

## Preface

The present paper by Professor J. Hillis Miller was given as a lecture at the University of Aarhus, Denmark, on September 7, 1999.

In his paper Professor Miller gives an astonishingly rich account of speech act theory and the human emotions used to exemplify it in Derrida, Wittgenstein, and Austin, and furthermore of the problem of the ego's inaccessibility as expressed in Husserl's fifth *Cartesian Meditation*, in Derrida's "Passions", and—most beautifully—in Gerard Manley Hopkins's "Commentary on the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius Loyola." Thus, Miller strives to investigate the dynamic interrelation between the unfathomable ego and the human ability to speak performatively. The link is *passion*. The unrevealable secret of the other and of literature generates a universal passion to which we gain access and of which we become part via speech acts. It is thus, as Derrida has shown in his investigation of the locution "je t'aime", performative language itself which impassions us, rather than us impassioning language.

Though we can never resolve the aporia of the inaccessibility of the other, the passions of our speech acts will continuously seduce us into regarding the loved one as transparent. Passages from Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu* serve as Miller's primary examples.

The essay is printed here with the kind permission of J. Hillis Miller. It is drawn from chapter four of his recently finished book: *Speech Acts in Literature*. The first three chapters discuss speech act theory in relation to literature in J. L. Austin, Jacques Derrida, and Paul de Man. According to plan the book will appear in the spring of 2001.

Rolf Gerd Heitmann

## J. Hillis Miller: Passions Performatives Proust

W. B. Yeats's "Politics" begins with an epigraph from Thomas Mann: "In our time the destiny of man presents its meaning in political terms." The poem itself defiantly challenges that. It begins with a blatantly heterosexual expression of desire:

How can I, that girl standing there,  
My attention fix  
On Roman or on Russian  
Or on Spanish politics?<sup>1</sup>

After briefly granting Mann's argument some cogency, the poem ends with a return to the poet's passionate desire for the girl:

And maybe what they say is true  
Of war and wars alarms,  
But O that I were young again  
And held her in my arms! (ibid.)

No reader of Yeats can doubt that many of his poems are overtly political, for example "Easter 1916," but in this late poem he opposes sex to politics. Since the passions of sexual desire not political passions are so often the subjects of literature, that raises the question of the relevance of literature, after all, to political concerns. Does one have to be a political scientist to read literature rightly? Or could the reverse be the case, that is, good political science be dependent on being a good reader of literature?

Marcel Proust had something to say about this question in a curious passage in *À la recherche du temps perdu*. Marcel has been talking about the way "life with Albertine and with Françoise had accustomed [him] to suspect in them thoughts and projects which they did not disclose." This experience of deception has led him, transferring personal experience to a national level, to doubt assertions of "pacific intentions" by Germany, Bulgaria, or Greece. These nations are here personified as single living persons, that is, as having a unity like that

of an organism or a consciousness. Moving from this, as Marcel often does, to a high level of generalization, expressed by means of a brilliant metaphor, he asserts that individual life is to national life as a single cell is to the large living body of which it is a part:

Of course my quarrels with Françoise or with Albertine had been merely private quarrels, of interest only to the life of that little cell, endowed with a mind (*cette petite cellule spirituelle*), that a human being is. But just as there are animal bodies and human bodies, each one of which is an assemblage of cells as large in relation to a single cell as Mont Blanc, so there exist huge organised accumulations of individuals and their life does no more than repeat on a larger scale (*répéter en les amplifiant*) the lives of their constituent cells, and anybody who is incapable of comprehending the mystery, the reactions, the laws of these smaller lives, will only make futile pronouncements (*ne prononcera que des mots vides*) when he talks about struggles between nations.<sup>2</sup>

This is wonderfully reassuring to a lover of literature. If you want to understand national politics and the conflicts between nations, study individual human lives, such as those endlessly proliferating details Marcel gives about his affair with Albertine or those stories about loobies George Eliot tells in *Middlemarch*. If you do not understand people you will never understand politics. Why? Because they can be counted on to correspond exactly. The study of people is easier, closer to home, and more immediate than the seemingly more abstract study of politics. Happily, each repeats the other on a different scale, so that to study one is indirectly to study the other. To adopt George Eliot's language, each is the parable of the other, or, to use a word more active in Proust's lexicon, each is the allegory of the other. The claim is that an understanding of nations cannot be approached directly, whereas individual human lives can be comprehended in themselves. If anyone tries to approach national politics without a detour through the analogy with individual lives, she will be sure to speak hollow words. Such pronouncements are not only false but ineffective, "empty." They have no performative purchase on the real world. The study of literature will allow readers to intervene successfully in society and to deflect the course of history. An example of that is the way the diplomat Norpois, in a splendid comic episode late in the *Recherche*, succeeds, through his understanding of

individual psychology, in getting a man he casually names to Prince Foggi appointed Prime Minister of Italy: "And has no one mentioned the name of Signor Giolitti?" (F4:215; E3:650).

