BEHAVIORISM AND LITERARY MODERNITY, 1913-2009

by

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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"Behaviorism and Literary Modernity, 1913-2009" constructs a history of twentieth-century literature by examining how writers incorporated behaviorism's arguments against consciousness into discussions of aesthetics, subjectivity, and empire. Skeptical of introspective knowledge, behaviorist thinkers argued that only external behaviors—and not mental states—could be known empirically. This paradigm not only dominated twentieth-century psychology and philosophy but also made crucial, if unrecognized, contributions to modern literature. Examining how behaviorism circulated and competed against other psychological doctrines, this dissertation substantially alters the idea of modernism as a "turn inward." Instead, I argue that modernism comprised an intense debate about the nature of such interiority and about the relationship of internal mental states to external aesthetic forms. Where some modernists said that literary forms offered unique access to mental states, others came to understand form itself as a behavior with

no necessary ties to consciousness. Competing with explanations offered by psychoanalysis, structuralism, and cognitive science, behaviorism was at the heart of this debate—as well as others about the nature of subjectivity, agency, and language. Writers skeptical of depth psychology found through behaviorism new models of aesthetic form and political action that seemingly circumvented the problems of self-knowledge and other minds. Bringing together analyses of the New Critics, Samuel Beckett, Djuna Barnes, Bertolt Brecht, Richard Wright and JM Coetzee, this dissertation demonstrates how behaviorism changed literary thinking across the globe and allows new insights into the psychological dimensions of aesthetic form, critical interpretation, and globalization.

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Dedication

To AEJJ.

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Introduction: Outward Turns

"An 'inner process' stands in need of outward criteria."
—Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*[1]

Behaviorism is an obsolete and infamous idea. Its claims—that consciousness is

unknowable, that mental states lack any consistent connection to behavior—have

suffered definitive rebuke over the past fifty years. And its style of empiricism has

withered while innatist approaches to the brain, including those of cognitive science and

recent philosophy of mind, have flourished. In literary history and cultural study,

behaviorism remains a marginalized object of curiosity (and sometimes disgust). When it

has appeared in accounts of literary history, behaviorism has served mostly as a foil to the

psychological depth, agency, and aesthetic autonomy so valued by modern humanism. In

contrast to psychoanalysis and existentialism, which allow for psychological interiority

and intentional political action, behaviorism threatens to reduce us to mindless automata.

Taken at face value, behaviorism is antithetical to the progressive, often utopian,

aspirations of modern criticism and theory. And so if modern literature comprised a

psychological turn inward, a turn toward subjectivity and the priority of subjective

knowledge, then behaviorism's distrust of introspection and mental states have been

rightly excluded from literary history.

And yet despite its obsolescence, despite its exclusion from historical accounts of

modern literature, this dissertation argues that behaviorism comprised a central force in

the development of transnational modernism and criticism. Behaviorism's anti-

psychologism, particularly its attitudes about the knowability of mental states, circulated globally and competed against the explanations offered by other psychological discourses, such as psychoanalysis and cognitive science. Offering a set of philosophical and political entailments different than these discourses, behaviorism was drawn on by writers who were skeptical of psychoanalysis's claims. Moreover, behaviorism allowed these writers to reconceive notions of aesthetic form, meaning, and selfhood without recourse to introspection or speculating about the minds of others. In these ways, writers from throughout the twentieth century translated behaviorism from a psychological and philosophical idea into a literary one. And as I hope to show, that very understanding of "literary" knowledge is a product of behavioristic thinking. Examining behaviorism's place in the intellectual marketplace and following its circulation across the globe, this dissertation offers tangible evidence of how behaviorism came to shape modernist writing and criticism. As such, it not only complicates the characterization of modernism as a "turn inward" but also shows the larger philosophical and historical stakes of that imagined turn. Spanning the whole twentieth century and moving between North America, Europe, and sub-saharan Africa, behaviorism's literary history reveals heretofore hidden connections within modernist literature and redefines the relationship of such literature to the philosophy of mind and the global history of ideas.

As it stands, however, behaviorism is relatively absent from literary history and criticism. What we might infer from two important histories of modernism and psychology is that behaviorism went unnoticed by most writers and critics. In Judith Ryan's *The Vanishing Subject: Early Psychology and Modernism* (1992), behaviorism is mentioned only twice, buried beneath deep analyses of psychoanalysis, structuralism,

functionalism, and early phenomenology. In Louis Sass's *Madness and Modernism: Insanity in the Light of Modern Art, Literature, and Thought* (1992), behaviorism isn't mentioned at all.[2] This is not an oversight on their parts. Instead, it is indicative of a larger attitude in literary study that behaviorism was historically unimportant to modern literature—particularly compared to psychoanalysis.[3] Literary representations of behaviorism have largely reinforced this conclusion, where behaviorism has been understood as dehumanizing the psychologically deep modern subject. As early as the 1930s, behaviorism became associated with a fascist present or a dystopian future. Prominent examples of this include Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1931), Wyndham Lewis's *Snooty Baronet* (1932), George Bernard Shaw's *The Black Girl In Search of Her God* (1932), George Orwell's *1984* (1934), Rebecca West's *Black Lamb and Gray Falcon* (1941), Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* (1952), Anthony Burgess's *A Clockwork Orange* (1961), JG Ballard's *Crash* (1973), and Thomas Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow* (1973).

There is work to be done about how these novels translated anxieties about mechanization, fascism, and futurity into the figure of behaviorism. But that is not the work I will be doing here. The novels I mention above are ostensibly examples of modernist writers thinking about behaviorism and reflex conditioning. My goal is the opposite: to show how behaviorism's arguments against consciousness changed the ways writers thought about the practices of literature. Modernism as a whole, I argue, was effectively a reevaluation of what "inward" could mean—psychologically, philosophically, aesthetically, politically. The literary history of behaviorism reveals, and gives us a vocabulary to describe, how modernist writers imbued competing

psychological theories with different aesthetic capabilities. Furthermore, it reveals how arguments against the accessibility of consciousness became sedimented into aesthetic forms, methodologies, and critical theories. Even as writers outwardly valorized mentalistic psychology and introspective knowledge, modernists nonetheless struggled with the transformation of literature into a *behavior*—an external action with no necessary correlation to internal mental states. The fundamental effects of this transformation have persisted through the present day and have defined both the way we read and our understanding of literary history.

In this introduction, I will begin showing how that happened. First, I will survey behaviorism's evolution as an idea from roughly 1880 to 1960, examining the development of key concepts and how those concepts moved through the world.[4] Focusing on those elements of behaviorism that were translated into literary study and production, it is necessarily schematic and leaves out important contributions by psychologists such as Clark Hull and Edward Tolman and philosophers including Rudolf Carnap, WVO Quine, and JL Austin. (More detailed and focused historical work is incorporated, as needed, into the dissertation's subsequent chapters.) I follow this history with a case study that exemplifies the broad, and unexpected, stakes, in behaviorism's migrations and its place in modernism. In particular, I focus on the writings of Frantz Fanon, whose work is foundational to postcolonial literature and theory. In literary studies, Fanon is generally understood as a psychoanalytic thinker. But if we trace Fanon's engagement with behaviorism, we see that his engagement with psychology was more complicated than is currently thought—with implications for both the psychoanalytic as well as Hegelian-Marxist programs at the heart of postcolonial theory.

Having used behaviorism's history to reevaluate the implications of Fanon's work, I discuss my project's own historical, theoretical, and formal implications. Spanning the whole century and running across several continents, behaviorism's literary history forces a reevaluation of both modernism's chronology and its geography. Furthermore, this history exposes many of the anti-psychological ideas at the core of contemporary literature and criticism—and asks us to consider how these concepts might serve as precedents for both modernist studies and literary criticism as a whole.

Behaviorisms

In *About Behaviorism* (1974), B.F. Skinner predicted that behaviorism would comprise the next step in Western philosophy. "Modern psychology," he wrote, "can claim to be far beyond Plato in controlling the environments of which people are said to be conscious, but it has not greatly improved their access to consciousness itself… Behaviorism, on the other hand, has moved forward."[5] According to Skinner, behaviorism was capable of answering (or at least disregarding) questions that Western philosophy had struggled with for 3000 years.

This is an overstatement of behaviorism's purview and of its historical origins. But many of behaviorism's key ideas and dispositions can be traced back to the British Empiricists of the 17th and 18th centuries. The empiricism and associationism of John Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690) and especially David Hume's *Treatise of Human Nature* (1739) were important precedents for behaviorism's rejection of mentalistic psychology. Suspicious of unobservable phenomena, such as mental states, early behaviorists Thorndike and Watson found themselves attracted to associative

models of learning (which would come to include Ivan Pavlov's stimulus-response physiology). And like Hume, the behaviorists were not strict empiricists per se. Much as Hume argued against innate knowledge while maintaining the *a priori* status of the mind's associative abilities, Thorndike, Watson, Skinner drew careful distinctions between what they considered inborn "unconditioned" and "conditioned" behaviors. Despite these similarities, of course, there were crucial differences between the British empiricists and the behaviorists. The most important of these differences was the nature, and accessibility, of mind itself. Where behaviorism rejected the study of consciousness categorically, Locke and Hume were explicitly concerned with how the mind worked, how it perceived the world, and how it perceived itself. In addition to Locke and Hume another 17th century philosopher's work would resonate with Watson and Skinner: Francis Bacon. In *New Atlantis* (1624), Bacon described an imaginary utopia, "Bensalem," that was organized around ideas similar to the ones he had developed in *The Advancement of Learning* (1605) and *Novum Organum* (1620). Both Watson and Skinner shared this utopian disposition, describing how behaviorism could maximize human prosperity and minimize suffering. As I shall discuss later on, this was a particularly important idea to Skinner, whose novel *Walden II* (1948) was a behaviorist analogue to Bacon's *New Atlantis*.

As a methodological intervention, however, behaviorism's origins were more local to the end of the nineteenth century—to the birth of psychology as a discipline separate from philosophy, biology, or physiology. Watson's 1913 "Psychology as the Behaviorist Views It" was largely a response to the psychological structuralism of Wilhelm Wundt and his disciples.[6] Wundt is credited as having transformed psychology

into an experimental discipline. Drawing on Gustav Fechner's "psychophysik," which speculated that one could introspectively connect mental experiences to external stimuli, Wundt suggested that introspection itself could be understood as an experimental technique.[7] In *Grundzüge der physiologischen Psychologie* (Principles of Physiological Psychology, 1873), Wundt argued that the constituents of mental life—ideas, memories, emotions—could be atomized into sensations. In this way, the mind was organized like the structure of a molecule (hence the name structuralism): much as water is two hydrogen atoms bound to one water atom, a particular emotion would comprise the binding of numerous sensations into a single mental form. So if the larger structures of mental life were built from atomistic sensations, then the architecture of the mind could be examined through the introspective examination of those sensations.

Through his students at the University of Leipzig, Wundt's ideas would move throughout the world and establish psychology as an experimental discipline. In Germany, they would be perpetuated by the so-called Würzburg school, where Wundt's former student Oswald Külpe established a laboratory. (As I show in chapter 2, "Mindless Modernism," Külpe's brand of structuralism was an important component of Samuel Beckett's novel *Murphy* and its criticism of novelistic form.) In the United States, Wundt's former student James Cattell established laboratories at the University of Pennsylvania and Columbia, where he would supervise the dissertation of Edward Thorndike. Edward Bradford Titchener, who proved to be Wundt's most passionate American advocate, established a research facility at Cornell. And Wundt's former student Granville Stanley Hall began a laboratory at Johns Hopkins University, where his students included John Dewey. In 1894, Dewey assumed a position at the nascent

University of Chicago, where his own students would include James Angell and eventually John Watson.

But by the 1890s, Wundt's ideas were under fire. At the University of Würzburg, Külpe and his students began suggesting that some thoughts were effectively "imageless" and that these thoughts were effectively inaccessible through introspection.[8] But the most influential criticism of structuralism came from the United States in the form of functionalism. In *Principles of Psychology* (1890), William James suggested that consciousness followed from physiology—from the function of organs and tissues in the brain and nervous system—rather than the structure of molecules. "Mental phenomena are not only conditioned *a parte ante* by bodily processes," James wrote, "but they lead to them *a parte post...No mental modification ever occurs which is not accompanied or followed by a bodily change*" [his emphases].[9] This functionalist tethering of mental state and physiological state was built on by Dewey ("The Concept of the Reflex Arc," 1896) and Angell ("The Province of Functional Psychology," 1907) at the University of Chicago.

James's and Dewey's functionalism was an important precursor to Watson's behaviorism. In "Psychology as the Behaviorist Views It" (1913) Watson wrote that behaviorism "is the only consistent and functional functionalism."[10] But a key difference remained between Watson's version of functionalism and that of James, Dewey, and Angell. Where Watson would define behaviorism against introspection and the study of consciousness, these other versions of functionalism were still largely introspective and oriented toward the study of mental phenomena. Despite his redefinition of consciousness as a *relationship* to cognition rather than an object unto itself, James was still invested in

the study of consciousness. And furthermore, he was invested in studying that relationship introspectively, even though he had doubts about the scope of self-knowledge. It was functionalism's reliance on introspection and consciousness that Watson criticized most heavily in 1913.

But as Watson acknowledged in "Psychology as the Behaviorist Views It," he was not the first psychologist to reject introspection categorically. In 1911, Edward Lee Thorndike—a former student of structuralist James Cattell at Columbia—published *Animal Intelligence*. Thorndike's research might be understood as the first steps of behaviorist psychology, even if Watson didn't coin the term "behaviorism" for another two years. Suggesting that animal behavior could be predicted without reference to unseen "magical agencies"[11] such as consciousness, Thorndike postulated the Laws of Exercise and Effect, which have since been misattributed to Watson, Pavlov, and Skinner. These laws described what today we call, informally, "reinforcement." According to the Law of Effect, a given behavior would be more like to recur if it were generally followed by "satisfaction."[12] The Law of Exercise stated that the strength of behavioral association was proportionate to the number of times this association had been exercised.[13] The hungry cat that learned to escape its cage by pressing a lever, Thorndike concluded, did not do so because it inferred the function of the lever. Nor were cats able to learn through imitation. Instead, the cat hit the lever randomly a number of times and associated the pressing of the lever with its subsequent escape from the cage. The cat's propensity to hit the lever was proportionate to both its "satisfaction" (escape and food) as well as the number of times the association between "lever" and "escape" had been made in the past. There was no reason, Thorndike concluded, to endow the cat with

mental states when the cat's behaviors had empirically knowable causes.

In offering a "behaviorist" critique of structuralism and mentalistic psychology, Watson would draw on Thorndike's arguments (as well as Jacques Loeb's theories of botanical tropism).[14] But Watson would go further than Thorndike; where *Animal Intelligence* had made a methodological case against the imputation of mental states to animals, Watson's "Psychology as the Behaviorist Views It" would remove mental states from psychological study entirely. His empirically minded critique of Wundtian structuralism, as well as mentalistic psychology as a whole, had four main points:

1. "Human psychology has failed to make good its claim as a natural science. Due to a mistaken notion that its fields of facts are conscious phenomena and that introspection is the only direct method of ascertaining these facts, it has enmeshed itself in a series of speculative questions which…are not open to experimental treatment."

2. "Psychology, as the behaviorist views it, is a purely objective, experimental branch of natural science which needs introspection as little as do the sciences of chemistry and physics."

3. "It is granted that the behavior of animals can be investigated without appeal to consciousness. Heretofore the viewpoint has been that such data have value only in so far as they can be interpreted by analogy in terms of consciousness. The position is taken here that the behavior of man and the behavior of animals must be considered on the same plane; as being equally essential to a general under- standing of behavior. It can dispense with consciousness in a psychological sense."

4. "This suggested elimination of states of consciousness as proper objects of investigation in themselves will remove the barrier from psychology which exists between it and the other sciences. The findings of psychology become the functional correlates of structure and lend themselves to explanation in physico-chemical terms."[15]

Over the 15 years that followed "Psychology as the Behaviorist Views It," Watson would write a number of monographs—including *Behavior* (1914), *Psychology from the Standpoint of a Behaviorist* (1919)*, Behaviorism* (1924)*,* and *Psychological Care of Infant and Child* (1928)—which developed and extended these ideas. During this fifteen-year span, two not-unrelated changes occurred within Watson's thinking. The first was the explicit incorporation of Pavlovian stimulus-response physiology into behaviorism, which occurred between 1914 and 1919. Largely congruous with Thorndike's Laws of Exercise and Effect, Pavlov's methods of classical conditioning— "conditioning" new reflexes on top of innate "unconditioned" ones through association— allowed Watson to hypothesize physiological causes for mental states.

This approach was best exemplified by Watson's infamous paper "Conditioned Emotional Responses" (1920), which he co-authored with his graduate student Rosalie Rayner. The paper ascertained whether Watson and Rayner could induce "emotional responses"—traditionally understood as mental events—through conditioning the reflexes of an infant, "Baby Albert." By pairing a number of objects—"a white rat, a rabbit, a dog, a monkey…a beard"—with a loud noise that caused Albert to cry, Albert was induced to cry whenever he was exposed to said objects.[16] This result, Watson and Rayner concluded, supported a mechanistic understanding of the mind and pushed

against any psychoanalytic inference of neurosis:

> It is probable that many of the phobias in psychopathology are true conditioned emotional reactions either of the direct or the transferred type...Emotional disturbances in adults cannot be traced back to sex alone. They must be retraced along at least three collateral lines - to conditioned and transferred responses set up in infancy and early youth in all three of the fundamental human emotions.[17]

Putting aside the scandals of Baby Albert and Watson's affair with Rayner, "Conditioned Emotional Responses" helps explain the second major change that happened in Watson's thinking between 1913 and 1928. Where "Psychology as the Behaviorist Views It" was primarily a methodological polemic, *Behaviorism* began making metaphysical claims about the nature of mind. If in 1913 Watson argued that consciousness was beyond empirical study, then in 1924 he began suggesting that consciousness itself might not exist. Similar to Gilbert Ryle's in *The Concept of Mind* (1949), Watson suggested that consciousness might comprise the misidentification of physiological and behavioral events. This idea is evident in Watson and Rayner's reproach against psychoanalysis above and also in Watson's discussion of thought in *Behaviorism*. Rather than comprising a mental event per se, *Behaviorism* concluded that what we identify as thinking "is in short nothing but talking to ourselves...the muscular habits learned in overt speech are responsible for implicit or internal speech (thought)."[18]

While Watson was developing the metaphysical component of behaviorism, however, earlier versions of his work were circulating globally and moving between disciplines. As I show in my discussion of Brecht in chapter 3, there is evidence to

suggest that behaviorism circulated to Germany by 1917, more than a decade before Watson's *Behaviorism* was translated into German (*Die Behaviorismus*). Behaviorism made inroads into sociology as early as 1920, where it warranted its own chapter in James Quayle Dealey's textbook *Sociology: Its Development and Applications*. And in 1924, I.A. Richards brought behaviorism to bear on literary criticism in *Principles of Literary Criticism*, thereby inaugurating the methods and core assumptions of close reading. Richards's behaviorist contributions to close reading and the discipline of literary study are the subject of chapter 1, "Behaviorism and the Beginnings of Close Reading."

Aside from Richards and Watson himself, the figure most central to behaviorism's literary and philosophical circulation was Bertrand Russell. Though he discussed behaviorism briefly in "The Philosophy of Logical Atomism" (1916), Russell's *Analysis of Mind* (1921) was the first extended philosophical consideration of behaviorism. (It is worth pointing out that Russell's enthusiasm for behaviorism was short-lived and that it generally predated Watson's sudden interest in metaphysics.) Russell emphasized that he was not a behaviorist himself but, as a philosophical materialist, was largely sympathetic to many of behaviorism's claims. "I do not think the truth is quite so picturesque" as is suggested by Freudian psychoanalysis, Russell explained in *The Analysis of Mind*. "I believe an 'unconscious' desire is merely a causal law of our behaviour, namely, that we remain restlessly active until a certain state of affairs is realized, when we achieve temporary equilibrium…The interpretation of unconscious wishes which I have been advocating has been set forth briefly by Professor John B. Watson in an article called 'The Psychology of Wish Fulfillment.'"[19] Much as in

Watson's account of language, here too mental events are interpreted as the miscategorized byproducts of physiology and observable behavior.

Russell's importance to behaviorism's intellectual legacy cannot be overstated. As Lawrence Smith suggests in *Behaviorism and Logical Positivism: A Reassessment of the Alliance* (1986), it was *The Analysis of Mind* that introduced Watsonian behaviorism to the Logical Positivists, particularly Otto Neurath (see chapter 3) and Rudolf Carnap.[20] Second, Russell's behavioristic *Philosophy* (1927) would become enormously influential to B.F. Skinner's own theory of radical behaviorism. As Skinner explained in his memoir *The Shaping of a Behaviorist* (1979), Russell's *Philosophy* began "with a careful statement of several epistemological issues raised by behaviorism considerably more sophisticated than anything of Watson's."[21]

Russell's sympathy for behaviorism ended in the 1930s, but behaviorism became an influential strain within analytic philosophy from the 1930s through the 1970s. For the purposes of behaviorism's literary and cultural history, two philosophers matter most: Ludwig Wittgenstein and Gilbert Ryle, whose conclusions were often contiguous with those reached by Watson and Skinner. Ryle's primary contribution was *The Concept of Mind* (1949), which he wrote would "undoubtedly, and harmlessly, be stigmatized as behaviorist."[22] The foundation of *The Concept of Mind* was Ryle's logical attack on Cartesian dualism, which he called "the dogma of the Ghost in the Machine."[23] Descartes's separation of mind and body, he explained, was predicated on (and perpetuated by) a "category mistake"—the mistaken attribution of certain phenomena to one logical category rather than another. Mind and Matter, he explained, were not analogous categories that followed different causal laws. Instead, Mind was an invented

subset of Matter that had then been treated as if it were its own logical type."[24] This mistaken "type-distinction," Ryle explained, was typical of "the traditional [Cartesian] theory of the mind."[25] When we talk about someone doing something intentionally or "intelligently," he continued, we make a distinction between categories of *knowing how* and *knowing that*—as if mental knowledge of "that" preceded physical knowledge of "how." But this too was an example of a category mistake inventing two categories where there is only one. "When I do something intelligently, i.e. thinking what I am doing," Ryle wrote, "I am doing one thing and not two. My performance has a special procedure or manner, not special antecedents."[26]

Like Ryle's *The Concept of Mind*, Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* (1953) focused on the relation of "inner states" to observable behavior (in Wittgenstein's case, language). "The essential thing about private experience," he wrote, "is really not that each person possesses his own exemplar but that nobody knows whether other people also have *this* or something else"[27] The way to circumvent this problem was circumvented was through language use. And yet such language use was responsible for the philosophical difficulties seemingly presented by "private experience." If a supposedly inner state could be given a referring term and talked about, Wittgenstein argued, then it was not so private or inner as initially presumed. Analogous to Ryle's distinction between *knowing how* and *knowing that*, Wittgenstein concluded that many of the phenomena we understand as psychologically interior are actually illusions created by the behaviors of language-use. The existence of the word "pain" to denote *pain* constituted definitional proof that *pain* was a public behavior and not a private event. But at the same time, the conventions of talking about *pain* recreated the

very difficulties that language was supposed to circumvent. Along these lines, Wittgenstein imagined being posed with the following question: " 'Are you not really a behaviorist in disguise? Aren't you at bottom really saying that everything except human behavior is a fiction?' — If I do speak of a fiction, then it is of a *grammatical* fiction."[28]

While Ryle and Wittgenstein were developing these ideas in England, B.F. Skinner was developing his own behavioristic program in the United States. Skinner's "radical behaviorism" was a philosophical, psychological, and cultural enterprise simultaneously. Distinguishing himself from Watson, Skinner suggested in *The Behavior of Organisms* (1938) and *Science and Human Behavior* (1953) that human behavior could not be explained or predicted through classical (Pavlovian) conditioning alone. "Reflexes, conditioned or otherwise," he explained in *Science and Human Behavior*, "are mainly concerned with the internal physiology of the organism. We are most often interested, however, in behavior which has some effect upon the surrounding world…[and] raises most of the practical problems of human affairs."[29] Skinner would call these behaviors "operants," such that "operant conditioning" comprised the conditioning of an organism to perform a given operant. Skinner's most famous example of successful operant conditioning was his "superstitious" pigeon. As he described in " 'Superstition' in the Pigeon" (1948), a pigeon at 75% of its ideal weight would be placed in a cage with a retracting food dish. If the dish appeared while the pigeon was performing a random behavior (say, a clockwise turn), then the pigeon tended to repeat this behavior purposively to make the hopper reappear."[30] The hopper would then reappear whenever the pigeon performed the operant behavior, thereby reinforcing the association between operant and reward. "The experiment," Skinner explained, "might be

said to demonstrate a sort of superstition. The bird behaves as if there were a causal relation between its behavior and the presentation of food, although such a relation is lacking. There are many analogies in human behavior"[31]

Comprising the philosophical program of "radical behaviorism," these analogies were controversial. In *Beyond Freedom and Dignity* (1971), Skinner suggested that behaviorism had exposed freedom (and free will) as an "illusion"—merely the perceived "absence of aversive control."[32] And in a range of publications including "Baby in a Box" (*Ladies Home Journal*, 1945), *Walden II* (1948), *Science and Human Behavior*, Skinner argued that behaviorism's techniques should shape the way "cultures" are designed. "A given culture," he wrote in *Science and Human Behavior*, is "an experiment in human behavior. It is a particular set of conditions under which a large number of people grow and live."[33] "Baby in a Box" attempted this on a small scale, advocating the use of an "Air Crib": by placing infants in a climate-controlled zone full of stimuli, Skinner suggested that mothers could begin conditioning their babies at an early age. In contrast, *Walden II* assumed a much larger scale, imagining a utopian community based on the principles of operant conditioning and radical behaviorism more generally.

 In terms of behaviorism's evolution as a psychological program, however, it was radical behaviorism's extension into linguistics that had the greatest impact. In *Verbal Behavior* (1957), Skinner outlined a theory of language in which language use itself was understood as an operant behavior.[34] The way a child learned language, he argued, was through imitation and operant conditioning: upon correctly imitating the speech of an adult, the child would be praised and rewarded, thereby reinforcing the imitation. Thus formulated, Skinner's theory of language acquisition was strictly empiricist (though,

clearly, the theory allowed for certain inborn reflexes and behaviors). If children learned *all* instances of language through imitation and operant conditioning, then it was implicit that children were born with no *a priori* linguistic knowledge. And it was precisely on this point that Noam Chomsky attacked Skinner in his 1959 review of *Verbal Behavior*, thereby inaugurating the rise of cognitive science and computational linguistics. "The fact that all normal children acquire essentially comparable grammars of great complexity with remarkable rapidity," Chomsky wrote, "suggests that human beings are somehow specially designed to do this, with data-handling or 'hypothesis-formulating' ability of unknown character and complexity."[35] An empiricist psychology that ignored or devalued mental content, he continued, could not explain the empirical evidence. Over the past fifty years, various behavioristic ideas have persisted in experimental psychology, philosophy, sociology, and even literary criticism. But its dominance as an explanatory paradigm has since drawn to a close.

"With blank mind and glazed eyes"

It is not hard to speculate how the history detailed above made its way into literature and criticism. Often, the references to behaviorism were explicit. In 1926, I.A. Richards wrote a review of Watson's *Behaviorism*. In his novel *Murphy* (1936), Samuel Beckett satirized structuralist introspection viciously—and used behavioristic concepts to do so. Matthew O'Connor, the star of Djuna Barnes's *Nightwood* (1937), parses his trouble with introspection as a function of stimulus-response physiology: "Why is it that whenever I hear music I think I'm a bride?"[36] In their efforts to sway audiences toward Communist politics, both Bertolt Brecht and Richard Wright incorporated behaviorism into their thinking about literary form. And in his dissertation on Samuel Beckett, JM Coetzee

reproached Chomskyan linguistics from the standpoint of logical behaviorism—and

began developing the philosophical arguments that would later define how his novels

thought about the origins of colonialism. Taken separately, these references might seem

insignificant. But put together, they speak to a global network of behavioristic ideas

beneath transnational modernism and literary criticism. And it is a network far larger, and

far more global, than critics of the twentieth century might suspect.

To demonstrate this, my goal here is to offer an unlikely case study: the writings

of Frantz Fanon. My point is not that Fanon himself was a behaviorist but rather to

demonstrate the role behaviorism had in shaping Fanon's changing attitudes toward the

nature of consciousness and the relationship of psychology to colonization. In so doing,

my goal is to also show Fanon was involved in not one but two contradictory

conversations about the nature of consciousness and the relationship of consciousness to

the environment. Fanon's struggle with behavioristic psychology is another way we can

begin understanding how literary modernity moved through the world—and how, and

why, it changed during that process. As Laura Doyle and Laura Winkiel argue in

Geomodernisms: Race, Modernism, Modernity (2005), "To consider [a global set of

texts] in relation to modernism is not to dilute them or the term but rather to concretize

them both, insofar as they share, not strict national or temporal frameworks or even

explicit aesthetic programs, but a global horizon that affects both content and form."[37]

Such an argument is atypical of those made about Fanon's work, which is of

course canonized as being primarily psychoanalytic. As Diana Fuss explained in "Interior

Colonies: Frantz Fanon and the Politics of Identification" (1994), Fanon created "a

vocabulary in which to diagnose and to treat psychological disorders produced in

individuals by the violence of colonial domination" as well as a vocabulary that could describe "the neurotic structure of colonialism itself."[38] Similarly, Homi Bhabha's introduction to the 1986 reissue of *Peau Noire, Masques Blancs* (Black Skin White Masks, 1952) suggested that psychoanalysis grounded Fanon's synthesis of intellectual pursuits. "The body of his work," Bhabha wrote, "splits between a Hegelian-Marxist dialectic, a phenomenologic affirmation of Self and Other and the psychoanalytic ambivalence, its turning from love to hate, mastery to servitude."[39] Henry Louis Gates Jr sums up rather well the place Fanon has taken in contemporary cultural study. In "Critical Fanonism" (1995), Gates suggested that Fanon had become a "global theorist" and a venerated "psychoanalyst of culture."[40]

These descriptions of Fanon are very much in keeping with *Black Skin, White Masks*, which articulated a strongly psychoanalytic and introspective understanding of consciousness. The goal of the book, Fanon explained, was to "teach the black man to free himself of the arsenal of complexes that have been developed by the colonial environment."[41] Through psychoanalysis, the traumatized consciousness of the colonized could be accessed, studied, and changed. But however desirable such remedy might be, the colonized's transcendence above his neuroses was not an end unto itself. Instead, it was a necessary term in Fanon's "Hegelian-Marxist" understanding of history and therefore a necessary term for the success of anti-colonial revolution. In "The Negro and Psychopathology," Fanon made this conceptual synthesis explicit: "Psychoanalytic schools have studied the neurotic reactions that arise among certain groups, in certain areas of civilization. In response to the requirements of dialectic, one should investigate the extent to which the conclusions of Freud or of Adler can be applied to the effort to

understand the man of color's view of the world." [42] In these ways, *Black Skin, White Masks* comprised not just an investigation but a polemic: a passionate argument for psychoanalysis's centrality in discussions of racism and colonial occupation. "I believe," Fanon wrote in his introduction, "that only a psychoanalytical interpretation of the black problem can lay bare the anomalies of affect that are responsible for the structure of the complex."[43]

In France in the 1940s, however, it was unusual for a psychologist or psychiatrist to be so explicitly invested in psychoanalysis. *Black Skin, White Masks* was making an argument not only against colonialism but an argument against the reigning psychology in France at that time: that of behaviorist Henri Piéron. As Professor of *le psychologie du sensations* at the College de France, director of both the psychological laboratories at L'Ecole Practique Des Hautes Études (EPHE), and editor of *L'année Psychologique*, Piéron steered psychological training at the University of Paris away from consciousness and toward *comportments*, or behaviors. As he wrote in "L'evolution du psychisme" (1908), "It is both possible and necessary not to deny but simply to ignore the question of consciousness in studies of the mental life of organisms."[44] This argument for a behavioristic psychology, of course, predated Watson's argument by five years. Both seem to have arrived at behavioristic psychology independently and through parallel paths: where Watson's work pushed against structuralism's introspective methodology, Piéron's work criticized the introspective techniques of philosopher Henri Bergson and psychologists Maine de Biran and Alfred Binet. Following Watson's international success in the 1920s, however, Piéron spent the rest of his career disparaging his American rival. As he wrote in *From Anemone to Man* (1958), "From the beginning of

the formation of my thoughts, I had renounced the subjective study of the phenomenas of the consciousness, and I had affirmed the validity of the psychological science of the behavior of man…at a moment where this psychological 'behaviorism' that Watson declares specifically American had not yet been revealed and which had no specifics except for his immature exaggerations."[45]

These disciplinary strictures explain Fanon's defiant insistence that *Black Skin, White Masks* was a work of psychology *despite* its subjective focus on consciousness. *Black Skin, White Masks* would comprise a mentalistic response to a discipline that had become preoccupied—even derailed—by *comportement*, physiology, and empirical concerns. Contrasting *Black Skin, White Masks* with other psychological treatises, Fanon explained that

> It is good form to introduce a work in psychology with a statement of its methodological point of view. I shall be derelict. I leave methods to the botanists and the mathematicians. There is a point at which methods devour themselves.
>
> I should like to start from there. I shall try to discover the various attitudes that the Negro adopts in contact with white civilization.[46]

This is a pretty damning description of behavioristic, physiological psychology—whether that of Piéron or of Watson (whose trained extensively with botanist Jacques Loeb). Limited to physiology and empirically observable behaviors, the implication is that such scientific psychologies cannot access the "attitudes" or mental phenomena at stake. In contrast, psychoanalysis *can* access these phenomena toward reaching the aforementioned "requirements of the dialectic."

Fanon's own attitudes toward consciousness, however, would soon shift. In 1953, following his medical studies in Lyon, Fanon moved to Algeria where he began working as a psychiatrist at Hopital Psychiatrique de Blida-Joinville. As Richard Keller explains in *Colonial Madness: Psychiatry in North Africa* (2007), the network of hospitals and clinics in Algeria comprised "experimental fields for creating and testing new scientific systems in a vacuum that could then be transported to the metropole."[47] Here Fanon saw racism and colonialism masquerading as legitimate treatments and diagnoses for neuropsychiatric disorders.[48] But even more importantly, Fanon witnessed the brutality of Algeria's anti-colonial revolution and began to treat its victims.

Algeria's anti-colonial war and its victims would become the subject of Fanon's next two books: *L'an Cinq, Dans La Revolution Algerienne* (1959), translated in English as *A Dying Colonialism*, and *Les Damnés de la Terre* (1961) or *The Wretched of the Earth*. These books described the horrors of anti-revolutionary violence and theorized the psychological, philosophical, and political implications such violence would have for Algeria's future as an independent nation. In particular, *The Wretched of the Earth* comprised an unmistakable departure from the psychological attitudes Fanon expressed in *Black Skin, White Masks*. *Black Skin, White Masks* had been premised on the success of psychoanalytic intervention—on the accessibility, and treatability, of the damaged colonized mind through psychoanalytic techniques. But now, five years into working as a psychiatrist in a war zone, Fanon found no such mind. Describing the remains of the Songhai Empire in "On National Culture," Fanon wrote "I concede that whatever proof there is of a once mighty Songhai civilization does not change the fact that the Songhais today are undernourished, illiterate, abandoned to the skies and water, with a blank mind

and glazed eyes."[49] The minds of the Songhai could not rise above the effects of colonization, above the "arsenal of complexes developed by the colonial environment." Instead, those minds were emptied and made inaccessible, "abandoned" to (and overcome by) the war zone itself.

But if this "blank mind" was a product of colonial violence, Fanon concluded, then it was masked and exacerbated by colonial psychology itself. Rather than reflect and treat the colonized mind, colonial psychologies—including Mannoni's *Prospero and Caliban* and Fanon's own *Black Skin, White Masks*—had projected both neurosis and "liberating consciousness" onto the colonized.[50] Such mentalistic psychology was not in response to the colonized's behavior ("blank mind and glazed eyes") but instead the colonial intellectual's repatriation. "The intellectual," Fanon wrote,

> Is terrified by the void, the mindlessness, and the savagery. Yet he feels he must escape this white culture. He must look elsewhere, anywhere, for lack of a cultural stimulus comparable to the glorious panorama flaunted by the colonizer, the colonized intellectual frequently lapses into heated arguments and develops a psychology dominated by an exaggerated sensibility, sensitivity, and susceptibility. This movement of withdrawal, which first of all comes from a petitio principi in his psychological mechanism and physiognomy, above all calls to mind a muscular reflex, a muscular contraction.[51]

It would be inaccurate to conclude from this statement that Fanon had become a behaviorist himself—entirely denying the usefulness, or accessibility, of consciousness in psychological study. And yet what we must recognize here is that Fanon's criticism of

the colonial intellectual comprises a behavioristic appraisal of mentalistic psychology. Having established that the mind of the colonized is either gone or beyond inference, Fanon suggests that the colonial intellectual's "psychology" is based on an imputation of mental states that is itself best likened to "a muscular reflex, a muscular contraction." The conceit of "liberating consciousness"—of colonized minds rising above the trauma of colonialism—was a fiction created by the colonial intellectual unable to reconcile his acculturation overseas with "the void, the mindlessness, and the savagery" of home.

This behavioristic cynicism about consciousness in *The Wretched of the Earth* has not been talked about and demands a change in how literary critics talk about postcolonial literature and theory. First and foremost, Fanon's behavioristic cynicism has had a distinctly literary afterlife. In his essay "Fanon the Awakener" (1969), Ghanaian novelist Ayi Kwei Armah wrote that when Fanon wrote *Black Skin, White Masks*, he was "young enough and inexperienced enough to believe that the cure for this disease built into the construction of the world could, for some of us at least, be found inside our heads and souls…through the liberating agency of pure mental exercise."[52] Armah's novel *The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born* (1968) represented Ghana as a nation of "walking corpse[s]" reminiscent of Fanon's Songhai and incapable of such psychological transcendence.[53] And in her novel *Nervous Conditions* (1988), Zimbabwean writer Tsitsi Dengarembga displayed a similar skepticism about psychological transcendence along with an explicit reference to *Wretched of the Earth*. Explicitly taking her novel's title from Homi Bhabha's preface to *Wretched of the Earth* (page xix in *Nervous Conditions*), Dengarembga's narrator is fooled by the false promises of economic and psychological transcendence offered by colonial education—until her cousin, Nyasha, acquires a

"nervous condition."[54] "If Nyasha who had everything could not make it," the narrator

asks, "where could I expect to go?"[55]

Additionally Fanon's anti-psychologism has implications for how we understand

his place in the enterprise of postcolonial theory and criticism. The psychological

arguments of *Wretched of the Earth* certainly seem to contradict the aforementioned

characterizations of Fanon as a 'psychoanalyst of culture.' But there is more at stake in

Fanon's skepticism about consciousness than psychoanalysis. Indeed, *Wretched of the*

Earth asks us to reconsider not only *Black Skin, White Masks*'s psychoanalytic ideas but

its Hegelian-Marxian ones as well. In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon argued that the

incorporation Freud and Adler served to meet "the requirements of the dialectic." In order

for history to progress, for colonized peoples to rise up against their colonizers, the

neuroses of the colonized mind had to be dissolved. It is this historical dialectic that

Fanon saw Freud and Adler enabling. But what of this historical dialectic's requirements

in *Wretched of the Earth?* Noting the dissipation of the dialectic in *Wretched of the*

Earth, Homi Bhabha suggested that "Fanon's Hegelian dream" had been

> ironized, even mocked, by his view of the Manichean structure of colonial
>
> consciousness and its non-dialectical division. What [Fanon] says in *The*
>
> *Wretched of the Earth* of the demography of the colonial city reflects his view of
>
> the psychic structure of the colonial relation. The native and settler zones, like the
>
> juxtaposition of black and white bodies, are opposed, but not in the service of 'a
>
> higher unity.' No conciliation is possible, he concludes, for one of the two terms
>
> is superfluous.[56]

Bhabha rightly identifies the disintegration of Fanon's earlier "Hegelian dream." In *Wretched of the Earth*, both the dialectical nature of consciousness—between lord and bondsman—and the dialectical nature of history are unsettled. But the relationship between these phenomena is more significant than Bhabha suggests. In *Black Skin, White Masks*, psychoanalysis was marshaled in service of historical progress. But in *Wretched of the Earth*, this faith in psychological transcendence is shaken—as was Fanon's own larger "Hegelian dream." As reinforced by Armah's "Fanon the Awakener," the success of the dialectical progress of history presupposed the possibility of psychological transcendence. But if such transcendence is impossible—if the Songhai have only "blank mind[s] and glazed eyes," if the neuroses of colonial consciousness are merely an intellectual invention—then the so-called Hegelian dream must be given up.

Modernism and Mind

In a number of ways, Frantz Fanon's writings are exemplary of what I want this dissertation to achieve. My goal isn't to supplant psychoanalysis with behaviorism—to exchange one monolith for another. Instead, it is to show what happens when we understand these discourses existing and competing simultaneously. Fanon's writings show how he struggled with the entailments of both psychoanalysis and behaviorism throughout his career—and how elements of both psychologies persisted in his larger theoretical project. And in understanding how Fanon became skeptical of the colonized mind's accessibility (or existence), we find an unexpected contingency between the success of introspection and the dialectical progress of history.

This is something Fanon shares with the other writers, critics, and theorists

described in the following pages.. Each encountered behaviorism as competing with mentalistic psychological discourses—including psychoanalysis, structuralism, and cognitive science. And perceiving mentalistic content in literary production and study, each understood behaviorism's distrust of consciousness as entailing a reevaluation of aesthetic concepts, genres, or forms. Each defined literature, either implicitly or explicitly, as *a behavior* that had no necessary connection to the mental states of authors, readers, or characters. For I.A. Richards, the New Critics, and Bertolt Brecht, the task was preventing readers and audience members from inferring the mental states of either poets or performers. Where the New Critics argued for an "intentional fallacy," Brecht theorized how actors might alienate their audiences psychologically and prevent emotional identification (*der Verfremdungseffekt*). Analogously, novelists including Samuel Beckett, Djuna Barnes, and J.M. Coetzee challenged the psychological interiority often expected from the novel. And these writers did not only bring behaviorism to bear on aesthetic questions; the rejection of mentalistic psychology had political and theoretical implications too. In contrast to Brecht, Richard Wright and Georg Lukacs both suggested that individualistic psychology was an obstacle to political change. For Djuna Barnes, one challenge of *Nightwood* was to imagine a kind of sexuality where desires were inaccessible—even to one's self. And in his fiction, J.M. Coetzee located the origins of colonialism precisely in the difficulties of inferring the minds of others. As a group, these writers ask us to evaluate the psychological attitudes embedded in our own critical efforts—whether those attitudes are behavioristic (i.e., close reading) or more mentalistic (i.e., the novel or our concepts of subjectivity and agency).

