Latin American culture, for here the theoretical myopia detects not the standard Rodó, brimming with an extrinsic, ethereal sybaritism, but a kindred spirit, a fellow child of the Enlightenment. Specifically informed by Goethe, Schiller, Comte’s “principios de las clasificaciones naturales” (83) and Carlyle’s “culto de cualquier noble superioridad” (83), Rodó’s own landmark essay offers a mingling of Harold Bloom’s aestheticism and Marx. For all its counter-revolutionary, anti-Jacobin ranting, its suspicion of a puritanical North American dynamism, Ariel is often contradictory in relation to its own strategies, more consistently projecting a neo-Romantic “fe en el porvenir, la confianza en la eficacia del esfuerzo humano” (40), with fathers learning “por la inspiración innovadora de los hijos” (42). Rodó is deferent to Emerson, a dynamic Unitarian par excellence (whilst concurrently proclaiming that in the US “El arte verdadero sólo ha podido existir . . . a título de rebelión individual” (111) to substantiate such deference), and euphemistically sanctions Nietzsche’s replacement of “una humanidad mediotizada” (84) with “la apoteosis de las almas que se yerguen sobre el nivel de la humanidad como una viva marea” (84). There is even an exhortation “a desarrollar
en lo posible, no un solo aspecto, sino la plenitud de vuestro ser” (44), implicitly paraphrasing The German Ideology’s promised dilettante’s idyll. All this, the oscillation between an original Nietzschean nobility and its future restoration, is entirely intelligible to Fernández Retamar, but an earlier version of his own schema, and it allows Calibán to simply switch the Ariel metonym, rewriting it as proem to the context of contemporary Cuba. The bullet-point approach, therefore, does elucidate some earlier bullets, and its rhetoric is certainly emblematic of its post-revolutionary backdrop, but there remain vast gaps in its supposed counter-history which are dismissed as superfluous. The fact that the author of “A Revolutionary Writing” is ostracised, that Fuentes is accused of “ahistorización” (72) and La nueva novela hispanoamericana of “una hábil posición de derecha” (65), is more an indication of just how much is missing here, of how artificially divisive modernity’s supersessions can become, than proof of any perceived inauthenticity. Such former thrusts would be easy to incorporate as complimentary to Calibán, former deployments of the same ontological paradigm which is itself an obstacle to confronting history’s silences, and hence a similar obstacle to the later text, with all complicit in an ever more paradoxically hegemonic criticism. Instead, Fernández Retamar sits, a little precariously, in his glasshouse, checking occasionally for the presence of some future entrant, lobbing bricks at others who have already smashed the windows with admittedly less hefty projectiles, all the while pretending that the glass is there to be broken and never realising the inevitable relevance of the house’s still extant frame.

In 1984, the frame itself was shaken once more by Ángel Rama’s posthumous La ciudad letrada. Rama died in an aeroplane crash the previous year, unavoidably leaving the text with the demeanor of an
essay in the original sense, and any reading of it should necessarily begin on a note of critical circumspection, rightly reserved for such publications. Despite the author's preexistent fame as the doyen of nineteenth-century Latin American studies, having produced a plethora of articles on the subject, La ciudad letrada has become his most puissant work, a statement corroborated in later, now canonical surveys by the likes of Roberto González Echevarría and Carlos Alonso, to which I shall return. At the beginning of a recent, favourable analysis, Román de la Campa suggests that "Of Rama's posthumous texts, none is more important in its complexity and reach than La ciudad letrada" (in Trigo, 18), claiming that it "may well be the most frequently mentioned text in contemporary Latin American cultural studies" (Trigo 18). The critical reach is evident, therefore, but Rama is only as complex as Foucault will allow him to be, for La ciudad letrada is steadfastly premised upon The Order of Things from its opening pages, rewriting the continent's history from the colonial moment onwards as Europe's "'tabula rasa'" (2), a projection of a foreign modernity which was both figuratively and literally centred in the schematisation of urban planning, a monotonous reality spearheaded by "lettered" justifications, with Rama rehashing the vocabulary of his theoretical source: "La fuente máxima de las ideologías procede del esfuerzo de legitimación del poder" (5). This source is first cited on the fourth page, as Rama fleshes out the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as the furthering of a still more sophisticated process of ideological legitimisation, a period of Cartesian rationalism when, "como ha visto sagazmente Michel Foucault, las palabras comenzaron a separarse de las cosas" (4), and, instead of referencing reality, "el signo . . . empieza 'a significar dentro del interior del conocimiento'" (4), thus becoming obligated to an order of knowledge, a discipline, from which
it has yet to liberate itself in a neo-colonial present. Whilst Jameson’s analogy between Caliban and Orientalism requires some exegesis, for their theoretical backdrops and desires are at least nominally different, de la Campa encounters no such difficulty in accentuating a Rama / Said symbiosis, both produced by the same brand of suspicion, and declares that with the publication of La ciudad lettrada “. . . Rama becomes the first Latin American critic to engage Foucault – rather than Roland Barthes or Paul de Man – systematically, in a full-length study that afforded Rama a broader, more historical approach to the new discursive horizon” (Trigo 27). In the shift to Foucault, therefore, this text apparently voids the field, rendering all prior studies the product of a less wholesale skepticism, for the latter is now directed not only at the moment of colonisation but also at more recent revolutionary paradigms, and implicitly at the discursive tactics of Fuentes, Rodríguez Monegal or Fernández Retamar. Rama suggests that the myriad exempla of revolution in the Latin American context were merely a series of guard changes or “una renovación generacional de la ciudad lettrada” (149), which endorsed both the real urban centres and the rhetoric of legitimisation, the veneer of democracy, and thus the citadel, “el viejo casco” (157), survived intact.

Broadly, the paradigm, the philosophical fabrication, against which Rama persistently rails is that of modernity, in all its forms, an oneiric sense of becoming which obscures any chance of discerning present reality and projects its own structure onto even those theories which would aim to supersede it:

. . . en vez de representar la cosa ya existente mediante signos, éstos se encargan de representar el sueño de la cosa, tan ardientemente deseada en esta época de utopías, abriendo el camino a esa futuridad que gobernaría a los tiempos modernos y alcanzaría una apoteosis casi delirante en la contemporaneidad.
... Y además se imponía a cualquier discurso opositor de ese poder, obligándolo a transitir, previamente, por el sueño de otro orden. (11)

Although the dream itself and its reflection in counter-positions are indeed viable targets in our misapprehension of the present and the erasure of the past, La ciudad letrada is also a victim of this dream, its argument unwittingly self-defeating on several fronts. Rama’s unqualified assimilation of Foucault inevitably replicates the same pitfalls as its source, which is to say that the critique of rationalism is founded on the notion that the sign, its capacity for dissimulation, becomes more sophisticated with time, less algebraic in terms of its relation to reality. The debate is thus skewed from the first. As with The Order of Things, rather than admitting to its complicity in modernity, its status as the latest in a long line of erasures or similar dreamers, La ciudad letrada perceives itself as a real alternative, outside the box, which again is typically modern, confirmation of Rama’s position within the paradigm he is attempting to subvert. There is no sense of continuity here, even between Rama and Fernández Retamar, since the former’s choice of theoretical paradigm precludes any and all analogy. Akin to Taylor’s suggested prevention of future juntas via more resistant reading, in order to oust the construct of revolution, to solve Latin America’s perpetual reassertion of a “tabula rasa” (2), Rama paradoxically invokes a theory which requires the ousting of any episteme. De la Campa’s summary of the book as an “... approach to the new discursive horizon” (Trigo 27) is indicative of its debt to the former dreams it supposedly replaces, its beginning of another, more extreme aphasia. It is arguable that in the light of such a post-Foucauldian vista discourse itself is threatened, that there is no discursive counter-position, but only the occasional smashing of glass. De la Campa’s most poignant lines venture that “Rama
shows a willingness to alter, if not endanger, his own previous modes of reading Latin America's modern culture" (Trigo 20), for it is true that this posthumous work annuls the epistemological contribution of earlier articles. Still writing the archae / parenthetical telos / future paradigm, of being devoid of thought, Rama's oscillation is between critique of superstructural order and a series of individualist rebellions, including indigenous orality, "Autodidactismo" (162) (an oxymoron), "Profesionalismo" (164), or often simply materialism, all now voiced as emancipatory within a more natural semiotics, supposedly closer to a one-to-one relationship between signifier and signified. Indeed, in the absence of its Foucauldian edge, the book enunciates an unrefined dichotomy between the urban and the rural, the foreign and the native, without ever intimating how such rurality is intelligible after (or even compatible with) allegiance to The Order of Things, how Fuentes' silences are to be heard, and never acknowledging that much of this counter-position is the product of an Enlightenment which Rama himself perceives as frivolous.

Even given our recomprehension of these non-disciplined, Bakhtinian forms, this autochthonous extraliterariness or "Autodidactismo" (162), which is to assume that there is some post-Foucauldian methodology, a way back into the episteme beyond rooftop stone-hurling, are such hopes so different to those of a Massera, and thus really a "new discursive horizon" (Trigo 20)? In his introduction to La ciudad letrada, Hugo Achugar concisely submits that Rama's "amor por la palabra . . . le sirvió para ejercer la escritura como un arma contra la arbitrariedad y la mistificación de los poderosos" (xiv), yet after a critique which is rather more totalitarian than the comment would suggest, this love is surely hypothetical, even similarly arbitrary, disappearing into an ever postponed future. The following
passage, part of a footnote in González Echevarría’s own neo-Foucauldian *Myth and Archive: A Theory of Latin American Narrative* [MA], is indicative in my context of Rama’s self-thwarting, his a *priori* preclusion from such a love:

La ciudad letrada is based on what appears to be a very scanty knowledge of the sixteenth century. For instance, Rama makes the shocking claim that the *traza* of colonial cities, which took the form of a chessboard, was influenced by Neoplatonism and the codification of abstract forms by mathematics in Descartes. But Descartes (1596-1650) did not publish his *Discours* until 1637, when most colonial Latin American cities had been founded for over a century. The model for Latin American cities was Santa Fe, the encampment from which the Catholic Kings laid siege to Granada. Rama’s conception of the *letrado* is too vague, because it is not based – among other things – on knowledge of Derecho Indiano, nor even familiarity with the questions of writing and reading discussed by Américo Castro . . . . (194)

Presumably, these gaps are not the deliberate product of some poststructuralist methodology, intentionally designed to reveal the frivolity of the signified, to expose themselves and the structure they reference as delusional. Of course, had Rama lived to revise the work, then perhaps some of the oversights would have received more attention, and González Echevarría prefaces his remarks with a similar caveat, but it is also possible that they are more generally symptomatic of an attitudinal deployment of modern theory. After all, the “lettered city,” Latin America’s past representation of itself, is predestined to be undermined here, hence a laissez-faire approach to the details of this past may be deemed justifiable, while Rama is left with only a visceral, certainly non-academic invocation of his alternatives. The knowledge sought by González Echevarría is obsolete in *La ciudad letrada*. The latter is trapped, once again, between a responsibility to its cherished silences and the impossibility of their mediation, in a suspended *tabula rasa* which is far from articulating the realities of Latin America’s textual or material inheritance, and yet, at a metacritical level, this same suspension marks it as an admittedly more
extreme successor to "A Revolutionary Writing" or *Calibán*, less a "new
discursive horizon" (Trigo 20) than another contribution to the
increasingly homologous way in which we are paradoxically taught to
read the continent’s culture.

After Rama, the acceleration begins, and the paradox itself, the
tenumbral, rhetorical space of modernity becomes an overtly sufficient,
even essential, critical position. It is most openly sketched in Djelal
Kadir’s *Questing Fictions: Latin America’s Family Romance* (1986). The
title’s present participle, a form which is almost always indicative of
an allegiance to theoretical contingencies, already hints at its
crepuscular intentions, reminiscent of Bakhtin’s definition of the
European novel as “ever questing, ever examining itself and subjecting
its established forms to review” (39). Europe’s experience of the
paradox is to be distanced, however, with Kadir suggesting that
“Although this trajectory may be taken for granted in other traditions,
in Latin America it emerges as self-conscious, problematic itinerary”
(4), that rather than simply exemplifying or lamenting the theory Latin
American fiction has deployed it with internal recognition,
problematising it again and again until the myotonic gesture itself,
the reiterated absence of mediation between primogenial origin and the
latter’s future restoration, has become evident as these fictions’
archi-trope. These fictions, furthermore, are in fact all fictions, for
whilst the study at least pays lip service to the possibility of other
approaches, claiming that it does not “aspire to an essential
definition of Latin American culture” (4), but instead merely offers “a
glimpse of a metaphor, of a sanctioning discourse” (6), the terms
“glimpse” and “sanctioning” are at odds with each other and are
resolved, from the first, in favour of the latter. The title’s obvious
intention is to establish filial ties, and the opening page of Kadir’s
preface, prior to any specification of the word “fictions” beyond its Latin American connection, includes the sentence “Indeed these fictions trace the imaginative outlines of an errant family history in endless errancy” (xxi), both emblems of (on the same page) “a culture’s timeless peregrination” (xxi), its “built-in mechanism” (xxi), and peregrinations in their own right. The first chapter begins under a sweeping quotation from Bloom, “‘romance is a journey toward a supreme trial, after which home is possible, or else homelessness will suffice’” (3), immediately followed by Kadir’s only qualification to this universal fetishisation of his field, from Columbus’ error to the present, as the culmination of this homelessness, or, in my admittedly slanted terms, as the most adept dramatisation of modern theory: “In a highly suggestive way the fictions of Latin America, particularly in the last two or three decades, seem to vindicate this observation” (3). A special place is reserved for the Boom and its aftermath, therefore, yet a more ubiquitous, homogeneous objective is ever presumed.

In addition to Bloom, Kadir’s own logic is formed by Paz, Rodriguez Monegal, Wilde’s “‘The youth of America is their oldest tradition. It has been going on now for three hundred years’” (7), an “Emersonian brazenness” (25) with regard to the past as opposed to “the enduring myth of Eliot which lingers long enough to cast a weighty shadow” (28), the now obligatory Order of Things, and a Borges / Derrida symbiosis. There are more than hints of the future Specters of Marx, for Kadir refers to the transplantation of an imaginary origin into projection as a moment which “must haunt as ghost of a beginning assumed to have been” (11), a “spectral analogue” (11) cast into the “uchronia in which all time attains to the timeless, to a ‘present absence’ or an ‘absent presence’” (11), as if pre-theorising the omnipresent threat, the accidental, unintelligible arrivant to the
démocratie à venir. Fernández Retamar is entirely absent, and Marxism
is described as "programmatic, progressive, totalizing" (33), whereas
Freud, of course, is implicit in the title, and Kadir means "to twist
those Freudian expectations in the direction of a particular metaphor"
(3). The metaphor itself, the quest, remains the same as in these
sources, but here both the origin and its projection, any and all
cherished silences, are rendered as invention, while the process of
such invention, the teleological span which ultimately proves the
artificiality of the specious beginning, becomes both desirable and
inhabitable, a vacillating non-space between archae and mediation which
simply as motion, as perpetually reinvented quest, is now the sine qua
non of Latin American textuality, never foreclosable within even Rama’s
"Autodidactismo" (162) or Rodríguez Monegal’s revolutionary word. It is
a version of Freud as bereft of a cure, liberated between primal father
and the latter’s reassertion in the peripatetic gesture of becoming, a
utopiographic discourse which never attains utopia but is lost in "the
romance of romanticism" (Kadir 32), a supposedly worthwhile venture
nonetheless. *Questing Fictions* is forever wary of arrival, of hitting
home, therefore, either in the past or the future, compelled to
reiterate its dynamic brink against the reader’s potential closing of
its Latin American elision:

Thus, lest a ‘premeditated’ utopia wrought by the European
imagination in order to escape the burden of its own history
become consecrated into a central Imago, a mystified and
portentous myth, the inventive impulse of that utopia, its
necessary fiction, is internalized as quest. In that internalized
phase it becomes manifested as perpetual operation, unending
event, ceaseless contingency, self-de-centering re-play, ever-
errant and deliberately erring. It emerges, one might say, as a
quest strategy deployed for its own sake and against its own
ends, a drive that oscillates between its pre-posterous beginning
and its waylaid destination. (10)

Arguably, this kinetic oscillation which constantly deprives itself of
content is difficult or even impossible to maintain over the course of
one hundred and fifty lengthy pages, and there are moments when a basic, liberal humanism, Romanticism without romance, the home of "what can be sensibly perceived (aestheta), sensually apprehended, bodily knowable" (29), is displayed. Amidst Terry Cochran's version of the paradox in his foreword to Questing Fictions, the precarious nature of Kadir's balancing act is neatly defined as "to acknowledge what would question - to be more specific, negate - one's [Western] knowledge is to increase one's knowledge at the expense of its negation" (x), an inherently contradictory position to write. It is similar to the dilemma confronted by Marx, Nietzsche and Freud, or Retamar, Rama, and Fuentes, indeed by any proponent of modernity, yet instead of relying upon at least some semblance of a counter-ideology here the latter has become the paradox itself. For the most part, however, as in the passage cited above, Kadir manages to duck the catharsis of syllogism, to maintain, invulnerably, the tension of his endless philosophical apostrophe via an ample word-hoard and a flair for salesmanship. The neo-Romantic challenge is portrayed with the usual shock tactics, almost as a dare, requiring the courage to embrace "The temerity, the adventure, of such 'making it anew each time'" (28), the "new fatigues and new terrors" (24), to leap into the "primogenial emptiness become abysmal void" (86). As a further indication of such extremity, González Echevarría's description of fundamentally the same paradox is read as the "hypostatizing of the process into 'entelechy'" (34), for therein it is resolved by its explicit assimilation into the Bakhtinian Carnival (92), a transhistorical analogy, in other words, which manifests a "tenacious nostalgia for ontology" (92). Resolution is far from Questing Fictions' agenda, for rather than questing after an out-clause, no matter how "bodily knowable" (29) that exit happens to be, Kadir's mantra is "I believe these 'paradoxes' are desirable" (34), a
position which necessarily ousts even his more radical predecessors and becomes, in and of itself, purely as rhetorical, periphrastic frame, the new revolution:

We can designate this process by the antithetical, the irreducibly mirrored, or reflective term, revolution. The term is a proper equivoque for an equivocal process that simultaneously entails rupture (‘transgression’) and repetition (revolvere). The creative performance, the 'negative,' or critical quest of the trope novel / utopia constitutes an originary act that self-consciously knows itself not to be wholly original but a repetition of a founding act which it violates, which it transgresses. The process I outline here is indicative of the family romance, the filial line linking Latin America’s fictions. (139)

On the other hand, without the ingeniously neoteric salesmanship, it is also possible to read this ever transient paradox as but the skeletal remains of the Western Imago sans pareil, namely modernity, which was barely able to enunciate itself even when its genealogies, whether those of a prelapsarian origin or a Bakhtinian Carnival, were considered to be genuine, or at least not entirely devoid of some future content. Kadir seems to have divested himself of such nostalgia, only to preserve its now meaningless paradigm which was designed and sold as the mechanism required to recapture those spurious, historically parenthetical yearnings. Yes, the genealogies are invented, both epistemologically worthless and often socially dangerous, but the choice here is between a junta that justifies itself as the re-embodiment of a captious Argentine nationalism and one that deploys the same revolutionary paradox for the sake of it, as if Argentine nationalism in transit, as paradigmatic aphasia, is somehow preferable to milder memory loss. Even Fernández Retamar’s whistle-stop tour through history is closer to filling the void. As Kadir himself has it, “we are remembering to forget” (52), and each time our mnemotechnia becomes too proficient, too static, it is overhauled in kind, “lest the cumulative weight of the past prove an overwhelming
burden" (15). After assuming that the missing link between all Latin American fiction has finally been uncovered, moreover, that each example manifests itself, intrinsically, as this meta-lie, there is still the question of an explicitly Nietzschean inversion of terms here, demanding that we perceive the successive hollowings and replacements of the rhetorical shell not simply as the negation of inherited thought, but as an addition, "a beginning anew without repetition" (23), that apparent "loss as affirmation" (xix) in Cochran's words, opening a critical space within which Latin America always articulates itself. This is to re-interpret Taylor's version of Massera as a desirable paradox, and one which is thankfully predestined to continue. Still more remarkably, Cochran begins his editorial defence of the text with the standard "if the specificity of Latin American literature is that it foregrounds the historical, the primary area of concern must be the way in which one inscribes oneself within that history" (ix), as if the rationale behind the impending ur-narrative is in fact to affirm the past as opposed to the latter's rhetorical indeterminacy, and he concludes with "history was invented in Europe to deprive non-Europeans of the possibility of a history that might take another course" (xix). Whilst these are viable, ethical concerns, another rendition of the oft-forlorn hope to voice silences, reading history itself as a First World (Cochran numbers his worlds) discursive construct seems counter-productive, regardless of which Questing Fictions' subsequent flaunting of modernity's aphanitic shell is not only devoid of "another course" (xix) but even precludes any such counter-history from finding its mediated ground, and reduces the possibility of its future appearance. Kadir may claim that his text is the product of "a critical language that the shape of the fictions makes inevitable" (xxii), and this may be true in the case of Terra Nostra (from which the above passage on
revolution is derived), but more endemically it would be preferable to read that statement vice-versa, as "a fiction that the shape of the critical language makes inevitable," the only inevitability now on sale.

At some point, surely, even if we hypothesize that any of these syntagmatic forays were indeed on the verge of exposing an original, universal, Latin American counter-truth, or that the syntagm itself, the pursuit of a "continually suspended goal" (Kadir 5), was in fact this objective all along, then at least the ceaseless application of the same theory would become recognised as a hegemonic position within the field, simply by dint of numbers, which is asking far less than a recognition of that theory as artificially preclusive or meta-critically self-satiating. Perhaps, if nothing else, we would note the efficacy of Kadir's expression and Questing Fictions' resemblance to Vattimo's The End of Modernity, to the latter's reduction of the discourse of the modern to exchange value, and thus tire of its reiteration. Instead, however, less than a year later, this "continually suspended goal" (Kadir 5) is reiterated once again, with similar vocabulary, in Lucille Kerr's Suspended Fictions: Reading Novels by Manuel Puig (1987). On the first page of this key text in Puig analysis, Kerr prefaces the upcoming studies with "In writing this book I have become more conscious of how our theoretical and critical vocabularies make it possible for us to organize and undertake our readings" (vii), but that at the same time "Puig's writing reminds us that those vocabularies always also limit what we can say" (vii), thereby implying that here at last, and in defiance of the title, we are about to expand our terminology beyond the paradigm of suspension, via the object of study, as opposed to via the now visceral re-
imposition (dare one say neo-Latin American tradition?) of modern theory.

