

ONE

THE TRANSFORMATION OF AUTHORSHIP

Useful Authority

The consensus on quotation and appropriation seems to be clear: these practices call into question the authority of artists and writers, and they make works of art and literature into something other than expressive, original creations. In this account, quotation and appropriation would join the ranks of iconoclastic avant-garde gestures, alongside futurism's call for the destruction of museums, expressionism's patricidal dramas, and Dada's anti-manifestos. 1 It would be a mistake, however, to exaggerate the transformation of authorship effected by quotation and appropriation. Writing often uses some form of quoting without causing the author's death, and artists' educations have always included some form of copying. 2 Literature and art frequently depend on something close to quotation (imitation, parody, allusion, pastiche), which makes it difficult to argue that the use of quotations spells the end of literature and art as we know them. 3 The most radical abjuration of originality and authenticity may not disturb the institution of authorship. Quotational works could even be considered the apotheosis of authorship, since authors and artists remain authors and artists even when they do nothing but quote. Émile Benveniste's discussion of the related notions of authorship, authority, and augury is instructive here, and not just for understanding literary authorship, because discussions of the "death of the author" have shaped the reception of appropriation art. Benveniste defines the Latin root of these terms— *augeo*— in terms that seem to correspond to the everyday understanding of authorship: *augeo* is "a creative act which causes something to arise from a nutrient medium." He describes the author as something like a conjurer or medium: *auctoritas* is the "gift which is reserved for a handful of men and which allows them to cause something to come into being [*faire surgir quelque chose*] and literally 'to bring into existence.'" 4 This "something" is not created by authors, who only act as the medium of its emergence. In Benveniste's account, authors are always removed in some way from what they write. They may do nothing more than call something forth; they may just "cite" in the sense of "summoning to appear in a court of law." 5 Quotation only accentuates this distance that determines every form of authorship. These preliminary remarks should make clear that the relation of quotation and authorship is not only antagonistic. But the opposite is just as true. It's not as if nothing has changed with the emergence of montage, appropriation, quotational literature, and digital means of copying and producing texts. Instead of hyperbolic conceptualizations of quotation as destruction and rupture, the relation of quotational literature and authorship can be presented more modestly, in rhetorical terms that take account of quotation's effects without exaggerating them. Quotation depends on a synecdochal and metonymic relation to authorship and authority. It is synecdochal, because one quoted line or even one quoted word can evoke an entire source text, *pars pro toto*. And it is metonymic, because this synecdoche creates an associative relation between the quoted and quoting texts. An author claims legitimacy by properly quoting passages from, for instance, *Les fleurs du mal*. That author's text is then associated, metonymically, with Baudelaire, and the tie is also synecdochal because all of Baudelaire's work is summoned with one line and because the quoting author's entire work will be, he or she hopes, imbued with authority by means of incorporating only one line (the right line!) from Baudelaire's collection. This is the function of quotation envisioned by Quintilian: "Authority may be drawn from external sources [such as Quintilian] to support a case." 6 The success of this

