

## Deleuze on the Superiority of Anglo-American Literature: A Victorianist Perspective<sup>1</sup>

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Michel Foucault famously asserted that “perhaps one day, this century will be known as Deleuzian.”<sup>2</sup> I choose to read this claim as implying that Foucault’s own investment in the 20<sup>th</sup> century reconstitution of historiography, and in counter-memory, is to be assessed against Deleuze’s philosophy. Gilles Deleuze in turn assigns particular importance to Anglo-American literature, as the sphere, or rather assemblage (the Deleuzian *agencement*, the Foucauldian *dispositif*...), where philosophy and its memory suffer an ongoing reconstitution, and where the collective and the political are configured for philosophy.<sup>3</sup> From here it follows that the logic of Foucault’s century is mobilized in Anglo-American literature, or else that the type of rationality is mobilized in Anglo-American literature on which Foucault’s century depends if it is to make sense, for philosophy and cultural history alike. That the 20<sup>th</sup> century demands to be addressed in these terms is corroborated by Alain Badiou, in his book titled simply *The Century*, which suggests that the 20<sup>th</sup> century captures somehow what century, as such, is all about. What happens in Badiou, in other words, is an attempt to carve century into a concept, with the memory of the 20<sup>th</sup>

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century used as an intellectual battleground where history and politics threaten philosophy into regeneration.<sup>4</sup>

This is why Deleuze is appropriate as a passageway to discussing English and American literatures at a conference that aims to address English Studies as archive and as prospecting. It is surely symptomatic that Deleuze’s final essay, “Immanence: A Life”, aligns itself significantly with Dickens (*Our Mutual Friend*). The same can be discerned in “On the Superiority of Anglo-American Literature”. In this essay, Deleuze classes Anglo-American literature with or alongside philosophy, as that position where philosophy suffers a deconstruction of the place where it produces concepts, or rather where concepts are to take place. Or, in Deleuze’s terms, Anglo-American literature appears to be in sympathy with philosophy, which is open to an ongoing reconstitution.

This entails that Anglo-American literature is, or assembles, the very thought where culture revolutionizes: the thought of transformation. This is an argument that can be traced back to Nietzsche, another favorite of Deleuze, who takes the notion of revolutionary culture from the writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson. I am alluding here to a well-known passage in “Schopenhauer as Educator”, in which Nietzsche quotes from Emerson’s “Circles” in order to describe transformative thought. According to Emerson, “a new degree of culture would instantly revolutionize the entire system of human pursuits.”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Michel Foucault, *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology* (New York: The New Press, 1987), 343.

<sup>3</sup> Most insistently, perhaps, in his essay “On the Superiority of Anglo-American Literature.” Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet, *Dialogues* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), 36-76.

<sup>4</sup> Alain Badiou, *The Century* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007). Badiou’s handling of century resonates with Deleuze’s precept regarding concepts. According to Deleuze, “concepts themselves change along with the problems. They have spheres of influence where [...] they operate in relation to ‘dramas’ and by means of a certain ‘cruelty’. They must have a coherence among themselves, but that coherence must not come from themselves. They must receive their coherence from elsewhere.” *Difference and Repetition* (London and New York: Continuum, 2011), xx.

<sup>5</sup> Ralph Waldo Emerson, *The Complete Essays and Other Writings* (New York: Random House, 1950), 284. In Nietzsche: “*Ein neuer Grad der Kultur würde augenblicklich das ganze System menschlicher Bestrebungen einer Umwälzung unterwerfen.*” *Die Geburt die Tragödie. Unzeitgemäße Betrachtungen I-IV. Nachgelassene Schriften 1870-1873*, ed. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1988), 426, emphasis F. N. Stanley Cavell pays special attention to this quote when discussing what he calls “the constitution of Emersonian perfectionism.” *Conditions Handsome and*

While this implies that Anglo-American literature is particularly suited to address the question of revolution—which again invokes Deleuze’s positions—it also suggests that Anglo-American literature invalidates criticism or literary studies, because the knowledge this literature generates renders the latter redundant wherever they claim to be other than literature itself. Ultimately, literary studies emerge in this context as an excess, a surplus, a leftover of useless thought. If they are of any value, they merely aspire to be the stammering of that very literature, its extension perhaps, rhizomatic and metonymic to it at best. This is where the position opens for a fundamental critique or revision of our discipline: can it be that American Studies or English Studies are uniquely unfit to address their very subjects? If so, can they therefore uniquely articulate the question of the economy of knowledge in the humanities, or rather the question of knowledge as economy? At best they seem to be repetition without acceleration, to use Deleuze’s terms, which is then a question of ecology as well, because what emerges in this position is knowledge as junk and disciplines as junk, debris in a less than Benjaminian fashion.

