# DEFAMILIARIZATION

## Beauty

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*for Larry Siegel, 1934–2020*

### 1. You Will Understand It

ALFRED Tennyson's poem "The Palace of Art" (1832/1842) is liable to strike the modern reader as all too clear in its meanings. Yet the author evidently feels the need to gloss the theme of the work *and* to elaborately preview its narrative in a brief poem that he includes with the piece when he sends it to his friend Richard Trench. "I send you here a sort of allegory (For you will understand it)," Tennyson writes in a peculiar formulation that muddies several issues about the aspirations of the work even while expressing certainty about the poem's clarity.[1] The suggestion is that Trench will have access to a particular insight ("you will understand" being something we say when others may not). Or does Tennyson mean that the allegory is so clear that its tendency is unmissable? That would certainly be a reasonable construal of the claim about a poem with few apparent mysteries.

"The Palace of Art" tells the tale of a self that builds for its soul a perfect location for encountering the culture of the world, a place where the soul remains, indifferent to the sufferings characteristic of the actual lived experience of that same world, until an undermotivated crisis drives it out of the palace in a paroxysm of shame and self-revulsion. A few ambiguities aside, the "Palace" is indeed relatively straightforward,

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which should make the creation of another poem in order to gloss it redundant—especially as the addressee of both poems is told even before reading either that he will understand it.[2] And so there is a quality of excess in the existence as much as in the form of this explanatory poem, which itself consists of a deeply conventional but far-reaching allegory locating humanity between the two extremes of angel and devil, its place in that spectrum determined by the object-choices of its passions. This ancillary poem, which the anthologies awkwardly entitle "To ___. With the Following Poem," informs us "The Palace of Art" is about

> A glorious Devil, large in heart and brain,
> That did love Beauty only, (Beauty seen
> In all varieties of mould and mind)
> And Knowledge for its beauty; or if Good,
> Good only for its beauty, seeing not
> That Beauty, Good, and Knowledge, are three sisters
> That doat upon each other, friends to man,
> Living together under the same roof,
> And never can be sunder'd without tears. (lines 5–13)

This improbably equitable, loving relationship among too many subjects is Tennyson's image for the appropriate affective bond between the self and three sisters who are Beauty, Good(ness), and Knowledge, something between a titillatingly chaste harem and a fantasy of perfectly balanced group affection worthy of middle school. Monogamous intimacy with just one sister is out of the question: love all or love none, declares the speaker. But that simple injunction is not so easy to obey: the gloss-poem ends with the Beauty-loving self banished from the bliss of full sisterly affections, a failure that amounts to the betrayal of that particularly human comeliness ("the perfect shape of man") which establishes our condition somewhere between the divine and the demonic. The frank avowal of a single attraction leaves the subject paradoxically excluded from love, bereft of all human connection:

> And he that shuts Love out in turn shall be
> Shut out from Love, and on her threshold lie
> Howling in outer darkness. Not for this
> Was common clay ta'en from the common earth
> Moulded by God and Temper'd with the tears
> Of angels to the perfect shape of man. (lines 14–19)

Although the claim is that the common clay of the common earth is only perfected by a love distributed equally among Beauty, Good, and

Knowledge, it bears noting that the insistence on an even temper of love is not based on an even distribution of charms. The poem is plain evidence that beauty is the most attractive sister, the one who puts the other affections at risk.

*You will understand it.* Indeed you will, even though that certainty is addressed to another. But perhaps we should pause in front of an understanding that interpolates one with such force, in which the imperative and the future tense are never resolved, in which demand and anticipation converge in the hope for intellectual sympathy. The conventions of editing have left a blank in the nontitle of this ancillary piece ("To ___"). We could fill in the gap with our own names, or assume that any name could be written into that spot equally well precisely because the theme is so easy to understand. Still, I want to suggest that Tennyson's use of an apparently unsophisticated allegorical construction both confesses to and covers over an extraordinarily difficult topic. It is, of course, not unusual to find a structure designed to appear self-evident rising over what is in fact a powerful ambivalence. My argument in this essay is that both the ambivalence and the strategy of representation are not only characteristic of attempts to address the nature of beauty in the nineteenth century but also very much in evidence in later—and very influential—accounts of the topic still common in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

The peculiar erotic situation the poem lays out is illustrative of a set of questions of long standing, so it will help to be literal about the relationships suggested in the allegory. While Beauty, Good, and Knowledge are intimately allied at their source in the way sisters are (that is, having a shared origin and common lineaments), they are also distinct. Their reconciliation will not, in any case, come from tracing their family tree or identifying family resemblances but from the arrival of a subject, a fourth self who puts the three into a kind of relationship that, as I have begun to suggest, is an exotic variation on the exogamous adventures of courtship. The relationship of the self to the three, which is bound to be unstable, is always at risk of being further distorted by the outsized attractions of Beauty, which are paradoxically so excessive as to be also present in some measure in the other sisters, but which when experienced solely in *her* are figured as a lust that is distinct from the form of attraction one experiences in the case of more virtuous attachments. The poem does not address an excessive passion for Good or for Knowledge, though the latter might be said to be the problem at the heart of "The Palace of Art" itself, and the former might be identified by the unsympathetic critic as the tendency that has placed that work among the poet's

least admired early pieces. And so, the claim of a close family relation notwithstanding, Beauty, Good, and Knowledge differ in fundamental ways, as do the feelings each is liable to provoke. Indeed, it is in the very kinds of desires they elicit that the two (Good and Knowledge) are distinct from the one (Beauty), though—just to round out and emphasize the weirdness of the allegory—the categories always risk becoming entangled again when the self loves either one of the two *only* for her beauty.

While Tennyson's allegory may seem heavy-handed to the modern reader, and the judgmental nature of its conclusions may even inspire a bemused condescension, the poem describes a relationship to the beautiful that is, in fact, not unrelated—that may be even very close—to the one we live with every day in modern criticism. For a long time, beauty was out of the running as a topic in advanced discussions of literary studies, and when it has returned it has typically been accompanied by close relations, alternatively go-betweens or strange chaperones. (*We* don't call them sisters, but the widespread unwillingness to name the relationships at issue even figuratively may in itself be symptomatic.) How did we go from a situation in which Tennyson might fear our humanity is at risk if we allow ourselves to be dominated by a love of beauty to one in which it is *only* a claim of either knowledge or goodness that justifies the presence of beauty? This is an important question, but it should not blind us to the fact that all of Tennyson's sisters are still present in our discussions of beauty; it is only our accounts of the kinds of relationships we should have with them that have changed.