The passage in Proust is a little less reassuring, however, to the reader who notices that what Marcel says one must learn about individuals in order to understand nations is not just "the laws of these smaller lives," but their "mystery" and the fact that most of the time they are lying. "Comprendre le mystère" may mean to penetrate it, but it may also mean understanding that it is impenetrable. The phrase is possibly an oxymoron. Marcel's account of his life with Albertine is perhaps the best account in literature of the impenetrable mystery of the lie. Just why a lie, for Proust, can never certainly be found out is a complex matter, to which I shall return in the section on Proust at the end of this essay. Such clarification of the impenetrable will go by way of a discussion of Marcel's life with Albertine. It can be said here, however, that a lie, contrary to what seems the case, is a matter of bearing false witness, not just a contrary-to-fact statement. It is therefore as much a performative use of language as a constative one. To the degree it is a speech act it is not open to cognition. It belongs to another domain of language. It dwells in the domain of doing things with words rather than in the domain of conveying true or false knowledge. If Germany, Greece, and Bulgaria characteristically lie, as do Albertine or Françoise, then what we may need to know about international politics is that understanding them is based on the science of the lie, another oxymoron.

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The word "passion" has both a passive and an active sense. When we speak of "the Passion of Christ," we mean what he suffered unto death on the cross. Passion as passive, as suffering, always tends to be associated with the ultimate passion of the death-throe. On the other hand passion also has a strongly active sense, as when someone says, "I have passion for small-boat sailing or for mountain-climbing," or, more poignantly, when the word is given an erotic turn, as when we say, "He passionately loves her." Passion is concupiscent and intentional. It wants to possess or transform that toward which it is oriented. It tends to be or to become hyperbolic and exces-

sive, like Bradley Headstone's passion for Lizzie Hexam in Dickens's *Our Mutual Friend*. Passion gives the motive for action, even dangerous, irrational, or self-destructive action, such as the passion for reaching the top of Mount Everest or for sailing alone around the world. A curious passage in the *Calendar of State Papers Relating to Scotland* written by one Nicholas White after he visited Mary Queen of Scots during her nineteen-year captivity in England, affirms that Mary's "pretty Scotch speech" along with her "searching wit, clouded with mildness," might instigate someone to attempt to free her: "glory joined to gain might stir others to adventure much for her sake; then joy is a lively impetuous passion, and carrieth persuasions to the heart, which moveth all the rest."<sup>3</sup> Meeting Mary Stuart face to face, according to White, stirred the passion of joy.

The problem of passion, however, is not just the often undecidable distinction between passive and active in a given passion endured or positively operating, but also the problem of the inside/outside opposition, or, to put this in terms of the distinction between constative and performative utterances, the question of whether the outward expression of passion, in words or other signs, simply reports, constatively, an emotion (joy, desire, anger, disgust, or whatever) that already exists, internally, or whether the outer expression, in words or other signs, creates, performatively, the inner passion. Am I first in love and then say, "I love you," or does saying "I love you" bring about the passionate state of being in love? That is the 'sixty-four dollar question.'

That it is a question, perhaps an unanswerable or "undecidable" question, depends on accepting in one form or another or to one degree or another the Husserlian assumption, expressed most overtly and apodictically in the fifth of the *Cartesian Meditations*. This is the assumption that I have in principle no direct access and no verifiable indirect access either to the ego of another person, to his or her thoughts, feelings, memories, hopes, sensations, passions. If I were to have to such direct access, there would be no problem or the problem would be fundamentally different. Derrida's admirable investigation of the performative force possessed by the locution "je t'aime" explicitly presupposes the Husserlian opacity of the other ego. This presupposition also determines his argument in his "Passions" that literature hides an unfathomable secret, for example the

unanswerable question of whether Baudelaire's protagonist in "Counterfeit Money" did or did not give a counterfeit coin to the beggar.<sup>4</sup> Derrida's name for this unfathomable secret is "le tout autre," the wholly other, that is, an otherness that in no way can be known or assimilated into some version of "the same." It is this otherness in literature, Derrida argues, that "impassions us." Derrida means by this that the unfathomable secret in each literary work has the strange performative effect of arousing our passion. This passion, as Derrida expresses it, takes the form of an irresistible but wholly unfulfillable sense of obligation. In this a work of literature is strictly parallel to the way the passions of love and desire for the beloved when she says (or does not say) "je t'aime" depend on my sense that the beloved hides an unrevealable secret, that she is unfathomably mysterious. I shall never know what she really thinks and feels, whatever she says or however she acts, and so my love for her increases immeasurably. The same thing impassions the religious person when he or she prays to God, as Derrida asserts at one moment in "Sauf le nom" (ON, 56). Here is what Derrida says about the way the secret in literature impassions us with the call of the other:

When all hypotheses are permitted, groundless and ad infinitum, about the meaning of a text, or the final intentions of an author, whose person is no more represented than nonrepresented by a character or by a narrator, by a poetic or fictional sentence, which detaches itself from its presumed source and thus remains *locked away [au secret]*, when there is no longer even any sense in making decisions about some secret behind the surface of a textual manifestation (and it is this situation which I would call text or trace), when it is the *call [appel]* of this secret, however, which points back to the other or to something else, and holds us to the other, then the secret impassions us. (P, 67-8; ON, 29)

