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PARALYSES

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PARALYSES

Literature, Travel, and Ethnography in French Modernity | John Culbert

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This book has been published
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Scripps College.

Portions of the introduction and chapter 1, "The Muse of Paralysis," were originally published as "Border Crossings/Crossing Borders: Paralyses of Travel in Literature and Anthropology" in *Western Humanities Review* 60, no. 2 (Fall 2006): 117–27. Chapter 3, "Slow Progress: Jean Paulhan and Madagascar," was originally published in *October* 83 (Winter 1998): 71–95. Portions of chapter 6, "The Wake of Ulysses," were originally published as "Haunting the *Métropole*" in *Formules* 14 (Spring 2010).

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Library of Congress
Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Culbert, John.
Paralyses: literature, travel, and ethnography in French modernity / John Culbert.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 978-0-8032-2991-4 (cloth: alk. paper)
1. Travel in literature. 2. French literature—History and criticism. 3. Travelers' writings, French—History and criticism. 4. Travelers in literature. 5. Ethnology in literature. 6. Imperialism in literature. 7. Travel—Philosophy. I. Title.
PQ145.6.T7C86 2010
840.9'32—dc22 2010022013

Set in Galliard.

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For my parents

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Acknowledgments

A book is always the record of debts beyond reckoning, which makes penning one's acknowledgments a task both impossible and necessary. This book reflects discussions and conversations with friends, students, and colleagues who contributed immeasurably to its composition over the years. Thanks are due first of all to my mentors, Emily Apter, Judith Butler, Neil Hertz, William Ray, and Ann Smock, and to my colleagues in the Department of Comparative Literature at UC-Irvine, especially Eyal Amiran, Jonathan Hall, and Rei Terada. Much of the material here draws on courses I taught at UC-Irvine, and I am grateful to the students who indulged my interests and helped me puzzle through challenging texts. I have benefited from conversations with Homi Bhabha, James Clifford, Celeste Langan, Françoise Lionnet, Catherine Malabou, Achille Mbembe, Gayatri Spivak, and David Wills. Emily Apter, Denis Hollier, and Richard Sieburth were kind enough to read portions of the manuscript and offer their comments and suggestions. Aron Vinegar invited me to present my work at a conference at Ohio State University at a crucial juncture in my research and writing. Claire Paulhan, at the Institut Mémoires de l'Edition Contemporaine in Paris, was very gracious and generous with her time as I researched the Paulhan archives.

A resident fellowship at the Camargo Foundation in Cassis, France, allowed me to begin work on the book project. With a grant from the Harry Ransom Center at the University of Texas at Austin I was

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able to consult the mud-spattered manuscript of Leiris's *L'Afrique fantôme*. Travel grants from the UC-Irvine Humanities Center provided support for research in Paris, and a Borchard Foundation fellowship at the Château de la Bretesche gave me much-needed time to complete the writing of the manuscript. A research associateship at the UC-Irvine Critical Theory Institute provided me with the facilities and resources to edit the completed text.

Gerald Prince and Edward Dimendberg gave invaluable editorial assistance and helped find the manuscript a home. At the University of Nebraska Press, Ann Baker, Ladette Randolph, and Kristen Rowley guided the book through the various stages with patience and care. Sue Breckenridge copyedited the manuscript with meticulous attention to detail. I would also like to thank the anonymous reviewers of the manuscript for their helpful comments and editorial suggestions. I am thankful to the editors and publishers of the journals *October*, *Formules*, and *Western Humanities Review* for their permission to reprint previously published texts here.

It is a particular pleasure to thank the close friends who over the years lent me their support and gave intellectual and creative sustenance to this project: Chris Andrews, Ali Dadgar, Michelle de Kretser, Gareth Gollrad, Daniel Katz, Eric Peterson, James Petterson, Kavita Philip, Stefan Mattessich, Targol Mesbah, Ward Smith, and Malina Stefanovska. My family provided constant support even when my work must have seemed incomprehensible. Most of all I thank my partner, Dina Al-Kassim, whose love, strength, patience, and unconditional support made this book possible.

Unless otherwise noted, all translations from French sources are my own.

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Introduction

Chiasmus, from *chiazein*, to mark with a chi [X]: an inverted relationship between the syntactic elements of parallel phrases (as in . . . *to stop too fearful, and too faint to go*). – *Merriam-Webster*

The bind and the knot are necessary in order to take a step. – Derrida

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Paralyses

At the beginning of his collected essays in political anthropology, Pierre Clastres recounts a journey into the territory of the Yanomami Indians. The author opens his text with a portrait of himself exhausted, crawling in the mud, a "Molloy in the Amazon," as he puts it.[1] On the trail of what he calls "the last free primitive society," the grail of the ambitious ethnographer, Clastres is reduced to a clownish figure he identifies with a character from Samuel Beckett.

This scene may serve as an emblem of my concerns in what follows. Clastres's "Molloy in the Amazon" shares with all the texts I examine here a critique of the figure of the modern traveler and doubts as to the viability of travel itself. The anthropologist's wry self-portrait, I would argue, is more than a passing scruple or a literary flourish; it indicates, rather, a crisis in the representation of the traveler, whose authority is in question and whose story may confound narrative. Clastres's critique of the traveler threatens to undermine the journey and its claims to knowledge and mastery, thereby setting the tone for his text. Even as he bears witness to the threatened life-world of the Yanomami, Clastres also testifies to his own inability to prevent the disappearance of their distinctive culture, or worse, as Western interloper, his unwitting implication in the changes he describes. Anthropology as a result gives way to what Lévi-Strauss in *Tristes Tropiques* called *entropology*, "the name of the discipline concerned with the study of the highest manifestations of this process of disintegration."[2] Traveler and travelogue are thus marked with the signs of futility and exhaustion.

Clastres's travelogue is characteristic of a strain of postcolonial anthropology for which travel, both as means of approach to its ob-

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jects and as organizing principle of narrative, is marred by a history of political control, commercial exploitation, and ideological abuse.[3] The development of mass tourism and the more recent encroachments of "ecotourism" exacerbate these problems by putting the ethnographer at odds with travel circuits that are seen to contaminate local cultures. For Clastres and his contemporaries, travel cannot serve simply to authorize experience and justify knowledge, but confronts them with the political and technological limitations that underlie that experience and knowledge. Contemporary ethnographic travel no longer considers itself apart from the vectors of imperial power that made it possible as a field of study, and this contradiction between travel's conditions of possibility and its avowed aims has yielded far-reaching insights in recent years into the epistemology and political genealogy of anthropology.[4] The moral plaints of "entropology" have thus led to a reflexive questioning of the discipline of anthropology itself as unwitting agent of colonial and imperial forms of controlling knowledge. Clastres made a vital contribution to these debates by arguing that Europe confronted an "epistemological impossibility" in the New World, and that the legacy of that original failed encounter is still maintained in anthropology today by ingrained Western political notions of state, as well as our implication in its insatiable and "ethnocidal" outgrowths, empire and capital.[5] If empire haunts anthropology as a discipline, there are, however, more insidious forms of power whose contradictions, and indeed "impossibility," may not lend themselves so readily to political and epistemological analysis. My aim in what follows is to examine such contradictions and their paralyzing logic. An intractable contradiction of anthropology, one that implicates travel as its method of knowledge, pits the intention to study alien cultures against the intrusion required to conduct such study. This is, so to speak, the enabling contradiction of ethnography, one that is aggravated by the discipline's traditional investment in "primitive" and purportedly pure cultures. As a result, Clastres's lyrical and elegiac line "a

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mortal shadow is being cast on all sides" is awkwardly complicit, as a consequence, with the prosaic disaster he foretells for the Amazon: "oil derricks around the *chabunos*, diamond mines in the hillsides, police on the paths, boutiques on the riverbanks" (*Archeology of Violence*, 27). This attitude, including both its mournful rapture and its bitter complaint, resembles nothing so much as the refrain of the tourist, who fruitlessly negates the very means that render his mediated experience possible. In drawing such a comparison, my intent is not to conflate the righteous militancy of a Clastres combating ethnocide with the tourist's mercenary demand for more local color. And yet the tourist haunts Clastres's own travelogue, and his ironic deflation of his role as explorer is the symptom of a paralyzing contradiction he shares with the ordinary traveler.

Lévi-Strauss speaks of this contradiction of ethnographic travel in *Tristes Tropiques*. "I wished I had lived in the days of *real* journeys," he reflects, while recognizing that his own travels are the source of more advanced anthropological knowledge, due to their very belatedness (43). The anthropologist is, as a result, "paralyzed by this dilemma," and feels travel's contradictions as the negation of all mobile options. "I have only two possibilities: either I can be like some traveller of the olden days, who was faced with a stupendous spectacle, all, or almost all, of which eluded him, . . . or I can be a modern traveller, chasing after the vestiges of a vanished reality." As a good dialectician, however, Lévi-Strauss converts his contradiction into a synthetic vision, and paralysis instead contributes to an immobilized structural order in which "evanescent forms" and the passage of time "crystallize into a sort of edifice" (44). The conversion of the traveler's paralysis into the stability of structure is enabled by a backward look at his journeys that distances his fieldwork in time. But rather than resolve the dilemma that first paralyzed him, Lévi-Strauss's distancing strategy may only displace that dilemma. In *Time and the Other*, Johannes Fabian argues that such distancing strategies are inherent to the methodology of anthropology, whose

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"politics of time" denies a shared temporality with the cultures and peoples it studies. Lévi-Strauss's case is exemplary for Fabian, since his "denial of coevalness" takes the radical form of a rejection of history and temporality as such in favor of structuralism's synchronic taxonomies. This appeal to structure, Fabian shows, goes hand in hand with a negation of fieldwork, the spatiotemporal experience of travel and exchange that nonetheless grounds anthropological understanding. The mournful tone of *Tristes Tropiques* takes on the character of a more violent sacrifice in the light of Fabian's critique: "Living in the Time of the primitives, the ethnographer will be an ethnographer only if he outlives them, i.e., if he moves *through* the Time he may have shared with them onto a level on which he finds anthropology."[6] For Lévi-Strauss a synthesizing backward look resolves the traveler's contradictions, and his paralyzing impasse is overcome. But, Fabian asserts, structuralist anthropologists "do not escape the aporia arising from the conflicting demands of coeval research and allochronic discourse" (60). For Fabian this inescapable impasse is constitutive of Lévi-Strauss's work and, indeed, all anthropology.