The title, of course, is more telling, for these statements are designed to introduce Puig’s texts as the apex of modernity, as having absorbed the discourse of suspension and re-problematised it within themselves, thus remaining trapped within perpetual asymptosy. In Kerr’s own words, with references to a few of the usual suspects, “Puig’s writing seems to clarify and extend some of the theories that might be brought to bear on them. For instance, while the work of Bakhtin (his writings on parody and stylization), that of Foucault (his formulations about relations of power), and that of Barthes (his views on the figure of the author), among others, have helped in reading Puig, Puig’s writing has also helped in reading those theoretical texts” (viii). It is, furthermore, quite practicable to fetishise Puig as a microcosm of poststructuralist thought, both the product and refashioner of these ideas, akin to Kadir’s refashioning of González Echevarría above though with a little more jouissance, which is to say that within the narrowed focus of one author Suspended Fictions works in tandem with its primary material, and substantiates its own canonical status. To name but one passing example, El beso de la mujer araña stylises the hitherto lower genre of Hollywood B-movies, and yet simultaneously writes them within the less accessible form of a novel, amidst Marxian rants and Freudian footnotes, thereby seeming to corrupt its own stylisation. Kerr (pace Bakhtin) reads such devices as “carnivalesque inversions” (13), suggesting that “the strategies that undermine the possibility of hierarchically placing languages and forms and themes, also affect the models his texts would seem to want to raise to new positions” (10), which leaves us with the continuous discomfort of Kadir’s paradox, reiterated here with customary edginess
as "the impossibility of characterizing - that is, domesticating - his [Puig's] writing in terms of one position or the other" (15).

The rationale, at a specifically political level, for this rhetorical strategy, and in fact it is less a heterodoxy of strategies than one paradox playing itself out in various guises, is now the strategy itself, without further qualification, so that it is sufficient, with apotropaic trust, to register the various instances of the strategy's existence and label them as "dazzling, even subversive" (9), lending Puig his "democratic, even revolutionary, quality" (9), as a conclusion, without ever questioning the possible benefits of this subversion or revolution, its mediation, or its difference from Latin America's superstructural orders which it replaces. Initially, these would all be legitimate questions to ask of Foucault (who receives several brief footnotes but is only named once, in the passage cited above, within the body of the text) regarding his own contextualisations of the "relations of power" (Kerr viii), and yet now, in the absence of any debate, his strategy is not only to be assumed as inherently advisable, but also to be inherently advisable within Latin America's already paradoxical political arena. Swanson's rhetorical question with respect to the conjunction of the continent's politics and fiction ("Undoubtedly true. But just where is it that they are going together?" (14)) echoes through Suspended Fictions, for even in the single case of Puig, who is no doubt engaging Kerr's strategies with some frivolity, it is not immediately obvious why or how these strategies dictate political subversion, or indeed why this subversion is either different or desirable from the theoretical off. The following comments by the Brazilian academic Roberto Schwarz, who tends to be described, simplistically, as a post-Marxian "enlightened materialist," are also relevant here. They first appeared in their
original Portuguese in the same year as *Questing Fictions*, and

explicitly refer to the application of Foucauldian / Derridean thought:

> Segundo os filósofos em questão, trata-se de condicionamentos (mas são de mesma ordem?) preconceituosos, que não descrevem a vida do espírito em seu movimento real, antes refletindo a orientação inerente às ciências humanas tradicionais. Seria mais exato e neutro imaginar uma sequência infinita de transformações, sem começo nem fim, sem primeiro ou segundo, pior o melhor. Salta à vista o alívio proporcionado ao amor-próprio e também à inquietação do mundo subdesenvolvido, tributário, como diz o nome, dos países centrais. De atrasados passaríamos a adiantados, de desvio a paradigma, de inferiores a superiores (aquela mesma superioridade, aliás, que este análise visa suprimir) . . . (35)

Despite our intentions, therefore, without at least some form of epistemological sifting of the “condicionamentos,” of the preexistent, supposedly stable orders, any number of which always survive the revolutionary process regardless, their surfeit ever defying the most ardent exhortations “to remember to forget” (Kadir 57), postmodern theory itself is not hypostatic but another disguise, veiling actual “inquietação.” Even the question “mas são de mesma ordem?” (35) is surplus to requirements, a naïve remark, and to some extent unanswerable via the paradigm of such French philosophy made essence of Latin America, for this ideological past is precisely the void demanded by parenthetical histories. To press the point further, it is possible that if an approach were sanctioned to reendow the former “condicionamentos” of Latin American politics with their meaning-making apparatuses, the latter would often prove little different and indeed ancestral to newfangled imports which erase more indiscriminately. Schwarz’s only request is for a recontextualisation of Brazil’s obvious “sentimento aflitivo” (46) as “o resultado duradouro da criação do Estado nacional sobre base de trabalho escravo, a qual por sua vez, com perdão da brevidade, decorria da Revolução Industrial inglesa e da conseqüente crise do antigo sistema colonial, quer dizer, decorria da história contemporânea” (45). We are at liberty, of course, to dissent
from this synopsis, to call it reductive in its own right or to venture that the industrial revolution was but one other display of the same rhetorical paradigm, that the likes of Foucault have worked within its ramifications, but to engage Schwarz at this level, even in contention, is already to have re-opened a kind of scholarship that Latin Americanism prohibits. At times, Kerr forgets the progressively devaluing nature of her ur-narrative, sealing her introduction with "The parodic inversions created by Puig’s writing could be said to reevaluate historically devalued (i.e. potentially repressed) forms" (14), a statement which is much closer to Fuentes’ notional recapturing of silences, a mark of entelechy rather than Kadir’s or indeed her own version of perpetual metalepsis. There are hints, therefore, more probably stemming from the difficulty of managing the paradox as discourse for any prolonged period than a desire for recontextualisation, where Schwarz would find at least some solace, some ground for debate.

The inclusion of Suspended Fictions here, however, a predominantly secondary, rather than metacritical text, is driven less by any particular longing to re-theorise Puig’s subversion as apocryphal, either in and of itself or against its Argentine context, than by the fact that his tactics are offered as the quintessence of Spanish American letters and thus the yardstick by which all others are to be judged. From the opening page, the only field worthy of consideration is emphatically 1961 and after, with Kerr’s "others" (viii), in addition to the mention of Bakhtin, Foucault and Barthes above, being Paz’s “Literatura de fundación” and Rodríguez Monegal’s “A Revolutionary Writing,” both explicitly paraphrased. The Spanish American boom or new novel in general is now "part of, but also leads the way within, the recent developments of significance in postmodern
fiction" (5), ousting the *nouveau roman*, and specifically Robbe-Grillet, from pride of place, all via the devices of self-consciousness, parody and stylisation, devices which may have existed prior to Borges’ receipt of the Formentor / International Publishers’ Prize but were practised with less expertise. In fairness, Kerr at least nominally lists her purview as a “little over forty years” (3), which allows for the irritation that Borges was active before receiving the prize, but at the same time means that even work such as Mariano Azuela’s *Los de abajo* (1916), occasionally described as a revolutionary novel and always as a novel of revolution, is now unintelligible, diminished post-*Suspended Fictions* which renders it as “apparently ‘old,’ ‘primitive’” (3). This attitude seems to be the natural conclusion of decades of Latin Americanism, an accurate, almost inevitable, precis of the criticism, but if Puig really is more revolutionary than *Los de abajo* (and that statement assumes a comfort with Kerr’s--and Robbe-Grillet’s--terms of reevaluation which are in themselves vastly more problematic than her text ever implies), there remain questions over the content of the revolution, whether the repeated husk of Kadir’s paradigm is necessarily the intrinsic desire and therefore the benchmark of all Spanish American novels, the latter thus becoming but lesser examples of *El beso de la mujer araña*, whether this process is indeed denotive of heterogeneity or rather a univocal critical obsession. In other words, whereas Foucault’s original effectiveness stems from an academic quest to re-historicise the episteme, however selective, contentious, and ultimately irrelevant such recontextualisation may be, it is now sufficient, as a Latin Americanist, to conclude that the paroding nature of all post-1961 texts “creates many of their radical possibilities, much of their political thrust” (7), without ever mediating either such radicalism,
the political order against which it reacts, or even the oft-touted Foucault.

In case my general extrapolations still seem too sweeping as the product of a more ostensibly secondary text on Puig alone, I should perhaps reiterate that the argument does not stand or fall on a single example but on quantity or flux, that for every *Suspended Fictions* there are many similar though less renowned texts which are merely implied here, and that a laconic introduction to the theoretical field may be less indicative of Kerr's later focus on a single author than a mark of how efficiently Latin Americanism's supposed subversion had already been ingested and institutionalised as departmental doxa. In a progression, furthermore, which corroborates Eagleton's concern regarding the rate and extent of postmodernity's *modus operandi*, Kerr would reassert her affinity for present participles in *Reclaiming the Author: Figures and Fictions from Spanish America* (1992), a text which hangs Kadir's (acknowledged, incidentally, for "his careful scrutiny of the entire manuscript as well as his lucid comments on critical and theoretical points" (xiv)) paradox on a more generic, obviously ubiquitous type. The plot, in short, born of the earlier text's "general ideas about the author in contemporary Spanish American fiction" (xiii), is that despite recent theoretical attempts to diminish the authority of the actual, biographical author, rendering the latter as a discursive construct, Spanish Americans, again "from the 1960s" (xiii), have managed to internalise that suspicion and thus outdo the theory itself, reaffirming the presence of the author or rather allowing the figure's biographical specter to throw its textual counterpart into contingency. The final sentence of "Borges y yo," "No sé cuál de los dos escribe esta página" (cited in Kerr, 2), is the sample here, for it supplants all the earlier, binary vying for
position between the title’s two characters, an authorial and a
biographical Borges, with the possibility of a third figure (“No sé”),
a reclamation, while simultaneously hedging that the subject of “No sé”
is in fact one of the original two, thereby leaving only a paradox of
authority, “a figure at a crossroads” (169). The ur-criterion,
therefore, is not whether Spanish American fiction simply represents
postmodern theory, but the degree to which it has become the theory,
part of a world literature written by but a handful of master authors.

Kerr’s first sentence, “made some years ago by a colleague in
French” (vii), reads “‘The Spanish Americans are actually doing what
the French are only talking about’” (vii), which means that the debate
is framed via the prematurely old favourites, Barthes, Foucault,
deconstruction (along with Kadir, Peggy Kamuf, who would publish an
English translation of Specters of Marx a couple of years later, is
credited with having read a chapter), and Robbe-Grillet, all now
introduced by phrases such as “As we recall, Foucault’s review ...”
(7), or “We remember that Barthes ...” (5), as if these were tales of
yore, the entirely accepted propaedeutics of Latin Americanism. Of
course, despite the presumption of an oddly stable theoretical
background, one which by no means every contemporary European author
would endorse, particularly with this mass uniformity, some future
moment of peripeteia, the modern’s sense of epiphanic becoming, must
also be oxymoronically promised. Kerr suggests that “Spanish American
fiction may be a good deal smarter (is, perhaps, even better ‘theory’)
than many of the literary concepts and critical theories advanced
around it” (21), that the cue may be Robbe-Grillet’s but Spanish
American novelists, “in their own inimitably adventurous fashion” (25),
would seem in one way or another to exemplify, if not also radicalize,
that trend within their own terrain” (25). Again, this is an attempt at
romance without Romanticism, the unending adventure which is no longer reacting against anything but its own rhetorical paradox, for Kerr's paraenesis is reserved not for the Latin American past but for earlier manifestations of French theory, as if the promise of some vague radicalism is a prefabricated talisman to stay the increasingly obvious closure of her field. There is already less room to manoeuvre here than often assumed, for the reason why Reclaiming the Author is a more palatable text, academically, than Questing Fictions or Massera's propaganda, why it would provoke less aversion than these former masters of its principles of "intelligibility," is that Kerr maintains an ethical concern for alternative meaning, for entelechy, which in fact is denied by her oscillatory paradigm but which is suggested regardless. The introductory dilemma is rendered as "whether the question of a text's meaning, or design, is a question that can (or cannot) be answered through reference to the empirical or biographical author" (12), whereas the question of meaning itself is at best contingent and at worst extraneous to the study's more endemic, self-thwarting criterion. Similarly, the conclusion is full of suggestion, openings for future, derivative work on "whether the empirical author's role or status in Spanish America differs (or not) from that of authors in Western culture more generally" (164) and the possible recapture of previously marginalised figures, "disparate authorial voices and faces" (165), yet whilst these are intimations of other approaches they remain other approaches. The only critical space available to either Western culture or Latin America's alterity, following Reclaiming the Author's primary argument, is the same paradigmatic modernity, one which devalues both the past and the latter's mediation to the extent that such potentially different voices have nothing to say and no way of saying it, save via homologously "doing what the French are only
talking about" (vii). There is the appearance of space, of renewed content, however, for in even nominally cherishing former silences Kerr underestimates the reach of her theoretical frame, prosecuting it less efficiently than Massera, a methadone to his heroine, which may mean that it is easier to institutionalise, that fewer people will leave the room on the first day of class when presented with Reclaiming the Author than with dictatorial propaganda, but as readings of culture they are methodologically analogous nevertheless.

However contradictory Kerr's almost gratuitously accepted radicalism may seem, in the "de-traditionalising tradition" of Latin Americanism it is historically justifiable. Between Suspended Fictions and Reclaiming the Author yet another of the latter's early readers, Carlos Alonso, published The Spanish American Novel: Modernity and Autochthony (1990), premised upon a recontextualisation of the apparently outmoded, pre-Borgesian, novela de la tierra in order to defy, in his own words, "a conception of literary history that perceives progress in literary developments, thereby sanctioning the relegation of certain texts to oblivion" (166). Both Fuentes' La nueva novela hispanoamericana and Rodríguez Monegal's "revolution" are admonished, precisely for their expulsion of the earlier, telluric novel, in lieu of which Alonso devises his own hermeneutics, submitting that "... calls for an autochthonous culture usually alternate between nostalgia for a relinquished state of cultural plenitude that is associated with an unspecified moment in the past, and the affirmation of the present as a moment that announces proleptically the future cultural redemption" (11). The misnomer here is "cultural," for as Alonso knows, the prelapsarian origin, which elsewhere he describes as a "primordial situation" (10) or "an immutable, ahistorical cultural essence that is identified with a zero-degree of cultural time" (11),
is fraudulent, like Massera's national essence, from the beginning, unintelligible, even if it existed, via the logography with which we would express it, and indeed that same logography simply confirms its absence. Instead, in terms which are now only too familiar, even bordering on plagiarism, the alternation itself, the "incongruous myth of cultural definition, in which interpretive desire and its thwarted teleology coexist" (36), now characterised as a "genetic paradigm" (18) or "never-ending search" (163) as opposed to Kadir's "family romance" or "questing fiction," is returned to its welcoming field from one more angle. Rather than jeopardising Fuentes and Rodríguez Monegal's ideal, their boom-inspired modernity, Alonso merely extends the same "deconstructive gesture" (164) into the literary past, since "one only has to bear in mind the original reception of the novela de la tierra as a revolutionary beginning to understand the repetitiveness of this gesture" (166), and "Only then will these works, which otherwise seem so inescapably tied to their historico-literary moment, be reinscribed in the contemporary critical scene" (165). The project, therefore, presented as an ethical recovery, is still that of a Romantic materialism, twinned with Kadir's perpetuity (at one point explicitly), of a now extended aporia which continually overstates itself while manifesting its overstatement. Martí's "Nuestra América," as in Calibán, is credibly included as a "paradigmatic case" (13), and that paradigm is further exemplified by the regional novel which is, after all, still a recent genre, no doubt meriting its rescue from a precipitous oblivion and arguably its newfound status within Alonso's repeated, postmodern aphasia.

Of more concern, however, is the ultimate extent of that aphasia, beyond our possible acceptance of its existence in Ricardo Güiraldes' Don Segundo Sombra or Rómulo Gallegos' Doña Bárbara, and the reason why
this particular text finds its way onto more general reading lists as the bread and butter of Latin Americanism. Having recognised modernity’s chiastic schema as both a self-annulling crisis and "a willful forgetfulness of history" (17), that even when "in the process of diagnosing the present predicament history is indeed reconstructed and examined, it is only in order to exorcise it more thoroughly" (11), all of which is a viable summary of the central impetus in Western philosophy from at least Bacon, Alonso stakes his new, Latin American claim. Due to the substantive success of both the French and the American Revolutions, to the material benefits of their scientific enlightenment, in a Western context the paradigm has now been vented and spent, the pursuit of autochthony is less fervent, whereas “Latin America’s obsession with the determination of its cultural specificity is a phenomenon related to its peculiar and paradoxical experience of modernity” (18). In other words, and the false dichotomy is already indicated in the study’s subtitle, having described the paradox as endemic to modernity, regardless of location, as always already an actual and rhetorical impossibility, it becomes solely, or at the very least most naturally, Latin American. As Alonso would have it, “this rhetorical predicament has found its most persistent expression in the assertion of Latin America’s irrepressible and irreducible cultural difference” (26), a “naturalization of a state of crisis” (18), which means that although the details of the approach may differ, we are confronted, once again, in the absence of Schwarz’s misgivings regarding the application of the paradigm, with both Kadir and Kerr’s fetishisation of the theory as an intrinsically antipodal pièce de résistance. Alonso not only ventures that the deployment of the paradox is the Latin American writer’s occasional defence mechanism, “given the incommensurability of Latin America’s circumstances and the
requirements of the modern" (163) (such "incommensurability" is, of course, ever the paradoxical case in the European context, since some form of excess memory will always remain, and is therefore entirely "commensurate" with the modern), but also that this deployment is "to write as a Latin American" (17). Indeed, still more stridently, rather than positing the "primordial situation" (10) as a hypothetical glimpse of autochthony, now the unremitting, oscillatory supersession has become both a teleology and an archæ in itself, "a second-order postulation of the autochthonous" (15), and is defined in suitably fundamental terms: "... the essence of Latin American cultural production is the ever-renewed affirmation of having lost or abandoned such an essence" (15). From here, it is but a short step to Alonso's fiat, to becoming the Latin Americanist equivalent of Bakhtin (despite the fact that not all European novels, even some of those explicitly endorsed by Bakhtin, fit within his own definition). Far from embracing difference, it is now possible, homogeneous predeterminacy in hand, to decide not only which texts are more essentially Latin American than others, more self-thwartingly subversive, but whether, still by dint of the same, single criterion, they are Latin American at all. This agenda is first voiced with at least some restraint, "I believe it would not be difficult to sustain the proposition that in essence all of Latin America's cultural production since Independence can be understood as having been generated from within a discursive situation such as the one just examined" (13), but it becomes, by the final pages, "the necessity of a thorough re-reading and revalorization of the entire novelistcanonbeforetheBoom" (165), a dictum which leaves no room for anyone working within (rather than at the beginning and the end of) the parentheses of history. Either we accept this version of postmodernity as the continental essence, which is to sanction merely
another kind of oblivion, or we are operating under an illusion. As an alarming indication of Alonso’s sanguinity regarding his paradigm, furthermore, which is also indicative of a more pervasive sanguinity within the field, on the penultimate page of his theoretical introduction he suggests that the aphanistic movement is “capable nonetheless of endowing the affairs of the collectivity with the requisite meaning and purpose” (36), that “Latin American intellectuals have paradoxically found an effective narrative of cultural identity” (36), statements which would seem to conflate Taylor’s “postmodern” solution to Argentina’s political reiterations with the reiterations themselves, thus promoting a Massera to the ranks of the intelligentsia, a meaningful, requisite, good.

There is no need, furthermore, to take this imputation of endemism on trust, for Alonso’s subsequent The Burden of Modernity: The Rhetoric of Cultural Discourse in Spanish America (1998) re-presents the paradigm beyond the confines of the regional novel, deferent to the earlier text’s theoretical preview of “the foundation for an intrinsically Spanish American cultural enterprise that could never be challenged or foreclosed” (v) but responding, in the supposed absence of any other comparable study in the interim, to its broader desideratum, “a complimentary effort that would put in evidence the existence of this contradictory movement in the larger realm of Spanish American cultural discourse” (v). To be sure, the range is now from the beginning of the nineteenth century to the present, though such diachronic details are of little relevance, for it is obvious as of the first paragraph, in which both of the above remarks appear, that the same superannuating fundamentalism, rewritten as the continent’s bedrock, sui generis modernity, will prove conclusively manifest. Again, despite Alonso’s occasional attempts at discretion, downplaying
his apparent attribution of "some sort of absolute or primordial rhetorical status" (viii) to the paradigm, the ontological spectrum, now autochthonous, is still defined as a "primordial tension around which each work articulates itself" (28), vacillating between "the formulation of a national myth of origins" and "the anticipation of a final and future epiphany" (18) when the formulation will be unburdened, two rhetorically internecine moments hindered by the mediating historical lacuna. This hesitancy, however, is not to be perceived as some antithetical, reactive strategy, "as a symptom of deficiency, as a sign of modernity manqué" (48), but rather as the apex of modern discourse, "more salient in the Spanish American text" (5) since "The uniqueness and particularity of the Spanish American postcolonial / neocolonial cultural situation is founded on this radically ambivalent movement toward and away from modernity" (26).

Even if the existence of this perpetual equivoke is considered to be a given, the cornerstone of each and every cultural expression for nigh on two centuries, Alonso remains convinced that the gesture towards some preternatural essence, however counterfeit, which is indispensable to the oscillation, absolves Spanish America from a less contingent (and therefore less desirable) Western episteme. Once more, an aesthetic Western modernity is written in conjunction with its material counterpart, as "a product of science and technological progress" (29), as though it were capable of inhabiting the ever-deferred future of its discourse, whereas Spanish America's theoretical aegis lies in its ambivalence towards such postponement. In the simultaneous toing and froing, it is the instinct to fro from this extraneous enlightenment "that is the expression of a discursive will to power" (26) here, as if the quest after some purer fountainhead and hence the paradoxical aporia were entirely lacking outside Spanish America, despite the fact
that both are aphoristically evident in the European Nietzsche, from whom even Alonso’s terminology is implicitly lifted. It is analogous to suggesting, superficially, that because Condillac was a mathematician and officially backed by the royal seal of approval his scientific Enlightenment differs, not merely in degree but in kind, to the Romanticism of a Rousseau, who is attitudinally surrounded by a natural, counter-cultural aura. In Alonso’s context this feigned division is an attempt to carve out a critical space from which Spanish America may define itself on its own terms, or at least become the paragon of the aesthetic variable of Western modernity, but the reciprocal equivocality, the postulated autochthonous, antipodal turn, is symptomatic of the hermeneutics of any version of modernity, which is to say that Alonso is reinscribing the same reductive, theoretical fetish, though claiming it as the concurrently non-modern, \textit{sine qua non} of Spanish American letters.

To name but one specific example, the explicitly Foucault-inspired \textit{La ciudad letrada}, which Alonso introduces as “Rama’s most influential book” (38), serves as prolegomena to the study, for although it is justifiably regarded as too indiscriminate in its “demonization of writing” (42), leaving “no possibility of an effective ideological opposition to the universe of the letrado” (44), Alonso reads its dichotomy, the opposition of “the vast, somewhat surreptitious ideological foundation to the material cultural activity of the continent” (39), back into his own schema of oscillation. Rather than discarding \textit{La ciudad letrada}, the dichotomy itself, which necessarily maintains the impossibility of ideological escape, becomes problematised, internally, by every instance of textuality within the scope of \textit{The Burden of Modernity’s} literary history, for in the latter “the difficulty was always, from the beginning, a constitutive part of
cultural discourse in Spanish America" (46), so that each text becomes the re-enactment of Rama's project, and, by my implication, a validation of Foucault2.