Interestingly, Matthew Arnold raises this issue in one of the most influential of Victorian essays, “The Function of Criticism at the Present Time” (1864). He starts with a plea for criticism, where criticism is disinterested knowledge. According to Arnold, this plea is in order, because English literature is singularly devoid of the pure criticism that characterizes other European cultures—for example German culture with Goethe; English criticism in turn is impure, partisan, practical and political.<sup>6</sup> Even though Arnold vocally criticizes the impurity of English criticism, his critique still supports Deleuze’s view of English literature, because it implies that English literature privileges criticism in terms of, or within, assemblages. An assemblage, says Deleuze, “is a multiplicity which is made up of many heterogeneous terms and which establishes liaisons, relations between them, across ages, sexes and reigns – different natures. Thus, the assemblage’s only unity is that of co-functioning: it is a symbiosis, a ‘sympathy’.” In assemblages, judgment is displaced in favor of agreements: “There is no judgment in sympathy, but agreements of convenience

between bodies of all kinds.”<sup>7</sup> It is therefore logical that criticism specific to English literature should appear as partisan, precisely to the extent to which it privileges metonymic relations constituent to assemblages and agreements. Moreover, this is why Anglo-American literature may be particularly suited to addressing the question of revolutions, with the implication that analyzing revolutions demands access to knowledge constituted around metonymy. Arnold himself touches on this position when he, somewhat abruptly perhaps, decides to match his discussion of English literature with an elaborate comparative analysis of the English and French Revolutions.

Of course, Arnold wants to overturn the hierarchy implicit in Deleuze’s claim that Anglo-American literature is therefore superior. That notwithstanding, Arnold is in no doubt that the “creative power” of (great) literature is superior to that of criticism. Also, like Deleuze, he maintains that literary assemblages are not in one’s control or in control of one. This is most evident in his assertion that “the man is not enough without the moment,”<sup>8</sup> which is but another way of claiming for literature a Deleuzian line of flight, a becoming.<sup>9</sup> Still, criticism, according to Arnold, with its distinct Cartesian structure, produces “an intellectual situation” of which literary assemblages “can profitably avail” themselves. Criticism, in other words, ultimately serves literature: it supplies the moment of a Cartesian *cogito* to an assemblage where judgment is strangely contaminated. I find this interesting, because it is similar to how Deleuze understands masochism: masochism, as he explains it, coheres precisely around the contract whereby control—structured around Cartesian reasoning and the Cartesian disinterestedness—is drawn away onto a configuration assembled around literary fantasies, where literature turns out to provide metonymic

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*Unhandsome: The Constitution of Emersonian Perfectionism* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1988), 10. Like Emerson, Deleuze privileges the word constitution where it signifies a symbiosis of health, language and politics; see Deleuze and Parnet, *Dialogues*, 5.

<sup>6</sup> Deleuze praises “the anti-Goethes.” See Deleuze and Parnet, *Dialogues*, 42.

<sup>7</sup> Deleuze and Parnet, *Dialogues*, 69, 52. Also, sympathy here “is not a vague feeling of respect or of spiritual participation: on the contrary, it is the exertion or the penetration of bodies,” where bodies “may be physical, biological, psychic, social, verbal.” Deleuze and Parnet, *Dialogues*, 52.

<sup>8</sup> Matthew Arnold, *Essays in Criticism* (London and New York: Macmillan, 1889), 5-6.

<sup>9</sup> Arnold’s assertion that the man is not enough without the moment resonates potently in Deleuze’s claim that „writing does not have its end in itself precisely because life is not something personal“: the claim which he supports by quoting from Nietzsche, that „the artist, and the philosopher in particular, is only a chance in his time.“ Deleuze and Parnet, *Dialogues*, 6.

coherence to this configuration's investment in education (also in ritual, resonance, heteroglossia, politics, sexuation, even promiscuity).<sup>10</sup> As a

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result, that in Anglo-American literature which Deleuze articulates in terms of superiority is deconstructed in Arnold in terms of a distinctly Deleuzian masochism. It is as if the title of Deleuze's essay—"On the Superiority of Anglo-American Literature"—reads in fact as "On the Masochism of Deleuze's Philosophy", with Anglo-American literature cast in the role of the dominatrix. Put differently, Deleuze's philosophy itself could be approached as he approaches masochism in *Coldness and Cruelty*, with masochism as a kind of Deleuzian *organon*.

Deleuze explains the dominatrix of masochism as an "oral mother," who mobilizes a peculiar zone of resonance: a zone in which voice in its complexity takes over, while the otherwise conflicted regimes of reason and sexuality give way to a metonymic reconciliation. Consequently, what Deleuze in his essay on Anglo-American literature mobilizes as economy and ecology of knowledge is deconstructed, through Arnold, as or into a sexuation of sorts, a repetition towards acceleration, a delirium perhaps in the position where Cartesian reason does not suffice on its own, but merely provides situations for what is contractual and metonymic.<sup>11</sup> Arnold contributes an important inflection here: if the reason of criticism does not stand alone, but rather depends on situating or accommodating literature, what emerges is a configuration of reason as uterine, not phallic. Its thought, it turns out, is critical not where it cuts across its own conceptual inside, but where it touches on an outside that is constituent to it. Thus criticism in English literature faces assemblages as the condition of its very constitution and comes out as fundamentally exterior. It is for this reason that the Arnoldian thought of literature is to be imagined not in terms of a lack but as an expanding wound, perhaps in the way in which Freud uses the wound to describe the labor and economy of melancholia.<sup>12</sup> Interestingly, this is also how Deleuze describes Hume's empiricism: with

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Hume, „the empiricist world can for the first time truly unfold in all its extension: a world of exteriority, a world where thought itself is in a fundamental relation to the Outside, a world where terms exist like veritable atoms, and relations like veritable external bridges – a world where the conjunction 'and' dethrones the interiority of the verb 'is'.“<sup>13</sup> As a result, the binary which Arnold would like to institute—of the true continental criticism and the false English one—collapses in favor of criticism which is felicitous or not, depending on the assemblages it cannot help but enter.<sup>14</sup>

This in turn sheds light on Arnold's decision to supplant, abruptly, his discussion of disinterested reason and (English) literature with a discussion of the French Revolution, as if analyzing revolutions provides the logical next step in understanding the English and their literature.

