Checking out of the Epoch: Performatism in Olga Tokarczuk's "The Hotel Capital" vs. Late Postmodernism in Ali Smith's *Hotel World* (with remarks on Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* and Miloš Urban's *Sevenchurch*)

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We live in an age that is highly skeptical about the possibility of epochal change. Although there is a widely held feeling that postmodern irony is démodé and that poststructuralist theory has run its course, there is little or no interest in inquiring whether current culture might be shifting into a new, as yet undefined aesthetic mode requiring an entirely different theoretical treatment. Thus while recent books bemoan "the theory mess" (Rapaport 2001) or muse about what might come "after theory" (Eagleton 2004) they don't offer much of a positive, programmatic alternative. This attitude, it might be added, isn't limited to die-hard postmodernists. Even such prominent critics of poststructuralist theory as Walter Benn Michaels in America (2004) and Boris Groys in Germany (2000) don't try to outline what culture might look like after the end of posthistory.(2) And, as readers of this journal hardly need be reminded, Eric Gans and myself are practically the only two critics who have tried to name and define the new postmillennial or performatist epoch in a systematic way.

Part of the disinterest in defining the nascent epoch has to do with the stringent way that scholars now address any event or utterance laying claim to be something "new." Today, whoever attempts to define the New is practically required to consider its endless, uncontrollable and open implication in the Already Existing

every single step of the way. Derrida, in an essay devoted to the irksome problem of historical “isms,” leaves no doubt as to the alternatives at hand. Either you offer up a “static and taxonomic tabularization” (1990, 65) of the new in divesting yourself of the old, which hardly seems very promising, or you give yourself over to the field of an “introjective multiplicity” that corresponds “neither to a linear and temporal order of succession, nor to the order of a juxtaposing simultaneity” (1990, 69). This being said and done, the whole business of defining a paradigm shift pretty much takes care of itself. The new dissipates in the endless gyre and gimble of a discourse allowing no innovation that its rigorous metaphysical critique has not already touched on and placed under erasure from the start.

Rather than bemoan Derrida’s self-serving demand that history be discussed solely in terms that would make it forever posthistorical, we need to ask how we can go about defining epochal change in the most parsimonious and rigorous manner. In semiotic terms, the simplest and most fundamental way of doing this is to key in on two mutually exclusive concepts of sign. The first such concept includes the object in its notion of the sign; the second leaves it out. Regarding postmodernism there is little doubt about its semiotic preference. The object is always exterior to the sign, which is the sole, albeit belated means of gaining knowledge of the world around us (the triumph of virtuality in postmodernism and of belatedness in poststructuralism are the most salient expressions of this attitude).

Traditionally, this sort of sign is called dualist: there is always a split between sign and thing. Given this attitude, poststructuralists consider monist sign concepts, which treat the object and the sign as a unity, to be just so much hokum–a self-deluding “metaphysics” whose intellectual history has for all serious purposes already come to an end. Not surprisingly, poststructuralists have fundamental difficulties accepting newly developing monist positions. For the radical monist theories of Eric Gans, Walter Benn Michaels, and the German philosopher Peter Sloterdijk aren’t just a correction or modification of postmodern culture, they’re its historical nemesis: they would reintroduce that element of difference into our cultural life that would ultimately make postmodernist dualism into something specifically historical–and historically expendable. Perhaps understandably, the theoretical project of radical monism has made little headway in academia, where poststructuralism and its offshoots have many eloquent and influential supporters. By contrast, the basic strategies of the monist aesthetic–closing works of art, striving for unity, ordering space and projecting belief onto characters and objects–have been appearing with increasing frequency and force in literature, film, and architecture without attracting the slightest bit of interest in academia. In the long run, the theoretical project of endlessly fine-tuning poststructuralism by injecting more ideology, more gender, or more history into it is in very real danger of missing out completely on the aesthetic and semiotic shift to monism now going

on around it.

Perhaps the most graphic way of demonstrating just how this shift has taken place is to take two similar works from each side of the epochal divide and compare them according to the basic semiotic features noted above. Often, this kind of comparative work is like comparing apples and oranges; unless you're dealing with an outright parody, it's unusual to find works that share the same formal features but implement them in two completely contrary ways. In this case, though, I've come across two texts which are so close in theme and details of plot that they invite comparison under what are almost laboratory conditions. The works I have in mind here are Ali Smith's novel*Hotel World* (2001) and the Polish writer Olga Tokarczuk's short story "The Hotel Capital" ("Numery," orig. 1989, cited according to 2000).

Both texts use exactly the same gimmick–the fancy international hotel as an allegory of global capitalism–but treat it in two completely divergent ways conforming respectively to the norms of postmodernism and performatism.(3) Smith, who did Ph.D.-level work in English literature, makes ample use of what looks like Foucauldian and Butlerian premises to set up a gender-sensitive victimary scenario. Tokarczuk, who was trained as a psychologist, deliberately follows in the Jungian (and by extension, Kantian) tradition, assigning an inspirational, unifying role to projections of an individual subject; in her treatment of spirituality, time, and space she also draws on the work of Mircea Eliade. *Hotel World* shows how helpless, decentered subjects accidentally and unintentionally come together to–unsuccessfully–resist the hegemonic order around them. "Hotel Capital," by contrast, describes how a tutelary, distinctly Jungian type of subject intervenes in that order from within to invest it with spiritual value. As is always the case in performatist works, Tokarczuk's story offers you a real choice. If you're still in the postmodern mode, you'll deconstruct the narrator's projections in the twinkling of an eye and cast the story aside. If you do decide to go along with the narrator, though, you'll enter into a whole, aesthetically mediated identification with those projections–and become a performatist so to speak by default.

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To round out my discussion, I'd also like to treat briefly two other critiques of global capitalism in performatist works. To this end I'll touch on Arundhati Roy's postcolonial classic *The God of Small Things* (orig. 1996), which shows how a Kantian ideal of the beautiful can be used to frame radical individual resistance to caste restrictions and the encroachments of global culture. And I'll provide a quick wrap-up of the young Czech writer Miloš Urban's untranslated *Sevenchurch* (*Sedmikostelí*, 1999), which offers a sublime, characteristically Central European

aesthetic of terror in answer to the resentment arising out of globalization.