Both Alonso's paradigm and his vocabulary, moreover, from the opening description of the paradox as "a thwarted historical development" (3) to the final "endless cultural project of searching for an identity" (175), had already been reproduced close to home, not only by a Questing Fictions or a Reclaiming the Author, both of which are included in the bibliography, but also by González Echevarría's aforementioned Myth and Archive: A Theory of Latin American Narrative (1990), the second, paperback edition of which was published in the same year as The Burden of Modernity, and remains readily available far beyond the confines of Latin Americanism's archival, "PQ" call numbers. Amidst González Echevarría's original acknowledgments, the most overt accreditation reads "Carlos J. Alonso lent me his manuscript on the novela de la tierra and discussed with me many of the ideas in the book" (xx). Predictably, if not also superfluously, the theory in question is a paradoxical aporia, trapped between myth, and "Myth represents the origin" (21), "the primordial stuff in the beginning, the first principle" (31), and the successive, authoritative discourses of post-Conquest Latin America, from the law, to natural science, to anthropology, all of which have attempted to access the mythic principle while simultaneously manifesting themselves as superstructural meta-knowledges, their power deriving from socially constructed privilege as opposed to foundational truth. The novel, and here this is categorically the Bakhtinian novel, a lineage of lawlessness traced back to Lazarillo de Tormes and Cervantes, mimics these discourses of authority, shielding itself under their jurisdiction, while contemporaneously undermining their respective
epistemes and thus debunking the myth of the “Archive.” Of course, Lazarillo de Tormes and Cervantes’ work are products of the European imagination, as for that matter is Bakhtin, a hiccup González Echevarría smothers via their contumacious dependence upon literary conventions and the repeated assignment of this theory of paradoxical disillusion to “all major Latin American novelists” (28), as though the outlaws of Europe became the antipodal mainstream, a former dalliance which is perfected or at least “particularly prevalent in Latin America” (38).

It may be superficially arguable, in terms of conceptualisation, that Fernández Retamar is more stereotypically revolutionary, that Alonso is initially concerned with the regional novel, or that Kerr’s primary focus is the rhetorical / biographical figure of the author, whereas Myth and Archive is at pains to stake out the novel’s deliberately self-thwarted, pseudo-deference to the non-novelesque, and is therefore some new contribution, the harrowing of the Latin Americanist field. González Echevarría’s own terms, however, are more indicative of resemblance. In this “economy of gain and loss” (2) (the gaining of discursive authority and the simultaneous loss of its meaning), “the previous writings of history are undone as the new one is attempted” (15), with the texts themselves supersessively recognising that the “clearing in the current jungle of discourses of power” (42), “the quest for that degree zero of time and history on which to inscribe a rewriting of Latin American history has not been found” (17). In the act of recognition, in their failure, “this defeat that turns into a victory” (4), these same “masterstories” (42) contribute to the “process toward liberation” (42), “a struggle to free the imagination of all mediation” (42). The omnipresent target is false consciousness, thought as prosthesis, and in addition to Bakhtin,
enlisted to corroborate the artificial constraints of any specifically
literary system, Foucault fills in the societal blanks. Although Rama's
La ciudad letrada is mentioned only once, in the footnote quoted above,
and González Echevarría is respectfully critical of the text's lax
scholarship, this is by no means a critique of methodology. Rama is
therefore ousted a little hastily, in the revolutionary terms of Latin
Americanism, so that Myth and Archive may assume his shifting ground,
for this later text simply re-problematises the Rama / Foucault
suspicion of knowledge / power within the narratives themselves, as if
the novels were micro-exempla of Discipline and Punish's thesis. As
González Echevarría himself explicitly concedes, his conceptual frame
is formulated "with no small measure of help from the theories of
Michel Foucault" (xvi), for whom "mediation is the very process of
constraining, denying, limiting, invented by humanity itself" (9). For
the most part, however, Foucault is implicit in the study's lexicon,
seamlessly permeating the Latin American novel without inverted commas,
as if there were some natural collusion between the two, in
catchphrases such as "The equation between power and knowledge" (102),
in a description of the Spanish letrados' legalese as having
"constructed a body of texts to maim, constrain, or annihilate the body
of the disobedient subject" (xi), or in the novel's "status as escapee
. . . . , the Counter-Archive for the ephemeral and the wayward" (34). He
resurfaces in the final paragraphs in one of the typically paradoxical
turns of phrase which mark González Echevarría's own discourse: "Hence
the Archive is not a Bakhtinian carnival but, if it is, it takes place
within the confines of Foucault's prison" (186). The possibility that
the Foucauldian opposition to legal and scientific discourse, even in
its European context, may be neo-Romantic, indeed neo-positivist, one
potential endgame of the earlier suspicions of modernity rather than
some alternative thereto, and is thus something of a fallacy in its own terms, is never even considered. Instead, Foucault represents González Echevarría’s a priori, hypostatic schema, not only viable as a European anti-knowledge but now the bedrock assumption of “all major Latin American novelists” (28), a theoretical premise to be accepted, without further ado, by his readers.

Despite the claim that the counter-modern point to which Foucault leads us, the “clearing in the jungle,” is “a truth that lies behind the discourse of the ideology” (18), whether this truth is indeed a “victory” (4) or merely a negation (in either Foucault or Myth and Archive) remains debatable. I am deliberately withholding González Echevarría’s commentary on primary texts to some extent, for from a purely metacritical perspective, it seems that the clearing is nothing more than a mirage, one which left Foucault as a sporadic / bourgeois lobber of stones. The critique is targeted at the hegemonic intelligibility of the obedient, while the latent disobedience on offer, post-Myth and Archive, seems reductive at best. In the original Preface, the influence of a similarly Foucault-inspired Edward Said is also acknowledged, and again, in the passages that are most reminiscent of the Said gestalt, when nineteenth-century science, for example, misappropriates “an Other that it depicts, classifies and describes as it creates a discourse of power predicated on the adequation of scientific discourse and an object that it has molded for itself” (113), there is no proposal of alternate, autochthonous discourse, but merely negation as autochthony, which is to say that González Echevarría replicates the same absence as his theoretical source. In this particular case, the problem begins with Foucault’s historical ruptures, via which the nineteenth century is rendered as in thrall to a sophisticated, scientific logos which is inventing rather than
referencing its reality and therefore ripe for suspicion, whereas it is possible to interpret the same discourse as already systematically reduced, that is as an epistemological reduction which apparently the Latin American novel now reduces still further. Schwarz's parenthetical question regarding "condicionamentos (mas são de mesma ordem?)" (35), is never prompted, for here these processes are considered to be equally constructed and therefore spurious from the beginning, while at the same time Paz or Fuentes' concerns over counter-silences never materialise. There is only the paradoxical process of rhyphographical clearing, or a clearing towards rhyphography, the as yet unknown foundation of an ever-imminent, non-cultural ataraxia.

This same schema predetermines a hubristic sifting of the past, akin to Fernández Retamar's bullet points of history, though here that history is patently literary. González Echevarría is expressly flouting "conventional literary histories" (38), and this supposed lack of convention begins with Lazarillo de Tormes and Cervantes as outsiders, exceeding the limits of canonical definition via their subversion of legal discourse, despite the fact that both of these examples are easily intelligible within the last four centuries of European canon formation, perhaps even its cornerstones, and appear on curricula in multiple disciplines. For Myth and Archive's purposes, however, it is not simply that these texts are re-invested with their original outlaw status, but that this status has failed to conform to the expectations of a superstructural European modernity between then and now. As González Echevarría would have it, furthermore, "The evolution of narrative prose prior to 1554, when Lazarillo is published, is of interest, but of minor relevance" (39), a statement which is certainly in line with his writing of the past, but which again wants contextualisation, for without the earlier conformity of collective
memory both Lazarillo and Cervantes are bereft of a context which would throw their criminality into relief. In short, in order to conform with the masterstory of Latin American narrative, the quest is blinkered in favour of rupture, of shock, which means that any text failing to meet the criterion of deviancy "will be forgotten, and this is what is important, by the new novels that will look always outside of literature to implement a radical change" (38). The European literary categories—naturalism, realism etc.—are therefore censured, and Romanticism in particular, which in the Latin American context means that the likes of José Mármol and Jorge Isaacs, perceived as blindly imitative, are nullified, time and again, by González Echevarría’s new canon: "Sarmiento and Euclides da Cunha are more important in that history than José Mármol or Jorge Isaacs. Only by applying mechanically a model of literary history, drawn from European sources, can Amalia and María play a significant role in the history of Latin American narrative" (xvii). Neither Amalia nor María, of course, although first published in 1855 and 1867 respectively, has been forgotten, which is surely more problematic for González Echevarría than is ever conceded, indicative of an inherent reduction of the past. As Doris Sommer’s Foundational Fictions: The National Romances of Latin America (one of very few dissident studies to Latin Americanism’s hegemony) would contend, less than a year after Myth and Archive, both texts are more complex than previous sloganeering would imply, each deviating from the European version of Romanticism via a law-abiding exceptionality. Instead, Sarmiento’s Facundo is privileged as representative of Latin America’s ur-theory, a generically amorphous text, forever exceeding its discursive bonds, with the life of its eponymous subject, the caudillo Facundo Quiroga, “set in the center of the book like an odd insect trapped in a glass paperweight” (115). As per Myth and
Archive, Sarmiento, buoyant on European intelligibility, compiled his version of the pampas vicariously, from the narratives of scientific travellers, narratives which authorise Facundo in the eyes of "civilisation," the "paperweight" (115), yet are simultaneously undermined as "European impedimenta" (112) when confronted with the "insect" (115), the archae, and consequently the text "falls in and out of compliance with legibility" (100), substantiating its relevance to Myth and Archive's oscillatory, theoretical prerequisite. Working in tandem with lengthy citations from Sarmiento, Gonzalez Echevarría establishes Quiroga as "an origin in the present" (117), the example par excellence of the gaucho's haphazard existence, the creation of accident, "an event independent of the past which becomes a unique form of present violently broken off from history" (116), whose "penchant for brutality is an expression of his freedom" (116), "his flight from the norm, his originality" (116), an irrepressibility that is evident in Facundo in defiance of the latter's supposedly scientific control. Referring to an episode when Quiroga is chased by a tiger which he kills, thereby garnering further notoriety as the "'tigre de los Llanos'" (120; Sarmiento 130), Gonzalez Echevarría appropriately presumes that the animal is not a tiger but a jaguar, "'tiger' being one of the approximations used by Europeans to name American natural phenomena that did not quite conform to their categories" (122). Quiroga assumes this exotic misnomer, then flaunts it back within Sarmiento's own discourse, as a reminder of Latin America's process of teratological mutation:

The tiger's roar establishes a communication with the gaucho's flesh that bypasses language. . . . Tiger and gaucho understand each other subliminally, that which is being communicated being itself sublime: terror and desire. . . . Meaning is not conveyed by the established code, but by a given feeling . . . The gaucho steals from the animal his already mistaken name. By killing the
tiger, the gaucho names himself. Naming is a violent activity, a break with the norm, with the law. (123)

It is not as though a counter-position would be the Spanish word "jaguar," or the Spanish transliteration of the Tipo-Guarani, "jaguara," or even the original Tipo-Guarani, for these are still subject to codification, and more significantly, the distance between Quiroga as origin and his inscription within Sarmiento's text would be diminished, a distance that constitutes González Echevarría's theory. Whilst the above is a feasible reading of Facundo, and indeed representative of Myth and Archive's broader quest, it is also a textbook example of modernity in the most European sense. Having shunned Amalia and María for their aura of Romanticism, despite their protestations to the contrary, González Echevarría's masterstory, in its paradox between the archæ and the latter's future, intuited liberation, in Quiroga's sublime brutality, is simply regurgitating Romanticism while masquerading as its opposite. As with Alonso, Myth and Archive assumes that it has revealed the latent counter-discourse of Latin America, never suspecting, in its unfettered transplantation of Foucault, that such discourse is not only the hegemonic critical position of Latin Americanism, but also of modernity more generally, and that it may be brushing aside real exceptions, Amalia and María among them, as obstacles in its path.

Although I have reinscribed this peripateticism as a linear corpus, there are few attempts at filial analogy from within its own pages, for these would be tantamount to a confession to plagiarism, and indeed are restricted by the cyclical paradigm itself. It was still possible for Fernando Aínsa to publish "The Antinomies of Latin American Discourses of Identity and Their Fictional Representation" in 1994, a skeletal, apparently inaugural version of the same thought, as
it would be possible today. Aínsa’s chapter, but one of many of its ilk, is included here for the flagrancy of his syntagmata, his lack of recognition of his discourse’s status as palimpsest, for his only source is a brief passage in Fuentes’ La nueva novela hispanoamericana, thus eliminating a quarter of a century of scholarship which had already re-theorised these “antinomies” and the paradox of their mediation. Fuentes’ own binary opposition is now paraphrased as ‘provincial content and anachronistic form’ (23) for some, and the imitation of avant-garde styles and themes for others” (15), a polarity which Fuentes himself, if we were to read on a little, had immediately conflated into “un tenso matrimonio entre la nostalgia y la esperanza” (23) and a Borgesian modernity that depended on such tension. In Aínsa, Latin America is once more “A world without nuances or intermediate terms” (1), “above all marked by antinomies structured around two pairs of opposites” (9). These opposites are labelled as “Centripetal and Centrifugal Movements” (9), the former “exalting ethnic roots, tradition, the rural and ‘primitive’ world, the autochthonous element, autarky and self-sufficient life-styles” (10), whereas the “centrifugal movement is plural, and its diversity is the most adequate expression and summary of the world’s ethnic and cultural mosaic” (11).

Aínsa’s obvious preference, if we remain within the boundaries of his dichotomy, is for the centrifugal, which he idealises as “a fascinating outcome” (11), but rather than acceding to such reductive terms (there are even lists of antinomies) it would be preferable to begin with the terms themselves. As shorthand references, along with centripetal / centrifugal, the division is limned as one between “tradition and modernity” (12), and “nationalism as opposed to internationalism” (13), though Aínsa’s tradition is static, “the archaic past” (9) or primitivism, which he admits “probably never
existed as it is imagined" (9), and is hence more an archae than a tradition, a factitious past that modernity would repeatedly exploit, often in the service of nationalist ends. Tradition is a misnomer, for such antinomies are created by the artificial division of modernity, and Ainsa is simply mapping the latter's parenthetical spectrum, though separating its nonetheless mutually intelligible future and "past." The lack of a dialogue between the two, the absence of any recognition that there may be only one movement here, is forgivable, since modernity deliberately elides tradition, including its own critical history. However jejune Ainsa may be, an Alonso or a González Echevarría, the intervening, post-Fuentes theorists of a self-thwarted dialogue between such antinomies, would have no recourse against him, for he has reiterated their paradigm as a grandiose beginning, as if the romantic journey between the terms had yet to be revealed, which is the very "Latin American" auto-perpetuation such theorists rendered as inevitable. Myth and Archive, though self-admittedly abridging Latin American thought, presupposes and even encourages its own repetition, its hegemony. Ainsa is not an entirely innocent acolyte, for at one point he hints that "The borders between the two are often ambiguous and oscillating" (16), and he ends with a synthetic hope for a "new order" (24), "beyond the antinomies with which the vicissitudes of history are characterized" (25), but there is never an inkling of marcescence, that perhaps this "beyond," this oscillation, indeed this vocabulary are not quite as new nor therefore as hopeful as he imagines. In the afterword to the collection in which this impasse appears, Alberto Moreiras regrets that Ainsa "never goes beyond description to a critique of literature as ideology, which leads the reader to confront the sorry conclusion that Latin American cultural authenticity is just the ideological nightmare of irreconcilable
antinomies he describes” (212). Whilst this is an appropriate concern, it is also broader than Moreiras allows, for if we assume, ex hypothesi, that Aínsa were to mediate the dichotomy beyond the essay, then given the stark nature of his antinomies the result would most probably be yet another version of suspension, perhaps propped up on another unquestioned version of modern theory, thereby solidifying Moreiras’ irreconcilability still further. This is also to assume, parti pris, that the stereotypically autochthonous pole is at least temptingly possible and desirable. No doubt a mediated re-reading would be equally if not more publishable, and to read Aínsa as potential is to attempt an escape from the more general atrophy of the field, yet in confirming the field’s already homogeneous expectations such an escape would ultimately be one more entropic contribution. Much depends on whether the arbitrating ideology is perceived as monotonously nightmarish in any context, and certainly from within Latin Americanism, or whether the latter has revealed its object as the culmination of that same ideology and should therefore continue to celebrate an equivocal pseudo-subversion.

Instead of questioning its own practices, however, the celebration is ever giddier, the absences more pronounced. Raymond L. Williams’ The Postmodern Novel in Latin America: Politics, Culture, and the Crisis of Truth (1995) is intended to privilege Latin American literature within the discourse of postmodernism and thus rescue its implicitly secondary status to Williams’ predominantly French theoretical backdrop. The rescue’s convincing though only apparent "point of departure is the assumption that Latin America is concurrently a region of premodern, modern and postmodern societies" (v), an intimation of excessive construction to which I would simply add that everywhere is. On the same opening page, this whisper of
incorporation is simultaneously undermined by Williams' more characteristic purview, "from the 1970s to the present" (v), which ultimately means that almost everything up to and including Cien años de soledad is at best a bourgeois "defense of reason as an ideal, and the Enlightenment faith in social progress as possibly analogous to the progress of knowledge achieved in the sciences" (7). In case the reader misses the fiction’s "fundamental break from the recent past" (20) (that not merely Amalia and María are now lost to us as rational appropriations of meaning), there is also, still on the opening page, the now obligatory, proleptic distancing of the critic from his prior and less disillusioned peers: "The most notable critics who write against postmodernism tend to be critical theorists with a relatively weak background in contemporary fiction, . . . . I am a scholar of Latin American literature and writing - I will be clear about my position from the beginning - in favor of postmodernism" (v). Although emblematic of Latin Americanism's schismatic bent, Williams’ belatedness (though denied) allows for a bombastic tone, a presumption that his theoretical position is both so viable and so desired that further exegesis, beyond the "Postmodernism works to subvert dominant discourses" (10) and is therefore anti-bourgeois line, is unnecessary. To dissent from this logic is either to acknowledge a lack of expertise, to be less of a scholar (through being more rational) than Williams, or at worst to associate oneself with some of the twentieth century’s most nefarious figures: "After all, both Adolph Hitler and Augusto Pinochet . . . were most rational" (15). Even Fernández Retamar’s rhetoric is less tendentious. Despite the “Crisis of Truth”’s hubristic premise of iconoclasm apodictically morphing into plurality, there is no point of entry for future debate.
The crisis is, of course, via an inversion of meaning and a "potentially threatening" (15) conjunction of theory and fiction, to be extolled, and the sources of this inversion are familiar:

Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida have also been quite influential in Latin America. Foucault attempted to establish the location of power in literary texts and rethought the subject as a discursive construct. Derrida questioned the concept of center as well as the possibilities of history capturing a way to truth. (12)

Both Alonso and González Echevarría (to name but two of the above) used this same methodology in order to suspend the hermeneutics of pre­seventies texts and to read that same suspension back into the Latin American canon. Here, the fiction is updated, yet Williams, for all his threats, is merely re-venting the same theory. This reiteration, however, the contrivance of presenting yet another set of texts as the manifestation of a now "postmodern" Foucault / Derrida symbiosis, is supposedly shifting the world’s centre, subverting the course of Latin Americanism, and communicating a more representative version of a continent’s multiplicity. As with Taylor’s resistance to Massera, furthermore, Williams is oblivious to the possibility that his own critical apparatus may be more responsible for the creation of a Pinochet than any other, that this is its real, univocal threat. The familiar pedagogy, and the word “taught” in the following passage confirms its authority, continues:

Umberto Eco claims that the postmodern is born at the moment when we discover that the world has no fixed center, and that, as Foucault taught, power is not something unitary that exists outside us. This moment occurred in Latin American literature with the rise of Borges, who became a seminal figure for both European theorists and Latin American postmodern novelists in the 1960s and 1970s . . . . (13)

In this round-up of the usual aphasias, Borges has mutated from ur­modernist to proto-postmodernist, although the summary of Borgesian thought is so reminiscent of this crisis’ precursors that one begins to
wonder, a little hopefully, if Williams is deliberately parodying his own field: "the narrator’s discourse is paradoxically postmodern, for it both inscribes a context and then contests its boundaries" (13). It would be preferable, therefore, if there were less contextualisation and more contesting in Borges, which is to say that rather than destroying its context en pre-thwarted route to a non-cultural oikoumene, even this pseudo-beginning is too appropriative, and should be abrogated. Although the words "Gianni Vattimo" are absent from the study, Williams is mapping the progression of Western theory entirely conscientiously here, and he concludes his initial, meta-critical approach to Latin American literature with "The discourse of truth has been reduced to exchange values" (19), a reproduction, almost verbatim, of Vattimo’s earlier claim to have ousted Marxian usage in the accomplishment of nihilism. Even in Vattimo, this accomplishment is more attitudinal than real, prompting a series of questions as to whether we have in fact achieved his linguistic abyss, and of what, assuming its existence, is it "our only chance" (20)? Once again, these questions pass unanswered, indeed unasked, in Williams, but instead Vattimo’s maxim is pronounced with utter acceptance, and lends the rhetoric (in a field which is already sanguine regarding its commitment to Western theory) its particularly dangerous, glib edge. At least the former authors of a questing Latin Americanism, despite a similar acceptance of a neo-Nietzschean backdrop, are compelled to mediate, however paradoxically, their selection of texts, whereas Williams reads the reduction not as a dialogue but as a fait accompli, allowing him to produce what is often no more than a list of exempla which in his judgement are suitably reductive and, ipso facto, beneficially postmodern. I shall limit my examples via a similar glibness, for this mantra works paraliptically, as if we are supposed to infer that
because "The feminist and postmodern work of [Armonía] Sommers and [Cristina] Peri Rossi is also vast" (118) (the only critical comment on these two authors), this postmodern vastness is necessarily advantageous. Whether even Sommers and Peri Rossi would find such reduction complimentary is debatable. Much marginal and doubtless constructive work is not "technically innovative enough to fit logically into a discussion such as this of Latin American postmodernities" (109), while all of premodernity and arguably much of modernity, two thirds of Williams’ multiple Latin American realities, are never represented. The crisis ends with an elliptical “Indeed, there are many stories . . ." (129), presumably a hint at openings to other abysses yet also an indication of how amorphous and ineffectual Vattimo’s discourse can be. From a less partial perspective, there are only two stories here, that of Williams’ myopic postmodernity and everyone else’s.