But beyond challenging our theoretical and methodological presuppositions, these

writers also ask us to redefine what modernism was. The literary history of behaviorism demonstrates that modernism was not a "turn inward" but rather a series of contentious efforts to redefine literature's relationship to mind and the relationship between interiority and external form. Some, such as the writers focused on here, doubted that mental states could be accessed and therefore understood form as fundamentally disconnected from consciousness. Other writers, such as Virginia Woolf and William Faulkner, understood aesthetic form as offering a way around problem of other minds. For these writers, literature comprised a special type of behavior that could circumvent the empirical and logical problems posed by doctrines such as behaviorism. In both cases, anxieties about the knowability of consciousness were translated into modernism's characteristic experiments in form, narration, and language. It is my hope that the chapters that follow speak to this dynamic conception of modernism. Furthermore, it is my hope that they demonstrate how much important thinking and writing came out of a supposed inability to know our own minds.

My first chapter begins by showing behaviorism's role in the development of close reading. Many of close reading's most enduring assumptions and techniques, I argue, have their origins in psychological behaviorism. Beginning with I.A. Richards's work in the 1920s, which was explicitly behavioristic in its approach to literature, this chapter demonstrates how Richards and the American New Critics adapted behaviorism's empirical intervention into literary ideas such as the "intentional fallacy." In *Principles of Literary Criticism* (1924) and *Practical Criticism* (1929), Richards argued that poetry comprised an instance of "behavior" as understood by Watson. In response, however, critics including W.K. Wimsatt and Cleanth Brooks took the phenomena Richards

attributed to the brain and instead argued that these phenomena were products of poetic form. The chapter concludes by discussing this history's implications for contemporary discussions of literary study and the promises of cognitive science.

In my second chapter I demonstrate how behaviorism redefined the concept of "mind" in modernist writing. For while literary modernism is often understood as a psychological "turn inward," the 1930s saw two prominent writers—Samuel Beckett and Djuna Barnes—push against modernist introspection through behaviorist concepts. In Beckett's *Murphy* (1936) and Barnes's *Nightwood* (1937), behaviorism's rejection of introspection was translated into experiments with novelistic conventions. These novels, I suggest, draw attention to not only introspection's place in the history of the novel, but also the unquestioned place introspective knowledge has assumed in contemporary critical study. To Beckett, the novel's ability to know other minds was fictional; the representation of character minds had to be subject to the same psychological laws as human beings. To Barnes, the task was to imagine what sexuality would look like if mental states—including desire—were inaccessible through introspection. Following the lead of these writers, the chapter concludes by trying to imagine what literary theory and criticism would look like if empirical doubts about introspection were incorporated into our methods.

My dissertation's third chapter is an investigation of how Marxist writers such as Bertolt Brecht and Richard Wright drew on behavioristic ideas to make literature more politically efficacious. Both writers conceived of literary form as a tool for inciting readers into political action—and therefore as a way of either advancing (or resisting) the agendas of institutional Marxism. Reflecting on behavioristic psychology as well as his

own experiences as a reader, Wright concluded that if *Native Son* (1940) could induce emotional effects in its readers then it could also condition those readers into specific behaviors. For Brecht, however, behavioristic conditioning was not a tool of Marxism; instead, it was a tool of capitalist manipulation and Aristotelian, "cathartic" theatre. In contrast, the goal of Brecht's "epic" theatre was to avoid conditioning its spectators and instead encourage them into educated, voluntary political decisions. For while the plays *Man Equals Man* (1925) and *Threepenny Opera* (1928) represent behavioristic conditioning onstage, their intended effects on spectators was precisely the opposite.

My fourth chapter reads the fiction of South African novelist J.M. Coetzee alongside the cognitive revolution, when cognitive science and computational linguistics replaced behaviorism as the dominant paradigm in the sciences of mind. For Coetzee, who was trained as a computational linguist, the questions raised by behaviorism persisted into the eras of cognitive science and post-colonial life. Coetzee's writings point not only to literature's shared history with cognitive science, but also how literature can became a conduit between the history of colonialism and technical issues within the sciences of mind. In the first part of the chapter I examine Coetzee's dissertation—a computer program to analyze Samuel Beckett's novel *Watt* (1945)—and its approach to literary style. In contrast to critics who argued that style was a generative cognitive apparatus not unlike Noam Chomsky's concept of generative grammar, Coetzee argued that cognitive science had failed to address the disjunction between covert mental states and overt behaviors. And in Coetzee's novels—including *Dusklands* (1975), *Foe* (1986), and *Summertime* (2009)—it is this same disjunction that Coetzee sees at heart of Western imperialism.

Notes.

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[1] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, translated by G.E.M. Anscombe (London: Blackwell, 2004), 1.580.

[2] It is worth noting that Sass's recent work has explored behaviorism explicitly, though not necessarily in connection to modernism. See Louis Sass and Marino Perez-Alvarez, "Phenomenology and Behaviorism: A Mutual Readjustment." *Philosophy of Psychiatry and Psychopathology* 15:3, 199-210.

[3] In his recent *Literary Modernism and Beyond* (2012), Richard Lehan exemplifies this attitude. He writes that "the last several decades [of literary criticism] have made inroads in questioning the realist-naturalist-modernist split…Neuroscience, evolutionary psychology, sociobiology, and cultural anthropology have added a revised dimension to the behaviorism that modernism rejected in moving beyond realism/naturalism."[3] Lehan's description oversimplifies a number of complicated, and not easily settled, questions. Nothing in his account is what it seems. Not only were modernist attitudes toward behaviorism more expansive than "moving beyond realism/naturalism" (something I discuss in chapter 3), but Lehan's history is wrong too. John Broadus Watson coined the term "behaviorism" in 1913; the ideas represented by this term fully entered the intellectual market place over the three years that followed. Lehan's account therefore implies that no fiction moved beyond "realism/naturalism" before 1913 and invents a schematic, clichéd role for behaviorism in the 20s and 30s.

This is not to say that behaviorism is entirely absent from literary criticism. Over the past decade, there has been a small but noticeable surge of interest in behaviorism. A handful of works—such as Douglas Mao's *Fateful Beauty: Aesthetic Environments, Juvenile Development, and Literature, 1860-1960* (2008) and Michael Trask's *Cruising Modernism: Class and Sexuality in American Literature and Social Thought* (2002)— have gestured toward behaviorism's importance to modernist literature. But Mao and Trask are exceptions; furthermore, their writings are largely limited to Richard Wright and Rebecca West (in Mao) and Gertrude Stein (in Trask).

[4] For fuller histories of psychological and philosophical behaviorism, see: John M. O'Donnell's *The Origins of Behaviorism: American Psychology, 1870-1920* (New York: NYU Press, 1987); John A. Mills's *Control: A History of Behavioral Psychology* (New York: NYU Press, 2000); William O'Donohue's *Handbook of Behaviorism* (San Diego: Academic Press, 1999); and Margaret Boden's *Mind as Machine: A History of Cognitive Science* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2006), 107-128, 237-278, and 727-646.

[5] Burrhus Friederich (B.F.) Skinner, *About Behaviorism* (New York: Vintage, 1974), 36.

[6] For more on Wundtian structuralism see Robert W. Rieber and David Robinson's edited collection *Wilhelm Wundt in History: The Making of a Scientific Psychology* (New York: Plenum 2001), particularly Arthur Blumenthal's "A Wundt Primer: The Operating Characteristics of Consciousness" (121-144).

[7] For more on psychophysics, see Daniel Robin's *Intellectual History of Psychology* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995), 231-269.

[8] For more on the imageless thought controversy in the context of psychology's origins as a discipline, see Martin Kusch's *Psychologism: The Sociology of Philosophical Knowledge* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 122-159.

[9] William James, *Principles of Psychology: Volume 1* (New York: Henry Holt, 1918 [1890]), 5.

[10] John Broadus Watson, "Psychology as the behaviorist views it," *Psychological Review* 20 (158-177), 166.

[11] Edward Lee Thorndike, *Animal Intelligence: Experimental Studies* (New York: Macmillan, 1911), 244.

[12] Thorndike, *Animal Intelligence*, 244.

[13] Ibid*,* 267.

[14] For Loeb's influence on Watson see Kerry Buckley's *Mechanical Man: John B. Watson and the Beginnings of Behaviorism* (New York: Guilford Press, 1989), 17-58, and Philip J Pauly's *Controlling Life: Jacques Loeb and the Engineering Ideal in Biology* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1987), 118-163.

[15] Watson, "Psychology as the behaviorist Views It," 166-7.

[16] John Broadus Watson and Rosalie Rayner, "Conditioned Emotional Reactions." *Journal of Experimental Psychology* 3.1 (1914), 1-14, 1.

[17] Ibid, 14.

[18] John Broadus Watson, *Behaviorism* (New York: WW Norton, 1930 [1924]), 238-9.

[19] Bertrand Russell, *The Analysis of Mind* (Mineola: Dover Books, 2005 [1921]), 18-19. For Watson's article on wish fulfillment see *The Scientific Monthly* III, November 1916.

[20] Laurence D. Smith, *Behaviorism and Logical Positivism: A Reassessment of the Alliance* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1986), 60.

[21] Quoted in Smith, 262.

[22] Gilbert Ryle, *The Concept of Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000 [1949]), 326.

[23] Ibid, 16.

[24] Ibid, 22.

[25] Ibid, 33.

[26] Ibid, 32.

[27] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 1.272.

[28] Ibid, 1.307.

[29] B.F. Skinner, *Science and Human Behavior* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1953), 59.

[30] B.F. Skinner, "Superstition in the Pigeon." *Journal of Experimental Psychology* 38 (1947), 168-172, 168.

[31] Ibid, 172.

[32] B.F. Skinner, *Beyond Freedom and Dignity* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2000 [1971], 32.
[33] Skinner, *Science and Human Behavior*, 430.

[34] B.F. Skinner, *Verbal Behavior* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1957), 1-34.

[35] Noam Chomsky, review of B.F. Skinner's *Verbal Behavior*, *Language* 35.1 (1959), 26-58, 58.

[36] Djuna Barnes, *Nightwood* (New York: New Directions, 2009 [1937]), 32-33.

[37] Laura Doyle and Laura Winkiel, editors. *Geomodernisms: Race, Modernism, Modernity* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2005), 4.

[38] Diana Fuss, "Interior Colonies: Frantz Fanon and the Politics of Identification," *Diacritics* 24.2-3 (1994), 19-42, 20.

[39] Homi Bhabha, "Remembering Fanon: Self, Psyche, and the Colonial Condition," in Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*, translated by Charles Markmann (New York: Grove Press, 2004 [1986]), x.

[40] Henry Louis Gates Jr, "Critical Fanonism," *Critical Inquiry* 17 (1991), 457-70, 458.

[41] Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 14.

[42] Ibid, 141.

[43] Ibid, 10.

[44] Quoted in Francoise Parot's essay on France in *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Psychology*, edited by David Baker (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2012), 291.

[45] Quoted in Paul Fraisse's "French Origins of the Psychology of Behavior: The Contribution of Henri Pieron," *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 6.2 (1970), 111-119, 114.

[46] Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 12.

[47] Richard Keller, *Colonial Madness*, 87.

[48] Ibid, 83-120.

[49] Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, translated by Richard Philcox (New York: Grove Press, 2004), 148.

[50] Ibid, 157.

[51] Ibid, 157.

[52] Ayi Kwei Armah, "Fanon: the Awakener." *Negro Digest* October 1969: 4-43, 31.

[53] Ayi Kwei Armah, *The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born* (Oxford: Heinneman Group, 1988), 2.

[54] On a prefatory page of Tsitsi Dengarembga's *Nervous Conditions* (Oxfordshire: Ayebia Clarke Ltd, 2004 [1988]), we read: "*The condition of native* [sic] *is a nervous condition* From an introduction to Fanon's *The Wretch of the Earth*" (v). The line is adapted from Bhabha's "Remembering Fanon."

[55] Tsitsi Dengarembga, *Nervous Conditions*, 206.

[56] Homi Bhabha, "Framing Fanon," in *Wretched of the Earth*, xxi.

1   Behaviorism and the Beginnings of Close Reading

There is a lot at stake in close reading. In the eighty years since its initial theorization, close reading has been subjected to a number of historical and ideological critiques.[1] We know the long (and often troubling) list of political forces, institutional pressures, and personal biases that had some role in close reading's development. Yet another type of historical work, however, is possible—one that identifies a different set of stakes and that traces how a certain set of cognitive dispositions came to be embedded in close reading's theoretical assumptions, techniques, and rhetoric. That type of work is my goal here: to show what these cognitive dispositions are, how they became part of literary study, and how they continue to shape the possibilities of contemporary criticism.

My argument is that some of close reading's most enduring techniques and assumptions have their origins in psychological behaviorism, the deterministic doctrine made famous by John Watson and B. F. Skinner, among others. This program of reading began in I. A. Richards's insistence in the 1920s that literary criticism reflect behaviorist advances in psychology and neurology. Building on these ideas, Richards theorized a model of literary criticism that would do two things. First, it would treat literary texts as behaviors, as defined by the behaviorists—it would treat them as external phenomena without reference to internal mental states. Second, it would record how the stimuli of poems affected readers physiologically and use these results to ground analyses of meaning and form. Richards's theories met strong resistance from New Critics such as Cleanth Brooks and William K. Wimsatt, who explicitly rejected the premises of Richards's work but whose own theories came to perpetuate Richards's transposition of

behaviorist doctrine. Mediated and translated by seventy years of subsequent literary theory, elements of these ideas remain with us today. When we defer to the authority of the text, or insist on the irrelevance of authorial intent, these actions can be traced back to Brooks, Wimsatt, and Richards. Furthermore, they can be traced to a still controversial set of empiricist interventions made by psychologists a century ago.

In 1911, when psychology was still a largely experimental (rather than clinical) discipline, Edward Lee Thorndike published *Animal Intelligence*, which explored how animal minds forge associations between experiences. Thorndike's findings contradicted the prevailing structuralist psychology of Edward Titchener, who had argued that mental states were accessible through introspection and also that animals possessed the rudiments of both consciousness and rationality. The capacities Titchener ascribed to humans and animals, Thorndike argued, could be explained without making recourse to unobservable phenomena (like consciousness) or other "magical agencies."[2] Instead, what Thorndike hypothesized were the Laws of Exercise and Effect, which articulated the relationship between reinforcement and the probability of a behavior's occurrence in the future. [3]

Thorndike's Laws found an ally in John Broadus Watson, whose 1913 lecture "Psychology as the Behaviorist Views It" incorporated Thorndike's work into a theory of experimental psychology that Watson called "behaviorism." A former student of John Dewey and Jacques Loeb at the University of Chicago, Watson argued for the redefinition of psychology as the study of observable behaviors rather than that of unobservable mental states. "Psychology as the behaviorist views it," Watson said, "is a purely objective experimental branch of natural science. Its theoretical goal is the prediction of behavior. Introspection forms no essential part of its methods, nor is the scientific value of its data dependent upon the readiness with which they

lend themselves to interpretation in terms of consciousness."[4] Drawing on Pavlov's stimulus-response neuroscience, Thorndike's laws, and Loeb's botanical tropisms, Watson reconceived psychology as an empirical discipline focused on the objective observation (and prediction) of behavior.[5] This new psychology had four main tenets: the unreliability of introspection; the need to analyze overt behaviors rather than covert mental states; the irrelevance of consciousness to psychological study (if consciousness was thought to exist at all); and the reduction of all behaviors (including mental states) to neurological actions and conditioning.

This chapter shows how these ideas became incorporated into the loose and often inconsistent set of techniques we call close reading.[6] It traces how an empiricist intervention in psychology was translated into a formalist intervention in literary study. To that end, the rest of this chapter is divided into three parts. In the first part, I examine I. A. Richards's early criticism with an attention to how Richards modeled his "practical criticism" on the main tenets of Watson's behaviorism. Despite Richards's protests about what he called behaviorism's "ontological" component, *Principles of Literary Criticism* (1924) and *Practical Criticism* (1929) present us with a translation of Watson's behaviorism into a protocol for reading literature. In the second section I discuss behaviorism's covert presence in the close reading techniques of the American New Critics. Despite their overt rejections of Richards's methods, these New Critics largely perpetuated Richards's methodology and behaviorist assumptions about the nature of literary experience. In discussing the New Criticism, I focus on theoretical concepts that continue to have a place in much contemporary criticism: the organic and non-propositional nature of poetic language and the abnegation of authorial intention. Embedded in the formalist rhetoric of Brooks's "heresy of paraphrase" and Wimsatt and Beardsley's "intentional fallacy" are mediated reassertions of Watson's behaviorist intervention.[7] In the third and final section, I discuss how

close reading's assimilation of behaviorism is relevant to contemporary concerns about formalism, the professional study of literature, and the promises of cognitive science. As a profession, we remain unaware of our own history of reading and, in that way, have come to inadvertently limit our agency as readers and critics.

A Behaviorist Poetics

What I will show in this section is how much Richards's concept of close reading depended on Watsonian behaviorism. But to argue for the centrality of behaviorism in Richards's work is to diverge from most accounts of Richards's contributions to literary study. For the past fifty years, Richards has been understood as an innovative critic who reinvigorated literary study with ideas from psychology, philosophy, and the sciences. Behaviorism, however, is not usually mentioned; Richards's contributions are attributed to other discourses and disciplines.[8] The critical consensus seems summed up by Richards's biographer, Richard Russo. At best, Russo explains, Richards was "lured not by the premise but by the promise of behaviorism."[9] This article will argue the opposite of Russo's claim and demonstrate how profoundly behaviorism shaped the methodology Richards developed in *Principles of Literary Criticism* and *Practical Criticism.* In these texts, the explicit goal is nothing short of a behaviorist poetics—a recentering of classic literary concepts such as genre, form, structure, and meaning around Watsonian behaviorism.

In these ways, Richards's work was not at all typical of the reception of behaviorism at Cambridge in the 1920s. More emblematic of this reception was Bertrand Russell's *The Analysis of Mind* (1921). Having enlisted Watson's help in the drafting of *The Analysis of Mind*, Russell was generally enthusiastic about behaviorism but wary of its categorical rejection of

consciousness. It was absurd, Russell argued, to define consciousness only as the perceived unity of a mosaic of sensations, habits, behaviors, and reflexes. This definition of consciousness, he continued, forced behaviorists into a methodological double-bind: in order to practice behavioristic psychology, psychologists had to possess mental states that theoretically did not exist. "Images without beliefs," Russell wrote, "are insufficient to constitute memory; and habits are still more insufficient. The behaviourist, who attempts to make psychology a record of behavior, has to trust his memory to make the record."[10]

Richards mirrored this critique in a review of Watson's *Behaviorism* (1925), which was published in *The New Criterion* in March 1926.[11] Written two years after *Principles of Literary Criticism*, the review distanced itself from Watson's more radical claims. Building on earlier theoretical work, *Behaviorism* sharpened its attack against introspection and the study of consciousness and hypothesized practical applications for behavioristic psychology.[12] It was this attack on consciousness that Richards seized upon in his review; Watson's abnegation of consciousness was the monograph's most obvious and troubling "crudity." The definition of consciousness provided by Watson, Richards wrote, is

> neither a definable nor a usable concept; that it is merely another word for soul . . . that it is pure assumption. All this does not follow from [consciousness's] unobservable nature. We may not observe consciousness, but we have it or are it . . . and in fact many of our observations of other things require it. In this respect the point of view of the behaviorist is hardly so much a point of view as a mistake.[13]

For these reasons, Richards claimed, "behaviorism contains a valuable part, and a part—the philosophical, more precisely ontological part—which will have to be discarded."[14] What

Principles of Literary Criticism did, the review suggested, was precisely discard behaviorism's "ontological" elements while retaining its "valuable" experimental and methodological protocols. The review of Watson was a prime opportunity for Richards to demonstrate that, unlike Watson, his was not the viewpoint of a behaviorist.

Richards's review of *Behaviorism*, however, fundamentally misrepresented Richards's own work. If we look at *Principles of Literary Criticism* and the later *Practical Criticism*, we find that these texts display none of the caution found in the *New Criterion* review. If anything, they display an almost uncritical enthusiasm for Watson's theories. "Damage is very likely already being done," Richards wrote in *Practical Criticism*, "by elementary courses in Behaviourism and stimulus-response psychology. Yet it is not the inquiry which is harmful, but the stopping short of the inquiry."[15] Indeed, *Principles* and *Practical Criticism* are fully invested in the abnegation of consciousness that Richards's review had been so eager to dismiss. As we read in *Principles of Literary Criticism,* published two years before the *New Criterion* review, "Whatever psycho-analysts may aver, the mental processes of the poet are not a very profitable field for investigation. They offer far too happy a hunting ground for uncontrollable conjecture."[16] In this comment about the "mental processes" of the poet, the extent of Richards's behaviorism becomes clearer. Not only is Richards's rejecting the possibility of knowing an author's mind but he is doing so because of the speculation and introspection such knowledge would require. The contents of the poet's mind, *Principles* suggests, are only accessible through either the poet's self-reported introspection or through speculative inferences made about the poet's creative work. Either way, the critic's knowledge of the poet's mind is necessarily unreliable, as even the poet's own introspection lacks insight into the unconscious processes of

poetic production. Any attempt to ascertain the mind of the author would compromise the critic's objectivity.

In the later *Practical Criticism* we see the abnegation of authorial consciousness become even broader and more sophisticated. Here, Richards draws not only on Watson's arguments against introspection but also on what Richards imagines as the cognitive mechanisms by which humans infer semantic meaning. Presupposing successful introspection, these arguments fail to hold up logically within the greater scheme of Richards's behaviorism. "Whenever we hear or read any not too nonsensical opinion," Richards writes in *Practical Criticism*, "a tendency so strong and so automatic that it must have been formed along with our earliest speech-habits, leads us to consider *what seems to be said* rather than the *mental operations* of the person who said it."[17] According to Richards, listeners induce meaning from the particularities of an utterance rather than trying to infer the mental state of the utterance's speaker. Listeners and readers "overlook the mind" behind the utterance unless "some very special circumstance calls us back."[18] The behaviorist rejection of consciousness is presented here as a phenomenon natural to language use. Our natural instinct, we are told, is to parse utterances only in terms of "what seems to be said" in the utterance itself. Attempts to infer the "mental operations" are uncommon exceptions to the rule and are unverifiable speculations at best.

Practical Criticism tries to develop a type of literary criticism based on this model: the imagined listener who gleans meaning from overt language use rather than covert (and imagined) mental states. To accomplish this, Richards transformed his classroom at Cambridge into a would-be laboratory; in the spring of 1926, just when his review of Watson was published in the *New Criterion*, Richards led a seminar at Cambridge called "Practical Criticism." In this seminar, he provided his students with radically decontextualized poems--poems with no titles, identifying

marks, or clues about origin. Such decontextualization, Richards hoped, would force his students

to restrict their analyses to the poetic text exclusively--and to make psychological speculation

impossible. Students provided Richards with written responses to each poem which then became

the central evidence cited in the monograph *Practical Criticism.* And while *Practical Criticism* is

prefaced in anthropological terms ("this book is the record of a piece of fieldwork in comparative

ideology"), the presence of behavioristic methodology is fairly clear.[19] Much as Watson insisted

on the analysis of overt behaviors rather than covert mental states, Richards forced his students

to analyze the poems as "behaviors"—as overt phenomena to be considered independently of the

poet's consciousness. Richards's analyses themselves were similarly framed: *Practical Criticism*

not only analyzed his students' essays as literary criticism but also as behaviors so defined.

Looking to the discussion of "Poem 3" in *Practical Criticism*, we see Richards adopt this

posture; responses to each poem are analyzed both as literary interpretations and as behavioral

phenomena. But before turning to his analyses of his students' work, we need to examine what

exactly Richards's students were responding to. Below are the first four lines of "Poem 3," as

copied from Appendix D in *Practical Criticism*:

> At the round earth's imagined corners blow
>
> Your trumpets, angels, and arise, arise
>
> From death, you numberless infinities
>
> Of souls, and to your scattered bodies go.[20]

This is the well-known opening of John Donne's "Holy Sonnet VII." But as Richards

acknowledges, this is not the poem as he found it. Instead, it is a redacted version of "Holy

Sonnet VII" tailored to the demands of the experiment. The anti-historical bias often ascribed to

the New Criticism looms overhead here. And yet Richards's redaction of "Holy Sonnet VII"

suggests that this perceived anti-historical bias is actually a bias against the inference of authorial

mental states. In Appendix C of *Practical Criticism*, we find the following entry: "*Poem 3.*

JOHN DONNE (1573). *Holy Sonnets VII*. Probably composed in 1618. The modernized spelling

was adopted in the interests of the experiment."[21] To prevent his students from speculating about

the poem's psychological origins, Richards not only removed all of the poem's identifying marks

but also scoured the text typographically. Looking to a seventeenth-century edition of Donne's

poem, we see that "imagin'd" has become "imagined," "Angells" has become "angels," and

"numberlesse" has become "numberless."[22] Variables were removed "in the interests of the

experiment"; as Richards was interested only in a certain class of behavioral responses, anything

that might induce psychological speculation about the author was purged from the text. In the

discussion of "Poem 6," which is a decontextualized version of G. M. Hopkins's "Spring and

Fall, to a young girl," we see similar reasoning and an analogous deletion of the text's formal

inflections. Explaining why he removed the accent from the line "And yet you wíll weep and

know why," Richards writes, "this mark I omitted, partly to see what would happen, partly to

avoid a likely temptation to irrelevant discussions" (emphasis added).[23]

Rather than so-called "irrelevant discussions" of consciousness and history, what we see

Richards describing are his students' immediate, automatic responses to each poem. As one

student wrote of "Poem 3," "Mouthfuls of words. Has no appeal whatsoever. Make a good

hymn—in fact, that's the way the meter goes."[24] Richard's analysis of this student is not

religious but psychological, focusing on the student's "stock response." "That a stock response,"

Richards writes, "elicited merely by the religious subject-matter, should be able to make a sonnet

sound like a hymn is a fact that surely stretches our notions of the mind's power over matter."[25]

According to Richards, the student's automatic reaction to religious content dominates his response and distorts the poem's objective features. Such "stock responses," we are told, define the experimental results culled in *Practical Criticism*. To Richards, the responses he received were not critical reactions to poetry so much as they were unthinking clichés and reflexes that mimicked genuine interpretive insight. Stock responses, Richards writes, "involve views and emotions already fully prepared in the reader's mind. . . . The button is pressed, and then the author's work is done, for immediately the record starts playing in quasi- (or total) independence of the poem which is supposed to be its origin or instrument."[26] [27] The consciousness of readers here is reduced almost entirely to reflexes and automatic behaviors. When we press play on the proverbial phonograph, we do not suppose that the machine in front of us has any conceptual understanding of music or sound. For Richards, his students are analogous to such a machine: the responses they produce are products less of consciousness than they are reflexes stimulated by the poetic "button" being pressed. (Logically, the same criticism might be extended to Richards, of course.) And if this is the case, consciousness is uninvolved and therefore irrelevant. Mired in the language of stock responses and automatic behaviors is what we might perceive as a prototype of close reading.

In showing how that prototype was constructed in *Practical Criticism*, my hope is that the cognitive dispositions embedded in close reading are clearer. But in order to fully understand the relationship between behaviorism and the techniques of close reading, we need to go one step further and examine that prototype's theoretical foundation. This foundation is not to be found in *Practical Criticism*; instead, we find it in the earlier *Principles of Literary Criticism*, which was published in 1924. Drawing on Pavlov, Watson, and the neurologist Charles Sherrington, *Principles* located literature squarely in a network of behaviorist ideas and also within the human

body's neurological circuitry.[28] "All mental events"—including literature—"occur in the course of processes of adaptation somewhere between stimulus and response."[29] Indeed, what enables *Practical Criticism's* prototype of close reading is the behavioristic translation of poetic language, aesthetic experience, and mind-body dualism we find attempted in *Principles*. In tracing how behaviorism entered into literary history, these behaviorist-inflected concepts are just as important as the "practical criticism" they preceded. As I will show later, the American New Critics attacked these behavioristic concepts while adopting (perhaps uncritically) the methods that Richards built upon their foundation.

For Richards the behaviorist redefinition of literature was central to the modernization of literary criticism. Only by contending with scientific advancement, Richards explained in *Science and Poetry* (1926), could literary criticism itself advance.[30] Such advancement was crucial even if it was difficult or seemingly impossible to achieve. One seeming impossibility was presented by Pavlov's stimulus-response neurology, which insisted on the infinite number of responses a stimulus could induce. As even the simplest stimuli could trigger a variety of responses, Richards wrote in *Principles*, so "it may seem no illegitimate step to conclude that highly complex objects, such as pictures, will arouse a still greater variety of responses, a conclusion very awkward for any theory of criticism."[31] It was criticism's job to contend with behaviorism and Pavlovian neurology just the same. But what were the advantages of criticism mirroring scientific progress? What could behaviorism and neurology bring to literary criticism?

According to Richards, behaviorism and neurology could reveal the physiological processes by which literature is perceived and the objective conditions of literary knowledge. In so doing, they could correct some of the misconceptions that had become commonplace in literary study. One of those misconceptions, we read, was the mistaken separation of "aesthetic"

or "poetic" experience from other types of experience. "All modern aesthetics," Richards writes

in *Principles*, "rests upon an assumption . . . that there is a distinct *kind* of mental activity present

in what are called aesthetic experiences. . . . Thus arises the phantom problem of the aesthetic

mode or aesthetic state, a legacy from the days of abstract investigation into the Good, the

Beautiful and the True."[32] Stimulus-response neurology here is a postulated cure for old-

fashioned belletrism. If all perceptions are produced by the same neurological mechanisms

(stimulus and response), then no one set of perceptions can be unique in kind. The difference

between a houseplant and a painting of that plant lies in their incumbent associations rather than

the way either object is perceived neurologically. What separates aesthetic experience from non-

aesthetic experiences, Richards suggests, are the way that aesthetic experiences are organized

and mediated consciously. Poetry, we read in *Principles*,

> has in no sense any different reality from the rest of the world and it has no special laws
>
> and no other-worldly peculiarities. It is made up of experiences of exactly the same kinds
>
> as those that come to us in other ways. Every poem however is a strictly limited piece of
>
> experience. . . .It is more highly and more delicately organized than ordinary
>
> experiences of the street or of the hillside; it is fragile. Further, it is communicable.[33] [34]

In this way, Richards understands stimulus-response neurology as revealing the structural

unity of aesthetic experience and experience. But just as the concepts of stimulus and response

show this unity of experience, they also show how poetry's irreducible separation from other

types of knowledge and language-use. In contrast to the logical "undistorted references" of

statements, poetic language makes no promise of factual accuracy or reducibility to logical

relationships.[35] And so if science, logic, and mathematics make propositional statements about

knowledge and the world, Richards concludes, then what poetry makes are non-logical pseudo-statements--"distorted references, or more plainly, *fictions*."[36] However, as we learn in *Science and Poetry*, what makes the pseudo-statement special is not just its logical distinction from scientific language. Instead, it is the pseudo-statement's physiological character that separates it ontologically from scientific knowledge. As Richards suggests in *Science and Poetry*, poetry is

> the reverse of science. Very definite thoughts do occur, but not because the words are so chosen as logically to bar out all possibilities but one. They are not; but the manner, the tone of voice, the cadence and the rhythm play upon our interests and make *them* pick out from among an indefinite number of possibilities the precise particular thoughts which they need. . . . The poet is not writing as a scientist.[37]

What poetry comprises is the addition of physiological and neurological information to the pseudo-statement's fictional propositions about the world. To Richards, poetry cannot be represented as a series of propositional statements about the world because poetic form transmits data that cannot be logically abstracted. Poetry comprises a range of physiological (and therefore non-logical) stimuli: the rhythm of the words, the deployment of phonological devices, the visual shape of the poem's form, and so on. Poetic knowledge is not only mental knowledge of a poem's content but also bodily knowledge of the way that content was transmitted. And rather than treating this bodily knowledge as ancillary to poetic language, Richards sees such knowledge as absolutely crucial to the production and perception of poetic meaning. The pseudo-statement solves the dilemma posed earlier, wherein a given word could have an infinite number of associations. A poem's physiological stimuli, Richards argues, are precisely what limit these associations. The function of a device such as alliteration is to appeal to "our interests" that then

automatically select ("make *them* pick out") the correct valence of a given object. Looking

forward to the criticism of Brooks, Wimsatt, and Beardsley, we need to understand the pseudo-

statement as straddling the worlds of neurology and literary criticism. At this moment,

psychological behaviorism is reaching towards poetic formalism. As Richards writes in *Practical*

Criticism, "It is never what a poem *says* which matters but what it *is*."[38] Later on, he discusses

the case of a student whose manner of reading physiologically precluded any thorough

understanding of Donne's "Holy Sonnet VII." "Technical presuppositions, by destroying the

movement of the verse and so precluding the emotional links from developing, certainly co-

operated in produced miscomprehension. . . . The sharp and jerky way in which he read these

lines probably prevented him from taking in their sense."[39]

In the larger scheme of Richards's project, however, the pseudo-statement is not just

proof of poetry's ontological distinction from science. What the pseudo-statement reveals, we

read, is a lack of separation between mind and body. It dispenses with mind-body dualism and

instead presents mind and body as components within a unified system of sensation and

cognition. "The Mind-Body problem," Richards writes in *Principles*, "is strictly no problem; it is

an *imbroglio* due to failure to settle a real problem, namely, as to when we are making a

statement or merely inciting an attitude."[40] For Richards, the imbroglio of mind-body dualism is

one that has plagued literature for centuries and is therefore yet another way behavioristic

psychology could make literary criticism more objective. The conceptual separation of mind and

body, he explains, frequently distorts the "psychological mechanism" of perception and forces

readers to mistake cause for effect. But with knowledge of stimulus-response neurology it would

be far harder to confuse the causes of an aesthetic experience with that experience's effects.[41]

Taking Aristotelian catharsis as an example, Richards writes that said imbroglio is the reason

"Tragedy, for example, is so often misapproached. It is no less absurd to suppose that a competent reader sits down to read for the sake of pleasure, than to suppose that a mathematician sets out to solve an equation with a view to the pleasure its solution will afford him."[42] People experience catharsis because of plays--but that is not the reason they necessarily attend or enjoy plays. Such causal confusions would dissipate, Richards insists, were critics better educated about how the nervous system actually processes aesthetic objects.

To illustrate the way that the nervous system might process aesthetic stimuli, Richards provides a "diagram, or hieroglyph" of the body's encounter with literature (see figure).
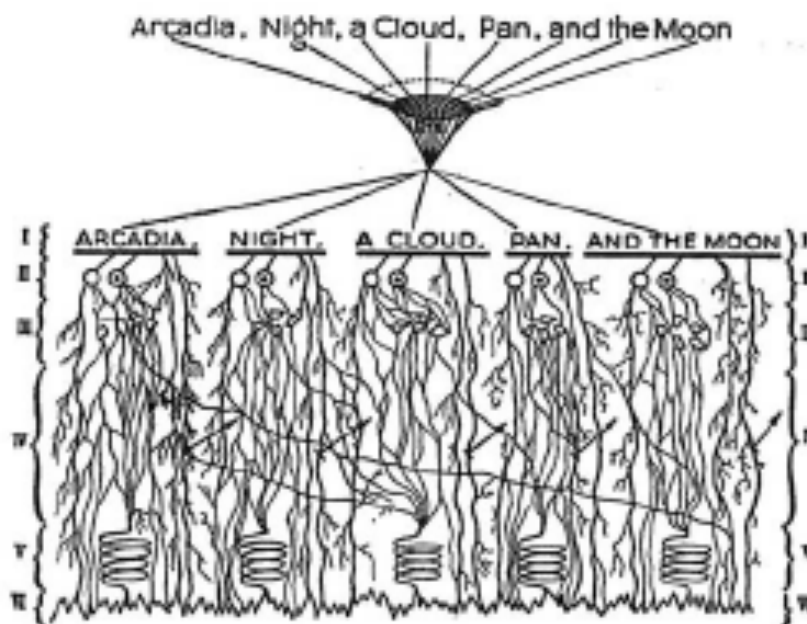

Figure 1, *Principles of Literary Criticism*, 116.

Invoking the final line of Robert Browning's poem "Pan and Luna," the diagram imagines how poetic language becomes cognitive data and how such data is translated into aesthetic experience. At the top of the figure, Browning's words enter into the eye as a unified line of

poetry; this line, however, is then broken into discrete fragments of language by the eye itself. Each word is processed individually while also retaining its syntactical relationship to the other words (the horizontal lines moving across the ganglia). As indicated by the roman numerals and the branching of the nerve pathways, each fragment goes through several stages of processing. Stage I comprises the "visual sensation" of the word itself--here, "Arcadia." Stage II is the formation of images "tied" to "Arcadia," which coincides with "auditory" and "articulatory" imaginings of language (represented by an empty circle next to a circle with a dot inside). Stage III, represented by small rhomboids in the middle of each pathway, is the experience of "free imagery" while Stage IV is the experience of poetic reference. Near the bottom of the diagram is Stage V, which indicates poetically induced "emotion" (represented by the coil). And below Stage V is Stage VI, the "attitude" the poem induces in the reader (figured visually as an EKG-style wave). During each stage of processing, the stimulus of each fragment induces a number of responses--eidetic, aural, logical, emotional--which then form the reader's aggregate response. In short, Richards's diagram *in Principles of Literary Criticism* is not only a imagining of how poetic knowledge is engaged by the nervous system but a visual representation of the "close reading" that would be theorized a few years later. It is a picture of the neurology of literary criticism.

Heresies and Fallacies

By the 1930s, however, Richards's neurological picture of literary criticism had been rejected--even as Richards's behaviorist methods grew in popularity. Indeed, Richards's harshest critics were, in a different context, often his most devoted acolytes. The reviewers who savaged his neurological discussions of literature became the champions of "practical criticism" (which

they called "close reading"). Referring to the diagram discussed above, Allen Tate wrote in "The Present Function of Criticism" (1940) that Richards's work was replete with the "hocus pocus" of Pavlovian neurology. It bore "the elaborate charts of nerves and nerve-systems that purport to show how the 'stimuli' of poems elicit 'responses'. . . . How many innocent young men--myself among them--thought, in 1924, that laboratory jargon meant laboratory demonstration!"[43] Even William Empson, Richards's former student and protégé, concluded in *Seven Types of Ambiguity* (1930) that literary criticism should remain separate from science and psychology. One of the central flaws of Richards's project, Empson explained, was that it understood itself as illuminating psychology through the analysis of literature. Logically, poetry could not be studied as behavior. "It would be tempting," he wrote, "to say I was concerned with science rather than with beauty; to treat poetry as a branch of applied psychology. But, so far as poetry can be regarded altogether dispassionately, so far as it is an external object for examination, it is dead poetry and not worth examining; further, so far as a critic has made himself dispassionate about it, so far as he has repressed sympathy in favour of curiosity, he has made himself incapable of examining it."[44] A diverse generation of critics concluded that Richards's behaviorist concerns had no place in literary study.[45]

What I will demonstrate in this section is that, despite what these critiques tell us, Richards's behaviorism maintained a foundational presence in the American New Criticism. Looking to the work of Cleanth Brooks, William Wimsatt, and Monroe Beardsley, we can see behaviorism embedded into the New Criticism's major theoretical statements: Brooks's *The Well Wrought Urn* (1947) and Wimsatt and Beardsley's 1946 essay "The Intentional Fallacy."[46] Brooks, Wimsatt, and Beardsley decry Richards's appeals to psychology but largely perpetuate Richards's methods just the same. What separates Brooks, Wimsatt, and Beardsley from

Richards is how these methods are justified: where Richards attributed literature's cognitive effects to the neuro-physiological composition of the human body, these later New Critics attributed these same effects to poetic language and form. They translate behaviorism into poetic formalism. While Brooks's *The Well Wrought Urn* offers a subjective and experiential model of reading poetry in opposition to Richards's, the only significant difference between these critics are the different origins they stipulate for such poetic experience. Similarly, Wimsatt and Beardsley's *Verbal Icon* attributes the "intentional fallacy" to the nature of poetic language-- because a poem is externalized result of an author's intention, we cannot confuse that result with the intention itself. But if we examine Wimsatt and Beardsley's reasoning, we see that this is not so much an argument about intention so much as it is an argument about mental states and consciousness more generally.

To trace I. A. Richards's behaviorism through Brooks, Wimsatt, and Beardsley, however, is not at all a straightforward task. Over the course of their careers, these critics (Wimsatt in particular) distanced themselves from Richards repeatedly; each presented his own work as a break from Richards's scientific aspirations. In "The Affective Fallacy," Wimsatt and Beardsley accused Richards's physio-affective poetics of perpetuating an affective or genetic fallacy--"a confusion between the poem and its *results*."[47] Richards's attempt to make literary criticism more objective, they concluded, had actually made the path to objectivity more difficult. "If the affective critic," they wrote, "ventures to state with any precision what a line of poetry *does* . . . either the statement will be patently abnormal or false, or it will be a description of what that the meaning of the line *is*."[48] In contrast to both Richards and Wimsatt and Beardsley, however, Brooks argued that literary criticism could never be objective; in *The Well Wrought Urn*, he cordially described Richards as not "a returned prodigal . . . but a pioneer who started from a

different set of assumptions."[49] Unlike *Principles of Literary Criticism*, he claimed, *The Well Wrought Urn* would make no claims toward objective knowledge. Instead, it would present "hopelessly subjective" and impressionistic analyses.[50] Not surprisingly, Brooks's "hopelessly subjective" and seemingly anti-scientific theory of poetry has been of great interest to subsequent critics.[51]

When we first look at *The Well Wrought Urn*, Brooks does indeed seem to rely on a "different set of assumptions" from Richards. In the discussion of paradox that prefaces the rest of the volume, Brooks employs poetic (rather than physiological) language and presents a broad distrust of objective knowledge. T. S. Eliot, Brooks writes,

> has commented upon 'that perpetual slight alteration of language, words perpetually juxtaposed in new and sudden combinations,' which occurs in poetry. . . . The tendency of science is necessarily to stabilize terms, to freeze them into strict denotations; the poet's tendency is by contrast disruptive. The terms are continually modifying each other, and thus violating their dictionary meanings.[52]

While Brooks's opposition between science and poetry might remind us of the pseudo-statement (which I will return to shortly), we find no concern with extra-semantic, affective data here. In contrast to Richards's description of Browning's "Pan and Luna," where specific words could be traced along specific nerve pathways, poetic meaning here is wholly abstracted. Paradox is disembodied: terms "modify" each other in an undefined space that is seemingly removed from readers or writers. And so "if the language of poetry is the language of paradox"[53], Brooks's theory of poetic language seems to be one that is exclusively semantic, non-affective and wholly removed from Richards's behaviorism. It is poetry not of feeling but of meaning.