Hotel World

On the surface, Ali Smith's *Hotel World* is concerned with the accidental death of a young hotel worker named Sara Wilby, whose name (Wilby–"will be") is already resonant with deferred potential. Sara, who has just taken on a job as chambermaid in the chain Global Hotels, bets a co-worker that she can stuff herself into the hotel's dumbwaiter. Immediately after she performs this feat, however, the elevator cable tears, sending the dumbwaiter and Sara crashing down to the bottom of the shaft.

The fatal occurrence along with its attendant circumstances is recounted in six stylistically very different narrative sections. Although in the novel five striking individuals dominate each section–they are, in order of appearance, the victim herself, the hotel's receptionist, a homeless woman, a female journalist, and Sara's sister–our identification with these figures is constantly being disturbed, undermined, or sabotaged entirely. Thus in her narration, the dead accident victim appears as a ghost who visits first its family, then its own body in the grave. So that no one might get the idea of taking the heroine's existence in the hereafter all too seriously, the ghost occasionally emits a "o-oo-oo" sound–just like in the comics.

This authorial ironization of characters' discourse applies no less to the living. The reader's identification with the younger sister's anger and grief is undermined by the complete lack of punctuation marks in the chapter narrated by her. Her intensively experienced emotional reaction is overwritten, as it were, by a kind of discursive dysfunctionality whose only source can be that of the author (since no teenager, no matter how grief-stricken, would leave out every last single punctuation mark in her own writing). The suffering of the homeless, tubercular Else is similarly marked by defective language: when begging, her speech is reduced to almost incomprehensible fragments like "Spr sm chn" ("spare some change").

These and other plays with script and language show the author to be a proficient, remote administrator of that dysfunctionality and defectiveness which otherwise weighs heavily upon her characters. By contrast, the only figure in the novel who is able to write, speak, and act in a conventional way is mercilessly exposed as a fraud. The person in question is a female journalist who befriends the homeless, disoriented Else while staying at the hotel for a night. The character, aptly named Penny, quickly proves herself to be everything promised by her name. Having written out a large check to Else she has second thoughts about it later in the night and has it cancelled–thus neatly exposing her own magnanimity as an empty, vain projection. The author doesn't want her character (or us) to buy into an

identification with Else; she wants to inscribe herself literally and directly in the dysfunctionality, alterity, and suffering of her characters–a contact that, however, never cleaves to one person for very long. Like the ghost, the bodiless, preternaturally weightless author moves effortlessly through her own book, haunting now one, now the other character.

By contrast, the author's treatment of space and order is easy to pin down ideologically. At times, in fact, the book reads as if the author had cribbed straight out of Judith Butler or Michel Foucault. The hotel is a spatial trap, a panoptic surveillance center in which the employees are strictly monitored and punished according to need. Loopholes in this hegemonic matrix arise only by accident–as when the omnipresent surveillance cameras fail to work shortly after Sara's accident. The characters in the novel, who are equipped with a quasi natural, spontaneous ability to resist à la Judith Butler, make immediate use of these flubs. Thus Lise, the mentally disturbed receptionist, takes advantage of the camera failure to sneak homeless Else into a luxury suite. Else, who is traumatized by enclosed spaces to begin with–some Christian missionaries once tried to convert her inside a locked room–soon flees, but forgets to turn off the bathwater, causing a small deluge. The damage is, however, quickly repaired and the costs fobbed off on an innocent chambermaid.

As this turn of plot suggests, resistance is both pointless and useless. It can occur only in the involuntary playing out of one's own dysfunctionality but not as a goal-oriented, willful act. Instead, we are encouraged to imagine the *possibility* of such resistance from a higher, constantly shifting vantage point. The authorially mediated metaperspective allows us to experience ironic *schadenfreude* over the small flood caused by Else and Lise even as we realize its accidental, inconsequential character.

In view of the close connection between space and power, Sara's accidental death in the innermost, "dumbest" and most confining space of the hotel carries a certain ideological weight after all. Sara's accidental death and the barely concealed spatial violence emanating from the hotel form a contingency relationship suggesting that something like this *need* not take place but very well *can*. Sara's senseless, accidental, death-by-wager–the embodiment of the aleatory per se–exposes the reified essence of the hotel as a whole: its omnipresent structural violence asserts itself even in the case of pure chance. Later on, Sara's sister will smash a hole in the wall of the hastily bricked up shaft and throw an alarm clock into it so that she may experience the time span between Sara's life and death by herself. By contrast, the hotel tempts its visitors with a false temporality, a false experience of transcendence: the hotel's brochure indeed promises that "a transcendent time is waiting to be had by all" (181).

That time is not transcendent, but instead depends on spatial restrictions and contractual obligations is demonstrated vividly in the last part of the novel. Sara's unrequited love for the salesgirl in a watch repair shop is answered–but only belatedly and in a mode of permanent deferral. The salesgirl, who had only fleetingly taken note of the pining Sara and who knows nothing of her death, intuitively realizes her affection ex post facto and–disregarding all regulations–puts on the watch Sara had brought in for repair. Love, then, is possible after all: you love without knowing the other, without wanting to do so, and without having to invest your desire in a bothersome interpersonal projection. Although the salesgirl's wearing of the wrist watch marks a double reconciliation–it is a symbolic act both of loving and of remembrance–this moment can ultimately only be enjoyed from the cool, epistemologically remote vantage point of the authorial metaposition–a position that undermines all lasting identifications and does not stay attached to individual figures or positions for any length of time.

At the very beginning of the novel the ghostly Sara begged the reader to "time me"–to measure her time so that she doesn't disappear in *différance*, in the endlessly receding, arbitrary conditionality of language. This "timing"–the translation of fluid temporality into fixed spatiality–is achieved formally as soon as the salesgirl puts on Sara's wristwatch. Yet even this unwitting act of remembrance threatens to go awry. On the book's last page we find once more the lines that the ghost, who is becoming ever more forgetful, uttered in the book's beginning chapter:

> Remember you must live.
> Remember you most love.
> Remainder you mist leaf. (30, 237)

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This tossed salad of signifiers is followed by the ghost's howl, which ends and simultaneously opens the book. The voice of the ever-fainter-growing Other forms the alpha and omega of the novel as a whole: the hereafter appears as the mirror image of a dysfunctional here and now rather than as a transcendent shore of salvation. Indeed, the ghost and the author turn out to be effects of the same persistent mechanism that holds forth the possibility of transcendence while in the final analysis always allowing it to fall flat. In terms of reader response, this mechanism is at the end passed on to the reader, who by way of a semi-comprehensible half-insult ("remainder you mist leaf") is encouraged to take part, albeit belatedly, in an unending ring-around-the-rosy of misdirected resistance and yearning.