This impasse is famously expressed in the first lines of *Tristes Tropiques*: "I hate travelling and explorers," Lévi-Strauss says, only to add, "Yet here I am proposing to tell the story of my expeditions" (17). Lévi-Strauss's defiant rejection of travel is more than an authorial anxiety of influence or literary avant-gardism; it breaks radically with travel and the travelogue, providing instead a vision of universal structuring codes of human society. *Tristes Tropiques*, a monument of modern travel writing, would aim at nothing less than a rejection of travel as such. This attitude, however, has a long genealogy. The critique of travel is endemic to French modernity and is linked to cultural transformations that in fundamental ways alter travel as form of experience and mode of representation. Among these transformations are doubts as to the notion of progress and its attendant metaphors; a critique of colonialism, along with the

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figures of discovery, adventure, and conquest that sustain its ideology; the rise of popular tourism, mass transit, and globalization; and technological changes that defy inherited representations of travel and transportation, prompting anxieties about spatiotemporal displacements within the lived present of the modern metropole itself. In 1859 Baudelaire vilified the very idea of progress in speaking of "a victory every minute lost, a progress forever denying itself," a critique that would be echoed by the entire symbolist generation and beyond.[7] These doubts are scathingly represented as well in *Sentimental Education*, where Flaubert describes a painting showing "the Republic, or Progress, or Civilization, in the form of Christ driving a locomotive through a virgin forest."[8] Conrad, inheritor of Flaubert's ironic vision, would later insist on the stillness of the journey related in *Heart of Darkness* as his steamship and its "pilgrims" doggedly "crawled on."[9] Clastres's invocation of Molloy is only a newer version of this ironic vision. In a more playful mode, Jean Echenoz's recent novel *Courir* delights in the absurd style of Zátopek, the fastest runner of his time: "Emil seems to dig deep, or dig in, like a man in a trance or a workman shoveling the roadway. Far from all academic canons or any concern for elegance, Emil's progress is heavy, jerky, tortured, all fits and starts."[10] The "impossible style" of the runner is like Echenoz's own, which seems to take up the baton from Beckett and his memorable descriptions of Molloy's stumblings and Watt's ridiculous gait.

Such paralyses may be found in all modern literature, but are particularly insistent motifs in French writing. Even the exceptions to this tendency confirm the rule; Le Clézio, perhaps the happiest traveler in today's more distinguished canon of writers, has been called "the most English of French writers."[11] A recent resurgence of travel literature in France, spearheaded by the manifesto *Pour une littérature voyageuse*, as well as the annual literary festival Etonnants Voyageurs, defines itself explicitly as a challenge to French literary tradition in advocating for "le 'travel writing' à la française."[12]

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As Charles Forsdick points out, however, this movement is not without a touch of nostalgia and indeed "neo-exoticism."[13] It may even be seen to reprise an effort in the early twentieth century to reinvigorate French colonialist writing through the example of the adventurous Conrad. The opening salvo in *Tristes Tropiques* against travel reflects this cultural context, and like other ambivalent statements of its genre, fails to settle accounts with journeys to which it remains indebted. In what follows, then, I will sketch the salient features of a modern French resistance to travel in literature. In so doing, I will draw a distinction between the traveler's habitual frustrations, disavowals, and negations on the one hand, and their more paralyzing contradictions on the other. The negation of travel is, in other words, symptomatic of a crisis of travel. But as symptom, it masks contradictions its author cannot resolve: aporias that are not negated or overcome, but that remain paralyzing dilemmas in the travelogue.

"Every story is a travel story," Michel de Certeau has pointed out.[14] We might say that Lévi-Strauss's misgivings about telling his story struggle with the discursive fatality that narrative must plot itself out in space and time like a journey. More specifically, however, Lévi-Strauss's rejection of travel expresses a defining exclusion upon which his discipline is founded. As Fabian notes, "anthropology became an academic discipline when scientific discourse replaced narration—when, to put it simply, the monograph replaced the travelogue." Moreover, Fabian adds, this entailed "stationary fieldwork taking the place of travel." This replacement, Fabian insists, is no innocent evolution but rather the result of a more suspicious "disavowal,"[15] and his work undertakes a reevaluation of the discipline in light of its traveling precursors, the missionaries, explorers, and amateur ethnographers who laid the groundwork for modern anthropology. Fabian proposes a rehabilitation of these travelogues, while at the same time offering some of the most incisive demystifications of the ideology of travel by examining the complex and multiform

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practices of knowledge construction in the field. Fabian is thus able to avoid the symptomatic rejection of travel and offers instead a more nuanced view of its complexities in his study of explorers' accounts, *Out of Our Minds*. Interestingly for our purposes, this entails a reconsideration of travel and motion as they relate to immobility and stasis: "What is difficult to reconcile with the image of the intrepid traveler is that much, probably most, travel was stationary." This distinction allows Fabian to challenge anthropology's disavowal of travel and the travelogue. "Both travel and stay, motion and stillness . . . shaped these expeditions. This would be a truism, except for the realization that, while movement defined expeditions ideologically, in practice stops took up by far the larger portion of the total time spent." By displacing and reversing the opposition of travel and stasis, Fabian applies a deconstructive strategy to his reading of the genealogy of ethnography; the myth of exploration, he says, "calls for deconstructive literary analysis."[16] But the deconstructive strategy of reversal and displacement, a key method in destabilizing the terms of a founding opposition, is only a means to a further critical aim: that of undoing the opposition itself and its binary logic. To do so would be to articulate another relation of mobility and stasis, of travel and stillness, one that I am pursuing here and call *paralysis*.

Paralysis is a recurrent symptom of the modern crisis of travel. Index of travel's exhaustion as theme and mode of knowledge, paralysis is travel's ordeal, a trial suffered and undergone by the traveling subject, an experience less object of knowledge than symptom of the traveler's unwitting passion. Paralysis is what remains of travel, what holds back and stays the traveler beset by contradictions. In this sense, and despite its negative connotations, paralysis remains close to travel's etymology in the French word *travail*, for labor, toil, and torment. *Travail* itself derives from the Latin *trepalium*, an instrument of torture, from which French also draws the word *entraver*: to shackle, impede, and restrain. The travails of travel

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thus originate, as one etymologist ingenuously has it, in "the toil of travelling in olden times."[17] However, we might add, this toil is no less mythic than historical; in literature and mythology, travel's ordeals are sanctioned by theological and metaphysical motifs relating to sacred terrors, rites of passage, and mortal trespass. Within this metaphysical horizon, only difficulty, or indeed impossibility, would seem to consecrate a journey worth relating. Paralysis, then, would be travel's negative companion, but by a ruse common to our dialectical and metaphysical heritage, its negating power would serve a redemptive logic of useful toil, salutary travail, and mortal trespass. To read against the grain of this redemptive logic would be to consider paralysis otherwise than as negation or difficulty to overcome.

Derrida once ventured the term *paralyse* for the form of reading and interpretation called forth by such paths of thought.[18] In texts on Freud's death drive and Blanchot's fictions, Derrida discerns a logic of death and negativity that articulates a different figure of death as border, and thus of the metaphysical figures of motion organized there, including transgression, mortal trespass, survival, and passing on. *Paralyse*, or paralysis, dwells at this border that yields nondialectical figures of mobility and stasis: *pas*, *démarche,* and *dérive* are among the duplicitous terms that Derrida employs to name these problematic border crossings. To think, as to travel, would be "the experience of the aporia," neither stopping at the impasse nor passing beyond it, in the attempt to reckon with the paralyzing trace of the path.[19] What Derrida says of Blanchot in "Pas" might well be extended to a broader scope of texts: "If a science or a theory of reading these narratives were to constitute itself, coming round in the end, or resorting to its name, I would call it *paralysis* [la *paralyse*]."[20] *Paralyse* suggests itself here as a near-synonym for Derrida's own methodology, though Derrida qualifies his own statement with conditional verbs, and his "en venir à son nom" is rife with ambiguities. If Derrida subsequently took his distance

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from the term, this retraction is already anticipated here, and is not unlike his hesitation in committing to a master term for what came to be called deconstruction. *Paralyse*, in other words, goes "under erasure."[21] Other terms thus challenge the singularity of *paralyse*: *contre-allée*, for instance, combines, in aporetic form, the ideas of both traveling "with" and "against."[22] Adopting the orphan term *paralyse* for my own purposes here, *Paralyses* will demonstrate its broad resonance with the discourse and cultural politics of modern French travel.[23]

"Molloy in the Amazon." If I am stuck on this image it is due to the crisis of travel it captures, and because, linking ethnography and literature in one stroke, it emblematizes the textual analysis and politics of translation that have become hallmarks of contemporary critical anthropology. This image also stays with me because the name of Beckett is tied to the most difficult and challenging figurations of paralytic motion. Clastres may well have been thinking of Foucault when he penned his lines, since "The Discourse on Language," which was published shortly before Clastres's own text, also begins with a Beckettian reference: "I must go on; I can't go on; I must go on; I must say words as long as there are words, I must say them until they find me, until they say me—heavy burden, heavy sin; I must go on . . ."[24] At grips with discourse, obligation, and sin, Beckett's contradictions and perplexities serve to develop Foucault's argument on the will to truth, conceived as an ordering of discourse by means of strategic systems of exclusion. Foucault allows us to reconsider Lévi-Strauss's denial of travel as symptom of the will to truth and its denial of power and desire. "I hate travelling and explorers. Yet here I am proposing to tell the story of my expeditions." This contradiction, Fabian would argue, structures anthropological knowledge as a constitutive aporia. In Lévi-Strauss's autobiographical salvo we hear, in other words, the anonymous voice of anthropology echoing that of Beckett's character: "I must go on; I can't go on . . ."

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It is ironic that Beckett's famous epigram should have become a password of sorts, translated by many commentators into all-too-meaningful statements about futility and the absurd. On the other hand, the emphasis is warranted, since Beckett remained doggedly attached to such statements, from his earliest works to *Worstward Ho*. The latter text's minimalist reiteration of *The Unnamable* strikingly renders its epigram as the alternating play, at once chiastic and aporetic, of the two mere words "no" and "on."[25] Only in recent years have critics taken Beckett's paralytic statements as more than negations or contradictions. Leslie Hill, for instance, observes that "all Beckett's protagonists set out on a journey which ends in an impasse," and adds that to read the journey's impasse thematically and teleologically would be to confer on Beckett's travels a progression and destination they deny at every step. As Hill points out, "Beckett's rewriting of the quest narrative is not an attempt just to toy with the forms of the past," but reflects instead "an aporetic crisis in the whole articulation of subjective space." What Hill calls "a system of self-cancelling alternatives" is characteristic of this aporetic crisis. "The space of journeying, like writing, becomes a space of indifference, . . . of movements made and then undone, advanced but annulled, of opposites set up and then abolished, of unity assumed and then divided."[26] Interestingly, as Hill's own commentary shows, it is seemingly impossible to convey these aporias without asserting a sequence of textual moves ("and then, and then"), so that the critic himself falls in with Beckett's double injunction "I can't" and "I must." This is what Leo Bersani calls "impeded reading," an effect of the Beckettian text's self-obstruction.[27] Bersani sees these impediments as enabling, through the near-ruin of representation, access to domains of affective experience repressed by narrative's ordering principles and spatiotemporal coordinates. Beckett's paralyses thus do not simply negate travel or motion but allow for other transports at the limits of representation.