operation depends on the skill of the quoter, who must know what, how much, and when to quote. The quotation must be presented with as much care as any original utterance; quoting well requires compositional abilities that are not so different from those required for any other kind of writing. 7 Authority is made useful in quotational texts, but not overcome. Authority and authorship are rarely even intended as targets of quotational works. In fact, quoting another author may reinforce that quoted author's authority. Critics of the Christian Virgilian cento (poems about Christ written with lines taken from Virgil) weren't anxious about the risk of Christianizing Virgil; that is, they weren't anxious about the new, Christian text challenging the old pagan source. Instead, they were concerned that Christ could become a Virgilian figure, because the authority and beauty of the pagan original might win out over the new subject matter. 8 Benjamin realizes this power of quotation and writes about the danger of quoting Michelet: readers may become so absorbed in Michelet that they forget the text that quotes him. 9 And Nietzsche, similarly, urges caution when quoting: "an excellent quotation can annihilate entire pages, indeed an entire book, in that it warns the reader and seems to cry out to him: 'Beware, I am the jewel and around me there is lead, pallid, ignominious lead!'" 10 Quoting does not undermine a source's authority or constitute an attack on the institution of authorship. The source text and its authority survive in— and might even undermine— the quoting text or work of art, which relies on authorship and authority to be produced. Allegory Quotation's transformation of its sources is allegorical. It takes away and endows meaning as it places texts in new contexts. This operation mimics the allegorical procedures that constitute the commodity, as Benjamin Buchloh points out. 11 Commodification is allegorical, because value functions as the "other sense" necessary for allegory, and the commodity as object becomes a mere carrier for value, whose quantifiability erodes every singularity that might allow for qualitative differences among commodities. 12 As Marx puts it in *Capital*, "The commodity form, and the value-relation of the products of labour within which it appears, have absolutely no connection with the physical nature of the commodity and the material relations arising out of this." 13 The result is what Walter Benjamin calls the "sense of sameness of things," which affects not only commodities but also human activity and experience, which become quantitatively measurable. 14 "By equating their different products to each other in exchange as values," Marx writes, "they equate their different kinds of labour as human labour." 15 The exchangeability instituted by the commodity relation is accompanied by the extraction of surplus value, which makes the apparently equal exchange inherently unequal. Equality, exchangeability, and sameness are unrealized capitalist ideals. For Theodor Adorno, the proper response to the generalization of the principle of exchange is not an insistence on singularity and difference (that is, inequality) but an insistence on equality and exchangeability as incomplete projects. 16 A tension thus marks the avant-garde's allegorical operations. On the one hand, objects, words, or images selected by artists or writers might seem, by means of this choice, to have been saved from their submersion in a sea of merely quantitative differences. Such a desire to rescue singularity appears in the surrealist transformation of quotidian banality, which is accompanied by an insistence on the universality of this transformation. André Breton argues that "the least object, to which no particular symbolic role is assigned, is able to represent anything," is able to become "marvelous." 17 But this can only occur after an object is saved from what Breton calls its "vitiating" current existence and turned into raw material. To be redeemed, the object must be damned to materiality once again. 18 Even if allegorists want to create new singularities, they cannot help but emphasize that the allegorized object always also remains mere material that can be given a new meaning. Its singularity is alienable. Insistence on singularity only emphasizes the malleability and exchangeability that it means to counter, because the object's new, marvelous meaning can just as easily be taken knowledge about how to work with alterity and repetition. Hermeneutic Desire The hidden knowledge of allegory also includes the

recognition of the desire that quoted texts or images “disclose their secrets” and reveal their truth. 23 This positive knowledge is especially apparent in works that quote well known images and texts, such as Marcel Broodthaers’s appropriation of Stéphane Mallarmé, Heimrad Bäcker’s quotations from *Mein Kampf*, and Troy Brauntuch’s appropriation of a photograph of Hitler. “Reproduced in one book after another about the Holocaust, already excerpted, enlarged, cropped, the images Brauntuch uses are so opaque and fragmentary as to be utterly mute regarding their supposed subject,” Douglas Crimp writes. 24 For Craig Owens, “Brauntuch’s images simultaneously proffer and defer a promise of meaning; they both solicit and frustrate our desire that the image be directly transparent to its signification.” 25 The fact that these photos can be reused in a different context and as part of new works of art makes puzzling what otherwise, in a television documentary about Nazi Germany, seems to make perfect sense. Crimp argues that Brauntuch’s techniques “make the pictures all the more picturelike,” “fix” them as images, and distance them from their meanings. “That distance,” Crimp writes, “is all that these pictures signify.” 26 The effect of quotation, like that of appropriation, is distancing and dilatory. It elicits a desire for understanding even as it opens up possibilities for misunderstanding and incomprehensibility. “As a result,” Owens writes of Brauntuch’s works, “they appear strangely incomplete— fragments or runes which must be deciphered.” 27 Quotation and appropriation allegorize their sources, revealing the alterity at their center and awakening a hermeneutic desire that cannot be sated. Allegory’s hidden knowledge is thus also a positive knowledge about the inexhaustibility of the allegorized object and about the intensification of the original’s latency. By renaming and recontextualizing, allegory awakens a capacity for repetition that is already there in the original. This claim could seem banal, and it is liable to be rephrased as the trivial insight that everything can be repeated, copied, and quoted. But quotational works reveal more than the repeatability of this or that text or image; they also indicate the repeatability of the moment of emergence of the original, the moment of the original’s origination. Although the rest of this chapter will be devoted to this aspect of quotation, this claim can already be sketched in broad strokes. Authority causes “something to come into being,” Benveniste claims. Quotation repeats this authoritative, authorial act and thereby indicates the possibility that this coming-into-being could have been different and could be altered in its repetition. Quotation repeats this surging emergence in which nothing is certain, not even the source work as it originally came to be. This, finally, is the secret knowledge of allegory: it is knowledge about origins as repeatable. 28 Allegory never just appropriates the source text as it happened to emerge, and it never just bestows another meaning. Allegory returns to the moment of beginning as open and attempts to appropriate its openness, the possibility of turning out otherwise. Quotational texts quote something that has not yet been said, some other beginning. That is the kernel of quotational writing; that is what makes it opaque even when it seems most transparent, as in the case of two works discussed in chapter 5, Vanessa Place’s *Statement of Facts*, which are appropriations of Place’s appellate briefs; and Sharon Hayes’s respeaking of Patricia Hearst’s taped addresses in *Symbionese Liberation Army (SLA) Screeds #13, 16, 20 & 29*. These works should be transparent, since the sources are known and since these artists and writers do so little to alter them. But they are puzzling because of the enigmatic repeatability or quotability that Place and Hayes reveal. They make incomplete what seems complete and finished. 29