### **Wittgenstein's Pain**

Ludwig Wittgenstein's prolonged meditation on the expression of the passions extends from book to book of his published writings. It is a topic, for example, in *The Blue and Brown Books*, in *Philosophical Investigations*, in *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology*,<sup>5</sup> and so on. These meditations center on the location, expressibility, and openness to knowledge of the pain of another, as well as on the way

the solitude of pain raises the question of private language, another topic of prolonged meditation in Wittgenstein. On the one hand, a private language is a contradiction in terms, as Wittgenstein again and again shows from different perspectives. As he says, "the very nature of the investigation" "compels us to travel over a wide field of thought criss-cross in every direction" (PI, vii), and he certainly does that. On the other hand, how could I speak otherwise than in a private and cryptic language about something so unique and incommunicable as my own private pain, pain that I alone can feel? Gerard Manley Hopkins, in an eloquent passage in the "Commentary on the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius Loyola," one of the greatest expressions of this idea, poses this problem not in terms of pain but in terms of something even more enduring, that is, my persistent, singular, and unique "taste of myself." This taste is a kind of basic bodily passion (in the passive sense of endurance) of self-awareness, my "feeling of myself":

And this [my isolation] is much more true when we consider the mind; when I consider my selfbeing, my consciousness and feeling of myself, that taste of myself, of *I* and *me* above and in all things, which is more distinctive than the taste of ale or alum, more distinctive than the smell of walnutleaf or camphor, and is incommunicable by any means to another man (as when I was a child I used to ask myself: What must it be to be someone else). Nothing else in nature comes near this unspeakable stress of pitch, distinctiveness, and selving, this selfbeing of my own. Nothing explains it or resembles it . . . searching nature I taste *self* but at one tankard, that of my own being. The development, refinement, condensation of nothing shows any sign of being able to match this to me or give me another taste of it, a taste even resembling it.<sup>6</sup>

When Hopkins says the distinctiveness of his self-taste is "unspeakable," the word must be taken literally. No way exists to speak his self-taste, to express it in words. This is because there are no literal words for distinctive or private inner feelings. At the same time no figural language works to express them either because "nothing . . . resembles" his selftaste. The striking figures here (taste of ale or alum, smell of walnutleaf or camphor) must be defined as catachreses. They name inadequately something that has neither any literal name nor any similarity to any other thing. It is wholly other. Nevertheless, the

goal of poetry for Hopkins, as the goal of narrative for Proust, is to find some way to speak this unspeakable, this wholly other of my private emotions, for example in Hopkins's "The Wreck of the Deutschland" or in his so-called "terrible sonnets," his "sonnets of desolation."

Wittgenstein expresses the incommunicability of private experience less hyperbolically but no less apodictically: "The essential thing about private experience is really not that each person possesses his own exemplar, but that nobody knows whether other people also have *this* or something else. The assumption would thus be possible – though unverifiable – that one section of mankind had one sensation of red and another section another" (PI, 95<sup>e</sup>). It would be unverifiable because no way exists to get the evidence from both sides out on the table where it can be compared. My sensation of red, the passion it impassions me with, is incommunicable by any means to another man (or woman). Pain is passion as something suffered. How can I know that the other is in pain? How can I know the pain of another? What is the relation of pain to the body? To consciousness? Is there such a thing as "unconscious pain"? What do we mean when we say "My pain is located *here*" (pointing to a place on my body)? Do animals have emotions, or are emotions purely human and only ascribed in figure to a cat or a dog, as when I say, "The angry dog attacked me" or "The cat purred with satisfaction." There would be much to say about this topic in Wittgenstein, partly because he had so much to say about it, returning to it again and again as to an obscure pain that he could not quite locate or rid himself of. Here is one example, from *The Blue Book*, of Wittgenstein's expression of this nagging pain:

We are [in being led to think that "everything that we can know and say about the world as resting upon personal experience" means that "it is all 'subjective'"] up against a trouble caused by our way of expression.

Another such trouble, closely akin, is expressed in the sentence: "I can only know that *I* have personal experiences, not that anyone else has". – Shall we then call it an unnecessary hypothesis that anyone else has personal experiences? – But is it an hypothesis at all? For can I even make the hypothesis if it transcends all possible experience? How could such a hypothesis be backed by meaning? (Is it not like paper money, not backed



by gold?)—It doesn't help if anyone tells us that, though we don't know whether the other person has pains, we certainly believe it when, for instance, we pity him. Certainly we shouldn't pity him if we didn't believe that he had pains, but is this a philosophical, a metaphysical belief? Does a realist pity me more than an idealist or a solipsist?—In fact the solipsist asks: "How *can* we believe that the other has pain; what does it mean to believe this? How can the expression of such a supposition make sense?" (BBB, 48)

If Husserl or Derrida or, as I shall show, Proust accepts the complete otherness of the other and goes on from there to draw consequences or, in the case of Proust, to investigate the problem by dramatizing its complexities in a narrative, Wittgenstein quite characteristically cannot rest satisfied with an apodictic formulation (the other is wholly other), but goes on, more or less interminably, asking questions and experimenting with new sentences from ordinary language that might allow a movement beyond this impasse or aporia. The aporia lies in the way we cannot know the pain of the other and yet behave as though we could, for example by manifesting the passion of pity in response to the other's pain. Wittgenstein had one of the most restless and inventive minds of any great philosopher. His inventiveness went partly into the thinking up of brilliant examples. If Wittgenstein was nagged by the pain of the other's inaccessibility, he kept nagging away at the problem, coming at it from different directions, criss-cross, as though he hoped he might suddenly and unexpectedly find the way out. In the passage just cited, as in general, Wittgenstein tends to assume that an apparent impasse in philosophical thinking is not so much a conceptual problem but a problem in "expression," that is, a problem in the way the issue is formulated in language. "Expression" is a key word in Wittgenstein. It is used with the full force of its root as meaning a kind of blow or stamp. This notion of the force in language is even more evident in the German equivalent "Ausdruck," literally pressure outward or thrust outward. "Ausdruck" must often have been in Wittgenstein's bilingual mind. "Druck" in German means, among other things, "print," or "printing," the blow of the inked type on paper. If we have no direct access at all to the body or mind of the other and can only hypothetically infer his or her pain, or not even hypothetically, since a genuine hypothesis must be verifiable as true or false, not possible in this