The French Revolution emerges in Arnold as the event that defines his century, much in the way Badiou imagines the century; it is the event which threatens philosophy into regeneration.<sup>15</sup> Arnold finds it important

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<sup>10</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *Coldness and Cruelty* (New York: Zone Books, 1989). That Deleuze's insight into the masochist's reason is to do with a Cartesian agenda can be deduced from the fact that Deleuze derives it from Lacanian psychoanalysis, and for Lacan, „as it is well known, the subject of psychoanalysis is none other than the Cartesian *cogito*.“ Slavoj Žižek, *Everything You Always Wanted to Know about Lacan (But Were Afraid to Ask Hitchcock)* (London and New York: Verso, 1992), 272.

<sup>11</sup> In its Lacanian inflection, this is the reason Shoshana Felman associates with metaphor. Shoshana Felman, *The Scandal of the Speaking Body. Don Juan with J. L. Austin or Seduction in Two Languages* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 24.

<sup>12</sup> In "Mourning and Melancholia", Freud compares melancholia to an open wound which attracts all the available libidinal energy from all sides, thus fatally impoverishing the ego, which cannot sustain itself. Sigmund Freud, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works*, Vol. XIV, ed. James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press, 1957), 253, 258.

<sup>13</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *Desert Islands and Other Texts 1953-1974*, ed. David Lapoujade (Los Angeles and New York: Semiotext(e), 2004), 163.

<sup>14</sup> This is an Austinian set of propositions, where true/false stands to be reconstituted as felicitous/infelicitous; with felicities and unhappiness in place of truth, J. L. Austin invokes perhaps being analyzed alongside Deleuze's take on Spinoza and affect. In addition, Austin's understanding of utterance and the primacy he attaches to it correspond rather interestingly to Deleuze's understanding of assemblage, and to the primacy Deleuze himself attaches to utterance. Finally, Deleuze's appreciation of utterance, in terms of philosophy, corresponds to his masochist's appreciation of the oral mother where the oral mother is to secure him parthenogenesis.

<sup>15</sup> The French Revolution, says Arnold, „is – it will probably long remain – the greatest, the most animating event in history.“ *Essays in Criticism*, 11.

that an event of such intellectual proportions did not produce literature to match. This he attributes to the singular fact that the French Revolution was founded in disinterested reason—the very reason he wants to identify as that of criticism. According to Arnold, the French Revolution was mobilized around reasoning stripped down to its Cartesian core. “1789 asked of a thing, Is it rational?” says Arnold, and adds: “That a whole nation should have been penetrated with an enthusiasm for pure reason, and with ardent zeal for making its prescriptions triumph, is a very remarkable thing.”<sup>16</sup> What spoiled this commendable zeal was “the mania for giving an immediate political and practical application to all these fine ideas of the reason”

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before “the right is ready,” or before we are ready for the right.<sup>17</sup> A configuration emerges here curiously akin to those of psychoanalysis: the configuration where reason and the right it commands can be seen in terms of “tyranny, and to be resisted” until one has processed their implications, which is when a variety of bonds is forged between pure reason and the self.

This is where a telling arrangement occurs in Arnold’s own reasoning: faced with the impasse of the French Revolution, which champions pure reason (that which Arnold wants for criticism) yet occasions tyranny and mania, he proposes that English thought be taken as a critical apparatus, almost a Foucauldian *dispositif*, where a deconstruction of this impasse can take place – even though this goes against his opening argument, that English thought should be admonished where it fails to appreciate criticism based in disinterested reason. On the one hand, this implies that English literature, tied as it is to the interested criticism Arnold despises, is ultimately an apparatus that allows an approach to the French Revolution where French traditions do not. On the other, this implies that English *literature* captures the constitution of English thought.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, this is the moment when Arnold himself assumes the guise of a Deleuzian masochist: while advocating pure reason as the ultimate authority, also the authority in which he himself is based, he demeans it where he contracts English thought for the job of analysis, with this thought’s various impurities and its peculiar affinity for the political, metonymic, capillary,

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economic, and everyday. The resulting image is all but too Deleuzian: English literature assumes the position of dominatrix to Arnold—the position of a Deleuzian oral mother—whose function is to annihilate the paternalism implicit in pure reason, providing instead a zone of resonance between chthonic regimes and those of punishment. This is why the core of masochism is political in the difficult position where politics is not to be subsumed to reasons other than its own. It is almost as if masochism serves Deleuze to address the political in itself, with the implication that masochism is one of the few positions where this can be done. This is also why masochism in Deleuze is a passageway to discussing revolutions. That Arnold is receptive to this fantasy can be evinced from his persistent complaints about the unashamedly political character of English criticism, and of English literature, where politics implies impurity of thought and of conduct, almost a kind of promiscuity.<sup>19</sup>

Conveniently, Arnold assembles the apparatus, which is to help him address the impasse of the French Revolution, around its English equivalent: the “Revolution of Charles the First’s time.”<sup>20</sup> True, this is a revolution that Arnold does not value as highly as he does the French Revolution, but he depends on it all the same if he is to sustain his argument—which again is not unlike the thought of masochism. “1789 asked of a

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<sup>16</sup> Arnold, *Essays in Criticism*, 10-11.