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Travel and narrative are intimately linked. To tamper with the narrative codes of travel, as Beckett does, is to challenge the basic storylines with which we order our lives. Accordingly, the aim of the following chapters is to show how paralyses undo the certainties of knowledge, presenting alternatives to the normative codings of travel, transports, and narrative. These alternatives, raised in moments of paralysis, may be political, sexual, or affective. At the limit—and paralysis always concerns a problematic limit—what presents itself may be more than a mere option and a decision; the alternative instead poses the challenge of the radically *other*. For this reason my focus has been on anthropological discourse, which traditionally concerns other worlds, other peoples, and other times. Anthropology thus has an implicitly ethical bent, oriented as it is toward the strange, the foreign, and the other. At the same time, however, one may argue that the ethical relationship is incomplete unless it calls language into question, unmastering the account one makes of the journey and the encounter. For this reason, as Fabian notes, language is a vital companion to the anthropological journey, not as a mere stylistic turn but as an exploration of the limits of language, narrative, and knowledge. Attuned to the "poetics" of its practice, anthropology today increasingly figures itself as a mode of cultural translation.[28] Translation, of course, implies transport: *trans* (across) and *latus* (borne) suggests a spatial transfer of meaning across languages. The figure and the practice always have an essentializing tendency, however, as what seems to be carried over is the "spirit" of the letter, not the material particularity of the source text. Translators have long been aware of this conundrum, of course, but only contemporary theory has been able to articulate the properly *paralyzing* implications of translation as a task both impossible and necessary. In recent years, and in response to the challenge of poststructuralist ethics, translation studies have complicated the classical model of translation as travel, suggesting that a certain

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untranslatability is the measure of fidelity and responsibility. "The translator's task is inevitably an ethical one," Sandra Bermann says, while recognizing that "language imposes internal barriers to appropriative understanding as well as to transparent communication." Translation, accordingly, is modeled less on metaphors of transport and delivery than on figures of interweaving and imbrication, in which the unmasterable otherness of the translator's language links with the unassimilable idiom of the other. "Linguistic ligatures," in Bermann's words,[29] being "tied up or trussed," and "entwined" in a "tangle," in Spivak's, speak to new models of translation as the paralyzing weave of a double bind.[30] Confronting such binds, the journey comes to a halt, *breaking down*, as Judith Butler has it, paralyzing travel and narrative alike in an encounter that remains, even in its ethical responsibility, unnarratable and paradoxically *unaccountable*.[31]

Roland Barthes poses this challenge to travel and narrative in *S/Z*, where he asks us to imagine the story of a journey without arrival or departure. Staying without arriving; traveling without departing; neither arriving or not: Barthes's paradoxical journey defies the normative codes of narrative and suggests the "self-cancelling alternatives" Hill ascribes to Beckett. "A scandal of readerliness," as Barthes puts it,[32] such a journey would thus no doubt provoke Bersani's "impeded reading" as well. Barthes's narrative mutations are more than a mere aesthetic concern. At stake in such questioning of travel and narrative is the invention of mobilities that defy travel's presumed spatiotemporal coordinates and their normative coding in narratives of desire, conquest, and exploration. Such paradoxical transports, moreover, provide the means to understand new mutations of travel that contemporary commentators may be ill equipped to conceptualize. Indeed, new technologies raise the stakes in this effort to reconceive modern travel. Take, for instance, the formulations of Paul Virilio, whose diagnoses of modern technology's paradoxical transports seemingly echo the words of Barthes: "Currently

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. . . we are seeing the beginnings of a '*generalized arrival*' whereby everything arrives without having to leave, the nineteenth-century's elimination of the journey . . . combining with the abolition of departure at the end of the twentieth, the journey thereby losing its successive components and being overtaken by *arrival* alone." Unlike Barthes, Virilio's willful paradoxes of transport ("static vehicle," "virtual velocity," etc.) ultimately appeal to outmoded theological and metaphysical grounding: the "soul" and the "here and now." Virilio's paralyses thus fall in with the mournful tone of Clastres and Lévi-Strauss in his nostalgia for what he calls "the essence of the path, the journey," and "the voyage of the navigator or the trek of the lone explorer."[33]

Modernity has long been equated with movement, change, and instability, whether in Marx's sobering diagnosis of the economic disequilibrium fostered by capital or the Futurists' rapturous embrace of speed.[34] And while this modern predicament has always provoked resistance and prompted reflection on the value of tradition and stability, such responses often tend to fall back on nostalgic tropes, even when, as in Virilio, they compulsively invoke figures of paradox. Virilio's paradoxes should, however, be answered not in the mode of nostalgia, but instead in a more critical—and playful—spirit. Ross Chambers's *Loiterature* contributes to such an effort, drawing on Beckett to advance what he calls a "poetics of digression." Digressiveness is not only wayward and wandering, Chambers says, but is marked by a tendency toward narrative slowness and stasis. "Loiterature," as Chambers names it, is a potential feature of any text, but is most characteristic of literary modernity, whose slowness and digressions constitute disorderly challenges to the order of proper narrative, and as such, express errant pleasures that contest the rules of discursive conduct and social rectitude. The subversive force and elusive charm of such texts lie in skirting the norm and testing limits, rather than in confronting the law. As Chambers says, "there is a type of practice, the digressive, that perhaps offers

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a model of how the law can be more effectively subverted, since in it something that does not manifest itself as subversive nevertheless has the power to put the law into question."[35] Digression, then, is an alternative to the frontal assault of transgression, and if it gives up the path of confrontation, it gains, however, in its room for play and seduction.

The subversiveness of Chambers's loiterature and the poetics of digression owe something to the poststructuralist turn in the analysis of power and dissidence, and in particular to Foucault, for whom power is not simply wielded, confronted, or endured, but distributed in more complex ways among disciplinary subjects. Foucault's "A Preface to Transgression" sets out the program for this study of power in an homage to Bataille. Chambers himself refers to Bataille in drawing a distinction between transgression and digression, stating that, unlike digression, "transgression and the law are intimately bound up with each other such that the law requires transgression as that which confirms its status as law" (*Loiterature,* 89). Chambers's account of Bataille posits a mutually defining relationship between law and transgression that, however, returns Bataille to the very dialectical system he aimed to undo. For Bataille, after all, transgression is not dialectical but aporetic; like Blanchot, Bataille insists on the impossibility of transgression that brings the dialectic to a standstill.[36] Consequently, Chambers's wandering digression, such as he defines it, is insufficiently distinguished from the transgression he would oppose. Moreover, digression merges with the dialectical transgression he attributes to Bataille, for if digression exploits "loopholes" in the law, Chambers says, "the loophole that it represents in the law is itself subject to a law: the law of loopholes. And the law of loopholes is that they are, in turn, constrained by the very order that they disturb" (*Loiterature,* 93–94). Paralysis, as feature of Beckettian digression, is thus cast as a dialectical confrontation of opposites, and, indeed, a "metaphysical paralysis," as Chambers says (100). Chambers thus speaks of a "paralysis—etymologically, a

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"coming loose" or "coming unstrung"—that simultaneously alludes to a desired inertia and signifies the impossibility of its attainment, for this paralysis is a state of suspension that derives from digression's oxymoronic pull toward a state of stasis, on the one hand, and a need to move or even a desire to progress, that is, to move on, on the other" (93). If, as Chambers correctly notes, Beckett's fiction is both paralyzed and "aporetic" (101), Chambers's account of its digressive stasis remains wedded to formulations of opposition and contradiction. Chambers's analysis of Beckett is thus another case of "impeded reading," provoked by the challenge of such paradoxical expressions as Beckett's "gress," "gression," and "moving pause." In reference to the latter, Chambers says, "such a busy pause is the opposite of stasis: it is a suspension" (101). This supposed opposition, unconvincing in itself, seems a symptom of a reading that insists on a play of contraries, even where Beckett defies them. Chambers's account of Beckett's narrative thus inadvertently mirrors the critic's own difficult critical choices in the face of textual undecidability. "Constantly making choices—whether to go in or to come out, whether to move or to stay put, whether to move in this direction or that—but making choices in a world in which there is no reason to prefer any particular option over its alternative, results in aporia."

Such impeded reading is the almost inevitable consequence of reading Beckett's strange transports. But were we to pursue Chambers's "law of loopholes" with Derrida, a way out of the stalemate of sheer contradiction might be found. Paralysis as a "coming unstrung" would likewise yield a different sense than that of loosening or unlacing; Derrida proposes instead a model of "stricture" and "destricturation" that is paralyzing, precisely, due to its undecidability, as seen in his essay on Heidegger's analysis of Van Gogh's boots. Derrida's essay is digressive in an exemplary way: stubbornly off-topic, it dwells at length on what seems trivial and virtually irrelevant, ignored by Heidegger, and insists on a slowness that is

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nearly immobile: "We're getting nowhere. We're not even sliding around, we're floundering [*Nous piétinons. Nous ne patinons même pas, nous pataugons*])."[37] The critic willingly trudges and flounders, the latter verb less evocative of Heidegger's privileged terms "way" and "soil," no doubt, than Beckett's mud. In the course of this slow, but never slow enough reading, what emerges, in a manner characteristic of Derrida, is the seemingly marginal detail in the painting that displaces and eclipses the whole: in this case, the shoelaces. The lace (*lacet*) is also a snare (*lacet*), one that sets a trap: "Another type of trap and of what in 'Pas' was named paralysis [*la paralyse*]."[38] The lacing of the boots, their passing in and out of eyelets in crisscross fashion, provides Derrida a model for thinking of a linking and differentiating that is beyond the logic of duality, opposition, and dialectic. The "pair" of boots is thus only the first pairing that calls for deconstruction, and which includes margin/center, inside/outside, representation/represented, part/whole. The interlacing is a nonoppositional and differential relation that, like the framing parergon, links inside to outside, only to confound the two, according to "the figure or trajectory of the *lace*: a stricture by alternate and reversible passage from inside to outside, from under to over" (*Truth in Painting*, 321). The shoelaces thus provide another model, crucial to Derrida, of a chiastic interlacing of asymmetrical terms.[39] Such is the paralyzing logic of the margin: delimiting the border of a given work, it simultaneously unworks that border and the distinctions it would support. "The picture is caught in the lace which it yet seems to include as its part" (*Truth in Painting*, 331). Nothing is more natural than to trip on these shoelaces which, both tight and loose, differentiate every pairing without opposing, contrasting, or negating: "the trap always works in the interlace, whether it misleads, lets go, or paralyzes."[40]

It is with such a paralyzing trap that Derrida opens his famous critique of Lévi-Strauss's Amazon journeys in *Of Grammatology*. *Tristes Tropiques* delivers a compelling version of anthropology's fatal