At least, in Williams, there is a sense of progression, an attempt to expand the theoretical framework, an implicit recognition of how laughably monadic Latin Americanist criticism had become, even though his own execution manifests a difference of degree as opposed to kind and is therefore comparably laughable. In Latin American Literature: Symptoms, Risks and Strategies of Post-structuralist Criticism (1997), Bernard McGuirk describes the North American academe’s adoption of poststructuralism as “a masturbatory repetition masquerading as the only jouissance possible” (5), an instant critical position offering only an antiseptic Derrida so that “sanitized, he might thus be rendered harmless” (3). In a now commonplace inversion of titular meaning, however, McGuirk is not about to indite the risks of poststructuralism itself, to suggest that the idea may be endemically problematic, but rather to hazard that its risks have remained latent,
that its application has proved insufficiently perilous hitherto. This tactic, though written as an epiphany against a deconstruction mangelé, is akin to González Echevarría’s “lawless” canon formation or Fernández Retamar’s bullet points of history, another gesture of out-risking the riskers, and is immediately more institutionally intelligible than McGuirk allows. Although the dust-jacket promises “a stimulating introductory text,” the latter does require an intimate knowledge of French theory and its institutionalisation within Latin Americana. It would seem that in this ever self-superseding vade-mecum of cultural analysis the inter-dependence of the two has become a propaedeutic given, for the beginner, and Robert Schwarz is similarly suspicious of the criminality of such risks:

Outra inversão de papéis: embora se estejam encarreirando no processo ideológico triunfante de nosso tempo, os ‘globalistas’ rationam como acossados, ou como se fizessem parte da vanguarda heróica, estética ou libertária, de inícios do século. Alinham-se com o poder como quem faz uma revolução . . . . Trata-se enfim de escolher entre o equívoco antigo e o novo, nos dois casos em nome do progresso. (34)

McGuirk’s revolution is presented “mosaically” (17), and his prose is spattered with hyphens, offset quotations and manifold theories which form a different though integrated pluralism. The extent of such difference is predictably suspect, since despite an emphasis on action, it stems from an epigonal, meta-critical genealogy: “In the Prison House of Institutionality many critical practices have been reluctant to take on board the implications of Michel Foucault’s investigations . . . consciously or unconsciously forgetting the inseparability of theory and practice” (10). Accompanying this materialist turn, one Latin American critic is favoured “above all, Ángel Rama” (16), with McGuirk repeatedly defining his targets, via paraphrases of Foucault, as not simply an overt “gouvernement” (235) but “gouvernementalité” (235), the panoptic ordering or policing of our
knowledge. Beyond critique, the question of "whether there can be a way out of the prison-house" (5) (Jameson pace Foucault) is posed, and though the terminology varies a possible exit is consistently reproduced as "a particular space of inbetweenness" (15) (Bhabha et al), alterity's inscription of its particularities within the fallacy of Western discourse while simultaneously displacing the latter's authority. Although the ethics of Foucauldian practice are debatable, this post-secular turn towards the other lends McGuirk's text an oxymoronically moral superiority. If there is a master narrative here, it is "the Derrida spectre which spooks this book" (147), the haunting Specters of Marx, a later, still "ideologically subversive" (3) Derrida combined with the above who offers "structuralist différence . . . at work" (10-11). McGuirk is recurrently chary, however, of ascribing "a pulse of transcendentalism" (11) to his version of such alterity, avoiding the messianic vocabulary which terminates in the neo-parousia of the "arrivant as justice" in his theoretical source. Instead, the other is written as flux, as an open inbetweenness, which is to follow the Derridan project while maintaining a skepticism to its ultimate hint of a non-deconstructible end which may then be subject to critique. This is the same position as that of Richard Rorty, briefly referenced in McGuirk as the "Anglo-Saxon - and, specifically, Rortian - caution regarding 'going transcendental'" (11). In my preceding chapter, the similarly complimentary though also suspicious Ernesto Laclau summarises it as skepticism regarding an "openness to the otherness of the other, to a primordial ethical experience, in the Levinasian sense" (Critchley 53). Within the context of Latin Americanism, this turn, the fleshing of a space into which the other never quite arrives, permits the reinscription of the quest, written most evocatively on this occasion by Silviano Santiago, re-presented in
McGuirk, who is re-presenting, albeit surreptitiously, as "risk," the legitimated, executive ideology of his own jurisdiction:

Between sacrifice and play, between prison and transgression, between submission to the code and aggression, between obedience and rebellion, between assimilation and expression - there, in that seemingly empty space, its temple and its site of clandestinity, there, the anthropophagous ritual of Latin American literature is performed. (Santiago; cited in McGuirk, 18)

This bricolage in motion is thus no more than a refashioned modernity, stereotypically pursuing some apocryphal, preternaturally feral desire and, in its predetermined failure to achieve its end, it becomes instead an equally reductive cannibalism, trapped, post-consumption, between the parentheses of history, while the never satiated cannibalism itself, the process of a post-secular kenosis, becomes its autochthony, its definition. Even in the absence of a critical, specifically Latin Americanist backdrop, the acceptance that developments in theory are immediately isomorphic to developments in Latin American literature is obvious, to the extent that the literature has become superfluous, and may be accessed vicariously via a handful of neo-philosophical texts.

There are, somewhat surprisingly in McGuirk's context of risking de-sanitisation but unsurprisingly in mine, two chapters on Borges. Without referencing Kerr, who is presumably less of a risk-taker, the first concerns "Borges y yo," which McGuirk portrays, via the "lo bueno ya no es de nadie, ni siquiera del otro, sino del lenguaje o de la tradición" (180) line as the ceding of history to lexis, an "uncommonly intelligent reading" (181) of Derrida's "il n'y a pas de hors-texte" (181). "Borges y yo" predates that phrase, of course, which allows McGuirk to read the later Derrida back into a now pre-Derridan Borges: "'Yo he de quedar en Borges, no en mí'. . . . At play is an ever-onwards compulsion ('I shall have to'), a 'flight,' an
undecided, at least unresolved, 'loss' of 'I' in either oblivion or otherness" (181). Given that the transcendental twist is already precluded, that we are even unable to assume that this other may be the non-present avatar or internet of **Specters of Marx**, the paragraph simply ends, leaving only alterity as incommunicable abyss. In McGuirk's polemic, however, in light of Santiago's oscillating cannibalism, this apparent void is written as the process of voiding, and thereby constitutes his privileged, supplemental inbetweenness: "Although I have, indeed, outlined in the Borges text a trajectory of compulsive loss, this is not, in my view, tantamount to 'collapse'" (183). For all its much flaunted venom, the possibility that we are now "risking" only another, relatively innocuous version of modernity's paradigm is confirmed in the second Borges chapter, in which "Emma Zunz" is initially defined "as a text deferring the very reality towards which it gestures" (185), a phrase that is congruous with any of Kadir's. The deferral is most evident in Emma's concocted alibi for the murder which the police, predictable in their rationalism, believe. This lie is rendered as an act of counter-gouvernementalité, that of a Panopticon-dweller abusing that dwelling's hermeneutic structure, and thus Borges' "'discourse shapes a truth only by bringing itself into question'" (Macherey; cited in McGuirk, 203).

In the wake of a now staple Borges, one of the more representative examples of such "strategies" is João Guimarães Rosa's short story, "A terceira margem do rio," part of McGuirk's finale (or "Post-postscript" in his own mosaic, ever-dislocating vocabulary). The title echoes the opening lines of the chapter, in which "the third term" (233) is defined as "the time, the space and the other we inhabit" (233). The story, narrated in the first person, is that of a son who beckons his old, apparently exhausted father to row his boat to
McGuirk introduces the river’s banks as "The most quintessential binary" (247), which, in the son’s act of abnegation, "must still encounter another measurability, a relativity" (247), the third bank or term. The act is then read as a dismissal of an atavistic entelechy, represented by the father, and the subsequent guilt, via rhetorical questions, as that "of lost patriarch, the indelibly Judaic heritage of Freud, of Harold Bloom, of George Steiner, of Levinas? And of how many Brazilian novos cristãos?" (248). In renunciation, these figures and now the son have relativised an earlier telos, opening themselves to a third bank which is "never other than virtual, the necessary (however unattainable) objective of search... the situation of self in the space of non-teleology... For the trajectory of the third term offers no guarantee of arrival, survival" (249-50). We are never certain of the particular brand of metaphorical patriarchy of the father, of whether it is in fact Judaism, Christianity, or perhaps even Freud, for the latter or indeed any modern consciousness seems more binary than McGuirk’s predictable choices. As with the Madres de la Plaza de Mayo, the father is both synecdoche and inevitably a literal patriarch, but perhaps this biological affiliation is also too ideologically bankrupt here. It would seem that we have, once again, in addition to regurgitating the framework of the thwarted quest, forgotten the precise nature of the conditioning processes. No matter how iniquitous his teleology may be, it is the father who continues to struggle within the confines of the river, in the mainstream if you will, whereas the son, rather than confronting this possible iniquity, becomes, in the inverted riskiness of McGuirk’s discourse, the marginalised. Exactly what form of alterity is this? Is he perpetually
caught between transgression and obedience, or, as potential, is he subject to the next neo-Romantic archae he happens upon, the numina of the technosciences, of the next Pinochet, or perhaps of Judaism?

Unless we are prepared to re-authorise this term (and some form of authority, even if alternate, is ineluctable), it remains, despite all protestations, a pseudo-transcendental. Whilst I am loathe to condone a self-lodged objection from within McGuirk’s thought, in the penultimate paragraph he himself admits that “there will be those who will still suggest that I, too, along with Levinas, with Irigaray and the rest, am dangerously eroticizing the encounter with the other” (255), and it does appear that this other has little option but to inhabit the pre-theorised, pre-eroticised, “risky” space of the third term. Even my questions above may be too appropriative, for one of McGuirk’s final quotations is Levinas’ “‘The very fact of questioning . . . identity means it is al-ready lost. But by the same token it is precisely through this kind of cross-examination that one still hangs onto it’” (255). Without such questioning, however, which is surely mutual, whence the alternatives to these supposed risks? As if spinning globalism for a foreign policy press conference, in the final paragraph McGuirk switches his governing metaphor from the mosaic to a quilt, a hankering for cuddliness which is indicative of both how fluffy and how safe his version of postmodern probing / Massera (the truly threatening arrivants) becomes. That it is ultimately not safe, the real danger of McGuirk post itinerant aphanisis, is most forcefully re-empowered by Benigno Trigo and Foucault and [Is?] Latin America: Appropriations and Deployments of Discursive [sic] Analysis (2002), in which he re-theorises a similar “‘third space’” (xviii). This book is comprised of fifteen essays, five of which are simply reprints, including chapters from La ciudad letrada, Myth and Archive, and Foundational Fictions.
The latter’s presence is further confirmation of an automatic acceptance of Foucault, since, as I attempted to clarify earlier, although his work is indeed propaedeutically referenced by Sommer it is only to expunge it from her remaining pages. The collection is paratextually introduced, on the back cover, as “the first volume to trace the influence of Foucault’s theories on power, discourse, government, subjectivity and sexuality in Latin American thought,” a relevance that is reinforced by Trigo’s editorial salesmanship: “To date . . . there is not one source where students of Latin American critical thought can turn to find the landmark appropriations and deployments of Foucault’s theories” (xxi). The idea of the collection was tested on students and floated at mainstream conferences (the Modern Language Association and the Latin American Studies Association’s), and the responses, as the above comments suggest, have only served to substantiate Trigo’s “belief in the timeliness of our venture” (ix). There is an immediate, obdurate confidence here, much as there is in McGuirk’s de-sanitisation, that this is an indispensable text for we have yet to read Foucault, that up until Trigo this influence has remained unperceived, that we are innocents in need of disillusion, however self-defeating such rhetoric is when prefacing five essays from long published and widely disseminated work.

The space in question, this other Foucault, is defined as an inhabitable opening between “epistemic negation” (xii) (i.e. Discipline and Punish, the battle cry, and close to Rama), and “the cul-de-sac of celebratory aestheticism” (xiii) (closer, post negation, to Vattimo’s celebration of exchange value), or “the living aspect of postmodern logic” (xvi). Most tellingly, however, beyond McGuirk, Trigo is prepared to flesh this third term via an analogy borrowed from Kelly Oliver, another contributor to the collection:
Like the No of the ascetic priest in Nietzsche’s Genealogy of Morals, this process of self-wounding, these negations of life, as if by magic bring to light ‘an abundance of tender Yeses’ (Nietzsche 121). Thus, like the actions of the ascetic priest who ‘[even] when he wounds himself . . . the very wound itself afterward compels him to live,’ the passage through this open ‘wound’ or threshold is both a symptom and a remedy for a self-diagnosed condition. (xviii)

This is a version of the arrivant’s return home, the “Yes” of the third space or modernity’s residuum, after questing, the space towards which Guimarães Rosa’s son turns. There is no information as to whether Oliver researched the apparent congruity, and Trigo simply incorporated it into his thesis, or whether he received a hint and then researched it unilaterally. Either way, the move to negate epistemology, of which Nietzsche, if paradoxically, is certainly a part, seems precipitous, and warrants recontextualisation. This priest, lest instant prejudices surface, is, in his original form and prior to the passage quoted above, antonomastic for “the philosophic spirit” (Nietzsche, BW 551) in general, “the contemplative man” (551). As such, his activity is not unlike that of Trigo or Oliver, and yet Nietzsche writes this contemplation as a denial of being, as “life-inimical” (553), and is repulsed by “how regularly and universally the ascetic priest appears in almost every age; he belongs to no one race; he prospers everywhere; he emerges from every class of society” (553). These traits, which in another guise might be valued as polymorphous, as the mosaic of a reconciled, intelligible alterity, are instead devalued here, both within their original context and as possibilities for Latin America. Via this reversal of meaning, it is only in the infliction of pain that man may recover his dignity, becoming “the great experimenter with himself, discontented and insatiable, wrestling with animals, nature and gods for ultimate dominion, . . . eternally directed toward the future” (BW 557). This is now Latin America’s process of catharsis, not
labile, anfractuous, aporetic, nor errant, and far from new, but a lunge at the Nietzschean entame as the pursuit of a healthy condition. Of course, after Trigo’s passage, already in the third and final essay of the Genealogy, Nietzsche’s aphoristic schadenfreude runs amuck, for “The sick” (557), those “web-spinners” (567) who continue their spinning, “represent the greatest danger for the healthy . . . not the evil, not the beasts of prey. Those who are failures from the start, downtrodden, crushed - it is they, the weakest, who must undermine life among men” (557-8). Such invective requires little exposition, except perhaps reminders that although the full implications of the passage may be unbeknownst to Trigo (which incidentally is no excuse), it is emblematic of the Nietzschean opus, and that from all those students, from all those academics at some of the more significant conferences, nobody questioned the legitimacy of this space. There is no room for anamnesis here, merely a past agnosia, a mental impossibility made parenthetically present, and given to Latin America as its most natural means of progress. No matter how threatening the figure of the father may be, as he turns his patriarchal prow in the direction of his son, Nietzsche’s materialist inversion, entirely consistent with any neo-Enlightenment philosophy, excludes “The sick woman especially: no one can excel her in the wiles to dominate, oppress and tyrannize” (559), and his vocabulary is ever telling:

Away with this shameful emasculation of feeling! That the sick should not make the healthy sick - and this is what such an emasculation would involve - should surely be our supreme concern on earth; but this requires above all that the healthy should be segregated from the sick . . . . (560)

Unwittingly, perhaps, Trigo has stumbled upon an autarkic, “noble” state, incapable of any form of mnemotechnia, and says “Yes” to it. It is also the state of Latin Americanism, and, more dangerously, a blueprint for nationalist politics. As mentioned earlier, Nietzsche’s
ideal nobleman "cannot learn from experience, but again and again falls into the same ditch into which he has fallen before" ("TF" 639). These acts of forgetting and repeating, those of an aphasiac, are not necessarily how Latin America is or wishes to be, but how it is expected to behave.

As but one example of such repetition from the "original" essays, Aida Beaupied's "From Liberty to Fatherland: Sacrifice and Dead Certainties in the Critical Discourses of Cuba" splits Cuban history, pace Rafael Rojas, into "'a modern will'" (126), associated with "'richness and progress'" (126), and "an 'antimodern will,' responsible for articulating Cuba's 'meta-narrative of morality, emancipation, and justice'" (126). Both are defined as nineteenth-century, Enlightenment longings, that "can be traced to the influx of liberal ideas from Europe" (127). Although never perceived as a convention of Latin Americanism, after a couple of pages of this dichotomy, Beaupied collapses the two, venturing, perhaps "dangerously," that "Paradoxically, modernity is found at the center of the antimodern will" (127), that Cuba's "moralizing letrados . . . were modern men themselves" (127). Even after this symbiosis, which may be viably subsumed under the term "modernity" (the oscillation between the two wills), Beaupied focuses on the antimodern, reading it as a discourse of "bourgeois respectability and nationalism" (126), the fabrication of an archetypal citizen which dominates the tactics of persuasion of José Martí, Ernesto Guevara, and Fidel Castro, and demands real sacrifice to its cause. The ideology is referred to as "anticritical" (130) and therefore "'immature'" (130), though this is already a simplification since the Martí / Guevara / Castro paradigm critiques everything between itself and the imposition of the new, authentic citizen, and is self-portrayed as the only maturity available. Within
Beaupièd’s argument, however, this discourse is naïve and must be escaped. She turns both to a non-appropriative Vattimo (128) and, more extensively, to the escape artist par excellence, for consolation:

Modern man, for Baudelaire, is not the man who goes off to discover himself, his secrets and his hidden truth; he is the man who tries to invent himself. This modernity does not 'liberate man in his own being,' it compels him to face the task of producing himself (Foucault, Ethics; Subjectivity and Truth 311-12). (130)

This is a reiteration of Rousseau’s disavowal of the social gaze, for the latter requires a veneer over man’s hypostatic potential. Via an interview in which Castro asks “How do you destroy that entanglement of lies, all those myths, how do you destroy them?” and of course continues to present his particular brand of revolutionary liberation as the answer, Beaupièd recasts the leader as Foucault’s “man who tries to invent himself” (130), as, in her own Foucauldian words, “the force capable of exercising absolute freedom to reinvent himself as maker of his own destiny” (133). Still within this logic, Castro thus becomes the “national Subject” (133), whereas his subjects, supposedly the liberated, play the role of “enslaved other” (133).

There is, assuredly, a very real, Cuban danger, and the idea of sacrificing oneself on the altar of nationalism is appropriately rejected. As with Taylor’s version of Massera, however, it is possible and even necessary (if Latin Americanism is ever to break its cycle) to read Castro not as the purveyor of superficial invention but as the paragon of Foucault’s “man who goes off to discover himself” (130), the grandiloquent annunciator of Trigo’s Nietzschean “Yes” and the inhabitant of McGuirk’s third space. As mentioned in the case of Fernández Retamar, whilst the patina of Cuba’s ideology may have faded with the years, and although it is certainly an example of neo-Enlightenment philosophy, Castro’s destruction of lies is not contrary
to that of Vattimo, or to Foucault, even in the lines from the 
interview selected by Beaupied or in her description of his “absolute freedom” (133). Her solution to Cuba’s modernity is, again like 
Taylor’s vague faith in the resistance of our postmodern readings, 
“the dismantling of traditional values” (134). This rendition is more 
current, but Castro has pre-read Beaupied and stolen her critical 
ground, even from within her pages. His liberation is implicitly 
condoned by the sources and the conclusion of the essay. The latter’s 
theory is already being executed as Beaupied would have it, making the 
essay itself, though adding to Latin Americanism’s self-propelling 
belief in novelty, obsolete.

Just as this archaic, the spectre of nationalism, of Romanticism, 
the Nietzschean “Yes,” is never absent from neo-Foucauldian discourse, 
since it is present in the original, so it is present, though less 
disclosed, in the other ur-narrator or aphasic of Latin Americanism, 
the now obligatory Borges. This is not to say that the more 
conventional reading of the quest, of modernity’s paradox, is 
misapplied, but that below, in keeping with the subject, there are two 
readings. The first, though of my own device, is a meta-reading, and 
the Borges of Paz, Rodríguez Monegal, Kerr et al., the one González Echevarría characterises as “ironic, critical, a 
demolisher of all delusions” (23), George Steiner’s landmark master of 
“the occult fantastations of literary, historical reference which 
pepper his narrative” (24), or John Barth’s similarly definitive artist 
who “doesn’t merely exemplify an ultimacy; he employs it” (31). He is 
also the Borges of The Order of Things’ disjecta membra, and is perhaps 
most exhaustlessly rendered by Kadir, initially as the only author on 
the opening page of Questing Fictions: “the self-deflecting 
peregrination in fiction’s textual enterprise . . . manifests itself as
family history as exemplified in Jorge Luis Borges" (xxi). From here, the latter becomes the equally thwarting heir to "Wordsworth's 'something evermore about to be'" (5-6). By his later chapter, spectrally entitled "Borges's Ghost Writer" (39) and headed by Nietzsche's "No one telleth me anything new, so I tell myself mine own story" (cited in Kadir, 39), he is "the abyssal authorial Borges" (46) with his repeatedly "abysmal space of writing" (49) and yet another legacy, reiterating "Emerson's own brazen inveighing against the privileging of antecedence's penumbra and his invenerate attempts at displacing history's shadows rather than extending them" (56):

I cite from the introductory lines of his [Emerson's] essay on 'Nature' (1836 version): 'Our age is retrospective. It builds sepulchres of the fathers. It writes biographies, histories, and criticism . . . Why should not we also enjoy an original relation to the universe? Why should not we have a poetry and philosophy of insight and not of tradition, and a religion by revelation to us, and not the history of theirs? . . . [W]hy should we grope among the dry bones of the past, or put the living generation into masquerade out of its faded wardrobe? The sun shines today also.' (56)

The second reading, though resulting from the first and the above, is more heretical.

It is tempting to contextualise Borges. If the ever ephemeral satisfactions of modernity begin to wane, if the knowledge that a movement from logos to lexis to the latter's erasure has perhaps irrevocably severed our referencing of even present reality, let alone the past, a revisiting of Borges' work, steeped in the source material of history, may offer some form of reappropriated meaning. There is certainly a wealth of reference here, an appeal to the academic mind, and Daniel Balderston suggests that a failure to respect such a call, a disavowal of such veracious details, will lead only to the "appalling errors some critics have fallen into precisely out of an unwillingness to read carefully" (Out of Context 42). Despite Balderston's premise
that history and fiction exist through "mutual implication" (8), however, and that the study will therefore posit itself amidst the tension between the two, there is such a surfeit of circumstantial minutiae that the quest for sources soon eclipses Borges' reinscription of them, and even the possibility of distortion, of Harold Bloom's assertion that "loss was always Borges' creative emphasis" (475), is either obscured or entirely absent. At best, though it is now a canonical Latin Americanist text in its own right, this study has saved the gratuitously conscientious reader a month in the library.