<sup>17</sup> Arnold, *Essays in Criticism*, 11-12. Hannah Arendt embarks on a similar argument when she claims that the American Revolution was mobilized around rights where they entail conceptual purity. Interestingly, Arendt observes that the French Revolution failed to uphold the American ideal and was tainted by pity and sympathy where they should have been replaced by solidarity, as solidarity warrants deliberation and a conceptual grasp of multitude. Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (New York: Penguin, 2006), 76-79. This in turn points to the problem which is central to Arnold: that the zeal for pure, disinterested reason of the French Revolution could incite “tyranny”, “mania”, “insanity”, “perversion”. Both Arnold and Arendt suggest therefore that conceptual purity was not sustained in the French Revolution except as a kind of skin or foil to an uncontrolled reconstitution of self (certainly not to self’s maintenance). Arendt suggests as much about the American Revolution when she quotes from the American founding fathers, who noted that their knowledge of what they had been doing while initiating the revolution was curiously delayed, forming at a later point, after the fact.

<sup>18</sup> It is a type of rationality, as Foucault would say, rather than rationality as such. Deleuze says as much when he discusses the English understanding of pact, promise and agreement as particularly suited to capitalism, which is not the case with the French. See Deleuze and Parnet, *Dialogues*, 37.

<sup>19</sup> Although Deleuze situates the fantasy of masochism in Austro-Hungarian literature (and bases his analysis of it in the work of Leopold von Sacher-Masoch), his perspective on Austro-Hungarian literature dovetails with his interest in Anglo-American writers. It is as if the two form an assemblage from where a reading of Deleuze can begin on terms not contained in either, so that the critical labor is reciprocated, this time with Deleuze as its subject.

<sup>20</sup> Arnold, *Essays in Criticism*, 10.

thing, Is it rational?” says Arnold, and continues, “1642 asked of a thing, Is it legal? or, when it went furthest, Is it according to conscience?”<sup>21</sup>

Arnold’s proposition here is symptomatic: he divorces pure, disinterested reason from law and legality, which he associates with conscience. He finds this distinction crucial, because “the prescriptions of reason are absolute, unchanging, of universal validity,” whereas “what is law in one place is not law in another; what is law here to-day is not law even here tomorrow; and as for conscience, what is binding on one man’s conscience

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is not binding on another’s.”<sup>22</sup> This is uncannily similar to the precept that Deleuze identifies as essential to masochism: in masochism, law is supplanted by contract, and is deconstructed in the process. This is important, says Deleuze, because law applies to all with no time limit in mind, whereas contract applies only to the parties involved for a limited period; this too is why masochism invokes revolutionary conditions. (Deleuze quotes from Sade who claims that the 1789 “Revolution would remain sterile unless it gave up making laws.”)<sup>23</sup> If anything, Arnold’s perspective here is even more radical, because his take on law tallies with Deleuze’s on contract, so that law as Deleuze describes it seems exempt from English culture, in favor of contract. As a result, England as Arnold pictures it appears suspended if not in revolutionary conditions then in the rhythms of the assiduous post-revolutionary reconstitution, where law and the state are forever being negotiated in terms of the contract.<sup>24</sup>

This, then, is how to understand Arnold’s claim, that the “great force of that epoch of concentration was England; and the great voice of that epoch of concentration was Burke.”<sup>25</sup> Again, this seems to go against the overall drift of Arnold’s argument: that the French should be exulted for their pure reason where England should be criticized for its lack of disinterested criticism. Yet Arnold attributes this swerve of thought to the fact that Edmund Burke—famous for his vocal criticism of the French Revolution—cultivated the “striking” purity of philosophical truth which the French Revolution mobilized and then contaminated. Indeed, Arnold admires Burke’s undaunted adherence to philosophical truth amidst the currents of English politics: “I know nothing more striking,” says Arnold, “and I must add that I know nothing more un-English.”<sup>26</sup> I find this remark striking in its own right where it implies that English literature can house such un-Englishness as constituent to it, also as that which is its force. Accordingly, Arnold exposes English literature as an interplay of surfaces

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and exteriorities that fail to yield a functional inside, or as an interplay of surfaces and exteriorities to which insides are not functional (in terms of concepts, too). Arnold affirms this proposition, unwittingly perhaps, when he observes that the “return of Burke upon himself has always seemed to me one of the finest things in English literature, or indeed in any literature.”<sup>27</sup> So Burke, exulted for pure and philosophical truth, is to be accessed from within literature, and as literature. Rather than compromising philosophy, this suggests that for Arnold the constitution of literature depends on hyperactive surfaces and exteriorities that do not yield a functional inside. This thought is the flipside of Deleuze’s precept for philosophy whose concepts, he says, must have coherence among themselves, but that coherence must not come from themselves; they must receive it from elsewhere. So that English literature, for Arnold and Deleuze alike, emerges ultimately as the oral mother to philosophy’s parthenogenesis, in what amounts to the spectacle of masochism.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Arnold, *Essays in Criticism*, 10.