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contact narrative, cast by Lévi-Strauss as the violent intrusion of writing into the world of the Nambikwara. As Derrida argues, this representation of writing as contaminating agent is allied to one of metaphysics' most pervasive claims, the opposition between writing and speech, an opposition that articulates some of the fundamental distinctions of metaphysical thought. In Lévi-Strauss's account, the fatal contact with writing supports a portrait of the Nambikwara as innocent, autonomous, and natural. But writing, as constitutive exclusion of Western thought, troubles the vital distinctions it would claim to uphold, and vitiates, indeed, the very object of traditional anthropology: the "primitive," or "peoples without writing." For Derrida, these distinctions are troubled at the outset by the path that leads to the Nambikwara, opening their world to the outside; indeed, writing is inscribed in this very path. Quoting from Lévi-Strauss, Derrida stops him, so to speak, in his track: "a *picada* (a crude trail whose 'track' is 'not easily distinguished from the bush')." Derrida suggests that "one should meditate upon all of the following together: writing as the possibility of the road and of difference, the history of writing and the history of the road, of the rupture, of the *via rupta*, of the path that is broken, beaten, *fracta*, of the space of reversibility and of repetition traced by the opening, the divergence from, and the violent spacing, of nature." As a consequence, Derrida says, "it is difficult to imagine that access to the possibility of a road-map is not at the same time access to writing."[41] The logic of the *trace*, here, follows the meanings of "path" and "footprint" that have become obsolete, or nearly so, in English.[42] By anticipating writing in this way, the native path brings the anthropologist up short in his quest. Moreover, if the "territory of the Nambikwara is crossed by the line of an autochthonic picada," as Derrida says, the word "crossed" (*traversé*) suggests not only *crossing through* but *crossing out*: a line, that is, lying as much *across* the path as it does *along* it. The native path, in other words, confronts the traveler with an aporia: both line of demarcation and passageway, a line that both

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marks vital distinctions and passes through them. Neither writing nor speech, the native path is the trace of what Derrida calls "arche-writing" or "arche-violence," inscribing the inevitable loss of the proper that Lévi-Strauss's moral fables and Clastres's "archeology of violence" narrate in the mode of mourning. The native path as aporia, deconstructing the anthropologist's moral plaints, thus provides another means to understand what Renato Rosaldo has called "imperialist nostalgia." Rather than being mere hypocrisy or bad faith of the anthropologist, Rosaldo's "mourning for what one has destroyed"[43] should be traced back to the path as *entame* that both "breaches" and "broaches," as Spivak's translation has it, in one stroke. Instead of merely immobilizing the traveler, "the experience of the aporia," Derrida says in one of his texts on mourning, "gives or promises the thinking of the path."[44] Accordingly, *Of Grammatology* reclaims Rousseau from Lévi-Strauss, for whom the philosopher represents the founder of ethnology.[45] Derrida instead argues that the crucial contribution of Rousseau lies not in his theories of natural man or his mournful critique of cultural decline, but rather in the duplicitous figures, such as the *supplement*, that waylay his philosophy, narratives, and travels.[46]

Attention to such a paralyzing logic exposes a thread common to modern narratives of travel: a tendency toward stasis that belies the journey and its ostensible purpose. In touristic narratives, moments of stasis tend to express, in symptomatic form, the traveler's conventional frustrations: a bid for originality and authenticity always threatened by rivalry and mediation; an experience of otherness frustrated by mere spectacle and convention; and a desire to capture history from within a touristic consciousness blind to its own historical nature. In this way, frustrated travel is at grips with difficulties all too easily overcome—if only by compensatory illusions—or alternately, too readily taken as sheer obstacle. Paralysis, however, expresses more than contradiction; as we have seen, its aporias expose the stymied traveler to what is both necessary *and* impossible in transport and

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translation. These aporias lie in the very *track* of the traveler as they do the unaccountable *trace* of his narrative. If, as Ross Chambers has argued, literature is by nature dilatory and slow, paralyses could be considered, in their insouciance to difficulty, an expression of the loiterly and playful resources of literary writing. The tragic aspect of paralyses would be the counterpart to this tendency: not a loiterly playing with transgression, but a painful confrontation with absolute limitations. Aporia, however, expresses neither of these options. Only a reading that is slow enough, indeed paralyzed, can account for the transports of the paralyzed traveler. Paralysis, then, is not only the object of these studies but the name of their critical approach.

Hesitations

My argument so far has drawn on Western travels to show how the encounter with the other provokes a breakdown in the journey and its narrative. I have argued that such breakdowns stage an ethical encounter that, however, often remains incomplete and symptomatic. The task of a paralyzed reading is to dwell at such problematic moments in the text to bring out the text's implicit challenge to its own motives, drives, and transports. Postcolonial authors, for their part, have rewritten narratives of travel to contest and subvert accounts of Western discovery and conquest. Such postcolonial journeys are a critical counterpoint to Western travel, exploiting the contradictions and lapses of the colonial vision. And while contestation and subversion are valuable resources in this challenge to the norms of travel, some of the most far-reaching postcolonial critiques lie not only in political opposition but also in an exploration of shared complicities and knotted histories. For such writers, as in our examples so far, discovery and conquest may become the site of a paralyzing encounter as well.

James Clifford has shown how the contemporary Native American is constrained by a double bind whose logic demands that the aboriginal be utterly different—at the risk of isolation and death—yet

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make himself known in the language and culture of the colonizer—at the risk of losing his identity. To escape this double bind Clifford suggests that "along with the history of resistances we need a history of hesitations."[47] Such hesitations may not be the stuff of adventure and drama, but are the persistent and necessary strategies of survival that defy the either-or logic of resistance and submission, assimilation and isolation. Even a story of postcolonial revolution, such as C. L. R. James's *The Black Jacobins*, confirms Clifford's "history of hesitations"; James aptly speaks of Toussaint L'Ouverture as embodying "vacillation" at a key point in his struggle for Haitian independence from France.[48] What Clifford calls hesitation I have, for my part, been calling paralysis. Paralysis lies at the *crux* of the matter, a place of crossed identities and crossed destinies, where decisions are made in the absence of clear alternatives, where vital distinctions are needed yet lacking. This crux, moreover, has the crisscross form of a double bind. I would argue, then, that its paralyzing logic is not so easily dispatched, and indeed provides the means to articulate a way beyond the alternatives of aboriginal resistance and opposition.

Such a paralyzing crux is found in Jamaica Kincaid's "In History," an essay that revisits the journeys of discovery to the New World. Claiming that all modern history bears the trace of slavery and the slave trade, Kincaid says she would like to mark that trace with an asterisk. The asterisk would indicate where a footnote to the "official story" of Western travel is needed.[49] What Kincaid modestly calls her own "addition" to this official history does not, however, do justice to the transformations and displacements this footnote would entail, which her searching, wide-ranging, and allusive text amply proves. Such a footnote cannot simply be added, since it would threaten to undermine and overflow the official story. The asterisk thus indicates an impossible yet necessary addition. Moreover, the spot marked by this asterisk is not that of a place or a boundary; it is, like the crux, that of a limit both crossed *over* and crossed *out*.

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The crux, then, does not simply mark the spot; its crosswise suture marks instead an overlapping of sites, histories, and identities. To encounter the crux is to be paralyzed.

In her imaginary journey home to her native island of Antigua, Kincaid tries to imagine her people and her land as seen through the eyes of Columbus. At the same time, traveling with Columbus, she tries to counter that discovery with her own claiming of Antigua, to "speak of it as if no one has ever heard of it before" ("In History," 3). The journey thus mimes that of Columbus, yet aims instead at an undiscovered aboriginal Antigua. Is this other, older Antigua "in" history, or outside of it? Can Kincaid's asterisk displace what is already, as she says, a "footnote" to history in Columbus's own account, his passing mention of her island? And her footnote to this footnote, can it find a proper place in the text of history? Kincaid's journey home is a belated return, of course, and so finds itself on the side of colonial history, its language, and its texts. Her discovery can only be a rediscovery of Antigua, and a return not to her home but only to the moment of fatal contact, perhaps to the very line of demarcation between a historical before and after. But it would be too simple to assert that Kincaid's belatedness condemns her to this side of history, much as she insists that it is "the human imagination that I am familiar with, the only one that dominates the world in which I live." Kincaid's asterisk indicates, instead, a point of discrepant history, where the myths of travel and progress are shadowed by another temporality. Indeed, the asterisk does not allow for a clear demarcation of a historical before and after, of the time of a people without history and that of Western history. Kincaid's belatedness is, rather, that of a continuous present, the postcolonial moment of an "open wound" that sutures *and* divides past and future, "each breath I take in and expel healing and opening the wound again and again, over and over" (1). Kincaid's journey is thus neither simply opposed to that of Columbus, nor fated to follow in its wake. Rather, it finds its subversive potential in traveling

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"tout contre" (right next to/completely against), as Derrida says, in the strange complicity of a paralyzing "counterpath."

Due to her predicament of belatedness, Kincaid's pared down, disarmingly simple language is marked with duplicity and repetition even at the crucial moment in her imaginary journey when she arrives home. "What were the things growing on the land?" Kincaid asks. "I pause for this. What were the things growing on that land and why do I pause for this?" ("In History," 3). The "why" of Kincaid's pausing is as important here as the "what" she indicates. This pause, hesitation, or paralysis is more than an occasion to stop and take stock of a momentous occasion. It indicates, rather, what defies indication, and even the index of an asterisk. The minimal alteration of "the land" to "that land" is pregnant with this impossible referent: the home as seen by the other, where her people suddenly "make an appearance" in history, but also, simultaneously, the one unknown to history, to which Kincaid also claims to belong. This is surely a decisive moment, for the appearance of her people foretells the impending consequences of genocide, slavery, and, more recently, the neocolonial economy of tourism. A decisive moment Kincaid would surely choose to change. Why, then, her indecision and hesitation? What gives pause here is not simply that the past cannot be altered, that the fatal contact has already occurred, but that Kincaid's voice cannot extricate itself from the crux that binds her aboriginal land to its simultaneous appearance and disappearance in the text of history. This is, moreover, the same double bind that requires that she voice her story from within the story of her own eradication. Kincaid thus speaks from the place of the subaltern, where the voice of counterhistory expresses what is constitutively erased or foreclosed from history, and confronts that erasure as the enabling condition of her speech. In this postcolonial paradox, she attempts to reclaim, in the language of colonization, an identity destroyed by that language. In a sense, her reclaiming of her history and her home owes itself to the erasure of that history, and

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her journey with Columbus simply revisits the erasure of her home. This does not amount, of course, to a submission to that language and its history, but neither is it the dialectical overturning of that history. It is, instead, a voice that articulates itself with the trace of the other, a trace that cannot be authored or appropriated. This postcolonial predicament makes Kincaid herself, like her homeland, an ambiguous referent, "I, me," both subject and object, fixed in the gaze of the uncomprehending other, yet stubbornly claiming recognition: "the person you see before you" ("In History," 4); "the person standing in front of you" (3).