It would evidently surprise the poet to discover that Beauty is the one sister who has been banished from the affections of modern criticism, only allowed to return under strict supervision by the other two, with Knowledge or Goodness at either side, holding her, not in a sisterly embrace, but in the guard's firm grip. My aim is not to argue for a need to recover a lost sense of beauty that I am not in fact convinced is gone (so much as constantly returning under assumed names).[3] Rather, I am interested in reflecting on what happened both to the kind of hard-to-discipline lust about which Tennyson warns and to the complex intersection of knowledge and ethical judgment written into the allegory. My argument opens up in two directions: recognition of the sophistication of Victorian reflections on beauty inevitably brings into view the hard work we do today to keep the force of the topic at bay, the embarrassment provoked by the theme perhaps distorting our work as cultural historians as much as our self-reflections as critics.

Victorian poetry provides many models of the relationship between love, self-love, and beauty. William Morris's "Defence of Guenevere" (1858) is worth citing in this context as a fantastic and contradictory instance of the claim of beauty as evidence—that is, as an alternative form of knowledge or truth: "will you dare," the adulterous queen demands to know from her accusers, without denying the factual basis of their accusations, "When you have looked a little on my brow, / To say this thing is vile?" Much of the fascination of the poem resides in its extraordinary commitment to the aggressively challenging claims of beauty Morris puts in the mouth of his speaker. A fantastic boldness shapes the formulations of the queen at risk of being burned to death for her affair with Lancelot: "will you care," she pretends to ask, drawing attention to her sinuous body, her lovely face, "For any plausible lies of cunning woof, / When you can see my face with no lie there . . .?"[4] The queen's words keep inviting the caring and daring they interrogate. But they never deny any of the charges against her, which, after all, are true. Instead, she offers an invitation for the experience of Beauty to take the place of Knowledge of her adultery and ultimately of the ethical value we look for in judges (what we might call Goodness).

Morris and Tennyson are not the only poets to borrow the energies and ambivalences of love for their reflections on beauty. And where better to find terms and structures for the complex relations between attraction, knowledge, and ethical judgment characteristic of the aesthetic than in the confusions of the affective life where we so often discover all those elements unresolvably at play? Still, in later periods the relationship of the three elements Tennyson's soul is meant to love equally has come into question. Like the mob gathered around Morris's Guenevere, hesitating to kindle the flame that will burn out of the world the person who fascinates them, as they listen to her one last time, as they watch the words rise along her lovely throat, modern writers about beautiful things often give the impression of being concerned that either they must pretend to come to judge when in fact they have come to gaze, or that at the moment of gazing on beauty they fear that an imposition is taking place—that perhaps it's just a trick delaying righteous action until some Lancelot shows up to make that action impossible. If we feel Beauty to be the dangerous sister, likely to lead to the neglect of Goodness and Knowledge, it may be because we want so much to love only the good and the true.

I am trying to suggest through the pressure I am putting on the terms of Tennyson's allegory that the challenge of beauty was written

into nineteenth-century texts in ways our own hesitations on the topic have frequently led us to deflect. Every use of the term "aesthetic" having to do with the appreciation of beauty, and not just perception in general, is ultimately traceable to the nineteenth century.[5] And yet the kind of discomfort the topic provokes in the era is also clear. For every "He fathers-forth whose beauty is past change / Praise him" of a Gerard Manley Hopkins ("Pied Beauty," 1877), we have the warning that stands at the threshold of Tennyson's "Palace of Art" (1832): "We cannot live in art."[6] Certainly, women poets in the period were unlikely to leave as they found them the masculine fantasies of desire and agency around which contemporary accounts of beauty often shaped themselves—as they do in Tennyson's poem. From Elizabeth Barrett Browning to Christina Rossetti and beyond, one finds a rich tradition of engagement, resistance, and transgressive revision that may be said to reach one of its culminating points in Michael Field's *Sight and Song* (1892), where "A Portrait" addresses "beauty in its cold / And vacant eminence."[7] I will return to this poem and others below, but before I do, it will be useful to lay out some of the challenges that have shaped treatments of the topic in recent years.

## 2. Distinctions of the Anti-Aesthetic

Beauty has never been more consistently celebrated as a good than it was in the Victorian period, the same era that taught us a fundamental ambivalence about the sources for that celebration.[8] The biggest challenge to our critical appraisal of the cultural significance of beauty does not lie in the Victorians' overinvestment in the idea, then, nor in their failings given the aesthetic values of later eras, but in what we might read as a fundamental though seldom fully acknowledged inheritance from the period. I hope it's easy to recognize one part of our legacy: the insistence that Beauty always must be placed in relation to Truth and the Good. I believe we have a harder time acknowledging the other, the dangerous attractions of Beauty. But even the more apparently straightforward affiliations merit reappraisal.

The relationship between Knowledge and Beauty can seem all too obvious in our day, at least in the broad sense that we understand the role of knowledge to be to explain to us *why* we find something beautiful, a question we typically route through now-familiar systems of causal explanation, each one having interest at its heart: the psychodynamics of the erotic life, the material forces of economics, the various things

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we call politics, or even, most recently, evolutionary biology. The most influential line of causal analysis is probably that developed by the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu in *Distinction* (1979) and *The Rules of Art* (1992), studies that wield surveys of French museumgoers in the 1960s and readings of a severely restricted canon of nineteenth-century French literature in order to propose a compelling analysis in which the rise of an ever more abstract formalism is linked to the consolidation of middle-class interest, the existence of which, Bourdieu proposes, blows up Kantian claims for the disinterested nature of beauty.[9] Human experience predisposes us to credit the claim that an ostensibly disinterested judgment is liable to have hypocrisy at its core. In this line of argument, Kant's insistence that the kind of pleasure we find in objects that we need or that we want to consume is distinct from the pleasure we find in objects toward which the attention is drawn without those stimulations is found at once mystified and deeply impoverished. To hold that our pleasure in seeing a flower or a beautiful landscape is distinct from the one we might take in the sight of a glass of wine we wish to drink or of a person we long to embrace is seen as a refusal of authentic experience, which is perhaps full of glasses of wine and people we want, but not so well furnished with beautiful sights or sounds, or in which the former are felt to have a clarity or experiential power the latter lack. "The whole of legitimate aesthetics has been constructed," as far as Bourdieu is concerned, by "an immense repression" against which his project is to produce the actual "truth of taste."[10] The palpable pleasure in reading Bourdieu is the satisfaction of seeing our clear-eyed sagacity confirmed to us by a recondite analysis combining the power of received opinion with the charisma of apparent complexity and some tables that look like data.