<sup>22</sup> Arnold, *Essays in Criticism*, 10-11.

<sup>23</sup> Deleuze, *Coldness and Cruelty*, 93.

<sup>24</sup> I have argued elsewhere that revolutions entail melancholia; this however is not at odds with Deleuzian masochism, because in masochism, as Deleuze perceives it, functional links seem to be forged between the revolutionary melancholia and the metonymic *raison* of post-revolutionary communities. Revolutionary politics, as well as the peculiar political economy of revolutions, could therefore be approached in terms of masochism-cum-melancholia. See Tatjana Jukić, *Revolucija i melankolija. Granice pamćenja hrvatske književnosti* (Zagreb: Naklada Ljevak, 2011).

<sup>25</sup> Arnold, *Essays in Criticism*, 13.

<sup>26</sup> Arnold, *Essays in Criticism*, 15.

<sup>27</sup> Arnold, *Essays in Criticism*, 15.

<sup>28</sup> In the paragraph quoted above, Deleuze contends that this is why “a book of philosophy should be in part a very particular species of detective novel”, which is to say that literature could be parthenogenetic to philosophy. Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, xx. Equally symptomatic is Deleuze’s decision, in the same passage, to associate this parthenogenesis with cruelty: the attribute he foregrounds as formative to masochism in *Coldness and Cruelty*. Similarly, J. Hillis Miller describes Arnold’s disinterestedness in terms of coldness, and goes so far as to assert that Arnold “is never able to conquer his coldness”. J. Hillis Miller, „Matthew Arnold“, *Matthew Arnold. A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. David J. DeLaura (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1973), 25. This coldness is evocative of the thermodynamics that Deleuze associates with masochism, and with its suprasensual sentimentality.

The position from where to develop this argument is Victorian literature: not only because it supplies resonance to Arnold's reasoning, but also because Deleuze too perceives Victorian literature in terms of parthenogenesis, for philosophy, when he remarks that "no one has described what a life is better than Charles Dickens, if we take the indefinite article as an index of the transcendental."<sup>29</sup> In which case *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859) can be taken as a point of departure, because it is in this novel that Dickens, like Arnold, engages the French Revolution as metonymic to England and to reason (both to be accessed as literature). Equally tellingly, Dickens organizes his account of the French Revolution from a position in which Victorian literature is assembled around philosophy: he prefaces *A Tale of Two Cities* with the assertion that "no one can hope to add anything to the philosophy of Mr. Carlyle's wonderful

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book,"<sup>30</sup> and thereby acknowledges that his novel is a séance-like residue, even excess, to Thomas Carlyle's *The French Revolution* (1837).

In many ways, Carlyle is to Dickens what Burke is to Arnold. It is true that Arnold reproaches Carlyle for mixing politics with philosophy and for the impurity of philosophical truth.<sup>31</sup> Yet Carlyle in Dickens cuts the same figure as Burke in Arnold, because in his reference to Carlyle, Dickens claims in fact that the constitution of literature depends on hyperactive surfaces and exteriorities that do not present a functional inside, precisely where philosophy would want one. Indeed, Dickens's preface seems to be spiraling towards the final comment on philosophy. In the preceding paragraphs Dickens describes himself as completely possessed by the story of the novel, to the extent that he had "so far *verified* what is done and suffered in these pages, as that I have certainly done and suffered it all myself";<sup>32</sup> he thus suggests that the language of séancing and conjuration yields the truth metonymic to philosophy. It is as if Dickens adumbrates Jacques Derrida here, who mobilizes specters in order to propose "hauntology" as a thought relative to philosophy.<sup>33</sup> Derrida is symptomatic in this context, because he needs hauntology to address Marx's writings where crucial to Marx is the intersection of philosophy and political economy (in Victorian England): the very impurity, that is, which Arnold condemns as typical of English rationality. Marx in turn was one of the great thinkers of the revolution, for the 19<sup>th</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries alike, so that Derrida discloses in his Marx, however inadvertently, a Deleuzian assemblage of thought, which hinges on metonymies subsisting between English literature, capitalism, political economy and revolution.<sup>34</sup>

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Dickens situates his novel around the proposition that Arnold finds fundamental to analyzing the French Revolution: while the French Revolution derives from a question of rationality, rationality in England translates as a question of legality and conscience. The very geography of Dickens's novel is organized around this proposition. Its Paris and London are mobilized as narrative metonymies. Still, while France of the Revolution occasions the micronarratives that focus on rights and rationality or, conversely, on madness, mania and insanity, the English micronarratives focus on laws and contracts, where law and contract give way to configurations of sympathy, sentimentality and the fantasy of self-sacrifice.