This discussion of paradox, however, is not removed from Richards's behaviorist poetics so much as it is a translation of that poetics into a new set of terms. Brooks's notion of the paradox is less communicative than it is psychologically affective: rather than parse the contradictory meanings at the core of the paradox, Brooks suggests that we experience the phenomenon of the paradox as a whole. The "poem gets its power," he explains, not from semantic communication but from the experience of language and "the paradoxical situation out of which the poem arises."[54] We do not understand the paradox semantically so much as we experience it as a feature of the text. If the language of poetry is the language of paradox, then what poetic language mediates is not only semantic meaning but experience itself. "The old description of the poet," Brooks explains, "was better and less dangerous: the poet is a maker, not a communicator. He explores, consolidates, and 'forms' the total experience that is the poem. . . . If we are willing to use imaginative understanding, we can come to view now the poem as an object--we can share in the experience."[55] For Brooks, John Donne's "The Canonization" both thematizes and performs this experiential capacity of poetic form. Analyzing the lines "We'll build in sonnets pretty roomes; / As well a well wrought urne becomes / The greatest ashes, as halfe-acre tombes," Brooks writes that

> the poem is an instance of the doctrine which it asserts; it is both the assertion and the realization of the assertion. The poet has actually before our eyes built within the song the "pretty room" with which he says the lovers can be content. The poem itself is the well-wrought urn which can hold the lovers' ashes and which will not suffer in comparison with the prince's "halfe-acre tomb."[56]

Just as the "well wrought urn" will gather together the ashes of the lovers, the form of the poem contains and transmits experiential knowledge. The poem's form not only contains memories, sensations, attitudes, emotions, and ideas, but actualizes them as well.[57] As we read later *in The Well Wrought Urn,* "a true poem is a simulacrum of reality . . . by *being* an experience rather than any mere statement about experience or mere abstraction from experience."[58]

To show that Brooks's theory of poetic language is experiential and affective, however, hardly proves the persistence of Richards's behaviorism in *The Well Wrought Urn*. At best, it proves a familial resemblance—two critics working through similar sets of problems, irrespective of influence. But my hope is that in looking at Brooks's "heresy of paraphrase" we can see Richards's embedded behaviorism rise to the surface. Brooks's underlying assumptions about poetry, science, and literary criticism are fundamentally different from Richards--and yet Brooks's "heresy of paraphrase" is structurally identical to Richards's pseudo-statement. Both Brooks and Richards argue that poetry resists logical abstraction because poetry inherently transmits information that cannot be represented as propositional statements. To reduce the poem in that way is to either distort the poem's effects on the whole nervous system (according to Richards) or limit the organic experience that the poem offers readers (according to Brooks). However they justify this argument against the logical or semantic abstraction of poetic language, appealing either to physiology or to literary form, both Brooks and Richards are aiming to preserve the same phenomenon: the cognitive effectivity of poetry. Much as Brooks rendered paradox as transmitting experiences rather than meanings, the heresy of paraphrase subsumes content to the poem's overall "context" and cognitive effects: "We have argued that any proposition asserted in a poem is not to be taken in abstraction but is justified, in terms of the poem, if it is justified at all, not by virtue of its scientific or historical or philosophical truth, but

is justified by its relation to the total context of the poem."[59] For both Brooks and Richards, "the total context of the poem"—whether that context is physiological or ontological—is why poetry cannot be paraphrased or abstracted logically. So despite his criticisms of Richards, we can see that Brooks developed a theory of poetic language parallel to Richards's behaviorist poetics--one that translated Richards's principles into poetic terms and then arrived at a set of logically identical conclusions. Crucially, however, this does not mean that *The Well Wrought Urn* is just "Ricardian psychologism in new trappings," as Gerald Graff has suggested.[60] For while, yes, Brooks's analyses reassert Richards's behaviorism, they also manage to redefine the relationship between cognition and poetry and assert that poetic phenomena are less products of cognition than products of poetic form itself.

To W. K. Wimsatt and Monroe Beardsley, however, these differences between Brooks and Wimsatt would have been beside the point. To talk at all of experience and effect was fundamentally to distort the nature of poetic language. True, as Wimsatt and Beardsley explained in "The Affective Fallacy," poetry induced emotions in its readers--but it did so exclusively through the transmission of semantic meaning. Poetic content, they continued, is not "communicated to the reader like an infection or disease, not inflicted mechanically like a bullet or a knife wound, not administered like a poison, not simply expressed as by expletives or grimaces or rhythms, but presented in their objects as a pattern of knowledge."[61] Wimsatt and Beardsley's litany of physical and bodily similes emphasizes their methodological distance from Richards and Brooks. Poetic knowledge is not affective, like an infection or an expletive or a bullet; poetry does not induce physiological responses or share experiences through its formal composition. Instead, poetry is a "pattern of knowledge": a wholly mental and semantic phenomenon. What affective and experiential theories of reading do, they explain, is encourage

readers to confuse a poem's effects with the poetic text itself. This "affective fallacy" is a

necessary consequence of any interpretive strategy that concerns itself with a poem's non-

semantic features.[62] In this way, affective readings of poetry obscure rather than illuminate

poetic structure. Instead of interpreting a line of poetry, affective models of reading either project

experiential data onto the poetic text or merely paraphrase the text's meaning. "If the affective

critic (avoiding both the physiological and abstractly psychological forms of report) ventures to

state with any precision what a line of poetry *does* . . . either the statement will be patently

abnormal or false, or it will be a description of what the meaning of the line *is*."[63] Throughout

The Verbal Icon, Wimsatt and Beardsley position themselves as the rejoinder to affective literary

criticism--particularly that of Richards. Where Richards argued that poetry stimulated

physiological responses, they counter that poetry is a "pattern of knowledge" exclusively. Where

Richards proclaimed Cartesian dualism an *imbroglio*, Wimsatt and Beardsley announce that

there is a "cognitively untranslatable" gap between mental states and physiological sensation.[64]

      But if we look to the "intentional fallacy," which remains one of the central tenets of

literary study, *The Verbal Icon* no longer seems a rejoinder to Richards's behaviorist concerns.

If anything, the assertion that "the design or intention of the author is neither available nor

desirable as a standard for the work of literary art"[65] mirrors Richards's assertion in *Principles of*

Literary Criticism: "Whatever psycho-analysts may aver, the mental processes of the poet are not

a very profitable field for investigation. They offer far too happy a hunting ground for

uncontrollable conjecture"[66] Moreover, the reasoning behind Wimsatt and Beardsley's fallacy is

almost entirely behavioristic, despite its anti-affective understanding of poetic language and

Cartesian separation of mind and body. The intentional fallacy is rooted in the problem of poetry

as analyzable behavior; and so much as Richards's abnegation of authorial consciousness can be traced to Watsonian behaviorism, the intentional fallacy can be too.[67]

As one of the central theories of the New Criticism, Wimsatt and Beardsley's theory has long been the focus of criticism. Historically, such commentary has focused on the problem of authorial intent specifically. It has been assumed that the fallacious material responsible for the fallacy is found in the specific problem of intention—rather than, say, the imputation of consciousness or psychology more generally. To Paul de Man, Wimsatt and Beardsley fundamentally misread the nature of poetic intention, which according to de Man was "neither physical nor psychological" but textual. In seeing textual intention "by analogy with a physical model," de Man explains in *Blindness and Insight* (1983), Wimsatt ignores the phenomenon's structural origins.[68] Similarly, in their essay "Against Theory" (1982), Walter Benn Michaels and Steven Knapp accuse Wimsatt and Beardsley of misunderstanding the relationship between intention and form. "The mistake made by theorists," they write, "has been to imagine the possibility or desirability of moving from one term (the author's intended meaning) to a second term (the text's meaning), when actually the two terms are the same."[69] [70]

But if we look at the ways that intention operates as a concept in "The Intentional Fallacy," we see that the fallacy is not grounded in structural or textual concerns but rather psychological ones. Wimsatt and Beardsley's definition of intention is less a definition than it is a catalogue of synonyms, analogues, and associated phenomena:

> "Intention," as we shall use the term, corresponds to *what he intended* in a formula which more or less explicitly has had wide acceptance. "In order to judge the poet's performance, we must know *what he intended*." Intention is design or plan in the

author's mind. Intention has obvious affinities for the author's attitude toward his work, the way he felt, what made him write.[71]

This definition of intention is at best nebulous (and at times tautological). Before offering synonyms for "intention," Wimsatt and Beardsley state that "intention" simply corresponds to "what he intended." The synonyms of intention they provide, however, give no information as to what intention actually comprises. In the way they describe the relationship of an author's mental state to a given text, "plan" and "design" are as ambiguous as "intention." Furthermore, the relationship between "the author's attitude toward his work, the way he felt, what made him write" and "intention" is left undefined. Intention is described as having an "affinity" for these mental states but with no causal relationship indicated. Any of those "obvious affinities" could be defined as part of intention or not depending on the circumstance and context. Rather than define intention as a specific and executable idea, Wimsatt and Beardsley seem to define intention as a category of ideas. Instead of speaking to an author's intent to write a play or to provoke an allegorical interpretation, "intention" describes the class of mental states an author can have about his or her literary output.

In these ways, we can begin to see the intentional fallacy as being less about authorial intention than it is about authorial consciousness more generally. Indeed, when we look at Wimsatt's theoretical justifications of the fallacy, the concern is not about intention at all. Instead, the concept of authorial intention is a placeholder for authorial consciousness. The "intentional fallacy" is not an argument about intention but an argument how well we can know covert mental states as compared to overt behaviors. As Wimsatt and Cleanth Brooks would write in *Literary Criticism: A Short History* (1957), "The poem is before us and is susceptible to analysis, but the psychological goings-on turn out to be below the surface and out of sight."[72]

Much as Watson distinguished between consciousness and behavior, and Richards distinguished between mind and text, Wimsatt and Brooks draw a behaviorist distinction between poetry and "psychological goings-on." The poem is overt (it "is before us") and is therefore "susceptible to analysis." The author's mental states, however, are covert and are therefore not available to critics. Like Richards's behavioristic "practical criticism," Wimsatt and Beardsley's argument against the intentional fallacy conceives of poems as behaviors (as compared to mental states):

> There is a gross body of life, of sensory and mental experience, which lies behind and in some sense causes every poem, but can never be and need not be known in the verbal and hence intellectual composition which is the poem. For all the objects of our manifold experience, for every unity, there is an action of the mind which cuts off roots, melts away context--or indeed we should never have objects or ideas or anything to talk about.[73]

To Wimsatt and Beardsley the cutting of psychological "roots" and the melting of "context" are what allow us to analyze objects and to place ideas into speech. And so what they suggest is that the obscuring of mental states is a necessary product of writing poetry. In the act of poetic expression, internal mental events assume an external form; it is through poetry's externalization of consciousness that consciousness itself becomes inaccessible. The "gross body of life, of sensory and mental experience" are dissolved and replaced by the structure and form of the poem. Behaviorism is translated into formalism yet again as the difficulties of close reading are attributed to the nature of poetry rather than the nature of cognition.

Cognition and criticism

In tracing behaviorism through Richards, Brooks, and Wimsatt and Beardsley, my goal has not been to valorize behaviorism or devalue close reading. Close reading remains a useful way of looking at texts. Of the literary theoretical positions that have been advanced over the past fifty years, few have had the tenacity of the New Critical ideas discussed above. For despite our theoretical knowledge and historical training, despite all our ideological misgivings about the New Criticism, fragments of Richards, Brooks, and Wimsatt and Beardsley's arguments remain almost second nature to us. Certain techniques of close reading have become our default critical position.

And this is why it is so important to know behaviorism's place in our profession's history. We know the aesthetic histories of our methods and we know the political histories, too. But our methods have a cognitive history that is relatively unknown. When we choose to close read a poem, we make not only aesthetic and political assumptions but psychological assumptions as well. By virtue of behaviorism's place in the history of formalism, we make unwitting choices about consciousness and behavior when we close read. In "Cognitive Science and the History of Reading," Andrew Elfenbein makes a parallel point: "For literary critics, much of the value of work done by psychologists lies in making these strategies visible and thereby clarifying the kind of cognitive work that literary criticism demands."[74] Over time, our methods and assumptions have become so mediated and translated that we no longer know "the kind of cognitive work" our methods involve. For example: if we know the behavioristic reasoning behind the intentional fallacy--reasoning which most critics and scientists would reject--then we should reevaluate the fallacy's continued usefulness. As a profession, we have

erased our cognitive history--and as a result of this erasure, with the promises of cognitive

science on the horizon, our agency as critics is very much at stake.

Two recent studies of the relationship between literature and cognition demonstrate how

crucial it is for us to be aware of the psychological dispositions embedded in our methods. In

Dreaming by the Book (1999), Elaine Scarry uses findings from cognitive science to draw

comparisons between how literature and visual art are processed by the mind. But "unlike

painting, music, sculpture, theater, and film," Scarry writes, "[the verbal arts] are almost wholly

devoid of *actual* sensory content."[75] My immediate concern here is not whether this assertion is

true or not. Instead, my concern is the following: if it is true that literature possesses no "actual

sensory content," then does it make sense to employ the techniques of close reading? These

techniques are built on the assumption that literary objects comprise physiological stimuli.

Scarry's argument and her close readings are pulling in opposite directions, indebted to non-

compatible ways of looking at literature's relationship to consciousness. Writing on how

cognitive science could change literary study, Oren Izenberg runs into a similar problem in

"Poems Out of Our Heads." "It makes good sense," he argues, to "bring literary study into closer

proximity with the disciplines that give accounts of how the mind works. . . . This vision of a

new lyric studies would rest on philosophical foundations different from those that undergird the

history of literary study."[76] The implication here is that the "new lyric studies," supported by

fields more empirical than literary study, would do what the old lyric studies could not. But the

reason literary critics are bad at talking about problems of mind is not that cognitive science has

yet to arrive. No, the reason we have trouble talking about those problems is that, following the

model of I. A. Richards, we stopped talking about them. Izenberg attributes what are in fact our

unused critical abilities to the promises of "disciplines that give accounts of how the mind works."

I do not mean to suggest those critics looking forward to cognitive science's contribution have misplaced their enthusiasm. This is an enthusiasm I share and I am excited to see the ways that advances in science will once again affect the protocols of literary criticism.[77] But in anticipating that future, we must remember that this coming engagement with cognitive science is not without precedent--and not without problems. Looking to how behaviorism shaped our practices as readers and critics, the stakes of this future engagement are quite clear.

Notes.

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[1] Two recent and noteworthy studies of close reading are Jane Gallop's "The Historicization of Literary Studies and the Fate of Close Reading," *Profession* (2007, 181-6) and Franco Moretti's "Conjectures on World Literature*," New Left Review* 1 (2000, 73-81). Both discuss close reading as a concept as well as a sociological phenomenon. According to Gallop, close reading "transformed us from cultured gentlemen into a profession" (183). This transformation, however, came at a cost: as we learned to be "ahistorical" readers, seemingly extra-textual concerns such as ideology were pushed to the margins. For Moretti, close reading's formalism not only marginalized political content but entire literary traditions. Close reading, he argues, cannot look beyond the confines of established national canons because "it's not designed to do it, it's designed to do the opposite. At bottom, it's a theological exercise—very solemn treatment of very few texts taken very seriously" (57).

[2] Thorndike, 141.

[3] Thorndike's Laws of Exercise and Effect are often confused with Ivan Pavlov's stimulus-response neurology. While both Thorndike and Pavlov were trying to explain how the brain established associations between independent phenomena, Pavlov's work was explicitly neurological and concerned with the physiology of these associations. In contrast, Thorndike's work focused on behavior exclusively. For more on Pavlov's stimulus-response neurology, see his *Conditioned Reflexes* (London: Dover, 2003)*,* chapters 1-3, 22, and 23. For more on Thorndike's Laws of Exercise and Effect, see *Animal Intelligence* (New York: Macmillan, 1911), 244-267.

[4] John Broadus Watson, "Psychology as the Behaviorist Views It," *Psychological Review* 20 (1913): 158.

[5] For a deeper explanation of stimulus-response neurology, see Pavlov, chapters 1 and 2; see also W. Horsley Gantt's "Reminiscences of Pavlov," *Journal of the Experimental Analysis of Behavior* 20 (1973): 131-136. For more information about Loeb's botanical tropisms, see Philip Pauly, *Controlling Life: Jacques Loeb and the Engineering Ideal in Biology* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1986), 3-8 and 164-200.

[6] We often refer to close reading as if it were a unified set of techniques and assumptions about literary interpretation. This isn't true, however. Each of the New Critics emphasized his own set of concerns and priorities, from literature's relationship to science (I. A. Richards, Cleanth Brooks, W. K. Wimsatt) to questions of canonicity (T. S. Eliot, Richards, John Crowe Ransom) to questions of morality and theology (Allen Tate, Ransom, Eliot, Yvor Winters). And yet, even at the New Criticism's height, the New Criticism was wrongly perceived as unified and consistent in its approaches. According to Mark Jankovich's *The Cultural Politics of the New Criticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2006), Brooks and Warren's *Understanding Poetry* was often considered to be the representative of a unified formalism (10). But in his essay, "In Search of the New Criticism" (*American Scholar* 53 [1984], 41-53), Brooks expressed frustration at being the unwilling figurehead of the New Criticism and denied there was much conceptual unity among the New Critics. "As quasi-representative," Brooks wrote, "one has not only to answer for his own sins, but also to assume responsibility for the collective sins of a vague, undefined group" (41).

[7] Cleanth Brooks, "The Heresy of Paraphrase," in *The Well Wrought Urn: Studies in the Structure of Poetry* (New York: Harvest Books, 1956). Wimsatt and Beardsley, "The Intentional Fallacy," in Wimsatt, *The Verbal Icon: Studies in the Meaning of Poetry* (Louisville: Univ. of Kentucky Press), 21.

[8] For more on Richards's legacy, see Nicholas Dames, *Physiology of the Novel: Neural Science and the Form of Victorian Fiction* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2007), 247-55; Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society, 1780-1850* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1983), 245-54; and W. T. N. Hotopf, *Language, Thought, and Comprehension: A Case Study of the Writings of I. A. Richards* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1965), chapters 1 and 2.

[9] Richard Paul Russo, *I. A. Richards: His Life and Work* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1989), 175.

[10] Bertrand Russell, *The Analysis of Mind* (New York: Macmillan, 1921), 160.

[11] Russell's critique was also suggested in Richards and Ogden's 1923 *The Meaning of Meaning* (New York: Mariner, 1989). It is wrong, Richards and Ogden wrote, to "deny the existence of images and other 'mental' occurrences . . . with the extreme Behaviorists" (22).

[12] It was in *Behaviorism* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1924) where Watson claimed that, through psychological conditioning, he could take any infant "at random and train him to become any kind of specialist I might select" (104).

[13] Richards, review of Watson's *Behaviorism, New Criterion* 4.2 (1926): 374.

[14] Ibid*,* 372.

[15] Richards, *Practical Criticism* (1929; New York: Harvest Books, 1966), 303.

[16] Richards, *Principles of Literary Criticism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1924), 29.

[17] Richards, *Practical Criticism*, 6.

[18] Ibid, 6-7.

[19] Ibid, xvii.

[20] Ibid, 352.

[21] Ibid, 350.

[22] In a 1659 edition, published by James Flesher of London, the first four lines of Donne's sonnet read as follows:

> At the round earths imagin'd corners, blow
> Your trumpets, Angells, and arise, arise
> From death, you numberlesse infinities
> Of soules, and to your scattered bodies goe.

[23] Richards, *Practical Criticism*, 79.

[24] Ibid, 43.

[25] Ibid, 43.

[26] Ibid, 14.

[27] In citing the "views and emotions already prepared in the reader's mind," Richards seems to be invoking a properly anti-behaviorist definition of consciousness. But for Richards, such mental content was less an example of the primacy of consciousness than it was an illusion of language use. As Richards wrote in *Practical Criticism*, prefiguring Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*, language-use is frequently mistaken for introspective self-knowledge: "We do somehow manage to discuss our feelings, sometimes with remarkable facility and success. We say things that seem to be subtle and recondite, and yet true. We do this in spite of our feebleness in introspection and our ignorance of the general nature of feelings.

How do we come to be so knowledgeable and clever? . . . Put shortly, the answer seems to be that this knowledge is lying dormant in the dictionary. Language has become its repository, a record, a reflection, as it were, human nature" (P, 208). See Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe (Toronto: Wiley-Blackwell, 2004), ¶1.307-1.308.

[28] In 1906, Dr. Charles Sherrington published *The Integrative Action of the Nervous System* (New York: Scribner, 1906), which drew heavily on the theories of "reflex-arcs" developed by William James and John Dewey. What Sherrington argued was that the nervous system coordinated the body's organ systems through such reflex arcs. In contrast to Pavlov, James, and later on the behaviorists, Sherrington insisted on mind-body dualism—despite the monistic implications of his own research. For more information about Sherrington, see *Integrative Action* as well as chapter one of W. C. Gibson's *Twentieth Century Neurology: The British Contribution* (London: Imperial College Press, 2001). For more material on the concept of the reflex-arc, see Dewey's 1896 article "The Reflex Arc in Psychology," *Psychological Review* 3 (1896): 57-70.

[29] Richards, *Principles*, 85.

[30] Richards, *Science and Poetry* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1926), 48.

[31] Richards, *Principles*, 9.

[32] Ibid, 11-12.

[33] Ibid, 78.

[34] In *Practical Criticism*, Richards expressed this idea again, though perhaps more eloquently: "There is no such gulf between poetry and life as over-literary persons sometimes suppose. There is no gap between our everyday emotional life and the material of poetry. The verbal expression of this life, at its finest, is forced to use the technique of poetry; that is the only essential difference" (300).

[35] The importance of propositional logic to early-twentieth-century analytic philosophy (particularly at Cambridge) cannot be emphasized enough. In the context of Gottlob Frege's 1879 *Begriffsschrift* and Bertrand Russell's 1905 "On Denoting," we can see Richards's theory of the pseudo-statement attempting to create a category of knowledge outside the domain of symbolic logic.

[36] Richards, *Principles*, 266.

[37] Richards, *Science and Poetry*, 29-31.

[38] Richards, *Practical Criticism*, 30.

[39] Ibid, 44-45.

[40] Richards, *Principles*, 84.

[41] What Richards is identifying here is an example of a "genetic fallacy." In their essay "The Affective Fallacy," which is a type of genetic fallacy, W. K. Wimsatt and Monroe Beardsley accuse Richards of being a critic who consistently confuses cause with effect (21-40).

[42] Richards, *Principles*, 97.

[43] Tate, "The Present Function of Criticism," *in The Limits of Poetry: Selected Essays, 1928-1948* (New York: Swallow Press, 1948), 9.

[44] William Empson, *Seven Types of Ambiguity* (New York: New Directions 1966), 248.

[45] The distaste for Richards's criticism that we see in Tate was shared by other New Critics as well as members of both the Chicago Neo-Aristotelians and the Prague Linguistic Circle. See Ransom*, The New Criticism (*New York: New Directions, 1941), 15; and R. S. Crane, *Critics and Criticism: Ancient and Modern* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1952), 38. See also René Wellek, *History of Modern Criticism 1750-1950: The First Half of the Twentieth Century: English and American* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press).

[46] Brooks's theory of poetry and Wimsatt's and Beardsley's fallacies have become almost synechdocal for the rest of New Critical theory. *The Well Wrought Urn* and the essays in *The Verbal Icon* are often understood as representative New Critical works and as the foremost theorizations of close reading. As Frank Lentricchia writes, "The imposing history of W. K. Wimsatt and Cleanth Brooks—its historical acumen aside—has been taken since the time of its publication and even more so now as a final statement of the New-Critical poetic" *(After the New Criticism* [Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1980], 3).

[47] Wimsatt and Beardsley, *Verbal Icon*, 21.

[48] Ibid, 33.

[49] Brooks, *Well Wrought Urn*, 266.

[50] Ibid, 217.

[51] In the long critical history detailing Brooks's relationship to Richards, the former's supposed stance against objectivity has been of particular interest. In *The New Apologists for Poetry* (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1956), Murray Krieger suggested that both Brooks and Empson were straddling the divide between science and humanism. Brooks and Empson, Krieger wrote, fused "the opposed metaphysics of [T. S.] Eliot and Richards into a methodology which, strangely, is at once heterogeneous and effective" (125). More recently, John Guillory has suggested that Brooks was attempting to place poetry outside the reaches of science and Positivism (much as Richards tried to remove literature from the purview of analytic philosophy in the 1920s). "Brooks's theory," Guillory writes in *Cultural Capital: The Problem of Literary*

Canon Formation (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1995), "concedes a very great deal to the epistemological tyranny of science (really, to the positivist 'philosophy of science' regnant between the wars), but only because that concession is strategic, because scientific truth has already been stigmatized as the origin of our dissociated modernity" (159).

[52] Brooks, *Well Wrought Urn*, 9.

[53] Ibid, 3.

[54] Ibid, 5.

[55] Ibid, 74-5.

[56] Ibid, 17.

[57] In "The New Critics and the Text-Object" (*ELH* 63 [1996]: 227-254) Douglas Mao discusses the New Critical disposition to treat poems as "things"—to treat a poem as a "well wrought urn" containing experiential knowledge. Despite its derision and misinterpretation by later generations of critics, this disposition remains central to what we do. "An assumption that the text has a thingly quality," Mao explains, "continues to be essential to literary study, in spite of the fact that the apparent absurdity of regarding the text as a thing like any other has been used to evade the uncanny problem of perceived historical continuity, to oppose particular installations within the canon, and above all to render us certain that if we have transcended nothing else for good and all, we have at least left the New Criticism behind" (229).

[58] Brooks, *Well Wrought Urn*, 213.

[59] Ibid, 204.

[60] Gerald Graff*, Poetic Statement and Critical Dogma* (Evanston: Northwestern Univ. Press, 1970), 111.

[61] Wimsatt and Beardsley*, The Verbal Icon*, 38.

[62] In the essay "One Relation of Rhyme to Reason," also in *The Verbal Icon*, Wimsatt attempts to formulate a universal semantic function for poetic sound effects. "Verse in general, and more particularly rhyme," they write, "make their special contribution to poetic structure in virtue of a studiously and accurately semantic character. They impose upon the logical pattern of expressed argument a kind of fixative counterpattern of alogical implication" (153). In contrast to Richards's pseudo-statement, wherein sound effects delimit the number of semantic meanings a poem can induce, Wimsatt and Beardsley position sound effects as necessarily opposed to the "expressed argument" of a poem.

[63] Wimsatt and Beardsley*, The Verbal Icon*, 33.

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[64] Ibid, 34.

[65] Ibid, 3.

[66] Richards, *Principles*, 29.

[67] Indeed, the intentional fallacy can be traced to behaviorism, but Monroe Beardsley's other analyses of intention cannot. In contrast to *The Verbal Icon*, Beardsley's *Aesthetics: Problems in the Philosophy of Criticism* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1958) discussed intention from a decidedly non-behavioristic stance. In *Aesthetics,* Beardsley's objections to what he identified as "intentionalism" were largely methodological and evidentiary. "What we learn about the nature of the object itself," he wrote, "is indirect evidence of what the artist intended it to be, and what we learn about intention is indirect evidence of what the object became" (20). See also Beardsley, "Intentions and Interpretations" in *The Aesthetic Point of View: Selected Essays,* ed. Michael J. Wreen and Donald M. Callen (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1982).

[68] Paul de Man, Blindness and Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1983) 25.

[69] Walter Benn Michaels and Steven Knapp, *Critical Inquiry* 8 [1982], 723-742), 724.

[70] See also Graff's *Poetic Statement and Critical Dogma*, where Graff misconstrues the imputation of a dramatic speaker as the cause of the intentional fallacy rather than an effect. "Since poetry asserts no statements and has no formulable 'content,' it is improper to speak of a meaning or content 'intended' or 'meant' by the poet. In effect, according to this view, the poet *must have no intention,* in the sense of a predetermined idea or emotion; the poem should generate itself out of its own internal laws. Authorial intention implies separable content and statement imposed upon the poem from the 'outside'" (138-9n).

[71] Wimsatt and Beardsley*, The Verbal Icon*, 4.

[72] Brooks and Wimsatt, *Literary Criticism: A Short History* (New York: Knopf, 1957), 620.

[73] Wimsatt and Beardsley*, The Verbal Icon*, 12.

[74] Andrew Elfenbein, "Cognitive Science and the History of Reading," *PMLA* 121 (2006): 498.

[75] Elaine Scarry, *Dreaming By the Book* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1999), 5.

[76] Oren Izenberg, "Poems Out of Our Heads," *PMLA* 123 (2008), 217.

[77] To see how cognitive science has already changed the ways we understand reading practices, see Stanislaus Dehaene, *Reading in the Brain: The Science and Evolution of a Human Invention* (New York: Viking, 2009).

2   Mindless Modernism

When we talk about the modernist mind we talk about a mind that is knowable and introspective.

This is an idea we have inherited from texts such as Henry James's "The Art of Fiction" (1884),

Marcel Proust's *Contre Sainte-Beuve* (1896), and Virginia Woolf's "Modern Fiction" (1919).

"Let us record the atoms as they fall upon the mind in the order in which they fall," Woolf wrote,

"let us trace the pattern, however disconnected and incoherent in appearance, which each sight or

incident scores upon consciousness."[1] The responsibility of the modern novelist, she continues,

is to look inward at the pattern left by these atoms—to explore "the dark places of psychology"

(108). Modernism's illumination of these "dark places" has been a mainstay of interest—

particularly the relationship between modernist techniques of introspection and psychoanalysis.[2]

According to John Brenkman, psychoanalysis's "amalgam of free association, dream, and

transference" comprised modernism's "new mode of mastery at the level of individual self-

narration."[3] For Brenkman, psychoanalysis's centrality to modernism is therefore indisputable.

But as Judith Ryan warns, "The subsequent of preeminence of Freud has tended to obscure the

importance of pre-Freudian psychology for the beginnings of literary modernism."[4] As Ryan

and others demonstrate, the introspective and associative techniques we associate with

modernism and psychoanalysis can actually be traced back to the empiricist psychology of the

late 19th century (particularly Brentano, Wundt, and William James).[5]   However they might

disagree, the histories represented here by Brenkman and Ryan converge on a key point:

introspection.   Both characterize modernist literature as anchored by psychological introspection

and interiority, however it got that way.

This characterization is not incorrect—but it's also not complete. Psychology, and modernism's relationship to psychology, did not end with introspection. In 1913, John Watson published "Psychology as the Behaviorist Views It," where he argued for the redefinition of psychology away from introspection and toward the analysis of observable phenomena (i.e., behavior). "Psychology as the behaviorist views it," Watson wrote, "is a purely objective experimental branch of natural science. Its theoretical goal is the prediction and control of behavior. Introspection forms no essential part of its methods, nor is the scientific value of its data dependent upon the readiness with which they lend themselves to interpretation in terms of consciousness."[6] Like empiricist psychology and psychoanalysis, this behaviorist critique of introspection was engaged explicitly by literary modernism and translated into a reconsideration of the relationship between mental states and novelistic form. In the 1920s, writers such as Virginia Woolf tasked the novel with exploring the "dark places of psychology." But in the 1930s, writers including Samuel Beckett and Djuna Barnes found those dark places inaccessible and drew on behaviorism to reconsider literature's relationship to introspection. These writers experimented with the implications of *mindlessness*—of minds that could not be known or represented, or whose nature was uncertain from the start.

Drawing on Beckett's early novel *Murphy* (1936) and Barnes's most famous work *Nightwood* (1938), my purpose here is two-fold. First, it is to illustrate how these writers translated behaviorism's criticism of introspection into a reconsideration of *what* fiction could represent and *how* such content could be represented. Second, it is to see what modernism would look like if it were effectively mindless.[7] Modernism was not psychologically monolithic; instead, an array of psychological theories—including behaviorism, structuralism, and psychoanalysis—circulated simultaneously and competed against each other.[8] To choose one

theory was to choose not only a model of mind but also a set of aesthetic, philosophical, and political entailments. Beckett and Barnes demonstrate not only how empirical concerns shaped the form of the modernist novel, but also how dynamic and contingent modernist psychology actually was. Furthermore, they should remind us not only of the implications these psychologies had for modernist fiction but the entailments they continue to have in criticism today.

To these ends, the rest of the chapter is divided into three parts. In the first, I survey the introspective methods of late nineteenth century structuralist psychology and behaviorism's response to these methods. The advent of behaviorism comprised both a disciplinary intervention—what is psychology and what can it do?—and a forceful redefinition of what could be known empirically about consciousness. In the second part, I examine how Beckett engaged the advent of behaviorism explicitly in his early writings—culminating in *Murphy*. In "Dante…Bruno. Vico…Joyce" (1929) and *Proust* (1930), we see Beckett incorporate behaviorism's critique of introspection into his understanding of literary language and the representation of mental states. And in *Murphy*, we see Beckett develop a stronger distrust of mental states redirect this critique toward novelistic form. The character Murphy is consumed by introspection and spends much of his time trying to withdraw from his body into his mind. But as the novel's narrator explains, such introspection is by definition unreliable; Murphy's "mind" is itself a fiction produced by introspection. As a result, the novel develops a register that indexes the failures of introspection and the contingent failure of novelistic form to access or represent mental states. Following my discussion of Beckett I turn to Barnes's *Nightwood*, where we are presented with the character of Robin Vote. Robin's mind is unknowable to her family, the novel's narrator, and even to herself; failing to impute mental states to Robin's observable behaviors, *Nightwood* struggles to make sense of Robin's existence, of her sexuality,

and of novelistic form's own reliance on introspection. *Nightwood*'s infamous difficulty is precisely that of a novel written without recourse to mental states, where the causes of actions cannot be known and behaviors cannot be rationalized. In the fourth and final part of the chapter I pursue the implications of these mindless novels for how we understand modernism today. *Murphy* and *Nightwood* are not merely counter-examples to the characterization of modernism as a psychological turn inward. Instead, they demand that we reconsider the role that "mind" has taken in modernism's literary and critical afterlives.

Introspection and its discontents

In the decades that followed Watson's initial delivery of "Psychology as the Behaviorist Views It," behaviorism became an interdisciplinary phenomenon. Even though he disagreed with behaviorism's categorical rejection of consciousness, Bertrand Russell wrote *The Analysis of Mind* in consultation with Watson.[9] As Laurence Smith explains, it was through *The Analysis of Mind* that behaviorism found its way to logical positivists such as Rudolph Carnap and Otto Neurath—who, unlike Russell, had no trouble with Watson's anti-mentalism.[10] And in *The Principles of Literary Criticism* (1926), I.A. Richards began translating Watson's ideas into protocols for reading literature and developed what we now understand as the core techniques of close reading.[11]

But for the purposes of understanding *Murphy* and *Nightwood*, it is not behaviorism's broad interdisciplinary influence we should focus on. Instead, it's behaviorism's somewhat narrow disciplinary origins. Despite what would become behaviorism's philosophical appeal, Watson's initial concerns were more methodological than metaphysical. Written as a polemic against particular trends in psychology, "Psychology as the Behaviorist Views It" does not lend

itself to interdisciplinary generalization. "I do not wish to unduly criticize psychology," Watson writes,

> It has failed signally, I believe, during the fifty-odd years of its existence as an experimental discipline to make its place in the world as an undisputed natural science. Psychology, as it is generally thought of, has something esoteric in its methods. If you fail to reproduce my findings, it is not due to some fault in your apparatus or in the control of your stimulus, but it is due to the fact that your introspection is untrained. The attack is made upon the observer and not upon the experimental setting.[12]

The object of Watson's attack here is structuralist introspection—the experimental techniques of introspection developed by Wilhelm Wundt in the 1870s and subsequently expanded by Oswald Külpe and William Bradford Titchener, among others.[13] Hypothesizing an analogical relationship between molecular structure and the organization of consciousness (hence the name structuralism), Wundt suggested that sensations were effectively the "atoms" of the mind. Much as atoms form molecules and molecules form larger molecules, sensations form the irreducible building blocks of perceptions, associations, ideas, memories, and so on. As he wrote in *Principles of Physiological Psychology* (1874), "sensations" comprise "the objective elements of mental life."[14] The way to map the mind, Wundt argued, was to record how these sensations occurred and then coalesced. The best way to do this was through systematic and empirically-minded introspection.

But in order for introspection to be empirically valuable, Wundt suggested, psychologists needed to redefine the relationship between perception and the external world. The trouble with "classical introspection," he wrote in *Outlines of Psychology*, was that it mistakenly separated

experience of the external world from experience of mental states.   Rather than comprising a "science of inner experience," psychologists needed to understand inner experience and experience of the external world as different facets of the same phenomenon.[15] "Outer and inner experience do not indicate different objects," Wundt wrote, "but *different points of view* from which we start in the consideration and scientific treatment of a unitary experience."[16] In this way, introspection was not merely self-reflection but a kind of empirical observation—a "subjective process" able to represent the "objective content" of "the general conditions both of all knowledge and of all practical human activity."[17] And if introspection was in fact a kind of empirical observation, this meant it could be performed systematically—in a laboratory setting— to atomize experience into its constituent sensations. Theoretically, a large number of test subjects would be presented with a physiological stimulus; each subject would then answer the same set of questions about the qualities of his or her induced sensations, perceptions, and associations. Thus psychology," Wundt explained, " has, like natural science, *two* exact methods: the experimental method, serving for the analysis of simpler psychical processes, and the observation of general mental products, serving for the investigation of higher psychical processes and developments."[18]

This methodological framework was elaborated by Wundt's students—including William Bradford Titchener, who became the face of structuralism in the United States (and Watson's most vocal critic), and the so-called Würzburg School, led by Oswald Külpe.[19] Within the history of psychology, Külpe's research is generally understood as a departure from Wundt's; in his own *Outlines of Psychology* (1893), Külpe argued that not all thoughts comprised "images"—meaning that sensations were not necessarily the atomistic building blocks of mental content.[20] But in terms of experimental introspection, Külpe largely continued in the spirit of

Wundt's work. The Würzburg School, whose work plays a significant part in *Murphy* and to which I will return, developed an extensive theoretical apparatus for the gathering of introspective data and extended Wundt's analysis of present-tense sensations to include sense-memories. Külpe devised four methods of collecting and interpreting introspective data from test subjects. "If we term the immediate apprehension and description of mental processes 'inner perception' or 'introspection,' Külpe wrote in *Outlines*, "the subjective form of the direct method may be named the *introspective method*. Its objective form will be the experimental method, since its objectivity depends upon the employment of experiment. The indirect method may be similarly divided into a *memorial method*, which is subjective, and a *linguistic method*, which is objective."[21]

The trouble with such methods, Watson argued in "Psychology as the Behaviorist Views It," is that they stemmed from an unachievable desire: to observe the unobservable and know mental states objectively.[22] If mental content is reducible to constituent sensations, then no objective knowledge of that content is possible because sensations themselves are *qualia*. "A sensation," he argued, "is defined in terms of its attributes. One psychologist will state with readiness that the attributes of a visual sensation are *quality, extension, duration, and intensity*. Another will add *clearness*…[If] we say that every just noticeable difference in the spectrum is a simple sensation…we are forced to admit that the number is so large and the conditions for obtaining them so complex that the concept of sensation is unusable, either for the purpose of analysis or that of synthesis."[23]

An even greater problem, Watson continued, was structuralism's use of behavioral data. To the introspective psychologist, "behavior data…have no value *per se*. They possess significance only in so far as they may throw light upon conscious states. Such data must have at

least an analogical or indirect reference to belong to the realm of psychology."[24] Because

behavior does not necessarily parallel mental states, the introspective tradition of psychology

attached no inherent value to "behavioral data." But in so doing, Watson suggests, structuralist

psychologists had devalued the only empirical data that they could collect. Any theory that

neglects the "independent value of behavior material," he wrote, "will inevitably force us to the

absurd position of attempting to *construct* the conscious content of the animal whose behavior

we have been studying."[25] As an example, let's take a hypothetical animal typically imbued with

rudimentary mental states, such as a dog or a cat. Now let's say that animal's sense of smell is

ablated. We would deduce two things: 1) that the animal's "stream of consciousness" (Watson's

wording, borrowed from James) has no data about tastes; 2) that the animal's stream of

consciousness must comprise information from its extant senses. But both of these deductions

are mistakes—errors of anthropomorphic, if not anthropocentric, attribution. Empirically, we are

still in no position to know what the animal's consciousness comprises; the ablation of the

olfactory faculty still tells us nothing about the role smell might or might not have had in the

animal's mental states. The same can be said of the animal's extant senses. The ablation of these

senses would mean, yes, that the animal's consciousness no longer comprises data from these

senses. But we still know nothing about what role (if any) these senses might have played in the

animal's consciousness.[26] In order be "purely objective, experimental," psychology would have

to completely divest itself of consciousness as an object of study and focus on overt behaviors

exclusively.