Dialectical Images

Quotation reopens cases that seemed closed. The *Arcades Project* explicitly reflects on this aspect of quotation. Benjamin sees salvation neither in the restoration of an original meaning to an event (returning to the past as it was) nor in the creation of a new meaning (a reinterpretation

in light of the present). Instead, he aims for the “exhibition of the fissure” in historical events and objects, and he aims to indicate the possibilities buried in the past. 30 These unrealized possibilities appear in Benjamin’s “dialectical images,” which are images of “what was” that become legible and potentially useful for historical understanding only in what Benjamin calls the “now of recognizability.” The terms “what was” (das Gewesene) and “now” (das Jetzt) correspond to and differ from the past and present of “historicism,” which is, for Benjamin, a way of writing and understanding history in terms of continuity. 31 In the fourteenth thesis of “On the Concept of History,” Benjamin identifies an exemplarily dialectical understanding of history in Robespierre, for whom ancient Rome was “a past charged with now-time, a past which he blasted out of the continuum of history.” 32 The term Benjamin uses in the next sentence to describe this “blasting” is “quotation”: “The French Revolution ... quoted ancient Rome exactly the way fashion quotes a bygone mode of dress.” 33 The quotational constellation of “what was” and “now” is temporary, revisable, incomplete, and useful for critique, but only for a certain “now”: “The image that is read— which is to say, the image in the now of its recognizability— bears to the highest degree the imprint of the perilous critical moment on which all reading is founded.” 34 It is “perilous” because it is free of every guarantee of intelligibility and released from its safe anchor in an established historical continuity, which is linked to commodification for Benjamin. 35 Historicism homogenizes history by including every event in a continuum of progress, and commodification quantifies differences (among objects, among types of human labor, among experiences of time) and homogenizes perception. Benjamin’s conception of time undoes “the concept of a progress of mankind in history” as well as the “homogeneous, empty time” that this notion of progress presupposes. 36 His quotational practices aim to counter historicism and commodification by returning to the moment in which their objects— history and the object— become known in the first place. The dialectical image proposes a different way of knowing that moment, a way of reading events that includes their contingency and their unrealized futures. There are narratives of history for Benjamin, but there could, he claims, be another writing of history, based not on narratives of progress but on “interferences.” 37 By revealing this aspect of the historical moment, Benjamin aims to free history from the “semblance of eternal sameness.” 38 Peter Fenves presents this liberation as the interruption of history by a monadic time in which “every time recapitulates, without ever exactly repeating, all of time.” The awareness of this monadic shape is experienced as a shock that interrupts the time of historicism, and since Benjamin understands history as the accumulation of guilt, a release from history-as-progress is redemptive. “Messianic time,” Fenves explains, “is not another time; it is just time— time and nothing but ‘plastic’ time.” Benjamin’s historical method consists in interpreting tensions between historical time (understood as continuity) and plastic time (understood as multidirectionality and as the ability to be shaped). 39 “This tension itself,” Fenves shows, “has a direction: ‘toward the messianic.’” 40 This aim seems as hyperbolic as the grand claims for the dissolution of authorship criticized in the introduction to this book. A different way of knowing the present sometimes seems, for Benjamin, to be revolutionary, but his claims can also be cast in a humbler light. Modesty and radicality are not mutually exclusive terms for Benjamin or for Adorno, who closes *Minima Moralia* with a passage that makes this clear: Knowledge has no light but that shed on the world by redemption: all else is reconstruction, mere technique. Perspectives must be fashioned that displace and estrange the world, reveal it to be, with its rifts and crevices, as indigent and distorted as it will appear one day in the messianic light. To gain such perspectives without velleity or violence, entirely from felt contact with its objects— this alone is the task of thought. 41 Thought only has to create new, estranging perspectives to enter into a relation with messianism. Becoming historical for Adorno simply means realizing that the world has been made by humans and can be changed by them too. Quotation and other forms of repetition create displacing and estranging