The alternative is to accept that amidst the Borgesian phantasmagoria thought is simultaneously fictive, inadequate to its signifieds and only more so when mediated via the past, that we have finally arrived at Vattimo's neo-Nietzschean "'accomplished nihilism'" (19), "the reduction of everything to exchange value, . . . precisely that world which has become fable" (26). In Nietzsche's original imagery which Borges would repeatedly usurp, man may now discern and thus delimit his speciously cogent state, for hitherto he was "indifferent to his own ignorance . . . hanging in dreams on the back of a tiger" ("TF" 635). The following is premised upon the notion that Borges presents his material tangentially, from obtuse angles, often selecting characters and narrative techniques that preclude a given story from obtaining any semblance of self-perpetuated stability, and yet I would hope that it is also careful.

"La otra muerte," a story in  El Aleph, attempts to illuminate the circumstances of the death of Pedro Damián, a foot-soldier in the Uruguayan revolution of 1904. It would be presumptuous to say more here, for perhaps Damián died heroically, at the battle of Masoller, or perhaps years later, of natural causes, still plagued by his cowardice during the battle. The account opens with these words:
Un par de años hará (he perdido la carta), Gannon me escribió de Gualeguaychú, anunciando el envío de una versión, acaso la primera española, del poema “The Past,” de Ralph Waldo Emerson, y agregando una posdata que don Pedro Damián, de quien yo guardaría alguna memoria, había muerto noches pasadas, de una congestión pulmonar. (Oc 1: 571)

To recontextualise, Emerson's "The Past," is emblematic of both Kadir's comments above and the Romantic Weltanschauung, a testament to the inaccessibility of history:

The debt is paid.
The verdict said.
The Furies laid.
The plague is stayed.
All fortunes made;
Turn the key and bolt the door,
Sweet is death forevermore.
Nor haughty hope, nor swart chagrin,
Nor murdering hate, can enter in. (257)

After death (in this case Damián's), we must "Turn the key and bolt the door" (257), thus rejecting any further interpretation. The narrator of "La otra muerte," however, in the dysphoria of Borgesian reinscription, subverts this sense of conclusion at every turn. Damián's death occurred two years before the current time of writing, yet the investigation is being reopened. As if such temporal distance were insufficient to blur the facts of the case, the narrator then informs us that he received the news in that most unreliable of formats, a letter, which he has subsequently lost. The unreliability continues, for the details concerning Damián appeared as a postscript, an afterthought to the presumably more significant bulk of the lost letter. Furthermore, according to Gannon, the narrator would only have retained "alguna memoria" (571) of the foot-soldier, as opposed to a definitive recollection. Gannon's "versión" (571) of "The Past" is of a similarly dubious nature, for it is only "possibly" the first Spanish translation, and the letter only announced an intention to send it. Indeed, the idea of creating other versions of Emerson's poem, of
revisiting the text, apparently contravenes the content of the poem itself. It is precisely this contravention, however, that Borges will exploit in the tale of Pedro Damián. The question is whether the infiltration of this hitherto unknowable past transcends Emerson's Romanticism, thereby resolving the present in a synthesis of knowledge, or instead proves futile, in which case "La otra muerte" tempts us with the promise of historical resolution only to reconfirm Emerson, to end as a sham, another gesture of unknowing.

The narrator's and, necessarily, the reader's, perspective is one of displacement. We begin at a vantage point from which Damián is barely visible, introduced yet aloof, present but obscured through a haze of perhaps apocryphal information. The immediacy of events is lost, along with the letter. Whilst much of the historical data in the initial paragraph is accurate, and it is both geographically and politically logical that Damián, an "entrerriano" (571), would have enlisted with the Blanco forces of Aparicio Saravia in the conflict against the Colorado government of José Batalle y Ordóñez in 1904, the narrator's doubts, his supererogatory heuristics, continue to plague the weight of the account. We remain uncertain of Damián's age when he enlisted ("a los diecinueve o veinte años" [571]), and of whether he was labouring in "Río Negro o Paysandú" (571). The narrator claims to have met the foot-soldier on an afternoon in 1942, yet the apparent testimonial authority of this detail is parenthetically deflated by the phrase "(yo traté de conversar con él una tarde)" (571). Whilst this may be a reference to Damián's silent nature ("Era hombre taciturno" [571]), it also presents the possibility that perhaps the meeting never transpired. The air of mystery that surrounds the soldier remains intact. Moreover, the narrator confesses to possessing an untrustworthy "memoria visual" (571), and is only able to recall Damián's features
from "una fotografía que Gannon le tomó" (571). The further admissions that "Gannon me mandó esa fotografía; la he perdido y ya no la busco" (571) do little to inspire the reader's confidence. Once again, we are confronted with the absence of proof (assuming, of course, that Gannon did in fact photograph Damián and subsequently sent the image to our informant). Not only is the narrator not looking for this potentially authentic piece of documentation, he also acknowledges that "Me daría miedo encontrarla" (571), thereby implying a conscious effort to avoid even a representation of reality in favor of his own personal (though still oneiric) version.

By now, it is surely obvious to even the most inadvertent reader that this is an inherently flawed account. The narrator began at a tangent, and marginalises himself still further, revealing that any interpretations he may supply with regard to the fate of Pedro Damián are mere conjecture, derived from a distant, objective, historical fact (the battle of Masoller) but partial in the extreme. Borges selects a highly documented event and then deflates it through the reader's dependence upon the narrator's circuitous subjectivity. The very selection of a foot-soldier as the focal point of our perception of the battle of Masoller predicates a marginalised viewpoint. Damián, though a participant in these events, would not have possessed a comprehensive knowledge of the battle even in the midst of the battle itself. Borges subverts the process by which we construct meaning to such an extent that the question ceases to be one of whether we may ascertain the facts of this case, but of whether these facts are indeed factual, of whether historical meaning, the past (which is only ever our mediation of it), even exists.

As Kadir and his aides affirm, there is, nonetheless, at least the skeleton of a quest in Borges, at least the possibility of a
source, a drive, however perambulatory, which is the impetus of the story. From a surfeit of feasible corroboration, the narrative "El testigo" is of particular relevance, for it considers the loss of first-hand knowledge. The opening paragraph is written in the historic present, and describes a dying man who has seen the Norse god Woden. Upon the man’s death, his authoritative testimony regarding this figure will die with him, and Borges concludes that "el mundo será un poco más pobre" (Nueva antología 71). Similarly, “hubo un día que apagó los últimos ojos que vieron a Cristo" (71), and on that day we were reduced to supposition, to vicarious knowledge, to conjecturing over the acts that Christ performed. Unfortunately for the narrator in "La otra muerte," even his witnesses, Colonel Dionisio Tabares among them, are not so reliable. The Colonel remembers events "con desorden" (571), with such a lack of chronological distinction that the account of a civil war seems "menos la colisión de dos ejércitos que el sueño de un matrero" (571-2). The stories are so romantic and the manner of Tabares’ exposition so literary that the narrator fears “que muchas veces había referido esas mismas cosas” and “que detrás de sus palabras casi no quedaran recuerdos" (572). The request for “recuerdos” (572) is not particularly exacting, since it is not a demand for a relation of the events as they occurred but simply as the Colonel now recalls them, yet Tabares is incapable of supplying even this diluted information. Having previously endured the narrator’s vicarious incertitude, the reader must now suffer the narrator’s assessment of the incertitude of a primary source. Unlike the man who has seen Woden, it would be no historical loss to the world if the Colonel died for apparently he possesses no genuine testimony. Furthermore, after Tabares’ initial evaluation of Damián as a coward, the latter is compared to Lord Jim and Razumov, two figures who were indeed ostracised at the beginning of
their careers for acts of cowardice (and praised, like Damián, for later acts of heroism), but who are also the protagonists in two novels by Joseph Conrad. Damián himself is rapidly attaining such fictitious status. Subsequently, the narrator is obliged to reinterview the Colonel, claiming that “una o dos circunstancias” (572) are still missing from his “relato fantástico sobre la derrota de Masoller” (571). It will not have escaped the reader that, despite Borges’ pseudo-journalistic, pseudo-questing approach, we are perusing this very tale and that more than “una o dos circunstancias” (572) are absent.

Juan Francisco Amaro, another veteran of Masoller, is present during this second visit, and contradicts Tabares’ version, informing the narrator that Damián fought valiantly and died on the battlefield. The conflict between the two interpretations continues, for the Colonel defines the foot-soldier’s last words as “Malas palabras” (573), whereas Amaro remembers them as “¡Viva Urquiza!” (573), adding the following: “No como si peleara en Masoller, sino en Cagancha o India Muerta, hará un siglo” (573). This a reference to the original civil war (1843-51) between the Colorado party of José Fructuoso Rivera and Manuel Oribe’s Blancos. Justo José de Urquiza, an Argentine general during the Juan Manuel de Rosas dictatorship, supported Oribe. Both Cagancha and India Muerta were the sites of battles in this war. Once again, as with the reference to Aparicio Saravia in the initial paragraph, it is logical for Damián to have shouted the name of an earlier Blanco compatriot at Masoller, but Borges’ point in blending such factual gems with such muddled recollection is that this is only a possibility, that these gems are paste.

The fumbling persists, for the narrator meets Patricio Gannon and the latter denies the existence of a translation of “The Past.” Was the
letter with the postscript regarding Damián ever written? Tabares retracts his version of Masoller in favor of Amaro’s, and the foreman Diego Abaroa, a witness to Damián’s death in Entre Ríos, dies before the narrator is able to interview him. The mental picture of the foot-soldier, based on the lost photograph, was instead the image of Tamberlick playing Othello, a play which hinges upon the notion of mistaken identity. The narrator even confesses to confusing Pedro Damián’s name with that of Pier Damiani, an eleventh-century monk who suggests that “Dios puede efectuar que no haya sido lo que una vez fue” (574).

Toying with our “nostalgia for appropriation” (Vattimo 26), the Borgesian ruse is to assume this same nostalgia, the possibility of syncretism via exegesis, only to relativise its results. “La otra muerte” begins with a similar yearning, yet its ultimate purview is not merely the fictionalisation of the past, of history, created via “dos historias universales” (575) (Tabares and Amaro’s versions), both of which are plausible and beget different ramifications, but rather any principle of intelligibility, for the reverse side of the same effect is that fiction paradoxically becomes less fictitious; in rewriting history and thus exposing the latter’s fragile claim to authority, fiction authorises itself or, in the narrator’s words, “Hacia 1951 creeré haber fabricado un cuento y habré historiado un hecho real” (575). In order to circumvent the excessive contingencies of a less than dependable narrator, it may seem comforting to investigate other, perhaps more verifiable contexts, in the hope that a solution, some telos, lies with Gannon, Damián, Tabares, Amaro, Lord Jim, Razumov, Othello, Pier Damiani, Saravia, Urquiza, or the battles of Cagancha and Masoller. It is not simply that the question “Is it true?” lies outside this uchronic text, in some other time or place, at the centre of the
past rather than on the Borgesian tangent, but whether the question is viable at all, whether through its multiple, self-abnegating tangents "La otra muerte" condemns any future quest to the same entropic, a priori vertiginosity, which in turn will lead to similar, supposedly plurivocal quests, sub specie aeternitatis.

Within the discourse of this quest, in the dialogue of non-arrival, there is at least the hope of home, however frustrated or spectral that hope may remain. In La nueva novela hispanoamericana, with its renewed hope of silences voiced, Fuentes wagers that Borges' prose "al relativizarnos, no nos disminuye, sino que nos constituye" (26), yet what form of constitution is this, post non-arrival, what form of addition? Guimarães Rosa's son inevitably turns towards something, perhaps Trigo's Nietzschean "Yes" or Beaupied's Castro-like version of Castro, even if the journey is interrupted. To paraphrase Kadir, after the "Poetic structures, historical details, and empirical contingencies thus become interwoven into the textual emplotment of this 'poetic history' (20), is the residuum an invitation to the heterotopic, to alterity, Kadir's affirmation of "a supplement which becomes an aggregate extending and simultaneously modifying tradition . . . if we read supplement in the sense given to it by Jacques Derrida (as substitute, as surplus, as compensatory 'other' that displaces, replaces, and extends . . .)" (20)? If we are suspended, via this first reading of Borges, not merely in a space of onanistic repetition, but between "a movement back to the beginning" (Kadir 21) and an "inauguration . . . a new beginning" (Kadir 21), then what, via a second reading, is the nature of these geneses, these avatars, and why is Latin America obliged to extol them?

In an "addendum" of Borgesian simultaneity, on the threshold of Arms and Letters, "El sur" condemns its protagonist, Juan Dahlmann, to
dichotomous deaths. One, that of a civil servant, via the onset of septicemia following a domestic accident, and the other that of a gauchito, indeed supposedly that of a bona fide Argentine, via the knife of a stranger in the South. In the final words of the story, which are also the final words of the collection *Ficciones*, Borges at last grants his library secretary “la eternidad del instante” (Oc 1: 527), switching from the vicarious past tenses used hitherto to the more immediate, live present: “Dahlmann empuña con firmeza el cuchillo, que acaso no sabrá manejar, y sale a la llanura” (530). Of course, there is bathos here, for Dahlmann craves a similar death to his maternal grandfather, Francisco Flores, a soldier “lanceado por indios de Catriel” (525), yet meets his end in either a Buenos Aires sanitarium or, at best, as the victim of a schoolboy prank (his adversary has merely fired a few spit balls) in a parody of a now rose-tinted idea. It is the design of this parody, rather than the parody itself, which is of interest here, since the secretary’s previously latent jingoism has been nurtured over the years not only by Flores but also by his paternal, Germanic ancestry, as well as several keepsakes:

. . . en la discordia de sus dos linajes, Juan Dahlmann (tal vez a impulso de la sangre germánica) eligió el de ese antepasado romántico [Flores], o de muerte romántica. Un estuche con el daguerrotipo de un hombre inexpresivo y barbado, una vieja espada, la dicha y el coraje de ciertas músicas, el hábito de estrofas del Martín Fierro, los años, el desgano y la soledad, fomentaron ese criollismo algo voluntario, pero nunca ostentoso. (525)

This list, a series of nods and winks to those readers who know better, implicates the European imposition of Romanticism, a vision exhorting Dahlmann to manifest the blood and guts of a more nobly violent, sublimated and therefore truer, national identity, then skewed by Borges in the later banality of the dual deaths. Whilst there is certainly some truth in the false autochthony of such noble idealism,
an import refashioned as innate nationalism--Dahlmann considers himself to be "hondamente argentino" (525)--the inclusion of José Hernández's *Martín Fierro* amidst these stereotypes, guilty by association, is perhaps an indication that Borges has succumbed, like his protagonist, to history's populist, reductive innuendo regarding the poem. The latter's circulation, as Nicolas Shumway confirms, was never restricted to citified liberals of Teutonic extraction: "... for the first time in the history of the gauchesque, a gauchesque work actually became popular among the gauchos themselves" (277). Shumway even suggests that the intention behind Part Two of the poem, with its emphasis on political compromise and stability, is less the stuff of wanton abandon than "tedious" (285). In an all too brief passage from a chapter primarily on *Amalia*, Doris Sommer presents Fierro, even within the poem, not as the poster of European Romanticism but as its whipping boy, unwittingly cast aside to mimic "the criminal and the vagabond that whites expect gauchos to be" (111). If so, then the implication is that Hernández had knowingly turned the stereotype on its head long before Borges, only to be cheaply re-stereotyped in "El sur." The debate below is one of identity, yet also of intertextual corruption, marked by a modern bent that perceives later texts as more sophisticated than their sources.

Borges' "Nuestro pobre individualismo," an essay in *Otras inquisiciones*, opens with this sentence: "Las ilusiones del patriotismo no tienen término" (Oc 2: 658). Initially, the statement seems to mean that patriotism itself, the notion of possessing some form of national cohesion through associations which everyone recognises as patently theirs, is merely illusory. Instead, however, Borges acknowledges that patriotism has existed in nations other than Argentina. This is not to say that it existed as a particularly enlightened or desirable force
for the proffered examples are all ironic, but Milton, nonetheless, was able to note “que Dios tenía la costumbre de revelarse primero a Sus ingleses” (658). The suggested rationale for patriotism’s continued fictional status in Borges’ homeland is that the Argentine’s self-perception is that of “un individuo, no un ciudadano” (658). The government, the State, the apparatuses and the idea of pervasive social solidarity, remain “una inconcebible abstracción” (658), not in the sense of a threatening, Foucauldian gouvernementalité but simply undreamt of, close to the culmination of Foucault’s own destabilising quest. This condition apparently finds its synthesis in a single passage of Hernández’s poem:

Profundamente lo confirma una noche de la literatura argentina: esa desesperada noche en la que un sargento de la policía rural gritó que no iba a consentir el delito de que se matara a un valiente y se puso a pelear contra sus soldados, junto al desertor Martín Fierro. (658)

For Borges, Cruz’s sudden defection presents a nihilistic instant when the police sergeant recognises the artificiality of the law which he upholds and then transgresses. It is an epiphany, a moment when a slave mentality becomes heroic, when he realises the possibilities of his individuality. The image is enticing, one which is indicative of Borges’ general perception of Hernández’s protagonist as an outlaw enjoying a voluntarily remote, limitless life amidst limitless plains, and this is by no means an extraordinary assessment of the poem’s ontology. Jean Franco, in keeping with her concerns over gender, prefers the term hombría, but it is still “hombría pitted against all those forces - exploitation, corruption, injustice - which threaten the individual” (53). “Nuestro pobre individualismo” is Borges’ most explicit, reductive consideration of the Romantic nature of Martín Fierro, but his thoughts elsewhere are consistent. In the prologue to Paulino Lucero, there is a comparison between Hilario Ascasubi’s all
encompassing description of the gaucho’s social framework and that of
Hernández’s poem, “el caso personal de un paisano al que las
vicisitudes llevan a la frontera y después al desierto” (Prólogos [P]
19). Similarly, in “La poesía gauchesca,” Borges asks himself the
question “¿Qué fin se proponía Hernández?” (Oc 1: 182), to which the
immediate response is “Uno, limitadísimo: la historia del destino de
Martín Fierro, referida por éste” (182). These thoughts are neither
penumbral nor even subtle, and in their obsession with the uniform,
macro-individualised Argentinian they miss a reading of Fierro as a
self-confessed slave mentality, the product of a number of ideological
apparatuses which he continues to desire. Although we may differ on the
exact definitions of such structuring authorities, and the extent to
which they are included, to engage the text at this level is already to
have exceeded the engagement of Borges, to reinscribe Fierro as more
than nationalist, hyperaesthetic incubus.

Hernández’s gaucho considers himself to be a “Cristiano” (pt.2,
line 782), servile to an “Eterno Padre” (2.705) and informed by the
pedagogy of suffering:

Junta esperencia en la vida
Hasta pa dar y prestar,
Quien la tiene que pasar
Entre sufrimiento y llanto;
Porque nada enseña tanto
Como el sufrir y el llorar. (1.121-26)

There is no explicit portrayal of this God, whether he is close to
Emersonian Unitarianism or another parenthetical form of Christianity,
but this is far from the life-affirming inflictions of Nietzsche’s
ascetic priest, or the Derridan, post-secular messiah. It is a
subservience to at least some form of theology as opposed to
thanatology, to sufferance as teacher, to an ideology modernity would
rewrite, inversely, as an immature snivelling.
If indeed subject to the laws of God, the gaucho’s status as beyond the laws of man is also open to question. At the beginning of the first part, Fierro recalls the satisfaction, the sense of stability, that he enjoyed as a law-abiding family man with steady work. There is nothing angst-ridden or even non-conformist about these earlier, halcyon days, resembling the ever-controlled, panoptically-mediated nature of a Bernadin de St. Pierre (for which the latter would be upbraided by Foucault?), of the labourer:

Y con el buche bien lleno
era cosa superior
irse en brazos del amor
a dormir como la gente,
pa empezar al día siguiente
las fainas del día anterior. (1.199-204)

This initial statement of satisfaction is by no means a disingenuous literary ploy which Hernández intends to disillusion or offset against the subsequent infinite delights of a gaucho’s solitary meanderings, but a constant, genuine nostalgia for a more disciplined life. When Fierro deserts from the army he recognises the infringement, the decision to turn outlaw (“Hácelmeles cimarron” [1.803]), but this is no nihilistic moment, no Nietzschean “Yes,” an expression of a determination to become a voluntary exile, a wanderer on the fringes of society who is free to enjoy all the excesses of life’s jouissance. Instead, as Fierro himself states, it is a decision to return to security, to the blissful monotony of domesticity: “Hácelmeles cimarron / Y volverme pa mi pago” (1.803-4). This domesticity no longer exists, and Fierro is forced into aimless roaming, into Romantic journeying, but persistently objects to it, continuing to define the familial stability that he once possessed as a preferable condition:

que el gaucho que llaman vago
no puede tener querencia,
y ansi de estrago en estrago
vive yorando la ausencia. (1.1315-18)
Even in Canto XXXI of Part Two, which is towards the close of the poem when the father is reunited with his sons, the inherently gregarious Fierro remains true to the ideal of establishing a domestic base, of limiting himself to a less errant existence, but is thwarted once more: "No pudiendo vivir juntos / Por su estado de pobreza, / Resolvieron separarse" (2.4583-85). It is not the separation itself that is significant, but the manner in which we acquire this information, the stimulus (or lack thereof) behind the act. Errancy is not acquired as some natural, autochthonous state, the opportunity to quest after an archae now renewed, but rather as a hapless, empty deferral.

Hernández does include an obvious disdain for the legal status quo which is responsible for isolating his protagonist, and yet even after enduring the hostility of the corrupt manipulators of legislation who have cast the gaucho in the role of the criminal, after explicitly acknowledging that "La ley se hace para todos / Mas solo al pobre le rige" (2.4233-34), Fierro does not advocate an absolute dismissal of the notion of a judicial system, but suggests evolutionary change from within. No pleasure is derived from the fugitive’s lawlessness because this particular escapee cherishes the belief that laws themselves are necessary, that we should impose and maintain the limits of social justice. As Fierro states, "Debe el gaucho tener casa, / Escuela, Iglesia y derechos" (2.4827-28), which may reek of Norman Maclean, of a simplistic North American puritanism, modern and nationalist in its own right, but this would imply a negation from within the discourse of competing ideologies, of conditioning processes. In the entire poem, the only stratum of society enjoying a limitless freedom from the artificiality of regulation is that of the Indians, a people who thus absolve themselves from the legal troubles which plague the gaucho:
Hacían el robo á su gusto
Y después se van de arriba,
Se llevaban las cautivas
Y nos contaban que a veces
les descarnaban los pieses,
A las pobrecitas, vivas. (1.511-16)

Of course, the Indians have not made a conscious determination to
exemplify modernity's prelapsarian origin, its locus amoenus, nor is
this the only form Enlightenment may assume, but the nobility of such
alterity is nonetheless a Romantic proposition which Martín Fierro is
permitted to witness and evaluates as an immoral chaos. When the
Indians return to the camp with their booty, they divide the spoils
into equal shares, an honourable act which prompts the following
comment from our non-aphasic payador: "No muestra el indio codicia, /
Ninguna falta comete - / Solo en esto se somete / A una regla de
justicia" (2.639-42). Fierro is not only cognizant of but also affirms
the orderliness of regulated justice, for although this is a statement
of praise it indicates that the Indian, whilst unselfish, has proved
himself to be morally deficient in every other aspect of his behaviour.
Indeed, Indian culture provides a foil to the gaucho's aspiration to
citizenship, not individuality, for at the conclusion of Part One both
Fierro and Cruz cross the frontier between the fixed and the abyssal in
the following fashion:

Le dijo Cruz que mirara
Las últimas poblaciones;
Y á Fierro dos lagrimones
Le rodaron por la cara. (2295-98)

It would seem that neither man is particularly eager to confront his
forthcoming exposure to a land without laws.

