

## The Character of the University

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The recent return of character criticism—whereby the critic’s voice, stance, and personality enunciate, embody, and particularize the cognitive content of the criticism—appears to be a low-tide stabilization in the wake of the free-floating days of literary theory. Geoffrey Galt Harpham expresses considerable relief that the academy is now beyond “the doomsday paradigm of the death of the author,” referring to the decrees of the 1970s by Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault.<sup>1</sup> Harpham demonstrates that character in criticism continues to be a respectable category of analysis, much more than mere gossip or the pursuit of personality for its own sake, because “the fundamental condition for the emergence of character in criticism is interpretive or speculative freedom” (*CC*, 8). Character provides criticism its bearings. For justification, Harpham quotes that doyen

1. See Geoffrey Galt Harpham, *The Character of Criticism* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 3; hereafter, this work is cited parenthetically as *CC*. The essays are, of course, Roland Barthes’s “The Death of the Author” and Michel Foucault’s “What Is an Author?” variously anthologized in several collections.

of eighteenth-century critics, Samuel Johnson, for whom criticism signifies a compelling singularity. For Harpham, criticism is not just an “analytical or descriptive discourse, but . . . a richly human testament in which a distinct sensibility tests and defines itself in—and is in turn challenged and exposed by—the encounter with a text” (CC, 25). The presence of character allows the reader to enjoy mimetic fidelity and engage in sympathetic identification. Even as criticism goes confessional, the personal signature of the critic becomes a *griffe*, and a distinctive—indeed unique—bearer of meaning and value. Harpham assesses four contemporary critics with remarkable characteristics: Elaine Scarry, Martha Nussbaum, Slavoj Žižek, and Edward Said. In each of these cases, criticism becomes characterologically distinctive: for Scarry, criticism is reverie, a meditative reflection on the world by “a beautiful soul, a contemporary Emily Dickinson . . . by so exotic a plant” (CC, 51). Nussbaum is the Amazonian alternative to Scarry’s delicate arabesques. Nussbaum, for whom criticism functions as personal and collective therapy ambitiously aiming to better the world, writes a prose “bristling with footnotes, heavily armored,” within which she impersonates “the snake that swallows eggs” in a notorious confrontation with Judith Butler’s prose (CC, 56, 77). Žižek and Said, the two masculine characters who round out Harpham’s fabulous four, perform criticism as urbane symptomatology and as politically inspired obsession respectively. For Harpham, character expresses critical individuation and mimetic emulation, even though such congruence also leads to the Johnsonian sublime of inimitable singularity. Harpham’s characterology is cathected with admiration and annoyance, and intellectual infatuation as well as professional envy.

Very different from this individuated appeal to character as charisma, Amanda Anderson’s *The Way We Argue Now* repositions character through the Aristotelian category of *ethos*.<sup>2</sup> Critical of the charisma sweepstakes, a liberal rationalist such as Anderson promotes the aspiring universalist as model democratic character. Refusing the false dichotomies between *logos* and *pathos*, Anderson relies on *ethos* to unify the socially interactive character of Habermasian proceduralism against a host of postmodern adversaries, whom she worries are unfairly benefiting from unearned charisma. Communicative rationality aspires to a democratic *ethos* and is therefore embedded and grounded just as much as other postmodern theoretical

2. Amanda Anderson, *The Way We Argue Now: A Study in the Cultures of Theory* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2006). Hereafter, this work is cited parenthetically as *WAN*.

communities who have mistakenly eschewed (*pace* Anderson) the abstract detachment of Enlightenment reason; in contrast, the desire to unify incipient theoretical separatisms into one conversation makes the universalist embrace of ethos normative. Discourse ethics provides the metapragmatic rules of engagement for Anderson. Not only are universalists alright; according to such an account, they can also be likable and possess striking depth of character. Communicative rationality becomes universalism with character—truth along with sex appeal. In contrast, Anderson perceives poststructuralism, pragmatism, and multiculturalism as compromised by self-promotion despite incoherent self-justification.

Anderson's belief in the efficacy of character is bolstered by a critical precursor (Lionel Trilling) and a period theme (Victorian virtue talk). Anderson believes that liberal rationalism ought to reclaim the category of sincerity, defined by Trilling as "congruence between avowal and actual feeling."<sup>3</sup> Drawing a dubious analogy between Trilling's reading of sincerity and authenticity—according to him, the two historic modes of the self in modern Europe—and the contemporary theory debates, Anderson suggests (with selective evidence) that postmodern thought follows the patterns of authenticity. Dominant in the late modern period, *pace* Trilling, when romanticism invests in alienation and disintegration as morally uplifting, authenticity is increasingly valued even as the avant-garde rejects society as insincere and hypocritical.<sup>4</sup>

Anderson's dream of a universal language is informed by late Victorian English liberalism, a grand language that accommodates, tolerates, and includes other languages. Even while making room for indirect, paro-

3. Lionel Trilling, *Sincerity and Authenticity* (London: Oxford University Press, 1974), 2. Hereafter, this work is cited parenthetically as *SA*.

4. Sincerity, on the other hand, although it is also a modern category—Trilling famously says it cannot be applied to Abraham or Achilles—is tracked as declining since its apotheosis in a work such as Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. Trilling tracks the decline of sincerity through Enlightenment texts such as Diderot's *Rameau's Nephew* and Hegel's reading of it in *Phenomenology of Spirit*. The complex process of self-estrangement proposed by Hegel is that the beautiful soul and paragon of sincerity, Diderot's narrator, is trumped by the disintegrated consciousness of Rameau's nephew, who is the standard bearer of authenticity. While Diderot's "Moi" stays in character, Rameau's nephew, "Lui," becomes protean in his disintegration. As Trilling puts it, "the high point of Hegel's admiration for Rameau and of his scorn for Diderot is reached in response to the great climax of the dialogue, Rameau's astonishing operatic performance, his momentous abandonment of individuated selfhood to become all the voices of human existence, of all existence" (*SA*, 44).

dic, and duplicitous languages within it, such a project is not boundless in its generosity. Butler is deemed a dogmatist who embraces temporal non-synchronicity to evade evaluative normativity; Foucault is caught indulging in glamorized notions of personality instead of honest argumentation; and Barbara Herrnstein Smith is accused of being smugly complacent when she ought to be troubled and apologetic about being a relativist (*WAN*, 121, 124). Jürgen Habermas, on the other hand, approaches saintliness by his refusal of charisma and embrace of the “transpersonal dimension of the sincerity paradigm” (*WAN*, 167). The heroic characterology put forward by such gatekeeping recuperates Victorian “virtue talk” whereby self-effacement is rewarded by discursive control.<sup>5</sup> Belief in contingency or irony or even political commitments to cognitive destabilization is coded as adolescent forms of acting out, escape, and refusal to negotiate, whereas proceduralism and deliberative democracy are deemed the only way forward. Habermasian discourse ethics, which followed from interventions around the nature of the public sphere, signals rational maturity and a nongrandiose performance of adulthood that works through positional differences and rational arguments even while renouncing affect.<sup>6</sup> Meanwhile, many other theoretical languages—Derridean deconstruction, Foucauldian genealogy, Rortian neopragmatism, general skepticism, and U.S.-style identity politics—are conflated as belonging to a generalized Babelian incoherence. Habermasian discourse ethics becomes the universal diluent of all other particularities. Cognitive stability and communicative transparency are derived from moral character, the Victorian category that trumps all others.

A renewed belief in sincerity aims to allay a number of anxieties. Sincerity becomes the earnest down payment on cognitive stability, guaranteeing against the slipperiness of undecidability and ironic performance. This desire for sincerity anticipates stable character subjects who keep their promises and who will not disappear when your back is turned.<sup>7</sup> How-

5. See Seyla Benhabib, *The Claims of Culture: Equality and Diversity in the Global Era* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2002), 142ff.

6. For a very useful set of expositions concerning the Habermasian interventions around public reason that form the deep background to these arguments, see *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, ed. Craig Calhoun (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1992).