case, it follows that our response to the other's pain, our passion of pity in response to the other's presumed pain, is a matter of belief. That is a way of saying that it is an implicit performative, not a cognitive or constative statement: "I believe the other is in pain," just as I believe the other loves me when she says, "je t'aime."

One way out of this impasse is to say, in a way similar to Derrida's way, or, as I shall show, Austin's, that pain or any other passion in the other is not hidden away somewhere and then expressed, outered, but that the expression is the passion or is indistinguishable from the passion (two very different things, and that is the problem). This is said eloquently, with some help from William James, in a much later passage in *The Blue and Brown Books*, this time from *The Brown Book*:

You will find that the justification for calling something an expression of doubt, conviction, etc., largely, though of course not wholly, consist in descriptions of gestures, the play of facial expressions, and even the tone of voice. Remember at this point that the personal experiences of an emotion must in part be strictly localized experiences; for if I frown in anger I feel the muscular tension of the frown in my forehead, and if I weep, the sensations around my eyes are obviously part, and an important part, of what I feel. This is, I think, what William James meant when he said that a man doesn't cry because he is sad but that he is sad because he cries. The reason why this point is often not understood, is that we think of the utterance of an emotion as though it were some artificial device to let others know that we have it. Now there is no sharp line between such "artificial devices" and what one might call the natural expressions of emotion. Cf. In this respect: a) weeping, b) raising one's voice when one is angry, c) writing an angry letter, d) ringing the bell for a servant you wish to scold. (BBB, 103)

This seems clear enough and plausible enough. Wittgenstein is forcibly rejecting the notion that emotions are hidden away somewhere in a purely subjective realm, as Hopkins's formulations might suggest if it were not for the strongly bodily figures of taste and smell he uses. "I taste myself"; "I smell myself," even though no one else can perform the same act of tasting or smelling. Each person's feeling of self is, for Hopkins, strongly incarnated. For Wittgenstein, here at least, emotions are incarnated too, whether in the muscular feeling of frowning when I am angry or in the sensations that go along with

crying when I am sad, though in paragraph 331 of the *Philosophical Investigations* Wittgenstein denies that a man is necessarily aware of this, for example aware that he is frowning when he feels angry: "There is no ground for assuming that a man feels the facial movements that go with his expression, for example, or the alterations in his breathing that are characteristic of some emotions. Even if he feels them as soon as his attention is drawn towards them" (PI, 105<sup>e</sup>). Emotions, for Wittgenstein in the passage I have cited from *The Brown Book*, are also incarnated in what I say or write when I am angry or sad. The words, like the frowns or the tears, are not signs for something that remains sequestered off at a distance, but are an inextricable *part of* the emotion. The problem lies in that locution "part of." The careful reader will see the equivocation present in Wittgenstein's expressions: "largely, though of course not wholly," and in "obviously part, and an important part, of what I feel." The justifications for calling something an *expression* of doubt or conviction consists largely, though of course not wholly, in descriptions of gestures, the play of facial expressions, etc. that go along with the expression in words, and the frown is part, an important part, of what I feel. What about the rest of the emotion? Where is it located? What is it made of? How could we come to know it in another person? Just what is the relation between the part we can see, hear, or understand as spoken language and the part we can neither see, hear, nor read from the outside? That difficulty and perhaps the impossibility of answering these questions satisfactorily within the enclosure of his thought keeps Wittgenstein returning and returning to this topic, for example in the lengthy sections on pain in the *Philosophical Investigations*.

Another equivocation, however, perhaps equally undecidable, occurs in the passage I have cited and at least implicitly throughout Wittgenstein's analyses. Is the "expression" of an emotion, whether by words or signs like weeping or frowning, related to the emotion cognitively or performatively? Wittgenstein does not use this distinction, and that may have been part of the reason he could not solve the problem of the accessibility of the pain of another to his satisfaction. On the one hand, he remains caught in terminology of "expression," a cognitive term. Tears, frowns, certain words, "express" the emotion, make it knowable, even though they are inseparable from the emo-

tion, not signs at a distance for it. On the other hand, William James's famous assertion that crying makes us sad, accepted in his own way by Wittgenstein, gives to tears a performative power to makes us sad. The tears generate the emotion rather than just being the cognitive part of it: "a man doesn't cry because he is sad . . . he is sad because he cries." Though the passion is certainly a different one, this seems to be saying much the same thing Derrida is saying when he argues that a person is not in love until he or she says "je t'aime." The utterance or the outer sign is a speech act or a sign act that creates the thing it names.