Over the following decade, this attack on introspection and consciousness grew and

developed. In *Behaviorism* (1924), what had been a primarily methodological intervention in

"Psychology as the Behaviorist Views It" became a polemic against the usefulness and even

ontology of consciousness. Prefiguring Gilbert Ryle's attack on Cartesian dualism in *The Concept of Mind* (1949), Watson argued that introspection and consciousness were simply physiological phenomena that had been misrecognized.[27] Introspection, he wrote, was "nothing but another name for talking about obscure bodily reactions which are taking place. It is not a genuine psychological method at all."[28] And "what the psychologists have hitherto called thought is in short nothing but talking to ourselves…the muscular habits learned in overt speech are responsible for implicit or internal speech (thought)."[29]

"He felt his mind to be bodytight"

The reliability of introspection is a theme and formal principle within Beckett's writings, particularly in his early fiction and critical texts. *Murphy* is no exception. And on the face of things, *Murphy* relies on the success of introspective knowledge. The character Murphy spends whatever time he can engaged in introspection, withdrawn from the physical world. Introspection "set him free in his mind. For it was not until his body was appeased that he could come alive in his mind, as described in section six. And life in his mind gave him pleasure, such pleasure that pleasure was not the word."[30] As we might infer from the allusion to "section six" of Descartes *Meditations on First Philosophy* (1641), *Murphy* is a novel haunted by Cartesian dualism. And, unsurprisingly, Cartesian dualism has haunted the novel's critics, too.[31]

I'm less interested in *Murphy*'s relationship to Cartesian dualism and occasionalist philosophy, however , than I am in its formal and thematic relationships to introspection. For while the character Murphy seems neatly divided into body and mind, the novel tells us that this differentiation is false—an illusion created by introspection. And so in disclosing that Murphy "felt his mind to be bodytight," my emphasis is therefore not the perceived split between body and mind but rather Murphy's belief that he could know or "feel" his own mind. Introspection,

the novel suggests, creates the illusion of a mind able to examine itself from both objective and subjective perspectives—of a mind that can seemingly break into pieces and observe itself from afar. Murphy, we read, "disconnected his mind from the gross importunities of sensation and reflection…Nothing can stop me now, was his last thought before he lapsed into consciousness, and nothing will stop me."[32] He lapses *into* consciousness—but from what? Faced with the distortions and paradoxes created by such psychological interiority, the novel attempts a mode of writing that replaces the representation of covert mental states with the representation of overt behaviors and actions.

In these ways, *Murphy* is indicative of a larger push against introspection in Beckett's early works—an empirically-minded rejection of high modernism's mentalistic arguments and techniques. This rejection is most explicit in "Dante…Bruno…Vico…Joyce" (1929) and *Proust* (1930), where behaviorism grounds a physiological analysis of the relationship between texts and the consciousness of both readers and writers. Most readers, he explains in "Dante…Bruno," "are not satisfied unless form is so strictly divorced from content that you can comprehend the one almost without bothering to read the other." This is because, rather than reading carefully, they skim:

> The rapid skimming and absorption of the scant cream of sense is made possible by what I may call a continuous process of copious intellectual salivation. The form that is an arbitrary and independent phenomenon can fulfill no higher function than that of a stimulus for a tertiary or quartary conditioned reflex of dribbling comprehension. When Miss Rebecca West clears her decks for a sorrowful deprecation of the Narcisstic element in Mr. Joyce by the purchase of 3 hats, one feels that she might very well wear her bib at

all her intellectual banquets, or alternatively, assert a more noteworthy control over her

salivary glands than is possible for Monsieur Pavlov's unfortunate dogs.[33]

Beckett's invocation of stimulus-response neurology here is both literal and figurative. Rendered

as "Monsieur Pavlov's unfortunate dogs," neither Rebecca West nor modern readers are spared

Beckett's nastiness. West and these readers don't think—they drool, "dribbling comprehension"

in a "continuous process of copious intellectual salivation." The reason for this is the literal

valence Beckett assigns to stimulus-response neurology. When readers skim, they break the

relationship between form and content and thereby reduce form to a physiological phenomenon

that is not itself intellectually meaningful. When we don't read carefully, form can fulfill no

higher function "than that of a stimulus"—the physiological cue that produces an unthinking

reflexical response. In *Murphy*, this disdain for skimming is maintained; the novel's narrator

harbors a deep mistrust of his audience, whom he accuses of laziness and even grifting. The

imagined reader gleans information much the way that Murphy scams a local restaurant—they

skim, they steal. After explaining how Murphy "defrauded a vested interest every day for his

lunch, to the honourable extent of paying for one cup of tea and consuming 1.83 cups

approximately," the narrator says: "Try it sometime, gentle skimmer."[34]

In *Proust*, consciousness—particularly authorial consciousness—is reduced to

physiology almost entirely. In "Dante…Bruno," it was implied that all reading relies on

stimulus-response neurology but that a good reader (who doesn't skim) has more than

unthinking, reflexological reactions to literary stimuli. In *Proust*, however, no such good

reader—or writer—exists. Beckett takes Proust's flights into memory as an opportunity to attack

the validity of introspective psychology and therefore the literature built upon it. Marcel's

memories, we are told, are not practices of mind so much as they are involuntary, physiological

reflexes. "The laws of memory," we read, "are subject to the more general laws of habit…a compromise between the individual and his environment, or between the individual and his own organic eccentricities."[35] Not only that, but memory is "conditioned by perception," meaning that a memory's perceived accuracy is a product not of mental acuity but rather reflex conditioning.

In discussing Marcel's memories of childhood insomnia, Beckett makes an analogous point about introspection in both its literary and experimental forms. "The most successful evocative experiment," he concludes,

> can only project the echo of a past sensation, because, being an act of intellection, it is conditioned by the prejudices of the intelligence which abstracts from any given sensation, as being illogical and insignificant, a discordant and frivolous intruder, whatever word or gesture, sound or perfume, cannot be fitted into the puzzle of a concept.[36]

Like Watson's "Psychology as the Behaviorist Views It," this is an explicit attack on the methods of structuralist psychology. The choice of words here is no accident. Beckett likens Marcel's memories to an "evocative experiment" designed to recall "past sensation" into presently accessible mental states. Such introspection, however, can only "project the echo" of past sensations as the introspective apparatus itself has been "conditioned by the prejudices of the intelligence" to focus on some sensations and overlook others. The possibility of objective introspection is therefore rejected on behaviorist grounds. And so despite the apparent similarities between Marcel's memories and structuralist introspection, *Proust* attempts to revise

literary history by accounting for modernism's techniques without recourse to mentalistic, introspective psychology.

In *Murphy*, such "evocative experiments" are an ongoing joke—part of the novel's explicit parody of structuralist psychology (particulary Külpe's Würzburg school). Murphy's strategy of getting 1.83 cups of tea for the price of one, we read, apparently had its origins in post-Wundtian structuralist psychology. Speaking to a waitress, Murphy says

> "Bring me," in the voice of an usher resolved to order the chef's special selection for a school outing. He paused after this preparatory signal to let the fore-period develop, that first of the three moments of reaction in which, according to the Külpe school, the major torments of response are undergone. Then he applied the stimulus proper.
>
> "A cup of tea and a packet of assorted biscuits." Twopence the tea, twopence the biscuits, a perfectly balanced meal.[37]

Murphy's bizarre behavior here is an attempt to adapt Külpe's experimental protocols for the goal of free tea and biscuits. The technique of separating a "preparatory signal" ("Bring me") from "the stimulus proper" ("A cup of tea") is lifted almost directly from Külpe's *Outlines of Psychology*. Expectation of a stimulus, Külpe explained, increases the "sensitivity and sensible discrimination" of the test subject, thereby better facilitating the accuracy and consistency of introspection. Therefore, "it is customary to give a signal at some fixed interval before the appearance of the stimulus in each experiment, so that the subject's mind is prepared for its reception" (Külpe 39). Murphy's stimulus does not have the intended effect; in this particular instance, Murphy's waitress does not give him free tea but rather mumbles, "Vera to you, dear." The waitress's response, the narrator explains, "was not a caress." But despite this result, we

read, "Murphy had some faith in the Külpe [Würzburg] school. Marbe and Bühler might be deceived, even Watt was only human, but how could Ache be wrong?"[38]

The underlying argument of *Murphy* is that these psychologists were indeed wrong—and that this wrongness has distorted the ways we understand the form and content of modernist fiction. Whatever possibilities Murphy himself finds in structuralist psychology, the narrator insists that the knowledge produced by Murphy's introspection is fictional. Soon after Murphy's discounted lunch the narrator explains:

> It is most unfortunate, but the point of this story has been reached where a justification of the expression "Murphy's mind" has to be attempted. Happily we need not concern ourselves with this apparatus as it really was—that would be an extravagance and an impertinence—but solely with what it felt and pictured itself to be. Murphy's mind is after all the gravamen of these informations.[39]

This direct address to readers dismisses the conditions, and reliability, of Murphy's self-knowledge. According to the narrator, Murphy's knowledge of his own mind is irrevocably false. The introspective methods he employs do not reveal his mind as it actually existed "but solely with what it felt and pictured itself to be." His introspective efforts are not so much observational, establishing relationships between stimuli, sensations, and memories, as they are imaginative. And these introspective reflections create the illusion of their own accuracy. Instead of being able to withdraw into his mind because of mind-body separation, this dualism is itself a mirage created by the act of introspection. "Murphy's mind," the narrator explains, "pictured itself as a large hollows sphere, hermetically closed to the universe" and to bodily existence.[40]

Within the real world presented by the novel's narrator, Murphy's experience of being "split in two, a body and a mind" is a fiction that he naively perpetuates about his existence.[41]

But as much as this address is about Murphy's self-deception, it is also a statement about the representation of mental states and novelistic form—a statement about the expectation that readers and narrators have unfettered access to character minds. Perhaps to our surprise, the seemingly omniscient narrator of *Murphy* has roughly the same knowledge of "Murphy's mind" that we do. Like us, he has access to Murphy's introspective reflections but no access to the mind that produces those reflections, to "the apparatus as it really was." Knowledge of that apparatus, he assures us, would be neither necessary ("extravagance") nor even possible ("impertinence"). We are so unsure as to the composition and content's of "Murphy's mind" that the "expression" itself requires "justification": in its wording, the expression "Murphy's mind" implicitly separates mind from body even though such separation is one of any number of attributes we do not know. In terms of what the novel can represent, the question of Murphy's mental states presents a problem. If neither reader nor narrator can know the "apparatus as it really was," if all we can know are introspection's distortions of consciousness and reality, then what is it that the novel is giving us? What is the novel's responsibility to the representation of mental states?

The answer *Murphy* arrives at, I believe, is that novels have no such responsibility. *Murphy* extends Beckett's empirical skepticism of introspection and consciousness into the fictional world and suggests that even fictional minds present problems of knowability.[42] Novels, we infer from *Murphy*'s narrator, do not grant us special access to mental states—even if that is precisely what they promise to do. The perceived effects of psychological interiority discussed in *Proust* are precisely that—effects. Generating an image of seemingly infinite psychological interiority, they belie their physiological origins. And so in contrast to Proust, as well Joyce,

Woolf, and Faulkner, *Murphy* attempts a kind of novelistic representation that both forgoes and parodies the possibility of psychological interiority. Instead of appealing to techniques that invoke the viability of introspection, it attempts a behavioristic mode of narration—one that jarringly cuts behavior and affect away from covert mental states and that therefore avoids the pitfalls discussed above.

This mode becomes most pronounced when Murphy begins working as a porter at Magdalen Mental Mercyseat (MMM), a local mental hospital tending to Dublin residents who had become "immured by mind."[43] Although Murphy distinguishes himself from the residents at MMM, he is similarly "immured by mind": he perceives his mind "not as an instrument but as a place" where he can hide from the physical world.[44] Both Murphy and his patients understand their own minds as walls against the onslaught of sensation. Recessing from the world into what they falsely picture as the hidden mechanisms behind consciousness, Murphy and the patients at MMM are " 'cut off' from reality, from the rudimentary blessings of layman's reality." The hope for these patients, the novel explains, is that therapy and treatment would overcome the walls created by introspection—that it would "bridge the gulf, translate the sufferer from his own pernicious little private dungheap to the glorious world of discrete particles."[45]

Of the patients at MMM, one is of particular interest to Murphy: Mr Endon. Endon is a suicidal "schizoid" who keeps trying to kill himself through intentional "apnoea"—even though his doctors have told him it is a "physiological impossibility" to commit suicide by holding your breath.[46] But it is not Endon's suicidality that draws Murphy to him. Instead, it's Endon's affect—or, rather, lack of affect. "Mr. Endon," the narrator explains,

> was a schizophrenic of the most amiable variety, at least for the purposes of such a
>
> humble and envious outsider as Murphy. The languor in which he passed his days, while

deepening every now and then to the extent of some charming suspension of gesture, was never so profound as to inhibit all movement…In short, a psychosis so limpid and imperturbable that Murphy felt drawn to it as Narcissus to his fountain.[47]

Much like Murphy when he's on his rocking chair, Endon spends his days in the space of his own mind. His mental states (whatever they actually comprise) are "immured" from his body, from the physical environment, and from the inference of outsiders (including the narrator). His "psychosis" is at once "limpid" and relaxed but also "imperturbable." Seeing Endon's achieved separation between mental states and physical states, Murphy swoons. Endon is able to achieve for indefinite periods what Murphy could achieve only when meditating in his rocking chair. To Murphy, Endon represents an attainable ideal of withdrawing from the body and world into the mind. He becomes Endon's regular chess partner, unaware that Endon views him not as a friend or even a human being but as merely the bringer of chess. "The sad truth," we read, was "that while Mr. Endon for Murphy was no less than bliss, Murphy for Mr. Endon was no more than chess. Murphy's eye? Say rather, the chessy eye. Mr. Endon had vibrated to the chessy eye upon him and made his preparations accordingly."[48] The stimulus of Murphy's "chessy eye" causes Endon to "vibrate" and begin preparations for their next game.

The games of chess between Murphy and Endon comprise the novel's climax and also its central push against the representation of mental states. Additionally, these games of chess were a crucial element in how Beckett understood *Murphy*'s intellectual project, marketing, and circulation. Finding an image of two chess players on page 10 of the 11 July 1936 edition of the *Daily Sketch* (London), Beckett wrote several letters to his agent George Reavey about the possibility of using the photo "as a frontispiece [to *Murphy*], or better still on the jacket."[49] "I am also very anxious," he wrote to Reavey in November 1936, "to obtain permission to use enclosed

photograph, without subscript, as frontistpiece. I came across it first in a Daily Sketch months ago, & found it again here in an Illustrierte [magazine]". Below is the image Beckett had found (reproduced from the cover of C.J. Ackerley's *Demented Particulars: The Annotated Murphy*):

The original caption for the image was a tongue-in-cheek "But he's done it! Mate!" And as Beckett wrote to Reaves in a later letter, "The chimpanzees [in the photo] are more or less a good joke."[50] But in addition to being funny, the image represents the stakes of a chess game between Murphy and Endon. In looking at this photograph, what we have access to are behaviors rather than mental states (if mental states are presumed to exist in chimpanzees at all).[51] We can infer nothing about intention nor intentionality: instead of saying the chimpanzees are *playing* chess, empirically we can only say they are sitting opposite a chessboard pushing the pieces around. Any parallelism between covert and overt phenomena is severed—much as in the case of Endon and Murphy, whose conscious minds are "immured" from the overt movements of behavior and

the stimuli of the external world. In terms of what we can establish empirically, and with certainty, we are in a world of pure behavior.

"But he's done it! Mate!" did not make the cover or frontispiece of *Murphy*. But the image does clarify the significance of the novel's most mystifying—and most important— moment: the representation of an Endon and Murphy's chess game not in prose but in English descriptive chess notation. Rather than describe the actions of the game, the narrator gives us more than a page of symbolic notation followed by footnoted commentary. The pages are reproduced below. "The game," we read, " was *Zweispringspott* [the ridicule of two knights]" and "was as follows":

White (MURPHY)	*Black* (MR. ENDON) (*a*)	244	
1. P—K4 (*b*)	1. Kt—KR3	21. P—QKt3	21. R—KKt1
2. Kt—KR3	2. R—KKt1	22. R—KKt1	22. K—QB1 (*h*)
3. R—KKt1	3. Kt—QB3	23. B—QKt2	23. Q—KB1
4. Kt—QB3	4. Kt—K4	24. K—QB1	24. B—K1
5. Kt—Q5 (*c*)	5. R—KR1	25. B—QB3 (*i*)	25. Kt—KR1
6. R—KR1	6. Kt—QB3	26. P—QKt4	26. B—Q1
7. Kt—QB3	7. Kt—KKt1	27. Q—KR6 (*j*)	27. Kt—QR1 (*k*)
8. Kt—QKt1	8. Kt—QKt1 (*d*)	28. Q—KB6	28. Kt—KKt3
9. Kt—KKt1	9. P—K3	29. B—K5	29. B—K2
10. P—KKt3 (*e*)	10. Kt—K2	30. Kt—QB5 (*l*)	30. K—Q1 (*m*)
11. Kt—K2	11. Kt—KKt3	31. Kt—KR1 (*n*)	31. B—Q2
12. P—KKt4	12. B—K2	32. K—QKt2 !!	32. R—KR1
13. Kt—KKt3	13. P—Q3	33. K—QKt3	33. B—QB1
14. B—K2	14. Q—Q2	34. K—QR4	34. Q—K1 (*o*)
15. P—Q3	15. K—Q1 (*f*)	35. K—R5	35. Kt—QKt3
16. Q—Q2	16. Q—K1	36. B—KB4	36. Kt—Q2
17. K—Q1	17. Kt—Q2	37. Q—QB3	37. R—QR1
18. Kt—QB3 (*g*)	18. R—QKt1	38. Kt—QR6 (*p*)	38. B—KB1
19. R—QKt1	19. Kt—QKt3	39. K—QKt5	39. Kt—K2
20. Kt—QR4	20. B—Q2	40. K—QR5	40. Kt—QKt1
		41. Q—QB6	41. Kt—KKt1
		42. K—QKt5	42. K—K2 (*q*)
		43. K—R5	43. Q—Q1 (*r*)

And White surrenders.

This shift of register—from novelistic conventions to symbolic notation—indicates a pivotal reconsideration of what *Murphy* can signify. Where novels typically allow access to character minds (something the narrator warned us about earlier), this is a chess game where such access is

impossible. Accordingly, narration switches to a register that makes it impossible to infer mental states. English chess notation has no symbols to denote intentions or desires or strategies it can only describe *actions*. It abstracts a chess match into a chronology of objects moving on a wooden board, regardless of why those movements happen. Effectively, this page from *Murphy* has adopted a behavioristic notation, thereby throwing the rest of the novel's narration into relief. The climax of a novel supposedly about the isolated life of the mind culminates in a figure that categorically obscures any access or representation of mental states. The narrator's pretentious, even cheeky, exclamation points and footnotes reinforce this. They emphasize the degree to which the minds of both Endon and Murphy have become obscured from view—and also the haphazard, even oblivious, nature of their chess playing. In note A, the narrator explains that, " Mr. Endon always played Black. If presented with White he would fade, without the least trace of annoyance, away into a light stupor."[52] In note O, we are told that Endon put Murphy's king in check without saying "check"—"nor otherwise giving the slightest indication he was alive."[53] And in note P, the narrator jokingly infers Murphy's mental state but only as a way of disparaging bad chess playing. Any representation of, or even reference to, Murphy's actual mental states are still impossible: "No words can express the torment of mind that goaded White [Murphy] into this abject offensive."[54] No words can express that torment of mind because that mind is sealed off from the narrator, whose conventional role would be the description of character mental states. Instead, the narrator's role has been fundamentally redefined—limited to commentary about overt behaviors and little else.

With the end of the match, the novel reverts to its previous mode of narration and Murphy loses his introspective abilities. "He tried," we read, "to get a picture of Celia. In vain…He tried to get a picture in his mind of any creature he had met, animal or human. Scraps

of bodies, of landscapes, hands, eyes, lines and colours evoking nothing, rose and climbed out of sight before him."[55] But what precipitates this loss is not Endon's victory at chess but intense eye-contact with Endon. Close enough "for a butterfly kiss," Murphy sees Endon's withdrawal into the mind as a reflection of himself—both literally and figuratively: "seeing himself stigmatized in those eyes that did not see him."[56] Rather than seeing the contents of Endon's mind, Murphy sees only an image of himself. Endon's eyes, the proverbial windows to the soul, appear empty; and in this reflection, Murphy appears empty to himself. He has access to neither Endon's mind nor his own. Consciousness and bodily action begin to blur and thoughts that might once have been exclusively mental are now *behaved*: "Murphy heard words demanding so strongly to be spoken that he spoke them."[57] Standing only inches away from Endon's face, "The relation between Mr. Murphy and Mr. Endon," Murphy says, "could not have been better summed up than by the former's sorrow at seeing himself at the latter's immunity from seeing anything but himself."[58] Losing the capacity for introspection, Murphy must now rely on the reflection produced by Endon's empty, solipsistic gaze. "The last Mr. Murphy saw of Mr. Endon," we read, "was Mr. Murphy unseen by Mr. Endon. This was also the last Mr. Murphy saw of Mr. Murphy."[59] All Murphy can know of himself now is his own appearance—his overt actions and movements reflected in the uncaring, inscrutable stare of a man "immured by mind." Endon's mind is now nothing but a wall that reflects the thoughts of others and hides his own.

"A bowl picked up in the dark"

Compared to *Murphy*, which is explicit in its fascination with the history of psychology, Djuna Barnes's *Nightwood* presents something of a difficulty. As the charlatan gynecologist Matthew O'Connor says to Nora Flood, "I have a narrative, but you will be put to it to find it."[60] Where *Murphy* made explicit references to the Würzburg school and Descartes's *Meditations on First*

Philosophy, *Nightwood's* engagements with behaviorism and introspection are subtle, even insidious, despite their centrality. Furthermore, where Beckett's other literary works—including *Watt* (1953), *Molloy/Malone Dies/The Unnamable* (1946-50), *Act Without Words I* and *II* (1956), and *Happy Days* (1960)—continue the cognitive investigations we see in *Murphy*, Barnes's other works are less helpful. Compared to Barnes's other works, *Nightwood's* philosophical and psychological concerns are unique. Nowhere in *The Book of Repulsive Women* (1915), *Ladies Almanack* (1928), *Ryder* (1928) or *The Antiphon* (1958) do we see the same sustained interest in problems of mind or in the relationship between consciousness and literary form. Lastly, where Beckett wrote literary criticism that involved behaviorism and structuralist psychology explicitly, Barnes published no criticism at all. The closest we come is Barnes's profile of her close friend James Joyce, published the March 1922 issue of *Vanity Fair*. Rather than offer many thoughts about Joyce's work, the profile explicitly attempts to flesh out "Joyce, the man" of whom "one has heard little."[61]

It should not surprise us, then, that questions of mind have been largely left out of *Nightwood's* critical history. This history has largely focused on several interrelated topics: identity, sexuality, animal tropes, the novel's style, and—often implicitly—the novel's infamous difficulty. Characterizing *Nightwood* as a novel, TS Eliot claimed that it would "appeal primarily to readers of poetry" as "it is so good a novel that only sensibilities trained on poetry can wholly appreciate it."[62][63] For Joseph Frank, *Nightwood* had not a stylistic affinity with poetry but rather a structural similarity to abstract painting. As Frank wrote in the seminal "Spatial Form in Modern Literature" (1945), the novel moved "not by the progress of any action—either physical action, or, as in a stream-of-consciousness novel, the act of thinking—but by the continual reference and cross-reference of images and symbols."[64] Since Eliot and Frank, criticism has

moved toward finding an analogy between the novel's constructions of selfhood and narratological structure. In *Language as Symbolic Action* (1966), Kenneth Burke suggested that *Nightwood* comprised a "lamentation" for unrequited love—such that "in celebrating the modes of invert [queer] love…it must find ways to make the plot 'serious' (*spoudaios*)…The impression of 'completion' (the *teleios*) is sought through the absoluteness of Robin's translation into identity with sheer beast."[65] More recently, Lara Trubowitz has argued that *Nightwood* turns the identity position of "the Jew" into a way of perceiving and representing the world. "In a curiously antiessential twist on a rather conventional essential discourse," she writes, *Nightwood* "transforms Jews from a racial or religious group into a narratological category, turning qualities she describes as distinctly Jewish into traits that can be given to non-Jews, even given to the narrative of *Nightwood* itself."[66] Dana Seitler makes an analogous point about *Nightwood*'s representations of sexuality and animalism, suggesting that *Nightwood* not only "rewrite[s] sexological narratives" but also "inhabit[s] the instability of their terms and hybrid formulations as a mode of sexual personhood."[67]

My purpose here is not to discount these approaches—who could deny the novel's difficulty, or treatments of sex, species, and identity?—but rather to suggest that another set of concerns might be the cause of these effects. Although not as obvious as *Murphy*'s excoriation of structuralist introspection, at *Nightwood*'s heart is a behavioristic distrust of psychological interiority. And it is this behavioristic distrust—distrust in the accessibility of consciousness, in the parallelism between mental states and behaviors—that generates the novel's difficulty and its cast of bizarre characters. As an example of this we can turn to an early description of charlatan gynecologist Matthew O'Connor. "His hands," we read, "which he always carried like a dog who is walking on his hind legs, seemed to be holding his attention, then he said, raising his

large melancholy eyes with the bright twinkle that often came into them: "Why is it that whenever I hear music I think I'm a bride?"[68] This moment exhibits both *Nightwood*'s difficulty and its characteristic tropes. O'Connor is likened to a dog and then says something seemingly nonsensical, where he likens himself to a woman. But in the odd description of the doctor and his rambling, there is a careful attention to how mental states might be accessed and represented. Taken literally or jokingly, O'Connor's question parses selfhood in terms of stimulus and response—music induces the state of perceiving oneself a bride. O'Connor, who is later revealed to be a transvestite, is unable to explain how thoughts arrive in his head; as he explained to Baron Felix Volkbein earlier, "God works in mysterious ways to bring things up in my mind!"[69] And what is a mystery to O'Connor is also a mystery to the narrator, who can only access the doctor's overt behaviors as opposed to his covert consciousness. O'Connor's movements are likened to those of a dog on its hind legs; any narratorial imputation of his mental states is paralyzed by comparing O'Connor's behaviors to the behaviors of an awkwardly anthropomorphized animal. What goes on in O'Connor's mind cannot be known and we cannot assume any parallel between behavior and mental state. We cannot know if O'Connor was thinking about his hands—only that they "*seemed* [my emphasis] to be holding his attention." Through such appeals to behavioristic thinking, *Nightwood* effectively distorts categories of selfhood and performed identity. Without introspective recourse to mental states, such categories don't make much sense. And when we do try to perform introspection, we find not mental states or ideas but flesh and bone. "There is no pure sorrow," O'Connor says a few pages later. "Why? It is bedfellow to the lungs, lights, bones, guts and gall! There are only confusions and defeated anxieties."[70]

These moments give us a sense of how deep *Nightwood*'s engagement with behaviorism runs—and how behaviorism's distrust of introspection shapes the novel's constructions of selfhood and figurative language. But my suggestion is that this engagement runs even deeper: this behavioristic distrust produces *Nightwood*'s infamous and paralyzing difficulty. Barnes's novel is precisely about the failure to impute mental states to, or explain the actions of, the silent Robin Vote. And this inability to know Robin's mental states is shared by other characters, readers and narrator alike; the failure of O'Connor, Felix, and Nora to interpret Robin's behaviors is mirrored by readers also attempting to interpret Robin's behaviors. Largely written without recourse to mental states, the difficulty of *Nightwood* is that it is a *mindless* novel—a novel lacking the mentalistic and introspective conventions typical to the genre, a novel where minds exist but they are obscured and unknown.[71] And so where Beckett's *Murphy* adapted its form and register to reflect the inaccessibility of consciousness, *Nightwood* makes no such adaptations. Instead, it leaves us to contend with our failure to rationalize its narrative and our readerly dependence on introspection, access to mental states, and the representation of intention.

This is, however, not the first argument explicitly about *Nightwood*'s difficulty—nor the relationship between the novel's psychological concerns and the difficulties it presents to readers. In "*Nightwood* and the 'Terror of Uncertain Signs'" (2008), Teresa de Lauretis also examines the novel's readerly difficulties but does so from the vantage of semiotics and psychoanalysis. Bringing Roland Barthes's "Rhetoric of the Image" to bear on narrative, de Lauretis suggests that "narrative" serves an "anchoring function" in "literary fiction"— stabilizing what Barthes saw as the "terror of uncertain signs" produced by "the floating chain of signifieds."[72] The language of *Nightwood*, however, resists such anchoring; *Nightwood*, she explains, is "written in a style both stark and intensely allusive, at once lucid and obfuscating, as

if only language—to paraphrase Barthes—could dress life in the garments of the unknowable."[73] The difficulty of *Nightwood*, de Lauretis argues, is precisely how the novel shades sexuality in unknowability, obscuring what was once knowable and understood. Incorporating Barthes's *Pleasure of the Text* (1973) into her analysis, de Lauretis suggests that "With Barthes, then, we might say that *Nightwood* denies the reader the pleasure [*plaisir* rather than *jouissance*] of the text by refusing to explain the enigma of Robin, the enigma of a sexuality reaching a traumatic paroxysm in the final scene in the chapel."[74]

But the difficulties de Lauretis ascribes to mitigated signification and psychic trauma can more readily ascribed to the novel's inability to represent mental states. Indeed, while de Lauretis's analysis occurs on psychoanalytic and semiological terms, what she is describing is precisely *Nightwood*'s behavioristic distrust of consciousness. Noting that "Robin hardly ever speaks in the novel," de Lauretis suggests that *Nightwood* "refuses to explain the scene or to rationalize Robin's behavior…Her childlike, unreflective, and unaccountable acts bespeak an unachieved symbolization that, were we interested in clinical diagnosis, would be suggestive of the loss of reality characteristic of the ego in psychosis."[75] In interpreting Robin's behaviors this way, de Lauretis's argument rests on the paradox of the repressive hypothesis. Even though she acknowledges that we have no access to Robin's mental states—we are unable to "rationalize" her "unaccountable" acts—de Lauretis's reading still assumes that these states are accessible (if only through psychoanalytic technique). Qualifying her efforts as speculative, she nonetheless psychoanalyzes a psyche whose defining characteristic is its inaccessibility. "By denying psychological explanations for Robin's actions and leaving the reader with only the doctor's obscure pronouncements as a guide," she concludes, "the text inscribes in the narrative the figure

of sexuality as an undomesticated, unsymbolizable force, not bound to objects and beyond the purview of the ego—a figure of sexuality as, precisely, drive."[76]

But the characterization of "sexuality as, precisely, drive" mistakes not having *access* to Robin's mind with Robin having no mind at all. The problem with Robin is not that she doesn't have mental states—it's that these mental states cannot be known or represented with any reliability. We know Robin's sexual behaviors, but we do not know the actual nature of her sexual desire: whom she desires, why, and why she leaves one lover for the next. And we do not know this information because Robin herself does not seem to know; she has mental states but lacks the ability to know the contents of her own mind. In a rare moment of access to Robin's consciousness (however indirect such access might be), the narrator reveals her failure at introspection:

> There was something in the heavy body with the weight in her mind, where reason was inexact with lack of necessity. She wandered to thoughts of women, women that she had come to connect with women…Leaning her childish face and full chin on the shelf of the *prie-dieu*, her eyes fixed, she laughed, out of some hidden capacity, some lost subterranean humour; as it ceased, she leaned still further forward in a swoon, waking and yet heavy, like one in sleep.[77]

This description imputes mental states to Robin and does so without qualification. The issue, then, is not whether such mental states exist but Robin's relationship to those mental states. Much like O'Connor, who thought himself a bride whenever he heard music, Robin is presented as having a largely involuntary relationship with the phenomena of consciousness. The pattern of her thoughts is "inexact with lack of necessity"; she is presented as having little control or

even awareness of her own sexual desire, as her mind "wander[s] to thoughts of women." The self-knowledge produced by introspection is unattainable and therefore the categories of self-identification are unattainable; affect is severed and the possibility of intentional action is dissolved. For this reason she is likened to "one in sleep"—elsewhere, "La Somnabule"—and an animal.[78] A few pages after Robin "leans her face and full chin on the shelf of the *prie-dieu*," she returns to the circus and meets Nora Flood. Nora encounters Robin standing in front of the lions' den. "Then as one powerful lioness came to the turn of the bars, exactly opposite the girl, she turned her furious great head with its yellow eyes afire and went down, her paws thrust through the bars and, as she regarded the girl, as if a river were falling behind impassable heat, her eyes flowed in tears that never reached the surface."[79] Hypothesizing "tears that never reached the surface," the narrator juxtaposes the lioness's lack of affect with our inability to know Robin's mental states and the intentions behind her actions.

Indeed, Robin's unknown intentions are the narratological and interpretive center of *Nightwood*. A set of questions haunts readers, character, and narrator alike: Why did Robin leave Felix for Nora, and then leave Nora for Jenny? Why does Robin do any of the things she does? Because of the inaccessibility of Robin's mental states, the intentions behind her actions cannot be known with any certainty.[80] What *Nightwood* therefore comprises is a series of failed attempts to interpret and explain Robin's behaviors; as readers, we accompany the narrator and a number of characters as they follow Robin and try to learn why she acts the way she does. Having looked at the narrator's failure in the excerpts discussed above, in the following pages I will discuss how Nora Flood, Baron Felix von Volkbein, and Dr. Matthew O'Connor also fail to make sense of Robin's actions. In trying to predict and explain Robin's behaviors, Nora, the Baron, and O'Connor perform the novel's behavioristic skepticism about introspection what can

be known of mental states. I'll conclude by looking at *Nightwood*'s infamous conclusion, where

Robin encounters Nora's dog and where interpretive resolution is denied to readers a final time.

Baron Felix von Volkbein, a wandering Jew of fictitious nobility, is the first of Robin's

lovers; he is therefore the first to be deserted by Robin and the first among her pursuers. After

giving birth to their son, Guido, Robin vanished; raising their son, Felix has tried to explain the

motivation behind her disappearance but never succeeded. "I never did have a really clear idea

of her at any time," Felix confesses to O'Connor. "I had an image of her, but that is not the same

thing. An image is a stop the mind makes between uncertainties. I had gathered, of course, a

good deal from you, at later, after she went away, from others, but this only strengthened my

confusion. The more we learn of a person, the less we know."[81] Felix's difficulty in

distinguishing between the "image" and the "idea" of Robin is indicative not only of the

inaccessibility of Robin's mental states but also Felix's feeble introspection. He has an image of

Robin—a sense of her overt actions—but not an idea that would explain why or how those

behaviors occurred. Unable to reflect on his perceptions and memories, Felix's failure to make

sense of Robin's actions is due in part to his own failure at introspection. As we read early in the

novel, Felix "knew figures as a dog knows the covey and as indefatigably he pointed and ran."[82]

In likening Felix's knowledge of finance to a dog's knowledge of a flock of birds, the narrator is

making two points simultaneously. More obviously, the implication is that, as a Jew, Felix has

an essential and *a priori* intelligence about money. But the comparison limits how much we can

assume Felix's self-knowledge or assume his actions to be intentional.

Unrequited love, however, is not the only reason that Felix has continued to reflect on

Robin's behaviors. He also does so to make sense of their son Guido, who shares his mother's

affects and dispositions. Recalling that Robin "always lets her pets die," Felix explains to

O'Connor that "I did not like her to talk about this subject, as Guido is very sensitive to animals, and I could fancy what was going on in his mind; he is not like other children, not cruel, or savage. For this very reason he is called 'strange.'"[83] In contrast to his experiences with Robin, Felix feels he can infer Guido's mental states to a degree. He can "fancy" the contents of Guido's mind and is confident that Guido, whom the narrator describes as "mentally deficient…an addict to death"[84], is neither "cruel, [n]or savage." O'Connor, however, warns against such inferences and insists that Guido's mind cannot be known nor Guido's actions predicted. "The excess of his sensibilities may preclude his mind," the doctor explains to Felix. "His sanity is an unknown room: a known room is always smaller than an unknown. If I were you…I would carry that boy's mind like a bowl picked up in the dark; you do not know what's in it."[85] The nature of the boy's mind cannot be known one way or the other: he might be a creature of only instincts and reflexes ("the excess of his sensibilities may preclude his mind") or might not. Either way, Guido's mental states are an unknown quantity ("like a bowl picked up in the dark") and must be handled accordingly.

Felix, of course, is not the only one to consult Dr. O'Connor; Nora Flood too asks for O'Connor's help in figuring out why Robin left her and what Robin was thinking while they were still together. Initially, she blames "the night"—the cultural, psychological, and biological impulses that come out after sunset. "The night," she explains, "does something to a person's identity, even when asleep."[86] Later on in her discussions with O'Connor, she explicitly links the night to Robin's imagined mental states: "She wanted darkness in her mind—to throw a shadow over what she was powerless to alter, her dissolute life, her life at night."[87] Robin, Nora imagines, was not running from her but from "her dissolute life"—including her own consciousness. But O'Connor doubts Nora's mentalistic interpretation; unsure of his own

introspective abilities (as we saw earlier), he is suspicious of any imputation of mental states or intentions. Indeed, O'Connor's aphoristic responses to Nora are some of *Nightwood*'s most conspicuous instances of nonsensical rambling. But at the heart of these ramblings is a focus on questions of mind and the same behavioristic distrust of introspection we saw earlier. "No one will be much or little except in someone else's mind," he warns Nora, "so be careful of the minds you get into, and remember Lady Macbeth, who had her mind in her hand. We can't all be as safe as that."[88] Here, one sleepwalker analogizes another. Nora is desperate to know Robin's feelings for her, but unlike the dreaming Lady Macbeth—"Out, damned spot! out, I say!" (V.i.35)—Robin's thoughts don't sit on the skin of her hands. But even after emphasizing the importance of "mind," O'Connor also suggests to Nora that mental states are illusory when compared to the objective and observable physicality of the body. "That priceless galaxy of misinformation called the mind," he says, "is the holy Habeas Corpus, the manner in which the body is brought before the judge."[89] Or, to return to the recurring motif of animal trope: "Even the contemplative life is only an effort, Nora my dear, to hide the body so the feet won't stick out. Ah…to be an animal, born at the opening of the eye, going only forward, and, at the end of the day, shutting out memory with the dropping of the lid."[90]

These issues come to a head in the novel's final scene, where Robin encounters Nora's dog at a New England church altar. All have failed in their efforts to determine the causes of Robin's behaviors—to know why she left them and moved on to someone else. The most recent victim of Robin's inexplicable actions is Jenny, "who did not understand anything Robin felt or did, which was more unendurable than her absence."[91] Alone in the church with Nora's dog, Robin begins to act like a dog, once again with no explanation why she might do so. "He let loose one howl of misery and bit at her," then Robin

began to bark also, crawling after him—barking in a fit of laughter, obscene and

touching. The dog began to cry then, running with her, head-on with her head, as if to

circumvent her; soft and slow his feet went padding. He ran this way and that, low down

in his throat crying, and she grinning and crying with him; crying in shorter and shorter

spaces, moving head to head, until she gave up, lying out, her hands beside her, her face

turned and weeping; and the dog too gave up then, and lay down, his eyes bloodshot, his

head flat along her knees.[92]

These are the final sentences of *Nightwood*. And rather than offer resolution to the novel's

ambiguities—revealing the causes behind Robin's actions, showing her communion with

animals—the impossibility of imputing mental states is reinforced and Robin's intentions remain

a mystery. It is a scene not of long awaited success, but failure once again; even the animals that

Robin was so often likened to have no special access to her mind (nor she to theirs). Like Felix,

Nora, and O'Connor, Nora's dog cannot discern Robin's desires. "Crying…moving head to

head," Robin fails to communicate her intentions to the dog—and the dog fails to communicate

its own to Robin. In this way, the novel ends by rearticulating its own hermeneutic difficulty and

leaves readers to consider the relationship between the imputation of mental states and what it

means to make sense of a novel.

The ill-fitting vestments of the mind

Murphy and *Nightwood* are not merely counter-examples to prevailing assumptions about

modernist interiority and selfhood. Rather, these novels are reappraisals of modernism written

mid-stream. For just as Murphy looks into Endon's eyes and sees only himself "unseen," or as

Robin fails in her attempts to communicate with Nora's dog, *Murphy* and *Nightwood* comprise a

hard behaviorist look at the introspective foundations of literary modernism—if not the history of the novel as a whole. The novel's ability to access and represent mental states, we're told, is not empirically justifiable. Fiction has the same problems knowing minds that people do, even if it tells us otherwise. Therefore the psychological interiority we encounter in novels, we're told, both reflects and re-inscribes a set of illusory attitudes about the accessibility of mental states.

This is a claim that we should consider carefully. In treating the introspective mind as a self-evident truth of modernism, we preclude rather than encourage new approaches to the period—particularly if those approaches are invested in the history of science, analytic philosophy, or the empirical study of mind. The study of modernism is as bounded by the mentalistic foundations of our own critical pursuits as it is by the introspective psychology we attribute to modernist writers. This is not to suggest that we stop believing in the viability of introspection or that we subject modernist literary study to a scathing behaviorist audit (Beckett already did that). My point is that we need to stop treating modernism's psychological turn inward as an *a priori* state of affairs.[93] By the 1920s, behaviorism's objections to structuralist introspection were circulating globally and appearing in a number of different literary circles; "Dante…Bruno" and *Proust* speak to this, as do texts by Bertrand Russell, I.A. Richards, and Bertolt Brecht.[94] The issue here is not whose concept of mind was right, or whose concept was more influential to modernism in the end. Instead, the issue is that these various concepts—some mentalistic, some behavioristic—circulated and *competed* simultaneously. So rather than treat the introspective mind as a self-evident truth of modernism, we should treat it as a contingency. To adhere to a particular concept of mind was to adhere to specific formal and political relationships while precluding others. In failing to consider this contingency we distort the historical record of modernism's relationship to the sciences of mind and thereby deny ourselves

new avenues of inquiry. Even more importantly, we lose sight of the stakes—literary, philosophical, political—that were attached to the success of introspective knowledge.

To examine these stakes, I'd like to conclude by returning to Woolf's "Modern Fiction." She writes, " 'The proper stuff of fiction' does not exist; everything is the proper stuff of fiction, every feeling, every thought; every quality of brain and spirit is drawn upon."[95] This is the introspective mind of modernism at its most capacious, impressive, and familiar. But Woolf's essay is not merely a naïve straw-man to Beckett's skepticism. If we read "Modern Fiction" as selecting between competing philosophies of mind, then Woolf's own theoretical savvy—even cynicism—becomes easier to see. "Admitting the vagueness which afflicts all criticism of novels," Woolf writes,

> let us hazard the opinion that for us at this moment the form of fiction most in vogue more often misses than secures the thing we seek. Whether we call it life or spirit, truth, or reality, this, the essential thing, has moved off, or on, and refuses to be contained any longer in such ill-fitting vestments as we provide. Nevertheless, we go on perserveringly, conscientiously, constructing our two and thirty chapters after a design which more and more ceases to resemble the vision in our minds.[96]

Much as there is an inherent "vagueness" in literary criticism, novels cannot "contain" a certain element of existence—whether we call it "spirit, truth, or reality." Woolf attributes this ineffability to the nature of existence; it is the "essential thing" that moves and "refuses" our "ill-fitting vestments." But why exactly are these vestments so ill-fitting? Are we unable to represent "the essential thing" because of its unrepresentable nature or are we limited by our abilities to perceive and, through introspection, represent the world? There are two possible answers;

logically, both are valid. Either one (or both) could be the reason that some things resist description.