7. On one side, there is the heroic narrative of Habermasian proceduralism, askesis, stoicism, and eschewal of charisma for democratic norms, which has been unfairly dismissed by caricatured anti-Enlightenment attacks, backed up by other Enlightenment-oriented philosophers including Seyla Benhabib and Martha Nussbaum; on the other side, we are presented with the charismatic grandstanding of the late Foucault, the semi-

ever, this is not as simple as it sounds. As Trilling points out, citing Emerson and Tocqueville, the stabilization effects of sincerity depend on a stable and recognizable class structure. A person who accepts his or her class situation embodies sincerity beyond reasonable doubt. English sincerity focuses on a desire not to be deceived or misled, whereby the practical power of that sincerity is a function of social immobility and recognizability and the material particularity of the individual in his or her social ethos.<sup>8</sup>

However, the French version of sincerity is substantially different from the English equivalent, and this possibility is ignored by Anderson's perilous appropriation of Trilling. Not just socially truthful, French sincerity is also a confessional disposition. The sincere French self testifies its subjective truth to others. Rousseau's philosophy combines the English and the French versions of sincerity while attacking theatricality and all forms of artifice. Rousseau's lionizing of sincerity *and* authenticity against artifice is clearly examined and critiqued fully by Jacques Derrida, who insists on the temporal occasion of writing or utterance, as well as the iterability and the decontextualizability of the signature. As a consequence, Derrida inscribes the self sincerely—but without guarantee—within the structure of philosophical and literary production.<sup>9</sup> Derrida's metasincerity shows the limits of conventional claims of sincerity. Wagering on the impossibility of ego stabilization—a Freudian insight to be sure—Derrida highlights the performative as the realm of the event. The performative cannot be dismissed as mere self-aggrandizement but embodies a potential sincerity in motion. Even though deconstruction is mistakenly dismissed by Anderson as part of a generalized poststructuralist approval of performativity, this charge is made in passing by associating deconstruction with “the semiosis of unde-

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otic undecidability or openness of Derrida, the turn to affect by Eve Sedgwick, the celebration of schizophrenia by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, and the theatrical performativity of Butler. Finding a common language of evaluation that can assess all these theoretical languages is the normative dream of Anderson the universalist, armed with proceduralist assessment standards.

8. Rameau's nephew, buffoon, parasite, and mimic, is exemplary of sheer role confusion—celebrated by Hegel but theoretically dangerous, according to Anderson, when deployed by pragmatists such as Richard Rorty, or performance theorists of gender such as Judith Butler.

9. See Jacques Derrida, “Signature Event Context,” in *Limited Inc* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1988), 1–25. The other side of this inescapable decontextualizability is Derrida's obsession with the “occasioning” of a text and the anchoring of it by a date and signature. See Jacques Derrida and Maurizio Ferraris, *A Taste for the Secret*, trans. Giacomo Donis (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001), 62.

cidability,” as if that philosophical attitude ruled out sincerity altogether. Sincerity along with undecidability makes for a metasincerity, whereby acknowledging the lack of subjective guarantee is more sincere than the fraudulent sincerity of self-deluded propositions of good faith that cannot be encashed. Deconstruction might therefore, by way of rejoinder, accuse proceduralism of unselfconscious authenticity, as the term’s etymology comes from the Greek *authentēo*, to have full power over something. In proceduralism’s case, this claim for power comes through defining the playing field and enforcing the rules (SA, 131).<sup>10</sup>

As Trilling reminds us, nineteenth-century Victorian novelists find that the Englishman as type is sincere *because* he is authentic in his social location and reconciled to his lot (SA, 115). The return of Victorian character at the end of the utopian wave of poststructuralist thought needs some teasing out. Sincerity, when attacked by Oscar Wilde, is also about what Victorians would have called Philistine respectability. Both sincerity and authenticity are indeed part of a certain Victorian dream of character. As Lauren M. E. Goodlad puts it succinctly, “To invoke character in the nineteenth century was, typically, to regard the individual’s spiritual condition as inseparable from collective purpose of some kind. Throughout the century this moral worldview vied with its materialist antithesis, a competing foundation for modern truth claims in which character lost its transcendent and intersubjective possibilities and was reduced to the product of external determinants, bourgeois competition, and representation.”<sup>11</sup> Precisely for this reason, the nineteenth-century record makes available these discourses of freedom through the self-representation of character, from liberal individualism to socialism, with the first airing of Marx and Engels’s

10. Another obvious example of metasincerity at work in deconstruction is Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s famous essay “Can the Subaltern Speak?” which scrupulously critiques structures of bogus authenticity in Foucault and Deleuze while defending the difference between speaking for (*vertreten*) and speaking as (*darstellen*) that specifies the realm of responsible theory. Anderson’s Habermasian quarrel is with Foucauldians and American pragmatists who consider themselves beyond metanarrative in a manner that is foreign to Derrida’s thought, which is, in any case, arguably neither poststructuralist nor post-modern, given that Derrida never accepted temporal characterizations concerning the Enlightenment being surpassed. See Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?” in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 271–313.

11. Lauren M. E. Goodlad, *Victorian Literature and the Victorian State: Character and Governance in a Liberal Society* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), 189.

characterization of the working classes as wresting a realm of freedom from a realm of necessity. Lest we forget, the very same period also participated in “the burgeoning knowledge bases of medicine, psychology, sexology, ethnology, and criminology to name just a few.”<sup>12</sup> The culmination of the long nineteenth century of the human (pseudo)sciences could lead to an extraordinarily racist treatise on character such as that by L. Hamilton McCormick in 1920: *Characterology: An Exact Science Embracing Physiognomy, Phrenology and Pathognomy, Reconstructed, Amplified and Amalgamated, and Including Views Concerning Memory and Reason and the Location of These Faculties within the Brain; Likewise Facial and Cranial Indications of Longevity*.<sup>13</sup> Character, in other words, is never merely about innocent self-cultivation and Schillerian *Bildung*. Also the close cognate of the racial and national stereotype, characterology goes back to ancient Theophrastan comic butts, which can be seen to anticipate several scholarly personalities, including *eiron*, the dissembler; *kolax*, the flatterer; *adolesches*, the chatterbox; *aponenoemenos*, the moral degenerate; *opsimathes*, the late learner; *kakologos*, the slanderer; *anaisthetos*, the obtuse man; and *logopoios*, the rumormonger.<sup>14</sup>

Character is a mechanism of cognitive stabilization, just like fingerprinting and signature verification, carried over into the realm of textual mechanisms and theatrical impersonation, whereby a fixed meaning can be tethered to a specific body (or indeed, a body of work or oeuvre). Recognition can be benign and yet also interpellational, as William James Herschel’s invention of the technology of the fingerprint in colonial British India demonstrated, or as biometric technological determinants—such as iris scans currently being instituted around the world—aim to establish today. As Harpham’s study shows, the concept of character is entwined with a related problematic around the stabilization of authorship. Several studies demonstrate the criminal basis of the rise of authorship in eighteenth-century Britain, as do earlier expositions of literature having emerged as an accidental side effect of criminal liability in Roman times.<sup>15</sup> At different

12. Goodlad, *Victorian Literature and the Victorian State*, 25.

13. McCormick attempted to rectify the obvious errors of phrenology even as he produced a manual for character analysis that could be used just as much by military recruiters as those in search of a spouse. See L. Hamilton McCormick, *Characterology* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1920).

14. Theophrastus, *Characters*, trans. James Diggle (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

15. Jody Greene, *The Trouble with Ownership: Literary Property and Authorial Liability in*

moments, the idea of “person” or “character” was deployed as an insurance policy against a contrast class deemed characterless or defective of character—slaves and barbarians deemed the nonpersons against the Hellenes endowed with subjectivity, non-Christians as the unregenerates versus the good Christians whose souls could be saved, and racialized or feminized natives contra rational European males elaborated by colonial discourses.<sup>16</sup>

Character, therefore, is never merely related to benign testimonials about reading ability and moral integrity; it is also just as much about elaborating the characteristics of criminal antecedents and their orientation to future predictability of subordinated promise or fugitive danger. Likewise, ethos is never just about creative coterie and utopian societies whose ambience generates like-minded liberal fellowship; it also identifies the toxic atmosphere that nurtures the “bad characters” of criminal gangs, underground anarchists in their proximity to each other, and anxieties about miscegenous genealogies and seditious conspiracies grown in a hothouse. If character, signature, and authorship are humanist ideals, they are also—especially since the rise of biopolitics—dehumanized targets. For these reasons, a criticism that focuses on character is, at the very least, willfully celebrating positive attributes of humanizing distinction with selective partiality even while oblivious to a raft of negative identity procedures that limit, obstruct, and de-individuate others at the same time. New state-sponsored mechanisms aim to capture, codify, and regulate subject populations (as did older imperial networks) amidst the promotion of selective élites who are conferred with the flattery of thinking of themselves as belonging to individuated meritocracies.

For these reasons, the return to character in theory and criticism has to be squarely located in our biopolitical temporality, as also within that of the university under the sign of globalization. In its Victorian context, teacher training was all about character, consequently establishing the formidable “old-boy” network of professional alliances that continues as one of the practiced forms of academic self-replication. A desire for character and ethos in the current context appears as a symptom of accel-

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*England, 1660–1730* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005); and Stephen Greenblatt, “What Is the History of Literature?” in “Front Lines/Border Posts,” ed. Homi Bhabha, special issue, *Critical Inquiry* 23, no. 3 (Spring 1997): 460–81.