The subject representations, epistemological figures and authorial strategies in *Hotel World* are neither especially surprising nor likely to plunge anyone into a spell of critical brooding on literary technique. The pre-programmed alterity and deficient subjectivity of the main characters, the radical undecidability of the spatial, temporal and causal relations, the author's superior, infinitely receding play with figures of lack–these are all typical, well-established procedures of postmodernism. One feature that seems characteristic of late postmodernism is the author's curious will to transcendence and love. These metaphysically loaded moments are however always presented as belated or deferred; they never threaten to become present or real to us. Thus the author can preside over ideal figures of classical metaphysics without endangering the critical posture of her novel as a whole.

This turn to metaphysical, indeed, rather sentimental themes from the standpoint of a constantly moving, epistemologically unassailable metaposition exposes the unenviable dilemma of late postmodernism. For in the process of showing her own superiority in questions of epistemology the author's dependence on traditional projections of unity–on love, reconciliation and transcendence–becomes ever more evident. The uncanny ability of the author to be everywhere and nowhere in her own book contrasts directly with a yearning for unity and presence–a yearning that is conjured up only to be dispersed once more through the author's own epistemological or linguistic interventions.

As *Hotel World* graphically demonstrates, late postmodernism is caught in a self-made trap. Whoever presents herself as epistemologically invulnerable falls into an empty, indeed, ghostly game of hide-and-seek with the reader and with herself; whoever foregoes this sort of epistemological critique in favor of metaphysical ideals becomes a purveyor of simple-minded, if not downright fraudulent projections. Since there is no immanent way out of this endless loop-the-loop, poststructuralist critics and literary scholars have long been in agreement that postmodernism will never end; it will simply refine and multiply self-ironic strategies for acknowledging belatedness and producing deferral. We are fated, it would seem, to shuttle endlessly between the poles of metaphysical wishful thinking and the merciless epistemological critique of the very same.

"The Hotel Capital"

That things can be done entirely differently is demonstrated by Olga Tokarczuk's story "The Hotel Capital" (orig. 1989; cited according to 2000). Using motifs very similar to *Hotel World*, Tokarczuk arrives at a specifically monist, no longer postmodern perspective on the sign, space, and the world in general.

At first it could seem as if "Hotel Capital" is even more zealous in its critique of

capitalism than is *Hotel World*. Apart from its transparently symbolic name, the hotel is flatly described in the very first line as being “only for the rich” (35). Like Sara Wilby, the heroine and first-person narrator is a lowly chambermaid and, moreover, a nameless foreigner. As in *Hotel World*, the Hotel Capital exerts an omnipresent, deforming force on the main character. In fact, as soon as the heroine puts on her uniform, she foregoes her own subjective sense of self: “I take off my exotic language, my strange name, my sense of humour, my face lines, my taste for food not appreciated here, my memory of small events […]” (35). In keeping with the fatal event related in *Hotel World*, the heroine is overcome by a feeling of existential angst when riding the cramped service elevator to her work–she is afraid “lest the lift should stop and I should stay here forever, enclosed like a bacterium inside the body of the Hotel Capital” (36). Finally, we even encounter a small flood in one of the rooms which, as in *Hotel World*, temporarily disrupts order in the hotel without washing it away entirely.

The postmodern reader now expecting to be initiated into a subaltern victim’s chronicle of alienation and otherness will be sorely disappointed. In spite of the superficial similarities with the ambience of *Hotel World*, “Hotel Capital” proposes completely different semiotic and spatial relations aimed at promoting unity, order, and belief. In particular, space appears as the guarantor of a whole, intimate, indeed sacral ambience which can be experienced only within the confines of the otherwise worldly hotel.

This spatially determined sacral experience can be thought of as a *sphere* in the sense used by Peter Sloterdijk. Sloterdijk calls the sphere an “aspirated commune” (2000, 17 ff), a protected interior space that allows intimacy, sensuality, and social cohesiveness to develop at all in the first place. As historians of religion like Mircea Eliade confirm, the origins of this interior experience are primal. Accordingly, the creation of closed, centered spaces must be viewed not as a metaphysical ploy but as an attempt to make space livable to begin with: “*If the world is to be lived in*, it must be *founded*–and no world can come to birth in the chaos of the homogeneity and relativity of profane space” (Eliade 1987, 22(4)). According to Eliade, this is “not a matter of theoretical speculation, but of a primary religious experience that precedes all reflection on the world” (1987, 21). Because it is essential to founding life the primal space is always placed in the middle of the world and displays a vertical, hierarchical structure that literally and figuratively opens up to the transcendent world of the gods (1987, 63).

Now, the claim that there once existed an originary, pre-reflexive, hierarchically arranged space with a built-in escape hatch to the heavens does not present much of a challenge for a poststructuralist or postmodern appropriation. Inasmuch as this kind of pre-reflexive, originary world is anchored in discourse it can always be

conceived of as a double, irreducible act of inclusion and exclusion, whereby the poststructuralist would always be sure to let the excluded and chaotic outer world receive its just due. Apart from this, an originary space can only be experienced again by way of simulation, which is to say in belated act which simultaneously undermines and outdoes the original.

This act of appropriation will encounter serious resistance only when the sense of spatial intimacy is put on as a *performance* with aesthetic means. In such a case the text will be presented as a closed space, which, by exerting one-sided pressure on the observer, gives him or her an unambiguous choice between an inside (going along with the work) or an outside (going against the work). This kind of *performatist work* is not mere discourse or simulation, *but rather imposes the closed conditions of the sacral, originary space on the observer by aesthetic means*. We are dealing here, then, with the fusion of a privileged aesthetic space in the Kantian sense with a rather un-Kantian attitude that you might describe as ritualistic, dogmatic, or compulsive.(5)

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It goes without saying that this forced aesthetic experience does not suspend the possibility of critical reflection. No one today can actually return to a sacral or ritual experience of interiority, no one can (or wants to) completely shut out the vibrant hurly-burly of exterior space. The possibility of deceit and fraud thus still lingers in every performative act of framing–but precisely as a possibility, and not as a preordained, epistemologically guaranteed result, as in postmodernism. Readers, in other words, now have a real choice. If this kind of aesthetically mediated inner space remains more or less intact we will be dealing with a performatist monism; if it mixes uncontrollably with exterior space we will fall back into the endlessly undecidable convolutions of postmodernism.