Kincaid's insistence on her present visual *appearance*, marked by her black and aboriginal heritage, is a claim to history in the name of "all who look like me" ("In History," 1). To make this claim the text thus narrows in on the very moment of discovery when, Kincaid says, "I and the people who look like me begin to make an appearance" (4). A repetitive and obsessive motif in Kincaid's text, this "making an appearance" is the ironic moment of a discovery that grants yet denies identity, that recognizes only through misrecognition: the postcolonial legacy of Columbus, "who started the narrative from which I trace my beginning." Kincaid does not, however, bow to the necessity of this beginning, since she insists as well on speaking from the standpoint of one who is "not yet in the picture" and, indeed, claims that "I have not yet made an appearance" (1). This is more than an attempt to turn back the clock of history or to defy the narrative of "discovery." It is, rather, to dwell at the crux of discovery, to "trace my beginning" to the moment of encounter, a moment that is also, moreover, that of her present appearance "standing in front of you." Kincaid's rebellious text thus *makes a scene*, talking back to history, but does not simply claim or reclaim a lost or neglected identity. Instead, she marks the *trace of her beginning*, a trace that neither appears or not: the trace, in other words, of a "pre-emergent" self, to use Gayatri Spivak's formulation, which testifies to an identity foreclosed by history.[50] This trace lies

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in the margins of Columbus's journey, and as "a reader of this account of the journey" ("In History," 2) Kincaid occupies the place of Columbus's foreclosed other, the Antiguan native. Kincaid's evocation of the Antiguan aboriginal would, then, be neither fiction nor history, but rather, in Spivak's terms, "the (im)possibility of a vicarious (un)reading, the perspective of the "native informant" (*Critique of Postcolonial Reason,* 35).

Kincaid's "In History" indeed provides a striking illustration of Spivak's theory of the "native informant." The native informant, as Spivak defines it, is neither the data-providing interlocutor of the ethnographer nor the postcolonial agent of an autonomous speech act. Rather, the native informant lies in the margins of the dominant discourse of Western history as a figure paradoxically necessary to the truth-claims of that discourse, yet occluded from the scene. This "foreclosure" is thus more than a denial or a disavowal of the other; it is, instead, the mark of a structuring absence upon which the dominant text depends. Like Kincaid reading Columbus, Spivak reads Kant for evidence of the aboriginal "raw man," and shows that "Rhetorically crucial at the most important moment in the argument, it is not part of the argument in any way" (*Critique of Postcolonial Reason,* 13). Strictly speaking, there is no "arguing" with this discrepancy in Kant; Spivak thus warns against the "opposition between master and native" (37) that can unwittingly produce a mere "legitimation-by-reversal" (39). The postcolonial critic's task is, instead, to move "from opposition to critique" and explore the "complicities" that bind the master discourse to its others (147). I have argued that Kincaid's *crux* is the index of such a complicity with history's official story. Similarly, Spivak's "complicity" is the place at which Kant's text relies on an aboriginal other—the Australian aboriginal and the South American Fuegan—that it nonetheless forecloses. These paralyzing contradictions in Kant's text are overcome all too easily in the "axiomatics of imperialism" (34) that consigns the other to a mere supplement. An important moment

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in Spivak's critique comes when she tries to take stock of the history and culture of the aboriginals Kant summarily dismisses. This entails a long footnote on colonialism and anthropology that runs to four pages: "the manuscript got stalled for years," Spivak says, admitting that "I cannot write that other book that bubbles up in the cauldron of Kant's contempt" (28). Like Kincaid's asterisk, this footnote indexes an infinite labor in the margins of official history: "a parenthesis, in a note, on the note on a note" (48).[51] This infinite supplementarity, both paralyzing and motivating, follows the trace of the other in the master discourse.

Kincaid's voice is thus a testimony to what Spivak calls the founding foreclosure of the aboriginal in colonial thought and Western reason. A challenge to Columbus's appropriating mission, the crux of Kincaid's text indexes what cannot be claimed or reclaimed, an aboriginal world more ancient than Antigua itself: the trace of the other that resists historical appropriation and persists as the infinite supplement to history and the postcolonial present. Kincaid's opposition is asymmetrical to colonial history in that it does not presume to reappropriate the aboriginal or claim redress or reparations. And yet, of course, the wounds of history can inform political action in favor of the aboriginal. This aboriginal is, however, not only the victim of violence, but also the testimony to an "arche-violence" more ancient even than Antigua.[52] To speak as an ab-original is to speak as one *deriving* from an origin that can be neither appropriated nor denied. To speak for the oppressed is thus to take sides where sides are lacking, where the crisscross suture "heal[s] and open[s] the wound again and again." Talking back to Empire and writing her way back home, Kincaid testifies to the impossibility of any simple return address. Indeed, her text seems finally to circle only around a handful of paralyzing questions: "and now how to go on," she asks in a Beckettian vein ("In History," 6); "What to call the thing that happened to me?"; "Should I call it history?" (1); "what is history?" (2). These paralyzing questions touch on what is

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perhaps the very origin of Kincaid's text. "It is almost as if what is told," Spivak says, "is the result of an obstinate misunderstanding of the rhetorical question that transforms the condition of the (im) possibility of answering—of telling the story—into the condition of its possibility. Every production of experience, thought, knowledge, all humanistic production, perhaps especially the representation of the subaltern in history or literature, has this double bind at its origin."[53] *Out of* this origin, always a supplement, Kincaid voices the necessary yet impossible claiming of her aboriginal home. Her faltering prose undermines both the journey and its telling to narrate not a return but a departure from the certainties of home, origin, and belonging.

And yet, *departure* too loses its conventional bearings as a result of this absent origin. The figures of transport provoked by this predicament are necessarily vexed, but still enable mobile tactics of identification and desire. For Glissant, such mobile tactics arise precisely from the lack of any possibility of a return, and in the promise of a Caribbean identity free of the illusion of an original self. In Glissant's terms, "reversion" to an origin is thus expressed in duplicitous "diversions," themselves oriented toward an "entanglement" akin to Kincaid's paralyzing crux. "Diversion," Glissant says, "is nourished by reversion: not a return to the longing for origins, to some immutable state of Being, but a return to the point of entanglement, from which we were forcefully turned away." Due to this insight, even the most violent cuts do not call for reunification, but rather for a closer attention to a visceral entanglement. "The machete, more twisted than knotted entrails."[54] Voicing a historical trauma, Kincaid invites us "to listen to departure," as Cathy Caruth puts it, calling on us to bear the responsibility for a traumatic event and a singular place that are always belated, always displaced, but which endure in the stubborn index of a historical asterisk.[55]

"Only the impossible can make me still," Kincaid says in *A Small Place*. Litotic and devastating by turns, Kincaid's searing monologue

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buttonholes the tourist and confronts his insouciant pleasures with the postcolonial realities of Antiguan life.[56] To be "still" is not so much a desire for calm and repose as it is the demand coming from an ignorant and tormenting other—the touristic "you" of Kincaid's insubordinate address—that she stop her ranting and retribution.[57] Here the polemical "you" is the site of another entanglement that Kincaid, for all her righteous hostility, cannot solve, since her own language embodies the hateful colonizing other from whom she wants to extricate herself. And yet within that entanglement surely the promise of another stillness is voiced, that of a hoped-for peace and resolution that could finally heal her wounds. In this sense, then, Kincaid asks for the impossible: a stillness that will not stop, and a "way" that can only be traveled in the travails of language, voiced in a rhetorical question that does not know whether it questions, affirms, or denies: "only the impossible can make me still: can a way be found to make what happened not have happened?" (32). There is no *solution* here, no *analysis* that that can assuage Kincaid's paralyses. The cherished name "Antigua"—translation, misnomer, and erasure of the proper—is the postcolonial allegory of this quest for selfhood, defying the claims of the explorer and tourist yet unclaimed by Kincaid herself, whose countervoyage is too aware of its fateful entanglement not to persist in demanding the impossible.

Transgressions

French literature forms the basis of this study of paralyzed travel, which spans a period from the early nineteenth century to the postcolonial present. As shown by our examples from Beckett and Kincaid, however, paralyses of travel are not limited to the French context. And yet it is in this context, and particularly in French modernity, that the critique of travel and paralytic transports becomes a culturally dominant motif. Moreover, French modernity provides both the most striking symptoms of paralysis and their most insightful critical theories. The French example serves here, then, both as a

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singular case and as an example with which to compare other cultural instances of travel's paralyses. This raises an interesting problem of cultural comparison and translation, however. If translation in its classical sense implies the transfer of meaning across cultural codes, such transfers and transports are called into question by travel's paralyses. As mode of cultural translation, paralysis dwells on the *untranslated*: that which does not cross borders, that which does not carry over. This is not to imply, however, that paralyses simply impede communication and reinforce cultural closure and singularity. Rather, paralyses prevent the facile transfer of meanings at the expense of language's figural thickets. It is, indeed, in the thickets of language that one reads the symptom as "a failure of translation," to borrow Freud's expression.[58] Extending Freud's notion of the symptom to a cultural level, one may speak of cultural "failures of translation" that bring travel to a halt. Far from remaining unmoved and static, however, the "to-be-translated," as Laplanche puts it, is the core of the desire to understand, communicate, and travel (259). The "to-be-translated" is, in this sense, the very source of the "drive to translate" (164), even if that source itself remains unmoved and untranslated.[59]

A diagnosis of the specifically French cultural motif of paralysis is provided by the Spanish critic José Ortega y Gasset in his 1925 *The Dehumanization of Art*, an early assessment and theorization of modernism. Ortega calls the novel "a sluggish genre" that, in his account, tends toward an increasing diminution of action, story, and adventure in favor of the exploration of literary form, character, and psychology.[60] Conrad might be cited as a key instance of this development; a hinge figure in literary modernism, Conrad exploits the resources of traditional adventure tales but tends to stall his journeys in reflexive psychological meditations.[61] For Ortega, Proust is the last great example, though an extreme one, of the modern novel's sluggishness. "So slowly does the action move," Ortega says of Proust, "that it seems more like a sequence of ecstatic stillnesses

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without progression" (*Dehumanization of Art,* 79). Indeed, in what he calls Proust's "paralytic novel" (87), "the permissible measure of slowness is overstepped" (80). Some amount of action is necessary to narrative, though Ortega approves its near-abolition in favor of hermetic formalism and psychological analysis. Ortega's modernist manifesto thus contrasts the French tradition, including the rigor of its classicism—as in the conversing "statues" of Racine's plays (73)—to the popular tradition of Spanish literature, still wedded in his time to models of chivalry, adventure, and the picaresque.