In the school of thought of which Bourdieu is among the most important and most straightforward exponents, Knowledge and Goodness can appear to reach an extraordinary prominence as Beauty fades almost to insignificance, or to the thinnest veneer covering over a reality that sufficient Goodness or Knowledge will allow us to pierce. And yet it would be hard to sustain the idea that the argument does away with Beauty, so much as it consigns her to a tighter control by her sisters or perhaps subjects her to a ritual act of humiliation that fascinates in its own right (like Guenevere before her judges).

If Bourdieu's research and arguments found a sympathetic hearing, it is because they reached an audience interested in the claims he was advancing. We could do worse in taking a measure of the world into

which his texts emerged with such effective force than citing *The Anti-Aesthetic,* an influential set of essays published in 1983, four years after *Distinction* was released in France, but the year before its English translation was brought out, a collection that carries its fundamental challenge in its title. The pieces the art critic and theorist Hal Foster gathered together in that volume are intended to offer an alternative to what the aesthetic is or was, which we will see is closely related to the challenge mounted by Bourdieu. It is striking, then, that in reading Jürgen Habermas's well-known essay on modernity as an incomplete project, which Foster places at the opening of the collection and which originated as the lecture Habermas delivered on receipt of the Adorno Prize in 1980, we find something like a genealogy for the sisters to which Tennyson had introduced us a century and a half earlier. In his discussion of Max Weber's characterization of science, morality, and art as three areas of human endeavor that once had a shared cultural home in the overlapping fields of religion and metaphysics, but which in modernity belong to three distinct autonomous spheres, Habermas identifies an unavoidable set of conceptual distinctions or specializations: "Since the eighteenth century, the problems inherited from these older world-views could be arranged so as to fall under specific aspects of validity: truth, normative rightness, authenticity and beauty. They could then be handled as questions of knowledge, or of justice and morality, or of taste."[11] While the division separating these fields, or "specific aspects of validity," is not accidental but fundamental to the experience of modernity, Habermas emphasizes how the collapse of an earlier system has left a set of inherited problems. With the disintegration of the metaphysical-religious family unit, each kid goes off to pursue her own interests, and the internal logic of specialization inevitably sharpens the distinctions among them even as it leads each specialized field to lose contact with the broader social whole that the family stood for and promoted:

> Scientific discourse, theories of morality, jurisprudence, and the production and criticism of art could in turn be institutionalized. Each domain of culture could be made to correspond to cultural professions in which problems could be dealt with as the concern of special experts. This professionalized treatment of the cultural tradition brings to the fore the intrinsic structures of each of the three dimensions of culture. There appear the structures of cognitive-instrumental, of moral-practical and of aesthetic-expressive rationality, each of these under the control of specialists who seem more adept at being logical in these particular ways than other people are. As a result, the distance grows between the culture of the experts and that of the larger public.

The stylistic infelicities of this passage, its arrival at the present through what the translator renders appropriately as a set of passive modal verbs in the past tense ("could . . . be," "could be," "could be"), are evidence of the formal challenge of making a conceptual argument about present conditions ultimately based on events in the past that may be imagined as contingent but that were probably necessary (in the sense of inevitable). Whatever the start date of the professionalization and institutionalization he describes, Habermas is interested in how the results of that process are experienced *now*: "What accrues to culture through specialized treatment and reflection does not immediately and necessarily become the property of everyday praxis." In the expression of this claim we may recognize a performative illustration of the problematic at stake. The echoing abstractions of the phrase instantiate what they declare, that we cannot live in art, of necessity a bloodless realization when it is, as in this case, neither an accusation nor an injunction so much as the declaration of a melancholy inevitability. Like the readout of a powerful diagnostic computer the design of which neglected to include any kind of bedside manner, Habermas's language brings us the bad news in the dispassionate voice of the specialization it is working to describe. In this account of things, it is definitional of art's situation in modernity that we cannot live in it (neither immediately nor of necessity is art part of "everyday praxis").

Habermas tells with characteristically impassive clarity a story that is often relayed in more sentimental or judgmental terms. "With cultural rationalization of this sort," he writes, "the threat increases that the life-world, whose traditional substance has already been devalued, will become more and more impoverished." Habermas describes a double loss. The alienation that accompanies rationalism (the impoverishment of the life-world) entails, on one hand, a division of elements that had once been imagined as coexisting and, on the other, a separation of the lived world from the newly abstracting concepts and practices that aim to describe and change it—and which had been available in earlier dispensations, generally through concepts and practices we now tend to treat as belonging to specialized realms of human activity: religious belief, say, or ritual. Knowledge, ethics, and beauty are not only sisters in this model, but they stand for a family relationship lost to every modern subject, an inherently harmonious condition that, when it is gone, will appear to us in fragments, each of which will, of necessity, entail competition for our interest. To make "objective science, universal morality and law, and autonomous art" newly relevant for life is a structural

challenge of extraordinary difficulty because it cuts against the grain of those fields and the history of their emergence. Specialized kinds of knowledge, only available through specific practices, conform with difficulty to a world in which the logic governing them will always seem partial—both because it does not fully match up to the richness of the world as it is and because of the residual, but never entirely forgotten, fact that these three things have been, for most of human history, understood to be related.[12]

Hal Foster's introduction to *The Anti-Aesthetic* is as bracing as Habermas's "Modernity" in laying out the challenging project of bringing fields of knowledge—the fundamental shape of which is understood to emerge in distinction to the lived world—into a productive conceptual relationship with that world. "'Anti-aesthetic,'" he writes about the awkward term he has chosen to champion in the volume, "signals that the very notion of the aesthetic, its network of ideas, is in question here: the idea that aesthetic experience exists apart, without 'purpose,' all but beyond history, or that art can now effect a world at once (inter)subjective, concrete and universal—a symbolic totality."[13] For the aesthetic to be in question is for the relationship of the category to be broken off—from life, from other categories with which it had once been associated. It is that break which is being put into question. The absence of purpose Foster adduces is evidently a reminiscence of Kant's *Zweckmässigkeit ohne Zweck* (purposiveness without purpose) from the third *Critique*, made over from an important conceptual gambit—an attempt to describe the effect of seeing a beautiful form on the faculties—into a charge of fundamental irrelevance or pointlessness, at least if the point is engagement with history, or the concrete, or totality, or the "(inter)subjective," which we may take as so many words to say the everyday lived social experience that is the manifold out of which specialties such as aesthetics are abstracted.[14]