perspectives that are messianic and modest at the same time. Eternal Return Benjamin develops his notion of the dialectical image as a critical response to the philosophy of history and especially to Nietzsche and Heidegger. The eternal return often appears as a target in *The Arcades Project*, in Benjamin's texts on Baudelaire (especially "Central Park"), and in the notes related to "On the Concept of History" (the so-called "Theses on the Philosophy of History"). 42 There are many versions of the eternal return in Nietzsche, but Benjamin's interpretations seem to take account only of this parodic version offered by the dwarf who plagues Zarathustra in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*: "All that is straight lies... All truth is crooked, time itself is a circle." Zarathustra protests the dwarf's jingoistic trivialization of his doctrine and offers another "vision" of the eternal return, a gateway inscribed with the word "Moment": From this gateway "Moment" a long eternal lane stretches backward: behind us lies an eternity. Must not whatever can already have passed this way before? Must not whatever can happen, already have happened, been done, passed by before? And if everything has already been here before, what do you think of this moment, dwarf? Must this gateway too not already— have been here? 43 Before something occurs, it is "there" in the gateway. In Zarathustra's vision, it is the gateway, the moment of emergence, that returns. For Gilles Deleuze, the eternal return is "the continual rebeginning of what has been; and ... the instantaneous return to a kind of intense focal point." 44 The "there" is this "intense focal point": it is a beginning that precedes and makes possible the event, and it is a nonactualized remainder that can return as the possibility of another beginning. To better illustrate this vision of the gateway, Zarathustra goes on to tell the story of a shepherd, who is lying "there" where Zarathustra previously envisaged the gate. The shepherd is "writhing, choking, twitching, his face distorted, with a thick black snake hanging from his mouth." Zarathustra tries unsuccessfully to rip the snake out of the shepherd's mouth. Suddenly, Zarathustra says, something "cried out of me: 'Bite down! Bite down! Bite off the head! Bite down!' Thus it cried out of me." This cry, repeated four times, offers a solution run through with repetition. The shepherd, who is writhing like a snake, must free himself by means of a bite, the same act with which the snake has anchored itself in his mouth. The shepherd listens to this advice and severs the snake's head: "Far away he spat the head of the snake— and he leaped to his feet.— No longer shepherd, no longer human— a transformed, illuminated, laughing being! ... I heard a laughter that was no human laughter." 45 The bite is suffocating and deadly when performed by the snake, but it becomes something else when repeated by the shepherd, or by this inhuman or superhuman being that once was the shepherd. 46 The bite is a helpful image for understanding the Nietzschean notion of repetition sketched out in *Difference and Repetition*, where Deleuze argues that there is not, on the one hand, an exact repetition and, on the other hand, an inexact variation. Instead, he claims, "variations express ... the differential mechanisms which belong to the essence and origin of that which is repeated." Repetition always varies and disguises itself; this can be seen in how the snakebite becomes a human bite. Differentiation belongs to repetition itself. "The mask is the true subject of repetition," Deleuze insists. 47 By heeding Zarathustra, the shepherd returns, at the moment of biting, to the "there" that precedes the snakebite and thereby returns to the bite's unrealized potential. What is actualized in this repetition? Nothing more than a break, nothing more than a beginning. A past possibility does not return to be actualized but to effect an interruption. In the eternal return, it is difference that is repeated. In the gateway called "Moment" and in the bite, the new emerges in a severing, differentiating, originating act of repetition. Benjamin and Nietzsche share the desire to overcome the notion of history as an empty continuum that houses progress, and they both think of the moment as an interruption that should be the basis for conceptualizing time. Benjamin intends for a key differentiation to take place between *The Arcades Project* and Nietzsche's eternal return, but perhaps Benjamin's concept of history is a differentiating, liberating repetition of Nietzsche's. 48 And for Benjamin, this small difference is