In effect Woolf *chooses* to attribute this difficulty to external reality—where Beckett chose to attribute analogous difficulties to the nature of mind. We must not overlook the calculations and stakes in either choice. Had Woolf attributed these difficulties to the mind, then psychological interiority would have evaporated; reflective self-knowledge—entailing experience, memory, sexuality, desire, intention—would be more elusive to representation. But if knowledge of the outside world is less reliable than reflective self-knowledge, then psychological interiority necessarily becomes the engine of literature. And it also explains not only why modern novel *can* excavate "the dark places of psychology"—why it turns away from reality and inward to itself—but also why it *must*.

Notes.

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[1] Virginia Woolf, "Modern Fiction." *Collected Essays: Volume 2* (London: Hogarth Press, 1966), 107.

[2] Among critics, this interest in psychoanalysis can be dated back to as early as the 1950s, including Lionel Trilling's *The Liberal Imagination* (New York: Doubleday, 1950). More recently, psychoanalysis has maintained a defining presence in several influential accounts of modernism including Perry Meisel's *Myth of the Modern: A Study in British Literature and Criticism After 1850* (Yale UP, 1989); Eve Sedgwick's introduction and "The Beast in the Closet" in *Epistemology of the Closet* (University of California Press, 1991); and Jean-Michel Rabaté's *1913: The Cradle of Modernism* (London: Palgrave, 2007), particularly "Everday Life and the New Episteme" (pp72-95) and "The Splintered Subject of Modernism" (pp141-63). For other discussions of psychoanalysis's place in modernist literature, see Louis Sass's *Madness and Modernism: Insanity in the Light of Modern Art, Literature, and Thought* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1998), pp174-212; and in Astradur Eysteinsson and Vivian Liska's edited

anthology *Modernism* (Amsterdam: John Benjamin, 2007), see Dirk Van Hulle's "Modernism, Consciousness, Poetics of Process" (pp321-38).

[3] John Brenkman, 'Freud the Modernist." *The Mind of Modernism*, Mark Micale, ed. (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2004), 173.

[4] Judith Ryan, *The Vanishing Subject: Early Psychology and Literary Modernism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 2.

[5] For more on the relationship between modern literature and non-psychoanalytic psychology, see Mark S Micale's edited collection *The Mind of Modernism: Medicine, Psychology, and the Cultural Arts in Europe and America*, 1880-1940 (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2004), particularly Tom Gunning's "In Your Face: Physiognomy, Photography, and the Gnostic Mission of Early Film," Lawrence Rainey's "Shock Effects: Marinetti, Pathology, and Italian Avant-Garde Poetics," and Martin Jay's "Modernism and the Specter of Psychologism"; Steven Meyer's *Gertrude Stein and the Correlations of Writing and Science* (Stanford UP, 2002); and Nicholas Dames's *The Physiology of the Novel: Reading, Neural Science, and the Form of Victorian Fiction* (Oxford UP, 2007), pp207-256.

[6] John Watson, "Psychology as the Behaviorist Views It," *Psychological Review* 20 (158-177), 158.

[7] The characterization of modernism as a psychological turn inward had one of its earliest proponents in Georg Lukacs, who argued that modernist and expressionist literature distorted the objective movements of history. For more on Lukacs's argument see "Reportage or Portrayal" in *Essays on Realism* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1983), edited by Rodney Livingstone and translated by David Fernbach; see also the canonical edited collection *Aesthetics and Politics* (Verso, 2007), featuring essays by Lukacs and responses by Bloch, Brecht, Adorno, and Benjamin.

[8] By the 1920s something of a rivalry developed between psychoanalysis and behaviorism. Freud understood behaviorism as an indication of a more general American intellectual degeneracy. As he wrote in a 26 January 1917 letter to Hungarian psychoanalyst Sandor Ferenczi, "Your duel with Watson must have been fun. The entire impoverishment of the American mentality has become manifest in pragmatism and behaviorism" (*The Correspondence of Sigmund Freud and Sandor Ferenczi: 1920-1933*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1993, p298.) Conversely, Watson began arguing that psychoanalytic categories such as neurosis and wish-fulfillment could be explained behavioristically without recourse to mental states. See Watson's "Psychology of Wish Fulfillment" (*Scientific Monthly* 3, 1916) and "Conditioned Emotional Reactions" (*Journal of Experimental Psychology* 3.1, 1920, pp1-14), co-authored with Rosalie Rayner.

[9] As Russell wrote in *The Analysis of Mind*, certain schools of thinking "regard the knowledge of our own mental processes as incomparably more certain than our knowledge of the 'external' world; this view is to be found in the British philosophy which descends from Hume…There seems no reason whatever to accept this view…The fallibility of introspection as regards what

we desire is made evident by psychoanalysis; its fallibility as to what we know is easily demonstrated" (Mineola: Dover Books, 2005 [1921]), 71.

[10] Lawrence Smith, *Behaviorism and Logical Positivism: A Reassessment of the Alliance* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1986), 60-61. See also Carnap's "Psychology in Physical Language" (1932) in *Logical Positivism*, edited by AJ Ayer (New York: Free Press, 1959). For more on the relationship between behaviorism and logical positivism see Smith's *Behaviorism and Logical Positivism,*1-66 and 299-330.

[11] See "Behaviorism and the Beginnings of Close Reading, *ELH* 78.1 (Spring 2011), 1-25.

[12] Watson, "Psychology as the Behaviorist Views It," 163.

[13] Building on the psychophysics of Gustvan Fechner and Herman von Helmholtz (and therefore in contrast to Sensationalist psychology), Wundt is usually credited as having developed the modern discipline of experimental psychology. For more on psychophysics, see Daniel Robin's *Intellectual History of Psychology* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995), 231-269. For more on Sensationalist psychology, see Gary Hatfield's "Remaking the Science of Mind: Psychology as a Natural Science" in *Inventing Human Science: Eighteenth-Century Domains*, edited by Christopher Fox et al (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 184-231.

[14] Wilhelm Wundt, *Principles of Physiological Psychology*, translated by Edward Titchener (New York: Sonnenschein, 1904), 12-13.

[15] Wilhelm Wundt, *Outlines of Psychology*, translated by Charles Hubbard Judd (London: Williams and Norgate, 1897), 1.

[16] Ibid, 2.

[17] Ibid, 15-16.

[18] Ibid, 23-24.

[19] For a fuller history of introspection, see Edwin Boring's "A History of Introspection," *Psychological Bulletin* 50.3 (1953): 169-89.

[20]For more on the "imageless thought" controversy see Danziger (1980) and *Wilhelm Wundt*: *Making of a Scientific Psychology* (Springer 2001), edited by Robert W Rieber and David K Robinson.

[21] Ibid, 8.

[22] It is important to note that the introspective techniques of structuralist psychology continued to develop after Külpe. By the time Watson delivered his address in 1913, Wundt's disciple Titchener—who had opposed Külpe in the imageless thought controversy—was the face of

structuralist psychology in the US and Britain. In 1912, Titchener published two articles which both outlined the future of structuralist research and responded to budding criticisms of experimental introspection: the theoretical "The Schema of Introspection" (*American Journal of Psychology* 23, 1912, 485-508) and the polemical, even frantic, "Prolegomena to a Study Introspection" (*American Journal of Psychology* 23, 1912, 427-448). Both of these essays identified the origins of modern experimental psychology in the mentalistic and introspective foundations of Wundt's structuralism. Without introspection, Titchener wrote in "Prolegomena," "we might still have a science of 'psychology,' a system of observations and inferences which could not be subsumed to any existing science. This assertion, as far as I can see, cannot be logically gainsaid, though one doubt whether in fact the 'psychology' would have arisen" (431).

It's also important to note that Watson's was not the only influential criticism of introspection. Twenty years earlier, William James lamented the necessity of introspection, writing that "Introspective observation is what we have to rely on first and foremost and always" but suggesting that introspection distorted psychological inquiry. ""Introspection is no sure guide to truths about our mental states and in particular the poverty of the psychological vocabulary leads us to drop out certain states from our consideration and to treat others as if they knew themselves and their objects as the psychologist knows both which is a disastrous fallacy in the science" (197-8). The trouble with introspection is two-fold: first, it induces a sampling bias—because only certain mental states are accessible to introspection and others are not, those inaccessible states "drop out" of consideration. Second, it creates a false parallel between experimenter and test subject as if both had equal access to (and knowledge of) the test subject's mental states. If introspective methods were able to achieve what they promised, James suggests, ongoing debates in psychology and the philosophy of mind would be resolved quickly." "The whole mind-stuff controversy would stop," he writes in *Principles*, "if we could decide conclusively by introspection that what seem to us elementary feelings are really elementary and not compound" (191).

[23] John Broadus Watson, "Psychology as the Behaviorist Views It," 164.

[24] Ibid, 158-9.

[25] Ibid, 159.

[26] The hypothetical animal described here is a streamlined, clarified version of a hypothetical animal Watson invents in "Psychology as the Behaviorist Views It" (160).

[27] Watson's reductionism in *Behaviorism* (1924) roughly prefigures Gilbert Ryle's indictment of Cartesian dualism as a category mistake. See chapter 1 in Ryle's *Concept of Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000 [1949]).

[28] John Broadus Watson, *Behaviorism* (New Brunswick: Transaction, 1998 [1924]), 39.

[29] Watson, *Behaviorism*, 238-9.

[30] Samuel Beckett, *Murphy* (New York: Grove Press, 1957), 2.

[31] Some critics, such as Hugh Kenner, see Cartesian dualism mapping onto Murphy cleanly. As he wrote in the seminal *Samuel Beckett: A Critical Study* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), "For Murphy…the central situation is that his body loves Celia…while his mind abhors the complications she introduces into his quest for anonymity, for a state of being 'not free, but a mote in the dark of absolute freedom" (51). More recently, however, critics have been more reluctant to see *Murphy* as an extension of Cartesianism. In "Presocratic Scepticism: Beckett's *Murphy* Reconsidered" (*ELH* 49, 1982, 214-34), Michael Mooney suggests that Cartesian interest in *Murphy* is a "fact of the critical history only" and that the novel "can be better understood by reference to…Democritus of Abdera and to Sextua Empiricus' scepticism" (215). Unlike Mooney, Gary Kemp and Richard Begam find Cartesian thinking in Beckett's writings—but only insofar as such thinking is parodied and undermined. In "Autonomy and Privacy in Wittgenstein and Beckett" (*Philosophy and Literature* 27.1, 2003, 164-187), Kemp suggests that both Wittgenstein and Beckett thought Cartesian dualism "might be refuted, overcome, left in the past alongside alchemy and vitalism" (165). And in *Samuel Beckett and the End of Modernity* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1996), Begam suggests that Beckett identified Proust and Joyce as still "working within a Cartesian paradigm, one that is based on dualistic and mimetic assumptions" (37). In contrast, *Murphy* "discovers at the heart of the cogito not the rationalism of the Enlightenment but the derangement of the lunatic asylum" (38).

[32] Beckett, *Murphy*, 105.

[33] Samuel Beckett, "Dante…Bruno…Vico…Joyce." *The Poems, Short Fiction, and Criticism of Samuel Beckett.* (New York, NY: Grove Press, 2006), 503.

[34] Beckett, *Murphy*, 83.

[35] Samuel Beckett, *Proust*, in *The Poems, Short Fiction, and Criticism of Samuel Beckett* (New York: Grove Press, 2006), 515.

[36] Ibid, 543.

[37] Beckett, *Murphy*, 80.

[38] Ibid, 81.

[39] Ibid, 107.

[40] Ibid, 107.

[41] Ibid, 109.

[42] Recently, there has been a surge of interest in literary representations of mental states and the relationship between fictional minds and real ones. Of particular concern has been theory of

mind—the process by which one mind infers or simulates the contents of another. (Such theories of mind, of course, would have been rejected outright by behaviorism.) Drawing on recent philosophy of mind and cognitive science, Lisa Zunshine's *Why We Read Fiction: Theory of Mind and the Novel* (Ohio State UP, 2006) argues that fiction stimulates and challenges the brain's inborn mind-reading abilities. See also *Theory of Mind and Literature* (Purdue UP, 2010), edited by Paula Leverage and Jonathan Kramnick's "Empiricism, Cognitive Science, and the Novel" (*The Eighteenth Century* 48.3, 2007), 263-285.

[43] Beckett, *Murphy*, 180.

[44] Ibid, 178.

[45] Ibid, 177.

[46] Ibid, 185.

[47] Ibid, 186.

[48] Ibid, 242.

[49] Samuel Beckett, *The Letters of Samuel Beckett, Volume 1, 1929-1940*, edited by Martha Dow Fehsenfeld et al (New York: Grove Press, 2006), 406.

[50] Beckett, *Letters*, 406.

[51] Earlier in the novel, Murphy likens the work of his colleague Neary to the "Tenerife and the apes," which is a reference to Wolfgang Kohler's well-known and anti-behavioristic *The Mentality of Apes* (1917).

[52] Beckett, *Murphy*, 244.

[53] Ibid, 245.

[54] Ibid, 245.

[55] Ibid, 251-252.

[56] Ibid, 249.

[57] Ibid, 249.

[58] Ibid, 250.

[59] Ibid, 250.

[60] Djuna Barnes, *Nightwood* (New York: New Directions, 1937), 91.

[61] Quoted in: Djuna Barnes, *Interviews*, edited by Alyce Berry (College Park, MD: Sun and Moon, 1985), 65.

[62] Barnes, *Nightwood*, xl.

[63] In many ways, Eliot's preface to the 1937 edition of *Nightwood* has proved as frustrating as the novel itself, which he edited. For more on Eliot's preface, as well as Eliot's friendship and professional relationship with Barnes, see Georgette Fleischer's "Djuna Barnes and TS Eliot: The Politics and Poetics of *Nightwood* (*Studies in the Novel* 30.3, Fall 98), 405-37.

[64] Joseph Frank, "Spatial Form in Modern Literature," *Essentials of the Theory of Fiction*, edited by Michael Hoffman and Patrick Murphy (Durham: Duke UP, 1996), 99-100.

[65] Kenneth Burke, *Language as Symbolic Action: Essays on Life, Literature, and Method* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966), 253.

[66] Lara Trubowitz, "In Search of "the Jew" in Djuna Barnes's *Nightwood*: Jewishness, Antisemitism, Structure, and Style" (*Modern Fiction Studies* 51.2, 2005, 311-344), 312.

[67] Dana Seitler, "Down on All Fours: Atavistic Perversions and the Science of Desire from Frank Norris to Djuna Barnes," (*American Literature* 73.3, 2001, 525-562), 531.

[68] *Nightwood*, 32-33.

[69] Ibid, 15.

[70] Ibid, 22.

[71] See note 52.

[72] Teresa de Lauretis, "*Nightwood* and the Terror of Uncertain Signs" (*Critical Inquiry* 34 supplement, 2008, s117-s129), s117.

[73] Ibid, s117-8.

[74] Ibid, s121.

[75] Ibid, s121.

[76] Ibid, s122.

[77] *Nightwood*, 46-7.

[78] Ibid, 29.

[79] Ibid, 56.

[80] My understanding of the relationship between mental states, intentions, and introspection has been greatly influenced by GEM Anscombe's *Intention* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1957). For Anscombe, "Intentional actions are a sub-class of the events in a man's history which are known to him *not* just because he observes them…Intentional actions, then, are the ones to which the question 'Why?' is given application" (24). To determine whether an action is intentional or not, then several things are needed. The agent of the action must be able to answer why the action was performed. This necessitates the ability to reflect on one's own past actions and mental states—which is to say, it requires introspection. And this is precisely what characters in *Nightwood* lack, in addition to being unable to infer the mental states of others.

In discussing *Nightwood,* however, there is a limit to Anscombe's usefulness. In the case of animals, Anscombe maintains that the intentions of animals are generally knowable. "The primitive sign of wanting," she writes, "is *trying to get*; in saying this, we describe the movement of an animal in terms that reach beyond what the animal is now doing…There are two features present in wanting; movement towards a thing and knowledge (or at least opinion) that the thing is there" (68). My issue here is not with the accuracy of Anscombe's analysis but its applicability to *Nightwood*. In *Nightwood* what animals figure is precisely the unknowability of mental states and metaphorize the failure of various characters to perform introspection.

[81] Barnes, *Nightwood*, 111.

[82] Ibid, 8.

[83] Ibid, 115.

[84] Ibid, 107.

[85] Ibid, 120.

[86] Ibid, 81.

[87] Ibid, 156.

[88] Ibid, 129.

[89] Ibid, 150.

[90] Ibid, 134-5.

[91] Ibid, 168.

[92] Ibid, 170.

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[93] In studies of modernism, inquires into the history of psychological affect have begun this work. In *Ugly Feelings* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2005), Sianne Ngai rightly suggests that thinking about affect allows the literary critic new possibilities of thinking about the "aesthetic" and the "political" simultaneously (3). I agree with this formulation but would add scientific and philosophical knowledge into the matrix Ngai describes. The value of discussing affect is that it can prevent us from isolating aesthetic knowledge from its simultaneously political, philosophical, and scientific valences.

[94] Bertrand Russell's often behavioristic *The Analysis of Mind* (1921), which he authored in consultation with Watson, became particularly influential to the Logical Positivists, particularly Otto Neurauth and Rudolph Carnap. Brecht's interest in behaviorism, as we see in early plays such as *Mann ist Mann* (1925) and the essay *Die Dreigroschenprozess* [Threepenny Trial] (1931), directly contributed to the development of epic theatre. And for Richards, behaviorism became the foundation of what we identify today as close reading. See Richards's *Principles of Literary Criticism* (1924) and *Practical Criticism* (1929) as well as "Behaviorism and the Beginnings of Close Reading," *ELH* 78.1 (Spring 2011), pp1-25.

[95] Woolf, "Modern Fiction," 110.

[96] Ibid, 105.

3   Brecht, Wright, and the Neurology of Political Literature

In my previous chapters I demonstrated behaviorism's counterintuitive but central

roles in the development of modern critical technique and high modernist fiction. In this

chapter, I will present a literary history that is no less counterintuitive: behaviorism's

pivotal, but quite unexpected, place in the development of Marxist literature and literary

theory of the 1920s and 30s. We can start by juxtaposing two excerpts from that literary

tradition. The first is from Bertolt Brecht's *Die Dreigroschenoper*, or *Threepenny Opera*

(1928).

> PEACHUM. Zwischen 'erschüttern' und 'auf die Nerven fallen' ist
>
> natürlich ein Unerscheid, mein Lieber. Ja, ich brauche Künstler. Nur
>
> Künslter erschüttern heute noch das Herz.[1]
>
> [PEACHUM. Between 'giving people a shock' and 'getting on their   nerves'
>
> there's obviously a difference, my friend. I need artists. Today,   only artists
>
> give people the right sort of shock.[2]]

The second is from Richard Wright's novel *Native Son* (1940).

> If he reached out with his hands, and if his hands were electric wires, and if his
>
> heart were a battery giving life and fire to those people, reached out through stone

walls and felt other hands connected with other hearts--if he did that, would there be a reply, a shock?[3]

These are not the most memorable moments from either *Threepenny Opera* or *Native Son*, both of which indict capitalism's abuses of the urban poor. We are not faced with the "moritat" (ballad) of Mackie Messer or the murder trial of Bigger Thomas. Instead, these two moments forgo the explicit language of class struggle and instead gesture towards Pavlovian neurology and, less obviously, behavioristic psychology.[4] In explaining to a beggar how to elicit alms from passersby, Peachum invokes both literal and figurative valences of "erschüttern" ("shock") and "Nerven" ("nerves"). (The German idiom of "auf die Nerven fallen," which Peachum places in scare quotes, is analogous to the English idiom of getting on someone's nerves.) Rather than annoy passersby, Peachum says, singing beggars must deliver an emotional, physiological or even electrical "shock" if they want any money.[5] The consciousness of the beggar's audience is reduced to physiology—to reflexes and automatic behaviors. In the excerpt from *Native Son*, Bigger's plight is also rendered neurologically, with social interactions reduced to synapse firings. His arms are imagined as galvanic "electric wires" that could transfer a current between his imprisoned body and the people outside. Much as he shocks them, "giving life and fire to those people," he wonders if he has stimulated "a reply, a shock" in return.

These reductive neurological metaphors, I want to suggest, are indicative of larger concerns present in *Native Son* and *The Threepenny Opera*. First, they speak to these texts' basic engagement with the physical bases of mind—something often overlooked in critical accounts of Brecht, Wright, and Marxist literature more generally. More

importantly, these excerpts establish a neurological determinism complementing (or even dictating) economic determinism. Money is what drives the plot in *Threepenny Opera*. But what presupposes the success of Peachum's beggar's theatre is the neurological complexion of its audiences. If those audiences couldn't be stimulated into giving money automatically, without thought, then profits would fall. Similarly, Bigger's imagined interactions with the world outside his cell are parsed as neurological events; to exist sociologically is to exist neurologically. *Threepenny Opera* and *Native Son* fold stimulus-response physiology into economic determinism. The conditioned reflex and the stimulated response become terms in these texts' Marxist critiques of modernity.

But I want to go a step further. Behaviorism and Pavlovian neurology are not merely represented by *Native Son* and *The Threepenny Opera*. Instead these concepts actively shaped how Wright and Brecht imagined literature's cognitive effects on audiences. As such, each of these writers drew on behaviorism to devise formal aesthetic strategies for disseminating Marxist critique. But despite Brecht and Wright's mutual commitments to Marxist theory and the determining capacity both ascribed to behaviorism, the formal strategies they developed differed significantly. What I hope to show in this chapter is how behaviorism comprised a crucial element in the historical development of Marxist literary aesthetics and an element that unifies the otherwise seemingly disparate approaches of Brecht and Wright.

To demonstrate this, the rest of this chapter is divided into three parts. In the first section, I discuss the development of Brecht's Marxist "epic theatre" in terms of the playwright's complicated engagement with behaviorism. For while texts such as *The Threepenny Opera*, *Man Equals Man* (1926), and *The Threepenny Trial* (1931) portrayed

behaviorism's efficacy, Brecht himself aligned behaviorism with capitalism and an older,

Aristotelian model of theatre. Instead of stimulating the reflexes and emotions of

spectators, the goal of epic theatre was to encourage—not impel—rational thinking about

socioeconomic problems through the artifice of performance.[6] In the second section of

this chapter, I focus on Wright's *Native Son* and demonstrate how behaviorism became

Wright's vocabulary for analyzing race and class in America. The experience of being

black, he contended, was precisely the experience of being physiologically conditioned

by capitalism and racism. And in contrast to Brecht, it was this physiological experience

that Wright wanted his fiction to disseminate. Not only would *Native Son* represent how

Bigger Thomas had been conditioned into automatic behaviors and reflexes, it would

make readers *physically feel* the stimuli that had contributed to the creation of Bigger

Thomas. In the third and final section of this chapter, I discuss the implications of these

analyses for both the history of science and Marxist literary study. In drawing

connections between Brecht and Wright, behaviorism manages to connect two vastly

different movements in the history of Marxism. Behaviorism's ability to do so should

lead us to question the relationship between Marxian concepts and mentalistic

psychology.

Alienation Effects

In this section I will outline epic theatre's shared history with behaviorism and

demonstrate the importance of behaviorism to Brechtian theatre more generally. This is

not to diminish the importance of Marxism to Brecht's epic theatre. The epic theatre, as I

will demonstrate below, was wholly committed to Brecht's understanding of how

literature could, and *should*, disseminate knowledge about the problems of the modern world. But in addition to this, epic theatre also synthesized a number of tenets from behavioristic psychology, however uneasy and inconsistent this synthesis might have been. Brecht's commitment to Marxism consistently superseded his interest in behaviorism—but despite this, behaviorism remained a curiously persistent presence in Brecht's writing. As we will see, Brecht eventually defined behaviorism in opposition to the epic theatre's Marxist project but nonetheless insisted that behaviorism's unwillingness to represent consciousness was essential for epic theatre to achieve its political goals.

This gesture against the representation of consciousness, I'd like to suggest, was in no way exclusive to behaviorism. Indeed, in the 1920s and 30s, the nature and representation of consciousness was one of the central problems in the articulation of Marxist aesthetics. Brecht's epic theatre was a key moment in this articulation, as were Georg Lukács's *History and Class Consciousness* (1922), where Lukács subsumed individualistic psychology into historical "class consciousness," and the "expressionism debate" between Brecht, Lukács, Ernst Bloch, Walter Benjamin and Theodor Adorno. In order to grasp behaviorism's relationship to epic theatre, we need to understand epic theatre and the expressionism debate as not only as Marxist theorizations of literary form but also as Marxist arguments against the literary representation of subjective experience and the usefulness of individualistic psychology. [7]

Beginning in 1934, Brecht, Lukács, Bloch, Benjamin, and Adorno published a series of essays that discussed the values ascribed to realist fiction and expressionist art. As encapsulated by the canonical volume *Aesthetics and Politics*, the conversation began

with Lukács's indictment of German expressionism and grew as Lukács extended this indictment to literary modernism as a whole. In contrast to the realist literature of the 19th century, Lukács argued in "Expressionism: Its Significance and Decline" (1934), expressionist art was unable to represent the "external conditions" of history with any objectivity or cohesiveness. This inability, he wrote, was

> above all the fault of the expressionists themselves, whose bourgeoisification, even in their oppositional strivings, was so advanced that they could only raise their 'social' questions to the level of a subjective idealism, or a mystical objective idealism, and could find no understanding of the social forces acting in the real world.[8]

In expressionism, Lukács maintained, was an "extreme subjectivism…a subjectivism that borders on solipsism" that prevented expressionist art from realizing the social and economic "totality" of realist fiction.[9] Realist fiction, Lukács wrote in "Realism in the Balance" showed "man in the whole range of relations to the real world," was therefore able to tell readers about their own places among the relations of production.[10] In contrast, expressionist art was too formally abstract and fragmented to impart such knowledge. The "taxing struggle" to understand expressionist literature, Lukács argued, "yields such subjectivist distortions and travesties that ordinary people" are unable "to translate these atmospheric echoes of reality back into the language of their own experience."[11]

In "Realism in the Balance" and later essays, Lukács translated this criticism of German Expressionism into criticism of literary modernism as a whole. In particular, he

focused on modernism's techniques of formal and psychological fragmentation, which—
like that of expressionism—occluded the history of class struggle and the relations of
production. For Lukács, the psychological content of the bourgeois novel and the
psychological fragmentation of the modernist novel were products of—not productive
responses to—the oppressive effects of modern capitalism.[12] "The principle expression
of 'reification' in the case of writers," he wrote in "Reportage or Portrayal?," is

> that existing reality appears to them as 'mechanical,' 'soulless,' and dominated by
> 'alien' laws…To this 'vacuous' reality, the bourgeois writer counterposes the 'life
> of the soul,' which is 'alone decisive.' This life of the soul then becomes the
> centre of gravity, and sometimes the sole content, of his portrayal. The creative
> method that arises on this basis is psychologism.[13]

In this way, Lukács quite forcefully opposed the representation of psychological content
to the goals and ambitions of a Marxist theory of literature. Modernism's fragmentation
of form and perspective were simply a "fetishistic dismemberment of reality"—an
"inability to see relations between people (class relations) in the 'things' of social life.[14]
This was the core of Lukács's Marxist critique of modernist literature, even though
several critics have questioned Lukács's Marxist justification of anti-psychologism. In
Marxism and Form (1972), Fredric Jameson suggests that "Lukács' criticism of
modernism was already implicit" in the Hegelian, and pre-Marxian, *Theory of the Novel*
(1920). "The distinction between realism and symbolic modernism," he writes, "was
therefore already present in the shift toward a novel which apprehended reality, and the
human environment, in terms of human history."[15] For Martin Jay, Lukács's disposition

against psychologism dates back even further—to 1910. "Lukács' life-long antipathy to psychology," Jay writes in *Marxism and Totality,* "particularly to its philosophical misuse, expressed itself in *Soul and Form*."[16] From whichever vantage he was writing from, it seems, Lukács found a way to argue against the place of psychological content in literature.[17]

Jameson and Jay's observations resonate with Brecht's criticism of Lukács's from the 1930s. Brecht, too, agreed with the Marxist premise of Lukács's analyses but questioned those analyses' understanding of history as well as their formalistic conclusions. "He starts from a sound principle," Brecht wrote in "The Essays of Georg Lukács" (1938), "and yet one cannot help feeling that he is somewhat remote from reality...It is the element of capitulation, of withdrawal, of utopian idealism which still lurks in Lukács's essays."[18] To Brecht, Lukács's criticism stank of a dated classicism that confused fidelity to literary form with a fidelity to objective Marxist critique.[19] To categorically elevate realist fiction over experimental modernism was to ignore, if not elide, the progress of history and the need for art that could engage that progress. As Brecht wrote in the essay "Popularity and Realism" (1938),

> Realism is not a mere question of form. Were we to copy the style of these realists, we would no longer be realists… New problems appear and demand new methods. Reality changes: in order to represent it, modes of representation must also change. Nothing comes from nothing; the new comes from the old, but that is why it is new.[20]

But despite the severity of this criticsm against Lukács, Brecht too was wary of modernism's psychologistic literary forms. For while Brecht did not reject literary modernism categorically, his comments on James Joyce seem to display a concern about how interior monologue might distort objective knowledge about the world. In the essay "On the Formalistic Character of the Theory of Realism" (1938), Brecht wrote that

> The fact that Tolstoy would have done it differently is no reason to reject Joyce's method…Now the interior monologue is a method which is very difficult to use, and it is very useful to stress this fact. Without very precise measures (again of a technical sort) the interior monologue by no means reproduces reality, that is to say the totality of thought or association, as it superficially appears to do. It becomes another case of *only formally*, of which we should take heed—a falsification of reality.[21]

Like Lukács, Brecht understood psychologistic representation as a particularly deceitful "falsification of reality"—one that superficially, formally, purports to capture reality. Much as Lukács accused modernism of distorting the relations of production through its techniques of fragmentation and abstraction, Brecht accused interior monologue of confusing experience with objective knowledge about the world. As he wrote in *Die Dreigroschenprozess*, "The old concept of art, derived from experience, is obsolete. For those who show only the experiential aspect of reality do not reproduce reality itself. It is simply no longer experienced as a totality."[22] In focalizing the world through the psychology of a character, through the form of interior monologue, modernist fiction had conflated subjective and objective knowledge. For Brecht, modern art—and literature

more generally—would have the responsibility of separating subjective experience from objective knowledge about the "totality" of the real. This was, in fact, the responsibility Brecht ascribed to epic theatre, which he began developing soon after his first exposure to Marx in 1926.[23]

And while we might note a similarity between Brecht and Lukács on the point of psychological representation, the differences between epic theatre and Lukácsian realism cannot be overemphasized. In contrast to Lukács's transhistorical valorization of the realist form, the epic theatre was Brecht's formal response to the crises of modernity—a historically specific, and determined, form. In "The Epic Theatre and its Difficulties" (1927), Brecht explained that "the radical transformation of the theatre can't be the result of some artistic whim. It has simply to correspond to the whole radical transformation of the mentality of our time."[24] And as a historically determined literary form, Brecht understood epic theatre as opposed to the tradition of dramatic or "Aristotelian" theatre. Where dramatic theatre had plots, Brecht wrote in "The Modern Theatre is the Epic Theatre" (1930), epic theatre would have "narrative"; where Aristotelian drama encouraged audience members to identify with the subjective experiences of the characters onstage, epic theatre would present only "a picture of the world"; and where Aristotelian theatre took "the human being for granted" and move its audiences to catharsis, the epic theatre would treat "the human being [as] the object of inquiry" and appeal to its audience's reason and thoughtfulness.[25] For while Aristotelian dramas might induce emotional reactions from spectators, "the essential point of the epic theatre," Brecht emphasized, "is perhaps that it appeals less to the feelings than to the spectator's reason. Instead of sharing an experience the spectator must come to grips with

things."[26] Leaving an epic theatrical production, audience members would not cry but

think rationally about—"come to grips with"— the effects of capitalism and the problems

of cultural modernity.

To achieve these goals, Brecht argued, a different relationship to psychology was

required. In contrast to the empathy and psychological identification engendered by

Aristotelian drama, the epic theatre would avoid representations of psychology. Only if

such identification were avoided could audience members see "the human being [as] the

object of inquiry" and think *about*, rather than identify *with*, the actions onstage. As

Brecht wrote in "On the Use of Music in the Epic Theatre" (1935), "The spectator is

given the chance to criticize human behavior from a social point of view, and the scene is

played as a piece of history. The idea is that the spectator should be put in a position

where he can make comparisons about everything that influences the way in which

human beings behave."[27] This cognitive reorientation of the audience is at the core of the

two practices we most commonly associate with the epic theatre: the *gest*, or gestic

movement, and *die Verfremdungseffekt*, or alienation-effect.[28] In gestic movement, a

performed action would invoke the "attitude" or argument of the play but not the

consciousness or psychology of its performer. In the case of the alienation-effect, it was

precisely the audience that was psychologically alienated. By breaking the fourth wall

and rejecting the psychological "conversion" of Constantin Stanislavski's method acting,

the actor reinscribed his or her status as a scripted character rather than a human being

with genuine emotions or desires.[29] The actor therefore prevented the audience from

"identifying itself with the characters in the play. Acceptance or rejection of

[characters's] utterances was meant to take place on a conscious plane, instead of, hitherto, in the audience's subconscious."[30]

If we notice any thematic similarities between epic theatre and Watsonian behaviorism, we are not alone. Brecht noticed them, too. In 1931, Brecht published *Die Dreigroschenprozess* (Threepenny "process" or trial), which detailed his lawsuit against director G.W. Pabst following Pabst's loose cinematic adaptation of *Threepenny Opera*. Treating the trial as a "sociological experiment," *The Threepenny Trial* comprises one of Brecht's most extended analyses of cinematic art, intellectual property, and the relationship of film to theatre.[31] And as a number of critics have pointed out, it was also Brecht's first explicit mention of "die behaviorismus." This discussion of behaviorism follows an extended analysis of the formal qualities of film, in which Brecht asserted a sort of kinship between film and the project of epic theatre. Even though behaviorism has yet to be mentioned, this analysis is worth excerpting at length:

> Film demands external action and not introspective psychology. Capitalism has an impact on this by provoking, organizing and mechanizing certain needs on a mass scale, revolutionizing everything. It destroys great areas of ideology by concentrating only on 'external' action, by dissolving everything into processes, by abandoning the hero as the medium and mankind as the measure of all things, and smashes the introspective psychology of the bourgeois novel. The external point of view is proper to the cinema and makes it important. For the cinema the principles of non-Aristotelian drama (a type of drama not depending on empathy, mimesis) are immediately acceptable.[32]

If capitalism focuses only on "external action…dissolving everything into processes," then media that emphasize such "external action" are the best suited to represent capitalism's effects. For Brecht, both film and epic theatre succeeded in this regard; as epic theatre alienates its audiences from identifying psychologically with the characters onstage, film reduces its characters to flattened images and disembodied sounds. Both remove "mankind as the measure of all things" and therefore render "mankind" not as "the hero" but as the object of inquiry. In this way, Brecht saw an easy exchange of principles between the formal elements of cinema and those of epic theatre—"of non-Aristotelian drama (a type of drama not depending on empathy, mimesis)."

But it was not only film that Brecht aligned thematically with epic theatre; it was also Watsonian behaviorism, which Brecht understood as central to cinematic techniques of representation. Films such as *City Lights* and *The Road to Life* displayed, however loosely, a behavioristic sensibility, as did "the great American comedies." These comedies, Brecht wrote,

> depict the human being as an object and could have an audience entirely made up of reflexologists. Behaviourism is a psychology that, based on the needs of commodity production, seeks to develop methods to influence the customer, an active psychology, therefore quintessentially progressive and revolutionary. Its limits are those that correspond to its function in   capitalism (the reflexes are biological; only in certain films of Chaplin are   they already social). Here again the road leads only over capitalism's dead body, but here again this is a good road.[33]

This moment from *The Threepenny Trial* muddies as much as it clarifies. The critical history of epic theatre's relationship to behaviorism is largely the history of critics arguing over what this excerpt means. At a very basic level, the excerpt establishes an affinity between behaviorism's physiological anti-psychologism and the anti-psychologistic formal elements of epic theatre and film. Like epic theatre and film, behaviorism understands the human being as an object of study divorced from the representation of consciousness or covert mental states. The temptation, then, is to think syllogistically: if epic theatre shares that a given set of characteristics with film, and film shares that same set of characteristics with behaviorism, then behaviorism and epic theatre necessarily share that set of characteristics. But at the same time, Brecht's analysis is unable to define behaviorism's relationship to film (and therefore epic theatre) without also producing a worrisome set of contradictions. As much as behaviorism is akin to epic theatre, it is defined as the psychological program of capitalism: "based on the needs of commodity production," seeking to manipulate consumers, limited by the needs of capitalism. If behavioristic conditioning is the tool of capitalism, then how is behaviorism "quintessentially progressive and revolutionary" from a Marxist perspective? What is behaviorism's relationship to the Marxist critique of epic theatre?

The answer I would like to suggest is that while Brecht understood the *representation* of behaviorism useful for the goals of epic theatre, Brecht needed epic theatre to function non-behavioristically. As we see in *The Threepenny Trial* above and in plays such as *Man Equals Man* and *The Threepenny Opera*, Brecht understood behaviorism as epitomizing capitalism's manipulation and dehumanization of consumers. For these reasons, epic theatre could not be behavioristic—rather than regulate its

viewers physiologically and unconsciously, the epic theatre needed to encourage its viewers into *voluntary and self-aware* discussions of social problems. As Walter Benjamin wrote in his essay, "What is Epic Theatre?," epic theatre was in opposition to Aristotelian "'*theatrocratia*': the use of theatre to dominate the masses by manipulating their reflexes and sensations—the exact opposite of responsible collectives freely choosing their positions."[34] And so what Brecht's epic theatre did, I argue, is place behaviorism onstage as a way of showing audiences their heretofore manipulation by the behavioristic capacities of capitalism and Aristotelian theatre. Spectators would view representations of conditioning on the epic stage but not experience it themselves. As R Darren Gorbert wrote in a recent article on catharsis in Brecht's *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, "Brecht's hostility toward emotional effects [in the 1930s and 40s] is rooted in his refusal to view spectators as objects to be conditioned in the manner proposed by some of his Soviet counterparts."[35]

The relationship between behaviorism and epic theatre I am suggesting, however, is not at all congruous with earlier examinations of Brecht's understanding of behaviorism. Earlier critics have confused epic theatre's thematization of behaviorism with the possibility of epic theatre operating behavioristically itself. On those grounds, the critical history has converged on two not unrelated conclusions: 1) that epic theatre was, unsurprisingly, behavioristic; and 2) that Brecht's interest in behaviorism was less psychological than it was sociological.

The clearest example of the first view is John Willett's foundational *The Theatre of Bertolt Brecht: A Study from Eight Aspects* (1959), where Willett argues that gestic movement should be understood as akin to behavioristic psychology.[36] The idea of

gestus, Willett explains, is "closely related to Behaviourism" and "is a central part of [Brecht's] doctrine, but it is hard to make it so in English, for there is no single word by which 'Gestus' can be translated. It is at once gesture and gist, attitude and point … It excludes the psychological, the subconscious, the metaphysical unless they can be conveyed in concrete terms."[37] In discussing the relationship between behaviorism and gestic movement, Willett makes two crucial mistakes. First, his definition of behaviorism is far more limited and restricted than Brecht's. In *The Threepenny Trial*, Brecht's invocation of behaviorism includes both the abnegation of consciousness and stimulus-response neurology. The audiences of American comedies, he reminds us, could be made up entirely of "reflexologists." Brecht's imagined audience of reflexologists brings Willett's second mistake to the fore: he forgoes any discussion of how gestic movement affects spectators. For Brecht, the essential feature of behaviorism was that it manipulated its objects unknowingly—in contrast to the knowing, rational spectators of epic theatre. To say that behaviorism comprised a "central part of [Brecht's] doctrine" without any mention of how it might affect audience members is to misunderstand Brecht's concerns about the deployment of behavioristic psychology.

Like Willett, critics such as Steve Giles and Marc Silberman locate Brecht squarely within the tradition of behaviorism. But for Giles and Silberman, Brecht's interest in behaviorism was less *psychological* than it was *sociological*. Discussing the "audience of reflexologists" excerpt cited above, Giles suggests that "a positive attitude is apparent when Brecht describes behavioursist psychology" and that "Brecht's attraction to a *sociological* variant of behaviourism is evident in key passages in [*The Threepenny Trial*] which present Brecht's views on progressive art and social scientific

methodology."[38] In footnotes to his edition of *The Threepenny Trial*, Silberman makes a

similar point about the same passage: "Brecht is referring here [p172, *Threepenny Trial*]

to the social behaviourism of philosopher Otto Neurath, whom he had come to appreciate

in his reading of the journal *Erkenntnis* (the house journal of the logical empiricists) in

1930-2 and whom he met in 1932-3."[39]

These analyses, however, are not entirely congruous with what we encounter in

The Threepenny Trial. For while all of Brecht's discussions of behaviorism have social

and sociological valences, the terms of Brecht's discussion tend to be psychological and

neurological ("smashes the introspective psychology of the bourgeois novel," "audience

made up entirely of reflexologists") rather than only sociological. And so in emphasizing

the "sociological variant of behaviorism" and Neurath's "social behaviorism," Giles and

Silberman make an error analogous to Willett's: they smooth over the contradiction

between behaviorism, psychological or social, and the aims of epic theatre. Like Willett,

they overlook the necessary incongruity between behaviorism's deterministic effects and

the rationalistic and voluntary effects that Brecht wanted epic theatre to produce. As Otto

Neurath explained in his essay "Empirical Sociology" (1931), "Sociology treats men in

the same way other empirical sciences treat animals, plants, and stones. It is a doctrine of

'behavior' in the widest sense; it is 'social behaviorism'…The problem of free will is a

pseudo-problem, and in a strictly scientific procedure the sociologist never has to face

it."[40]

The invocation of Neurath and social behaviorism, however, brings up an

important point about how the chrononology of epic theatre has been understood. In

1930, Deutsche Verlangsanstalt (Stuttgart) published Fritz Giese's *Der Behaviorismus,*

which was the first German translation of Watson's 1924 monograph. In 1931, the philosophical journal *Erkentnnis* published Neurath's "Soziologie im Physikalismus," which mirrored the invocation of behaviorism discussed above and which Brecht is known to have read. (Brecht's copy of that issue of *Erkentnnis*, Giles explains, has been found; Neurath's essay is littered with Brecht's pencil marks and comments.[41]) Putting these pieces together, the assumption has been that Brecht learned of behaviorism (as well as logical positivism) precisely *through* Neurath and *Erkentnnis*. This is why Silberman and Giles emphasize Brecht's engagement with "social" or sociological behaviorism and why discussions of Brecht and behaviorism examine only Brecht's work after *The Threepenny Trial*.