Foster's analysis, like Habermas's, entails a number of divisions or separations. But if in Habermas these distinctions are the result of historical processes calling out for reflection, in Foster, as in so many critics of the period, including Bourdieu, they are registered not as historically determined conditions, even definitional of modernity, but as intolerable political disaggregations or abandonments of social solidarity. "Art," Bourdieu charges, "is one of the major sites of denial of the social world" (*Distinction,* 510).[15] If Habermas can sound like he is rewriting an old story, of a fall into knowledge that leads to our banishment from a more harmonious paradise, "denial" in Bourdieu's turn of phrase

("*dénégation*" in the original) feels more like an ongoing betrayal or a psychic weakness, as in those formulations in popular psychology (judgments at once ethical and cognitive) whereby people are held to be living in denial. While Foster is more judicious in his formulations, his own arguments share the tendency to identify a political failing at the heart of modern concepts of beauty. The "anti-aesthetic," Foster writes in a strategically tentative formulation in which a kind of historical sensibility becomes a tool for critique, "marks a cultural position on the present" from which we ask: "are categories afforded by the aesthetic still valid?"

## 3. Resistance

The strength of *The Anti-Aesthetic* at its best resides in the combination of its political and ethical commitments with a nuanced understanding of the critical tradition to which the arguments of its contributors are responding. Foster, unlike Bourdieu, does not strand the history of thinking about the aesthetic in the eighteenth century but instead reminds his readers of sophisticated later developments in that field, which comprise an "adventure," indeed, no less than "one of the great narratives of modernity." The familiar story Foster tells culminates in Theodor Adorno's attempts to rescue the category of the aesthetic as oppositional—as a fundamental mode of critique.[16] But Foster calls this a story in part to be able to mark its end, not to say its failure:

> The adventures of the aesthetic make up one of the great narratives of modernity: from the time of its autonomy through art-for-art's-sake to its status as a necessary negative category, a critique of the world as it is. It is this last moment (figured brilliantly in the writings of Theodor Adorno) that is hard to relinquish: the notion of the aesthetic as subversive, a critical interstice in an otherwise instrumental world. Now, however, we have to consider that this aesthetic space too is eclipsed—or rather, that its criticality is now largely illusory (and so instrumental).

Foster insists that the end of the adventure of the aesthetic is demanded by the urgency of the moment: "in the face of a culture of reaction on all sides, a practice of resistance is needed." Ultimately, the only question is whether Beauty is the problem (she aids the culture of reaction) or the savior who refuses to help. If Beauty is indeed to blame—particularly for her damaging disconnection from the world—then reestablishing the relationship among the sisters might do some important work in

defeating the culture of reaction. The premise seems clear enough. So clear, in fact, that it leads to another question altogether: when will it be permissible to ask, *How is that working out for us?* Has the anti-aesthetic in fact fostered a practice of resistance that is having an effect on the culture of reaction all around us? Have we seen gains in resistance as we see losses in our relationship to beauty?

Is it in *poor taste* to ask for results? Surely not, when one is busy reconnecting culture to the life-world. Surely the invitation (and the only way to measure success or progress) is to look from concept to experience. And we have available to us all the evidence we need to evaluate the claims at either end: that is, as to whether we find in the world an ongoing relationship between power and valorized forms of elite taste, or whether by freeing ourselves from what have been identified as outmoded forms of aesthetic judgment we have achieved a practice of resistance that in fact resists. The alternative to making the connection would be, strangely enough, a disinterested practice of resistance, or one unlinked to the life-world, a specialized practice that would be just one more version of the very kind of thing the anti-aesthetic and the de-denegating projects of the 1980s were designed to challenge.

If the question appears to be in poor taste, that may be less because its simplicity and straightforwardness may appear to stint the sophistication of the formulations it is intended to address, and more because the answer is so obvious. The evidence is everywhere around us that there is no necessary relationship between tastes that have been identified as elite and social power. A Diet Coke and some fried chicken at a beauty contest, overpriced whiskey at a staged wrestling match, some shared narcotics at a concert, or a slow ride through a carefully groomed landscape, punctuated by brief episodes of hitting a ball with a stick—these are the cultural situations where power might be encountered these days, or at a yoga retreat, perhaps, with fresh fruit juices squeezed out on demand. In the meantime the claims of and for an elite canon of beauty—and for canons in general—are less and less self-evident to anyone. As museums reach out to an indifferent world with fashion shows and popular music, they suggest not overweening confidence but the despair of a superannuated lothario squeezing himself into jeans and T-shirt in order to confuse those he courts (or himself) about where his charms may lie at this stage in life. Art history departments are perennially close to the chopping block when cuts are discussed at universities. But more telling, perhaps, than the indifference of the wider public, or threats from STEM-obsessed administrators to the field that has become

willy-nilly the proxy for the aesthetic, is the fact that it would be impossible to mount a credible debate about the curriculum at *any* department in which one side was arguing that the beauty of a particular work was a good enough reason for that work to be studied or taught. John Guillory pointed out decades ago how "surprisingly difficult" it had become "to define a progressive political rationale for the teaching of canonical texts." The urgency of that observation is underlined by his undeniable point a few years later that academic practice had found its fundamental justification in its identification as "a vehicle of political transformation."[17] I mention both of these observations from the 1990s largely to assert that they are so self-evidently true at this point that we may need to be reminded that they were ever novel enough to provoke comment.

In short, the question about results seems particularly worth asking precisely because the strategy of resistance might be said to have been an utter success. But the taste we associate with power must surely match up with actually existing power in some way for our claims of political agency to have any purchase, to be more than perverse nostalgic exercises of necrophobia, wherein we resurrect dead things in order to blame them for conditions over which, being dead, they have no effect. Evidently, those of us who write on taste will soon find ourselves in a peculiar situation where in order to teach texts that critique the power of elite culture we may well need an extensive critical apparatus to explain what that culture was. Indeed, I'd hazard a guess that we are at that point now, but we may be simply too accustomed to the fact to acknowledge its peculiar nature. Or should we see ourselves as officiants at a kind of ritual celebration like those at which a villain who was executed centuries before is reconstituted out of rags and hay at regular intervals to be burned all over again? Perhaps our role is to commemorate a victory we don't quite remember. But that would mean the resistance had succeeded, right?