The above analysis is the gaucho pace Hernández. My proposal is
not that Martín Fierro presents a trustworthy depiction of the vital
gaucho, a telluric essence, or that it is more faithful than that of an
Ascasubi. Borges' understanding of an inherent, Argentine propensity
for Romantic individualism may be sound. Sarmiento’s archetypal version of “el gaucho malo” (88), defined as “un misántropo particular” (88) in the first sentence of the section dedicated to him in Facundo, may be similarly accurate. This gaucho, however, bears little resemblance to the protagonist of Hernández’s fictional apology which is not the text that Borges endeavours to forge. A contiguous snag is that although Borges is willing to attribute the encapsulation of the supposed rebelliousness of his countrymen to the poem, it is an assertion that affords him little satisfaction. In an article on W. H. Hudson’s The Purple Land Borges praises the Anglo-Argentine for reducing the gaucho to a sidelined, less self-reflective position, for apparently this is a more honest portrayal of the corporeal man: “Alguien observará que en The Purple Land el gaucho no figura sino de modo lateral, secundario. Tanto mejor para la veracidad del retrato, cabe responder” (Oc 2: 735). Whether we consider Hudson’s version to be authoritative or not, the unmentioned Martín Fierro would presumably be grouped with those other texts that represent the gaucho as “autobiográfico y efusivo, que ya es deformarlo” (735). In the Prologue to “El matrero,” Borges is again dissatisfied with Fierro’s presumed Romantic tendencies, denying the historical prevalence (suggested by Hernández, then mythified by the populous) of such errant criminals:

Si el matrero hubiera sido un tipo frecuente, nadie seguiría recordando, al cabo de los años, el apodo o el nombre de unos pocos: Moreira, Hormiga Negra, Calandria, el Tigre del Quequén. Hay distraídos que repiten que el Martín Fierro es la cifra de nuestra complejísima historia. (P 112-13)

There are two possibilities here. The first is to accept Borges’ appraisal of the inherent Romanticism of the Argentine as expounded upon in the aforementioned “Nuestro pobre individualismo,” in which case Hernández’s poem, as Borges reads it, proffers an unfortunately extreme, fictitious example of such individuality which the Argentine
will disastrously but nonetheless naturally countenance. This possibility seems contradictory, for if the word Argentine is synonymous with individualism, surely the real gaucho would have displayed similar characteristics to those of his literary counterpart, and at least some of Martín Fierro's verisimilitude would remain intact. The other, more logical option, is that the Argentine is not inherently misanthropic but has become so through culture, through the fallacious paradigm of Martín Fierro whom the reader perceives as the definitive national figure and through whom, therefore, the Argentine defines himself. Borges' preference for the second is substantiated by an endnote to his prologue to Sarmiento's Recuerdos de provincia:

Sarmiento sigue formulando la alternativa: civilización o barbarie. Ya se sabe la elección de los argentinos. Si en lugar de canonizar el Martín Fierro, hubiéramos canonizado el Facundo, otra sería nuestra historia y mejor. (P 133)

Whilst Sarmiento intermittently expresses a begrudging respect for the lawless gaucho (in González-Echevarría's version this respect is part of Latin America's modernity, its involuntary though necessary epistemological oscillation), and Facundo is, at best, something of a stylistic melange, in Borges the book endorses a programme for social improvement through the limits of discipline and education. Martín Fierro, of course, remains the example of limitless barbarism in the above quotation. The initial choice between these two texts is entirely literary, and yet the claim is that a different selection would have affected the course of history. In short, Borges targets Martín Fierro, Romanticises it (thus succumbing to the popular myth), expresses disdain for such Romanticism, and then claims that history, the Argentine character, has been unhealthily affected by this supposed representation.

Finally, the "Biografía de Tadeo Isidoro Cruz (1829-1874)," a
short story in Borges’ *El Aleph* and one of Kadir’s ur-texts, is defined in the epilogue to the collection as “una glosa al Martín Fierro” (*Oc* 1: 629). The story does culminate in the scene of Cruz’s desertion from the police force, a scene from the original text, but the other, earlier components of the Sergeant’s personal history are almost entirely spurious. In light of the author’s stance regarding Hernández’s poem, this premise would seem to supply the latitude to debunk the Romantic myth of the previous work, to rewrite the past, to impose some restraint on Cruz’s wanderlust and thus establish that the latter was not “un tipo frecuente” (*P* 112). Instead, however, the myth becomes more extravagant than before. In the earlier work Cruz peacefully joins the police at the request of a clement judge. In Borges’ version, Tadeo is forced to confront the same situation as the original Fierro, ensconced in the undergrowth and alerted to the police’s presence by “el grito de un chajá” (562), by nature as opposed to man. A bloody battle ensues, and Cruz is conscripted into the army. In case this display of unreserved lawlessness proves insufficiently emphatic, the narrator provides further information on the gaucho’s lack of loyalty during his military career: “a veces combatió por su provincia natal, a veces en contra” (562). Even history itself is unable to contain this fugitive, for our biographer confesses that “abundan los hiatos” (562) in the data he has managed to gather. There is no portrayal of nor nostalgia for a stable, quotidian existence in the story. Instead, the focus is unashamedly centred on a single instant of a particular night of Cruz’s life, “un acto de esa noche” (562). This instant, of course, is the soldier’s confrontation with Fierro, an outlaw ensconced in the undergrowth who is alerted by a plover. That such decisive moments repeat themselves universalises Cruz’s choice between enslavement and autonomy, a point which the
narrator underscores: "Cualquier destino, por largo y complicado que sea, consta en realidad de un solo momento: el momento en que el hombre sabe para siempre quién es" (562). For Kadir, this potentially infinite repetition is typical of Borges, though a "new beginning" (21), a "supplement" (20) is created in the act of replacement, in this "paradoxical primal scene" (19), so that Borges becomes the master quester. Although the moment is indeed emblematic of the Borges residuum, at least approximating an archae, such universalisation is but a Romanticism for all, still an Enlightenment project, via which every individual is ultimately granted an occasion to embrace their relentless individuality. It may be written as a redeployed "ultimacy" (Barth 31), and Borges as "ironic, critical, the demolisher of all delusions" (González Echevarría 23), the expansionist Borges of "La otra muerte," but the moment is closest to Trigo's "Yes," and its not so new redeployment offers familiar, reductive choices:

The first is a reaction of extreme despair that would be accompanied by the gnashing of teeth and the cursing of the bearer of such ill tidings. The second and obviously preferable response is an affirmation of the divinity of such a thought. In Nietzsche's view the hypothesis of eternal recurrence - or, more accurately, the acceptance of this hypothesis - has the power to transform the individual and to place the heaviest weight on human action. (Holub 62)

Cruz, in assisting Fierro once again, opts for the appropriate nihilistic response, abandoning his role as civilisation's enforcer to become the unencumbered criminal, accepting "su íntimo destino de lobo, no de perro gregario" (563), and Latin Americanism's theoretical expectations are read back to it, another version of the Nietzschean nobleman who "cannot learn from experience, but again and again falls into the same ditch into which he has fallen before" ("TF" 639). Even if we concede Borges' assumption that Martín Fierro is informed by Romanticism, the original pales in comparison to the consummate
extremity of the "Biografía de Tadeo Isidoro Cruz." The latter seems closer to Mary Louise Pratt's deprecatory rendition of a nineteenth-century metropolis that "seized on gaucho culture as the source of a fiercely androcentric esthetic of authenticity" (187) than to Robert Alter's Borges-inspired "The more books that are written, the more complicated with meaning are the books that exist before them" (228). This new work is an effectively stark short story, but rather than complicating its predecessor, the poem is reduced to its presumed elements. The only additional complication is but quantitative, since more has now been written. Borges may have diagnosed the mythic legacy of Hernández's text as the cause of a peculiarly Argentine waywardness, yet Borges himself is more responsible than Hernández for the perpetuation of that myth. Though certainly a paradigm of modernity, and viably Latin Americanism's proto-author of third spaces, its invitation to the arrivant, whether Borges ever intended to voice these spaces beyond Nietzsche is dubious, as Steiner, in a different, overwhelmingly complimentary context, glimpses:

Nonetheless, despite its formal universality and the vertigo breadths of his allusive range, the fabric of Borges' art has severe gaps. Only once, in a story called 'Emma Zunz,' has Borges realized a credible woman. Throughout the rest of his work, women are the blurred objects of men's fantasies or recollections. Even among men, the lines of imaginative force in a Borges fiction are stringently simplified. The fundamental equation is that of a duel. Pacific encounters are cast in the mode of a collision between the 'I' of the narrator and the more or less obtrusive shadow of 'the other one.' When a third person turns up, his will be, almost invariably, a presence alluded to or remembered or perceived, unsteadily, at the very edge of the retina. The space of action in which a Borges figure moves is mythical but never social. (31)

As much as neither side always welcomes the following association, there is another way of theorising the tropology of the third space, of the Nietzschean "Yes," though still within Latin Americanist hegemony, via the postboom and its non- or
extraliterariness. Donoso always feared that his espousal of novelesque revolution would be superseded in kind, that possibly "dentro de un tiempo el boom, que hoy parece tan fresco y audaz, será equiparado por los jóvenes venideros con un establishment" (29), and in the closing pages of his personal history he even concedes that a new, avant-garde "anti-literatura" (94) has already arrived. There is nothing intrinsically Latin American in out-radicalising an already radical institution, for Bakhtin had emphasised "the novel’s special relationship with extraliterary genres" (33) in other contexts and long before. Similarly, in Robbe-Grillet’s new novel "literature is rejected into the category of the frivolous" (35). It is arguable, however, that Latin Americanism’s preexistent, modish acceptance of critical theory snatched at this next ultimacy as another, potentially risky out-clause. John Beverley’s tactic in Against Literature (1993) (meaning “in an antagonistic relation with literature” [vii] as opposed to writing with an integral, literary backdrop), is to assimilate the likes of “Said’s magisterial Culture and Imperialism” (xiii) and Rama’s La ciudad letrada, while simultaneously protecting his own work against critique by its supposedly less indoctrinated post-position. In Said, Salman Rushdie’s The Satanic Verses is a de-authorising, oppositional work, but for Beverley this escape from authority is at least initially literary and elitist, an example of “the danger that even the most iconoclastic or ‘progressive’ literature is simply forging new forms of hegemony” (xiii). The pre-ciudad letrada Rama “championed a form of left literary modernism” (3) (and as mentioned earlier the solutions of La ciudad letrada itself are little more than this), and is therefore still a participant in the “idealization of literature” (3), the disciplined discourse of the university. Although Borges the librarian, the ur-archivist, would doubtless have been dismayed at his apparent
involvement in the hermeneutics of such an endeavour, Beverley footnotes (obscured, perhaps, since we are now “against literature”) his reading of “El Sur” as “a highly literary version of the disintegration of the ciudad letrada” (144), a corroboration of Said, Rama, and ultimately his own anti-thesis. In other words, whilst we may still read The Satanic Verses or the Borgesian aporia, they will only carry us so far, for their solutions are paradoxically complicit in their target. Literature has enjoyed its “protracted cultural revolution” (30), but has lost its edge, and we should read even its most ostensibly disillusioned exempla, via Beverley’s second disillusionment or “agnostic position” (21), as prostheses.

In lieu of Borges, or rather as literature cedes its privileges to become “one discourse among many” (Beverley 22), Latin Americanism’s focus should encompass the mass media, “a photo of a young combatant of the Salvadoran FMLN wearing a Madonna T-shirt” (Beverley 6), and the testimonio (particularly Rigoberta Menchú). However gingerly or indeed ethically this gesture is phrased in Against Literature, and as must be obvious I have no objection to the study of multiple discourses from coffee bars to masochism as art, the ever unstated implication is that this new focus is less burdened by autocratic mediation than Said or Rama, and that even they are precluded. An Alonso, who at best is rescuing past texts as emblematic of present theory and then claiming that theory to be the essence of Latin American autochthony, is now undermined as inculcated, as is McGuirk’s still mosaically, ubiquitously literary attempt at no such rescue. Within the dynamics of Latin Americanism, furthermore, this undermining is a viable supersession in kind. Beverley relativises former relativisers (though I hope, by now, to have recontextualised their discourse as dogma in its own right), and in his conspicuous lack of pretension may even
capture unexpected readers who were always suspicious of neo-Borgesian questing, the kind who wrote in to The Atlantic Monthly after its publication of Barth’s ultimacies with comments such as “Sir: John Barth doesn’t exist. You invented him” (Geoffrey Taylor 48), or “Sir: I can’t quite think why you bothered to publish the article by John Barth. I can’t understand it. Neither can my son-in-law, who is young and bright” (Edith Smith 48). They too have a possible stake in this radical future, which is where Latin Americanism was epiphanically leading, a continuation which nonetheless defines itself as a break, and Beverley’s interpretation of the combatant’s Madonna T-shirt as another gesture of rebellion (rather than some form of Salvadoran authenticity corrupted by the West) is surely feasible. Where, however, is this? Just as Alonso et al. operate under the paradigm of modernity, and Trigo’s Nietzschean “Yes” is still a projected origin, a project of the modern, Beverley is prejudiced, not only against literature and in favour of the mass media, but in favour of limited, parenthetical representations.

It is not simply that the status of testimonio as an extraliterary genre, including Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú y así me nací la conciencia, is fragile since obviously literary, even, in Menchú’s case, after doubts regarding the tinkering of her interlocutor, Elizabeth Burgos-Debray, and David Stoll’s questioning of the text’s historical accuracy. There is, within my context and in any discussion of the testimonio as hypostasis, the hubris of modernity, its pre-foiled drive to out-think itself, to sweep the rug out from underneath its field while securing the furniture, but Beverley is at least somewhat aware of this and never claims the testimonio as entirely non-literary. Instead, still within my context, Borges’ Tadeo Cruz and the now single, perhaps dreamed death of Juan Dahlmann in the pampas, morph
into Menchú, and in Menchú as Beverley reads her, “the boundary between literature and real life is transgressed” (84), revealing “the power of literature as a form of social action, but also its radical insufficiency” (84). The now conventional anti-epistemological quotations, of the “‘For the Indian, it is better not to study’” (cited in Beverley, 14) ilk, are here, incorporated as a denial of “literacy and book learning” (95) that assures “the powerful textual affirmation of the speaking subject” (75), “something of the experience of the body itself” (96), “the urgency for radical social change” (107) and Menchú’s ratifying of “Fernández Retamar’s celebration – in Caliban and elsewhere – of Latin American alterity” (114). Of more concern than the degree of the testimonio’s literariness, therefore, and even than Beverley’s voiding of the field, is the nature of his replacement, his analeptic, for Menchú becomes the explicit successor to “Calibán” and “Nuestra América,” to “the picaresque” (73) and Latin America’s “armed struggles for national liberation” (72). Whilst this is a form of rescue, a form of memory, it is willfully reductive, regardless of whether we are to retrieve it from the mass media or literature, for it is a reinvocation of Fernández Retamar’s deleterious bullet points of history, an elision of the bulk of Latin America’s past. We are exhorted to abandon literature while simultaneously supplanting it with only those popular voices, a succession of militant “origins,” which resemble the present reduction.

As a rescuer of sorts, a protector of at least a diminished number of “texts,” Beverley is compelled, having escaped his discipline, to pre-defend his version of history (which is indeed vulnerable, even as a false positive) from the future. It would be more consistent to throw Menchú to the lions, to whence Beverley has thrown almost everyone else, but modernity’s discourse obliges it to pretend
that it has out-radicalised history to an untouchable degree. The lion in this case is postmodern cultural studies, of which McGuirk is perhaps the most fervent example in my context, and which Beverley predicts "will be naturalized in the curriculum and begin to approximate something like an epistemological (and elite) 'Faculty Club'" (20). An espousal of "radical social change" (Beverley 107) is incompatible with nebulous debate regarding the possible non-truth of the non-present arrivant or ambiguous third spaces. In Beverley's words, "There is the danger that such a celebration [akin to Fernández Retamar's above] . . . may involve simply a new variation of the ideology of the literary . . . something like a pop sublime" (19).

Menchú is permitted to semi-transcend literature, but she is not to become some metonymic, transcendent alterity or aesthetic utopia. A Levinas-propelled Todorov, therefore, the Todorov of The Conquest of America (or herein the Derrida of Specters of Marx, or Symptoms, Risks and Strategies . . .) is to be mistrusted. In all too familiar terms, Todorov explicitly perceives his work, in its conclusion, as at best contributing to Levinas' "transcendence of self which calls for epiphany of the [capitalised] Other" (250), as an attempt "to become conscious of the relativity (hence of the arbitrariness) of any feature of our culture" (254), whereas for Beverley this is an abstraction based on an idealisation of alterity, "a misrecognition of the nature and limitations of the representational systems developed by the indigenous civilizations" (41). Beverley's purview, his protection, is oddly proactive and reactionary, for whilst he acknowledges that an extraliterary Menchú is, at least via her testimonio, fanciful, the extraliterariness must be maintained in order to enunciate his political maieutics: "Although it is easy to deconstruct this illusion, it is also necessary to insist on it to understand the testimonio's
peculiar aesthetic-ideological power" (81). It is presumably acceptable for the institutionalised apparatus, the postmodernity of cultural studies, to operate on other literature, but it would perform this same operation on Beverley’s vulnerably privileged testimonio only, and the redeployment of Todorov’s vocabulary is telling, “at the expense of relativizing the moral and political urgency demanded by the real-life referent it [the testimonio] narrates” (82).

One indication of the frailty of this protection is the turmoil, already infamous in the relatively brief history of testimonio criticism, surrounding Brett Levinson’s “Neopatriarchy and After: I, Rigoberta Menchú as Allegory of Death” (1996), in which Levinson recontextualises Menchú’s community, admittedly from his own non-Quiché perspective but via Menchú’s own work, as yet another patriarchy. This failure to insulate Menchú was denounced, most vociferously by Gordon Brotherston, as a theft of her alterity by a postmodern academic. In The Exhaustion of Difference: The Politics of Latin American Cultural Studies (2001), Alberto Moreiras suggests that the genre of the testimonio is guarded with such sensitivity as to be in “danger of fetishization” (228), and he reinterprets the Levinson / Brotherston debacle accordingly:

To understand the Maya-Quiché community . . . as invested in a form of patriarchy is not to slander the community or to deprive it of its purity. It is rather to respect its history, by rejecting the double standard according to which third-world or resistant texts should only be treated abjectly, with ‘affect, empathy, or commiseration’ (Levinson 38) and never ‘intellectualized.’ (219)

Whether or not we concede Levinson’s point, his focus is a conditioning process beyond Beverley’s reduction of history. In this sense, the re-authorisation of “Neopatriarchy” is appropriate, but rather than simply justifying this exception to a field Moreiras’ broader concern is the field itself, as may be inferred from the plaintive rhetorical question
at the close of his reinterpretation: "... is that an undigestible
[sic] scandal for Latin Americanism?" (235). That my response would
coincide with Moreiras' here is ultimately little more than a
coincidence, for his strategy is not consistently or necessarily that
of recontextualisation. In the negation of a prior negation, we
coincide.

The Exhaustion of Difference's intention is to exhaust Latin
Americanism in its contemporary form, to redefine cultural studies as
"in a process of consolidation as epistemic power" (17). In short,
Moreiras, like but now superseding Beverley, thus inverts that power's
own perception of itself, claiming that "a newfound theoretical
interest in the subaltern may constitute a new avatar of more
traditional tools for US cultural domination" (10). This neoteric
discourse, still a "thinking in the ruins of thinking" (14), "cannot go
beyond the affirmation of an identitarian space-in-resistance" (5), a
"homogenized difference" (36) with "no productive notion of an outside"
(20). As opposed to re-mediating the field, however, to producing a
more viable inside, Moreiras' own, paradoxical reliance on the
discourse of modernity surfaces, for having supposedly eclipsed Latin
Americanism an outside is now, at last, visible. If this desire for and
apparent apprehension of an out-clause is not already disconcertingly
familiar, not already a Nietzschean "Yes," then perhaps a glimpse of
Moreiras' intellectual formation, the prelude to his outside, may serve
as a reminder:

A number of contemporary theorists have made similar
points, and they all have a Hegelian genealogy, for instance,
Louis Althusser talking about the ideological state apparatus,
and Fredric Jameson on capital in its third stage. Their
discourse is not so drastically different in this respect from
the quasi-totalizing parameters Jacques Lacan set in reference to
the unconscious, Martin Heidegger and Jacques Derrida regarding
Western ontotheology and the age of planetary technology, or
Michel Foucault regarding the radically constituting sway of the
power-knowledge grids. All these thinkers come to the far side of their thinking by opening up, usually in a most ambiguous manner, the possibility of a thinking of the outside that will then become a redemptive or salvific region. (41)

Arguably, this reading understates the actual anagnorises of at least some of these thinkers. Foucault attempted to redeploy Nietzsche in the form of physical rebellion, regardless of the latter's proposed ideology, and Derrida, even amidst the pervasive ineffability of Specters of Marx, spies the arrivant's non-presence in the "tele-technosciences" (169). As ventured in the above quotation, however, there remains an ambiguity in these positions, in the lack of purity of their deconstruction, an unutterable, fideist redemption through and against which Moreiras will define himself. This is not a reconstruction of ruins, therefore, but again, the metacritical parabiosis of Latin Americanism and modern theory, and a grandiose contribution which will displace both simultaneously via their own terms. Thus, the prolegomena to such an outside must inevitably be epiphenomenal, a series of intertextual borrowings from the equivocal "tradition" above. As the space of an outside progressively opens, this indebtedness becomes more obvious. The revisiting of the aforementioned ruins concludes with "There is nothing, in my opinion, wrong in principle with any kind of ruinous thinking" (Moreiras 16). Immanuel Wallerstein's "'Perhaps we should deconstruct without the erection of structures to deconstruct, . . . trying merely to remember in which direction we are going'" (cited in Moreiras, 78) is sanctioned. The reinvigoration of a debilitated Latin Americanism must be reinvigorated, with a "poisoned love" (97), "through as relentless and savage a practice of clearing as possible. Call it a labor of the negative . . . . This is not abstract thought or mysticism of any kind" (299). With the exception of the last sentence, included perhaps to
ward off the redemptive ambivalence of former thinkers' post-secular neo-messianicity in favour of a more specific outside, we are at least on the same page as Latin Americanism's earlier manifestations, though without an object for our quest. Still in familiarly non-specific, theoretical terms, Moreiras repeatedly defines the positive form of the outside (though "positive" is always a misnomer within the negation of his own discourse) as the introduction of "Latin Americanist thought to nonknowledge and that would transform it into a nonholder of the nontruth of the real" (25). This process of recognition of Latin America's "untranslative excess" (23), of allowing it to remain perpetually contingent, is also characterized, pace Lacan, as converting "Latin Americanism into a proper interlocutor for the hysteric" (82), with the latter apparently representing the real. Moreiras' least mystical rendering of the forecast, however, lies in his promotion of a "solidarity with the singular" (21), and the exhortation, reminiscent of the Foucauldian battle cry, that "A chance must be taken, on the basis of the Nietzschean perhaps, which does not entirely reduce the sinister possibility of the utterly dystopian or monstrous [sic] future" (21). In other words, the affair between Latin Americanism and poststructuralism coalesces in The Exhaustion of Difference, only to produce another version of hysteria as reality, another form of aphasia as its archae, a bizarrely Nietzschean "No" in lieu of Trigo's more consistently Nietzschean "Yes." This "No," which is also presented as the ethical outside of our metacritical discourse, may pass unenunciated, for it is a refusal to be represented, a point of suspension between a possibly silent noncompliance and the threat of that noncompliance's reinscription into hegemony. Silence, of course, is not a common word in the neo-Nietzschean purists' vocabulary (they are generally trifling with their lexis in order to reveal its status
as exchange value), and this reticent nature of Moreiras’ outside does
preclude him from excessive textual commentary on its corroborating
application. There are, however, non-transcendent specifics, as
promised, and the following are two such exempla from the book’s third
chapter, which has the advantage of being the last chapter written.