16. See Amélie Oksenberg Rorty, “Persons and *Personae*,” in *The Person and the Human Mind: Issues in Ancient and Modern Philosophy*, ed. Christopher Gill (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 21–38.



erated anxieties about delocalization and virtuality, already present in modest forms since the emergence of the public sphere under Enlightenment premises. Liberal rationalism aims to further Enlightenment critique without due analysis of the primary ethos of its elaboration—the globalizing university, as well as the persistence of its shadow double, the university-in-the-world. The globalizing university, as I define it, is the attempt by university administration to expand the university transnationally by analogy with corporate globalization. Extending their corporate brands in a new wave of educational neocolonialism that goes eastward, from Dubai to Delhi and Singapore to Shanghai, the globalizing university, mostly anchored in the United States, aims to provide a new crop of educational consumers with contemporary vocational skills and infuse their new transnational contexts with developmental synergies. However, the price is frequently political quiescence and collaboration with a plurality of privileged elites who have chosen to embrace development within a late capitalist framework. The university-in-the-world, as the counterconcept of the globalizing university, points to the worldly consequences of the university's actions and presence, as historical legacy, social motor, and critical aspiration, which is far in excess of the limited agenda of the globalizing university.<sup>17</sup>

We need to pay much greater attention to monolingualism—not just the obvious issue of Anglobalization but the alarming convergence of theories and methodologies under the duress of corporate models of efficiency as well as managerialist forms of tolerance and inclusion whereby post-political participation masquerades as communicative democracy.<sup>18</sup> The obverse of the global university is the largely unrealized possibility of the university as one of the rare sites of genuine intellectual hospitality in an increasingly commodified and brutalized world, or what Derrida has called “the university without condition.”<sup>19</sup>

The language of theoretical convergence, whether liberal proceduralism or any other, when it features protocols of how we should and should

17. This is a loose application of the distinction that Derrida makes between the connotations of globalization in English and *mondialisation* in French. See Jacques Derrida, “What Does It Mean to Be a French Philosopher Today?” in *Paper Machine*, trans. Rachel Bowlby (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2005), 112–20.

18. See Wendy Brown, *Regulating Aversion: Tolerance in the Age of Identity and Empire* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2006); and Kenneth J. Surin, “Postpolitical Citizenship,” *Polygraph* 16/17 (2005): 47–57. See also Kenneth J. Surin, *Freedom Not Yet: Liberation and the Next World Order* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2009).

19. See Jacques Derrida, “The University without Condition,” in *Without Alibi*, trans. and ed. Peggy Kamuf (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2002), 202–37.

not argue, as well as assessments of who deserves charisma and who does not, inexorably imposes hierarchical and meritocratic conditions on the kinds of thought—and varieties of theoretical interrogation and characterological stances—possible in the humanities. Ultimately, this model of liberal toleration combined with theoretical credentialization—on the basis of greater or lesser conformity with proceduralist hegemony legislated as universal good manners—is destined to fail, as it draws boundaries around character attributes that function as substitutes for language itself, spawning the multiple problems of theoretical, linguistic, and cultural commensurability. Translation, to the extent that it takes place under such convergence ethics, is one-way and one-sided, implying certification, credentialization, and character references for those select few who are then integrated into a theoretically monolingual club, where they eschew charisma for academic bureaucratization and a supposed plurality of representation within hegemonic universality that also eschews other models of fictive and ideal universality.<sup>20</sup> As we have learned from Derrida, absolute hospitality, whether in the language, the home, the university, or the nation, is impossible, but, paradoxically, trading off this absolute hospitality for proceduralist good manners as an aspirational quasi-transcendental (if not quite regulative) ideal is a poor substitute. The renunciation of the unconditional for the practicable undercuts the plurality of theoretical language games that are then increasingly swept up in utilitarian fashion by the reductive domestication of a managerialist ethos.<sup>21</sup> Board members in a corporation are characters too, and enjoy an ethos as well, but they are not everybody's aspirational universals even if the neoliberal rhetoric of globalization might want to convince us that it is the only game in town. Under current corporate creep in the U.S.-based university, where shrinking endowments are putting efficiency measures into place, students are current consumers and future donors, professors are information specialists and promoters of the distinct university brand, and administrators are middle managers keeping it all together while hoping to swell the corpus back to pre-downturn levels.<sup>22</sup>

20. See Étienne Balibar, "Ambiguous Universality," in *Politics and the Other Scene* (New York: Verso, 2002), 146–76.

21. It is for this reason I agree with Slavoj Žižek's "A Plea for a Return to *Différance* (with a Minor *Pro Domo Sua*)," *Critical Inquiry* 32, no. 2 (Winter 2006): 226–49.

22. In the interest of full disclosure, I should indicate that I confronted these issues on a daily basis in the context of directing an interdisciplinary humanities institute at my institution and am currently the dean of humanities, making my criticism also (but not only) self-criticism. I hazard that these words should indeed apply as relevant to any tenured

All these character roles might find their appropriate Theophrastan equivalents, but these are not characters worth defending except as a small part of a very large realm of dramatic and philosophical possibility. When fundraising, doesn't the critic-administrator who is a dissembling *eiron* turn into a flattering *kolax*? Hiring and tenure meetings find colleagues indulging as readily in their critical roles as slandering *kakologos* and rumormongering *logopoios* in what ought to be an objective evaluation of the scholarly record rather than a personality assessment. And our departments are filled with the corridor-haunting *adolesches*, the predatory *aponenoemenos*, the *opsimathes* who has recently found the light, and many who have not and never will, and who therefore resemble the obtuse *anaisthetos*.

I would like to progress beyond the academic dead end where bureaucratization and charisma converge (such that the waning academic star system today might indeed be a parody of Hollywood in the 1920s, epic grandeur repeated as intellectual farce). Derrida's turn to analyzing monolingualism and then hospitality is situationally, and indeed ethically, an intriguing critique of where the university finds itself today, beyond the limited play of character, personality, and professional self-cultivation glorified as ethical absolute. Sometimes these Derridean reflections on hospitality have been poorly understood as unabashed idealism, or a form of deconstructionist narcissism with little practicable consequence. We have to revisit the famous Kantian conflict of the faculties with new goals in mind for the precise character role that philosophy plays in relation to power, and thereby rearticulate the challenge posed by literary and cultural work, whether as scholarly labor or characteristic dissent. Ultimately, the goal of a university without condition is to ensure a genuine future for institutional critique, make room for a translation that is reciprocal and not instrumentalizing, and have us live according to an ethics of hospitality that awaits revolutionary transformation by the unanticipated event.

One of the two goals of this essay is admittedly defensive: Derridean deconstruction still has lessons to teach us about the difference within language that cannot be grasped by Habermasian proceduralism (and any other generalized attacks on various poststructuralisms). The other goal is to ask, as I have already done, whether the recent return to character criticism can be an alibi (even if unintentionally so) for this new moment of the globalizing university. Character stands in as a support for

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professor within an elite educational institution, and they should also ensure that I am not claiming ethical purity for my own character-ID as it plays itself out in its specific ethos.

sincerity in a posthumanist world that actually returns us to many aspects of the old-fashioned humanism that were putatively challenged by the generation of 1968, even as the slipperiness of language and the plurality of (meta)languages are ignored or dismissed by this new drive toward universalism. Derrida's idea concerning the university as site of intellectual hospitality will end up being my alternative proposal, one that, as a structure, supports the linguistic difference that is part and parcel of metalinguistic (that is, epistemo-theoretical) multiplicity. However, it is important to understand that difference/*différance* has been badly misread and reified as multiculturalism, whether U.S.-style or in other national situations. Difference/*différance* is a genuine discovery of Derrida's that includes general philosophical features of language as well as idiolectal aspects that undergird "individuality" or "character." From here on, the essay is focused on the metaphor of theory as language, and the assertion that Habermasian proceduralism (symptomatically, if inadvertently) serves as the handmaiden for a neoliberal ideology of globalization.<sup>23</sup>

### The Character of Enlightenment Critique

The topic of character has been integral to the debates around Enlightenment. The famous newspaper debates among the German *Aufklärer* in the 1780s feature the competing pulls of logos and ethos.<sup>24</sup> Moses

23. In retrospect, the thinly veiled anticipatory polemic of Jean-François Lyotard's *The Postmodern Condition*, as Fredric Jameson suggests in his introduction to the English translation of that text, was an attack on Habermasian ideals of communicative transparency. See Fredric Jameson, foreword to *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, by Jean-François Lyotard, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1979), vii. As another study argues, almost all the major French "poststructuralist" thinkers—Derrida, Foucault, Deleuze, and Lyotard—are (post-)Marxist critics of neoliberalism, whereas Habermas's defense of the universal transparency of communication appears to share a crucial condition necessary for the articulation of neoliberalism and finance capital. See Michael A. Peters, *Poststructuralism, Marxism, and Neoliberalism: Between Theory and Politics* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2001).