"This project requires," Bourdieu tells his reader in a disarmingly frank moment of self-reflection in his postscript to *Distinction*, "above all, a sort of deliberate amnesia" (485). Indeed. And what most needs to be forgotten is not—as he seems to think—the claims of eighteenth-century philosophy but the culture of the nineteenth century. The challenge mounted by Jacques Rancière in *The Philosopher and His Poor* (1983) against the school of thought represented by the Bourdieu of *Distinction* deserves to be better known among scholars of the nineteenth century for reasons at once methodological and historical, not simply because of the salutary resistance it presents to a number of commonplaces of

our own day about class and the politics of taste, but because of the value of the philosopher's nuanced identification of the period of our study as one in which art has "detached itself from its old functions and judges but still has not closed itself up in its autonomy."[18] Rancière's work is driven by a sympathy rare in recent writers for the affective drives and the historical determinants shaping claims about culture. Hence his unironic response to the ambition to unite "freedom and equality with compulsion (rather of respect and submission . . . than of fear) in the aesthetic" (197).[19] These are Kantian concerns, which Rancière develops from a thoughtful reading of Friedrich Schiller, and so they are philosophical. But they are also recognized as *historical* in his argument, as characteristic of the period following the French Revolution, when art presents the possibility (or even identifies the necessity) of "offer[ing] itself as the aim and privileged support of strategies of reappropriation." As this provocative argument develops, the elements of the aesthetic become sources for political agency. In a bold set of formulations that unhesitatingly, and with tendentious awkwardness, repurpose terms typically wielded by schools of thought concerned to identify the subjection of disenfranchised groups—"appropriation," "gazing," "dispossession," and "other," not to say Bourdieu's "*dénégation*"—Rancière reorients the vision of self and of other in order to identify a situation in which the aesthetic could become a key element in a politics of recognition rather than negation or unidirectional appropriation: "the 'denegating' aesthetic gaze," he writes about the nineteenth century, "can now take, among the intellectuals of the proletariat, the full force of an other gaze [*d'un regard autre*] upon the property [*propriété*] of the other that becomes an other gaze [*qui devient regard autre*] upon the proletarian's dispossession." Rancière's jangling play with possession and gazing is designed to throw into confusion the limiting accounts of possession and recognition so often brought to bear in ostensibly political reflections on the aesthetic. The translators render *propriété* as "propriety," suggesting correct behavior or conformity to accepted standards, but I think the primary meaning of the word is probably more productive. Instead of being shut out of the property of others, or being merely an object for reflection, gazing on the property of the other (or even taking things in through an internalized version of the gaze of the other) reveals to the member of the proletariat a dispossession, which eventuates, in turn, in a productive development, "an aesthetic and militant passion for reappropriation."[20]

Rancière is challenging what he understands to be a deeply destructive network of conventions in progressive thought—the claim that the love of beauty is always and of necessity an imposition from above shaped around a claim of autonomy, and with the consolidation of domination as its ultimate tendency. The philosopher refuses the arrogance that appropriates the aesthetic to the privileged elite.[21] And his argument seems ever more clearly vindicated by developments that have taken place in the years since he wrote *The Philosopher and His Poor*. The anti-aesthetic tradition, it is becoming ever more clear, represents less a moment of practical resistance than the hypertrophy of a specialized and theoretically instrumental concept of the aesthetic in which beauty is largely abstracted out of the life-world by arguments that see in it only a tool of power, with privilege on one end and disenfranchisement on the other. In order for Knowledge and Good to come to the fore, it would seem that one sister needs to be hidden entirely out of sight. But for Rancière even Good has a limited role to play in analyses that leave little space for working-class agency or cross-group solidarity—or really any commonality of thought and experience that may tend to support enfranchisement. "In the final analysis," the philosopher writes, "the pedagogy that 'raises consciousness' by unveiling exploitation and its mystifications is a very impoverished virtue" (121).

Rancière's animus is driven by a sense that Bourdieu's project is the latest manifestation of a dynamic whereby fundamental change is held to be impossible due to a mechanism of irreconcilable division that strands us in a familiar situation with, on one side, the intellectual, occupying the position of a knowing and alienated subject, and, on the other, the people, seen as a sullen and possibly dangerous object, blind to itself and its best interests, unable to be more than an obstacle to its own liberation. The alternatives offered by Rancière's Bourdieu are willfully stark and impoverished when they offer a choice between a perfect and fully self-motivated and autonomous engagement with aesthetic objects—a phenomenon never described because it is indescribable—or an instrumental use of those objects (to achieve or maintain social rank), which is described with great detail and verve. When we discover, as we always will, that the kind of perfection in the first choice is not available in aesthetic experience any more than in any other experience, we are left with an option that has neither the merit of being useful nor of being true.

## 4. Nineteenth-Century Beauty

The contemporary philosopher Nick Zangwill has noted the tendency of sociological challenges to the aesthetic to address themselves to a category that is easy to refute in theory in part because of its scarcity in life or philosophy, that is, to "a pure aesthetic approach to art."[22] Zangwill reminds us of what should be obvious: "Beauty does not stand alone. It cannot exist by itself. Things are beautiful because of the way things are in other respects. . . . Beauty cannot be solitary and we cannot appreciate it as such."[23] What would happen if we heard in Tennyson's unresolved attempt to identify the sisters of beauty not simply confusion about the ethical limits of a passion for admirable form but a recognition of the actual complexity of a category that seems to call out to us with a claim of particular distinction yet in fact will not ever fully sustain that claim? Evidently Zangwill is only bothering to deny beauty's solitary existence because the tendency to lose sight of the network of nonbeautiful things required for beauty to exist is a recurrent phenomenon. We know that the lack of a pure experience of justice in the world does not mean we should abandon the concept, any more than the impossibility of experiencing love unaccompanied by elements that we tell ourselves are not integral to that emotion has suggested to anyone beyond adolescence that there is no such thing as love. Beauty tantalizes with the promise of a distinct kind of experience free of so much else. The fact that that promise is never manifested in the pure fullness of the freedom it seems to suggest is recognizable throughout the nineteenth century, which may be an indication not of the naïveté of the period but of its thoughtful engagement with the topic.