How many emotions are there? How could you be sure that you had collected and labeled them all? Is there a different emotion for every name? Is "gratitude," for example, the name of a distinct emotion, different from every other, for example "thankfulness"? Are there different emotions for those who speak a different language, as the bilingual Wittgenstein, who must often have had occasion to reflect about this, suggests: "In which cases would you say that a word of a foreign language corresponded to our 'perhaps'? – to our expressions of doubt, trust, certainty?" (BBB, 103). Does this not suggest that the names of emotions are performative, that we feel gratitude because there is a word "gratitude." This might suggest that "Dankbarkeit" and "Erkenntlichkeit," German words for gratitude, generate different emotions. Do those who speak exclusively German never experience gratitude, only Dankbarkeit? The dismaying number of different words in different languages for (apparently) different emotions is a little like the dismaying number of different active verbs (ten to the tenth power, says Austin) that can be used in performative utterances. Each performs a different action. Each is open to a different analysis. "I bet" is not the same kind of performative as "I promise" or "I warn," or "I declare," and so on, more or less ad infinitum. In a similar way, it may be (but what is the force of "similar" here), gratitude is not the same emotion as thankfulness or a sense of obligation, as when someone says, "I am much obliged to you." Do these distinctions name different somethings already there or create them by naming them? The latter hypothesis seems absurd, as absurd as saying I am sad because I cry, angry because I frown, or fall in love only when I say "je t'aime," but how could you disprove these hypotheses? How could you be sure one way or the other? J. L. Austin, the reader

will remember, asserts that the increase in discriminatory power in language through the centuries and millenia created the distinctions the more refined language names. It may have been Wittgenstein's failure to possess the distinction between constative and performative utterances that Austin was to make a few years later (at Oxford rather than at Cambridge) that kept him from breaking out of the impasse indicated in his phrases "largely, though of course not wholly," and "part, and an important part, of what I feel."

Wittgenstein's choice of the word "perhaps" as an example of a word whose translation may perhaps be dubious seems arbitrary, just one example chosen at random. It is, however, highly significant. Moreover, it hardly seems the name of an emotion, like "doubt, trust, certainty," or "gratitude." To say "perhaps," "vielleicht," or "peut-être" is in a peculiar way, different for each language, to express uncertainty. The words express in each language a strange combination of just those emotions of doubt, trust, and certainty that Wittgenstein goes on to name after raising the question about the translation of "perhaps." What can one say of the emotion appropriately corresponding to the locution "perhaps"? Someone asks, "Is that a goldfinch?" or "Is that person really angry and not just pretending?" or "Is that a tornado on the horizon?" or "Am I experiencing the first symptoms of a fatal heart attack?" I answer "perhaps." It is neither doubt, nor trust, nor certainty, but somewhere between them all, a neither/nor or both/and, a neuter or neutral. "Perhaps" expresses a passion oriented toward the future moment that will, it is hoped or feared, settle the matter one way or another in a definitive event. "Perhaps" keeps the game going, keeps life open. As long as I can say "perhaps," I am still alive, still waiting for something unexpected, whereas if I know for sure then the future is entirely programmed and predictable, not really a human life anymore, or at any rate not worth living. The human ability to say "perhaps" is perhaps a sign of a distinctively human way to be related to time, that is, by putting off indefinitely the last word of certainty. "Perhaps" defines human temporality as such, even though it is oriented, we all "know," toward the future definitive event of the death that will come sooner or later to all, though luckily we do not, at least not usually, know just when. That perhaps is what Hamlet means when he says, "The readiness is

all." "Perhaps" is a way of saying "yes, I am ready," ready even for death, when that event comes.

Jacques Derrida says something closely related to this in two places where he discusses "perhaps" in various languages. One is in *Politique de l'amitié*, apropos of what Nietzsche calls "this dangerous perhaps."<sup>7</sup> The other is in a paragraph in a quite recent essay, "Comme si c'était possible, 'within such limits,'" that refers back to *Politique de l'amitié*:<sup>8</sup>

N'avais-je pas essayé ailleurs [He means in *Politique de l'amitié*.] d'analyser à la fois la possibilité et la nécessité de ce 'peut-être'? Sa promesse et sa fatalité, son implication dans toute expérience, à l'approche de *ce* qui vient, de (ce) (l'autre) *qui* vient de l'avenir et donne lieu à ce qu'on appelle un événement? Or cette expérience du 'peut-être' serait à la fois celle du possible *et* de l'impossible, du possible *comme* impossible. Si n'arrive que ce qui est déjà possible, donc anticipable et attendu, cela ne fait pas un événement. L'événement n'est possible que vien de l'impossible. Il arrive *comme* la venue de l'impossible, là où un 'peut-être' nous prive de toute assurance et laisse l'avenir à l'avenir. . . . le 'peut-être' maintient la question en vie, il en assure, peut-être, la sur-vie. Que veut dire alors un 'peut-être,' à la jointure désarticulée du possible et de l'impossible? Du possible *comme* impossible? (ibid., 498-9)

The possible would be on the side of the constative, on the side of something that can be predicted to happen, with certain knowledge. The impossible is on the side of the performative, of the unpredictable and unknowable that is inaugurated by the sort of radically initiatory and anomalous performative exemplified by "je t'aime" or "The Declaration of Independence."