The rejection of adventure and the picaresque is a common thread in modern French literature, which voices an ironic doubt as to narratives of escape, adventure, and discovery. One may argue, further, that the breakdown of plot and narrative characteristic of modern literature corresponds to the demise of overarching spatiotemporal narrative structures modeled on travel, adventure, and conquest. This allows us to trace a longer genealogy to what Lyotard, in his celebrated formulation of 1979, calls postmodernism's "incredulity toward metanarratives." As Lyotard says, "the narrative function is losing its functors, its great hero, its great dangers, its great voyages, its great goal."[62] The political reasons for this rejection are lacking, however, in Ortega's analysis, though it betrays throughout a suspicion of mass culture and popular forms of literature. At the other end of the political spectrum, Michael Nerlich's *Ideology of Adventure* offers more pointed political reasons to critique the tradition of adventure. Nerlich argues that Western adventure narratives were born in a transitional historical stage between feudalism and early capitalism, Spain being a main context for this historic shift. Having lost his role within the feudal system, the knight's purpose was glorified in narratives that emphasized honor and romance. Interestingly, however, the rise of the tale of chivalry coincides with the obsolescence of the knight, serving as an ideological mask for his decreased social status in an increasingly mercantile and capitalist world. Taken up in turn by the rising merchant class, *adventure*

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similarly justified and masked the political role of the capitalist through the glorification of financial risk and adventure. And since profit negates the very risks undertaken in capitalist travel, it is only in promoting an ideology of risk that narratives of adventure, like the discourse of speculator, investor, and merchant, justify their profitable returns. Heroic adventure, in Nerlich's analysis, is thus the mere alibi of this closed economy, whose aim, in fact, is "to remove adventure as far as possible from any incalculable risk."[63] Nerlich's historical approach allows us to see how the decline of adventure in modern literature may be a symptom of the breakdown of bourgeois confidence in its historical mission. This doubt dominates in the literature of the nineteenth century, though the ideology of adventure persisted in popular media, just as it does today in the touristic discourse of so-called "adventure travel."[64]

Claude Simon's great war novel *The Flanders Road* provides a late instance of the demise of chivalry and adventure. Interestingly, in so doing the novel also contrasts the two cultural traditions of Spain and France. Horsemanship, horseracing, and the French cavalry are dominant themes in Simon's novel, whose story weaves back and forth between the history of an aristocratic officer, routed in the Napoleonic war with Spain, and the experience of the narrator, a soldier in the French cavalry in World War II. The retreat from Spain, remembered in the context of World War II, allows Simon to embroider a vast historical tapestry, from the origins of French literature in *La Chanson de Roland* up to the recent past. The narrative comprises a series of shifting and repeated tableaus that are strikingly static; the text insists on the immobility of all the soldiers' actions, as in the description of "the four riders and the five horses somnambulistic and not advancing but lifting and setting down their hooves almost motionless on the road."[65] The book's emblematic image is that of a dead horse lying in the mud, repeatedly invoked as frozen in motion or petrified like a fossil: "it seemed to have been there forever, like one of those fossilized

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animals or plants that had returned to the mineral kingdom, with its two front feet bent into a foetal posture of prayer" (26). This static and frozen figure connects the narrator's obsessive memories, though it cannot be located in a determinate time in the narrative. Indeed, the dead horse seems to fall outside of time in a kind of infinite acceleration, "as if the margin of time normally necessary for the passage from one kingdom to the other (from the animal to the mineral) had this time been crossed at once" (104). It remains for us to determine how and why such a paralyzed image coincides with a sudden *passage* and *crossing*.

The originality of Simon's novel lies in its insistence on a time that is not so much historical as geological. Indeed, all seems petrified or frozen in the novel, caught in the imperceptible movement of a glacier, "that Olympian and cold progression, that slow glacier moving since the beginning of time" (*Flanders Road,* 284). Time, conceived as a glacial substance containing all the novel's characters and events, suspends chronology and causality to offer instead a web of episodes linked not in a single temporal chain but rather as static elements in a contemporaneous frozen space. This bold narrative gambit of an impersonal glacial and geological time nonetheless betrays recognizably psychological obsessions and conventional narrative structures: "I the horseman the booted conqueror coming from the depths of time coming to seduce to carry off the lily-white princess" (272). This seduction, moreover, bears the traits of a Freudian family romance; the mother of Georges, the protagonist, hails from an aristocratic lineage, and Georges, in seducing the wife of his aristocratic officer, seems to flirt with incest and defy his father's peasant lineage. Georges's paralyses can then be ascribed to a neurotic fixation that sustains both his desire and its prohibition in images of frozen motion. This ambivalence also marks the novel's relationship to the adventurous narratives it aims to challenge and dismantle. In this respect, then, Georges—and Simon himself—would be similar to Georges's mother, who is

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"animated by contradictory sentiments, probably uncertain herself if in narrating these scandalous, or ridiculous, or ignominious, or Cornelian stories she wanted to deprecate that nobility, that title she had not inherited, or on the contrary give it more luster, so as to further gorge her pride with the consanguinity and the glamour reflected from it" (58). The reference to Corneille, appropriately enough, refers us to that classic tale of Spanish chivalry, *El Cid*. But in taking leave of such literary history, Simon's novel betrays an anxiety of influence that paralyzes his narrative. This ambivalent tension reaches a climax in the elaborate scenes of lovemaking at the end of the novel. The woman's body is identified with all that is earthly, mineral, and geological; a misogynist fantasy thus lays the blame for corruption and death in the fatal desire "to return to the moist and secret hiding place, the dark mouth" of his lover's sex (296). We have seen how the frozen image of the dead horse also invokes a sudden "passage" into another realm. Petrified and timeless, and yet suddenly crossing over a limit, the dead horse shares with Georges a similar paralyzed motion in the act of lovemaking, as he indulges in fantasies of guilty transgression. Women and the earth are insistently compared in such figures as "the matrix of pale ochre earth" (161), and the "ancient matrix" (221). Thus, Georges is described as "paralyzed with cramps, and as motionless as the dead nag, his face buried in the thick grass, the hairy earth, his whole body flattened as if he were trying to vanish between the lips of the ditch, to melt, to slip, to sink altogether through the narrow crevice to rejoin the original matter (matrix)" (249). Here, sex and desire seem to give way to Freud's death drive. I will return, in what follows, to this key notion in Freudian theory. Here let me briefly indicate that Simon's approach to the death drive resembles Freud's in its speculative delirium, as well as in its attempt to encompass a negativity that reaches beyond narrative and structure. But if the death drive opens onto sheer negativity and the loss of meaning, a compensatory move usually allays the costs; in Simon's novel, that

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move would be a grounding of meaning in a mythic feminizing of the work of destruction: "[B]ut what could you call that: not war not the classical destruction or extermination of one of the two armies but rather the disappearance the absorption by the primal nothingness or the primal All of what a week before were still regiments batteries squadrons of men, or better still: the disappearance of the very notion of a regiment a battery a squadron of men, or better still: the disappearance of any notion of any concept at all" (305).

What transports remain when the main thrust of narrative is seemingly abandoned, as we see here? What subjects replace the hero, adventurer, and conqueror? In Simon's case, the avant-gardism of his prose subtly perpetuates chivalry in the very dismantling of its literary codes; in this sense it is akin to all adventure tales that, as Nerlich argues, are inherently belated and anachronistic. I have argued, further, that a Freudian account of the text serves as a key to the narrator's paralyses. In what follows, I will further develop the stakes of a Freudian critique to show how modern literature's discourse of adventure is inflected away from the conventional domain of adventurous plot and action and toward psychic risk, rebellion, and transgression.

In an account of the demise of adventure in Western literature, Paul Zweig's *The Adventurer* argues for a rehabilitation of the adventurous hero, understood as an indispensable figure who dramatizes the defining boundaries of the social order through transgression and risk. Zweig's modern exemplar of such a hero is Nietszche, whose transgressive philosophy rejects the bad conscience of the criminal in favor of the overman. Zweig's celebration of adventure in literature fails to account, though, for what remains normative in such tales of masculine risk, discovery, and monstrosity. Interestingly, Zweig's first invocation of risk goes by way of *paralysis*: "Haven't all of us, now and then, experienced moments of abrupt intensity, when our lives seemed paralyzed by risk?"[66] This paralysis may well evoke the moment of suspense before action; it also points,

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however, to a breakdown of transport, a hesitation at the place of transgression. I would suggest that such paralyzed transgression can be approached through psychoanalysis, which offers some of the richest accounts of the paradoxes of transport. In contrast to Zweig's hero, the psychoanalytic subject would be that other criminal whose desire, in its byways and displacements, confronts the motivating and paralyzing force of prohibition. Neurotic travel reveals the structuring role of an internalized prohibition that the subject vainly attempts to circumvent. As the subject's alibi, travel, then, may be the scene of a failed reflexive turn; within the modern adventurer lies the ironic figure of a Rat Man, whose obsessions, fixations, and frenetic wanderings are so many frustrated attempts to bring to light his compromised desiring motives.[67] The reflexive turn away from adventure and toward the everyday is a hallmark of modernism and the Nouveau Roman; in Sarraute's early work, the emotional transports of her characters are reduced to minimal "tropisms" in a stifling atmosphere of anxiety and claustrophobia.[68] In its characteristic reflexivity, modern literature shares with psychoanalysis a suspicion of travel, or what Paul Morand calls the "délit de fuite" ("hit and run"; literally "crime of flight"), and the breakdown of heroic narrative confirms literature's quest for other transports, at the cost of paralysis.[69]

From conquistadors and chivalry to the modern cavalry, it is a small step to the *corrida*, belated holdover of an ideal of masculine heroism. Here again we find a paralyzed transgression, such as stands at the beginning of Michel Leiris's autobiographical project. Despite its promising title, Leiris's *Manhood* (*L'Age d'homme*) is no account of heroism, except in suggesting an impossible ideal: that of the matador to which the author aspires in his poetics of risk. As stated in the essay that opens the autobiography, Leiris aims at exposing himself to a "danger" analogous to that of the bull's horn by submitting himself to an absolutely truthful self-portrait.[70] Leiris notes that his writing is intended as an "act" of confession inspired by the experi-

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ence of a prior psychoanalytic treatment. This act, however, tends irresistibly toward paralysis, since the "sculptural" model to which Leiris aspires is that of a matador whose "feet remain motionless," controlling the passing bull with his cape (161). Further, Leiris says that he wants his autobiography to present him as a "solid block" in protection against death—adding that, paradoxically enough, this contradicts his own intention to "risk everything" (162). This crucial equivocation between self-constitution and absolute risk, unresolved by Leiris, points to a crisis of identity at the site of transgression, a crisis marked by castration anxiety, tellingly evoked by the threatening horn of the bull. Dedicated to his friend Georges Bataille, Leiris's *Manhood* bears the stamp of his friend's Nietzschian philosophy of transgression, and thus seems to confirm Zweig's argument; and yet, Leiris's examples of the *corrida* and sacred ritual fall more fully within the scope of a psychoanalytic predicament. Here, transgression conveys nothing so much as the compromised status of neurotic desire, both sustained and inhibited by a reigning prohibition. Thus, the matador, as embodiment of a ritualized transgression, is seen as submitting to a *rule* of conduct with respect to the dangerous bull. There is "an immediate connection between obedience to the rule and the danger incurred," Leiris notes (160). Indeed, the rule, "far from being a protection, contributes to his danger." The *rule*, then, submits to another imperative, that of the symbolic *law* conveyed by the phallic horn. Leiris's paralysis in the face of this threatening law is the price of his wayward, transgressive desire.