The speaker in A. Mary F. Robinson's "Art and Life" (1886) freezes the blossoms of her apple tree by dipping them into the icy well that is art. In this form, their beauty is preserved, but only at the cost of preventing the flowers from ever coming to fruition. The life that art memorializes and on which it depends is protected but chilled, its nutritional value sacrificed for something else: "therefore, when winter comes, I shall not eat / Of mellow apples such as others prize: / I shall go hungry in a magic spring!"[24] This kind of equilibrium in the dialectic between art and life was often upset in late-century writing, which frequently emphasizes not the artist's hunger for life but the fear of being caught up in natural processes—to freeze one's apple blossoms is, after all, to preserve them. Michael Field renders in verse a highly finished portrait of a slender and bejeweled young woman by Bartolomeo Veneto, now in

Frankfurt: "A Crystal, flawless beauty on the brows / Where neither love nor time has conquered space."[25] But it is the burden of the woman's knowledge of the place of beauty in time that drives the creation she sponsors and shapes. The poem is the loving rewriting of the painting as a staging of her own beauty by the noblewoman who is its subject (she selects the flowers, she decides how much of her body to reveal, and so on). She conquers time, in a perverse revision of Keats's urn (that foster child of slow time), in the process of self-memorializing, thereby removing at once the possibility of change and of memory in the permanently perfect present tense at which the poem arrives at its close: "She had no memories save of herself / . . . And gave to art a fair, blank form, unverified by life. / Thus has she conquered death."[26]

The distance between Michael Field's "blank form, unverified by life" and the various claims for the vivifying and life-affirming powers of art that run through the period (e.g., Barrett Browning: "art / Which still is life") is clear enough.[27] But this kind of contradiction must be recognized as typical of an uncertainty of long standing. Nature, beauty, disinterestedness, passion, meaning, transience, permanence, artifice—sometimes the aesthetic seems less like a concept than a waiting room for actors awaiting casting in a larger drama, each quite perfect for one vision of the role but not for another. Nevertheless, the force of the category in Victorian England was no less powerful for rarely being coherent. On the contrary, the drive to find a space sheltered from what Michael Field called, in their poem on the *Mona Lisa*, "the vicissitudes by which men die," while still in some way reflecting those very vicissitudes, only gathered energy, until, by the end of the century, the claim of artistic autonomy was left as a major contribution to modernism.[28] Rancière's historicization of a category that has become detached from old functions and judges, but which we would be wrong to simply see as on its way to a fated autonomy that will easily and as a matter of course separate it from lived experience, may help us to be more generous than has often been the case about main lines of Victorian literature and fine arts that have tended to be characterized by their failure to either achieve autonomy or to deploy the styles that came to be associated with the higher levels of abstraction. We may also read in this account of the period an invitation to serious new scholarship. Rancière's most ambitious recent work, *Aisthesis*, includes substantial engagement with Ruskin, Whitman, and Emerson along with the usual French figures. The history of modern beauty is a characteristically Victorian one, in the sense that it is characterized by failure, compromise, and uncertainty.

Indeed, some of the most interesting critical work on the topic comes from such thoughtful authors as Bourdieu himself or, more recently, Franco Moretti who are deeply committed to the concept of autonomy but keep discovering its failure to be fully manifested in the nineteenth century.[29]

## 5. The History of Beauty

*Beauty*, *the aesthetic*, *form*: these can seem like various ways of talking about related things, different degrees of precision or technical engagement, perhaps. But the topic changes depending on the term. The category of the aesthetic carries with it a long conceptual history, and its power resides precisely in the things it never fully resolves: the nature of experience, of subjects, of an engagement with the world that may well be charged with force in spite of what we do or don't fully know. To use the term "aesthetic" invites reflection on the social role of individual responses—on the claim to shared experience, and perhaps to judging others through the things that move them, or through their ability to be moved.[30] Form, on the other hand, is always about second-order claims, because no claim about form is recognizable without other similar or related structures against which to declare that this thing belongs to the category in which we are placing it: it is a box, it is a circle, it is a network.

Beauty strikes me as the most productively troubling of these terms because it is a claim about the object that takes all its power from the subject or subjects who concur or disagree about that claim. The name of beauty identifies an experience that engrosses the senses without providing the mind with reasons for that fascination. In that sense it is that which reflections on the aesthetic attempt to explain, which formal claims work to organize. Your eye is drawn in a certain direction when a figure—something as simple as the line of a cheekbone or the fall of a mass of hair—appears at the edge of your vision. A line of poetry keeps coming back to you, troubling or comforting you for reasons not fully related to the evident content of that line. A painting in a gallery suddenly moves you, or (why not?) moves you after long reflection. A line of clouds in a clear sky feels very important, or a pair of bridges on a river with the light falling a certain way beneath them. You look, and look again. While the recognition of form inevitably depends on reflection about a set of experiences, on abstraction from instances, the experience of beauty is always partial, limited, contingent: this

beautiful face, that stand of trees with that line of light cutting across it, or even, that tone of voice, that melody.

Looking at the stars, Gerard Manley Hopkins sees a beauty he unhesitatingly associates with the divine. But his expression of that relationship, though passionate, is elegantly nuanced. "I kiss my hand / To the stars, lovely-asunder," he writes in a Keatsian moment in "The Wreck of the Deutschland," "Kiss my hand to the dappled-with-damson west."[31] The gesture that marks the arrival of beauty is an intimate physical greeting, bringing hand to mouth in a salute coming from the interior to the exterior, from the site of verbal expression to the world toward which the hand reaches. But the exuberance is accompanied by an important distinction between celebration and knowledge, though the former will follow when the latter comes: "For I greet him the days I meet him, and bless when I understand."[32] Hopkins's faith makes him a special case, but the links connecting the sensibility of the student of Walter Pater to his religion are forged in the aesthetic culture of his day. Kissing and greeting are forms of acknowledgment related to knowing, or understanding, but not identical to them: an anticipation, a precondition, a prior step toward something the full manifestation of which is blessing.[33]

In the allegory that Tennyson's "To ____. With the Following Poem" accompanies, the soul is driven out of her haughty isolation in the Palace of Art by an overwhelming sense of guilt figured in extravagantly gothic forms, with rotting corpses emerging in unexpected corners of her elaborately designed place of beauty. And yet, though the soul leaves the palace, she refuses to have it torn down, with the thought that she may return again when she has cleansed herself of the guilt she has accrued for taking up residence where one is not supposed to live ("Yet pull not down my palace towers that are / So lightly, beautifully built / Perchance I may return with others there / When I have purged my guilt").[34] It is an evocative, ambiguous space, this palace that is treasured and feared, a site the love of which is liable to become a guilty all-engrossing passion, but one that also requires protection. It may make most sense to read the ending of "The Palace of Art" as proposing a vision of the modern relationship to beauty: a treasured space charged with the nostalgic force of its near loss as well as with the guilty sense that its absence is necessary for the full expansion of moral sensibilities, the importance of which does not make the attention they bring to bear any less vulnerable to distraction. Burn the beautiful being out of the world, or stare at her lovely figure as she openly beguiles you. Tear down the Palace of Art, or leave it up

as a perpetual potential place of return shaped by beauty and distorted by the realization of irresponsibility.