24. Kant's essay "An Answer to the Question, 'What Is Enlightenment?'" was published in 1784 in the *Berlinische Monatsschrift*. The theologian Johann Friedrich Zöllner had asked the question some months earlier in an article on the advisability of civil marriages. Answers to the question by both Moses Mendelssohn and Immanuel Kant were published, and the debate spread. The published remarks followed on the heels of preceding discussions in the *Mittwochsgesellschaft*, or Wednesday Society, consisting of various self-declared friends of the Enlightenment, to which both Zöllner and Mendelssohn

Mendelssohn's answer to the question "What Is Enlightenment?" emphasizes group-defined characteristics. While culture (*Kultur*) involves social intercourse, poetry, and eloquence, the sciences (*Wissenschaften*) lead to Enlightenment. Mendelssohn's essay makes identitarian distinctions that are founded on national and ethnic stereotype: Nurembergers are more cultured, Berliners more enlightened; the French are more cultured, the English more enlightened; the Chinese are highly cultured, but hardly enlightened; whereas the Greeks were both highly cultured and highly enlightened. Enlightenment involves the distribution of scientific knowledge and its accompanying critical attitudes through various estates and classes in society, but for Mendelssohn vocational differences determine that scholars are necessarily more attuned to the critical examination of poetry, genre, or eloquence than the nonliterary common man. The individual's calling (*Beruf*) determines the differential distribution of Enlightenment attributes, whereas the educational development (*Bildung*) of society might make Enlightenment the common destination of all mankind (*Bestimmung des Menschen*). Mendelssohn seeks both legitimacy and ability. If logos and ethos were interconvertible, Enlightenment and culture could refashion each other, but actually, Enlightenment is the secondary consequence of certain contexts more than others, which demonstrates its particular roots despite its universalist claims.<sup>25</sup>

If Mendelssohn chooses vocational differentiation to restrict any unintended political radicalism and point to the genuine difficulty of making Enlightenment a reality, Immanuel Kant famously takes a horizontal approach by reversing the conventional notions of private and public. In Kant's essay, the formula of Enlightenment as man's emergence from self-incurred immaturity (*selbstverschuldeten Unmündigkeit*) is accompanied by the *Wahlspruch*, or heraldic device, *sapere aude*—dare to know—taken from Horace's epistles. Where Mendelssohn's aspersions deny Enlighten-

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belonged. The secret society's agenda was actually driving the debate. In the original examples published in the *Berlinische Monatsschrift* in the 1780s, we see the debates as staging a complex negotiation between a secret society of philosophers and an intellectually oriented reading public during the reign of Frederick the Great. See Immanuel Kant, *Political Writings*, ed. Hans Reiss (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 273n1. For the details of the *Mittwochsgesellschaft*, see James Schmidt, "The Question of Enlightenment: Kant, Mendelssohn, and the *Mittwochsgesellschaft*," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 50, no. 2 (April–June 1989): 269–91.

25. I use the translation of Mendelssohn's essay from James Schmidt, ed., *What Is Enlightenment? Eighteenth-Century Answers and Twentieth-Century Questions* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 53–57.

ment characteristics to those from a specific cultural ethos, Kant promotes individualism and universalism in joint measure across the board. All the same, Kant asserts that most human beings, including especially women, do not possess the aptitude for Enlightenment.<sup>26</sup>

Where Mendelssohn relies on national stereotype, Kant's developmentalist approach leads to the famous "two hats theory" of civic character. The military officer, the tax collector, and the clergyman do not argue but command while they are exercising their civic functions, and they equally do not expect their subordinates to question their authority while doing so. The same individuals can write treatises intended for their peers, questioning aspects of military strategy, fiscal policy, or church doctrine. In performing their vocational social roles, these individuals are exercising passive and private functions, whereas in the cut and thrust of scholarly and textual debate these subjects become citizens who advance their extravocational critique as scholars (*Gelehrter*), creating the cosmopolitan sphere of a reading public.<sup>27</sup> In this sense, Enlightenment benefits from the audacity of self-reflection even as professionals are insured from any personal consequences that could be incurred by expressing criticism within the line of duty. For Mendelssohn, Enlightenment is distributionally differentiated and vocationally situated; for Kant, Enlightenment is extravocationally unmoored even while made distributionally equitable. Kant's move constructs the public sphere as a virtual opening (*Öffentlichkeit*) that constructs a horizontal fellowship among world citizens through a republic of letters, even as the same citizens are politically restricted in their specific social identities, deemed private, whereby they carry out the intentions of the bureaucratic command structure of centralized state authority. For Kant, Enlightenment creates its own transvocational as well as speculatively open ethos, whereby the subject of Enlightenment subtracts himself from social and professional ties even as his intellectual interventions might eventually improve his society and profession. Scholars can stay in line with enlightened despotism: they can "argue, but obey."<sup>28</sup>

26. "The far greater part of mankind (including the entire fairer sex) regard the step to maturity as not only difficult but also very dangerous" (Kant, "What Is Enlightenment?" 58).

27. Kant, "What Is Enlightenment?" 60.

28. Kant, "What Is Enlightenment?" 62. We also need to note in passing the Kantian distinction between Enlightenment and critique: Enlightenment is the task of the rationalization of society and the state through reason, whereas critique is reason's power of discrimination and separation, as well as limitation and purification, which allows profes-

Revisiting these debates, Foucault's essay "What Is Critique?" identifies "the critical attitude" as a virtuous characterology that found its origin in the Reformation and its interrogation of ecclesiastical authority through the textual turn to the Bible. By naming this critical attitude as "virtue in general," Foucault argues that critique originates in a counterpower, seeking "how not to be governed" in relation to "the art of governing men." "As both partner and adversary to the arts of governing," critique ends up being "the art of not being governed quite so much." There is virtue and salvation present in both obedience and disobedience, and the critique-inspired subject is also a nascent self who is created through a series of decisions about whether to argue or obey, rather than through a complete internal abdication regarding responsibility. A spiritual power converts itself into political resistance, and therefore ensures "the desubjugation of the subject in the context of . . . the politics of truth." Foucault's reading of the Kantian enterprise reveals the missionary underside of critique's evangelism that seeks to majoritize men who are being maintained in the minority condition by religion, law, and knowledge—here we can really discern the characterological roots of the Kantian language concerning immaturity/maturity emerging in Habermasian evaluations of poststructuralist metalanguages. One approach to character would recognize a panoply of attributes and types that are either impervious to or amenable to Enlightenment, as Mendelssohn does; another approach reintroduces the entirety of mankind into a scale of maturation that is synonymous with worldliness (*Mündigkeit*), whereby minority status is converted into full-blown adulthood through a project of philosophical education that produces being-in-the-world. Butler justifies Foucault's remarks on the characterology of critique as reemphasizing the ethical dimension of existence.<sup>29</sup> Critical character is found when cultural determinism is overcome in favor of self-fashioning. As we also know from the history of imperial and martial ideologies of various stripes, adversity builds character, whether for the establishment or in resistance to its dictates.

With both Mendelssohn and Kant, we find different coping strategies

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signals to reflect theoretically on their practices. Critique can be instrumentalized toward Enlightenment, but there is always something about critique that can escape, exceed, and query the ongoing reality of rationalization.

29. Michel Foucault, "What Is Critique?" trans. Lysa Hochroth, in *The Political*, ed. David Ingram (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, 2002), 191–211, esp. 192, 193, 195; and Judith Butler, "What Is Critique? An Essay on Foucault's Virtue," in *The Political*, 212–26.

to deaden the negative impact of unrestricted criticism on the enlightener as virtuous character. Kant's idea of the open-ended character-building quality of the cosmopolitan public sphere anticipates Derrida's idea of the university without condition as an ethos-to-come, which has to be defended in the here and now as a way of marking its distance from the state, as well as from economic, religious, cultural, and media powers:

an unconditional right to ask critical questions not only about the history of the concept of man, but about the history even of the notion of critique, about the form and authority of the question, about the interrogative form of thought. For this implies the right to do it affirmatively and performatively, that is, by producing events (for example, by writing) and by giving rise to singular oeuvres (which up until now has not been the purview of either the classical or the modern Humanities).<sup>30</sup>

While Kant's *The Conflict of the Faculties* is too well known to bear summary here, that text is remarkable for the manner in which disciplinary definitions become incipient characterologies. Such a characterological structure, replete with social roles, suggests a philosophical impasse within the university that is also metatheatrical. There is a perpetual comedy of errors that takes place through the conflicts of the modern university and its higher and lower faculties, a process that also brings to mind Diderot's account of Rameau's nephew, which would later be celebrated by Hegel's *Phenomenology*. While the higher faculties want to rule over the lower and over society at large, the lower faculties are justified in wanting to control,

30. See Derrida, "The University without Condition," 204. For a discussion of the unconditional and nondemocratic nature of sovereignty, see Jacques Derrida and Elisabeth Roudinesco, *For What Tomorrow: A Dialogue* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2004). Vincent Leitch is perplexed by deconstruction's predilection for being "on the side of unconditionality even where it appears impossible, and not of sovereignty, even where it appears possible." It might be said that this is the continuation of a certain Kantian idealism and metasincerity within deconstruction as a project, which eschews the soft power of critique for its transcendental counterpower. However, Derrida goes beyond Kant in stressing the unfinished and open nature of infinite responsibility. See Vincent Leitch, "Late Derrida: The Politics of Sovereignty," *Critical Inquiry* 33, no. 2 (Winter 2007): 239–40; and Rodolphe Gasché, "European Memories: Jan Patočka and Jacques Derrida on Responsibility," *Critical Inquiry* 33, no. 2 (Winter 2007): 311. See also Hent de Vries, "Derrida and Ethics: Hospitable Thought," in *Jacques Derrida and the Humanities: A Critical Reader*, ed. Tom Cohen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 172–92.