The first passage, which includes a relatively passive incidence
of naysaying, is from Harriet Beecher Stowe’s Uncle Tom’s Cabin, and I
quote it in full:

“You belong to the church, eh?”
“Yes, Mas’r,” said Tom, firmly.
“Well, I’ll soon have that out of you. I have none o’yer
bawling, praying, singing niggers on my place, so remember. Now,
mind yourself,” he said, with a stamp and a fierce glance of his
gray eye, directed at Tom, “I’m your church now! You understand,
- you’ve got to be as I say.”
Something within the silent black man answered No! and, as
if repeated by an invisible voice, came the words of an old
prophetic scroll, as Eva had often read them to him, - “Fear not!
For I have redeemed thee. I have called thee by name. Thou are
MINE!” (cited in Moreiras, 122)

Moreiras reads Tom’s inner negation, as I would suggest he must given
his hermeneutics, as “an absolute refusal of representation”(122), a
“silent refusal to submit to consolidated or hegemonic power” (123)
which presents itself in the form of the master and slavery. Via this
reading, the outside maintains its inviolable ethics. There is no
mention whatsoever, however, that the enabling, conditioning process
behind this “No!” is Tom’s church, though the passage is rife with
religion’s ideological superstructure, with a self-avowed form of
representation that Moreiras would doubtless find hegemonic. It is not
even mentioned, as with Levinson’s attribution of patriarchy to Menchú,
in order to negate it, but is simply absent. It would seem that, as
either theorists or Latin Americanists, we are now reduced to questing
after such moments of silent negation while also decontextualising
them, even if the negation explicitly demands to be recontextualised.
In just a few lines, which Moreiras himself has selected, Tom’s constructed, non-hysterical past, the very telos which permits Moreiras’ apprehension of an outside, is eliminated, an elimination which is itself, though perhaps not immediately analogous to slavery, closer to the master’s discourse than to Tom’s.

The second passage is from Martín Luis Guzmán’s account of the Mexican Revolution, El águila y la serpiente. Moreiras’ reading is akin to the above, and I include it in part as a repetition, lest the extremity of the first be dismissed as aberrant or of my own invention. In the passage, the zapatistas command the presidential palace, and are visited by the narrator’s villista delegation. The zapatistas are drunk, and their lack of decorum is mediated as out of place with their temporary, presidential surroundings. Shortly, following a moment of "‘deep silence’" (cited in Moreiras, 124) between the delegation and the zapatistas, villista soldiers take the palace without resistance. Moreiras, again, offers this lack of action as an outside moment, the "abandonment or suspension of the political" (125), a silent, zapatista negation that implicitly says "I will not be where you place me, in a context in which hegemonic thinking can only at most place everything, place obsessively" (126). Is this misplacement really where Latin Americanism should and indeed desires to be, its noble gesture of singularity, trapped, pastless and futureless, in a hysterical stupor of negation, and how different is this to the position of Taylor’s Massera, or Beaupied’s Castro? That question is not rhetorical, and in response I conclude, on a note of cautious optimism, with an exception in the criticism, of which there are few, and an exception in literature, of which there are more than the criticism will allow.

Focusing on the dictatorships of the seventies and eighties in Latin America’s Southern Cone, Amy K. Kaminsky’s non-mystical though
risky After Exile: Writing the Latin American Diaspora (1999) combines historical research, fiction, and extraliterary, cultural readings in an analysis of both those physically dislocated and those dislocated at home. Even in the contemporary absence of the dictatorships, in the theft of their history these actual Latin Americans are suspended between new and former beginnings, and obliged to read the intervening years parenthetically. One of Kaminsky’s sources is the Latin Americanist Mabel Morana, who “speaks of an evening in Uruguay when she emptied a room full of Uruguayan intellectuals, a number of whom had, like her, lived in exile and were members of what she has called ‘la generación fantasma,’ by asking what was being done to get the murderers to trial” (20). This anecdote captures a very different hermeneutics to those of Latin Americanism’s oscillating, much sought after modernity, to Trigo’s “Yes” or Moreiras’ “No,” for here, with almost the same vocabulary, is the spectre of a real arrivante, someone who has endured “the suffering caused by literal displacement” (Kaminsky xi), the parenthesis, and yet attempts to reconstruct the voided telos. Is the emptying of the room comparable to the zapatistas’ emptying of the palace? I am, of course, synthesising Kaminsky with my own context, but she is also aware that the theory, even its postulated outside, is inadequate. Instead, beyond Latin Americanism’s censor, in lieu of the reimposition of neo-epiphanic thought, Kaminsky opens herself, from her initial pages, to the risk of mnemotechnia: “I am on the side of those, like Mabel Moraña, who want these stories told, who will tend their memory, however complicated by our understanding of the partiality of knowledge and situated meaning” (xviii). It would be contradictory to write this book from within a theory that enforces intellectual exile, for the exiles themselves have already experienced the hysteria of third spaces and, via the admitted “construction” of
other memories, wish to forget them. The act of sedition here is similar to Fuentes’ reinvoked silences, and yet now “history can be known, reread, and drawn upon for the present” (Kaminsky 111), and the combatants in Madonna T-shirts are replaced by Uruguayan rockeros who “rebek against the ban on memory” (Kaminsky 112). If “the list of classic utopian models headed by Marxism quite determinedly excludes feminism” (Kaminsky 106), how is that list to mediate these others who would doubt its own premises in order to communicate their difference? In Kaminsky’s, counter-Foucauldian version, “Making meaning is a form of naming reality and one’s place in it and is for that reason the exercise of a kind of power. It is a means of taking action, a way to stamp a difference on what has been the same” (98). We are closer, via this methodology, within literature but in distinction to Bakhtin, to explaining Socrates’ noesis, T. S. Eliot’s mediated logos, the still popular anamnesis of a Graham Greene, an Amalia, or a María, to the secret meaning of Thomas Pynchon’s Tristero which his heroine, Oedipa Maas, is so often misread as postmodernly un- and re-ravelling, as if it did not exist: “Another mode of meaning behind the obvious, or none. . . . there either was some Tristero beyond the appearance of the legacy America, or there was just America and if there was just America then it seemed the only way she could continue, and manage to be at all relevant to it, was as an alien, unfurrowed, assumed full circle into some paranoia” (150-51).

I shall end, therefore, non-mosaically and teleologically, with metaphors of spinning, first with Rodrigo Cánovas’ interpretation of Pinochet’s dictatorship, and then with the words of Luisa Valenzuela’s Alfredi, who spuriously diagnoses the Señora’s post-exilic sickness in Realidad nacional desde la cama. Neither overtly references Latin Americanism, modernity, or Foucault’s thread-disorderers, but I trust
the analogy is obvious. Both seem to have attained maturity without becoming monsters of dystopia. The quotations are deliberately left in English, and in Kaminsky, the secondarily constructed discourse of a North American academic, though hopefully they are still meaningful:

As Rodrigo Cánovas points out, "Authoritarian societies are characterized by their prohibition against dialogue within a community." Cánovas goes on to argue that this censorship induces the individual to forget any sense of the self as part of a collectivity.

In the first years of the dictatorship in Chile, the interruption of the dialogue generates a collective aphasia. At the level of culture, aphasia implies speech that says nothing, an amorphous weave of signifiers that is the equivalent of what linguists call, simply, 'noise.' Besides constituting a symptom of the loss of a community’s cultural referents (having to with ideological discourses that are absolutely ineffective in explaining a new historical situation), this dislocated language is the effect of a disruptive censorship, which the community has internalized.

"You’re suffering from what we call ‘willow sickness,’ it’s very common in this part of the world. Sufferers show no desire to move, only to look, to remember, to tie up loose ends." (120)
Epilogues

Mau grado os defeitos do confronto, Canudos era a nossa Vendéia.

Os Sertões: Campanha de Canudos. Euclides da Cunha (2: 28)

A growing body of theoretical discussion defines our own contemporary literature in terms of the dispersion of the self, of the unimpeded crossing of national boundaries and crossing out of national histories, of the triumph of pastiche, superabundant citation and other forms of explicit intertextuality over originality and the integrity of the individual imagination, in short, of Postmodernism. This may well be no more than a claim that we are finally taking a first step beyond Romanticism - but the jury is still out.

“Lyric Poetry of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries.”
Andrew Bush (The Cambridge History of Latin American Literature 1: 400)

I

Euclides da Cunha’s Os Sertões (1902), at its simplest, recounts the four attacks (1896-97) of a still nascent Brazilian Republic against Antônio Conselheiro’s reactionary community in Canudos. It is more than this, of course, for da Cunha, army officer turned engineer turned journalist (reporting on the events during the last month of the conflict), opens with Brazil’s geography, with nineteenth-century positivism, a scientist’s determination of how both the land and the inferiority of the mestiço race necessarily produced Conselheiro’s superstitious religious fanaticism and that of his followers. As the campaign proceeds, however, the ordered military strategy and European matériel of the Republican forces are repeatedly thwarted by the elements and guerrilla tactics of the sertanejos’ admittedly more numerous though less equipped bands. The journey into the backlands is not merely physical but temporal, and hence troublesome to rationalise in modern terms. Da Cunha’s positivism is challenged, and, as his regular army is compelled to behave irregularly, to deploy the same tactics as Conselheiro’s jagunços, so the discourse of Os Sertões becomes less strategised, ceding its formerly scientific, superior
ground to the immediacy of a journalist's testimony and respect for the rebels. Although the text owes more to the epic than Facundo, its stylistic mélange is reminiscent of Sarmiento's, and its paradoxical undermining of its own discursive premises is similar to Facundo's often unwitting defence of the supposed target.

Its critical heritage is also comparably illustrious. In brief, Beverley reads Os Sertões as a proto-testimonio, a precursor to Menchú's extraliterariness and thus privileged (72). In La ciudad letrada, Rama summarises da Cunha's version as a pessimistic account of civilisation, as precisely the kind of anti-lettering lettering that epistemology must incongruously demand of itself (17). More lengthily, in Myth and Archive González Echevarría devotes an entire sub-chapter to the work, re-writing the violence of the real sertanejos in his own post-Foucauldian image as "a general deviance from, sometimes literally a rupture with, the norm, the law" (128). This violence eluded the Republic's interpretive abilities, and the same elusion is then "re-enacted by Os Sertões" (128). When confronted with the rebels' "cauldron of primitive perversity" (135), da Cunha's text becomes "as much a pell-mell collection of disparate fragments as the Counselor's sermons" (134). The parallelling of reality and narrative allows González Echevarría to inscribe, simultaneously, oscillatingly, the myth of Canudos' "time of origin" (133) or its "prelapsarian opening" (138), and the destruction of an archival hermeneutics in the quest to capture such an origin. That da Cunha must end his narrative abruptly, with the decapitation of Conselheiro, is seen as a coup de grâce, both to the Republic's pyrrhic victory and to the subsequent text, an implicit admission that the "Other Within" (97) has not yielded as predicted, that "there is no organic way of ending the story" (139).
In fairness to the above, moreover, da Cunha does seem to have primed Conselheiro and the hinterlands, even in his vocabulary, for their later incorporation into Latin Americanism's post-Foucauldian paradox. The climate of the sertão is itself limned as aphanitic, ever wary of severe drought in times of plenty, and this dichotomy is then reproduced in the psyche of its inhabitants. The latter are classified as "histéricos" (1: 96), "frágeis, irrequietos, inconstantes" (1: 97), and the archetypal backlander as a "permanente contraste entre extremas manifestações de força e agilidade e longos intervalos de apatia" (1: 106), in turn a "Perfeita tradução moral dos agentes físicos da sua terra" (1: 106). Conselheiro's rampant subjectivism is but another case of this delirium, another "revolta contra a ordem natural" (1: 132) (which is not, I hasten to add, the order of the backlands, but da Cunha's science), operating "nas fronteiras oscilantes da loucura, nossa zona mental onde se confundem facínoras e heróis, reformadores brilhantes e aleijões tacanhos, e se acotovelam gênios e degenerados" (1: 134). The patients, in other words, now control the asylum, or at least an asylum, and, caught between moments of unfathomable insight and madness, they semi-occupy a perpetually in-between space, the space of a third term or aphasia. As if this paroxysmal, neo-Romantic origin were not enough of an invitation to Beverley, Rama, and González Echevarría, the patients are sufficiently organised to have established a "População multiforme" (1: 168), a multi-racial, multi-classed heterodoxy, and they appear within a text that becomes an *ars combinatoria* in its own right, progressively representing them not simply as "Fora da pátria" (2: 271), as beyond nationalism, but beyond its representation, beyond its cartography, as the contradictory inhabitants of "uma ficção geográfica" (2: 272). It is in its self-defeating intimation of this beyond, within González Echevarría's
master aetiology of such parenthetically glimpsed origins, that Os Sertões, as it fraternises with the sertanejos, encounters its "transcendental language" (134).

One of the weaknesses in such transcendence is that any post-Foucauldian must perceive thought as increasingly abstract over time, that nineteenth-century positivism is more sophisticated and therefore more referentially bankrupt than its precursors, whereas González Echevarría's own parenthetical schema is closer to the modernity of Republican idealism than da Cunha's, even within the pages of Os Sertões. In a vignette of Floriano Peixoto, Da Cunha defines the former Brazilian President's methodology as necessarily "combatente e demolidora" (2: 68), since he was obliged to dispel any lingering monarchist atavism while also quelling any customary, post-revolutionary unrest. Although unintentional, this process guaranteed a frenzy of microcosmic, supersessive revolutions, via Peixoto's own ideology: "Destruira e criara revoltosos. Abatera a desordem com a desordem" (2: 69). As da Cunha bemoans, the first Republican government's legacy to Brazil thus mutated into a "cópia grosseira de um jacobinismo" (2: 69), but I would suggest that it is also its legacy to González Echevarría, who reads the sertanejos as nothing more than an unintelligible, mythic origin which is projected into the future in order to demonstrate the fallacy of Republican positivism. As I attempted to clarify in earlier chapters on the Enlightenment and Foucault, this kind of revolutionary paradigm or demolition is entirely comprehensible within modern theory, since it is operating on an epigonal version of the same revolutionary paradigm itself. González Echevarría's distancing or undercutting of da Cunha is a distancing in kind, and, tellingly, Os Sertões' overt awareness of the fragility of its own discourse is excised from Myth and Archive. Da Cunha knows, and
states explicitly, that "O feitichismo político exigia manipansos de
farda" (2: 70), that "A paixão patriótica roçava, derrancada, pela
insânia" (2: 138), that the Republic creates its own myths in the form
of spuriously dead heroes who ultimately turn up alive and well. As he
himself frequently ventures, "tornamos, revolucionariamente, . . . mais
fundo o contraste entre o nosso modo de viver e o daqueles rudes
patrícios mais estrangeiros nesta terra do que os imigrantes da Europa.
Porque não no-los separa um mar, separam-no-los três séculos . . ." (1:
182). Amidst a passage describing Conselheiro's hierarchy within
Canudos, this self-confessed vulnerability of the government's agenda,
its loss of memory and with it intelligibility, becomes specifically
linguistic, an admission of inadequate tools: ". . . digamos em falta
de outro têrmo - porque os léxicos não o têm para exprimir um tumulto
disciplinado - ordem inalterável" (1: 173). Conspicuous by its absence,
what is missing in da Cunha, in González Echevarría's replication of da
Cunha, and for that matter in Beverley, Rama, or more pervasively Latin
Americanism, is any sense of counter-discourse, of counter-memory. Da
Cunha may approximate the ideology of the sertanejos more than the
others, for he is both literarily and literally confronted by them, and
at least reads their creed as a fanatical, pseudo-Catholicism. His
later readers, however, in part because modern theory requires purity
of its archae (a purity Beverley and Brotherston struggle to maintain
in the case of Menchú), because Foucauldian counter-discourse is as
ruinous as the knowledge it counters, never consider the import of the
desired origin itself. Yes, the sertanejos are a dissident, anti-
Republican force, but are they simply a non-archival negation? Is
dissidence, Moreiras' Nietzschean "No," enough? Arguably, we have
assumed them as an out-clause without even pondering the latter's
nature. Whether Rama or Beverley would accept da Cunha's fanatical,
hybrid Catholicism is debatable, and yet, hampered by their metacritical paradigm, they have accepted it without question. González Echevarría submits that Conselheiro's corpse "is now a relic" (140), for "The detached head can provoke delirium in the crowds and unleash a carnivalesque celebration" (140), but the rebellion was both reactionary and ascetically religious, thus parodying his Bakhtinian zeal. As is so often the case in Latin Americanism, we seem to have remembered only in order to forget more efficiently. Da Cunha's alternative title for Os Sertões was "A Nossa Vendéia," and our amnesia on this particular occasion would indeed seem to have eliminated a combination of monarchism and Christianity, as if, as with critical discussions regarding the precise extent of Charles Ryder and Sebastian Flyte's homosexuality in Brideshead Revisited, we were deflected by modish concerns. At best, the silence is akin to that surrounding Poe's purloined letter, except that everyone knows where the purloined Christianity is from the beginning of the story and may be too embarrassed to say so. Mario Vargas Llosa's reinscription of Os Sertões, La guerra del fin del mundo (1981), opens in this gap, where da Cunha and Latin Americanism end, though his sertanejos are less hysterical and less original than perhaps expected.

In the case of a boom author turned postboom, and in a novel that fuses an omniscient narrator with shifts in narrative perspective and tenses, that incorporates such figures as the Brazilian anthropologist Nina Rodrigues from Os Sertões but this time as an army doctor, there is at least the temptation to assume that these devices are isomorphic to the aporia of postmodernity. In Latin America's New Historical Novel, Seymour Menton reasserts Fernando del Paso's dictate to "Spanish American novelists to 'assault' the official versions of history" (22), a "conscious distortion" (23). Leaving aside the apparent impasse that
the official history of Canudos may be nothing more, pace González Echevarría, than this distortion, *La guerra del fin del mundo*, in Lucy D. Harney's version, boasts "a decentering of narrative viewpoint that . . . undermines da Cunha's fundamental assumption of the efficacy of reason in action" (6). Da Cunha, as per the above, had already performed this gesture. If there is any innovation, for Vargas Llosa's shifts are no more traumatic than those of a Dickens or a Balzac, it is closer to Swanson's sobering of the Latin American new novel in general: "The novelty really lies in the presentation" (6). The sertanejos are narrated in past tenses, whereas the Republic and its newspaper must contend with the present, but this recontextualisation of the pasts of the inhabitants of Canudos is a stand against the projected, "original" lunacy of other readings, a previously absent effort to individualise the supposed fanaticism from within.

The events of *La guerra del fin del mundo* are the same four attacks, though without da Cunha's backdrop of scientific treatises on Nature and Man. The Republic, in the wake of *Os Sertões*’ interrogation of its own hermeneutics, is now a parody of itself from the first. It encounters technological difficulties stemming from the terrain of its own country, the country it is seemingly liberating. It is ever uncertain of the numbers of the rebels while supremely certain of its own, and continually presumes, in its rationalised hubris, that "la horda de fanáticos - al igual que tantas otras, fugazmente cristalizadas alrededor de una beata o de un predicador - se había seguramente disuelto" (45). Again, it paradoxically creates its own myths, as if some form of memory were inevitable, not least in the figure of the commander of the third expedition, Colonel Moreira César, "el Robespierre nacional" (133). As but one indication of the ideological schism, prior to the march from Queimadas to Canudos, the
Colonel offers a banquet intended for the troops to the town's poor. An old woman thanks him with the words "'Que la Santa Señora lo proteja, Coronel'" (149), and the latter's response is "'Ésta es la señora que me protege' . . . tocándose la espada." By the fourth expedition, even the soldiers doubt their convictions, discerning in Canudos not sedition but "una sensación curiosa, algo que, si no es la fe, es nostalgia de fe" (428), and their burning of bodies is described by the army's own priest as a "perversidad masónica" (424).

Beyond da Cunha, Vargas Llosa's equally lampooned Scottish phrenologist-cum-freedom fighter, Galileo Gall, is a more extreme example of Republican philosophy, though one who paradoxically considers this particular Republic to be a stable, mendacious superstructure threatened by an intrinsically purer latency, and he therefore pledges his allegiance to the sertanejos. The latter, in Gall's terms, are staging a Marxist revolution in a non-industrialised country, and, in one of several post-Foucauldian moments, he suggests that his new-found brothers (whom, incidentally, he never joins) are panoptically misappropriated as outlaws by the discourse of legality: "la sociedad prepara los crímenes y los criminales son sólo los instrumentos para ejecutarlos" (88). The delirium of modern theory and science climaxes in his violation of his guide's wife, Jurema, an actual sertaneja. Gall questions his actions, "¿Cómo explicar científicamente lo de esta madruga?" (108), and concludes with a Nietzschean "Yes," with "'Yo soy tu injusticia'" (108), as if in spontaneous pain Jurema may finally understand the real conjunction of power and knowledge and is thus disillusioned. Gall's other dilemma is that the rebellion, and the following is inescapable in La guerra del fin del mundo, is not Marxist nor even progressive but reactionary, and does not conform to his reductive, aphasic methodology. As with
González Echevarría, although he is predisposed to favour Canudos' cause, his ideology is closer to the Republic's. In one of several letters to a revolutionary publication in France (one that no longer exists, due to lack of funds, before any of the letters arrive), Gall warns against interpreting the vagunzos as an anachronism: "Me imagino la decepción de muchos lectores y sus sospechas, al leer lo anterior, de que Canudos, como la Vendée cuando la Revolución, es un movimiento retrógrado, inspirado por los curas" (89). He is convinced that the monarchism and religion of the backlands are only superficial, that the Consejero is either manipulating his flock via religious maxims in order to unleash a less mediated version forthwith, or, that given a proper tutelage in the ways of rebellion and science, the sertanejos might become rebels in Gall's image. Even when faced with the Christianity-spewing vagunzos themselves, he remains intent on manifesting to them that "por debajo del ropaje engañoso de las palabras que decían, era capaz de escuchar la contundente verdad de una lucha en marcha" (282), though his analogy to la Vendée is one of the novel's most accurate definitions of the Canudos it sympathetically reinscribes.