But let us return now to “Hotel Capital.” If the space of the hotel is a sphere in Sloterdijk’s sense, then it is by no means an idyllic inner sanctum. The sacrally aspirated hotel room–no less so than in *Hotel World*–is unavoidably exposed to the pressures exerted by globalization and global capitalism. As the narrator herself remarks, the room is a “four-cornered, prostituted space” that gives itself to anyone who is willing to pay for it (37). The space of the hotel, whose sacral, protective function is constantly being emphasized by the narrator, is in the secularized world itself helpless and exposed. Space requires an agent who would, as it were, clean up the spiritual and metaphysical mess brought into it by the hotel’s guests. Precisely this active, theist role is filled out by the narrator/chambermaid, who intervenes in a life-affirming way in the half-public, half-intimate sphere of the guests. Having temporarily laid aside her subjective personality, she settles into the

invisible realm that is neither outside nor in and intervenes from there in interior space–a transcendental subject with a theist mission and a human face.

The postmodern reader secretly hoping for the first-person narrator to be ironically dismantled in the course of the story will wait in vain. Indeed, in narratological terms much the opposite takes place: the first-person narrator acquires distinctly authorial characteristics. In lieu of direct antagonists–as a rule the heroine tidies up in empty rooms–the story appears as a series of quasi-philosophical meditations on space and the people in it; in lieu of disruptive hints from the author we are forced to identify with the heroine and her space-friendly value judgments. From the normative postmodern point of view it is of course always possible to reject this authorially supported mindset as blind self-deception. If you do so, though, you'll stumble into a narrative trap. For either you enter into the closed space of the work or you remain outside it. The work frame changes from a place of undecidability to a place of decision–quite contrary to the normative precepts of postmodernism. The act of reading reproduces the simultaneously compulsive and comforting quality of the fictive inner space.

This experience of spatially mediated pleasure (Kant's *Wohlgefallen*) must be understood perfomatively or as a gesture and not discursively or conceptually. Although we may be in disagreement with individual meanings or arguments in the work, we must nonetheless accept it as a whole. The reader is suspended–half voluntarily, half by way of force–in an aesthetically mediated no-man's land which can only be conceived of or experienced under the given conditions of the aesthetic frame. This spatially determined pleasure is accompanied in turn by a practically idiot-proof, compulsory mechanism that arrests the restless, hypercritical spirit of the postmodern reader long enough until she is able to identify with what is going on in the work's interior space. If the obstinate reader balks at this, then she will remain where she belongs: namely on the outside. Thus once more–with a little dogmatic help–we arrive at the restoration of what Kant calls *necessary* aesthetic pleasure [*notwendiges Wohlgefallen*].(6)

Loading the Kantian frame with dogmatic and archaic means of enforcement leads to the inevitable question as to whether we are foregoing hard-earned achievements of the Enlightenment by doing so. This fear can be disarmed with a paradoxical reference. For the archaic force exerted on us in performatism allows us to occupy precisely that transcendental position which is generally regarded as typical of the Enlightenment (but which has lost its "punch" due to a hyperrationalistic critique of metaphysics and unbounded pleasure in boundary transgression). This paradox is ultimately possible only in an aesthetic, secularized context and not in a ritual or dogmatic one. Moreover, in terms of cultural history it is only conceivable after modernism and postmodernism, as a reaction to their

programmatic skepticism of enlightenment and metaphysics. “Hotel Capital,” for its part, avoids an absolute relapse into pre-Enlightenment gullibility by allowing the transcendental subjectivity of the heroine to manifest itself in the form of a negotiable role or *performance*.

In this case, the performance manifests itself in the resacralization and reaesthetization of what at first seems to be purely practical terms of employment. When starting work the heroine puts on a quasi-sacral *uni–form* which cloaks a conciliatory, spatially limited monism; as soon as she takes off her work clothes she returns to a personal, “interested” attitude commensurate with the needs of daily life. The heroine’s space-friendly attitude is based on a simple contractual agreement: it is not an authentic, natural or originary state.

As a result, the usual deconstructive strategies for undermining “metaphysics” meet with little or no resistance. The story is well aware of its own constructedness; it raises no claim to propounding an original or ultimate truth. Indeed, the strict sense of order that applies inside the hotel evaporates as soon as the heroine is outside of it. This can be seen in the only scene not taking place within the hotel. From a hotel window the heroine has spotted a Scotsman playing a bagpipe for money; she muses to herself that he can’t be real since he’s going about it with too much zeal. At the end of the story, after she leaves the hotel, this suspicion is confirmed: the Scotsman takes off his kilt and puts on a pair of stylishly tattered jeans. When the heroine remarks that she already knew he was just pretending, he smiles at her mysteriously and winks (in the Polish original this last glance is a shade more obtrusive: it reads “robi do mnie oko”–literally, “he does an eye into me”). The visual penetration which the heroine shortly before experienced as unbearable when she was being ogled by one of the hotel guests is not made into an issue here–for this is also where the text ends and hence also the possibility of delving further into the false Scotsman’s secrets.

Within the hotel we find a spatially conditioned metaphysical order that travelers take advantage of in different ways. The metaphysical ideal of the hotel room is approached most closely by a Japanese husband and wife who leave behind practically no traces–those indispensable poststructuralist bearers of alterity. Their room, remarks the narrator, “gives the impression of not being occupied at all.” (39) There are no objects left lying around by mistake, no personal traces, not even an odor. And when the chambermaid cleans up, she “create[s] more disorder than they would make in a month.” (39) The only communication between the order-loving Japanese and the order-upholding chambermaid takes place through the tip that the couple leaves behind in a neat stack on their pillow. The coins, however, are not for the chambermaid but for the room itself:

So when they leave the tip it is not for me but for the room, for its silent continuance in the world, for its constancy amid the inexplicable inconstancy. . . . The two coins left on the pillow preserve the illusion that such rooms exist even when nobody looks at them. The two coins dispel our only essential fear–that the world exists only in the act of seeing and there is nothing beyond this. (40)The economy of this gift is transcendental and self-confirming: it represents the sacral opposite of the "prostituted" room and makes the room seem like a "small temple" (40). On the other hand, though, the relationship as a whole remains impersonal and cool. The chambermaid is familiar only with "the immaterial shape of the footprints left in the abandoned sandals" (40); conversely, for the Japanese guests she remains without a body and face. Communication and value exchange don't take place through tattered words or marks ("spr sm chn") but through shared attitudes toward space and the objects in it. The scene with the tip simply acknowledges the latent dualism of this dialectical relationship. The more spiritual and complete the relationship to the absent guests, the more the relationship of the individual to material reality is placed in doubt.