certify, and perform a gatekeeper's role with respect to the higher (*kontrollieren* being the police function of control but not command).<sup>31</sup>

In his rich reflection entitled "Mochlos, or The Conflict of the Faculties," Derrida argues that the university of reason is a nonstarter precisely because of Kant's inability to maintain distinctions between theory and practice, as well as the constative and the performative.<sup>32</sup> Even what Kant calls the philosophy faculty is again subject to an internal division, whereby the historical disciplines are separated from the rational sciences.<sup>33</sup> Critique here, to refer to Foucault's phrase, is not necessarily a choice between the characteristics of "high Kantian enterprise and little polemical professional activities."<sup>34</sup> *The Conflict of the Faculties* suggests that the high and the little happen to be one and the same, as the bureaucratic professionalism of the university as an artificial (*künstliche*) entity is entirely devoted to the quasi-industrial manner of its production of knowledge (*gleichsam fabrikenmässig*), with the professors as trustees (*als Depositeure*). The wielder of critique has to be both high-minded and careerist, and altruistically interested in saving the reputations of peers who know no better, even while self-servingly investing in promoting his or her own profile while doing so. Kant's location of critique within the university brings the function of the scholarly academy fully into the university at a moment when teaching and scholarship were not integrated with each other.<sup>35</sup> The attempt to locate

31. For a good contextual reading of Kant's *kontrollieren* in relation to the *Passkontrolle* of the gatekeeper, and the control rather than the command function of reason (*Vermögen*), see Timothy Bahti, "Histories of the University: Kant and Humboldt," *MLN* 102, no. 3 (April 1987): 437–60.

32. Jacques Derrida, "Mochlos, or, The Conflict of the Faculties," in *Logomachia: The Conflict of the Faculties*, ed. Richard Rand (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992), 1–34.

33. Kant wrote this piece as a response to the new emperor, Friedrich Wilhelm, a Christian mystic who had publicly called him to account for, and upbraided him with, corrupting the youth and undermining his sovereign authority (as *Landesvater*, or "father of the nation"). *The Conflict of the Faculties* is therefore written as a justification of critique as the institutional responsibility of philosophy, a discipline that clings to truth and disinterestedness in the face of the corruption of the higher faculties, which freely express and act out their obscurantism and opportunism. This is an ethics of disinterestedness that resembles the approach laid out in the *Critique of Judgment*.

34. Foucault, "What Is Critique?" 191.

35. While Wilhelm von Humboldt proposed a new university for Berlin along the lines suggested by Kant, Kant had located critique as an institutionally generative conflict that was under way within the existing German university system of the 1790s. Kant, the famous

critique in the lower faculty of philosophy ended up leveraging responsibility as intramural, interactive, and transrational in its negotiations under the eye of overarching sovereignty.

There is a novel problematic before us concerning the question of critique as a form of responsibility institutionalized within the university rather than just as characterological virtue in itself, and, if so, how critique can be proven to be acting responsibly toward society. While academics in many liberal democracies are not generally called to account by the country's sovereign as Kant was, and even though our scholarship is not controlled by our universities' presidents and executive officers, unless we teach in highly religious settings, we are occasionally called to account by colleagues or students; and depending on where we work, we are sometimes hounded by state legislators, the media, and corporate interests in ways that could have censoring effects. The international consortium for academic freedom, Scholars at Risk, testifies that academics are probably just as much physically and professionally at risk nowadays from nonstate actors, as they may be in danger of falling afoul of state repression.<sup>36</sup> In the larger global setting, critique is beleaguered, both within and outside the walls of the university, without a sense of whether it has a clearly defined role to play in institutional life today. Even if it could not fulfill its Kantian functions, both the high-minded enterprise and the polemical professional activities present in critique seem very much out of joint.

By Kant's own definition, and given Foucault's criticism of critique, we might think that we are faced with two very unsatisfactory characterological choices. Critique is either a good form of impotence, a virtuous but failed nonpower—Hamlet unable to assert his sense of justice through the inaction he embodies as a hypercritical melancholic—or critique is a subordinated form of instrumentalization, a vicious soft power—such as Gertrude's willingness to get into bed with Claudius.<sup>37</sup> These two Kantian

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armchair cosmopolitan, taught at Königsberg even though he hardly traveled; whereas Berlin, the capital of Prussia, was the seat of the prestigious Berlin Academy but did not possess a university of its own till 1810. Critique, therefore, became a leveraging function within an institutional context for Kant, who aimed to relocate scholarship within pedagogy at the cusp of industrialization and full-blown modernity.

36. For further information, see the Scholars at Risk mission statement on the organization's Web site, available at <http://scholarsatrisk.nyu.edu/About-Us/Mission.php>.

37. I return to *Hamlet*, as this text marks the emergence of the sincerity/authenticity paradigm of characterology in early modernity for Trilling.

alternatives already suppressed a reflexive third role that critique could play through the revocation of vocation or professional calling (*Beruf*), by staging a kind of academic general strike if we invoke Georges Sorel (and we may bemusingly wonder whether this is Ophelia's option, insanity as performance of full-scale revocation of social and political being).<sup>38</sup> We do know of historical moments when universities as social-conceptual spaces erupt into crisis, whether during the anti-Vietnam War protests in the 1960s or anti-apartheid protests of the 1980s.<sup>39</sup> However, there is still a fourth possibility for a future of critique that approaches the transcendental through the empirical, as a form of cosmopolitan detranscendentalization, perhaps what Hamlet performs at the end of the play, and furthers beyond his death in conjunction with Horatio. This might take the form of actualizing something like a new charter or academic contract for the university that builds on a juridical moment in Kant, but that takes it beyond Kant. The famous essays "Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose" and "Perpetual Peace," both of which explore the project of a global reason, and by implication, a cosmopolitical university, actualize a notion of free exchange and openness to the outside, whose essence could be characterized as that of intellectual hospitality.<sup>40</sup>

On the face of it, hospitality might seem to be the exact opposite of critique. While critique denounces prejudice and illusion, indiscriminate hospitality welcomes without preconditions. However, such hospitality could also be seen as fulfilling an affirmative function for what Derrida calls the

38. See Georges Sorel, *Reflections on Violence*, ed. Jeremy Jennings (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 144ff.

39. It is indeed stunning that the Iraq War has barely affected university campuses in the United States. Is this a sign of the decline of the university as a site of political ferment? There is, nonetheless, a religious genealogy in the European context that traces the origin of critique, as professional or academic vocation, back to the very idea of calling (or, *Beruf*) present in the Kantian text, a term identified by Max Weber as going back to Martin Luther. See Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Talcott Parsons (New York: Routledge, 1992), 25ff. Giorgio Agamben traces this notion of calling to the term *klêsis*, in Paul's *Letter to the Corinthians*. See Giorgio Agamben, *The Time that Remains: A Commentary on the Letter to the Romans*, trans. Patricia Dailey (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2005), 19ff. Critique as a space-clearing gesture, when radicalized, resembles a secularized messianic vocation that preaches the revocation of every other vocation. But the possibility of a religious origin for critique does not reduce it to faith. And in this case, we are on very different terrain from that of content-oriented theological doctrine.

40. Both essays can be found in translation in Kant, *Political Writings*.

right to philosophy, which involves a welcoming that accepts without passing judgment, something that is instead postponed for future reckoning in relation to the political project of a democracy to come. What kind of character is it that welcomes all other characters as guests, including those that might question the host? How do we discover the counterinstitutional space that is paradoxically possible within the realm of critique and the institution that is the university?

Within the context of a vacuous excellence that governs the globalizing university amidst the dereferentialization of nation and culture, Bill Readings melancholically offers “the university in ruins” as a place where the affirmation of teaching and learning can take place within a network of pedagogical obligation.<sup>41</sup> While this approach felt like a tragic Benjaminian commitment during the millennial feeling engendered by the late 1990s, a decade of subsequent reflection amidst the vast globalizing expansion of the university has also led to new forces within the university being able to seek out the more diverse uses to which the counterinstitutional turn could be put, in large part by reorienting the humanities toward its fundamental commitments, which include both critique and hospitality. What Readings had also counseled, concerning inhabiting the ruins, needs to lead toward more ambitious forms of inhabitancy that institute migrant, diasporic, and excluded traditions of scholarship alongside hegemonic ones. Such dreams of inhabitancy bring together the exigencies of postcolonial geography occupying the center, advocated by Said’s expanded humanism, alongside a posthumanist ethics of undecidability associated with Derrida. The critical secularism espoused by Said shies away from uncertainty toward immediate restitution, even as transdisciplinary hospitality emerges outside disciplinary critique.<sup>42</sup> As William V. Spanos warns, we need to unwork the complicity of assimilative pedagogy alongside sociopolitical domination, except that the current conjuncture is no more that of U.S. national reconsolidation in a post-Vietnam era. Now, the university is increasingly imbricated within late capitalist transnational networks that instrumentalize the credentializ-

41. See Bill Readings, *The University in Ruins* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996), 154–58; and also Simon Morgan Wortham, *Counter-Institutions: Jacques Derrida and the Question of the University* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2006).