Another way of approaching the paralytic aspect of Leiris's work would be by means of the register of identification and desire that Jacques Lacan terms the *Imaginary*. As the primary mode of the subject's identification, the Imaginary initially serves to stabilize the infant as a specular ego in resistance to its bodily disorganization. Lacan emphasizes the inertia, fixation, and resistance that characterize the specular ego in its "formal stagnation," a stasis akin to the face of an actor in a film that has been stopped.[71] In the

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adult subject the persistence of the Imaginary represents above all a vain effort of self-constitution in resistance to the symbolic law of castration. Leiris's frustrated writings and travels would thus be structured and limited within the scope of an impossible and illusory effort of self-realization. It is worth recalling that Lacan defines egoical identity as an aspect of the subject that is intractable and permanent. While defined by a moment of development Lacan isolates as a "stage," the mirror stage is not one that is overcome, but is incorporated within the subject and in Lacan's discourse in an increasingly complex structuring network, overlapping and interfering with the Symbolic and the Real. At the same time, if this Imaginary regime that "fixates" the subject is irreducible, it contains within its own dynamic the seeds of its own dismantling. This is the topic of Lacan's essay "Aggressivity in Psychoanalysis," where he highlights the frustrating nature of the ego and the characteristic violence it fosters. Like Freud, Lacan considers aggression against others to be determined by an original aggressivity toward oneself. Lacan refines this point by tying its logic to "a primary identification that structures the subject as a rival with himself."[72] Accordingly, aggressivity, in Lacan's analysis, is fundamentally aggressivity turned against the specular ego; the ego, in its frustrations, is seen as undertaking the destruction of its own claims to integrity—such as Leiris's "single solid block"—and ultimately aiming beyond the Imaginary. In this account, then, Freud's primary narcissism is directed less at defense and self-constitution than toward the very overcoming of its illusions. Lacan thus parts company with Freudian ego psychology, which makes the ego the very core of the well-adjusted individual. In contrast, Lacan states that egoical frustration and aggression point the way to the emergence of the *subject* in the place of the ego. This self-realization is undertaken by means of the death drive, whose tireless work compels the subject to dismantle its cherished illusions. Leiris's "autocritique" can be usefully situated within this problematic, and the symptoms of

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Leiris's masochism may be located at this primordial level, where the work of self-reflection and autobiography is directed at the demolition of the image of selfhood. Accordingly, a crucial feature of Leiris's travel accounts is their self-deflating presentation of his imaginary desires and motives. I examine Leiris's work and travels in chapter 1, where I compare him with two precursors, Nerval and Gautier, and more at length in chapter 4, where I examine his ethnographic travels.

Psychoanalysis thus provides a means to reconsider the topos of *imaginary travel*, usefully recast as a phantasmatic domain of vexed identification, rivalry, and frustrated transports. In his *Prospero and Caliban: The Psychology of Colonization*, Octave Mannoni addressed the imaginary motives for traveling to underdeveloped countries: "Baudelaire felt, as we all do, that savage countries and savage peoples were the nearest imitation he could find in the real world of that of his childhood—of paradise. We may go further and say, with but slight exaggeration, that there would be no ethnographers, explorers, or colonials 'among the savages' if it were not for this *vocation*." Mannoni links this vocation to a fundamental *ambivalence* that plays out in the colonial drama: "civilised man is painfully divided between the desire to 'correct' the 'errors' of the savages and the desire to identify himself with them in his search for some lost paradise."[73] What accounts for this ambivalence, and how does it serve to motivate the traveler? Mannoni's formulations here provide the elements of a Lacanian analysis. The traveler's picture of the native would be framed in the Imaginary, that register of desire in which the subject projects the illusory figments of an impossible plenitude by means of mirroring relationships with images of the self and others. This specular resolution is purchased at a great cost to the subject, however, as the ironic consequence of the subject's imaginary strivings for identity is to see itself only as an *other*. The ego is thus constituted as a relationship to a field of projections that the self cannot fully assume; for this reason, Lacan says, the ego is

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"frustration in its essence." All imaginary relations are as a result structured by an unresolvable dynamic of identification and rivalry as the subject struggles with the terms of his specular alienation. Mannoni points to such a dynamic when he asserts that the traveler is painfully divided by the desire to "identify" with the primitive and to impose himself on him. The alter ego is always prey to such violent alteration by the egoic subject due to the aggressivity inherent to his specular frustration.[74] With its focus on the case of French Madagascar, Mannoni's *Prospero and Caliban* provides me with some of the terms with which I approach the work of Jean Paulhan in chapter 3. In close readings of Paulhan's work, including his linguistic study of Malagasy proverbs, I underscore characteristic turns and reversals that bear persistently on a dynamic of mastery and submission. Paulhan's linguistic studies in Madagascar thus symptomatically enact a problematic of *subjection*, in which questions of agency and authority vie with intractable doubts and anxiety. These vexing figures of uncertain agency defy accountability, and as a result, Paulhan's cultural estrangement and dislocation yields no clear narrative but only paralyses and paradoxical transports.

Insofar as the traveler follows the vectors of an imaginary desire, his travels will be marked, then, by a defining frustration. Psychoanalysis thus provides useful terms for a political critique of imaginary travel. One might, for instance, recast Dean MacCannell's well-known sociological study of tourism in Lacanian terms. If, as MacCannell puts it, the tourist's journey is "a search for authenticity," his travel is, however, fundamentally nostalgic and illusory, sustained by figments of stereotyped elsewheres and others.[75] Frustration habitually accompanies the quest for authenticity, which misrecognizes its true purpose, Jonathan Culler points out, as "a quest for an experience of signs."[76] The habitual resentment by the tourist of other tourists could be attributed to specular rivalry, and the friction between the tourist's cherished illusions and the awkward mediation of his experience could be cast as a struggle between the

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Imaginary and the Symbolic. Moreover, imaginary travel allows us to see how touristic travel can survive, and even sustain itself, in its very nostalgia and belatedness; the traveler's disenchantment—and even his failure—can console him in his illusions. We have seen how "imperialist nostalgia" stakes its claim to lost authenticity in a loss it perpetuates and dissimulates. Similarly, imaginary travel lays hold of images and stereotypes whose frustrating nature fosters an evermore imperious fixation. This is captured in Malek Alloula's catalogue of colonial Algerian postcards.[77] The postcards document the power of the stereotype in authorizing French claims for colonial domination, exposing in a striking way the role of the sexual phantasm in the discursive hegemony of colonial rule. A victory of the gaze, such postcards disavow their own frustrated access to women who remained in large part out of reach and sight of the French colonial.[78] In chapter 2, I explore this ambiguous colonial fascination in Fromentin's rapturous description of an Algerian harem, and argue that Fromentin's Algerian journeys demonstrate the belated traveler's jealous hold on colonial illusions.

Psychoanalysis also presents novel insights into one of the most time-honored examples of paralyzed travel: Zeno's arguments on the impossibility of movement. Several recent Lacanian essays have turned their attention to Zeno's paradoxes, the best known of which represents Achilles in pursuit of a tortoise. Zeno's argument purports to demonstrate that although Achilles is faster than the tortoise he will be forever unable to catch up to it. Since the tortoise has an advance on him, the argument goes, Achilles must make up first the distance between them, plus the advance. This advance, however short, becomes infinite in Zeno's argument, for once a given distance is covered, an advance always remains, which itself becomes a distance to cover, and so on. The prey thus infinitely recedes in smaller and smaller increments. Slavoj Zižek points out that psychoanalysis allows us to recognize in this seeming sophistry what is in fact the most common of experiences, namely the dream of running in

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place.[79] Zeno's paradox thus holds true at an unconscious level of experience. What the tortoise would represent, in this analysis, is the subject's *goal*: not any particular object but the object as such, whose promise of infinite satisfaction provokes its infinite regress. Zižek's argument concerning Zeno draws on the Lacanian notion of the *objet petit a*. In an important scene from Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, the child conjures up an object that would cover over the absence provoked by the mother's departure. Lacan's reading of Freud asserts that the absence bears less on the mother herself than on the child's identity; out of the child's sense of lack he precipitates an object—the ego—with which his integrity can be assumed. This object Lacan terms the *objet petit a*, an object that the child attempts to recover but which, paradoxically, was not there to begin with. This object is inversely figured in the mirror stage, where the child anticipates an identity in the form of an image that his body cannot yet correspond to. The imaginary object thus exists within a temporality that cannot coincide with the subject: on the one hand, an impossible nostalgia posits retroactively what *must have been*; on the other, a dream of fulfillment to come conjures up a future perfect, what *will have been*. As cause of desire, the imaginary object propels the subject in a quest for what cannot be attained.

A second paradox of Zeno's posits that an arrow in flight is motionless. Since at any point in its trajectory it must occupy a certain space, it is claimed to be perpetually at rest. The logic of both paradoxes relies on the principle of cutting up motion into increments. Joan Copjec ties this logic to the rationale that leads Aristotle, in his theses on movement, to posit the Prime Mover, an immobile agent at the heart of any motion. What dictates that the identity of the arrow or the substance of a given being must interrupt its own motion? In Copjec's analysis, it is the primal cut between the Imaginary and the Symbolic that accompanies the subject's every move and threatens him with paralysis even as it causes his very flight. "The subject constructed by language finds itself detached from a part

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of itself. And it is this primary detachment that renders fruitless all the subject's efforts for a reunion with its complete being. The arc of its strivings appears to the subject as Zeno's arrow—an endlessly interrupted flight that can only asymptotically approach its goal."[80] Lacan adds to Zeno's paradox of Achilles and the tortoise the clarification that the subject (Achilles) may well be able to *overtake* the object (the tortoise), he simply cannot *attain* it. The most obscure moment of the paradox thus becomes that of the limit point where the subject crosses over or crosses out the place of the object: a point of coincidence without contact, a point of presence without present. "Clearly," Lacan says, "Achilles can only overtake the tortoise, he cannot catch up with her. He rejoins her only in infinity."[81] Copjec ties this question of infinite regression to the problematic of the signifier. In a linguistic order founded on difference, the infinite deferral of meaning, how, she asks, can the sign ever reach a point where meaning can coincide with the sign? Copjec suggests that the limit that suspends these alternatives is the subject's finitude, the incompletion that precipitates the subject's impossible object of desire. This finitude motivates the subject; the cause of his actions originates in an impasse whose overcoming is the impossible object. In Milner's words, Zeno shows that "the impossible is necessary."[82] The solution to the paradox lies with the limit: it is because the subject is finite or castrated that the limit is overcome, not once and for all but endlessly. Copjec says, "The psychoanalytical subject is not infinite, it is *finite*, and it is this limit that causes the infinity, or unsatisfiability, of its desire. One thing comes to be substituted for another in an endless chain only because the subject is cut off from that essential thing that would complete it."[83] A recognition of this unsatisfiability would be, then, the condition for an ethics of traveling desire. Ethical transports, renouncing the imperious image and its objects, would be modeled on the Freudian *drive*, a sheer impulse without object but its own tireless quest.