5

The opposite of the Japanese are the "young Americans," the bearers of imperial disorder. This disorder has no true metaphysical valence of its own but is rather a "thoughtless, stupid mess" (literally *bałagan*–a kind of Slavic Punch and Judy show) in which "there is no rhyme or reason" (44). This lack of order–quite in keeping with a Baudrillardian scenario–is circulated by the media and intensified ad infinitum. The absent young Americans leave their TV on to CNN, and CNN assures the chambermaid that the world exists and is full of young Americans. The imperial arrogance of the young Americans and their "inattentiveness to the present" (45) is countered by the chambermaid's recurring to their common corporeal mortality: "I clean around roughly, as if afraid of destroying these relics of the transitoriness of the people who live here" (45). This isn't ironic *schadenfreude* but rather existential insight into a shared fear of death–a fear that the chambermaid in this case doesn't want to assuage entirely. Later, however, in the room of the dying old Swede whose body absorbs all odors from without, the chambermaid will deliberately leave behind a sweaty, vital whiff of her own self. In a way that is "conspiratorial, respiratory and inspirational," as Sloterdijk writes (2000, 40), the chambermaid tries to forge a "dyadic union" (2000, 42) in interior space that will set both human frailty and human arrogance to rights.

The chambermaid's job differs, however, from Sloterdijk's in one important respect. Whereas Sloterdijk is trying to reconstruct historically the "morpho-immunological" spheres (2000, 46) and "foams"(7) that he considers indispensable for the development of human culture per se, the chambermaid faces a much more

immediate problem. Her task is, namely, to restore that state of interior intimacy that can be experienced only through a monetary transaction and away from home–the genteel, introspective spatial phenomenology of a Bachelard doesn't work well in the "prostituted" ambience of the Hotel Capital. And that is why the chambermaid proceeds in such a deliberate way, so to speak in accordance with an authorially approved metaphysical work code.(8) If you want to clean up after postmodernism (or even sweep it away entirely) then you must, as the heroine says, do so with deliberation: you must first frame scattered traces of alienation so that modest inspirational measures can take hold in the first place.

Given the rigid spatial order of "Hotel Capital" it is justified to pose the question of theodicy, which is to say the question of evil and the responsibility which spiritualized space bears for it. (In *Hotel World* the answer is clear: the spatial order is the sufficient, but not necessary condition of evil.) True to the tradition of metaphysical optimism in which Tokarczuk's story follows, evil doesn't appear as a principle sui generis but rather as disorder or as a falling away from spirituality.

The first kind of disorder–that of the "young Americans"–is childish. It corresponds to a lack of consciousness and humility in regard to the world that the young Americans dominate. The second kind of disorder, by contrast, is spatial: it resides in the vast expansiveness of the hotel (and, by extension, the world as a whole). The hotel has a mysterious tract called the "squar" which is designed for long-term guests and has a confusing layout; it is labyrinthine, convoluted, spiraled, and dark: "Something strange happens to space here. Space does not like spiral stairs, chimneys and wells. It tends to degenerate into labyrinths." (51) The tangled, invaginated layout of the hotel building appears as a flaw offending against the anthropomorphic space's supposedly natural love of order (once more something hardly in keeping with the architectonic norms of postmodernism). It's easy in deconstructive terms to get all worked up about this simple tautology, but it's harder to ignore it within the framework of the story–unless, of course, you are prepared to take upon yourself the stigma of disorder as a matter of principle.

The third variant of disorder is no less anthropomorphic than the others. Its point of departure is a self-willed, mischievous room bearing the number 229; its "Kabbalistic sum" is said to equal the number thirteen, which "is a number of excess and trickery." (47) This room has an appropriately subversive effect on visitors: "I suspect that one night here is enough to get them trapped, to bring unquiet dreams, to hold them a little longer, to bring out desires and overturn carefully laid plans." (47) The minor inundation mentioned earlier also had its origin in this room, which induces an intensified sense of corporeality and narcissistic self-alienation in the chambermaid: "The room encloses me within itself, cradles me. It is a most tender if non-physical caress, this embrace which only a closed space can

give you.” (48) And:

I feel distinctly that my body exists. . . . I am aware of my skin, conscious that it’s alive and breathing, that it has its own scent, and I can feel my hair where it touches my ears. I like then to get up and look at myself in the mirror which never spares me a surprise. Is this me? Really me? (48)Were the narrator not being caressed by the room around her one could suppose that Lacan and his mirror stage were lurking somewhere in the wings. For the corporeal and narcissistic feeling of insecurity experienced by the chambermaid is further intensified by the gaze of a guest that severs the chambermaid’s metaphysical bond with the space around her. Thus “the established [literally: eternal] order is inverted. My cleaning is no longer omnipotent, it becomes emptied of meaning” (49).

It could at first seem that the presence of the unashamedly gazing guest shatters the Apollonian dream space of the chambermaid and revives precisely that patriarchal order that in *Hotel World* could only be overcome temporarily by accident and through deceit. Yet here, too, space and the metaphysical service code offer a way out. As soon as the chambermaid leaves the room she is able to recuperate in that very depth of space which was the death of Sara Wilby: “I . . . stop in front of the banister separating a stairwell two or three storeys high. I look down and see only the ground floor from here. And–as usual–not a soul about. . . .] This is the best relaxation: to look down to where everything becomes progressively smaller and more distant, less clear, more illusory” (50). The spatial haven of the *theist* perspective has been restored–but with a built-in personal or human dimension of self-deception.