Telling in this sense is Dickens's portrayal of London: London comes across as an expansive capillary network of courts, banks and adjacent spaces, where laws are more often than not perceived in a contractual light. This is one of the reasons why laws in Dickens's England seem closer to Deleuze's vision of contract than to Lacan's ideation of the law. This London finds its perfect representation in the figure of Mr. Lorry. Employed

<sup>29</sup> In Gilles Deleuze. *Pure Immanence. Essays on A Life* (New York: Zone Books, 2001), 28.

<sup>30</sup> Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1903), xix.

<sup>31</sup> Arnold, *Essays in Criticism*, 26. In his essay on Heinrich Heine, Arnold describes Carlyle as "a man of genius, but to whom precisely this one quality of justness of spirit is perhaps wanting"—a quality "very necessary to the critic". Arnold, *Essays in Criticism*, 157.

<sup>32</sup> Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities*, xix, emphasis mine.

<sup>33</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx. The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International* (New York and London: Routledge, 1994), 10, 63, 202.

<sup>34</sup> There is an intellectual debt in his book on Marx that Derrida is shy to acknowledge, although it informs, structurally, his thinking of Marx in terms of séance, conjuration and the work of mourning: the debt to Freud and psychoanalysis. Freud too discusses mourning in terms of work and economy, and also as a positionality of reason, especially in "Mourning and Melancholia". For a detailed critique of Freudian positions in Derrida's *Specters of Marx*, see Jukić, *Revolucija i melankolija*, 11-49. Also: when Dickens describes his novelistic "understanding" of the French Revolution as "popular and picturesque," after he has only just outlined his novelistic self as possessed, his phrase corresponds almost too neatly with Derrida's take on the political and the spectral in his book on Marx.

by a London bank as a trustworthy caretaker of its various contracts and their unsuspected spectral weight, he moves freely and swiftly in and out of England, as well as in and out of the English courts, in order to secure, ultimately, not merely justice but also a free flow of sympathy which warrants that the novel is moored in a narrative collective, a kind of Derridean *plus d'un*.<sup>35</sup>

Lorry's French counterpart is Doctor Manette, an esteemed physician who goes mad once exposed to the anomic character of pre-revolutionary France. Dickens assembles Manette around the suggestion that laws, rights and reason combine to make a man; hence "manette" designates not only that which about "man" is minor or supplemental, but also the political structures where man, as well as the rights of man, entail the question of rationale and of rationality. Hence also the meaning to be assigned to Manette's medical profession, which he is losing or dropping as he goes mad in a pre-revolutionary prison: his medical prowess signals biopolitical concerns, but above all the complicated, mutating knowledge of life which goes into

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the making of politics, now as the making of reason. Eric Santner suggests this when he warns of "the biopolitical pressures generated by the transition from royal to popular sovereignty in the wake of the French Revolution and the long struggle to reconstitute the 'physiology' of the body politic over the course of the nineteenth century." According to Santner, such "a rethinking of the political [...] constitution of modern life" implicates "medical science, the law, the world of religious thought and experience, the realm of politics, or some new sort of science or mode of knowledge yet to come."<sup>36</sup>

Lorry supplies mobility to the novel, and to Manette: while Manette is consistently confined (in his Paris prison cell, in the cramped space of an urban warren-like structure just after his release, in the protective enclosures of his London residence...), Lorry moves swiftly in and across the world of Dickens's novel and mobilizes it in turn. In other words, Lorry—not Manette—is a figure of mobilization, and therefore of Dickensian multitude: of the mass that emerges in Dickens similarly to Marxian *Schwärmerei*. (Hannah Arendt considers freedom of movement as axiomatic to revolutions.) This is why Lorry is metonymic precisely in the position where Manette would still cling to metaphor. Dickens foregrounds two details symptomatic of the extent and meaning of this distinction: while Manette's madness manifests as frenetic shoe-making—which seems devoid of meaning apart from that contained in symptoms—Lorry is distinguished by "a good leg" of which he "was a little vain."<sup>37</sup> Put differently, Lorry's leg is metonymic to movement where Manette's shoemaking is metaphorical, as if to suggest that the relation of revolution to reason cannot be contained or resolved in Manette's condition: as if to suggest that Manette is not enough to address the mobilization involved in the making of the French Revolution.<sup>38</sup>

Lucie Manette is the lynchpin of this world: Dickens calls her the golden thread. She partakes of both Paris and London, and in equal degrees; also, she engages both Manette and Lorry into relations of fatherhood,

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only to deconstruct paternalism as such. She is Manette's long-lost daughter, but she is made aware of this fact only after he has gone mad, so that she assumes the role of the mother to her father-child, while her father remains exempt from paternalism.<sup>39</sup> The same is true of her relationship with Lorry. When Lorry nearly proposes to Lucie on Mr. Stryver's behalf, to spare her the crudity of Stryver's approach, or when he saves Darnay's life, Lorry obliterates his assumed fatherhood by reducing himself to a brother to her other suitors (including Darnay and Carton), all of whom relate to Lucie in terms of sacrifice or self-deprecation. It is through Lucie thus that Dickens's novel is structured into a masochistic collective, with her as its oral mother; indeed, Lucie is conceived emphatically in terms of sounds, voices and echoes, as a veritable zone of resonance, with her London residence presented by Dickens as a kind of resounding chamber. She is the core of Dickens's fantasy in this

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<sup>35</sup> Derrida uses *plus d'un* to describe a deconstruction of selves in séances or conjurations, but also in political collectives. See Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, 2. In *A Tale of Two Cities* Dickens supplies a position where Derrida's *plus d'un* stands to be analyzed alongside Deleuze's understanding of sympathy.