### **Austin's Anger**

J. L. Austin possessed the distinction between constative and performative utterances all right. He invented it, in a revolutionary inaugural move. That, however, did not solve the problem indicated in Wittgenstein's "largely, though of course not wholly," as what I have said so far about Wittgenstein might have implied would be the case. This is made clear in two essays by Austin that are to a consid-

erable degree about the expression of anger: "Other Minds" and "Pretending."<sup>19</sup>

Though an example is an example, chosen somewhat at random as one example among many any one of which, at least implicitly, would have worked just as well, what passions or excessive emotions are chosen by a given philosopher or novelist as exemplary of emotions in general are clearly symptomatic. You will have noted that the English (or Austrian) philosophers go in for violent, unpleasant feelings or emotions (pain, anger), while the French (Derrida, Proust) take the passion of love (by no means always pleasant, as Proust abundantly shows) as exemplary. That seems almost too good to be true, since it fits just the stereotypes of the various countries: masochistic Austrians, irascible English, amorous French. Certainly the choice of anger as paradigmatic fits with the zany violence that runs through all Austin's examples in *How to Do Things with Words*. I have elsewhere analyzed in some detail what Austin says about how you can tell the other person is angry. Austin's conclusions, such as they are, are given in some ringing words of affirmation at the end of an essay entitled "Other Minds." The problem is that the evidence Austin has given in his careful teasing out of the implications in various ordinary language expressions (e.g. "I know he is angry because he has taken a big bite out of the rug.") by no means leads equivocally to such a consoling conclusion. Nevertheless, Austin needs to utter it as a kind of declaration of faith. It is a performative utterance, not a constative one, or a performative masking as a constative:

It seems . . . that believing in other persons, in authority and testimony, is an essential part of the act of communicating, an act which we all constantly perform. It is as much an irreducible part of our experience as, say, giving promises, or playing competitive games, or even sensing colored patches. We can state certain advantages of such performances, and we can elaborate rules of a kind for their "rational" conduct (as the Law Courts and historians and psychologists work out the rules for accepting testimony). But there is no "justification" for doing them as such. (PP, 115)

There is no justification for doing them because they cannot be verified or supported rationally. They are not open to knowledge. They are "performances" (Austin's use of the word anticipates the later coinage "performative") that are acts of "belief." We believe in

the testimony of other persons all the time, for example when my beloved says "je t'aime," and we had better believe them, since law, order, communication, felicitous marriages, and the happy working of society depend on such belief, even though that belief is in the teeth of the evidence that we can never have sufficient grounds for such confidence.

## Proust

What contribution does Marcel Proust's work make to understanding the relation of passions to performatives? The central passion, though by no means the only passion, for him is love, erotic or familial, as that primary and always excessive emotion is related to death and lying, also to illicit homosexual desire. I pluck one passage early out of the long ruminative opening of chapter one of "The Guermantes Way," like taking one apple out of a basket of apples.

This passage characteristically moves from a particular observation about the Proust family servant Françoise to generalizations asserted to be true for all persons at all times. We make this sort of change in register all the time without reflecting that it is a performative statement of conviction, not a constative statement that might be proved true or false. Just because something is true for one person does not make it true for everyone. The move Proust makes here is parallel to the move Paul de Man makes when he leaps from the reading of a single passage in Rousseau's *Julie* to posit the claim that "The paradigm for all texts consists of a figure (or a system of figures) and its deconstruction".<sup>10</sup> *All* texts?! How many texts would you need to study in order to justify that generalization? How many Françoises and other people of all types would you need to investigate in order to justify claiming that our relation to all of them is the same in just the way the narrator (let us call him "Marcel," since the narrator at one point invites the reader to do that) affirms? This, the reader will observe, is just my own problem in at least implicitly "holding," positing, or claiming that this particular apple is a fair sample of the whole basket of them.

In this passage Marcel reports that at the same time their old servant Françoise had been treating him with respect and apparent affection she was telling their neighbor Jupien "that I was not worth



the price of a rope to hang me (je ne valais pas la corde pour me pendre)" (F, 2: 366; E, 2: 64). Marcel has mistakenly assumed that Françoise and people in general are transparent. Their words and behavior are unambiguously valid signs of what is going on in their minds and feelings: "When Françoise, in the evening, was nice to me, and asked my permission to sit in my room, it seemed to me that her face became transparent and that I could see the kindness and honesty (la bonté et la franchise) that lay beneath" (F, 2: 366; E, 2: 63-4). Marcel is "appalled" by the revelation that this is not the case. It leads him to ask if such duplicity is true in general: "Was it the same with all one's social relations? And into what depths of despair might this not some day plunge me, if it were the same with love? That was the future's secret (C'était le secret de l'avenir.)" (ibid.). This is a characteristic proleptic gesture by the narrator, speaking now in the present of the narration about the hero's anxiety and ignorance then: "Little did I know. Now I know. The future has revealed its secret." The reference is presumably to all the suffering his inability to know his beloved Albertine's real feelings, propensities, and secret behavior were to cause him. These are narrated in the fourth and fifth of the six main sections of this immense novel.