If the solidarity among subalterns in *Hotel World* is characterized by a fleeting, Nietzschean love for pure strangers, then in “Hotel Capital” it reveals itself to be genetic, object-oriented and monist. The justification for this is provided by the Castilian laundryman Pedro, who resembles a bearded missionary and who draws on an originary history of language and etymology to make his point. When people “in times of old” were wandering across Europe and Asia they carried their languages with them “like banners. They formed great families, although they did not know each other; only the words were permanent” (41). Pedro “pulls out the roots from words as if stoning cherries,” and those listening to his lecture slowly realize that they all “spoke the same language long ago” (41). Although this doesn’t quite apply to everyone–the narrator is (unjustifiably) afraid to ask about her own Polish language, and a woman from Nigeria “pretends not to understand,” everyone wants to take cover under the “dark swirling cloud of prehistory”(9) (41) that Pedro stretches over their heads. This emblematic, genetic concept of language has a direct counterpart in the Swedish Bible that the narrator finds in the room of the dying Swede:

I cannot understand anything and yet all seems so familiar. A red bookmark marks the Book of Ecclesiastes. I run my eye along the page and I have the impression that I am beginning to understand it. First individual words and then whole phrases float out of memory and mix with the print. "*That which hath been is now; and that which is to be hath already been; and God requires that which is past.*" [The Polish Bible translation is much more emphatic; the last phrase reads: "And God will restore that which is past." R.E.] (53-54)6

These are, as the narrator remarks, "the most mysterious words of the Holy Book" (54). The foreign words behave like small hollow objects into which human memory breathes spiritual life; through her ritually mediated reading the narrator experiences the possibility of an originary, linguistic and sacral unity in the sense of Mircea Eliade's *illud tempus*. In Eric Gans's terminology, this understanding of language is also ostensive. This reading is neither a hermeneutic exegesis nor an act of inscribing oneself in an always already existing network of signs. Rather, it is a ritual making-present of a prehistorical moment in which the sign is experienced as object-related, but also as conflict-resolving and divine: as a *performance*.

The Politics of Space and Beauty: "The Hotel Capital" and *The God of Small Things*

At this point, it is justified to ask about the political implications of "The Hotel Capital." Tokarczuk's depiction of a monolithic world order is in many respects no less critical than Smith's. However, unlike the no-win world of spontaneous, mindless resistance depicted in *Hotel World*, Tokarczuk assumes the possibility of resacralizing and re-aestheticizing capitalism from within–a strategy that the alterity-loving theoreticians of postcolonialism may slowly have to get used to themselves. For whoever wants to construct positive regional or individual identity under the conditions of an all-encompassing global capitalism will practically be forced to create closed spaces *inside* that order in which desirable values of some kind congeal into more or less coherent form–the "chutneyfication of history," as Mita Banerjee (2002) has aptly called it.(10)

Thus a postideological, regionally oriented book like Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* seeks to transcend oppression, discrimination and loss of identity by welding a genetic and erotic originary bond (incest between siblings), by sensually amalgamating words and languages (English and Malayalam) and by plotting the erotic union of two loving individuals across caste boundaries.(11) The same focus on intimate aesthetic bonding is no less apparent in her political writings, which can hardly be accused of fostering sympathy for capitalism. In her well-known polemic "The End of Imagination," Roy even goes so far as to suggest that beauty, which is usually high up on anyone's list of essentialist taboos, is the direct answer to the

threat posed by the Indian Bomb:

There is beauty yet in this brutal, damaged world of ours. Hidden, fierce, immense. Beauty that is uniquely ours and beauty that we have received with grace from others, enhanced, reinvented and made our own. We have to seek it out, nurture it, love it. Making bombs will only destroy us. (Roy 1998)Roy performs in practice what Tobin Siebers has suggested in theory when he links Kant's notion of beauty with otherness and with an explicitly political notion of shared affect:

Beauty arrives at political form by virtue of the shared experience of affect. The vision of the beautiful object is also a vision of a beautiful "we" because it compels individuals to expose private feelings to the judgment of other people while at the same time imagining them as members of an affective community that shares common goals and objects. (1998, 48)The effect of beauty's conceptually inexplicable otherness is thus to create a new, potentially reconciliatory set towards "thingness" in its most positive and pleasing manifestation.

In a postideological world beauty can, as Roy vividly demonstrates, become that positively charged other that is uniquely suited to combating an economically unshakeable but "ugly" political order. This is no doubt also the reason why Roy (who is not a religious believer) deliberately spiritualizes her aesthetic credo. Seen this way, the "God of small things" is none other than the God of beauty, which in Kantian terms has a modest or human scale and applies to the intrinsic qualities of things rather than to interchangeable, subjective characteristics assigned to them after the fact. Kant's equating of beauty with smallness makes possible the confluence of the human and the transcendent in terms still acceptable to secular individuals.

Since "Hotel Capital" was written before the actual advent of capitalism in Poland and because Tokarczuk has since then addressed historical and psychological rather than topical themes, it's not as easy to pigeonhole her politically as it is Roy.(12) All in all, though, Tokarczuk remains a good deal more comfortable with closed space and capitalism than does Roy, whose plot stresses boundary transgression,(13) and whose politics are in conventional terms left-wing. Also, unlike Roy, whose chutney-like mix of Malayalam and Anglo-American culture is still very much a thing of her own making, Tokarczuk comes from a Central European culture steeped in venerable literary traditions and an acute sense of national history; she has plenty of time and opportunity to seek out the closed spaces in it in which to cast out her projections. Although not exactly an apology for globalism, her story suggests the possibility of a spatial accommodation with the capitalist world order that would probably be foreign to Roy.

Sevenchurch

This kind of inner accommodation does not, however, apply to all Central European writers addressing their respective countries' sudden re-immersion in capitalism. In the following discussion I would like to touch briefly on another book from post-Communist Europe that also stresses space and order but which presents them expressly in terms of the *sublime*.

The work in question is Miloš Urban's *Sevenchurch. A Gothic Novel of Prague* (1999),(14) whose basic plot motif is the struggle for control over post-postmodern space and form. Echoing an old theme of Czech culture, the book sets the Gothic style of the Czech high Middle Ages against the Baroque of the Counterreformation, whose onset coincided with the long-term loss of Czech national sovereignty. The main protagonists of *Sevenchurch* are all enthusiastic, not to say fanatical admirers of the Gothic and detractors of the Baroque, whose ornamental bombast and playful superficiality are clearly reminiscent of postmodernism. The Gothic, by contrast, is declared to be the only epoch at all capable of realizing architectonic transcendence:

The Gothic architects were the only ones to resist the dictates of antiquity; they came up with a style that did the impossible: it realized the victory of spirit over matter in human dwellings. In all preceding and following epochs exactly the opposite was the case. (64)The hero and narrator of the novel, a failed history student and ex-policeman named Švach, is gradually initiated into the plans of a mysterious sect that seeks to roll back democracy in favor of a medieval regime. As the leader of the sect declares:

Monarchy is a thousand times better than democracy. Democracy is dynamic and quick-moving, it reckons with the permanent growth of everything possible and impossible, it thrives on a cult of innovation. How monstrous! How erroneous! How against the order of the universe! By worshiping enlightenment, prosperity and functionality this loudmouthed democracy has taken us to where we are now–the end of Western humanity. (300)7

These tirades are embedded in a detective story emphasizing the sublime, "gothic" side of the narrator-hero's perspective as he uncovers ever new atrocities and eavesdrops on ominous sexual practices (part of this, incidentally, takes place in the corridors of a dark, labyrinthine hotel). After the zenith of sublime terror has been achieved–the hero is subjected to a fake execution–we find out that the sect has already achieved its goal. Švach, who has now become a faithful disciple of the group, informs us that the center of Prague has been cut off from the surrounding world and is being ruled according to the cruel dictates of the "wonderful, beatific

14th century” (326).