<sup>36</sup> Eric L. Santner, *The Royal Remains. The People's Two Bodies and the Endgames of Sovereignty* (Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 2011), xi-xii.

<sup>37</sup> Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities*, 12.

<sup>38</sup> Telling in this sense is an episode early in the novel, in which red wine is spilt on the Paris cobblestones to spread in a capillary fashion. This wine is to feed the starving pre-revolutionary multitude. While the wine is also a metaphor which anticipates their blood, to be spilt on the same cobblestones, the novel's marked investment in the physics and physiology of feeding and hunger suggests that the wine is metonymic to the blood it anticipates, not metaphoric to it.

<sup>39</sup> Borislav Knežević observes that Manette is "one in the long line of Dickensian infantile fathers. That something is not quite right with his paternal authority is already inscribed in his name: Manette is a *man* with a feminine ending (-ette)." Borislav Knežević, "A Study of Aggression: *A Tale of Two Cities*", *Studia Romanica et Anglicae Zagrabiensia* XXXVI-XXXVII (1991-1992): 255.

novel, just as the oral mother, according to Deleuze, is the core of the masochist fantasy. She occasions the annihilation of fatherhood, which is what oral mothers do in Deleuzian masochism, but also mobilizes its script around Christological elements, so that the novel climaxes in the purifying Christ-like self-sacrifice of Sidney Carton.<sup>40</sup> Lucie is thus cruel and promiscuous to the male masochist collective she mobilizes for the narrative.<sup>41</sup> Of course, she is an exemplary Victorian angel in the house too, which seems to go against the reading where she is portrayed in terms of Deleuzian coldness and cruelty. Yet Deleuze insists that the structures of masochism entail the suprasensual sentimentality of their oral mothers, which is precisely how Lucie appears to her admirers whom she commands effortlessly.

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While it is true that Lucie comes out as suprasensually sentimental, she nonetheless summons cruelty, chiefly from within: she is also the novel's seat of melancholia. In other words, her cruelty is directed primarily towards the self, which is how Freud explains melancholia. This is most visible in the episodes involving her consuming fear about the future, suggesting that loss—which Freud perceives as occasioning melancholia—is not that which takes place in the past and spectralizes the present, but rather the loss of the future, or else the impossibility of facing the future except in terms of crisis.<sup>42</sup> Put differently, Dickens suggests that melancholia is not about the crisis of the past that spills over into the present, but rather about the crisis that takes place when the future can be mobilized only as a gaping wound, attracting to itself all available energy from all sides, so that the past in fact becomes irrelevant. What plagues the melancholy ego is not memory as much as survival: a peculiar, exclusive, critical recalling of the future whereby its constitution is invoked—along with the constitution of the ego—and deconstructed in the process. This could well be the lesson that Dickens contributes to our reading of Freud. This could also be Dickens's contribution to our reading of Deleuze, because Dickens explains the cruelty the oral mother supplies to the fantasy of masochism as secondary to the cruelty with which a melancholy woman undoes her ego.<sup>43</sup>

Melancholia figures in *A Tale of Two Cities* in yet another way: in the position where it forms an assemblage with the revolution, if assemblage is how the two make sense. Revolution too is mobilized around survival, where survival entails a peculiar, critical reconstitution of the future, along with the reconstitution of the ego. Furthermore, it could be argued that a

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revolution worthy of its name cannot do without deconstructing the ego, and that constituent to revolutions is a peculiar political economy of psychic life, which corresponds to Freud's portrayal of melancholia. (It could equally be argued that Freud's portrayal of melancholia entails a peculiar political economy.)<sup>44</sup> Here, Dickens's Lucie overlaps with Madame Defarge, the dominatrix of the revolutionary collective in Paris, whose distinctive coldness and cruelty are ultimately explained as melancholia. In fact, Lucie is to Madame Defarge what Lorry is to Doctor Manette: the figure in which madness/mania is finally reconstituted into suprasensual sentimentality, and where laws/rights give way to contract.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>40</sup> Deleuze emphasizes that Christological components are integral to the fantasy of masochism. *Coldness and Cruelty*, 96-100.

<sup>41</sup> Carton is presented as Darnay's mirror-image, which seems to implicate Lucie's admirers in the (Lacanian) structures of doubling and twinning. Yet their twinning makes sense only as it enters the script of masochism and contributes to its Dickensian collective. Their names testify to this: while Charles Darnay shares his initials, and more, with Charles Dickens, and thus signals that the fantasy of novel as the self is at stake (similarly to *David Copperfield*), Darnay is placed into yet another C-D configuration, Darnay-Carton, where the doubling is redoubled, damaged and cancelled.

<sup>42</sup> "At first, there were times, though she was a perfectly happy young wife, when her work would slowly fall from her hands, and her eyes would be dimmed. For, there was something coming in the echoes, something light, afar off, and scarcely audible yet, that stirred her heart too much. Fluttering hopes and doubts—hopes, of a love as yet unknown to her: doubts, of her remaining upon earth, to enjoy that new delight—divided her breast. Among the echoes then, there would arise the sound of footsteps at her own early grave; and thoughts of the husband who would be left so desolate, and who would mourn for her so much, swelled to her eyes, and broke like waves." Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities*, 156.