42. For a very useful article that attempts (this admittedly difficult) Saidian-Derridean synthesis through the notion of inhabitancy, see Robert P. Marzec, “Said, Derrida, and the Undecidable Human: In the Name of Inhabitancy,” in *Edward Said and Jacques Derrida: Reconstellating Humanism and the Global Hybrid*, ed. Mina Karavanta and Nina Morgan (Newcastle, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008), 304–23.

ing power of U.S. universities to generate entrepreneurship and intellectual property competitively through transcontinental pods and hubs. Would an evacuation of local allegiances in favor of global elites imply new counter-institutional opportunities?<sup>43</sup>

### Hospitality as Critique's Supplement

In the context of a world integrated by the forces of globalization—trade, empire, travel, and migration over the last few centuries—hospitality has to be considered as a radical supplement to critique. The ethical roots of hospitality could also be traced back to the mobilization of religious and ethical thought (such as Derrida's reading of Emmanuel Lévinas as recently argued by Hent de Vries in *Religion and Violence*), although while origins are contingent factors worthy of interpretation, they ought not to be treated as repressed essences or reductive teleologies.<sup>44</sup> Kant's ethnocentrism in *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, where Christianity becomes the very model of religion itself, and within which various forms of paganism as well as syncretism are decried as antithetical to the goals of critique, does not provide an adequate model.<sup>45</sup> The concept of hospitality makes available multiple philosophical, religious, and linguistic traditions for an open-ended dialogue with the Kantian problematic at a particularly fraught moment for Euro-American philosophical modernity caught in the throes of transcontinental globalization. Rather than hastily generalize the Kantian model as normative of world-historical conceptual space, scholars have to account for the multiple histories of secularism, secularity, and secularization as ongoing and unfinished projects.

Much has been said about the masculinist violence of Enlightenment when reason is instrumentalized. Kantian critique suffers from an emasculation complex in its worship of the sublime power that comes from the executive dimension of sovereignty, even as there is a sense of shame and loss that results from critique's inability to exercise power vested in those

43. See William V. Spanos, *The End of Education: Toward Posthumanism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993).

44. See Hent de Vries, "Hospitable Thought: Before and Beyond Cosmopolitanism," in *Religion and Violence: Philosophical Perspectives from Kant to Derrida* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 293–398.

45. Kant's essay is translated in Immanuel Kant, *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason and Other Writings*, ed. Allen Wood and George Di Giovanni (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 31–192.

more worthy (and presumably more macho) than the scholar. Is it possible to think of the future of critique via a notion of cosmopolitan hospitality—ethos over individual character—which unmans the symbolic and gendered violence of the denunciation of illusion and identity associated with critique? The ethics of hospitality also reactivates a certain aspect of gender subordination that has been characteristic of critique in its full-blown form. For instance, Lévinas, in *Totality and Infinity*, suggests “Woman” as “hospitable welcome par excellence,” and Derrida overgenerously comments that Lévinas’s book could be a feminist manifesto.<sup>46</sup> At the very least, the project of hospitality opens the juridical power of the university to the genealogies, critiques, and transformative possibilities of subjugated knowledges, both gendered and religious.

Any reflection on the hospitable future of critique and its character, institutional as well as extra-institutional, also needs to explore how the concept of the future is a relationship between what Reinhart Koselleck has termed “the space of experience” (*Erfahrungsraum*) and “the horizon of expectation” (*Erwartungshorizont*).<sup>47</sup> Does the failure of critique to reorganize the world create alternative expectations? Koselleck points out that while experience consists of a spatialization of the presence of the past assembled into a totality, expectation consists of the future made present. Secular modernity has extended the distance between experience and expectation, even while the shrinking of the world through travel and communication has created cultural and philosophical contiguities whereby a critical attitude has to live cheek by jowl with acts of hospitality that are inspired by the horizon of expectation.<sup>48</sup> Kant had always delineated institu-

46. Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh, Pa.: Duquesne University Press, 1969), 131. Derrida’s comment is in *Adieu to Emmanuel Levinas*, trans. Michael Naas and Pascale-Anne Bruault (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1999), 83; cited in de Vries, *Religion and Violence*, 331.

47. Reinhart Koselleck, “‘Space of Experience’ and ‘Horizon of Expectation’: Two Historical Categories,” in *Futures Past*, trans. Keith Tribe (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 255–75.

48. In the more banal context of historical experience, expectation and experience influence each other with the retroactive accumulation of expectation even within the category of experience. As Kant suggests in his famous reflection on the collective experience of the French Revolution, “even if the revolution or reform of a national constitution should finally miscarry . . . that event is too important, too much interwoven with the interest of humanity, and its influence too widely propagated in all areas of the world to not be recalled on any favorable occasion by the nations which would then be roused to a repetition of new efforts of this kind” (Kant, *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere*

tional critique as a virtual alternative within the Kantian architectonic.<sup>49</sup> The intramural nature of philosophy, as defined by Kant, sets it up for failure, as philosophy must speak truth, but only in hushed tones and only to the fraternity of scholars in the know; and while philosophy speaks on behalf of others, it must never speak directly to them, as that will usurp the role of the sovereign that can only be played by the higher faculties within the university. However, if the defanging of executive authority from critique makes critique benign but impotent, the Kantian tendency is to wish passively for the instrumentalization of critique as soft power, thereby muddying its hands with the politics and actuality of the real world. Kant's directive is to reason always as a scholar rather than as a citizen.<sup>50</sup> Is there a way out of this double bind, where the walls that separate the institutions of thought from the world of action are deemed as ethically necessary, and yet, as Derrida has pointed out, philosophically impossible to maintain? Bruno Latour, one of the greatest critics of the universalist gestures of critique as enacting an illegitimate denunciation of its other, has more recently counseled that we recenter around a theory of concern that separates itself from both philosophical defetishization and scientific positivism by instead gathering around a robust realism. However, haven't the horses already left the barn? There is no Archimedean lever that can enable a reunified perspective involving the critical discourses of the humanities, the physical positivism of the applied sciences, and the statistical realism of the social sciences. To go in the direction Latour now recommends is to overvalidate the social sciences as the disciplines that allow gatherings and ensembles at the expense of the seemingly hypercritical humanities, and this could prove to be a strategic overcompensation that would not necessarily lead to clearer outcomes.<sup>51</sup>

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*Reason*, 159). This is the cautious wisdom of someone who has just witnessed the failure of revolution but does not see in this failure the extinction of hope.

49. For a very interesting discussion of the Kantian antinomies between critique and doctrine, see Hannah Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, ed. Ronald Beiner (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982).

50. "Transcendental philosophy is only the idea of a science for which the critique of pure reason has to lay down the complete architectonic plan. That is to say, it has to guarantee, as following from principles, the completeness and certainty of the structure in all its parts." Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp Smith (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 60.

51. See Bruno Latour, "Why Has Critique Run Out of Steam? From Matters of Fact to Matters of Concern," *Critical Inquiry* 30, no. 2 (Winter 2004): 225–48.

The humanities still have one card in the deck that has begun to be played out, and that is the philosophy and practice of cosmopolitanism. As recently described by Anthony Appiah, cosmopolitanism is universalization with difference.<sup>52</sup> This return of universalism is also highly “ambiguous,” as Étienne Balibar has characterized it: the empirical universalism of globalization differs from the fictive universalism of the Kantian public sphere and the idealistic universalism of equaliberty.<sup>53</sup> Countercosmopolitans, on the other hand, reject cosmopolitanism as always heralding uniformity, standardization, or universalist subsumption. Linguistic cosmopolitanism with multilingualism as the informing background is more resonant with difference than monolingual pronouncements made without translational backup. What is the philosophical content of the cosmopolitan character that might put together within itself both critique and hospitality? In the context of the university, cosmopolitanism is that translation machine that is the university itself, treating languages and vocabularies as reciprocally informing rather than constitutively hegemonic, and, in the best instances, allowing the centrifugal structure of hospitality to counter the centripetal vision of critique. Rather than impose one language on everyone, cosmopolitanism would potentially highlight the intense study of language and metalanguage as the best possible future of critique undertaken within the new ethos of the university-in-the-world.

Language, qua language, is neither universalist nor relativist, although it is frequently mischaracterized as either. All human beings inhabit the medium of language. Correspondingly, there are specific psychologies—indeed, pathologies—that arise in relation to the study of languages. Language study can be a philosophical means to deepen one’s understanding of difference within language just as much as among languages. Whatever happens to a specific language or to language in general, it especially cannot be mourned because it has never been fully possessed by the subject who claims mastery or some proprietary relationship over it. This melancholic attestation is ultimately a reflection on how any investigation of language is a prosthesis of the origin. As Derrida enunciates this paradox in *The Monolingualism of the Other*, “Yes, I speak only one language, but it isn’t mine.”<sup>54</sup>

52. Anthony Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers* (New York: Norton, 2006).

53. See Balibar, “Ambiguous Universality,” 165ff.

54. Jacques Derrida, *Le monolinguisme de l’autre* (Paris: Galilée, 1996), 15. In French, the phrase is “Oui, je n’ai qu’une langue, or ce n’est pas la mienne.”