The history of what beauty has been, I have been arguing, is important in order to understand later formulations on the topic. Indeed, I am suggesting that precisely the period of study of the readers of this journal is the one that needs to be looked to for a sense of the sources of the complexity of beauty that provokes later simplifications. I also want to note that writers and artists of the nineteenth century may serve to remind us that beauty is a historical event in a more narrow or personal way: that it is always in some measure shaped by time, the time of subjects losing themselves in the object world, of finding themselves there.

## Notes

My thanks to Danny Hack, Meredith McGill, and Nancy Yousef for their generous and imaginative help revising this essay for publication.

1. Tennyson, "To ___. With the Following Poem ["The Palace of Art"]," lines 1–2. All subsequent references are to the Ricks edition and are noted parenthetically in the text.
2. On "The Palace of Art," see Siegel, *Haunted Museum,* 8–12; also Ricks, *Tennyson,* 86–88.
3. Elaine Scarry points out that the sciences have been less fastidious about keeping these topics apart than the humanities. She also describes the vocabulary of beauty as not so much lost as driven underground. See Scarry, *On Beauty and Being Just,* 52, 57.
4. Morris, "The Defence of Guenevere," lines 236–41.
5. See Siegel, "Victorian Aesthetics."
6. Hopkins, "Pied Beauty," lines 10–11. Tennyson cited the statement by Trench as the goad for writing "The Palace of Art." See Ricks, *Tennyson,* 86.
7. Field, "A Portrait," 29.
8. The most interesting systematic historical treatment of the topic is probably Prettejohn's *Beauty and Art.*
9. Bourdieu, *Distinction* and *The Rules of Art.* The two works are quite distinct, as John Guillory pointed out decades ago, but the centrality of autonomy is a constant (Guillory, "Bourdieu's Refusal"). On the tension between Bourdieu's evidence and his claims, see the philosopher John Armstrong, who good-humoredly writes of the "local and period" flavor of Bourdieu's evidence in the course of his quietly

devastating discussion, which concludes with this gentle condemnation of the entire project: "The central failing of Bourdieu's analysis is that he insinuates an explanation . . . where no such explanation is justified" (*The Secret Power of Beauty*, 100). Another contemporary aesthetician is less mild: "He appeals to data about the way different social classes have different aesthetic tastes. And he thinks that this supports his historicism. But it is difficult to reconstruct steps of reasoning between this empirically supported premise and the general historicist conclusion" (Zangwill, *The Metaphysics of Beauty*, 213). For further discussion of Bourdieu's project, see Siegel, *Material Inspirations*, 13–16, 67–128.

10. Bourdieu, *Distinction,* 485. Subsequent references to this edition are noted parenthetically in the text.
11. Habermas, "Modernity—An Incomplete Project," 9. All subsequent citations are from one passage on this page.
12. Habermas recognizes the positive aspirations of the emergent specialization he associates with an Enlightenment philosophy that aimed to "utilize this accumulation of specialized culture for the enrichment of everyday life—that is to say, for the rational organization of everyday social life" ("Modernity," 10). Compare Terry Eagleton's dialectical account of the Weberian argument, in which the split opens up to a new possibility of freedom as it models a new vision of ethical autonomy (*The Ideology of the Aesthetic*, 366–68). In an important variation on the Weberian claim, suggesting why Beauty might be the privileged sister, Michael McKeon proposes the emergence of the aesthetic as "a reaction to and compensation for the early modern division of the arts from the sciences" (*The Secret History of Domesticity*, 385).
13. Foster, "Postmodernism," xv–xvi. All subsequent citations are to an argument on these pages.
14. On purposiveness, see Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 47–51 and 106–8. In order to link the topic to Kant's ethical theories, Guyer and Matthews prefer to translate the term as "purposiveness without an end" over the more typically symmetrical rendering of the phrase. See Guyer, "Editor's Introduction," xlviii.
15. "*L'art est un des lieux par excellence de la dénégation du monde social*" (Bourdieu, *La distinction*, 596). Bourdieu is well aware of the sociological tradition on which his argument is based. See, for example, his *Practical Reason* (1994), where the topic is cited as something of a truism:

> Thus, Durkheim endlessly recalled, one observes that initially, in archaic societies and even in numerous precapitalist societies, social universes which in our society are differentiated (such as religion, art, science) are still undifferentiated; one thus observes in them a polysemy and a multifunctionality . . . of human behaviors, which can be interpreted at the same time as religious, economic, aesthetic, and so forth.
>
> The evolution of societies tends to make universes (which I call fields) emerge which are autonomous and have their own laws. (83)

For all that this is a well-documented sociological process, it is also consistently a charge against the one class to which is ascribed either the task of (or the blame for) bringing it about. Thus, writing about music, Bourdieu describes "the negation of the world, and especially the social world, which the bourgeois ethos tends to demand of all forms of art" (*Distinction*, 19).