Those sufferings exemplify with a vengeance the law that Proust has Marcel enunciate already somewhat later in "The Guermantes Way," apropos of Robert de Saint Loup's ignorance of the real nature of his mistress, Rachel: "He was ignorant of almost all these infidelities. One could have told him of them without shaking his confidence in Rachel. For it is a charming law of nature, which manifests itself in the heart of the most complex social organisms, that we live in perfect ignorance of those we love. (Il ignorait presque toutes ces infidélités. On aurait pu les lui apprendre sans ébranler sa confiance en Rachel; car c'est une charmante loi de nature qui se manifeste au sein des sociétés les plus complex, qu'on vive dans l'ignorance parfaite de ce qu'on aime.)" (F, 2: 578; E, 2: 291-2). This admirably intransigent passage is echoed by the much later passage about Swann's ignorance of Odette's many lovers, while Charlus could recite their names as accurately as a schoolboy can name the kings of France. It is echoed also by the long unsuccessful attempt the narrator makes to know Albertine. He can never know for sure, even after her death, whether or not she has betrayed him in lesbian love af-

fairs. He can only know when he no longer loves her and so no longer cares. Someone could get Robert to "apprendre," to take in, to grasp, Rachel's infidelities without budging his confidence in her. His naïve belief is a performative act that goes against knowledge. It is a matter of faith, not altered by knowledge, just as the evidence of the age of the earth and of our evolution from lower animals does not touch the believer's faith in the creationist account in *Genesis*. Confidence and apprehension are separate spheres that do not touch except at some uncrossable frontier. It is a "charming" law of nature that love and knowledge are wholly incompatible. This law transcends history. It is true of any time and place, in any culture. It is a law of nature, like the law of gravity, not a law of human nature and so it transgresses the distinction, tying us human beings, shamefully, to non-human nature. It is as true in complex societies like Marcel's Paris as of more "primitive" ones. We have no hope of "evolving" beyond this sad universal law. "Charming" in Proust's formulation may be taken literally. This law charms the lover into ignorance, as a snake charms its prey or as a magical charm makes something invisible. Poetry is a charm, charming. "Carmen" means in Latin a lyric poem. Originally it was a name for a magic prestidigitation performed by language, in short, for a species of speech act. All speech acts that work, that are felicitous, are charming. They work magically, like a charm.

The bottom line in what Marcel says is the dismaying, even terrifying, proposition, posited as achieved truth, that just because you love someone, feel toward him or her the passion that would lead you to say "je t'aime" and mean it, you are condemned to a total ignorance of that person. Robert de Saint Loup is condemned to be ignorant of Rachel's real nature and life just because he is so infatuated with her. He thinks with violently ironic inappropriateness that she is an angel, sweet, unselfish, sensitive, and shy, someone who suffers a lot, and so on, whereas, as Marcel knows, or thinks he knows, she is no more than a cheap whore who can be had for twenty francs. Passion, particularly the passion of love, paradigmatic passion for Proust, as pain and anger are for Wittgenstein and Austin, respectively, is antipathetic to knowledge. The more you love the less you know. Excessive love means total ignorance. I shall return to Saint Loup's grotesque misreading of Rachel.

In the passage about Françoise's hypocrisy Marcel moves rapidly to an absolute generalization on the basis of this single bit of evidence, though no doubt also on the basis of Marcel's larger experience of the many human beings he has met in society, not to speak of the long history of such generalizations in French moral or aphoristic writing and in historical memoirs or letters, such as those by his grandmother's beloved Madame de Sévigny. These associations make Proust's assertion of a law of ignorance more persuasive, though his formulation has its own unique absolutism. For Proust (or at least for Marcel), as for Husserl in his fifth Cartesian meditation or for Jacques Derrida in his meditation on "je t'aime," we have no direct access whatsoever to the mind and heart of another. We can only guess at it by what Husserl calls, in a barbarous and ambiguous formula, "analogical appresentation." The formula is barbarous because it is rebarbative and ugly. It is ambiguous because each word takes away what it gives, in the double antithetical prefixes: "ana" and "ap." An "appresentation" is not the same thing as a "presentation." It is indirect, shadowy, a matter of yes and no, of perhaps. To appresent by analogy doubles the perhaps. An analogy is not logical, but "beside," "according to," or "against" logic, depending on which valence of "ana" you take." The mind and feelings, the self-awareness, of the other may or may not be analogous to my own. It is another matter of "perhaps," since the interiority of the other can never be presented directly, only "appresented," presented without being presented. It is a matter of faith, a performative positing, not a verifiable knowledge. Marcel compares this act to the way we "compose" the external world in perception. Here is another word with the "pose" root. "Pose" is one of the signatures of the performative. The performative has many signatures, counterfeit and genuine, aliases, pseudonyms, and sobriquets, as Austin knew. It takes a sharp eye to track this shapechanger down and unmask his disguises. It takes courage, also, to countersign these signatures and thereby say, in effect, "Yes; I declare this is a performative." "All reality," says Marcel, "is perhaps equally dissimilar from what we believe ourselves to be directly perceiving and which we compose with the aid of ideas that do not reveal themselves but are none the less efficacious, just as the trees, the sun and the sky would not be the same as what we see if they were apprehended by creatures having eyes differently constituted from ours, or

else endowed for that purpose with organs other than eyes which would furnish equivalents of trees and sky and sun, though not visual ones" (F, 2: 366; E, 2: 64). Marcel must say 'perhaps' here because even perception is always a matter of 'peut-être,' never a matter of certain knowledge. "Perhaps" is another alias of the performative.