A characteristic facility with a language, idiom, or dialect—whether in the positivist sense of sociolinguistics, or the more rarefied philosophical one of style—can never reach ultimate self-reflexivity or full comprehension of the structure of the ego's linguistic identity and self-identification, whether preexisting or retroactively imposed. The characteristics of the cosmopolitan pursuit of language can be defined as the repeated enactment of the antinomy that exists between *language as ontological and transcendental universality* and *language as empirical phenomenon*.<sup>55</sup> This becomes, effectively, a metatheatrical staging of the various challenges of the university-in-the-world, something that the globalizing university and certain forms of instrumentality, such as Habermasian proceduralism, eliminate in favor of a pure universalism.

The psychological alternatives created by our impossible responsibility toward language comprise three characterological positions: (1) forgetful aphasia, (2) integrationist amnesia, and (3) hypermnesia and anamnesis. Those who promote a single global, national, or rational/theoretical language (including apologists for neoliberalism, proponents of globalization, and defenders of minimal rationality) are universalists reacting to linguistic excess with an aphasic gesture. Those who respond to the mathematical sublime of the vast number of languages with preservationist horror are the Romantic hypermnesiacs. And those who propose multiple institutional solutions that limitedly resolve linguistic tensions are the integrationist amnesiacs of Derrida's parable, who find themselves within the translation machine of the university-in-the-world. Intercommunication among languages and metalanguages occurs by proximity and contiguity but cannot be enforced as homogeneous teleology. These psychopathologies (including their linguistic symptoms as identified by Derrida) need analysis and translation, especially when they spill over into cultural separatism, or the profession of untranslatable or incommensurable difference. Avoiding the blind intolerances of universalism and the self-imposed shackles of relativism, such language-oriented cosmopolitanism negotiates ceaselessly between integrationist amnesia and Romantic hypermnesia, tempering critique with hospitality.

The philosophical characterology of language-oriented cosmopolitanism is one of antinomy rather than transcendence: at any single moment, it should be noted, a cosmopolitan speaks, not in multiple languages but always in one language; yet, one language is never adequate.

55. These phrases are italicized in Derrida's text.

Language divides internally into dialects, idioms, and secret codes, even as attempts to police the system of stabilized languages are gestures of containment that misapprehend their object. Language is much more than an instrument of communication or a mere vehicle of culture. It transindividually precedes any subject who inhabits it. As a result of the limitations of the linguistically biased subject, the public language of the university-in-the-world has to be positioned within a cosmopolitan institutional structure, opening outward beyond the proclamation of Kant's and Wilhelm von Humboldt's university of reason.<sup>56</sup> Even a committed Habermasian such as Seyla Benhabib warns, "The transcendence of the nation-state is occurring hardly in the direction of cosmopolitanism but more in the direction of the privatization and corporatization of sovereignty."<sup>57</sup> The language of cosmopolitanism, responsive to the university-in-the-world, ought to resist the globalizing university by turning its singular language inside out, and by forcing accountability to language politics and to attitudes to language as revelatory of politics. Hence, the danger of adopting a Habermasian metalanguage.

In his essay asserting that Hegel's critique of Kant does not apply to discourse ethics, Habermas claims that the proceduralist method becomes ethically substantive because everyday language is the medium of an equally shared intersubjectivity among interlocutors. What was the unbridgeable gap between the phenomenal and noumenal in Kant is simplified to the everyday tension found within discourse. However, as may be demonstrated by Jacques Rancière's idea of the necessary importance of the grammatical third person in language and political speech, discourse ethics dangerously assumes synchronous temporality and full presence

56. As we know, it was this Kantian-Humboldtian model that made its way over to the United States through the establishment of graduate schools at Columbia, Yale, Harvard, and Johns Hopkins. See Bahti, "Histories of the University," 437–60. The language of reason need not be English, of course, and, as in the case of the Kantian example, it was most definitely scientifically obsessed German. Bill Readings's suggestion in *The University in Ruins* that the university of reason (whose ideal was philosophical and scientific high German) was replaced by a university of culture (whose references were political and literary French) which in turn was replaced by a university of excellence (whose jargon we can say is a U.S. English administrative managerialism) gives us a very schematic but helpful frame that can be considerably refined. See Readings, *The University in Ruins*, 21ff. For a useful critique of Readings, see Dominick LaCapra, "The University in Ruins?" *Critical Inquiry* 25, no. 1 (Autumn 1988): 32–55.

57. Seyla Benhabib, *Another Cosmopolitanism*, ed. Robert Post (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 177.

regarding the accountability of past and future embedded within a mutual dialogue among first- and second-person subject-positions. The appeal to the third person, sometimes taking the form of an appeal to the spectral presence of ancestors or divinities, who are then asked in the second person to serve as transcendental justice or immanent witness, is central to so many ethicopolitical approaches and cannot, therefore, be reduced by discourse ethics to the minimal interlocution between first- and second-person positions. The limitations of discourse ethics arise from its insistence on a single theory of communication and metalanguage, positioned within an empty time and space of modernity that ignores the presence of the past and expectations of the future not based only on modern assumptions.<sup>58</sup>

The university is the place where we can alternate between the role of host and guest from the seminar room to the lecture hall. Language becomes both the medium of hospitality and critique, supplying a dialectics of identification and disidentification with the medium of instruction, whether this is recognized to be a natural language, a historical discipline, or a theoretical method.

How can we guard against English becoming the sole vehicle for the globalizing university? The nation/language/culture synthesis that dominated the world is falling apart, making way for a situation of perpetual translation (or lack thereof), where English functions as a postmodern version of what Latin was for Europe, but with much less depth and meaning. This new positioning of English places it as cosmopolitan mediator rather than transcendental essence. Sometimes, English enters the linguistic field as the opening to the outside, or as the international lingua franca that displaces existing linguistic and cultural rivalries with the promise of economic and career opportunity—posed as either flight or freedom. In other situations, English is the colonial language of the former British Empire, or that of neocolonial domination by the United States, with sedimented meanings that indicate class privilege or historical access. Interestingly, the recent rise of China and India as economic powers has further increased the use of English as link language. English can be the sign of new cultural capital as well as new lines of flight from closed social totalities. Sometimes, new forms of English intervene to interrupt older idioms. English becomes

58. See Jürgen Habermas, "Morality and Ethical Life: Does Hegel's Critique of Kant Apply to Discourse Ethics," in *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action*, trans. Christian Lenhardt and Shierry Weber Nicholsen (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1990), 195–215; and Jacques Rancière, *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998).

the language that puts other languages in relationship with each other, but when it does so as a casual connector, it is not as metalanguage but as a kind of instrumentalizing creole, or even debased pidgin. By becoming a conduit, or the currency of circulation that puts many languages and idioms in contact with each other, English also loses social power and prestige rather than always accumulating it. This is just as much a loss of aura and idiomaticity in linguistic and social terms, as it is also sometimes loss of purchasing power, because soon there will be as many brokers as customers.<sup>59</sup> English as the sole global link language does epistemic violence to other languages but also recoils backward by creating deadening effects on the (trans)idiomatic particularity of English itself.

Modernity might well be the anomaly in the history of languages, as standardization and state-centered language policy arrested linguistic evolution. Before modernity and after it, linguistic evolution meant and continues to mean novelty and obsolescence. Ernest Gellner remarked sarcastically that Euro-American anthropologists, while generally politically liberal in their own societies, turned into the equivalent of fierce Tories when defending the non-European cultures they studied.<sup>60</sup> For this reason, rather than confront linguistic imperialism—whether of English, discourse ethics, or anything else—with defensive forms of separatism, the ethics of

59. With its polycentric localizations, English might be on an upward trend that could lead to universal dominance, but we should be careful not to fall prey to the zero-sum view that the increased use of English necessarily means the death of other languages. Concerns we may have about language extinction are preservationist assumptions that can often be traced back to the “Humboldt” or “Herder” effect of nineteenth-century romanticisms. For the former, see Wilhelm von Humboldt, *On Language: On the Diversity of Human Language Construction and Its Influence on the Mental Development of the Human Species*, ed. Michael Losonsky, trans. Peter Heath (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 150ff. For the latter, see Johann Gottfried Herder’s “Essay on the Origin of Language,” trans. Alexander Gode, in *On the Origin of Languages*, trans. and ed. John H. Moran and Alexander Gode (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966), 85–166.

60. For an analysis of Gellner’s assertions, see Talal Asad’s “The Concept of Cultural Translation in British Social Anthropology,” in *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, ed. James Clifford and George E. Marcus (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 141–64. This position is not to be confused with that of a linguistic social Darwinist, dubiously rationalizing the decline of endangered languages; rather, it is a rejection of patronizing attitudes toward languages that need to be saved in favor of full-throated multiplicity. I thank Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak for pushing back at this formulation during an oral presentation of this argument at SUNY–Stony Brook, which has helped me further nuance this point so as not to be mistaken as indifferent to language change and impact.

the university should be that of an ongoing and endless translation *without* a dominant metalanguage. Languages acquire depth when barely heard melodies are encouraged, therefore allowing ontology to be challenged by hauntology.