16. See Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*.
17. Guillory, *Cultural Capital*, 21; Guillory, "Bourdieu's Refusal," 370.
18. Rancière, *The Philosopher and His Poor,* 199. All subsequent references to this edition are noted parenthetically in the text. On the importance of Bourdieu for Rancière's project, see Andrew Parker's introduction to the volume, "Mimesis and the Division of Labor." See also the chapter "The Sociologist King," 165–202. The fullest engagement with this text in Victorian studies is probably Elaine Freedgood's recent "The Novelist and Her Poor," which brilliantly places Elizabeth Gaskell's *Mary Barton* in the political tradition Rancière identifies in the book, wherein sympathetic engagement with the disenfranchised poor consolidates the impossibility of political action because it expands the gap between social groups and works against any compelling solidarity. Freedgood identifies in particular the political work entailed in the denial of shared aesthetic experience in the novel's treatment of poetry that the reader encounters but from which the working-class characters are barred.
19. Rancière is citing Kant's extraordinary appendix, "On the Methodology of Taste," with its densely suggestive play of historical circumstance, struggle, and insistence on the need to harmonize higher culture with natural inclinations:

> The age as well as the peoples in which the vigorous drive towards the lawful sociability by means of which a people constitutes an enduring commonwealth wrestled with the great difficulties surrounding the difficult task of uniting freedom (and thus also equality) with coercion (more from respect and subjection to duty than from fear): such an age and such a people had

> first of all to discover the art of the reciprocal communication of the ideas of the most educated part with the cruder, the coordination of the breadth and refinement of the former with the natural simplicity and originality of the latter, and in this way to discover that mean between higher culture and contented nature which constitutes the correct standard not to be given by any universal rule, for taste as a universal human sense. (Kant, *Critique*, 229–30)

20. Rancière, *Philosopher*, 199; translation slightly modified. On Bourdieu's indifference to evidence of commonalities of taste among classes, see Zangwill, *Metaphysics*, 212–13. The claim of fully distinct class-based spheres of aesthetic experience on which ideas of appropriation and resistance depend should be difficult to sustain at this point, but it appears to be one of those historical-methodological truisms on which too much has depended, for too long, for it to disappear without sustained effort. Rancière's *Aisthesis* is designed to mount a counterargument by example. In Victorian studies we might cite Greg Vargo's recent work demonstrating the cultural life of Chartism (*Underground History*), or Daniel Hack's study of the uptake of what we call Victorian literature in African American literary culture in the nineteenth century (*Reaping Something New*), or Tricia Lootens's challenging account of race and what she identifies as the legacy of separate spheres in accounts of nineteenth-century poetry (*The Political Poetess*). On the aspiration toward a "more tolerant and inclusive understanding" of beauty in the period, see Hartley, "Beauty," 585. Isobel Armstrong drew our attention to the aesthetic aspirations of Chartists at least as early as *The Radical Aesthetic* (see 3, 21n1). See also Sanders, *The Poetry of Chartism*.
21. We may compare Terry Eagleton's attempt to rebut "those on the political left for whom the aesthetic is simply 'bourgeois ideology' to be worsted and ousted by alternative forms of cultural politics" (*Ideology of the Aesthetic*, 8). Eagleton's project is to recuperate the ideological force of the aesthetic as part of a dialectical process in which, while class is of course a central category, it is precisely not stable. For a more recuperative challenge to the simpler forms of ideological critique, see Isobel Armstrong, *The Radical Aesthetic*. For a nuanced challenge to accounts of interest grounded in a detailed account of the earliest period of its formulation, see McKeon, *The Secret History of Domesticity*, 323–87. McKeon finds in Richard Steele a vison of disinterestedness not associated with the owner of landed property but with "the contemplative tradesman" (363).

22. Zangwill, *The Metaphysics of Beauty*, 209.
23. Zangwill, *The Metaphysics of Beauty*, 1.
24. Robinson, "Art and Life."
25. Field, "A Portrait," 27.
26. Field, "A Portrait," 29.
27. Barrett Browning, *Aurora Leigh*, 5.238–39.
28. Field, "La Gioconda," 8. Out of the vast literature on artistic autonomy we may cite Loesberg, *A Return to Aesthetics*. For a sense of the emergence of autonomy in Victorian art writing, see Teukolsky, *The Literate Eye*. See also Goldstone, *Fictions of Autonomy*.
29. Bourdieu's *Rules of Art*, already an extraordinarily self-referential meditation developed in response to the author's reflections on Gustave Flaubert's *Sentimental Education* (1869), is framed by two remarkable paratexts that do suggest a newly urgent dialectical sensibility. The volume is introduced by a surprisingly nuanced brief preface on the place of love in accounts of the aesthetic, and it is supplemented by an anxious postscript on the danger to concepts of aesthetic autonomy presented by recent developments in technology and the business of culture. In the latter argument, autonomy becomes something much more interesting than simply a pernicious category needing to be exploded. It is a vital concept that must be rescued from financiers—if only in order to be put again in question by intellectuals (*Rules of Art*, xv–xx, 339–348). Franco Moretti's *The Bourgeois* treats Weber's concept of the separation of the intellectual spheres with autonomy as its core value as at once definitive of bourgeois culture and impossible for Victorian literature. Some of the elegance of Moretti's argument is bought at the cost of recasting the ironies, ambiguities, and ambivalence of the accounts of beauty in authors such as Tennyson and Arnold as amounting to so many instances of an obfuscating bad faith or confusion in the face of the inevitable arrival of artistic autonomy. But this is not a bargain Moretti's reader needs to make in order to benefit from his analyses. See Moretti, *The Bourgeois*, 137–44.
30. Sianne Ngai addresses the complicated nature of the universality written into aesthetic categories in her recent work, but it is in fact declared in the very title of *Our Aesthetic Categories: Zany, Cute, Interesting*, in which the possessive pronoun makes the categories it describes at the same time contingent and something close to universal, at once just ours and potentially shared by all of us. See Ngai, *Our Aesthetic Categories*, 169–73, 284n93.

31. Hopkins, "The Wreck of the Deutschland," lines 33–34, 37.
32. Hopkins, "The Wreck of the Deutschland," line 40.
33. Jonathan Kramnick has proposed the word "handsome," which he finds in some telling moments in *Robinson Crusoe*, as a congenial term for expressing an especially charged recognition in literature of the subject's relationship to the perceived world. It would be forcing things to claim that Hopkins's gesture to the stars is akin to the castaway's ability to reach the things he has with effort placed around him, but Kramnick's project of tracing both the immediacy of things we encounter in the world and the processes of recognition shaping that encounter is a reminder that the eighteenth century ought not to be looked to simply for models of abstract and pure aesthetic experience. See Kramnick, *Paper Minds,* especially 57–97. See also Elaine Scarry's proposal that "the very pliancy or elasticity of beauty . . . is a model for the pliancy and liability of consciousness in education" (*On Beauty and Being Just,* 46). For both critics, beauty is not distinct from other processes of consciousness but may provide an insight into (because it may be a particularly full manifestation of) how consciousness routes us back to the world. Hence Scarry's claim that the experience of beauty leads "to a more capacious regard for the world" (48).
34. Tennyson, "The Palace of Art," lines 293–96.

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