This history, however, is based on a incorrect assumption—that that Giese's *Der Behaviorismus* comprised psychological behaviorism's introduction to Germany. For while, yes, *Der Behaviorismus* was the first German translation of Watson's monograph, it was by no means behaviorism's German debut (translated or otherwise). A few notable examples speak to behaviorism's arrival in Germany before Giese's translation: In 1917, the German psychologist Wolfgang Köhler published *Intelligenzprufengen an anthropoiden* (roughly: testing primate intelligence).[42] Köhler's book described two years of primate intelligence testing done on Tenerife in the Canary Islands; in *Intelligenzprufengen*, Köhler cited these tests as a rejoinder to behaviorist Edward Thorndike's claim that animals could not learn through imitation.[43] Often cited as an early example of Gestalt psychology, Köhler's *Intelligenzprufengen* was immensely popular and reprinted in Germany in 1921 and 1925. In 1922, the German journal *Zeitschrift fur Psychologie und Physiologie der Sinnesorgan* (journal of psychological

and physiological sense-organs) published an editorial review of Watson and Rayner's article "Conditioned Emotional Reactions," which detailed attempts to condition fear reactions in an infant.[44] And in 1925, the journal *Erkentnnis*, where Brecht would later read Otto Neurath, featured a discussion of Watsonian behaviorism in its annual "Literatuarberichte" (or literature-review) of psychological research.[45]

The best evidence against this faulty chronology, however, are Brecht's plays themselves. Written well before *The Threepenny Trial*, Brecht's *Man Equals Man* and *Threepenny Opera* demonstrate two things with respect to epic theatre's relationship to behaviorism. First, at a very basic level, they disprove the assertion that Brecht's engagement with behaviorism began in 1931. Second, and more important, they define behaviorism's role within both modern capitalism and the Marxist project of epic theatre. In *Man Equals Man*, the porter Galy Gay is behavioristically transformed into the soldier Jeraiah Jip. As we might infer from *The Threepenny Trial*, behaviorism is presented in *Man Equals Man* as a mechanism by which capitalism manipulates consumers and citizens. In this way, behaviorism provides the vocabulary for *Man Equals Man* to "treat the human being [as] the object of inquiry," as Brecht wrote in "The Modern Theatre is the Epic Theatre." In *Der Dreigroschenoper*, too, behaviorism is aligned with the demands of the capitalist marketplace. More importantly, *The Threepenny Trial* explicitly aligns behaviorism with Peachum's profiteering and dishonest "beggar's opera." The representation of behaviorism allows *The Threepenny Opera* to sharply distinguish epic theatre's ambitions and effects from the *theatrocratia* of older theatrical forms, with the "beggar's opera" a foil to *Threepenny Opera*'s own criticisms of

capitalism and attempts to induce its audience into voluntary, rational discussions of social problems.

Man Equals Man is centered around the question of human fungibility and the extent to which human beings can be willingly or unwillingly transformed. Set against the backdrop of Britain's colonization of India, the play follows a group of soldiers trying to transform the porter Galy Gay into the missing infantryman Jeraiah Jip. In an address to the audience, war profiteer Widow Leokadja Begbick explains to the audience that

> BEGBICK.   Herr Bertolt Brecht behauptet: Mann ist Mann.
>
> Und das ist etwas, was jeder behapten kann.
>
> Aber Herr Bertolt Brecht beweist auch dann
>
> Daß man mit einem Menschen beliebig viel machen kann.
>
> Hier wird heute abend ein Mensch wie ein Auto ummontiert
>
> Ohne daß er irgend etwas daei verliert.[46]

.

> [Herr Bertolt Brecht maintains man equals man—
>
> A view that has been around since time began.
>
> But then Herr Brecht points out how far one can
>
> Maneuver and manipulate that man.
>
> Tonight you are going to see a man reassembled like a car
>
> Leaving all his individual components just as they are.][47]

Widow Begbick's address makes "man" the "object of inquiry," much as Brecht suggested in "The Modern Theatre is the Epic Theatre." Begbick's speech to the

audience encourages audiences not to *identify* with Gay; her explicit references to "Herr Bertlot Brecht" dissolve any illusions of dramatic mimesis. Instead, Begbick's appeal is argumentative and polemical, asking audience members to consider how the components of a human begin—its body, mind, sense of self, free will—can be unwittingly repurposed by economic, technological, and psychological forces. To do this, Begbick constructs a careful analogy between "ein Mensch" and "ein Auto." But this is no typical assembly line: where in Henry Ford's factories cars were produced by human laborers, here humans are both the producers and *products* of such labor. Reminiscent of Watson's boast that he could condition any infant into the specialist of his choice, *Man Equals Man* cynically concludes that—as its title suggests—that a porter named Galy Gay can be wholly transformed into a machine gunner named Jeraiah Jip if subjected to the correct psychological and physiological pressures. At the end of the play, Gay's psychological and physiological transformation is complete: "Es lebe Jeraiah Jip," Jesse announces, "die menschliche Kampfmaschine!"[48] Long live Jeraiah Jip, the human battle-machine!

Prefiguring Brecht's eventual comments in *The Threepenny Trial*, the way one creates a "menlische Kampmaschine" is through behavioristic conditioning, with *Man Equals Man* rendering behavioristic psychology as a tool of social and economic manipulation. As she pays Galy Gay with eight bottles of beer, Polly explains that soldiers would not fight as bravely or recklessly without the stimulus of alcohol. Alcohol comprises both the soldiers' salary and a physiological stimulus toward violence, recklessness, and a reduced sense of self-preservation.   "Vor jedem Sturmangriff bekommt der Soldat kostenlos ein so großes Glas Alkohol, wodurch sein Mut ins

Ungemessene ja, Ungemessene wächst"—before every attack, each soldier gets a giant glass of alcohol for free, which makes his courage endless, absolutely endless.[49] The stimulus of alcohol is therefore a crucial ingredient in the repurposed "menschliche Kampfmaschine" that every soldier becomes on the battlefield. Drunk soldiers, of diminished free will and impulse control, their individual identities mitigated by neurological stimulation, are essential to the success of colonial expansion.

In that way, this use of alcohol is synecdochal for how *Man Equals Man* imagines the ways humans are manipulated neurologically into the service of capitalism and imperialism. Not even commanding officers, such as Charles "Bloody Five" Fairchild, are immune to this; as we see, Bloody Five himself is often manipulated (and seduced) by the profiteering Widow Begbick, who sells the alcohol to the British army. As Begbick explains to the soldiers who would eventually transform Galy Gay into Jeraiah Jip, Fairchild is particularly susceptible to the stimulus of rainfall. "Das er bei Regengüssen," she says, "in schreckliche Zustände von Sinnlichkeit verfällt und sich äuserlich und innerlich verädert"; during rainstorms, he is subject to overwhelming sensuality and is transformed both internally and externally.[50] The rain effectively dehumanizes Bloody Five and reduces him to a creature of only reflexes, sensations, and instincts; his behaviors are detached from his consciousness or from any sense of his subjectivity. The stimulus of the rain affects Bloody Five's "innerlich" impulses as well as his "austerlich" behaviors; it evacuates his free will, making him a more pliant pawn in the schemes of Begbick and his soldiers. As Widow Begbick says to Bloody Five, "Komm / Zu mir in dieser Nachet des lauen Regens…als Widerspruch. Als Muß-und-will-doch-nicht…[als] hilfos deiner eigenen starke horig."[51] Come to me, she says, in this night of warm

rain…as a contradiction. As a must-but-will-not…as a slave to your own strength. The rain exposes to Widow Begbick, as well as to the play's audience, the conflicting forces that comprise Bloody Five; he is a "Widerspruch," a contradiction between his will and his reflexes and instincts.

Bloody Five and Galy Gay are the alienating, behavioristic images of "menschen" that *Man Equals Man* generates—much in line with Brecht's theses on the content of epic theatre. Their actions are attributed not to free will or consciousness but instead to external physiological stimuli.   In the later *Threepenny Opera*, we see Brecht use elements of behaviorism to analyze a different feature of capitalist life: the theatre itself. Incorporated into *Threepenny Opera*'s metacommentary on how theatre affects its spectators, behaviorism allows Brecht to distinguish between the manipulativeness of "Aristotelian" mimetic drama and epic theatre. The theatrical tradition most discussed in *Threepenny Opera* is Peachum's aforementioned "beggar's theatre," where beggars sing for a proverbial "dreigroschen" from passersby and then give the proceeds to Peachum. In the opening of *Threepenny Opera*, "Die Moritat Von Mackie Messer" (Ballad of Mack the Knife) is sung by beggars to pedestrians onstage—and necessarily the audience in the theater. But as Peachum explains to an employee, it isn't easy to make a profit on these performances:

> PEACHUM (zum Publikum): Denn mein Geschäft ist es, das menschliche Mitleid zu erwecken. Es gibt einige wenige Dinge, die den Menschen erschüttern, einige wenige, aber fas Schimme ist, daß sie, mehrmals angewendet, schon nicht mehr wirken. Denn der Mensch hat die furchtbare Fähigkeit, sich gleichsam nach eigenem Belieben gefühllos zu machen.[52]

> [PEACHUM (to the audience): My business is trying to arouse human pity.
> There are a few things that'll move people to pity, a few, but the trouble is, when
> they've been used several times, they no longer work. Human beings have the
> horrid capacity of being able to make themselves heartless at will.][53]

In explaining the logistics of his business, Peachum breaks the fourth wall—he speaks "zum Publikum"—and addresses the theater audience directly. This accomplishes two things: first, it emphasizes Peachum's status as a scripted character. When a character speaks "zum Publikum," he or she dissolves any illusions of verisimilitude. Second, it draws Peachum's beggars' opera into relief against *Threepenny Opera* itself and emphasizes the differences between Peachum's enterprise and Brecht's epic theatre. For Peachum, the biggest problem is nullifying "eigenem Belieben gefühllos zu machen"— the *choice* pedestrians make to become habituated and ignore the pathos of the beggars in front of them. In contrast to epic theatre's goal of inducing voluntary and rational thought from its spectators, Peachum's business requires its audiences to feel pity *automatically* and without deliberation. Only then will they give money freely.

The best way to get audiences to do this, Peachum concludes, is to manipulate them neurologically—to give spectators a "shock" rather than just get on their nerves, to return to an earlier citation of the play. Rather than encourage spectators to give money voluntarily, the beggars's opera must manipulate the audience psychologically by stimulating its reflexes. As Peachum explains,"Das sind die fünf Grundtypen des Elends, dis geeignet sind, das menschliche Herz zu rühren. Der Anblick solcher Typen versetzt den Menschen in jenen unnaturlichen Zustand, in welchem er bereit ist, Geld

herzugeben" (149).[54] "There are the five basic types of misery best adapted to touching the human heart," he says. "The sight of them induces that unnatural state of mind in which a man is actually willing to give money away."[55] Much as we saw in *The Threepenny Trial*, this is the alignment of behavioristic manipulation with capitalism: the use of stimulus-response neurology to control consumers. Furthermore, it is also the alignment of older, Aristotelian theatre with the abuses of the capitalistic marketplace. In that way, Peachum's beggars's theatre provides the perfect foil for epic theatre—the perfect object to induce audiences to think rationally about not only the deleterious effects of capitalism but also the role theatre might play in alleviating those effects and disseminating Marxist critique.

Behaviorism and Black Marxism

Between the plays of Bertolt Brecht and the fiction of Richard Wright, a number of variables change. Most obviously, there are differences in language, nationality, race, and genre. There are differences of audience and circulation. And while both writers at times identified as Marxists or Communists, there are important differences there too. Indeed, Brecht and Wright come from opposite ends of the spectrum of Marxist philosophy and political thought. Where Brecht's engagement with Marxism was highly theoretical and intellectualized, Wright's was far more pragmatic—if not often distrustful of theory. As he wrote in "Blueprint for Negro Writing" (1937), "It is through a Marxist conception of reality and society that the maximum degree of freedom in thought and feeling can be gained for the Negro writer…Yet, for the Negro writer, Marxism is but the starting point. No theory of life can take the place of life."[56] Despite the differences

between these writers, two crucial similarities remain. First, both Brecht and Wright argued that literature could—and should—mediate Marxist critique. Second, both writers understood the possibilities of this mediation through the vocabulary of behaviorism. If literature was to achieve political change, then the neurological mechanisms by which literature reached readers and spectators had to be understood.

Of course, Brecht and Wright came to different conclusions on this point. For Brecht, epic theatre needed to foment social action—but it also needed to preserve the agency of its spectators. For this reason, epic theatre could not condition or physiologically affect its audiences. Wright, however, felt no such restraints; fiction such as *Native Son* (1940) could both represent *and enact* behavioristic principles (in contrast to Brecht's *Die Dreigroschenoper* or *Mann Ist Mann*). Through the neuro-physiological stimulation of literary language, he concluded, a novel could induce readers into new behaviors, emotions, and modes of political engagement. As he wrote in "Blueprint for Negro Writing", "Shall Negro writing be for the Negro masses, moulding the lives and consciousness of those masses toward new goals, or shall it continue begging the question of the Negroes' humanity"?[57] Looking to *Native Son* and *Black Boy* (1945), we can see how literally Wright understood literature's ability to "[mould] the lives and consciousness" of the black proletariat, whose absence from Communist politics defined Wright's relationship with the Party. Instead of being tantamount to the capitalist manipulation of consumers (as we saw in Brecht), literature—and more specifically "Negro writing"—could condition its readers without mitigation and therefore be an agent of critique and social change. *Native Son* would, theoretically, represent the ways in

which Bigger Thomas had been conditioned into violence and through that representation stimulate its readers into new levels of political action and involvement.

So despite thematic similarities between *Native Son* and novels such as Norris's *McTeague* (1899) and *An American Tragedy* (1925), this physiologically affective element separates Wright's novel from the conventions of naturalism, which was similarly concerned with neurological and economic determinism. Indeed, it's worth noting that comparisons of *Native Son* to naturalism date back to the novel's initial publication. As Peter Jack wrote in a *New York Times* review (3 March 1940), "A ready way to show the importance of this novel is to call it the Negro *American Tragedy* and to compare it roughly with Dreiser's masterpiece. Both deal seriously and powerfully with the problem of social maladjustment, with environment and individual behavior, and subsequently with crime and punishment."[58] My point here is not that *Native Son* doesn't share key thematic features with naturalist fiction.[59] As Douglas Mao suggests in *Fateful Beauty: Aesthetic Environments, Juvenile Development, and Literature, 1860-1960* (2008), *Native Son* goes beyond the more general determinism of naturalist fiction. Unlike Dreiser, he writes, "Wright supplies his narrator with the terminology of behaviorism proper." [60] My argument here is that the neurologically affective ambitions of *Native Son* pursue an agenda that is closer to experimental modernist poetry (i.e. Gertrude Stein) than it is to naturalist fiction (cf. note 4). For Wright, the form of a novel would reflect the environmental pressures that surrounded it and then exert physiological pressures of its own. As he wrote in the essay "How Bigger Was Born" (1940), If Poe were alive [in the 20th century], he would not have had to invent horror; horror would invent him."[61]

As I will show over the coming pages, the way horror would "invent" Poe—and, indeed, Bigger Thomas—would be through behavioristic stimulus-response conditioning. By the time Wright wrote *Native Son*, behaviorism had grown from the methods of behavior prediction developed in E.L. Thorndike's *Animal Intelligence* (1911) and John Watson's polemic against structuralist introspection, "Psychology as the Behaviorist Views It" (1913). In the 1920s, Bertrand Russell's *The Analysis of Mind* (1921) had popularized behaviorism's critique of mentalism—and through Russell Watson's work shaped the anti-psychologism of the logical positivists.[62] For Watson himself, however, the core of behaviorism remained the prediction and control of human behavior. In 1920, he and Rosalie Rayner published "Conditioned Emotional Reactions," where they discussed the infamous case that would come to be known as "Little Albert." Watson and Rayner gradually conditioned infant "Albert B." to fear anything white and soft— whether it was a rabbit, a puppy, a man dressed as Santa Claus, or a scrap of cloth. To Watson, this proved that emotional states such as fear had their origins in the stimulus-response transactions of the physical environment. "It is probable," he and Rayner wrote, "that many of the phobias in psychopathology are true conditioned emotional reactions either of the direct or transferred type."[63] In 1930, this research manifested itself as a boast about behaviorism's ability to shape a given child into a particular type of adult. "Give me a dozen healthy infants, well-formed, and my own specified world to bring them up in," he bragged in the revised edition of *Behaviorism*, "and I'll guarantee to take any one at random and train him to become any type of specialist I might select – doctor, lawyer, artist, merchant-chief and, yes, even beggar-man and thief, regardless of his talents, penchants, tendencies, abilities, vocations, and race of his ancestors."[64]

This kind of deterministic thinking permeates *Native Son*, particularly in descriptions of Bigger's interactions with the physical environment. His behaviors and dispositions are attributed to a history of conditioning by poverty, racism, and the physical landscape of Chicago. Playing hooky from school and smoking a cigarette on the street, he is rendered as lacking both intent and intentionality (in the phenomenological sense). "He puffed silently, relaxed, his mind pleasantly vacant of purpose. Every slight movement in the street evoked a casual curiosity in him. Automatically, his eyes followed each car as it whirred over the smooth black asphalt."[65] In discussing how Bigger spent his days playing hooky, the novel's language is explicitly behavioristic, with Bigger's thoughts rendered as automatic responses to the stimuli of passing cars. Bigger, we read, "longed for a stimulus powerful enough to focus his attention and drain off his energies."[66]

Indeed, the languages of behaviorism and neurology are invoked throughout *Native Son* to explain the origins of Bigger's emotions and behaviors. Bigger's life is not presented as a series of choices, of exertions of agency and free will, but instead as the mitigation of voluntary actions by involuntary physiological responses. In his early encounters with the Dalton family, the interplay between voluntary and involuntary actions becomes explicit; we see the degrees to which Bigger has been conditioned, knowingly and unknowingly, to behave around white people. The abstract concept of racism is translated into a series of specific stimuli, reflexes, and behaviors. Since beginning work as the Dalton family's chauffeur, we read, Bigger "had not raised his eyes to the level of Mr. Dalton's face once since he had been in the house. He stood with his knees slightly bent, his lips partly open, his shoulders stooped…There was an organic

conviction in him that this was the way white folks wanted him to be when in their presence."[67] Similarly, when Mary Dalton and Jan Erlone insist that Bigger address them by their first names, he is unable to do curb his conditioned (and now automatic) deference toward whites. "How on earth could he learn not to say yessuh and yessum to white people in one night when he had been saying it all his life long?"[68]

Bigger's most notorious acts, of course, are his murders of Mary and Bessie. These too are rendered as neurologically determined—not just by the narrator but by other characters attempting to explain the killings. After Bigger faints at his arraignment, a newspaper article suggests that the innate neurological composition of African American men made the killings inevitable: "His shoulders are huge, muscular, and he keeps them hunched, as if about to spring upon you at any moment…All in all he seems a beast untouched by the softening influences of modern civilization."[69] Advocating racial segregation, the article suggests that "another psychological deterrent" from violence would be "conditioning Negroes so that they have to pay deference to the white person with whom they come in contact."[70] Conversely, in his defense of Bigger, Communist attorney Boris Max suggests that psychological conditioning is not a cure but—along with poverty and racism—a cause of Bigger's behaviors. In court, Max argues for a direct connection between the physical conditions of poverty and Bigger's history of violence. Putting the father of Mary Dalton on the stand, he asks: "Mr Dalton, do you think that the terrible conditions under which the Thomas family lived in one of your houses may in some way be related to the death of your daughter?" (328) Later on, Max's summation synthesizes psychological determinism and economic determinism far more explicitly.

The identification of psychological conditioning comprises a central facet of his Marxist critique of the capitalist state:

> Every time [Bigger] comes in contact with us, he kills us! It is a physiological and psychological reaction, embedded in his being. Every thought he has is potential murder. Excluded from, and unassimilated in our society, yet longing to gratify impulses akin to our own but denied the socialized expression, every sunrise and sunset makes him guilty of subversive actions. Every movement of his body is an unconscious protest.[71]

These mechanistic descriptions of Bigger have not been without their detractors. Most famously, in the 1951 essay "Many Thousands Gone," James Baldwin accused Wright of oversimplifying Bigger psychologically and in that way distorting the experience of black urban life. *Native Son*, Baldwin wrote, lacked any "revelatory apprehension of one of the Negro's realities" and that this was a result of "the representation of his psychology—which makes his situation false and his psychology incapable of development."[72] In addition to Baldwin, a number of critics have taken issue with Bigger's largely physiological and anti-mentalistic psychology—separate from discussions of naturalism or sentimentalism. In 1940, the psychiatrist Fredric Wertham psychoanalyzed Wright for the explicit purpose of interpreting *Native Son*. In "An Unconscious Determinant in *Native Son*," which was published in the July 1944 issue of the *Journal of Clinical Psychopathology and Psychotheraphy*, Wertham argued that Bigger's acts had their origins in Wright's own oedipal anxieties.[73] More recently, Houston Baker has suggested that psychoanalysis provides the best framework for

understanding the novel. Additionally, he argues that Marxism has little bearing on the text. In "Richard Wright and the Dynamics of Place in Afro American Literature" he writes that *Native Son* should "not be conceived in Marxian terms. It must be read, instead, in terms of the Freudian description of dying."[74]

For Wright, however, Bigger's psychological limitations and disposition toward violence were precisely what made him most real, most believable. Men like Bigger Thomas were not "essentially and organically bad," he explained, but rather products of elaborate histories of stimulation and response. As Wright wrote in "How Bigger Was Born," Bigger Thomas was a "variation" within a "behavioristic pattern"—an example of how African Americans were conditioned by racism, poverty, and the surrounding physical environment.[75] Such conditioning was, according to Wright, a fact of life—the physical truth of being black in a white world. But it is worth noting that Wright thought of himself as an exception to this truth. Recalling Bigger's difficulty in addressing Jan and Mary as equals, Wright maintained in *Black Boy* that he had never been conditioned to act any particular way in the presence of whites. "I could not make subservience an automatic part of my behavior," he wrote. "I had to feel and think out each tiny item of racial experience in the light of the whole race problem, and to each item I brought the whole of my life. While standing before a white man I had to figure out how to perform each act and how to say each word."[76]

Wright, then, was the exception. But the rest of the United States's black population, he argued in "How Bigger Was Born," had been conditioned into lives of subservience and crime. In addition to this, Wright claimed, the stimuli of poverty and

racism had conditioned the African American community *politically*—toward a specific set of progressive political desires and dispositions.

> Granting the emotional state, the tensity, the fear, the hate, the impatience, the sense of exclusion, the ache for violent action, the emotional and cultural hunger, Bigger Thomas, conditioned as his organism is, will not become an ardent, or even lukewarm, support of the *status quo*… the conditions of life under which Negroes are forced to live in America contain the embryonic emotional preconfigurations of how a large part of the body politic would react under stress.[77]

This moment translates neurology into sociology quite explicitly, even if Wright's reasoning is not airtight (nor in line with behaviorist research into aversive stimuli).[78] If the political "status quo" comprises aversive stimuli and responses then Wright assumes that African Americans will *automatically* prefer political change and upheaval. The old status quo, in effect, conditions in citizens a desire for what will become the new status quo. These desires are themselves a product of the political system's physical environment. As "embryonic emotional preconfigurations" inherent in "the conditions of life under which Negroes are forced to live in America," these political desires and affiliations are experienced as natural and *a priori*. As a result, African Americans such as Bigger Thomas, Wright explains, seem predetermined toward progressive—or at least adversarial—politics. "Bigger," we read, "an American product, a native son of this land, carried within him the potentialities of either Communism or Fascism."[79]

This imagined relationship between conditioning and Communism is enormously important for understanding the aesthetic and political ambitions of *Native Son*. Even so, it tells us nothing about Wright's own relationship to Communism, which has been frequently misunderstood and misremembered. In *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual* (1967), Harold Cruse was unsparing in his evaluation of Wright's connection to Marxist theory and the American Communist Party. Before Wright left the party in 1942, Cruse writes,

> he took his Marxism very seriously, and was so ideologically blinded by the smog of Jewish-Marxist nationalism that he was unable to see his *own* clearly…Wright, a Southerner, should have known…that the classics of Marx and Engels were written not for the proletariat but for the intelligensia…Wright confused the role of Negro literature (a cultural problem) with the role of the Party line on Negro-White labor unity.[80]

There are several problems with Cruse's account (its anti-Semitism aside). Even while an active member of the John Reed Club of Chicago, Wright was hardly blinded by the ideological "smog"; he made no secret of his disagreements with party policy, which eventually precipitated his departure. And Wright's fiction of this period, including *Native Son* and *Uncle Tom's Children* (1936), made no secrets of these disagreements either. But Cruse's invective does identify the key issues that defined Wright's tenure within both the John Reed Club and the Communist Party: the party's low black membership, the strained relationship between the "proletariat" and the "intelligentsia," and the responsibility of Communist writers with respect to the party line.

As Daniel Aaron argues in "Richard Wright and the Communist Party" (1971), Wright was the writer that the party had been searching for: a black "proletarian revolutionary artist—free of bourgeois taint."[81] Joining the Communist John Reed Club of Chicago in 1932, Wright was perceived as a way of improving the party's relationship with the poor black community. In the 1930s, only about 900 of the American Communist Party's members were black. Despite reaching a "resolution on the Negro Question" in 1928 and additional public outreach following the Scottsboro trials in 1931, the party failed to attract black proletarians and remained overwhelmingly white. It was precisely this failure that Wright hoped his writing—fictional and non-fictional—would begin to redress.

But over the course of his involvement with the Communist Party, Wright's thinking about the black proletariat evolved and came to differ with the official party line. For Wright, the "Negro question" was less about outreach and appeal than it was a philosophical problem originating in Marx. Black proletarians, he argued, were actually poorer and more alienated than their white counterparts. This meant they were harder to reach through literature and media campaigns. Even more important it meant that "the proletariat" could not be theorized, or appealed to, as a uniform and homogeneous category. As Cedric Robinson argues in *Black Marxism* (1983), "Like Many European-left intellectuals, Wright was moving beyond classical Marxism and Marxism inspired by Lenin in order to come to terms with a world constituted by material and spiritual forces that were historically unique."[82] And as the Communist Party of America grew to define itself in opposition to European Fascism, Wright's concerns about the black proletariat

were increasingly marginalized. As a result, Robinson argues, *Native Son*'s publication in 1940

> was a refutation of radical dogma from the vantage point of Black experience. He sought first to re-create that experience, and in so doing to force a confrontation between it and socialist ideology. Bigger Thomas's charcter was specific to the historical experience of Blacks in the United States, but his nature was proletarian, that is world-historical.[83]

Knowing Wright's history within the John Reed Club and Communist Party, it is easier to see *Native Son* as a synthesis of Wright's scientific interests and political commitments. The novel would narrate the lived experience of one particular member of the black proletariat and reveal the deterministic forces in his life; it would show how economics and racism were translated into the proletariat's reflexes and involuntary behaviors. Furthermore, it would be skeptical of efforts by the Communist Party to relieve the black proletariat's plight. Characters such as Boris Max are helpful in identifying the socioeconomic and psychological forces that have determined Bigger's course in life. But as helpful as this intellectual work is, Max and others are unable to prevent Bigger's conviction and execution. Indeed, at the end of the novel, readers are left doubting whether Max's motivation was to save Bigger's life or use the trial to promote party ideals.

Wright's problem was how to ensure how telling this story would itself be politically efficacious—to ensure that it would not only represent such social problems, but begin to remediate them as well. And so much as he turned to behaviorism to translate capitalism and racism into neurology, here too Wright turned to the mechanics

of stimulus-response physiology. If humans behaved according to the laws of stimulus and response, then the physical stimuli of a novel's language could be used to evoke predicted responses in its readers. In this way, a novel such as *Native Son* might transmit an intellectual critique of capitalism in America while also disseminating elements of that critique physiologically to the proletariat. In contrast to Bertolt Brecht's epic theatre, the critique of capitalism would not be restricted to voluntary, rational discussion. The transmission of knowledge would be simultaneously intellectual, emotional, and physiological, bringing a new depth and accessibility to the critique.

As Wright explained in "How Bigger Was Born," the trick was to find linguistic stimuli—a technique, a style of writing—that would represent an idea as well as transmit that idea as a physiological stimulus. In writing the first scene of *Native Son*, he wrote, "I had definitely in mind the kind of emotion I wanted to evoke in the reader…but I could not think of the type of concrete event that would convey the motif of the entire scheme of the book…that would introduce to the reader just what kind of organism Bigger's was and the environment that was bearing hourly upon it."[84] Put another way: "I tried to write so that, in the same instant of time, the objective and subjective aspects of Bigger's life would be caught in a focus of prose. And as always I tried to *render, depict*, not merely to tell the story. If a thing was cold, I tried to make the reader *feel* cold, and not just tell about it."[85]

These statements speak to the literary genealogy Wright assigned himself in *Black Boy*, where Wright presented himself as shaped by both literary naturalism and experimental modernism. Looking to the thematic determinism of *Native Son*—and Wright's task of showing "what kind of organism Bigger's was and the environment that

was bearing hourly upon it"—Wright's appeal to naturalism presents little difficulty, as I mentioned before. Like the novels of Dreiser and Norris, *Native Son* operates within a deterministic environment wherein the laws of economy and neuro-physiology mitigate, or eliminate, personal agency. Noting that his "first serious novel was Sinclair Lewis's *Main Street*," Wright claimed to find an intellectual kinship in naturalist and realist fiction that he had not found elsewhere. "I read Dreiser's *Jennie Gerhardt* and *Sister Carrie*," he wrote in *Black Boy*, "and they revived in me a vivid sense of my mother's suffering; I was overwhelmed…It would have been impossible for me to have told anyone what I derived from these novels, for it was nothing less than a sense of life itself."[86]

But literary naturalism failed to provide Wright with a model of how to affect his readers physiologically, and by extension politically. Instead, Wright found such a model in the writings of Gertrude Stein.[87] Thematically and stylistically, *Native Son* seems much closer to the plain-styled naturalist fiction of the late 19th century than it does to the formally experimental modernism of the 1920s and 1930s. And yet it was Stein, Wright maintained, whose writing had taught him to use words as physiological stimuli capable of evoking particular and predictable responses from readers. "Why do I, a Negro, read the allegedly unreadable books of Gertrude Stein?," Wright wrote in a 1945 review of Stein's *Wars I Have Seen*. As he read "Melanctha" for the first time, he continued, "my ears were opened for the first time to the magic of the spoken word. I began to hear the speech of my grandmother, who spoke a deep, pure Negro dialect…All my life I had been only half hearing, but Miss Stein's struggling words made the speech of the people around me vivid."[88] For Wright, his encounter with Stein's *Three Lives* was immediately

transforming—a hinge in his own development as a writer. "After reading *Three Lives*, I was able to tap at will the vast pool of living words that swirled around me."[89] For Wright, Stein's *Three Lives* initiated a new relationship with literary language—a new set of writing and reading practices that engaged with the physiological materiality of words. As he explained in *Black Boy*: "Under the influence of Stein's *Three Lives*, I spent hours and days pounding out disconnected sentences for the sheer love of words. I would write: 'The soft melting hunk of butter trickled in gold down the stringy grooves of the split yam.' Or: 'The child's clumsy fingers fumbled in sleep, feeling vainly for the wish of its dream'."[90]

These sentences read as fairly poor stylistic imitations of Stein's prose. But for Wright more was at stake in Stein's style than aesthetic pleasure or literary defamiliarization. Instead, Stein's prose was psychologically and physiologically charged; to return to "How Bigger Was Born," such prose could make the reader *feel* cold. It could stimulate the reflexes of its readers—and this is precisely what Wright wanted his own writing to do. After the hours spent on those "disconnected sentences," he explained in *Black Boy*,

> My purpose was to capture a physical state or movement that carried a strong
> subjective impression, an accomplishment which seemed supremely worth
> struggling for. If I could fasten the mind of the reader upon so firmly that he
> would forget words and be conscious only of his response, I felt that I would be in
> sight of knowing how to write narrative. I strove to master words, to make them
> disappear, to make them important by making them new, to make them melt into
> a rising spiral of emotional stimuli, each greater than the other, each feeding and

reinforcing each other, and all ending in an emotional climax that would drench

the reader with a new sense of the world. [91]

Even though we might not think of Gertrude Stein's writing in terms of neurological

stimuli and response, the model of literary language that Wright gleaned from Stein was

precisely that. According to Wright, this was how a sentence in a novel could make a

reader *feel* cold: by using the stimuli of language to evoke "subjective impressions" of

"physical state[s]" and to therein "fasten the mind of the reader so firmly that he would

forget words and be conscious only of his response." It was through these transmitted

"subjective impressions" that the work of conditioning occurred. Readers not only

learned new facts about the world but, through the "reinforcing" of "emotional stimuli,"

were programmed neurologically to see the world in a different way. Literature becomes

a sociological (and neurological) tool, much as Wright theorized in "Blueprint for Negro

Writing."

In this way, Wright found Stein to be the arbiter of not only literary history but

psychological history as well. Lodged in *Three Lives* was a specific cognitive model of

how the mind perceived and processed information; this model, Wright surmised, was

transmitted through the practice of reading. In his preface to St. Clair Drake and Horace

Cayton's *Black Metropolis: A Study of Negro Life in a Northern City* (1945), Wright

suggested that such models—whether they came from literature, psychology, or

philosophy—were crucial to understanding the problems of black life in the urban north.

"What would life on Chicago's South Side look like," he wrote, if "seen through the eyes

of a Freud, a Joyce, a Proust, a Pavlov, a Kierkegaard? It should be recalled in this

connection that Gertrude Stein's *Three Lives*, which contained "Melanctha," the first long

serious literary treatment of Negro life in the United States, was derived from Stein's preoccupation with Jamesian psychology."[92] Its arrogant dismissal of African American literature aside, this comment accomplishes two things. First, hearkening back to our discussion of Bigger Thomas and the conditioned reflexes of city life, it positions Wright as the inheritor of Pavlovian neuro-psychology, if not Jamesian psychology as well.[93] Second, it defines fiction as not only as that which can condition its readers neurologically, but also a vehicle for the transmission and circulation of psychological theory. An implicit analogy is constructed: as "Melanctha" was to William James, Wright's fiction would be to Freud, Joyce, Kierkegaard, and—most important for our purposes—Pavlov.

Through the physiological medium of literature these otherwise inaccessible ideas could be absorbed by the masses. Indeed, Wright was confident that Stein's prose was legible and accessible across boundaries of race and class. But as he explained in his review of *Wars I Have Seen*, he had not always had this confidence. For while Wright believed that Stein had written "the first long serious treatment of Negro life in the United States," he was initially troubled by claims that Stein "spent her days reclining upon a silken couch in Paris smoking hashish, that she was hopeless prey to hallucinations and that her tortured verbalisms were throttling the Revolution. I was disturbed. Had I duped myself into worshipping decadence?"[94] Weighing experimental literary form against the possibility of proletarian revolution, Wright's anxieties here echo those voiced by Brecht and Lukács during their debates about Expressionism (and, by extension, literary modernism). Did the techniques of literary modernism preclude the possibility of objective historical knowledge and therefore political change? "Believing in

direct action," Wright designed an experiment he thought would either confirm his

admiration for Stein or confirm that her "tortured verbalisms" were in fact "throttling the

revolution."

> I contrived a method to gauge the degree to which Miss Stein's prose was tainted
>
> with the spirit of the counter-revolution. I gathered a group of semi-literate Negro
>
> stockyard workers—"basic proletarians with the instinct for revolution" (am I
>
> quoting right?)—into a Black Belt basement and read "Melanctha" to them. They
>
> understood every word…My fondness for Steinian prose never distressed me after
>
> that.[95]

At a very basic level, Wright's experiment relieves his stated concerns: that Stein's

writing was too experimental, too "tortured," to be accessible and was therefore counter-

revolutionary. But beyond this, the experiment recalls Wright's disagreements with the

Communist Party of America as well as an easily overlooked moment from *Black Boy*.

Wright describes returning home from a meeting of the John Reed Club and presenting

his mother with party literature. "A gentle woman" whose "ideal was Christ upon the

Cross," his mother was unimpressed by the symbolic, intellectual art on the cover of

Masses. At the next meeting of the club, Wright asked, "Why can't Communism speak a

language she understands?"[96] "They had a program, an ideal," he explains, "but they had

not yet found a language" to reach the repressed proletariats it supposedly represented.[97]

What Wright found in Stein, however, was precisely that language—a medium

that he thought would reach the "basic proletarians with the instinct for revolution."

Where the ideas of Communism had failed to be accessible to the working class, the

neuro-physiological stimuli of Stein's prose succeeded. And in writing *Native Son*, which

actually thematizes the failure of American Communism to persuade or save Bigger

Thomas, this is the model that Wright tried to follow. In effect, *Native Son* comprised an

ideological critique aimed not at the heart or the head but at the nerves. In addition to

representing the experience of black urban life—showing the effects of capitalism,

showing how Bigger was conditioned into violence—it would use the physiological

stimuli of language to transmit those experiences to readers and in that way "[mould] the

lives and consciousness of those" readers toward new political goals.

The novel's efforts to do this truly begin with its first word:

"*Brrrrrrriiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiinng!*" *Native Son* starts with the onomatopoeia of an alarm clock,

as both Bigger and the imagined reader wake up to the rat-infested slum around them (3).

In rendering the bell onomatopoetically, the line insists on the word's tangibility as a

sound, forcing readers to not only parse the word visually but to perceive it

physiologically. The bell of the alarm clock sets the physiological experiences of Bigger

and imagined reader in parallel; moving beyond free indirect discourse, where Bigger's

thoughts would be woven into the third person narration, the bell establishes a

physiological identity between Bigger's body and our own. Indeed, the opening lines of

the novel are replete with other onomatopoetic devices. As the Thomas family has yet to

turn on the apartment's lights, both Bigger and reader are restricted to auditory stimuli:

An alarm clock clanged in the dark and silent room. A bed spring

creaked.

A woman's voice sang out impatiently:

"Bigger, shut that thing off!"

A surly grunt sounded above the tinny ring of metal. Naked feet swished dryly

across the planks in the wooden floor and the clang ceased abruptly.[98]

"Clanged," "creaked," "grunt," "tinny", "ring," "swished," and "clang": rather than

merely describe the sounds of Bigger's environment, these onomatopoeia physically

create an environment of sounds for readers. Furthermore, the information readers

receive is restricted to the kinds of stimuli Bigger can perceive at this moment. We are

not only learning about "what kind of organism Bigger's was and the environment that

was bearing hourly upon it" but learning about how our own organisms are

environmentally shaped and controlled.

If Wright's arguments are to be believed, these onomatopoeia would have begun

the process of forcing readers to identify with Bigger not only intellectually but also

physiologically—both knowing and *feeling* the weight of racism, poverty, and the

failures of capitalism. Whether *Native Son* succeeded in those goals is hard to say and

beyond the scope of this discussion. For while we can examine the poetic effects of the

novel and estimate the cognitive dimensions of those effects, we cannot know precisely

how *Native Son* affected its readers psychologically or physiologically—nor know the

political ramifications of those stimuli. Much as we can only know the cognitive effects

that Brecht *ascribed* to the devices of epic theatre, here too we only have the text of the

novel and Wright's theoretical ambitions to go on. But these theoretical ambitions, along

with the text of *Native Son*, are more than enough to reevaluate Wright's place within the

intertwined histories of Translatlantic modernism, Marxist writing, and behavioristic

psychology.

The Mind of Marxism

In pairing Brecht and Wright's political literature with behaviorism, two fairly clear conclusions present themselves. First, we can now see behaviorism's central place in the development of modernist Marxist literature. *Native Son* and Brecht's epic theatre demonstrate a counterintuitive, but ultimately tenacious, synthesis of determinisms that explain why each writer made the formal choices that he did. Second, we gain a way of connecting two writers from disparate, if often opposed, traditions within the history of Marxist thought. Brecht's writings engage a history of philosophical and academic inquiries into Marxist theory and practice. In contrast, Wright was increasingly disillusioned with Marxist intellectualism and increasingly doubtful about its ability to reach the proletariat masses. And yet behavioristic assumptions about mental states and reflexes are embedded in the works of each writer, particularly in how each imagined the way literature might foment political action.

It is the question of behaviorism's embedding that interests me most here—not only in terms of literature but in terms of what cognitive dispositions and assumptions are embedded in Marxist critique. As a psychological doctrine, behaviorism seems largely anathema to the aims of contemporary Marxist theory; while similarly deterministic, it is dehumanizing, which is why Brecht aligned it with capitalism. But behaviorism persisted in his thinking nonetheless and shaped not only epic theatre but his writings on the political uses of literature. Behaviorism's explicit influence on epic theatre became an implicit, even disguised, influence in Brecht's discussions with Lukacs about

Expressionism. Behavioristic attitudes toward mental states became an unacknowledged—but extant—part of the critical apparatus.

For Lukacs, however, the psychological attitudes and assumptions embedded in Marxist criticism were a point of concern. A full decade before the debates about Expressionism, he explored this problem in *History and Class Consciousness* (1923), where he argued against the usefulness of individualistic psychology for analyzing the dynamics of historical events. Instead, he offered "class consciousness" as a substitute. His explanation is worth excerpting at length.

> By relating consciousness to the whole of society it becomes possible to infer the thoughts and feelings which men would have in a particular situation if they were *able* to assess both it and the interests arising from it in their impact on immediate action and on the whole structure of society. That is to say, it would be possible to infer the thoughts and feelings appropriate to their objective situation…The historically significant actions of the class as a whole are determined in the last resort by this consciousness and not the thought of the individual…This analysis establishes right from the start that separates class consciousness from the empirically given, and from the psychologically describable and explicable ideas which men form about their situation in life.[99]

Written a full decade before the Expressionism debate, Lukács distaste for subjective, individualistic psychology already seems apparent. But it is important to note here that Lukács is not doing away with individualistic psychology entirely (yet). Instead, he is seeking to reorient Marxist inquiry around a different set of cognitive and psychological

categories—away from "psychologically describable" individual consciousness toward the *possible* thoughts of a class if they had objective knowledge of "the whole structure." Much as he would later accuse Expressionist writing of distorting objective historical knowledge, here individualistic psychology is an obstacle to pursuing such objective knowledge. In order for the Marxist critic to analyze history objectively, we are told, he or she must displace ideological assumptions about individual consciousness with psychological concepts that are congruous with historical analysis. For Lukács, the type of work the Marxist critic can perform is fundamentally dependent on that critic's presuppositions about the nature of psychology. Therefore these presuppositions must be known and, if necessary, changed to fit the work of Marxist critique.