As in “Hotel Capital,” *Sevenchurch* forces a spatially defined monist order upon the reader. However, this now occurs using the specific means of what might be called the archaic sublime. In his novel Urban carries out that “rollback” of the Enlightenment that Tokarczuk suggests only in passing. This odd novelistic performance is neither ideological in nature–the real-life Urban is not a monarchist–nor can it be explained as an exercise in infinite postmodern regress. You could, I suppose, argue that the backwards-directed plot is simply a ploy meant to expose a weak hero to arbitrary manipulation by an infinitely receding author (the hero’s name “Švach,” which means “weak” in German, might support this). Problematic about this however is that there is no immediate possibility of regress behind the Medieval scenario; there is no mise en abyme into which the author nonchalantly plunges after having left the reader holding the bag (what Ali Smith does in *Hotel World*). Rather, we are confronted with a setup or frame similar to that in “Hotel Capital.” The point is not that we actually identify with the sect’s claims about Gothic style, but that we more or less involuntarily assume a position of terrified awe vis-à-vis the text. Upon finishing the book, we are transfixed and stunned by its representation of the victory of a whole, monist order without necessarily agreeing with its actual content.(15)

The text, in other words, carries out what might be called a *performative gesture*. The reader is forced to assume a unified attitude that is only possible within the framework of the given work; assuming this attitude is in turn what allows an aesthetically rewarding reading to occur in the first place. We ourselves remain in an aesthetically defined, sublime space that exposes us alternately to waves of pleasure and terror and keeps us from making practical ideological or conceptual judgments. If we did try to make such judgments nonetheless, we would merely conclude that this sublime vantage point allowing us to obliterate the Enlightenment at one stroke is guaranteed by the aesthetic principles of precisely that Enlightenment for which that stroke is intended.

All in all, the performance in *Sevenchurch* allows us to assume the cognitive position of a *terrorist* without having to share his or her practical interests. This sublime or terrorist monism comprises a *necessary* counterpart to the monolithic capitalist world order, whose metaphysical destruction must take place all at once in order to be truly gratifying (we will recall that in the Butlerian ambience of *Hotel World* the unshakeable hegemony of global capitalism is expressly *confirmed*: resistance takes place only partially, in a mode of murky, haphazard solidarity among victims). Rather than wallowing in a victimary mode, *Sevenchurch* employs a “high” aesthetic that allows you to let off your resentment all at once in an act of sublime projection and identification. And, needless to say, it leaves behind more

than enough irony, allusion, and loose ends to keep further interpretations alive. The Gothic ideal propounded by the sect, for example, contains elements both of Communist internationalism and of Czech national ideology and appears to mock the nostalgic yearning for both.

Conclusion

These examples suggest that the switch to a radical monist, postmillennial or performatist kind of consciousness is not exactly going to cause writers or other artists to burst out in hosannas to global capitalism. What it does mean, though, is that the thing that Eric Gans calls victimary politics (of which *Hotel World* is a prime example) is going to grow increasingly outmoded as an aesthetic device. In part, this is due to the ubiquity of victimary argumentation itself. The ironic act of displaying your political impotence on the one hand and flaunting your epistemological superiority on the other has by now become an entirely predictable exercise even for those who agree with its political aims. However, the rise of radical monism also appears to meet a real cultural need to create spatially discrete identities or performances within global capitalism that would enable forms of totalized or holistic resistance to it.

Using the examples I have discussed here as a rough guide, you could speak of a "right," a "left" and a sublime or "terrorist" path to this goal. The "right" method is not uncritical of capitalism. However, it tries to work within it by creating inspirational projections in its inner space (by aspirating what Sloterdijk calls spheres or foams–whole pockets of belief, faith, truth etc.). The "left" strategy corresponds roughly to the attempt to amalgamate variegated otherness into an appealing, tasteful object of cultural identity (a nice hot chutney, so to speak). This strategy seems particularly appropriate to postcolonial writers, as it would allow them to reify attributes from their own cultures that are at the same time universally binding or "necessary" for others to enjoy in the Kantian sense. Finally, the "terrorist" alternative suggests the possibility of a *total* critique of capitalism that takes place in the mode of "as if." The terrorist aesthete will play *va banque* with the sublime possibility of a radical monist alternative to capitalism, postmodern society or Western culture per se(16) (although this doesn't mean that we must now be on the lookout for a novel by Osama bin Laden).

Summing up, the performatist works by Tokarczuk, Roy and Urban can all be subsumed under the broader umbrella of what might be called "anthropological Kantianism." In the new literature, Kantian notions of subjectivity and aesthetic judgment are being applied–sometimes quite consciously–to topical problems relating to the role of individuals and cultures in the era of global capitalism. In the process, these Kantian notions have been modified and adapted to a new,

specifically monist mindset that runs counter to Kant's original (and possibly also misinterpreted) dualism of mind and matter.(17) The innovative crux of this adaptation lies in what I call the *performance*.(18) The author *knows* there is a split between mind and matter (or some other basic duality), but nonetheless forces us to identify with the possibility of transcending it *per formam*–by passing with our mind's eye and with our bodily emotions through form. The "reward" for engaging in this formally mediated identification or projection is an aesthetic, performatist pleasure which transcends the dualism of cognitive vs. physical; the "punishment" for dismantling that projection is to live in the epistemologically correct but joyless state of knowing that is postmodernism. In performatism, aesthetics trumps epistemology. Art is a privileged place where secular individuals will once again be able to experience transcendence, albeit only under limited, artificial conditions.

There is little doubt that the most appropriate philosophical, psychological, and sociological sources for dealing with this "closed" situation with its specific, positive projections can be found in the Kantian tradition. Reclaiming this long line of Western thought for performatism/postmillennialism is a project that must, however, remain reserved for further studies.