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As Copjec's essay makes clear, her Lacanian analysis of the paradoxes of transport aims to rebut a deconstructive theory of linguistic difference. Derrida's critique of Lacan involves a challenge to the theory of the Symbolic as structuring linguistic order, with castration and transgression as its linchpins. Even among Lacan's dissenters, including many of his feminist critics, castration, transgression, and the law provide orienting terms for a questioning of symbolic norms and their social instantiations. Derrida's deconstruction of Freud and Lacan disorients these terms in a radical way. There is, as a result, a hint of anxiety in Copjec's invocation of an unstructured infinity, whose limiting cut, for all its painful consequences, offers a structuring reassurance. Indeed, her very argument with Derrida betrays a structuring reflex of opposition, one that, moreover, pits infinity against its contrary. However, Derrida's analysis of the limit does not itself posit the infinite Copjec would attribute to him. Neither finitude nor infinity, Derrida's limit poses the problem of an aporia more paralyzing than Lacanian theory, and more paradoxical even than Zeno.

Among Derrida's most searching inquiries into the figures of transport is his essay on Freud's death drive, where he suggests the name *paralyse* for the critique he undertakes.[84] Freud's metapsychological *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, with its focus on death, finitude, and the "beyond," allows Derrida to question the role of the limit in Freudian thought. This limit is Freud's very topic—the limit of life—but as Derrida shows, it is also the limit of Freud's own discourse as it comes up against its unthought margins and boundaries. Derrida thus displaces the question as Freud poses it, to show how the text's unworking of its argument stages its own death-work at the limits of knowledge. Derrida emphasizes the erratic, stumbling, and wayward progress of Freud's argument, his *démarche*, underscoring how Freud's textual tarrying with the limit entails a fruitful paralysis. Metaphysical and spiritual figure par excellence, the notion of the "beyond" is significantly critiqued

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in Freud's own analysis, but it is only his inadvertent stumblings and paralyses that constitute a deconstruction of that notion. The value of Freud's inquiry lies, therefore, not so much in his theory of a purported biological death drive as in its enacting of a "destruction drive," the persistent undoing of the text's own argument.

Derrida thus finds Freud an ally in the deconstruction of death as theme or dialectical negation. Death as the radically other, Derrida argues, cannot be appropriated or set to work by the dialectic; its otherness is not opposed to life or the pleasure principle, nor is it sublated in a movement that transcends that opposition. Similarly, in an essay on Blanchot, Derrida reduces the movement at the limit to the mere step or "trace" of a "pas": a step beyond that is simultaneously the negation of that same step. The grand pathos of Bataille's theory of sacrifice and the grim negativity of Blanchot amount as a result to a mere pun. Derrida is careful to caution, however, that such a pun risks being mistaken as mere voluntary play or, as in Freud, a successful, if momentary, transgression of the censoring law.[85] The duplicity of the "pas" (step/not) aims instead to convey, in a pairing of nonopposed contraries, the differential stroke that inscribes otherness within any given sign. Likewise, Derrida's witty and punning intervention into Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* aims not to make light of the death drive, but to bring out, in Freud's own inquiry, what resists death's appropriation as theme or *telos*. Death is not dialectical otherness and negation; it is, instead, a paralyzing confrontation with a minimal limit that, always already crossed, binds the sign to its duplicitous other. Derrida's "pas" conveys this play of otherness and iteration that confounds any account of presence, paralyzing both writer and reader in their encounter with its paradoxical trace.

In *Reading for the Plot*, Peter Brooks has named the theory of the death drive as "Freud's masterplot."[86] It is noteworthy that in using Freud's text for his narratological purposes, Brooks's focus is on nineteenth-century literature, and not on more-modern fictions—

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such as Claude Simon's, for instance—that dismantle and problematize the arc of conventional narrative. Moreover, Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* is not so much a *plot* as a tangle of fits and starts, of retractions and reversals. Reading for the *plod*, so to speak, we bring out paralyses in Freud more akin to the texts surveyed here: the trudging fictions of Beckett, the wayward self-scrutiny of Leiris, the drifting of Barthes. To catch the drift of Barthes's texts is to read desire in its paradoxical transports, in tropisms and paralyses that belie narrative order. As I show in chapter 5, Barthes's early *Mythologies* took to task the political, ideological, and colonial economies of travel and tourism as expressed in the popular media of the France of the 1950s. Subsequently, Barthes theorizes other transports that go by the names of *dérive* and *atopie*. Such transports reflect a turn in Barthes's work, begun with *S/Z*, toward the theorization of sexuality, pleasure, and desire. *S/Z* also marks Barthes's departure from the structuralist paradigm, and his espousal of paradoxical transports carries him away from structural models of sexual identity, plot, and narrative. This proves a significant means of challenging gender norms as embedded in traditional narrative and plot, and as perpetuated in narrative theory.[87] One of Barthes's tactics in the face of such normative sexual roles is to redistribute them along the lines of gender. Thus, pointing to the convention that "Woman is sedentary, Man hunts, journeys," Barthes claims the privilege of the former: "sedentary, motionless, at hand, in expectation, nailed to the spot, *in suspense* [*en souffrance*]."[88] This paralysis defines the principal role of the lover in *A Lover's Discourse* as one who suffers the absence of the other: "in any man who utters the other's absence *something feminine* is declared: this man who waits and who suffers from his waiting is miraculously feminized. A man is not feminized because he is inverted but because he is in love" (14). Barthes's appropriation of a conventional topos of amorous narrative thus yields a queer alternative to its sexual essentialism and elaborates

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an ethics of desire that refuses the spoils of romantic adventure and chivalrous conquest.

Barthes's suspicion of travel in *A Lover's Discourse* entails a rejection of narrative, to the extent that the latter is wed to motives that would deny or attenuate the force of a desire aiming beyond ends, needs, and morals. Paralysis and fragmentation, as opposed to the language of mastery and adventure, nonetheless allow for other forms of transport. The language of absence provides for a space of play, a rhythm of attachment and separation. A frequent model of such transports for Barthes is the *fort-da* game from *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, by which the child mimes the comings and goings of his mother. Barthes is close to Lacan in taking this scene as exemplifying the force of the drive in its impossible relation to a forever absent object. Indeed, Barthes specifically adopts the term *dérive* (drift) from Lacan to name the paradoxical transports of desire. Unlike Lacan, however, Barthes holds to *dérive* and its relation to the maternal object in resistance to the Symbolic as such. Barthes thus departs from the psychoanalytic critics we have surveyed so far, and attempts to reclaim the Imaginary as an alternative to the normative constraints of social and sexual identification. This alternative ultimately entails a rehabilitation of imaginary travel as an ethical relation in which the subject makes room for his *atopic* desire as the space of his necessary illusions and queer transports.

Barthes launches the challenge of such atopic transports in *S/Z*: "What would be the narrative of a journey," Barthes asks, "in which it was said that one stays somewhere without having arrived, that one travels without having departed—in which it was never said that, having departed, one arrives or fails to arrive?"[89] Barthes's impossible journey and its paradoxical transports resonate with all those explored in this book. As we will see in the next chapter, such an impossible journey is highly evocative of the spatiotemporal complexities of the immigrant experience. It also speaks to the nightmare of marginality and discrimination as described by

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Boudjedra, the focus of my final chapter. Barthes's analysis thus not only can inform atopic pleasures and drifts but also contribute to a political critique of the exclusion of *sans-papiers* and migrants from the dominant narratives of travel. Such insights are enabled in part by cultural and political criticism, as seen in *Mythologies*, but also, more significantly, by the paralyzed reading in *S/Z*, a patient, exhaustive, "*slow motion*" and "*step-by-step*" approach (12). Neither arriving nor failing to arrive, as Barthes has it, the transports of such reading are a pleasurable *dérive*. At stake in this drift, once again, is the figure of an aporetic boundary, a *rive*—"shore" or "bank"—that defies access. Barthes's paradoxical drift thus accords with Derrida's in "Pas": "What arrives would always arrive *at the border*. Affecting the border. But by remaining there: by not arriving."[90] Neither movement nor stasis, the "non-arrivé" is an impossible arrival at each and every step.[91] At the same time, however, the "non-arrival" is promising, as it suggests not only paralysis but also transports, translations, and destinations still to come. For the *rive* or border is also a *crossroads*; here at this crossroads we will meet the *arrivant*, the twin and reversible figure of the colonist and immigrant, each paralyzed by the legacy of modern French travel.

At the end of *Sentimental Education*, Flaubert gives a summary indictment of bourgeois travel: "He travelled. . . . He returned."[92] One hundred years later, Barthes's *S/Z* offers a similarly telegraphic synopsis: "*To depart/to travel/to arrive/to stay*: the journey is saturated" (105). Between the two and stretching beyond into a wider nineteenth- and twentieth-century modernity, French literary culture expresses a pervasive mistrust of travel. One might call this a dominant literary *discourse* against travel, akin to the modern French denigration of vision studied by Martin Jay in *Downcast Eyes*. Unlike Jay's, however, my own approach aims not at a comprehensive cultural history, and does not claim to fully represent even a literary history of the period. In this respect, I share Jay's own qualifications

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regarding the limitations of "discourse" as an organizing principle of cultural historiography. Jay quotes from James Clifford on this point: "Discourse analysis is always in a sense, unfair to authors. It is interested not in what *they* have to say or feel as subjects, but is concerned merely with statements as related to other statements in a field."[93] A similar problem arises when treating travel as unitary theme or motif; Clifford's work, eminently sensitive to travel's complexities, has pursued the seemingly contradictory, but more precisely oxymoronic and paralyzing implications of "traveling cultures" and "dwelling-in-travel."[94] Likewise, to avoid the risk of overgeneralizing claims and illusory themes, in what follows I pursue close readings of the work of a select number of authors; a sustained focus on their texts brings out the particular lineaments of their paralyses within a discursive context they evoke, contest, and alter. It is, in fact, only from a synoptic perspective—such as that of Flaubert and Barthes above—or by means of selective quotes and broad themes, that one could make the claim for a simple, consistent, or uniform modern French negation of travel. A closer, slower approach reveals that paralyses are always challenges not to travel as such but to the norms and constraints of travel and translation. In this sense, the critique of travel is a "counter-discourse," as Richard Terdiman defines it; not simply the discourse of antagonism and resistance, but a more imbricated contestation within the dominant order.[95] Paralyses, as distinct from critique, would occupy the very site of this imbrication: between discourse and counterdiscourse; between the colonizer's vision and the recognition of the other; between touristic mentality and the experience of alterity. Given the omnipresence of figures of transport in language, the vexations of paralyzed speech threaten all the terms by which we represent our motions, emotions, motives, and meanings. As a result, language too becomes the site of contestation, its powerfully freighted metaphors paralyzed by poetic insight into more problematic turns of speech. Even at their most

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stymied, however, paralyzed travels always speak to new mobilities, and it is to a more detailed study of such paradoxical transports that we will turn next.

Having opened this introduction with a discussion of Beckett's paralyzed travels, I will index in closing a late manuscript of his titled "The Way." Beckett accompanied his drafts of this brief, unfinished, and unpublished text with the image of a figure eight, alternately drawn upright and horizontal. Each image figures a "winding one-way way," the path of a perpetual circuit. "The one way back was on and on was always back."[96] The cover of this book is indebted to Beckett's simple and evocative image that conveys a journey both infinite and infinitely stymied. Beckett's "Way" may serve as a map to the chapters that follow.

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