<sup>43</sup> Deleuze attributes a strong educational impulse to masochism. Freud does the same with the melancholic when he remarks that "when in his heightened self-criticism he describes himself as petty, egoistic, dishonest, lacking in independence, one whose sole aim has been to hide the weaknesses of his own nature, it may be, so far as we know, that he has come pretty near to understanding himself; we only wonder why a man has to be ill before he can be accessible to a truth of this kind." Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia", p. 246.

<sup>44</sup> For a detailed analysis of this position see Jukić, *Revolucija i melankolija*.

<sup>45</sup> This perhaps is how Dickens situates Deleuze's claim that "there is a revolutionary-becoming which is not the same as the future of the revolution, and which does not necessarily happen through the militants." While this is typical of Anglo-American literature, says Deleuze, the French "even with the revolution [...] think about 'a future of the revolution' rather than a revolutionary-becoming." Deleuze and Parnet, *Dialogues*, 2, 37. It is certainly symptomatic that the original Phiz



The novel ensures that this process is metonymic rather than metaphorical: it transpires that Madame Defarge's melancholia was triggered by a sexual crime committed against her sister, who in turn was left in the care of Doctor Manette, who was imprisoned so as not to divulge the crime, and went mad as a consequence. This reduced him to a child-like figure to be taken care of by his mother-like daughter who, thus stripped of genealogy, falls prey to melancholia, with melancholia now bared to the future. In this way, Dickens's narration prevents the melancholy labors of Lucie Manette and Madame Defarge from being perceived as alike, as a simile (based in metaphor); rather, melancholia emerges as constituent to a massive, capillary narrative metonymy, which in turn exposes the melancholy labors of the two heroines as the narrative labor itself. As a result, Dickens's story-telling is shown to depend on hyperactive surfaces and exteriorities which fail to yield a functional inside to an event, so that event stands to be produced in Dickens as that to which insides are not functional. Event in Dickens thus matches Deleuze's appreciation of the indefinite article: the appreciation of that which makes for *a* life. It is for this reason that Dickens is representative of Victorian literature, where Victorian literature is at home with implacable exteriority, to which insides make sense only as folds, recesses

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or momentary, critical points of contact.<sup>46</sup> This is also why Victorian literature is the literature of event, which English modernism is no longer, or not to the same extent, fascinated as modernism is with the invention of interiority.<sup>47</sup> Indeed, Foucault seems to have done just that to 20<sup>th</sup> century critical thought: he confronted it with exteriority as implacable.<sup>48</sup>

This is, of course, merely a sketch of the reading that *A Tale of Two Cities* invokes and merits. Still, this sketch is operable insofar as it outlines a complex Victorian agenda to some positions in Deleuze, turning them inside out. Also, it sheds light on the constitution of English and American Studies, where Deleuze's appreciation of the reason specific to Anglo-American literature threatens to expose them as redundant, uneconomic junk. What emerges is the proposition that criticism makes sense to the constitution of English literature in the same position where (Cartesian) law plays its part in the sexuation specific to Deleuzian masochism. This is ultimately to do with the peculiar political reason both of English literature and of Deleuzian masochism. As for English and American Studies, this means that the question of economy and ecology of criticism (the question implicit in Deleuze) is thereby supplanted by a kind of radical republicanism.

This is where a further question can be raised: is the study of revolutions at all possible outside this assemblage? What if revolutions make no sense in the Cartesian model, or even in continental philosophy? Symptomatic in this sense is Derrida's shrinking from discussion of the American Revolution, in his 1976 "Declarations of Independence",

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in favor of turning towards Nietzsche, the latter's fascination with Emerson notwithstanding.<sup>49</sup>

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illustrations of *A Tale of Two Cities* made Madame Defarge "look like a dark-haired version of Lucie." Knežević, "A Study of Aggression", 256.

<sup>46</sup> In his reading of *David Copperfield*, D. A. Miller argues that Dickens's characters, including David Copperfield, are assembled around a box or enclosure housing the secret thanks to which their ego is maintained (although this ego is never stable). D. A. Miller, *The Novel and the Police* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988), 192-220. *A Tale of Two Cities* seems to be unpacking these boxes as but momentary folds or as uterine fantasies. This is also how they may be considered hysterical.

<sup>47</sup> Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899) could well mark this transition, as it is unable to conclude before producing the inside (for horror). In turn, Deleuze's appreciation of D. H. Lawrence resides mostly in the positions where Lawrence departs from the mainstay of modernist poetics.

<sup>48</sup> This is how Deleuze understands Foucault's reasoning, as well as Foucault's interest in imprisonment and confinement. "Exiling and partitioning", says Deleuze, "are first of all precisely functions of exteriority which are only afterwards executed, formalized and organized by the mechanisms of confinement." Gilles Deleuze, *Foucault* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press), 42-43.

<sup>49</sup> See Jacques Derrida, "Declarations of Independence", *New Political Science* 7.1 (1986): 7-15.

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