"Ideas that do not reveal themselves but are none the less efficacious" is a perfect definition of ideology as described by Louis Althusser or Paul de Man. It is just because they do not reveal themselves that they are efficacious, just as we are mistakenly led to believe that the world of sun, sky, and trees we perceive is the real and only world because we are trapped within the sense organs we happen to have. These receptors are sensitive in a certain way to certain frequencies of light and sound, though not to others. A cat has infrared vision and so "sees" the world quite differently from human beings. A cat "sees," for example, the heat radiated by a mouse behind the wainscot and so can see through walls. The similarity or analogy claimed in Marcel's "just as" is just as slippery and untrustworthy, of course, as "analogical" in Husserl's "analogical appresentation." We posit a similarity but there is no way to prove it. In our apperception of people we are just as blinded as we are in our perception of the inanimate world, as Marcel goes on to assert in the climax of this little sequence:

At any rate I realised the impossibility of obtaining any direct and certain knowledge of whether Françoise loved or hated me. And thus it was she who first gave me the idea that a person does not, as I had imagined, stand motionless and clear before our eyes with his merits, his defects, his plans, his intentions with regard to ourselves (like a garden at which we gaze through a railing with all its borders spread out before us), but is a shadow which we can never penetrate (*une ombre où nous ne pouvons jamais pénétrer*), of which there can be no such thing as direct knowledge, with respect to which we form countless beliefs, based upon words and sometimes actions, neither of which can give us anything but inadequate and as it proves contradictory information—a shadow behind which we can alternately imagine, with equal justification, that there burns the flame of hatred and of love. (F, 2: 366-7; E, 2: 64-5).

All the suffering of Marcel's long affair with Albertine is contained proleptically in this sad and remorselessly demystifying pas-

sage. The key words here are "shadow," "beliefs," and "imagine." The other is not open to inspection, like a garden laid out before our eyes, but a species of black hole, a "shadow" which we can never penetrate, of which we can never have direct knowledge. It is, however, a black hole that emits enigmatic, inadequate, and contradictory signs in the form of words and actions, just as an invisible object casts a shadow showing that something is in there but giving little satisfactory evidence of just what that something is. These signs, as a result, are open to a multitude of unverifiable interpretations. Since those interpretations can never be checked directly against the hidden object that casts the shadow, anything we say of that object (the mind and feelings of the other) is not a constative statement of fact but a statement of belief, a form of testimony, a performative utterance: "I hold that Françoise loves me," or "I hold that Françoise hates me." Proust's word for the projection of love or hate, either equally justified and unjustified by the shadowy evidence, is "imagine": "une ombre où nous pouvons tour à tour imaginer avec autant de vraisemblance que brillent la haine et l'amour" (F, 2: 367). Did Françoise love Marcel or did she think he was not worth the price of the rope to hang him? There is absolutely no way to tell for sure.

This assumption that the other is an impenetrable shadow, a shadow that emits contradictory signs open to endlessly varied contradictory hypotheses, all equally unverifiable, all equally fueled by one emotional need or another, is the presupposition of all Marcel's presentation of human life.

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<sup>1</sup> W. B. Yeats, *The Variorum Edition of the Poems*, ed. Peter Allt and Russell K. Alspach (New York: Macmillan, 1977), 631.

<sup>2</sup> Marcel Proust, *À la recherche du temps perdu*, ed. Jean-Yves Tadié, éd. de la Pléiade (Paris: Gallimard, 1989), 4:350; *Remembrance of Things Past*, trans. C. K. Scott Moncrieff (New York: Vintage, 1982), 3:795. Further references will be to these texts, indicated by "F" and "E" respectively.

<sup>3</sup> (London: Longmans: 1858), IV: 300, cited in Jayne Elizabeth Lewis, "All Mankind are Her Scots': Mary Stuart and the Birth of Modern Britain," *Literature and the Nation*, ed. Brook Thomas, *REAL: Yearbook of Research in English and American Literature*, 14 Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag, 1998), 59.

<sup>4</sup> Jacques Derrida, "Passions" (Paris: Galilée, 1993), 67-8, henceforth P; *ibid.*, "Passions: 'An Oblique Offering,'" trans. David Wood, in *On the Name*, ed. Thomas Dutoit (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), 29-30, henceforth ON.

<sup>5</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *The Blue and Brown Books* (New York: Haroer Torchbooks, Harper & Row, 1965), henceforth BBB; *ibid.*, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe (Oxford: Blackwell, 1968), henceforth PI; *ibid.*, *Bemerkungen über die Philosophie der Psychologie/Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology*, ed. G. E. M. Anscombe and G. G. von Wright, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe, 2 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980).

<sup>6</sup> Gerard Manley Hopkins, *Sermons and Devotional Writings*, ed. Christopher Devlin (London: Oxford University Press, 1959), 123.

<sup>7</sup> Paris: Galilée, 1994, chapters 2 and 3, espec. pp. 46, 86.

<sup>8</sup> In Derrida, *Revue Internationale de Philosophie*, 3 (October 1998), 498-9.

<sup>9</sup> J. L. Austin, *Philosophical Papers*, 3<sup>rd</sup>. ed., ed J. O. Urmson and G. J. Warnock (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 76-116, 253-71, henceforth PP. "Other Minds" was first published in 1946 in *Proceedings of the Aristotlean Society*, that is, nine years before the presentation of *How to Do Things with Words* at Harvard in 1955. "Pretending" was first published later, in the 1957-8 Supplementary Volume xxxii of *Proceedings of the Aristotlean Society*.

<sup>10</sup> Paul de Man, "Reading (Proust)", *Allegories of Reading* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), 205.

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## CV

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