My point here is not that Marxist theory today remains indebted, however unwittingly, to Lukács's class consciousness. Instead, it is to draw attention to Lukács's premise that particular concepts of mind and cognition can either allow or disallow certain critical approaches. And this is a premise, as well as a self-reflexivity, that Brecht and Wright share. These writers were explicit, if not pedantic, about the psychological and cognitive assumptions they were making in order to execute their Marxist political projects through literature and criticism. Looking to Marxism's shared history with behaviorism, and to the ways that concepts of mind have shaped both Marxist literary production as well as criticism, one question overwhelms the others. When we give Marxist thinking theoretical privilege in our work, what psychological and cognitive assumptions are we making—and to what implicit ends?

Notes.

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[1] Bertolt Brecht, *Die Dreigroschenoper*, *Versuche 1-12* (Berlin: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1959), 147.

[2] Bertolt Brecht, *The Threepenny Opera*, translated by Eric Bentley (New York: Grove, 1960), 36. For convenience, I am providing Bentley's translation as a point of reference and as a gloss.

[3] Richard Wright, *Native Son*. (New York: Harper Perennial, 2005), 362.

[4]   By the 1920s, John Watson's psychological behaviorism had largely incorporated Ivan Pavlov's findings in *Lectures on the Work of the Digestive Glands* (1898, translated into English in 1902). Initially, Watson conceived of behaviorism without reference to conditioned reflexes. As Watson explained in "Psychology as the Behaviorist Views It," behaviorism would have four main tenets: the rejection of introspective psychology; the privileging of behaviors over covert mental states; the irrelevance of consciousness to psychological study; and the reduction of mental states to physiological phenomena (*Psychological Review* 20, 1913, 158-177). By 1919, however, Watson had incorporated Pavlov's conclusions into his experiments; in the article "Conditioned Emotional Reactions," which Watson wrote with Rosalie Rayner, Watson demonstrated that seemingly "mental states" such as emotions could be induced through reflex conditioning (*Journal of Experimental Psychology* 3.1, 1920, 1-14). It was this version of behaviorism which Watson developed in his later writings and which Brecht and Wright engaged in their work. For more information on Pavlovian neuro-physiology, cf. Pavlov's *Conditioned Reflexes* (New York: Dover, 2003), chapters 1 and 2. For more on Watsonian behaviorism, cf. either of the aforementioned articles or Watson's *Behaviorism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1924).

[5] Bentley translates "Nur Künslter erschüttern heute noch das Herz" as "Today, only artists give the right sort of shock." A more literal translation would be, "Today, only artists *still* [my emphasis] shock the heart[s]."

[6] Bertolt Brecht, "The Epic Theatre and Its Difficulties," *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesethetic,* edited and translated by John Willett (New York: Hill and Wang, 1992), 23.

[7] My discussion of the expressionism debate skews toward psychology and should not be confused with a complete rendering of the debate's contents. For more extensive accounts of the expressionism debate, cf. Fredric Jameson's afterward to *Aesthetics and Politics* (Verso, 2007) and David Pike's *Lukács and Brecht* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985).

[8] Georg Lukács, "Expressionism: Its Significance and Decline." *Essays on Realism: Georg Lukács*, translated by Rodney Livingstone (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1981), 85.

[9] Lukács, "Expressionism: Its Significance and Decline," 109.

[10] Georg Lukács, "Realism in the Balance," translated by Rodney Livingstone. *Aesthetics and Politics*, with an afterword by Fredric Jameson (London: Verso, 2007), 48.

[11] Lukács, "Realism in the Balance," 57.

[12] As Eugene Lunn suggests, the innovation of Lukács's criticism was that it understood novelistic practice as an example of Marx's concept of reification. As Lunn writes in *Marxism and Modernism: A Historical Study of Lukács, Brecht, Benjamin, and Adorno,* "In the narrative voice lay the cognitive ability to uncover the construction of economic and social life through human interaction" (79).

[13] Lukács, "Reportage or Portrayal?." *Essays on Realism: Georg Lukács*, translated by Rodney Livingstone (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1981), 47.

[14] Ibid, 48. Lukács makes these comments about both the psychological novel of modernism and the modernist novel of "reportage." For while the novel of reportage very consciously avoided the representation of mental states and psychological motivations, Lukács argued that it, too, comprised an abstraction away from reality. Novelists of reportage, he writes, "want the objective to be purely objective, the content pure content, without any dialectical interaction with the subjective and formal factors, and in this way they fail to grasp and give adequate expression to both the objective and the content too" (49).

[15] Fredric Jameson, *Marxism and Form: Twentieth Century Dialectical Theories of Literature* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1972), 199-200.

[16] Martin Jay, *Marxism and Totality: The Adventures of a Concept from Lukács to Habermas*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 88.

[17] Of course Lukacs's distrust of psychology, particularly individualistic psychology, was not exclusive to his literary criticism. Cf. *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics*, translated by Rodney Livingstone (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1967), preface and 46-82.

[18] Bertolt Brecht, "The Essays of Georg Lukács," translated by Stuart Hood. *Aesthetics and Politics*, with an afterword by Fredric Jameseon (London: Verso, 2007), 68-9.
[19] To historian Eugene Lunn, the disagreement between Lukács and Brecht was indicative of a larger institutional struggle about the role of art in the Communist state. As Lunn wrote in *Marxism and Modernism: A Historical Study of Lukács, Brecht, Benjamin, and Adorno* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), "Lukács's

outlook resembled, and provided philosophical underpinning for, Soviet cultural policy (if not for the actually dismal practice of socialist realism), Brecht, by formulating his own response to this body of work, was defending experimentation against current official orthodoxies and developing and important theoretical basis for the Marxist reception of modernism" (77).

[20] Bertolt Brecht, "Popularity and Realism," translated by Stuart Hood. *Aesthetics and Politics*, with an afterword by Fredric Jameseon (London: Verso, 2007), 82.

[21] Bertolt Brecht, "On the Formalistic Character of the Theory of Realism," translated by Stuart Hood. *Aesthetics and Politics*, with an afterword by Fredric Jameson (London: Verso, 2007), 73.

[22] Bertolt Brecht, "The Threepenny Trial," *Brecht on Film and Radio*, edited and translated by Marc Silberman (London: Methuen, 2000), 165.

[23] For more about the development of epic theatre, particularly its relationship to Marxism, cf. Eugene Lunn's *Marxism and Modernism*, 91-127.

[24] Brecht, "The Epic Theatre and Its Difficulties," *Brecht on Theatre*, 23.

[25] Brecht, "The Epic Theatre is the Modern Theatre." *Brecht on Theatre*, 37.

[26] Brecht, "The Epic Theatre and Its Difficulties," *Brecht on Theatre*, 23.

[27] Brecht, "The Use of Music in the Epic Theatre," *Brecht on Theatre*, 86.

[28] My discussion of *verfremdungseffekt* and *gestus* here necessarily focuses on their relationship to psychological representation. For a broader discussion of these concepts within epic theatre, cf. Brecht's "A Short Organum for Theatre" (*Brecht On Theatre*), 179-208. For a discussion of the relationship of *verfremdungseffekt* and *gestus* to other theories of aesthetic alienation, particularly Viktor Shklovsky's *ostranenie* or 'defamiliarization,' cf. Douglas Robinson's *Estrangement and the Somatics of Literature: Tolstoy, Shklovsky, Brecht* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2008), 167-234.

[29] To Brecht, epic theatre and Stanislavksi's "method" acting were philosophically and pragmatically opposed. But like epic theatre and Vsevolod Meyerhold's "biomechanical" theories of performance, Stanislavski's "method" also drew on Pavlovian physiology. Furthermore, as Joseph Roach explains in *The Player's Passion* (Cranbury: Associated UP, 1985), the method used subjective phenomena such as "affective memory" to re-experience old physiological stimuli. To Stanlislavski, drawing on one's memories was a way of drawing on one's history of reflex conditioning and inhibition. For more on the relationship between Stanislavski's method and stimulus-response physiology, cf. *The Player's Passion*, 195-226; Jonathan Pitches, *Science and the Stanislavski Tradition of Acting* (London: Routledge, 2005), 48-76.

[30] Brecht, "Alienation Effects in Chinese Acting," *Brecht on Theatre*, 91.

[31] Bertolt Brecht, *Die Dreigroschenprozess, Brecht on Film and Radio*. Translated and edited by Marc Silberman (London: Methuen, 2000), 147.

[32] Ibid, 171.

[33] Ibid, 172.

[34] Walter Benjamin, "What is Epic Theatre," *Understanding Brecht* (London: Verso, 1998), 10.

[35] R Darren Gorbert, "Cognitive Catharsis in the *Caucasian Chalk Circle*." Modern Drama 491: 1 (Spring 2006), 13. Gorbert is opposing Brecht's epic theatre to the theatrical work of Soviet director Vsevolod Meyerhold, who incorporated Pavlovian neurophysiology into his "biomechanics" of performance. Like Stanislavski, Meyerhold argued that the performance of affect could not be separated from the performer's physiological state. But where Stanislavski's method asked actors to prepare their performances through psychological introspection, Meyerhold physically manipulated the bodies of his performers to produce the desired effects. For more on Meyerhold's biomechanics, cf. Jonathan Pitches's *Vsevolod Meyerhold* (London: Routledge, 2003) and Alma Law's *Meyerhold, Eisenstein, and Biomechanics: Actor Training in Revolutionary Russia* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 1996).

[36] For other studies that understand epic theatre as fundamentally behavioristic, or that fail to acknowledge the tension between the goals of epic theatre and the methods of behavioristic psychology, cf. Martin Esslin, *Brecht: The Man and His Work* (New York, Norton: 1974), 43; Albrecht Schone, "Bertolt Brecht, Theatertheorie und Dramatische Dichtung" (quoted in White, 249); Hans Jurgen Rosenbaum, *Brecht und der Behaviorismus* (Hamburg: Gehlen, 1970).

   In *Bertolt Brecht and the Theory of Media* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1989), Roswitha Mueller argues that Brecht's *lehrstucke* ("learning pieces") were partly derived from Pavlovian physiology. Like epic theatre, the *lehrstucke* aimed at encouraging spectators to engage in political action. But unlike epic theatre, the *lehrstucke* were not full-length plays and had neither a strict distinction between spectator and audience nor a fixed script. Together, epic theatre and the learning plays speak to how Brecht understood the theater itself as a pedagogical form. For more on the *lehrstucke*, cf. Brecht's "Theatre for Pleasure or Theatre for Instruction" (*Brecht on Theatre*, 69-76) and Eugene Lunn's "Marxism and Art in the Era of Stalin and Hitler: A Comparison of Brecht and Lukács," *New German Critique* 3 (Autumn 1974), 12-44.

[37] John Willet, *The Theatre of Bertolt Brecht: A Study from Eight Aspects* (New York: New Directions, 1959), 175.

[38] Steve Giles, *Bertolt Brecht and Critical theory: Marxism, Modernity, and the Threepenny Lawsuit* (Bern: Peter Lang AG, 1997), 73.

[39] Bertolt Brecht, "The Threepenny Trial," *Brecht on Film and Radio*, edited and translated by Marc Silberman (London: Methuen, 2000), 265, note 20.

[40] Otto Neurath, "Empirical Sociology: The Scientific Content of History and Political Economy," *Empiricism and Sociology*, edited by Marie Neurath and Robert Sonne Cohen; translated by Paul Foulkes and Marie Neurath (Boston: D. Reidel, 1973), 361-2.

[41] Steve Giles, "Bertolt Brecht, Logical Empiricism and Social Behaviourism," *Modern Language Review* 90.1 (January 1995), 90.

[42] Wolfgang Kohler, *Intelligenzprufungen an anthropoiden*. Berlin: Koniglich akademie der wissenschaften, 1917. Kohler's book was translated into English as *The Mentality of Apes* (New York: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1925).

[43] Cf. *The Mentality of Apes*, 219-231, and Thorndike's *Animal Intelligence* (New York: Macmillan, 1911), 76-92 and 189-215.

[44] Editorial review, *Zeitschrift fur Psychologie und Physiologie der Sinnesorgane* 89 (1922), 367.

[45] "Literaturberichte: Psychologie, *Erkentnnis* 5 (1925), 45-50.

[46] Bertolt Brecht, *Mann ist Mann*, *Bertolt Brecht: Gesammelte Werke, Band 1* (Frankfurt am Main:: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1968), 336.

[47] Bertolt Brecht, *Man Equals Man*, from *Man Equals Man and the Elephant Calf*, edited and translated by Ralph Manheim and John Willett (New York: Arcade, 2000), 38.

[48] Brecht, *Mann ist Mann*, Suhrkamp Verlag, 376.

[49] Ibid, 330. My translation.

[50] Ibid, 314. My translation.

[51] Ibid, 317. My translation.
[52] Bertolt Brecht, *Die Dreigroschenoper*, *Versuche 1-12*, (Berlin: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1959), 147.

[53] Bertolt Brecht, *The Threepenny Opera*. Translated by Eric Bentley (New York: Grove, 1960), 5-6.

[54] Bertolt Brecht, *Die Dreigroschenoper,* 149.

[55] Bertolt Brecht, *The Threepenny Opera*, 10.

[56] In 1944, Wright published "I Tried to Be a Communist" in the August issue of *The Atlantic* (Vol. 174, No. 2). The narrative presented would later become part of *Black Boy*.

[57] Richard Wright, "Blueprint for Negro Writing," *Richard Wright Reader*, edited by Michel Fabre (New York: Harper and Row, 1978) 40.

[58] Peter Jack, "Life in America," *The New York Times*, 3 March 1940. Accessed on 10 February 2011: http://www.nytimes.com/books/97/07/06/home/history-son.html?scp=1&sq=peter%20jack%20native%20son&st=cse

[59] *Native Son*'s relationship to the conventions of naturalism is part of an ongoing conversation. For Michael Davitt Bell, comparing *Native Son* to naturalism comprises an oversimplification. As he explained in "African-American Writing, 'Protest,' and the Burden of Naturalism," "In technical or formal terms, determinism is not the most significant hallmark of naturalism" (*Culture, Genre, and Literary Vocation: selected essays on American Literature.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001, p194). Instead, it was the ideological distance between the novel's narrator and its characters. In this way, a novel such as *Native Son*, which employed "the Negro" as "subjective center of understanding" rather than merely "brute" and "inarticulate other," pushed strongly against naturalism's conventions. For Michel Fabre, the problem is less nuanced. Any comparisons to naturalism, he suggested in *The World of Richard Wright* (Oxford: University of Mississippi Press, 1987), were largely undue. Writing that Wright "probably did not even know of Herbert Spencer, the true philosophical cornerstone of American naturalism," Fabre sees Marxism overshadowing any of *Native Son*'s similarities to naturalist writing. To Wright, he explains, he continues, "the fittest were the productive workers, not the parasitic upper classes. Insofar as he was a Marxist, 'the organized exercise of the social will' meant the liquidation of the bourgeoisie" (57).

       More recently, Michael Szalay has aligned *Native Son* not with naturalism but rather sentimentalism—including the latter's affective agenda. In *New Deal Modernism* (Duke, 2000), Szalay rejects Baldwin's criticisms of the novel but builds on Baldwin's allusions to Harriet Beacher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Baldwin's interpretation, Szalay writes, does "not ring true with *Native Son*. But at the same time, the novel does work within the orbit of sentimental fiction, specifically within the spectral politics sympathy mentioned above. Wright's sentimental fantasy of weeping bankers' daughters is simply displaced into his novel: Mary Dalton is exactly the kind of reader Wright says he wishes not to bring to tears" (208).

[60] Douglas Mao, *Fateful Beauty: Aesthetic Environments, Juvenile Development, and Literature, 1860-1960* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2007), 260.

[61] Richard Wright, "How Bigger Was Born," *Native Son* (New York: Harper Perennial Classics, 2005), 462.

[62] In *Behavioism and Logical Positivism: A Reassessment of the Alliance* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1986), Laurence Smith suggests that Bertrand Russell's *The Analysis of Mind* (1921) brought Watsonian behaviorism to the logical positivists, where it was drawn on by Rudolf Carnap as well as sociologist Otto Neurath (60-1). Unlike Russell, Carnap and Neurath were unbothered by Watson's categorical rejection of consciousness. See also Carnap's "Psychology in Physical Language" (1932) in *Logical Positivism*, edited by AJ Ayer (New York: Free Press, 1959).

[63] John Watson and Rosalie Rayner, "Conditioned Emotional Reactions," *Journal of Experimental Psychology* 3.1 (February 1920), 14.

[64] Watson, *Behaviorism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1930), 82.

[65] Richard Wright, *Native Son* (New York: Harper Perennial Classics, 2005), 15.

[66] Ibid, 28.

[67] Ibid, 47-8.

[68] Ibid, 73.

[69] Ibid, 280.

[70] Ibid, 281.

[71] Ibid, 400.

[72] James Baldwin, "Many Thousands Gone", *Notes on a Native Son.* Boston: Beacon Hill, 1984, 40.

[73] Frederic Wertham, "An Unconscious Determinant in *Native Son*," *Journal of Clinical Psychopathology and Psychotherapy* 6, July 1944, 111-120).

[74] Houston Baker, "Richard Wright and the Dynamics of Place in African American Literature." *New Essays on Native Son* (Cambridge UP, 1990), 112.

[75] Richard Wright, "How Bigger Was Born," in *Native Son* (New York: Harper Perennial Classics, 2005), 437.

[76] Richard Wright, *Black Boy* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1998) 196.

[77] Wright, "How Bigger Was Born," 446-447.

[78] Aversive stimuli, B.F. Skinner explained in *Science and Human Behavior*, induced behaviors far more easily extinguished than those conditioned through positive stimuli. See *Science and Human Behavior* (New York: Free Press, 1953), 45-106 and 171-194.

[79] Wright, "How Bigger Was Born," 446.

[80] Harold Cruse, *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual: A Historical Analysis of the Failure of Black Leadership* (New York: New York Review of Books Press, 1967), 182.

[81] Daniel Aaron, "Richard Wright and the Communist Party," *Richard Wright: Perspectives and Impressions*, edited by David Ray and Robert Farnsworth (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1871), 41.

[82] Cedric Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1983).

[83] *Black Marxism*, 297.

[84] Wright, "How Bigger Was Born," 456.

[85] Ibid, 456.

[86] Wright, *Black Boy*, 250.

[87] Very little critical work has been done on the relationship between Wright and Stein. An exception is M. Lynn Weiss's *Gertrude Stein and Richard Wright: The Poetics and Politics of Modernism* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 1998). Weiss's study, however, almost entirely neglects the topics of literary psychology and physiology (which are my concerns here). Additionally, it largely neglects *Native Son*.

[88] Richard Wright, review of Gertrude Stein's *Wars I Have Seen*, *The Richard Wright Reader*,), 75-76.

[89] Wright, review of *Wars I Have Seen*, 76.

[90] Wright, *Black Boy*, 280.

[91] Ibid, 280.

[92] St. Clair Drake and Horace Cayton, *Black Metropolis: A Study of Negro Life in a Northern City* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), xxxi.

[93] Several critics have convincingly demonstrated Gertrude Stein's interest in neuroscience and the bearing it had on her career. See Michael Trask's *Cruising Modernism: Class and Sexuality in American Literature and Social Thought* (Ithaca:

Cornell UP, 2003), 74-107; and Steven Meyer's *Irresistible Dictation: Gertrude Stein and the Correlations of Writing and Science* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2003).

[94] Wright, review of *Wars I Have Seen*, 76.

[95] Ibid, 76.

[96] Wright, *Black Boy*, 321.

[97] Ibid, 320.

[98] Wright, *Native Son*, 3.

[99] Georg Lukacs, *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics*, translated by Rodney Livingstone (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1972), 51.

4   Coetzee, Colonialism, and the Cognitive Revolution

In the fiction of JM Coetzee, philosophy of mind and colonialism are inexorably linked. A moment in *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1981) identifies this with some force. The novel's narrator, a colonial administrator known only as the Magistrate, is describing his encounter with a colonized woman.

> There is no link I can define between her womanhood and my desire. I cannot even say for sure that I desire her. All this erotic behaviour of mine is indirect: I prowl about her, touching her face, caressing her body, without entering her or finding the urge to do so. I have just come from the bed of a woman for whom, in the year I have known her, I have not for a moment had to interrogate my desire…But with this woman it is as if there is no interior, only a surface across which I hunt back and forth seeking entry. Is this how her torturers felt hunting their secret, whatever they thought it was?[1]

The narrator has no trouble having sex with white prostitutes. The colonized woman, however, is a different matter. Her lack of "interior" defamiliarizes his own desires—"I cannot even say for sure that I desire her"—and introspection fails him. He meditates on the relationship between covert and overt phenomena: between surface and interiority, between mental states and behaviors ("all this erotic behaviour of mine is indirect"). Her interiority is categorically unknowable; sex with her is analogous to the police interrogation that crippled her and, as we learn from the rest of the novel, analogous to colonial expansion itself. The unknowability of the colonized woman seems to produce a crisis in the narrator's own claims to self-knowledge.

This moment is fairly typical of Coetzee's novels. The encounter with the inscrutable colonized figure—be it the Namaqua people in *Dusklands* (1975), Friday in *Foe* (1986), or Petrus in *Disgrace* (1999)—disables the colonizer's habits of mind. Critics have attributed this acquired disability to a number of causes. For Sam Durrant, the reasons are primarily philosophical: "Repeated contact with the physical body of the other," he writes, "with that which marks the limits of their own minds, would seem to induce a certain stupor, a suspension of the will, and a mysterious but overpowering tiredness."[2] For Derek Attridge the reasons are more socio-economic than philosophical; Coetzee's fiction is less about the problem of other minds, we're told, than the problem of other races and backgrounds. In *Disgrace*, he explains, the character of Petrus "remains almost entirely inscrutable…as so often in Coetzee's fiction, the racially or socially privileged character can gain virtually no understanding of the inner world of the other who has been excluded from such privilege."[3] Whether the reasoning is philosophical or sociological, we're told that Coetzee's colonizers are destroyed from the inside out by the unknowability of the colonized. It's an old story: Mr. Kurtz sails to the inner station and loses his mind.

I want to suggest, however, that the opposite is true: that such behavioristic crises of mind are not *produced* by the colonial encounter. Instead, they are what Coetzee sees as the encounter's philosophical foundations. Such problems of mind made the colonial encounter possible in the first place. Upon visiting a foreign land, the colonizer gazes at indigenous peoples only and comes to one of two conclusions. Either he concludes that they have no psychological interiority or he projects his own onto the colonized.

The problem with this, Coetzee's novels tell us, is that either conclusion results from an incorrect understanding of behavior's relationship to mental states. Therefore, any factual

knowledge the colonizer has about the colonized mind is a *fiction*. The empirical problems of

knowing minds, these novels argue, apply to everyone equally and can only be circumvented

through fictional invention. Like his colonizing characters, Coetzee's novels are paralyzed by

their own relationship to the colonial world. Denied access to the mind of the colonized, they

either deny her psychological interiority or create it for her. In this sphere the responsibilities of

fiction and colonialism come from the same set of philosophical problems.

To talk about these problems, we needn't be behaviorists ourselves. Instead, we need to

establish *how* behavioristic ideas came to be able to occupy these two positions in Coetzee's

work. We need a history of ideas that connects philosophy of mind to both Coetzee's ideas about

colonialism and his anxieties about what fiction can represent. The best place to start, I think, is

the cognitive revolution and Coetzee's response to it: his dissertation in computational

linguistics, *The English Fiction of Samuel Beckett*. The problem of knowing minds, of tying

behaviors to mental states, Coetzee argued, were not solved by Chomsky's nativist ideas about

language. These problems were endemic to human behavior—and therefore to language as well.

Towards these ends, the rest of this chapter is in three parts. In the first part I examine

Coetzee's dissertation as a behaviorist response to the cognitive revolution. Following Noam

Chomsky's theory of an innate generative grammar in the late 1950s and early 1960s, a number

of literary critics argued that literary style was an operation within grammatical transformation,

such that style itself could be understood as an index of mental states. For Coetzee, however, the

cognitive revolution did not alleviate behaviorist skepticism about the accessibility of

consciousness through language. Performing a computational analysis of Beckett's *Watt* (1943),

Coetzee concluded that the disjunction between covert mental states and overt behaviors was

endemic to literary language and form. In the second section, I look at two of Coetzee's

novel's—*Dusklands* and *Foe*—and explore how they imagine this behavioristic disjunction at the center of both literary production and colonial expansion. In *Dusklands*'s paired novellas, a young writer loses access to his own mind while writing anti-Vietcong propaganda—and a diary is discovered that narrates the atrocities committed by "Jacobus Coetzee" in the colonial settling of South Africa. In *Foe*, narrator Susan Barton struggles simultaneously with the unknowable intentions of both mute manservant Friday as well as what fiction can be expected to represent and fictionalize. These novels demonstrate how the surmised absence of the colonized mind comprises a justification for colonization. Furthermore, *Foe* in particular suggests that the role of the novel is not to circumvent these problems—to know other minds, to see from other perspectives—but rather to experience their impossibility directly. In the third and final section, I discuss the implications of these ideas through a discussion of Coetzee's most recent novel, *Summertime* (2009). Written as a posthumous biography of the writer "John Coetzee," *Summertime* offers a bleak picture of the postcolonial writer's life—and, like *Dusklands* and *Foe*, pitches the future of the novel against the problem of other minds.

Styles of Thought

Noam Chomsky's 1959 review of B.F.Skinner's *Verbal Behavior* (1957) was a turning point in the modern sciences of mind—and, as we shall see later on, in the literary criticism of J.M. Coetzee. Chomsky had already begun advancing his theory of generative grammar in *Syntactic Structures* (1957): "Assuming the set of grammatical English sentences to be given," he wrote, "we now ask what sort of device can produce this set (equivalently, what sort of theory gives an adequate account of the structure of this set)."[4] Beneath the grammar of every language, he argued, was a native cognitive apparatus that generated these language-specific grammars, which

were necessarily extrapolations—or transformations—of the apparatus's own rules and organization.

It was through Chomsky's review of Skinner, then the figurehead of psychological behaviorism, that this argument gained notoriety and that Chomsky made his career. Following the success of *Science and Human Behavior* (1953), which argued that most socioeconomic ills could be cured through programmatic conditioning, *Verbal Behavior* extended psychological behaviorism to language use and acquisition. As Skinner wrote in *Verbal Behavior*, "The final responsibility" for understanding language, he wrote, lies not with literary criticism or linguistics, but "with the behavioral sciences, and particularly with psychology. What happens when a man speaks or responds to speech is clearly a question about human behavior and hence a question to be answered with the concepts and techniques of psychology as an experimental science of behavior."[5] The reason for this was that language, according to Skinner, was first and foremost a *behavior*—an overt action that bore no necessary correlation to mental states. Falling in line with John Watson and Gilbert Ryle, *Verbal Behavior* would push against "the belief that speech has an independent existence apart from the behavior of the speaker" (7).[6] As behaviors, instances of language use could be increased in frequency through positive reinforcement or extinguished through contradictory conditioning. "Any operant [voluntary acquired behavior], verbal or otherwise," Skinner wrote, "acquires strength and continues to be maintained in strength when responses are frequently followed by the event called 'reinforcement'…A response must appear at least once before it is strengthened by reinforcement. It does not follow, however, that all the complex forms of adult behavior are in the child's unconditioned repertoire."[7] Children have no inborn way of asking for food. The way a child learns to ask for food is by being repeatedly coaxed into uttering "food" and then receiving a reward. This builds

an association not only between the word "food" and its reference but also between the operant of saying "food" and the social interaction by which food is acquired. As a child grew, such verbal operants would grow in complexity—from "food" to "I would like some food"—but even more complicated instances of the behavior would still be based in schedules of reinforcement. Children, Skinner continued, were not unlike pigeons learning to peck a button or raise a wing for a bit of birdseed.[8] With enough reinforcement, both child and bird would learn the mechanism of voluntary communication.

The problem with this theory of language acquisition, Chomsky wrote in his review, was that it was contradicted by the evidence. Putting forth what he would later identify as the "Poverty of the Stimulus Argument" (*Rules and Representations*, 1964), Chomsky argued that children were capable of producing and understanding verbal utterances they had never encountered before. This meant two things. First, it meant that children were deducing linguistic information from a source other than the "stimulus"—the words, phrases, and structures they had seemingly learned through conditioning. Second, if children had such deductive abilities independent of experience and education, then the ability to make sense of new linguistic structures must be somehow inborn. As Chomsky concluded the review (in an excerpt worth quoting at length),

> The fact that all normal children acquire essentially comparable grammars of great complexity with remarkable rapidity suggests that human beings are somehow specially designed to do this, with data-handling or "hypothesis-formulating" ability of unknown character and complexity. At any rate, just as the attempt to eliminate the contribution of the speaker leads to a "mentalistic" descriptive system that succeeds only in blurring important traditional distinctions, a refusal to study the contribution of the child to

language learning permits only a superficial account of language acquisition, with a vast

and unanalyzed contribution attributed to a step called generalization which in fact

includes just about everything of interest in this process. If the study of language is

limited in these ways, it seems inevitable that major aspects of verbal behavior will

remain a mystery.[9]

Effectively, these lines proclaim the end of behaviorism and the beginning of what would be

called computational linguistics and cognitive science—fundamentally nativist approaches to the

brain in contrast to behaviorism's strict empiricism. The verbal behaviors of a child could only

be explained by appealing to innate mental structures, even if those structures were not fully

known or even knowable. Ignoring such structures, or pretending they did not exist, guaranteed

that language acquisition would "remain a mystery." Forty-four years after John Watson's

reaction against structuralist introspection, behaviorism's intervention within psychology—and

expansion into philosophy, sociology, and literary criticism—began to collapse beneath its own

weight.

But how do we get from the poverty of the stimulus and generative grammar to

literature? How might these theories translate into literary criticism—particularly Coetzee's

dissertation, *The English Fiction of Samuel Beckett: An Essay in Stylistic Analysis*? Some help

with this translation came from Chomsky himself. As Coetzee explained in the dissertation's

conclusion, critics interested in style—in why one word or syntax is chosen and another is not—

could not ignore linguistics' theoretical upheaval. "There has been something of a philosophical

revolution in linguistics, led by Noam Chomsky," he explained, "against logical empiricism and

in favor of a revived Cartesianism in which the 'mental act' is distinct from the verbal act."[10]

Indeed, in *Cartesian Linguistics* (1964), Chomsky himself had begun to gesture towards toward

literature and linguistic creativity more broadly. Positioning himself within a philosophical

tradition going back to Descartes, Chomsky cited Descartes's argument that linguistic creativity

was how humans attribute mind to other humans but not to animals.[11] **"It is the diversity of

human behavior,"** he wrote, "its appropriateness to new situations, and man's capacity to

innovate—the creative aspect of language use providing the principal indication of this—that

leads Descartes to attribute possession of mind to other humans, since he regards this capacity as

beyond the limitations of any imaginable mechanism."[12] The creative use of language, he

claimed, was inherent to the structure of language itself. Furthermore, Chomsky argued that all

instances of creative art—whether literature, painting, or music—were made possible by

language's generative and recursive capacities.[13] "Poetry is unique," he continued, in that

> its medium, language, is a system with unbounded innovative potentialities for the
>
> formation and expression of ideas. The production of any work of art is preceded by a
>
> creative mental act for which the means are provided by language. Thus the creative use
>
> of language, which, under certain conditions of form and organization, constitutes poetry,
>
> accompanies and underlies any act of the creative imagination, no matter what the
>
> medium in which it is realized.[14]

Translating linguistics into literary criticism, however, was less a product of Chomsky's

efforts and more a product of the efforts by stylistic critics such as Donald Freeman and Richard

Ohmann. As Freeman explained, earlier linguistic theories—such as Bloomfieldian linguistics—

were "rigorously and at times nearly behavioristic…To refer to a given literary effect as a

'stimulus,' with the philosophical commitments inherent in such a term, is to do violence to the

very nature of literature."[15] In contrast, Chomsky's generative grammar performed no such

violence—and even justified, or at least gestured toward, the stylistic approach exemplified by

Leo Spitzer in the 1940s and 50s. Building on Spitzer's *Zirkelschluss*, or hermeneutic circle,

Freeman, Ohmann and others would extend Spitzer's method through the theoretical apparatus

of Chomsky's generative grammar. In some ways, this is a move that Spitzer's *Linguistics and*

Literary History (1962) anticipated. As Spitzer explained, the method of the hermeneutic

circle—by which one deduced "a common denominator…the common spiritual etymon, the

psychological root, of several individual 'traits of style'"—was explicitly anti-behavioristic.[16]

Bypassing any concerns about authorial intention, Spitzer insisted that the circle allowed one to

establish the "pseudo-objective motivation" of a text—to use style as an index of the author's

mind. This method, he explained, was not without detractors. "A very understanding but critical

ex-student of mine, an American," Spitzer wrote, once sent his former teacher the following

letter: "To establish a behavioristic technique which would reveal the application of your method

is, it seems to me, beyond your abilities. You know the principles that motivate you, rather than

any 'technique' that you rigorously follow…At every second you are making choices, but you

hardly know that you make them: what seems right to you must be immediately right."[17]

Spitzer's response to this quasi-behavioristic criticism was blunt: "These words," he wrote,

"offer a picture of the limitations of a particular individual temperament…The solution attained

by means of the circular operation cannot be subjected to a rigorous rationale because, at its most

perfect, this is a negation of steps."[18] To Spitzer, questions of objectivity were hardly the

point—and were a distraction from deducing the aforementioned "psychological root" of the

text.

　　　　To Freeman and Ohmann, this "psychological root" was analogous—if not partly

synonymous—with Chomsky's generative grammar. If every possible sentence was a product of

a generative set of linguistic rules and dispositions, then *style* was necessarily a product of that generative apparatus. And if style was an expression of particular linguistic rules, it could then be used to infer the content of those rules. In Ohmann's hands, the concept of generative grammar therefore became a key theoretical supposition in the analysis of literary texts. As he explained in "Generative Grammars and Literary Style," "A generative grammar with a transformational component provides apparatus for breaking down a sentence in a stretch of discourse into underlying kernel sentences…and for specifying the grammatical operations that have been performed upon them. It also permits the analyst to construct, from the same set of kernel sentences, other non-kernel sentences."[19] Here, Ohmann's "kernel sentences" are a rough analogue for Chomsky's "deep grammar": the essential logical relationships between syntactic units that are transformed into the "surface grammar" of actual utterances.[20] Deriving the kernel sentence would allow two things. First, it would let the analyst trace the transformation that occurred between the kernel and the sentence in question. Second, it would let her deduce the possible sentences that the author *had not* written—other sentences with the same deep grammar but different surface transformations, which is to say, *styles*.

In *The Style of George Bernard Shaw* (1962), Ohmann presented his work as a synthesis of Spitzer, Chomsky, and Roman Jakobson, suggesting that, "Style, in this view, far from being intellectually peripheral ornament, is what I have called 'epistemic choice,' and the study of style can lead to insight into the writer's most confirmed epistemic stances.[21] Ohmann hedges here ("can lead to"), but the implication is clear. In contrast to a behavioristic close reader who would deny the accessibility of authorial intention, Ohmann's stylistic analysis promises illumination of the author's mental states and "epistemic stances." For Ohmann, stylistic analysis reconstructs the patterns of an author's style into the propositional content of mental states. Which is to say:

different stylistic patterns are caused by different, and discreet, mental attitudes about the world.

Ohmann turns to a particularly paratactic moment from late Shaw (*Everybody's Political What's What,* 1944) as an example: "The lion may lie down with the lamb, or at least cease eating it; but when will the royalist lie down with the republican, the Quaker with the Ritualist, the Deist with the Atheist…"[22] This excerpt from Shaw, Ohmann suggests, indicates that Shaw held those terms in rough equivalence; following the axiom "Proximity implies similarity"[23], the parataxis indexes Shaw's attitude toward a list of objects. Ohmann's analysis is not especially impressive. What matters more is Ohmann's rationale:

> The writer who builds a serial structure chooses each successive member with an eye trained on likenesses; he emphasizes the process of selection (to use Jakobson's term) by reiterating linguistic elements that are formally identical and close to each other in meaning. It hardly seems too much to conjecture that these parallelisms take form under an impulse toward similarity.[24]

It was precisely this "conjecture" that Coetzee sought to test in his dissertation on the style of Beckett's *Watt*. In designing a computer program to analyze *Watt'*s style—including its diction, syntax, rhythm—Coetzee came to conclusions opposite Ohmann's. Ohmann, Coetzee wrote, understood syntax as "the writer's way of ordering experience: the form of the deep structure of a sentence *is* [his emphasis] the form of the thought that the sentence expresses."[25] This position—which, like Chomsky's *Cartesian Linguistics*, might remind us of Jerry Fodor's "language of thought" hypothesis[26]—was not one Coetzee shared. "There is some conflict between Ohmann's (and the generative grammarian's) position and the position I take in

discussing the syntax of *Watt*," Coetzee explained. "I assert that the relation between thought and the syntax of the related printed sentence is associative rather than determinate."[27]

This perhaps seems like a relatively minor disagreement. But the question of whether style was *associated with,* or *determined by*, corresponding mental states cuts to the heart of Ohmann's enterprise—and how he and others incorporated Chomsky into stylistic analysis. Coetzee's dissertation comprised a behavioristic response to the products of the cognitive revolution. If every stylistic pattern was determined by a corresponding mental state or attitude, then a literary critic could conceivably index mental content through style. But if styles were merely associated with mental states, then the relationship between the two was contingent on other factors—such as biography, genre, even capriciousness. To say that the relationship was associative, therefore, was to preclude the possibility of revealing the text's "psychological root." A given mental state could manifest itself in any number of styles; stylistic choices could not be assumed to index particular mental attitudes and dispositions. No correlation between surface and deep grammar, between covert and overt phenomena, could be assumed. And so even with recourse to Chomsky's generative grammar, literary critics had no purchase on the intentions or mental states of authors. As Coetzee explained, "A rule of thumb is beginning to emerge: the more conscious a verbal choice is likely to be, the less amenable it will be to treatment en masse… The furthest we can safely go is to say that they define a kind of syntax which is often associated with interior monologue. This is not yet to say that the syntax is a 'reflection' of some 'real' interior monologue."[28]

The methods Coetzee used to reach this rule of thumb, however, are ones that modern critics might find counterintuitive. Focusing his attention on Beckett's *More Pricks than Kicks*, *Murphy*, and *Watt*, Coetzee—who worked as a programmer for IBM in the early 1960s—

designed a set of algorithms that could parse these texts and analyze the syntactic and stylistic patterns it encountered. The program's goal was not *criticism* per se, he explained, but to reveal the stylistic conditions preterit to interpretation. This was done in the spirit of objectivity and, more specific to the sort of criticism offered by Ohmann and Freeman, inductive reasoning. Rather than starting deductively from axia and theoretical accounts of language, this analysis would begin from actual linguistic utterances and extrapolate rules and laws from those utterances. "Insofar as [this] essay attempts to satisfy all the reasonable expectations a reader might have of an essay on Beckett's style," Coetzee wrote,

> it proceeds inductively toward generalizations about style. Insofar as it employs techniques of stylistic analysis derived from other critic' axiomatic approaches to style, and tests the conclusions they yield against conclusions that could reasonable be drawn using alternative techniques, it tests the various axiomatic approaches to style.[29]

On these grounds, Coetzee's program would analyze both phenomena such as word-choice and the recurrence of particular syntactic forms. The stylostatistical inquiry into word-choice was presented in a sequence of figures, such as the following:

	No. of once-words	As percentage of vocabulary
More Pricks ("Dante")	243	71.2
Murphy	233	69.1
Watt	126	53.4
"An Abandoned Work"	183	61.4

J.M. Coetzee, *The English Fiction of Samuel Beckett: An Essay in Stylistic Analysis*, 127.

This table represents a comparative stylostatistical analysis of once-used words in "Dante and the Lobster" (from *More Pricks Than Kicks*), *Murphy*, *Watt*, and "An Abandoned Work."[30] The chart speaks to *Watt* as a stylistic and statistical anomaly compared to Beckett's other fiction in English. (Beckett's *Mercier et Camier*, from 1946, and the trilogy of novels *Molloy, Malone Dies,* and *The Unnamable* were all originally written in French.) In "Dante and the Lobster" and *Murphy*, once-used words comprised around 70% of each text's demonstrated lexicon. In "An Abandoned Work," a piece Beckett wrote for BBC radio in 1957, these words account for about 60% of the lexicon. But in *Watt*, they comprise only 53.4%—roughly 25% less than *Murphy* or "Dante." Such results, Coetzee explained, are not especially surprising; they reflect the experiences that many readers might have with these texts. "These figures," he wrote, "reflect again the higher degree of repetition in *Watt*…They also reflect the existence in *More Pricks Than Kicks* and *Murphy* of words extremely infrequent in English…which have no function in the plot. Their rarity makes, in most cases, for verbal wit. Their wit, together with their lack of function in the plot, ensures that they will not be repeated."[31] But what generative principles do these results signify? Is "verbal wit" a phenomenon analogous to Chomsky's generative grammar? Is repetition?

Not really, no. There were a number of problems with this type of analysis, Coetzee claimed. Logically, the repetition of certain words failed to demonstrate an underlying generative principle. If anything, it demonstrated only a tendency for certain words to be repeated more than others. This overt tendency to repeat certain words was not enough to infer a covert principle causing all instances of such repetition. Additionally, focusing on word-choice, he confessed, had taken him "perilously close"[32] to Spitzerian poetics. The trouble with Spitzer's analyses was that they understood diction to index the "psychological root" of a text. There were two key

differences, then, between Coetzee's work and Spitzer's. First was Coetzee's behavioristic

skepticism. "I too am looking for an etymon," he explained, "but I see no need to introduce the

writer's psyche into the investigation (in fact I do not see why Spitzer logically needed to): the

etymon I am looking for is linguistic."[33] Furthermore, the search for the "generative principle

behind *Watt*" should not focus on "the vocabulary, which has never been shown to be more than

slightly determinate, but in the nexus logic-grammar-rhythm."[34] With its repetition of not only

words but phrases and logical constructions and rhythms, *Watt* would seem to lend itself to this

type of analysis. To Coetzee, a paragraph in *Watt* about Knott sending Watt and Erskine on

errands ("Perhaps Mr Knott sends him now upstairs, and now downstairs, on this errand and that,

saying, But hasten back to me"), had syntactic and logical structures that were nearly identical.