What to make of consensus-building exercises backed by the stampeding discourse of the globalizing university? Language politics qua language politics in the university is not the theme here, as before we can get to that issue, we have to confront the Habermasian metaconversation that determines that the existence of a plurality of theoretical metalanguages is ipso facto an attack on language qua language. Such proceduralist intolerance will lead directly to the “monolingualism” of Anglobalization today.<sup>61</sup> As Michel Serres argues in *The Parasite*, communicational “noise” is an inescapable feature of complex networks, and attempts to eliminate such noise as superfluous are bound to fail.<sup>62</sup>

The dream of a single metalanguage reduces all rivals to noise that ought to be taken seriously rather than just be screened out. We are now facing a globalizing university wherein the single metalanguage aims to be American English, whose operational philosophy will be dictated by administrative neoliberalism. This translocal metalanguage is likely to tout procedural democracy as part of its functional armory, and its vaunted ideology may very well be Victorian character of high imperial extraction masked through ancient Greek sources, even while it will enact continued aggression to other languages, taking the form of withering admonitions analogical to those made since the early modern period to women, children, the insane, and the irrational, all of whom are advised to grow up and shoulder their responsibilities to a universalist project. Admittedly, this is no longer the world of the glories of the British Empire: it is, rather, the world of a communicational monolingualism hiding behind the fig leaf of superficial cosmopolitanism.

Against this type of theoretical aphasia or integrative monolingualism there exist more salutary models of comparative cosmopolitanism. Where there is a turn to affect and ethics, a corresponding turn to translation theory can be consequential. Emily Apter’s book *The Translation Zone* defines the way all linguistic space comes into being in relation to two extreme propositions concerning translation—universalism and incommensurability. At one

61. I thank Jonathan Arac for coining the wonderful word *monolingualism*.

62. Michel Serres, *The Parasite*, trans. Lawrence Schehr (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982).

pole, we have the proposition that everything is translatable; at the other end, the proposition that nothing is translatable. Translation studies exists in a zone of linguistic contact today, where the migratory crossovers and rubbing together of languages has meant that the world is paradoxically both more monolingual and more multilingual at the same time. Rey Chow suggests that the matter is subtle, as it is also the question of internal division rather than just that of external multiplicity: “[As] diversity is not the opposite of oneness (because oneness is never one), so neither is monolingualism the opposite of multilingualism.”<sup>63</sup> Rather than favoring either universalism or incommensurability, Apter adroitly maneuvers in the zone of uncertainty that linguistic practice generates between both these poles. Comparative literature is indeed the space of argument, contestation, and the provisional reconsolidation of subjects, cultures, languages, and literatures. Rather than some dream of *adequatio*, a gatekeeping or pass-law exercise of command and control, where every language and metalanguage, whether critical or empirical, is questioned about its norms and its relationship between facts and values before being allowed to enter the privileged space of the university, translation ensures a shuttling back and forth and a keen attention to the regulatory definition of foreign and symbolic languages within the humanities and the institution of the university. The language and reach of global Englishes are not effective without their institutional supports, such as the translation machine that is the university itself.<sup>64</sup>

Another admirable book of recent publication, Natalie Melas’s *All the Difference in the World*, arises in the context of the marginal situation of comparative literature in the U.S. university today. Arguing that the totality of the world is not systematizable under a single concept or idea, Melas speaks of a situation where multiple languages and differences express their singularity in the context of a hegemonic monolingualism.<sup>65</sup> Using Édouard Glissant’s poetics of relation as her model, Melas puts forward Glissant’s proposal for “a multiplied poetics of the world that present themselves to those alone who attempt to gather them into equivalences that do

63. Rey Chow, “Reading Derrida on Being Monolingual,” *New Literary History* 39, no. 2 (Spring 2008): 217–31.

64. Emily Apter, *The Translation Zone: A New Comparative Literature* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2006).

65. Natalie Melas, *All the Difference in the World: Postcoloniality and the Ends of Comparison* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2007).

not unify.”<sup>66</sup> Combining this with Jean-Luc Nancy’s pun on *comparaison* in French, where comparison is not about pure recognition or selfsameness but the coappearance (*com-paraitre*) of two singularities, Melas shows the way to an ethico-political disciplinary practice that focuses on dissimilation rather than assimilation as its *modus vivendi*.<sup>67</sup> In the dereferentialized university in ruins that we inhabit, various attempts at re-referentialization get caught up in new forms of hegemonic police work, which subject linguistic others to projects of universalist metalanguage. Glissant’s model of a degeneralized universal or Nancy’s exposure of the dissimilation of singularity in the face of community and identity leads to models of “consensual opacities,” where differences do not close themselves off under the sign of incommensurability but instead face each other openly without guarantee, and also without immediately compromising coappearance into sameness or consensual transparency. An appeal for transparency almost always implements new hierarchies of linguistic subordination. How, for instance, can indigenous epistemologies enter the academy in a nontrivial way? Rather than just promote anthropological ways of knowing, the university has to dehegemonize the dominant metalanguage, and thereby make space for other voices and axiologies.<sup>68</sup>

Cosmopolitan hospitality could also be seen as fulfilling an affirmative function, endorsing what Derrida calls the right to philosophy, perhaps at bottom, the right to language, which Lévinas describes as involving “an attention to speech or welcome of the face, hospitality and not thematization.”<sup>69</sup> By making the singularities of various languages appear beside each other, linguistic hospitality makes available multiple philosophical, cultural, and religious traditions, putting them into an open-ended dialogue with the Kantian problematic, and with each other. Linguistic hospitality is not sentimental; it construes an opening of the juridical power of the university to the genealogies, critiques, and transformative possibilities of subju-

66. “Les poétiques multipliées du monde ne se proposent qu’à ceux-là seuls qui tentent de les ramasser dans des équivalences qui n’unifient pas” (Melas, *All the Difference in the World*, xii, 32). Glissant’s proposal occurs in his *Le discours antillais* (Paris: Éditions de Seuil, 1981), 466.

67. See Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*, ed. Peter Connor (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991).

68. See Rauna Kuokkanen, “Toward a New Relation of Hospitality in the Academy,” in “Native Experiences in the Ivory Tower,” special issue, *American Indian Quarterly* 27, nos. 1&2 (Winter/Spring 2003): 267–95.

69. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 299.

gated knowledges and languages, but at the same time, it doesn't claim to save others or impose a unified metalanguage that choreographs the entire conversation.

That way is indeed heralded by a renewed vigor of the teaching, pursuit, and translation of languages and language—natural and philosophical and theoretical—in relation to each other, without acceding to the simplification of acknowledging the imperiousness of one theoretical metalanguage, whether proceduralism or any other. As Derrida asserts, “Language itself becomes through and through, structurally, the very element of the alibi: nonbelonging, impossible appropriation.”<sup>70</sup> There is only language, which can be alternately critical and hospitable to itself and to other forms of language, and the university is a series of language-based hypotheses and critiques—constructions and deconstructions, hospitalities and hostilities—that persist and continue with the assumption that neither critique nor hospitality can ever entirely dominate, as both embody different principles of centripetality and centrifugality within language, allowing for the possibility of a multicorned dialogue with, rather than a dialectics of, Enlightenment. This would be the ethos of a university beyond character references, but replete with all comers—whether talkers or doers—in the utopian manner that Aimé Césaire puts it in *Notebook of a Return to the Native Land*: whereby “no race has a monopoly on beauty, or intelligence, or strength, and there will be a place for all at the rendezvous of victory.”<sup>71</sup> Said had also suggested that, “without wishing to romanticize the university, the university is the last remaining protected space.”<sup>72</sup> Hospitality is what allows for the university to be a bastion of utopian possibility in an increasingly commodified and brutalized world. The university should remain open to all kinds of characters, all forms of thought and reasoning, all metalanguages, natural languages, and symbolic actions. After an initial welcome without passing judgment, interanimated discussion, debate, and critique can commence. This is indeed a more desirable commonsense logic than one that conducts a gatekeeping exercise on the basis of deliberative rules and expectations. Universities are responsible within multiple temporalities, curating historical legacies and keeping up past commitments as well as

70. Derrida, “Provocation: Forewords,” in *Without Alibi*, xxviii. Indeed, as the French followers of the Russian formalists asserted, “il n’y a pas de metalangage.”

71. Aimé Césaire, *The Collected Poetry*, trans. Clayton Eshleman and Annette Smith (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 77; translation modified.

72. Edward Said, *The Edward Said Reader*, ed. Moustafa Bayoumi and Andrew Rubin (New York: Vintage, 2000), 436.



future orientations that are emergent, and even preemergent. Not just the voices of the excluded others in the present are in question: multiple potential openings on to new futures and forgotten pasts are also at stake. By spurring newer forms of hospitality to scholarly languages and disciplines that are not automatically comprehensible at first blush, what began as the globalizing university can be replaced by the more desirable construct of the university-in-the-world.