8

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Notes

1. This article is my own emendated translation of Eshelman 2004. In particular, I have rewritten the introductory and concluding remarks to accommodate Anglo-Saxon readers. (back)

2. At the end of his most recent book, Michaels concludes that “history, as of this writing, is still over” (Michaels 2004, 182). (back)

3. It is conceivable that Smith, who also works as a literary critic, was familiar with the English translation of Tokarczuk’s story, which appeared in the prominent English literary magazine *Granta*. (back)

4. Italics in the original. (back)

5. See in this regard Gans’s interpretation of Kant in terms of GA (2004, 344): “The ultimate source of our pleasure in the ‘formal finality’ of aesthetic representation is not our ‘cognitive faculties’ but our intuition that the community’s shared participation in this finality or representational intentionality will protect us from mimetic violence. The aesthetic performs a function analogous to that attributed by Durkheim to religious ritual: it reinforces our solidarity with the sacred center and, through its mediation, with our fellow members of the human community.” As Gans points out, Kant ignores these social pressures and the violence implicit in them in his own definition of aesthetics: “The pleasure in the moment of sharing exists only against a constantly renewed background of ‘painful’ desire that Kant does not mention” (343). (back)

6. See the classic phrasing in § 22 of his *Critique of Judgment*. Kant, of course, suggests that this “necessity” is an expression of absolute cognitive freedom and does not consider the force that the text exerts upon the reader. (back)

7. In the last volume of his philosophical trilogy “Spheres” Sloterdijk uses the ungrammatical metaphor of “foams” (“Schäume”) to describe the inner experience of a modern life “developing in a multi-focal, multi-perspectival and heterarchical way” (2004, 23). “Foams” serve as a post-metaphysical emblem of heterogeneous interiority and dyadic bonding as it occurs in modern and postmodern culture. (back)

8. In the case of Tokarczuk, these regulations are almost certainly derived from C. J.

Jung's teachings on dreams and archetypes as well as from Mircea Eliade's studies on religion (readers familiar with Polish can check up on this for themselves in Tokarczuk 2001 and Bereś 2002). In the former book, an essay on Prus's realist classic *The Doll*, Tokarczuk borrows the concept of a higher ego or "observer" from Jung; the observer encompasses the authorial ego and influences it in a symbolic way that cannot be reconstructed rationally (2001, 16-18). The chambermaid, so one must assume, is a personified instrument of the author, who is in turn guided by this higher, originary and apriori source of authority. In this regard it is significant, as Sloterdijk has pointed out in a different context, that Jung's "observer" is derived from a tradition encompassing both the tutelary gods of antiquity and Kant's formula "I think" (Sloterdijk 2000, 426 and 454). (back)

9. My emendation. "Prehistory" was left out of the English translation. (back)

10. Banerjee is unfortunately still stuck in a typically late poststructuralist vicious circle causing her to vacillate between a merciless, endless critique of essentialism and the desire to construct positive, albeit illusionary identities. In the end, she opts for Gayatri Spivak's "strategic essentialism," which licenses you to employ artificial essences in spite of knowing better epistemologically (2002, 37). For similar reasons she apparently feels compelled to mix the gooey, vibrant chutney metaphor with the by now rather dessicated poststructuralist image of the textual palimpsest. (back)

11. I've treated *The God of Small Things* in greater detail in an as yet unpublished article entitled "Performatism in Literature. After Postmodernism." (back)

12. Her only book translated into English, *House of Day, House of Night* (Evanston: Northwestern Univ. Press, 2000; Polish orig. 1998), is fairly typical of her recent work; it uses individual, often rather bizarre projections comparable to those of the chambermaid to sketch out the history of the Silesian border village where the author lives. (back)

13. Although with a transcendent twist. Compare this striking passage from *The God of Small Things*:

Perhaps, Ammu, Estha and she [Rahel] were the worst transgressors. But it wasn't just them. It was the others too. They all broke the rules. They all crossed into forbidden territory. They all tampered with the laws that lay down who should be loved and how. And how much. The laws that make grandmothers grandmothers, uncles uncles, mothers mothers, cousins cousins, jam jam and jelly jelly. […] It was a time when the unthinkable became thinkable and the impossible really happened. (1997, 31) (back)14. The novel has been translated into German as *Die Rache der Baumeister. Ein Kriminalroman aus Prag* (Berlin: Rowohlt, 2001). (back)

15. By contrast, Urban's other recent book, *Hastrman* [Prague: Argo, 2001; roughly: The water demon], supplies us with a plausible object of ideological identification. The half-piscine, half-human hero, who in the 19th century acts as a cruel avenger of human hubris, returns in the 20th as a merciless green terrorist. In the end, however, he is able to recognize the superiority of a political or symbolic vengeance over a purely physical one. In this case, Urban draws on Kant directly. The amoral, fish-like hero, who in the 19th century once boasted of "the starry sky within me and the moral law beside me" (29) becomes a true Kantian in the 20th: he recognizes that the green commune whose members he helps "have at least for the time being foregone their egoism and have become parts of a perfectly functioning whole." (393) Realizing that his avenging function is superfluous, the hero allows himself to be violently and ritually sacrificed for the good of the green cause—something entirely in keeping with the tenets of an archaically founded Kantianism. (back)

16. In Russian culture the main proponent of this line is Viktor Pelevin, best known in America for his novel *Buddha's Little Finger* (New York: Penguin, 2001). I've treated Pelevin in more detail in my German-language article Eshelman 2001, which compares his fictional monism and approach to capitalism with Gans's GA. (back)

17. Recent studies on Kant, most notably Collins (1999) and Oberhausen (1997), contend that Kant's philosophy is neither dualist nor idealist. Collins, in particular, denies that Kant "reduces perceived spatial objects to perceptions or to any other mental reality" (1999, 1) and tries to liberate Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* from a long history of what he regards as idealist misinterpretations. Oberhausen, for his part, maintains that Kant viewed apriori perception as acquired and not innate, something that would open the door to a revitalization of Kant's supposedly mechanistic notions of how we apprehend time and space. If these new readings are correct, we would be dealing with a monist, constructivist Kant whose philosophy would have a direct affinity with the new monist semiotics. (back)

18. Not to be confused, of course, with poststructuralist concepts of performativity, which stress a weak, belatedly constructed subject and/or locate performativity in the dysfunctional aspects of the speech act. For an incisive critique of the postmodern notion of performance see Michaels 2004, 140-143. (back)