"The paragraph," Coetzee wrote, is "logically constructed in the perfectly reasonable sense that it

represents such a shortest possible ordering. And if we turn to the syntax of the paragraph, we

find it remarkably close in shape to the logical structure."[35] The organizing principle of this

paragraph's style, Coetzee argued, seemed to be its logical linearity. Representing Watt's

frustratingly logical thought processes, the paragraph makes no logical jumps and requires no

such inferences from its readers. Surface phenomena seem to correspond to deep logical

relationships between objects. Could deductive logic succeed as a generative stylistic principle

where verbal wit and word repetition had failed?

Here, too, Coetzee's answer was no. True, this analysis established a relationship

between sets—between surface phenomena and covert principles. But to say that it established

logic as a *generative* principle was to confuse deep grammar with generative grammar and to

confuse correlation with causation. There was nothing empirical in the text that allowed one to

infer that deductive logic *determined* the surface grammar. "There is no demonstrable relation of

cause between state of mind and syntactic device," Coetzee concluded.[36] The reason for this, he explained, was the very nature of conventional language-use (particularly literary language). "The tenor of my objections," we read,

> is that the relation between syntax and what we understand to be the thought that produces it depends on our experience of the kinds of syntax and the kinds of meaning that usually occur together, as well as on literary convention. There are not thus invisible extension cords from modes of thought or perception, into which a writer can plug his pen in order to produce the syntactic graph of the mode. In particular the language of Watt's reflection is not a magic correlative of logical thought, but rather the kind of language, particularly in its syntactic patterns, which we most often associate with logical thought, perhaps because we have found it efficient in expressing logical thought.[37]

This is Coetzee's fullest explanation of the stakes in syntax having either a determinate or associate relationship to mental states. In order to establish a determinate relationship, we would need "invisible extension cords" between text and authorial consciousness—which is precisely what we don't have. Instead, we have empirical evidence of association, both in terms of the kinds of syntax that frequently appear with particular thoughts and with certain literary conventions. The disjunction between mental state and form, Coetzee seems to be arguing, is endemic to literature and unavoidable.

But while such disjunction is endemic to literature, it is not exclusive to it. Indeed, Coetzee's empirically-minded objections to stylistics are specific to literary form but also indicative of a more general cynicism about the tying of behaviors to mental states. The disjunction between form and mental state is endemic to literature because it is endemic to

language and behavior as defined by psychological and logical behaviorism. And to say that any behavior indexes mental states—whether that behavior is written text, spoken word, or gesture—is to run afoul of behaviorism's foundational axiom. As Coetzee wrote, "The habits of a writer's mind can only be a metaphor for habits (or patterns) of the text."[38] This is not to say that "mind" does not exist but rather that any mental content seemingly adduced from textual phenomena is at best a figurative approximation of actual mental states. These behavioristic objections to Ohmann and Spitzer therefore draw us in a strange circle: where Chomsky's review of Skinner seemingly defeated behaviorism's account of language acquisition, Coetzee's dissertation brings the weight of logical behaviorism down on Chomsky's literary acolytes. Indeed, Coetzee's objections to Ohmann et al run parallel to some of the observations we encounter in Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* (1953). "Suppose," Wittgenstein explained in a fairly famous example,

> everyone had a box with something in it: we call it a 'beetle.' No one can look into anyone else's box, and everyone says he knows what a beetle is only by looking at *his* beetle.—Here it would be quite possible for everyone to have something different in his box. One might even imagine such a thing constantly changing."[39]

In addition to serving as an argument against the existence of so-called "private languages" (which Jerry Fodor criticized in *The Language of Thought*), the type of disjunction between the utterance of "beetle" and the private object in the box is a familiar one. We have no surefire way of tying the verbal behavior, whether it's "beetle" or a written text, to a particular mental state. (Here, the mind of the person holding the box is imagined as a perfect reflection of that box's contents.) Through agreed-upon conventions, language can largely circumvent—but not solve—

this disjunction between behavior and mental state. The existence of other people's mental states

is not doubted, per se, but the content of such mental states is still unknown. And as we shall see

in the following section, this is precisely the problem that Coetzee's novels *Dusklands* and *Foe*

examine, where this disjunction is portrayed as not only as inherent to literature but also to

colonial life.

The Peoples of Our Interior

For most critics, however, the inherent disjunction between mind and behavior, between

language and mental state, is not the philosophical problem raised by Coetzee's fiction. Instead,

as I mentioned before, most critics have focused on how the colonial encounter *produces*

psychological and philosophical problems—rather than the problems that might cause the

encounter. David Atwell's argument about *Dusklands* is largely indicative of these efforts:

"Elements of mainstream philosophical traditions become fictionalized as part of the 'content' of

the reflecting consciousness of the [novel's] narrators…Coetzee selectively raids the traditions of

Western philosophy so as to position them within the colonial situation, as a way of dramatizing

the subject-constitution implied by the colonial encounter."[40] Looking to *Dusklands*, and later on

to *Foe,* my argument here is the opposite. Coetzee's novels translate the behavioristic disjunction

between style and mental state into models of colonial history and literary form. Characters do

not have trouble with other minds and self-knowledge because of colonialism. Instead, such

problems preexist the colonial encounter and suggest that colonialism itself might have origins in

the disjunction between behavior and mental state.

But on the surface, *Dusklands* does seem to conform to Atwell's argument. In its paired

novellas, "The Vietnam Project" and "The Narrative of Jacobus Coetzee," the book presents us

with two male colonizers who both seem to suffer mental breakdowns because of their

encounters with the colonized. In "The Vietnam Project," Department of Defense propaganda specialist Eugene Dawn has a nervous breakdown after writing a report called "New Life for Vietnam." In "The Narrative," humiliated settler Coetzee slaughters dozens, if not hundreds, of indigenous Namaqua tribespeople in a psychotic (yet meticulous) rage. Debra Castillo simplifies the novel up thusly: "'The Vietnam Project' narrates an unstable humanist's mental breakdown following his questionable contribution to the American military efforts in Vietnam; the second, 'The Narrative of Jacobus Coetzee,' tells of the meaningless wanderings and senseless butchery perpetuated by an illiterate Boer in Namaqualand, colonial South Africa."[41]

Jacobus Coetzee's "butchery," however reprehensible, is not quite senseless. Coetzee justifies it confidently as an act of revenge. Having been humiliated by the Namaqua people, he would now "make them take me more seriously."[42] But in fact the slaughter of the Namaqua and Hottentots stems from a larger set of attitudes about interiority—whether that interiority is geographical or psychological. He explains:

> Behind this familiar red or grey exterior, spoke the stone from its stone heart to mine, this exterior jutting into every dimension inhabited by man, lies in ambush a black interior quite, quite strange to the world. Yet under the explorer's hammerblow this innocent interior transforms itself in a flash into a replete, confident, worldly image of that red or grey interior. How then, asked the stone, can the hammer-wielder who seeks to penetrate the heart of the universe be sure that there exist any interiors? Are they not perhaps fictions, these lures of interiors for rape which the universe uses to draw out its explorers?[43]

The job of explorer or colonizer is understood here precisely in terms of interiority and exteriority. Presented with a world of "familiar red [and] grey" surfaces, his job is to take a hammer to these surfaces—to destroy them and reconstruct them so that their surfaces reflect the interiors that they are imagined to have. Colonization is the process by which the exterior of the colonized is remade to reflect the interior the colonizer thinks he should have—or vice versa. But not every "stone" has an interior and the explorer-colonizer has no way of knowing in advance of what "the hammerblow" will yield. Even if such interiors are "fictions," the "rape" of such interiors—we can think back to the colonized woman in *Waiting for the Barbarians*—still constitutes the explorer's motivation. As Jacobus Coetzee explains after slaughtering the Namaqua, "I am an explorer. My essence is to open what is closed, to bring light to what is dark. If the Hottentots comprise an immense world of delight, it is an impenetrable world, impenetrable to men like me, who must either skirt it, which is to evade our mission, or clear it out of the way."[44] The reason he killed so many Hottentots along with the Namaqua was that they comprised an "impenetrable world…to men like me." As an explorer, his options were to either allow this impenetrable interiority to exist or to destroy it. Unable to bring "light to the dark," he chose the latter.

In "The Narrative of Jacobus Coetzee," the mind of the colonized and the colonized landscape exist in parallel. They stem from the same behavioristic attitude toward the relationship between interior and exterior phenomena: if we cannot see the interior of a rock or a mind, then it follows that this interior might not exist at all. In describing how he killed several Hottentots, this is an idea that Jacobus Coetzee expresses with some sophistication (and not at all meaninglessly or senselessly). "What passes through [the Hottentot's] mind during his last moments," he wonders. "Perhaps he has no mind, perhaps his mind is extraverted as mere

behavior, as they say of the praying mantis?"[45] As the Hottentot mind is inaccessible, Jacobus

Coetzee wonders if it exists at all. The inference of mental states through the observation of

behaviors is not empirically supported. Instead, like Ryle and Watson before him, Coetzee (the

character) hypothesizes that the relationship between the colonized's behavior and so-called

mind might be akin to that of a praying mantis. Worshipped as gods by the Hottentots, female

mantises look as if they're praying. But to colonizing outsider, the inference is that praying

mantises have no concept of faith (or concepts at all). The anthropomorphized behavior belies a

mental state can't be seen. And if can't be seen, it might not be real.

But just as Coetzee denies the "native peoples of our interior"[46] any psychological

interiority, he speculates that they deny him the same. Describing his bout with dysentery and

subsequent humiliation by the Hottentots and the Namaqua, Coetzee explains that

> in the blindest alley of the labyrinth of myself I had hidden myself away, abandoning
>
> mile after mile of defences. The Hottentot assault had been disappointing. It had fallen on
>
> which partook of the labyrinth, by the continuity of my exterior with the interior surface
>
> of my digestive tract. The male body has no inner space. The Hottentots knew nothing of
>
> penetration. For penetration you need blue eyes.[47]

Coetzee's description here elaborates on the polarity between colonizer and colonized. Where

the colonizer has equated the colonized mind's inaccessibility with absence, he understands

himself as comprising almost limitless interiority and depth. While the Namaqua and Hottentots

watched him suffer the agony of dysentery, he withdrew further and further into "the labyrinth of

myself." But "the Hottentot assault" into this labyrinth: lacking psychological interiority

themselves, the natives are unable to perceive or infer the interiority of the colonizer. Instead, all

they saw was "the continuity of my exterior with the interior surface of my digestive tract"—

physiological, rather than psychological, interiority made external. In order to penetrate the male

colonizer—the white, male, colonizing body and mind—one must have "blue eyes."

Coetzee's meditation on psychological interiority clarifies much of what we see in "The

Vietnam Project," which precedes "The Narrative of Jacobus Coetzee." Having established that

Jacobus Coetzee's violence was contingent on dispositions he already held, we understand "The

Vietnam Project" as also unearthing the psychological and philosophical foundations of colonial

propaganda. On the face of it, however, "The Vietnam Project" threatens to repeat the old myth

that started this discussion: that the white man enters the colonial encounter and then loses his

mind. Over the course of "The Vietnam Project," Eugene Dawn suffers a nervous breakdown

and kidnaps his own child at gunpoint; his breakdown seems a direct product of his involvement

with colonial propaganda. This, Dawn explains, had always been his wife's fear: "Marilyn and

her friends believe that everyone who approaches the innermost mechanism of the war suffers a

vision of horror which depraves him utterly. (I articulate Marilyn and her friends that they do

themselves. This is because I understand them as they do not understand me.)"[48] The shadow of

Colonel Kurtz looms here. Dawn's arrogance—that he understands his wife and her friends "as

they do not understand me"—is precisely why Marilyn and her friends are wrong. The issue is

not that Marilyn and her friends have misattributed the cause of what will become Dawn's

nervous breakdown. Rather, in saying he can explain Marilyn's mind in ways she cannot explain

his, Dawn is perpetuating the same assumptions about mental states we saw in "The Narrative of

Jacobus Coetzee." What "The Vietnam Project" narrates is Dawn's realization of these

assumptions and the artifice of his own self-knowledge.

In *Dusklands*, colonization rests upon two dovetailing, yet contradictory, assumptions about the relationship between behavior and mental states. First: behaviors can be understood to index mental states (which is an idea we saw Coetzee push against in *The English Fiction of Samuel Beckett*). In "The Vietnam Project," Dawn's supervisor—also named Coetzee—makes a statement we might expect from Richard Ohmann discussing George Bernard Shaw. "What I would like to you to do" to your writing, Coetzee explains to Dawn, is revise "the *tone* of your argument…If you stress continually, not only explicitly but through the very genuflexions of your *style,* that you are merely a functionary with a narrow if significant specialism, a near-academic with none of the soldier's all-round understanding of the science of warfare."[49] *Tone* and *style* are italicized in the original. Suggesting that style comprises "genuflexions," the argument is that Dawn's prose will relay his submissive intentions. And just as language reveals mental states, behaviors do too. Dawn is impressed by Coetzee's ability to infer mental contents from gestures—"as a manager he has probably through a one-week seminar on the interpretation of gesture"[50]—and argues the validity of this belief to Marilyn. "There are no secrets, I would tell her, everything is on the surface and visible in mere behavior, to those who have eyes to see."[51] Or, as Jacobus Coetzee would have specified, *blue* eyes.

The contradictory, but nonetheless inherent, assumption is that behaviors do not necessarily indicate the presence of mental states at all. If behaviors do not indicate mental states, then it follows that mental states do not necessarily exist. This was the behavioristic attitude articulated by Jacobus Coetzee, who saw himself shattering surfaces as he looked for the interiors that might lie beneath. In "The Vietnam Project," this behaviorism informs how Dawn imagines his propaganda's colonized, occupied audience:

The voice which our broadcasting projects into Vietnamese homes is the voice of neither

father nor brother. It is the voice of Rene Descartes driving his wedge between the self in

the world and the self who contemplates that self…We attempt to embody the ghost

inside the villager but there has never been any ghost there.[52]

Much as the propaganda projects "the voice of Rene Descartes" into Vietnamese homes, this

excerpt projects the voice of logical behaviorist Gilbert Ryle into "The Vietnam Project." As

Ryle explained in *The Concept of Mind* (1949), Cartesian mind-body dualism was the "dogma of

the Ghost inside the Machine."[53] The idea of a "mental life" separate from bodily existence, he

argued, was a "category mistake"—the attribution of phenomena to an invented category called

"mind" when those phenomena were actually produced by, say, "body." This was not to say that

"mental conduct," as Ryle termed it, did not exist, but that it did not exist as an entity unto itself;

there was no ghost manipulating the machine.[54] Eugene Dawn's use of Ryle's metaphor is

somewhat loose, but the idea is clear enough. Where Ryle suggested that mental life was not

somehow separate from bodily experience, Dawn's implication is that no phenomena "inside the

villager" exist to be misconstrued. Thinking himself a ghost inside a machine—a mind or soul

separate from, yet tethered to, a physical body—Dawn looks for the same in the Vietnamese. But

he claims to find nothing of the sort. The Vietnamese are just machines—just bodies and reflexes

governed by "orthodox S-R [stimulus response] propaganda."[55] The official position is that the

Vietnamese can be controlled through reflex conditioning and that their behaviors fail to indicate

any sort of meaningfully separate mental life.

These contradictory attitudes, then, are the philosophical foundation of colonialism in

"The Vietnam Project." And what Eugene Dawn's nervous breakdown comprises is not "a vision

of horror which depraves him utterly"—"the horror! The horror!"—but rather the dissolution of

this foundation. Where others had presumed to infer mental states through behavior but also

denied the mental states to the colonized, Dawn begins to fall into the space between thought and

action. "As I write this moment," we read,

> I catch my left fist clenching. Charlotte Wolff calls it a sign of depression (*The*
>
> *Psychology of Gesture)*, but she cannot be right: I do not at this moment feel depressed,
>
> being engaged in a liberating creative act. Nevertheless Charlotte Wolff, when she speaks
>
> on gesture, speaks with authority, therefore I am careful to create opportunities for my
>
> fingers to busy themselves. While I am reading, for example, I conscientiously flex and
>
> unflex them; and when I talk to people I keep my hands conspicuously relaxed, even to
>
> the point of letting them droop.[56]

Earlier in "The Vietnam Project," Dawn complained how easily Coetzee inferred his mental

states from his behaviors; here, Dawn finds his own introspective self-knowledge contradicted

by Charlotte Wolff's *The Psychology of Gesture* (1945). Trained as a psychoanalyst, Wolff

argued that hand gestures—including clenching, curling, crossing—fundamentally and

unchangeably signified specific psychological phenomena.[57] Looking at his hand, Dawn finds

himself at odds with Wolff: he does not feel depressed, but according to his behaviors, he must

be. This tethering of behavior to mental state is the crux of Dawn's nervous breakdown. Unable

to believe that his own "mind is extraverted as mere behavior," Dawn becomes paralyzed by the

disjunction between his covert mental states and overt behaviors. "My fingers, expressive, full

of meaning, full of love," he writes, "close on their narrow shoulders, but close empty, as

clutches have a way of doing in the empty dream-space of one's head. I repeat the movement

many times, the movement of love (open the chest, reach the arm) and discouragement (empty

hand, empty heart)."[58] In his mind, these gestures are "expressive" and "full of meaning"; but performed by his hands, these behaviors are meaningless and his mental states are utterly inaccessible. Unable to perform his mental states through behaviors—unable to prove his own psychological interiority—he is comparable to the Vietnamese villager or Jacobus Coetzee's Hottentot. In his own fragile mind, he has become colonizable—if not already colonized. The fictions of mind that had granted the colonizer self-possession and agency quickly dissolve.

We cannot say the same of Susan Barton, the protagonist and narrator of *Foe*. Unlike Jacobus Coetzee and Eugene Dawn, she is not complicit in the behavioristic project of colonial expansion. Where Dawn and Jacobus Coetzee puzzled over the relationship between behavior and mental states, Barton is most explicitly concerned with *narrative*. How will Cruso's story of shipwreck be relayed to future generations, she wonders. How did Friday lose his tongue—and, without that tongue, how can we know his story? As Barton writes of Cruso, "Is it not possible to manufacture paper and ink and set down what traces remain of these memories, so that they will outlive you; or, failing paper and ink, to burn the story upon wood, or engrave it upon rock?"[59] (17) Unsurprisingly, the topic of narrative is an important feature of critical conversations about *Foe*. Some, like Lewis McLeod, have taken Barton's interest in narrative at face value. "The struggles between Susan" and other characters, he writes, "have to do with who gets to establish and maintain the narrative framework and with who is going to seduce (and/or compel) whom into living inside his or her story world." [60] For Derek Attridge and Gayatri Spivak, *Foe* presents a far more pointed—and politically cynical—view of narration. In *The Critique of Postcolonial Reason* (1999), Spivak suggests that *Foe* upends male narratives of imperialism by employing a female narrator largely unsympathetic to the story she's required to tell. *Foe*, she writes, "will not defend itself against the undecidability and discomfort of imagining a woman. Is that

authoritative word *father* being turned into a false but useful analogy (catachresis) here?"[61] To

Attridge, *Foe*'s analysis of narrative goes even deeper—to the dialectic between individual

epistemology and cultural normativity. *Foe*, he argues in *J.M. Coetzee and the Ethics of Reading*

(2004), demonstrates that "what we call 'insights' are produced and conveyed by the

narrativizing agencies of culture…Even if the transmutation of experience into knowledge

occurs in the privacy of the individual consciousness, it does so by virtue of internalized cultural

norms…but without external validation, such 'knowledge' must remain uncertain and

insubstantial" (75).

My suggestion here is that *Foe*'s concerns with narrative are indicative of, and built upon,

the same philosophical problems we encountered in *Dusklands* and even *The English Fiction of*

Samuel Beckett. Barton's struggle to learn Friday's history is the struggle of trying to infer

mental states from behavior—which is the same struggle we saw at the root of colonial brutality

in *Dusklands*. In the novel's opening pages, however, this is not yet apparent. Instead, we are

presented with a recently shipwrecked Barton attempting to communicate with Friday. Barton's

description of the event emphasizes both the materiality of her own speech—she speaks with a

"thick dry tongue"—but also Friday's affectless and inscrutable silence.[62] "I lifted myself," she

explains, "and studied the flat face, the small dull eyes, the broad nose, the thick lips, the skin not

black but a dark grey, dry as if coated with dust. '*Agua,*' I said, trying Portuguese, and made a

sign of drinking. He gave no reply, but regarded me as he would a seal or a porpoise thrown up

by the waves."[63] The inference here is that Friday does not understand language or mimetic

behavior; to him, they fail to signify anything semantic, like an animal washing up on shore. And

this inference about Friday's mental states is interwoven with Barton's grossly stereotyped

description of his appearance. With a "flat face," "small dull eyes," and lips "thick" like Barton's

own parched tongue, his appearance implies to her a lack of intelligence and understanding.

Barton therefore infers Friday's mind is blank and that his mental life comprises only extroverted

behaviors (to use Jacobus Coetzee's phrase).

But according to Cruso, Friday understands the meanings of certain words—including

"water" and "firewood." For Barton, however, the nature of Friday's understanding is unclear.

Does he understand these words as representing concepts or has he merely associated sounds

with a given behavior? When Barton asks Friday to fetch some "wood," Cruso explains,

"'*Firewood* is the word I have taught him,' said Cruso. '*Wood* he does not know.' I found it

strange that Friday should not understand that firewood was a kind of wood, as pinewood is a

kind of wood, or poplarwood; but I let it pass."[64] If Friday responded to "wood" as he did

"firewood," then it could be reasoned that Friday possessed abstract reasoning—that he

understood "firewood" as an example of "wood." But as Friday did not respond to "wood" as he

did "firewood," then the inference is that what looks like semantic understanding is actually just

learned behavior in response to specific stimulus. The way Friday responds to the call of "wood"

is indicative of what mental abilities he has—and perhaps whether he has any at all.

The reason this is such an issue is not just Friday's race—it's that he doesn't talk. He

cannot confirm verbally what he does or does not know and cannot narrate the circumstances of

his own acquisition by Cruso. After Barton inquires about the cause of Friday's silence,

> Cruso motioned Friday nearer. 'Open your mouth,' he told him, and opened his own.
>
> Friday open his mouth. 'Look,' said Cruso. I looked but saw nothing in the dark save the
>
> glint of teeth white as ivory. 'La-la-la,' said Cruso, and motioned   to Friday to repeat.
>
> 'Ha-ha-ha,' said   Friday from the back of his throat. 'He has no tongue,' said Cruso.
>
> Gripping Friday by the hair, he brought his face close to mine. 'Do you see' he said. 'It is

too dark,' said I. 'La-la-la,' said Cruso. 'Ha-ha-   ha,' said Friday. I drew away, and Cruso released Friday's hair. 'He has no tongue,' he said. 'That is why he does not speak. They cut out his tongue.'[65]

This description of Friday trying to speak reiterates a trope from *Dusklands*: the unknowable "interior" of the colonized forced open by the colonizer ("gripping Friday by the hair"). Inside Friday's mouth it's too dark for Barton to see; both his mouth and his mind are shrouded in inscrutable darkness. The only empirical evidence Barton has is the noise Friday makes in response to Cruso. But even these are cheap imitations of Cruso's speech and intelligence. Cruso's musical "la-la-la" becomes "ha-ha-ha," parodying Cruso and mocking Barton's attempts to infer the contents of his mind. All she knows of Friday's mind, or his life story, is what Cruso tells her: "They cut out his tongue." The problem with Cruso's explanation, Barton realizes, is that it can't be verified. Cruso speaks for Friday, and as Friday can neither understand most of what Cruso says or interject in his own language, Cruso's explanation goes unchallenged. Barton comes to speculate that Cruso might have removed Friday's tongue himself, thereby preventing anyone from learning Friday's actual biography or attributing to him psychological interiority. Without a tongue, Friday only has stories or mental states as they are provided by the colonizer.

But despite Friday's silence, Barton does eventually believe that Friday has psychological interiority—and that his behaviors and affects, which remain inscrutable to her, are not necessarily indicative of his mental states. Watching Friday ritualistically scatter flower petals in the water, Barton remarks, "Hitherto I had given to Friday's life as little thought as I would have a dog's or any other dumb beast's…This casting of petals was the first sign I had that a spirit or soul—call it what you will—stirred beneath that dull and unpleasing exterior."[66] This is the moment that separates Barton from *Duskland*'s Jacobus Coetzee or Eugene Dawn. Where Dawn

had found no "ghost" and Coetzee found no interior beneath the hammer-blown surface, Barton begins to believe that Friday does in fact have mental states beyond "a dog's or any other dumb beasts." He has mental states and experiences that could be narrated—but how could she learn about them? This becomes the foundation of her relationship with Friday and the central problem of *Foe*: "So I knew he knew something," she explains, "though what he knew I did not know."[67]

Following Cruso's death and her return with Friday to England, Barton spends most of her time doing two things. (As we will see later on, these activities are not unrelated.) First, she hires Daniel Foe to turn her story into a novel and writes letters to Foe when he disappears. Second, she devises ways of inferring the contents of Friday's mind. Her primary method of accomplishing this is to do what Cruso refused to do: to teach Friday language. Barton's account is worth excerpting at length:

> While he works I teach him the names of things. I hold up a spoon and say 'Spoon, Friday!' and give him the spoon into his hand. Then I say 'Spoon!' and hold out my hand to receive the spoon: hoping thus that in time the word *Spoon* will echo in his mind willy-nilly whenever his eye falls on a spoon.
>
> What I fear most is that after years of speechlessness the very notion of speech may be lost to him. When I take the spoon from his hand (but is it truly a spoon to him, or a mere thing?—I do not know), and say *Spoon*, how can I be sure he does not think I am chattering to myself as a magpie or an ape does, for the pleasure of hearing the noise I make, and feeling the play of my tongue, as he himself used to find pleasure in playing his flute?[68]

Psychological behaviorism and philosophical behaviorism have an unlikely convergence here. Barton's efforts to teach Friday language echo the methods offered by Skinner's *Verbal Behavior*. Perhaps even more importantly, they echo Wittgenstein's discussion of "language-games" in *Philosophical Investigations*.[69] One of the ways children learn language, Wittgenstein explains, is through ostensive definition: a person names an object and then another person points to that object or picks it up (over and over again). This allows the child to learn associations and linguistic rules without engaging with the full complexity of that language's grammar or usage. But Friday will not, or cannot, participate in Barton's language game. Instead, he is analogous to the foreigner Wittgenstein imagines watching the language-game of others. "Someone who did not understand our language," he explains, might think the phrase *bring me a slab* was "one word corresponding perhaps to the word for 'building'stone' in his own language."[70] Without Friday's participation in the language game, Barton can't know if Friday understands "spoon" to be the object, the act of giving him the object, the process of ostensive definition—or just noise. Or, to recall a moment from *Philosophical Investigations* I discussed earlier: Barton has no way of establishing if Friday too has the proverbial beetle, or spoon, inside his box.

Unable to teach Friday language, Barton's becomes preoccupied with circumventing Friday's muteness—a preoccupation that *Foe* and other postcolonial novels share. Indeed, the question that Barton poses to novelist Daniel Foe is the same that the novel *Foe* might pose to us: if the colonized cannot speak, can the novel speak for him? Could the novel, with its ability to imagine the minds of others, invent an accessible mind for Friday and restore "the loss of [his] tongue"?[71] As Barton explains to Foe, the stakes are high: without language, Friday has no defense "against being re-shaped day by day in conformity with the desires of others. I say he is

a cannibal and he becomes a cannibal."[72] Without language, Friday is vulnerable to never-ending

colonization. The novelist, however, can solve this problem by giving Friday—or at least others

like Friday—a voice. "The story of Friday's tongue," Barton pleads,is a story unable to be told,

or unable to be told by me. That is to say, many stories can be told of Friday's tongue, but the

true story is buried within Friday, who is mute. The true story will not be heard till by art we

have found a means of giving voice to Friday."[73] This is the burden Barton assigns to "art"—in

particular, novels. The responsibility of fiction, we're told, is to cut through the philosophical

difficulties that stripped the colonized of their minds and tongues.

The final paragraph of *Foe*, however, suggests that this is a responsibility that fiction

cannot meet. Returning us to the questions raised by *Dusklands* and *The English Fiction of*

Samuel Beckett, Foe ends by frustrating any efforts—by Barton or by the reader—to know the

mind of the colonized. The novel ends with Barton dreaming: she dreams she is on a ship that "is

the home of Friday." On this ship, "bodies are their own signs"—there is only surface and no

interiority.[74] For the first time in the novel, Friday makes an attempt to communicate:

> His mouth opens. From inside him comes a slow stream, without breath, without
>
> interruption. It flows up through his body and out upon me; it passes through the cabin,
>
> through the wreck; washing the cliffs and shores of the island, it runs northward and
>
> southward to the ends of the earth. Soft and cold, dark and unending, it beats against my
>
> eyelids, against the skin of my face.[75]

Only a few pages before this dream, Barton explained to Foe that "Friday's desires are not dark

to me. He desires to be liberated, as I do too. Our desires are plain."[76] But no desires are "plain"

in this novel; desires are covert. What we are to infer is that this was Barton projecting her own

mental states onto Friday; where at the beginning of the novel she denied that Friday had

psychological interiority, she now remakes his interiority in her own image. But in fact nothing

can be inferred from Friday's "speech": to Barton it is more a physical experience than a

semantic utterance—a sensation on the "skin of [her] face" rather than the mind behind that face.

On this ship, "bodies are their own signs"—but what signifies the mind? Friday's mind remains

irrevocably "dark and unending" even to the most sympathetic readers and writers.

1719-2009

In Coetzee's most recent novel, *Summertime* (2009), the same ideas and formal concerns that

dominate *The English Fiction of Samuel Beckett*, *Dusklands*, and *Foe* persist. Here too

philosophy of mind and colonialism are inextricably linked. But in *Summertime*, the

behavioristic double standard is reversed. Where in the earlier novels it was the colonizer who

granted himself interiority while denying it to the colonized, now the white novelist sees

"Africans as embodied" while seeing himself paralyzed by the disjunction between mind and

behavior. As Coetzee's former colleague Sophie recalls, "In Africa, he used to say, body and

soul were indistinguishable…He had a whole philosophy of the body which seemed to

me…politically unhelpful."[77] In contrast, dance instructor Adriana remembers Coetzee as

"disembodied"[78] and former lover Julia describes Coetzee as "the autistic type" who "treats other

people as automata, mysterious automata."[79] In return he expects to be treated as a mysterious

automaton too.

And much like *Foe*, *Summertime* brings these concerns to bear on its own form. In *Foe*,

Susan Barton was haunted by the inaccessibility of Friday's mind; but she still manages to

function as an introspective narrator who grants herself interiority. But such a narrator is a

conceit that *Summertime* is not willing to grant. Instead, it has a biographer. And rather than

synthesize his own narrative, making inferences about Coetzee's life and intentions, he restricts himself to *transcription*—to recording the stories of the people he interviews. Transcribing speech, there is no formal apparatus for denoting mental states. And so throughout the novel, which no longer feels like a novel, we are presented with reminders not to confuse speech or text with mental state. Furthermore, they remind us that the interviewees are not necessarily to be trusted. Before describing Coetzee as autistic, Julia proclaims her fascination with "exchanges between human beings when the words have nothing to do with the traffic of thoughts through the mind."[80] Martin, who has doubts about the biographer's methods and abilities, puts it more bluntly: "Who can say what goes on in people's inner lives?"[81] This, I think, has been the guiding statement of Coetzee's career as both a linguist and a novelist. And it's my hope that the preceding discussion—from cognitive science to the contemporary colonial novel—has shown the broad stakes in such a banal question.

And it is a question relevant for, though not always typical to, literary study. Most obviously we might think of recent cognitive approaches to literature—including Lisa Zunshine's *Why We Read Fiction* (2006) and Brian Boyd's *On the Origin of Stories* (2009). These studies are predicated on both the fictional representation of minds and the accessibility of certain cognitive processes in the brain. For these reasons, they would likely take issue with Coetzee's empirical objections to "cognitive" literary criticism. Or we might turn to postcolonial criticism and how Coetzee's work arrives at a different answer for why the colonized cannot speak. In her landmark essay "Can the Subaltern Speak" (1988), Gayatri Spivak concluded that the colonized subject could not "speak" without becoming an instrument of Western colonialism and imperialism.[82] In her own writing on *Foe*, Spivak points out that the muteness of Coetzee's Friday is a contrast to DeFoe's Friday, who is "the prototype of the successful colonial subject"

that "learns his master's speech."[83] But rooted in behavioristic questions about mind and behavior, we might respond that one crucial dimension of Friday's muteness in *Foe* is not a question of speech at all. Instead, his silence is synecdochal for the disjunction between mental states and behaviors—and how language functions with respect to that disjunction. The question of whether Friday can speak pertains to his political agency and sovereignty. But the question of that speech's relationship to mental states allows us to question the place speech itself—i.e., empirically knowable behavior—has taken within postcolonial criticism.

The issues I would like to end on, however, are more historical and formal than theoretical. By the time we get to *Summertime*, the novel about colonialism and its aftermath no longer looks like a novel. Even in *Foe* and *Dusklands*, the mentalistic structures of the novel are mitigated. And these formal changes, these novels tell us, come from the same philosophical problems responsible for the brutality they depict. For these reasons, Coetzee's fiction begs that we look back at the colonial fiction of Conrad, Kipling, and Forster—to look at how the priorities of the colonial and postcolonial novel have changed over the past hundred years. Should Coetzee's linguistic and philosophical arguments change how we read what Adela experienced in the Marabar caves? Does it give us a new way of approaching Chinua Achebe's claims about the bias inherent in *Heart of Darkness*? "At first sight," Achebe wrote in "An Image of Africa" (1974), the native's sudden ability to say "Mistah Kurtz—he dead" "might might be mistaken for unexpected acts of generosity from Conrad. In reality they constitute some of his best assaults. In the case of the cannibals the incomprehensible grunts that had thus far served them for speech suddenly proved inadequate for Conrad's purpose of letting the European glimpse the unspeakable craving in their hearts."[84] The racism Achebe sees in *Heart of Darkness* hinges on the novel's momentary ability to know the mind of the colonized native. And Coetzee

seems to disagree fundamentally with Achebe on the ethical implications of the white novelist granting interiority to the colonized.

But in fact the literary history Coetzee's fiction constructs goes back further than Conrad. Indeed, it goes back to 1719—to the novel that *Foe* burrows beneath, Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (as well as Defoe's novel *Roxana*).[85] Effectively *Foe* is a novel about how some of the first novels came to be written. It is an imaginative backstory, an alternate history, of how the genre itself came into being. Colonialism and anxieties about mind, we infer, were not associations that the novel came to *acquire*. Instead, Coetzee argues that novel's formal claim to represent other minds *has always* run afoul of the problem of other minds—and of other continents. Which is to say: in its explorations of the New World and its claims to represent other minds by whatever means necessary, Coetzee condemns the novel as being a *colonial* form of literature. Denying psychological interiority to the colonized, he claims, is a colonizing gesture. But so, it seems, is extending that interiority through fiction.

Therefore the question Coetzee poses to us is not if novels *can* fictionalize other minds. He asks us if they *should*.

Notes.

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[1] J.M. Coetzee, *Waiting for the Barbarians* (New York: Penguin Classics, 1981), 43.

[2] Sam Durrant, *Postcolonial Narrative and the Work of Mourning*: *J.M. Coetzee, Wilson Harris, and Toni Morrison* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003), 121.

[3] Derek Attridge, *J.M. Coetzee and the Ethics of Reading: Literature In the Event* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 168.

[4] Noam Chomsky, *Syntactic Structures* (The Hague: Mouton de Gruyter, 2002 [1957]), 18.

[5] B.F. Skinner, *Verbal Behavior* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1957), 4.

[6] Both Watson and Ryle arrived at formulations of thinking as merely internalized, or non-externalized, speech. For Watson, language use appeared to be a complicated behavior requiring introspection, but was in fact a cluster of learned behaviors. (Like Skinner, he emphasized the imitative element of language acquisition.) For Ryle, the presence of a certain amount of thought existing in language was common sense. But it did not follow that all thinking was linguistic, or that all instances of language involved thought. For more, see Watson's "Talking and Thinking" and "Do We Always Think in Words?" in *Behaviorism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1924, pp181-216) and Ryle's "The Intellect" in *The Concept of Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949 [2000], pp281-292).

[7] Skinner, *Verbal Behavior*, 29.

[8] Skinner's program of operant conditioning, whereby a subject was conditioned into performing a given behavior ("the operant") voluntarily, was made most famous by his article "Superstition in the Pigeon" (1947). In this article, Skinner demonstrated a schedule of reinforcement in which a pigeon was conditioned into turning and raising its wing in the belief that these behaviors would precipitate food. This conditioned operant, Skinner argued, was in fact the structure identified as "superstition" in humans. For more, see Skinner's "Superstition in the Pigeon" (*Journal of Experimental Psychology* 38, 168-72).

[9] Noam Chomsky, "A Review of B.F. Skinner's *Verbal Behavior.*" *Language* 35.1 (1959), 26-58, p58.

[10] J.M Coetzee, *The English Fiction of Samuel Beckett: An Essay in Stylistic Analysis*. Dissertation. University of Texas at Austin, 1969, p156.

[11] As Margaret Boden explains in her history of cognitive science, *Mind as Machine* (Oxford, 2006), Chomsky's *Cartesian Linguistics* was not without controversy. In particular, the book's intellectual history was criticized. In arguing that his nativist grammar could be traced back to René Descartes, Boden suggests, Chomsky was willfully misinterpreting the ideas of Descartes, Alexander Humboldt, and the Port-Royal grammarians. Indeed, Descartes himself was more empiricist in his ideas about language acquisition—a contrast to Chomsky's firm nativism. For more, see Boden's "Not-Quite-Cartesian Linguistics" in *Mind as Machine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 602-625.

[12] Noam Chomsky, *Cartesian Linguistics: A Chapter in the History of Rationalist Thought* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 61.

[13] This type of structuralist argument, where by cognitive processes are said to be organized as/by language, grew in prominence after the resurgence of cognitive nativism. The most prominent example would be Jerry Fodor's *The Language of Thought* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1975), where Fodor argued that thinking itself was structured by syntactic relationships. The existence of such structures comprised part of Fodor's critique of Wittgenstein's argument

against "private languages." For more, see Fodor's introduction, where he attacks psychological and logical behaviorism (pp1-27), as well as 27-54 and 99-155.

[14] Chomsky, *Cartesian Linguistics*, 68.

[15] Donald Freeman, editor, *Linguistics and Literary Style* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, & Winston, 1974), 5.

[16] Leo Spitzer, *Linguistics and Literary History: Essays in Stylistics* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1962), 22.

[17] Spitzer, *Linguistics*, 30.

[18] Ibid, 31.

[19] Richard Ohmann, "Generative Grammars and the Concept of Literary Style." First appeared in: *Word* 20 (1964), pp424-439. Reprinted in Freeman, *Linguistics and Literary Style*, p267.

[20] For more on the difference between "deep grammar" and "surface grammar," see Chomsky's *Language and Mind* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006), 1-56.

[21] Richard Ohmann, *Shaw: The Style and the Man* (Middletown: Wesleyan UP, 1962), xii-xiii.

[22] Ohmann, *Shaw*, 9.

[23] Ibid, 11.

[24] Ibid, 13.

[25] Coetzee, *English Fiction*, 158.

[26] For information about Fodor's Language of Thought hypothesis, see note 13.

[27] Coetzee, *English Fiction*, 158.

[28] Ibid, 53.

[29] Ibid, 13.

[30] This table does not represent Coetzee's comparisons of *Watt* with earlier drafts of the novel. These analyses focus on trying to understand analogous moments within the drafts as different stylistic transformations of the same deep structure. Through these analyses, too, Coetzee arrives at the conclusion discussed above.

[31] Coetzee, *English Fiction*, 127.

[32] Ibid, 76.

[54] For a fuller explanation of Ryle's metaphor, along with the reasoning behind the idea of a category mistake, see *The Concept of Mind*, pp7-24.

[55] Coetzee, *Dusklands*, 9.

[56] Ibid, 4.

[57] See Charlotte Wolff, *A Psychology of Gesture* (New York: Arno Books, 1972), 3-21. See also Wolff's *The Human Hand* (Methuen, 1942).

[58] Coetzee, *Dusklands*, 34.

[59] J.M. Coetzee, *Foe* (New York: Penguin, 1986), 17.

[60] Lewis McLeod, "Do We of Necessity Become Puppets in a Story?" Or Narrating the World: On Speech, Silence, and Discourse in J.M. Coetzee's *Foe* (Modern Fiction Studies 52.1 Summer 2006, 1-18), p3.

[61] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1999), 179.

[62] Coetzee, *Foe*, 5.

[63] Ibid, 6.

[64] Ibid, 21.

[65] Ibid, 23.

[66] Ibid, 32.

[67] Ibid, 45.

[68] Ibid, 57.

[69] For more on Wittgenstein's language games, see *Philosophical Investigations* 1.7-1.21.

[70] Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 1.20.

[71] Coetzee, *Foe*, 117.

[72] Ibid, 121.

[73] Ibid, 118.

[74] Ibid, 157.

[75] Ibid, 157.

[76] Ibid, 148.

[77] J.M. Coetzee, *Summertime* (New York: Penguin, 2009), 231.

[78] Ibid, 198.

[79] Ibid, 53.

[80] Ibid, 31.

[81] Ibid, 216.

[82] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (eds), *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (London: Macmillan, 1988). A revised and expanded version appeared in Spivak's *Critique of Postcolonial Reason*.

[83] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1999), 187.

[84] China Achebe, "An Image of Africa," *Research in African Literatures* 9.1 (1978), pp1-15, 7.

[85] For the purposes of discussing Coetzee's thoughts on colonialism and the novel, *Foe*'s appropriation of *Robinson Crusoe* is the primary concern. But *Foe* also positions itself as an origin story for Defoe's novel *Roxana: The Fortunate Mistress* (1724), where the narrator Roxana is haunted by the daughter she abandoned and aided by her daughter-like maid Amy. Susan Barton is not the inspiration for one novel but two.

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