In the midst of the fanaticism of Moreira César, Gall and, from his perspective, that of Canudos, the Barón de Cañabrava is the novel's voice of pragmatism. As an Anglophile and former monarchist, the Barón is accused by the Colonel of being "alguien que mira atrás" (213), and yet this is also part of the Republican façade. Like the chameleon in his garden, Cañabrava simultaneously allies himself to the army, Epaminondas Gonçalves' Partido Republicano Progresista, Canudos, and leads the Partido Autonomista. Nevertheless, none of such deal-mongering guarantees intelligibility, and the Barón's mind draws a blank in his confrontation with the Colonel, his house in the backlands
is razed by the rebels, and when he is interviewed after the fall of Canudos he ventures, however impossibly, only oblivion: "'Canudos?' murmuró el Barón. 'Epaminondas hace bien en querer que no se hable de esa historia. Olvidemosla, es lo mejor'" (340). As with Gall, who is incapable of remembering even his own past without guilt, for within his brand of militancy "'La nostalgia es una cobardía'" (126), the Barón's mediation is inadequate, and ultimately he is only able to communicate with his own wife in the act of raping her maid.

All these forms of mediation operate in counterpoint to and are indeed judged against the vagunzos, who, at least in La guerra del fin del mundo, in a later text which is more complicated than its predecessor and thereby exceptional, do not constitute ochlocracy, some pre-thwarted non-quest to a neo-Romantic origin, a nostalgie de la boue, a plethora of Nietzschean "Yeses" or the singularity of a non-archival, Nietzschean "No." I have withheld these purloined reactionaries, artificially, as Latin Americanism does, but they are fleshed by Vargas Llosa from his opening page, representatives, if not of the war of the end of the world, than of the superstructure to end all superstructures. As mentioned above, amidst the multivocal, shifting narrative they are granted pasts, which is already a non-revolutionary, non-modern manoeuvre, and as the pastiches of other ideologies menace the fragility of their own, Vargas Llosa sustains their gravitas. In short, via a Catholicism that is shored up on the medieval imports of the troubadours, the sertanejos' agenda is to deny the separation of Church and State, civil marriage, a new tax system that they consider to be more arbitrary than the collection of tithes, and the secularisation of cemeteries, while believing in the memory of the sixteenth-century king, Dom Sebastião, and the restoration of the Emperor Dom Pedro. It is, therefore, a community that must exist, until
the attempted reality of Canudos, entirely discursively, in language, as a symbol of “todo lo que no se comía ni vestía ni usaba” (353), ousted by an already revolutionary, mainstream Catholicism in league with the Republic. Unlike John Foxe’s Acts and Monuments, or the Münster Anabaptists, or the Branch Davidians, these “rebels” are not questing after an archae but are forced into the parentheses of history by precisely that form of ideology. They still hear Mass whenever possible, accept transubstantiation, and defend their ground both with the assistance of priests and so that “los curas volverían” (76). However fanatical the above may have seemed in Os Sertões, I emphasise that it is not portrayed as such in La guerra del fin del mundo, but rather as a coherent, conservative royalism. As opposed to regenerating the real Chouans, the novel may be summarised as a more organised, more researched version of Trollope’s La Vendée. From the beginning, the Consejero appears as a tearful, humble restorer of chapels, alleviating “la enfermedad, el hambre y los padecimientos de la vida” (16) not with tales of the nobles of the inverted “good,” but with “Cosas que se entendían porque eran oscuramente sabidas desde tiempos inmemorables y que uno aprendía con la leche que mamaba” (16). As he becomes a Fidei Defensor at the helm of a premodern crusade, so Canudos becomes the home of heterogeneity, of a “diversidad humana” (94), and establishes an “espíritu solidario, fraterno” (398). Such inclusion, however, rests on “las prohibiciones de la religion” (59), on converting an array of former übermenschen, and functions via a very different mnemotechnia to Beverley’s extraliterary or Moreiras’ singular solidarities. Yes, the Republic must dispose of the Consejero’s corpse owing to its danger as a potential “Santuario heterodoxo” (433), but again this is not the risk of a Bakhtinian carnival, of González Echevarría’s projected origin.
I am not advocating conservative, Christian royalism as the fundamental in-clause of Latin America. In *La guerra del fin del mundo*, nonetheless, it is one, and one that is eliminated, still more astonishingly than in the case of *Os Sertões* though not within my broader context of Latin Americanism, by the criticism. Menton reads the chameleonic, compromising Barón as emblematic of Vargas Llosa’s politics and the rape of the maid as further enlightenment, a victory for secular love. The *sertanejos*, of course, are merely fanatics. In Marie Madeleine Gladieu’s version of the novel, they are again no more than “la noción de regreso hacia la barbarie” (114), tied to a “visión reductora de la razón de ser” (113). Hernán Loyola, publishing in Fernández Retamar’s *Casa de las Américas*, reads them as a contribution to the ur-trope of “Calibán,” which is barely more significant than labelling them as fanatical, as modernity's prelapsarian myth. Although Harney at least acknowledges the “sympathetic account of the Canudos rebels’ pitiable origins and fate” (18), she also regards the rebellion, as reinscribed by Vargas Llosa, as “a pathetically transient recovery of lost innocence” (16), and then selects an already obvious source: “On the one hand, Vargas Llosa could be called a Rousseauistic liberal, in his apparent view of man’s inherent goodness. On the other hand, he lacks the implicit optimism of the Rousseauist concept of the social contract” (17). Do these flagrantly superstructural, traditional *yagunzos* represent the return of the flattening of foreheads? There would seem to be a tacit watershed between Rousseau and everything before him, as if when we are confronted with any form of unfamiliar, premodern ideology it must be the catch-all of Rousseau. Is *La guerra del fin del mundo*, to repeat Moreiras, “an undigestible [sic] scandal for Latin Americanism” (235)? Allegorically, the novel’s Latin Americanist is not the Consejero but Gall. He rails against “la
Universidad, . . . considerándola responsable de la división entre el trabajo físico y el intelectual y causante . . . de peores desigualdades sociales que la aristocracia y la plutocracia" (42), while remaining firmly within its metacritical boundaries, comfortably readable within its modernity. In another letter to his non-existent revolutionary publication, the caricature of a freedom fighter writes that in Canudos "hombres humildes e inexperimentados están, a fuerza de instinto e imaginación, llevando a la práctica muchas de las cosas que los revolucionarios europeos sabemos necesarias" (55). Although part of Vargas Llosa’s parody, these lines are more than a little reminiscent of the opening to Kerr’s Reclaiming the Author, and, by implication, of her field: "'The Spanish Americans are actually doing what the French are only talking about’" (vii). I used to wonder, since most critics consider this novel to be Vargas Llosa’s masterpiece, why it never appeared on undergraduate or graduate reading lists, and presumed, innocently, that perhaps its length was too daunting. Having now been compelled to read Fortunata y Jacinta, however, both as an undergraduate and a graduate, it seems more probable that someone in the class might disconcertingly, dangerously, propose that these sertanejos are not quite the lunatics they are meant to be. If so, then this novel, a touchstone for other novels, for other readings, is destined to remain pregnant with a meaning the criticism can not perceive and would not wish to even if it could, thus leaving it submersed, as Canudos itself was eventually submersed, by yet another dictatorship’s construction.

II

On a snowy day in Washington DC, when the 'planes were delayed and the only people wandering the airport seemed to be tourists or
stragglers from the last day of the MLA Convention, I sat at a pseudo-Umbrian coffee bar with an obligatory frothaccino (or "No. 4") and a copy of the Post. Amy Argetsinger’s article, “Oh, the Humanities! Pros Use Prose in Job-Hunting” (C1), on the front page of the “Style” section, lamented “The spawn of a survival-of-the-fittest job market in the academic humanities” (C1). It included comments from experienced professors who suggested, after a few days of interviewing possible recruits, that “The emphasis on being able to teach is getting lost” (C8), that their own role should return to its more pastoral beginnings “to encourage graduate students to focus on putting together a quality dissertation” (C8). A woman was reading over my shoulder, and she turned out to be both a professor of French literature and a member of the MLA Council. I mentioned my discipline, and, perhaps out of politeness or perhaps because of its aura of pullulation, of theoretical risk, her response was that Latin Americanism now seemed to be a more attractive field than her own. I ventured, not out of politeness, that if the current trend in the Humanities continued, if we were successful in our bid to reduce the world to but a few metacritical texts that parrot only different versions of the same theory, fields would ultimately become irrelevant, conglomerated into the monotone of Cultural Studies. Many of the papers presented at the Convention, such as Michael Eskin’s “Responsibility, Différance, and the Question of the Third” (Program 1470), or Jackie E. Stallcup’s “Shrinking Kids Down to Size: Adult Surveillance and Children’s Autonomy” (Program 1500), were already realising this vision. My companion, on the contrary, had found the papers to be genuinely diverse, and postulated that I may simply have read the wrong books – had I tried “Pierre Bourdieu”?
The French social scientist Pierre Bourdieu considers Marx’s definition of class to be inflexible and hence impractical. The proletariat is not one mind. In a collection of his own essays, *Practical Reason*, he fleshes social position with “habitus (or *tastes*)” (7), which nobody can escape. One upstanding bourgeois may play tennis, a game requiring a certain sense of etiquette and probably the etiquette of a club, whereas another of the same ilk may prefer rugby or football. The hierarchy of the social fabric is thus determined by multiple factors, although for Bourdieu all such factors, including sports, are constructs implicitly controlled by the dominant in any given society, and are to be suspected. These constructs do indeed mould reality, but we apprehend them osmotically, as “doxa” (67). Through a process of “euphemization” (114) the dominant “confers upon the cultural arbitrary all the appearances of the natural” (19). Tennis, in other words, is an apparently innocuous activity, but in the absence of euphemism we would perceive its deception, its divisiveness. Beyond tennis, “school is a state nobility” (21), definitive though mendacious, and “the family is indeed a fiction, a social artifact, . . . a well-founded illusion” (73). Even those institutions claiming to be altruistic or disinterested, and religion is Bourdieu’s example par excellence, are in fact interested in their disinterestedness. From the moment we can say “Mummy” instead of discerning her as an aggregation of such tastes, as a CEO of one of society’s “corporate bodies” (19), we are already indoctrinated, initiated into our own burgeoning “illusio” (76), our “feel for the game” (80). This illusion is Bourdieu’s impetus, and he writes “to expose the danger of always being thought by a state that we believe we are thinking” (35), to detail the shocking, actual fabrication of the superficial “opacity and resistance of things” (67). We might be happier without Bourdieu, and “have a
magnificent academic career" (82), though it would be the bliss of ignorance, devoid of his radical "epistemological questioning" (36), "the critique of suspicion" (144) (i.e. suspicion's critique), his inverted "politics of morality" (144) that paradoxically involves the constant declaration of selfish interest.

I did not, of course, disclose any of this at the coffee bar, for it would have been tantamount to saying that whilst the name on the covers may change, we have been reading Bourdieu's modernity, his oxymoronic tradition, for centuries, and that the papers at the Convention were not as diverse as they seemed. Practical reason, at its most moral, is Kant's primary categorical imperative, at the behest of which, prior to any action, we must ask ourselves "What if others were to act likewise?" (Scruton 147). This mutates into the more distrustful "Whose interest does it serve?" as perhaps the modern question. In The German Ideology, Marx submits that even the proletariat "must first conquer for itself political power in order to represent its interest in turn as the general interest" (46), and the Communist Manifesto reinvokes "the demands of the French Revolution" (48) as "nothing more than the demands of 'Practical Reason'" (48).

Althusser was also aware that "Ideological State Apparatuses," unlike overt, violent repression, operate, self-explanatorily, "by ideology" (145), as a form of "habitus" (Bourdieu 7). T. J. Clarke calls such interest the "internalizing of social idealizations" (296), and Jameson deconstructs Marx into subsets under the premise that "a ruling class ideology will explore various strategies of legitimation" (84). Eagleton writes, point blank, that "All theory and knowledge . . . is interested" (207), an interest that he too is intent on exposing. In Galileo Gall's words, "hay siempre una racionalidad encubierta detrás de la más confusa apariencia" (Vargas Llosa 90). In Freud it is
described as a “community of interest” (GP 57) that rests, more
latently and more radically than in Bourdieu, on our libidinal
investment in others. For Foucault, the symbol of the same, invisible
matrix is the Panopticon, and it functions with “a strict economy that
has the effect of rendering as discreet as possible the singular power
to punish” (DP 302). Critchley defends Derrida’s Levinasian, spectral
non-truth of the arrivant as an attempt “to subordinate claims to
knowledge to claims to justice, or, . . . to establish the primacy of
practical reason” (32). Less affectionately, Gablik calls such a
philosophy of interest consumerism, and Bourdieu would also be a
consumer within her logic, though she too is obliged to declare its
hegemony, to concede that in the late twentieth century, even beyond
modern art, “nothing exists outside it” (96).

It is not merely that a few theoretical texts, superseded only in
kind, are reducing the world to their version of it, but that this
version is itself reductive. To return to the article in the Washington
Post, that teaching is devalued or that graduates’ articles “seem
underbaked” (C8) is hardly surprising, for the theory to which they are
expected to subscribe is neither pedagogical nor even academic. The
academics themselves, in the case of the recommendation of Bourdieu,
are condemned to forget even the most obvious precedents, thus
encouraging only sketchier theses. The jury is coming in, and
Romanticism, as per Andrew Bush’s appropriately broad reading of it in
my epigraph, is safe.
Notes

One

1 In Shakespeare 164.
2 National Cash Registers.

Two

1 For the difficulties in imposing any modern approach on this novel, see, along with many others, David Leon Higdon's article on Charles and Sebastian's liaison, arguing that "there seems no doubt that the characters' tie is homosocial, that Charles is homoerotically attracted to Sebastian, and that their relationship is homosexual, though perhaps not sexually active" (83), only to conclude, more appropriately, that the exact status of their association is of little consequence, for it ultimately belongs, along with several heterosexual relationships, within Waugh's general riposte to paganism, and hence Brideshead Revisited is not "a novel gay liberationists will eagerly embrace" (86). On a similarly auto-invalidating note, see Frederick Beaty's The Ironic World of Evelyn Waugh: A Study of Eight Novels, which, in the conclusion to the chapter on Brideshead, has to concede the relative insignificance of its own primary thesis: "Although his [Waugh's] later serious novels may contribute to his stature as a literary artist, critic of society, and Catholic apologist, they do little to advance his reputation as an ironist. Since their more direct approach, increasingly solemn tone, and preoccupation with religious themes diminish the possibilities even for technical irony, these works are not within the scope of this study" (165). As an alternative to approaches of this ilk, David Rothstein justifiably focuses on Waugh's mediation of the past from the off, the novel's premise being "to stop time and forgetting through the concretion of memory" (329), to thwart "a prevailing discourse of bourgeois individualism and materialism . . .
which he sees beneath the ruinous transformations of the modern
world” (324). Here, Brideshead’s defiance of time’s fragmentation is
even written against an explicitly Marxist present:

... Waugh represents both Charles and the Marchmains as having
intersected with a modern world that sweeps them up in the
historical process summarized so well by Marx in the Communist
Manifesto:

All fixed, fast-frozen relations, with their train of
ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions, are swept
away, all new-formed ones become antiquated before they can
ossify. All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy
is profaned, and men at last are forced to face ... the
real condition of their lives and their relations with
their fellow men. (328)

2 See Zwerdling 107-08.

Three

1 Hart’s references are to Fred C. Judson’s “Continuity and Evolution
of Revolutionary Symbolism in Verde Olivo,” in Cuba: Twenty-Five Years
Lawrence C. Soley and John S. Nichols’ Clandestine Radio Broadcasting:
A Study of Revolutionary and Counterrevolutionary Electronic

2 Incidentally, and it is no more than an incident in the context of
both The Spanish American Regional Novel and The Burden of Modernity,
Alonso’s final chapter, “The Closing of the Circle: The End of
Modernity in Spanish America,” includes studies of García Márquez’s El
general en su laberinto (1989) and Fuentes’ La campañá (1990). I do not
propose to re-submit the respective arguments in detail here, but the
suggestion is that these more recent works are indicative of a
perception, within the continent’s literature, of both the fallacy and
the institutionalised atrophy of the rhetorical paradigm which so many
of Alonso’s pages have sought, and therefore provide an explicit
neutrodyne to the dystopia of never-ending contingency, which was
apparently not quite so never-ending after all. Both works broach the parentheses of history, or, as Alonso has it,

... in the context of the tale of mourning I have identified in El general en su laberinto, La campaña is emblematic of the successful passing from melancholy to mourning and beyond, that is, to the final awareness that loss must somehow be turned into memory if life is to abide and prevail. (166)

Such defections, described in a fashion that is closer to the Bakhtinian definition of mourning as lying outside the transience of revolutionary heterotopia than to the Derridean notion of imaginary prosopopeia, the false imposition of meaning upon the potential arrivant, are now seen as a "salutary effect" (175), a conclusion which seems to contradict much of Alonso's earlier work on the ur-criterion for writing "as a Latin American" (Regional Novel 17). The terms in which it is couched, however, as a "final awareness" (166) and "our particular version of postmodernity" (175), remain epiphanic, as though Alonso were simply chronicling the sudden appearance of a phenomenon which had been non-existent hitherto, whereas although these texts are literally post-modern, their hermeneutics, as described above, are far from those of postmodernity, and there is at least the intimation here of a very different book. In other words, in the course of almost two centuries, perhaps not every Spanish American text conforms to the paradigm of modernity, but instead there may be exceptions, precursors to El general en su laberinto and La campaña.

3 Sommer's analysis begins from a different theoretical premise to Myth and Archive's, one which assumes that meaning is inevitably constructed, and not necessarily priming itself for future deconstruction by dint of such obedience: "My reading consciously delays the ultimate questions of meaning, because I am more concerned to suggest how these books achieved their persuasive power than to determine if they had any right to do so" (45). Here, the national
romances of the nineteenth century, *Amalia* and *Maria* among them, are written as a symbiosis of nation-building positivism and conjugal love, a sentimental, requited love devoid of European Romanticism’s “bad fits” (45). Whilst “Rousseau had fretted over the ‘referential error’ of the word love” (45), the Latin American equivalents were less jaded in their legalised, liberal reformation, “... the nation-building novelists didn’t fret” (46). It is arguable that these positivist projects, already enshrouded in Jeremy Bentham’s modernity, were intrinsically unstable as philosophies via which to establish principles of communal significance, but Sommer’s story, more credible than González Echevarría’s, born “of curiosity for the tradition new Latin American novelists were so loudly denying” (xi), narrates both the obvious desire for and indeed the reality of a cultural past, regardless of how fragile that past, that significance, happens to be. Even here, however, incongruously, Foucault is again referenced as one of two theoretical sources (the other is more logically Benedict Anderson’s *Imagined Communities*), specifically his *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, an invective against the state’s supervision of the body. Since Sommer’s aim is to validate the attractions of Schwarz’s “condicionamentos” (35), and she ultimately submits that “Foucault’s hypothesis doesn’t really acknowledge a seductive moment in state-celebrated sexuality, as if all institutional stimulations were indirect or repressive” (36), the inclusion of Foucault itself seems redundant, introduced though admittedly extraneous, as if at least a hint of aphasia were simply de rigueur. In a similar vein to *Foundational Fictions’* reconstruction, though in but a few, more laconic pages, Sylvia Molloy defends Isaacs’ novel for its “considerable bearing on Spanish American attitudes towards the past” (96), suggesting that “There is no future in *Maria* or rather its future
is its past: from the very beginning the text is a protracted farewell” (95), and rendering Isaacs as “a master of what Richard Coe calls curiosa nostalgica: ‘the minutiae of daily life, familiar to anyone of that generation but now unknown and unrecorded, are details of a manner of existence which was fundamentally acceptable and therefore right; and so their passing can inspire nothing but regret’” (95). It may be that such regret, the recontextualising of a parenthesis of history for which Bakhtin always knew his revolutionary paradigm to be ill-suited, is not in fact gratuitous, but instead excessively cryptic for González Echevarría’s paradoxical, apostrophised masterstory of “a beginning that is also already the end” (28).


5 In the chapter on “El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan,” Balderston ventures his accustomed density of information. In short (cf. Out of Context 41-43 for a lengthier description of the ensuing paraphrasing), the story begins with a quotation from Liddell Hart’s The Real War, a book which Borges claimed to possess. Yu Tsun, the name of the story’s protagonist, is also the name of a character in the eighteenth-century novel Dream of the Red Chamber. Balderston duly reports that this character is absent during most of the novel but controls the plot. Furthermore, the name Yu Tsun bears some resemblance to that of Sun Tzu, author of The Art of War, a text commented upon in the eleventh edition (the “Borges edition”) of the Encyclopedia Britannica, with particular reference to the chapter on spies. Samuel Griffith, an acquaintance of Liddell Hart, translated The Art of War into English. Finally, Sun Tzu conquered the province of Chuan, Yu Tsun’s (Borges’ protagonist) birthplace. Although certain links in this chain may appear tenuous, the information is conceivably pertinent. Yu Tsun is
indeed a spy, and, through his possession of intelligence which is only revealed to the reader at the conclusion of the story, controls the key to the events. The use of the name Yu Tsun in connection with Liddell Hart’s account constitutes the intermingling of fiction and history, a fundamental notion in the Borges text and one which is also suggested by Samuel Griffith’s translation or reinterpretation. However, these are simply my meagre assumptions. For Balderston, it often appears that the discovery and discussion of a source is an end unto itself, rendering any consideration of this discovery with regard to its potential influence within Borges’ story unnecessary. There is no rationale as to how this meticulously researched context alters other readings of “El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan,” or, more generally, the Borges gestalt. The title of Balderston’s study promises insight into Borges’ work, not merely into that of Liddell Hart or Sun Tzu. Even if we accept the background research as conclusive, and Yu Tsun is employing the same techniques as Sun Tzu, then the ramification within Borges’ story is that specific external contexts are cyclical, reiterable to the point of irrelevance, and Balderston’s elucidation provokes no alternate, internal impact, having been annulled by “El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan” itself.

6 This term respects the implicitness of the autobiographical elements in the story. The latter is related in the first person, and Patricio Gannon was a friend of Borges, but there is no express connection in the text to the author himself.

7 See Madness and Civilization 192-93.
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