crucial: it is like the “smallest gap” or “closest cleft” that, Nietzsche claims, differentiates the eternal return from nihilism. 49 Historicity In the notes for *The Arcades Project*, Benjamin saw Heidegger as his primary contemporary target of critique. 50 Historicity in Heidegger has many characteristics in common with the notions of repetition in Nietzsche and Benjamin: it does not repeat the past simply as a past; it does not allow Dasein to realize an unrealized possibility from the past; and it does not contribute to any kind of progress. Historicity is the term for Dasein’s relation to its past as a series of possibilities that it cannot actualize but that it can respond to and expose itself to as it becomes authentic. 51 For Heidegger, “authentic historicity ... understands history as the recurrence of the possible.” 52 Benjamin and Heidegger conceive of history as the return of possibilities and develop concepts of repetition to account for an opening of an authentic time from within an inauthentic, “empty and homogeneous time.” 53

For Benjamin, Heidegger’s historicity is abstract: “Heidegger seeks in vain to rescue history for phenomenology abstractly through ‘historicity.’” And, Benjamin claims, Heidegger’s historicity lacks the dialectical image’s “historical index,” which is concrete and determined for Benjamin: “The historical index of the images not only says that they belong to a particular time; it says, above all, that they attain to legibility only at a particular time.” 54 A historical index that differentiates *The Arcades Project* from *Being and Time* would be the fact that, for Benjamin, the arcades only become legible as they disappear. But Heidegger, too, makes claims about the concrete aspect of his project: he writes of his “violent” Kant interpretation as a “repetition” that returns to the “concrete taking place” of Kant’s “laying of the ground for metaphysics.” 55 This is a false concretion, Benjamin would claim. In *Negative Dialectics*, Adorno expands Benjamin’s critique of Heidegger’s historicity: “historicity [in Heidegger’s sense] brings history to a halt in the unhistorical, heedless of the historical conditions, which undergird the inner composition and constellation of the subject and object.” 56 History is not the way it is because of Being but because of capitalism. For Adorno, Heidegger is unconcerned with how history has shaped and been shaped by subjectivity, and this lack of concern turns his philosophy of history into little more than a symptom of the reification of history, an attempt to dehistoricize history. 57 In his writings on the philosophy of history, Adorno claims that a proper understanding of history has been impeded by the spell of eternal sameness and naturalness cast by the exchange relation. Under this spell, “progress within the whole”— that is, progress that does not affect relations of production— stands in for truly historical progress, which Adorno calls “progress of the whole.” Progress has become the name for limited progress within society as it is, but this progress only “represents the control of nature, both inner, human nature and nature outside man.” 58 Progress in this sense is a synonym for domination, which for Adorno is always the oppression of the nonidentical by the identical. This oppression creates its own opposition: domination “feeds its [the nonidentical’s] resistance,” and it is in this antagonism that Adorno sees the possibility of another kind of progress. Forms of domination find it “impossible to impose that full identity with human beings that is depicted in negative utopias.” There always remains some kind of gap between domination and freedom, and for Adorno, “this explains why progress in the world [progress in the whole], the arch-enemy of that other progress [progress of the whole], nevertheless remains open to the possibility of it, no matter how little it is able to assimilate this possibility into its own law.” This other progress would be progress of the whole because it leaves the whole behind, a whole whose very homogeneity and identity contribute to its own overcoming: “The progress engendered by eternal sameness is that at long last progress can begin, at any moment.” 59 For Adorno, the task of philosophy is to interpret the antagonism of identity and nonidentity, of determination (which would enforce sameness and identity) and freedom (the nonidentical, difference). Interpretation in Adorno does not reveal a meaning of history, but, instead, an antagonism at the heart of history: the nonidentity of identity and

nonidentity. This appears in a struggle “between whatever is held down and the universal domination that is condemned to identity.” 60 Interpretation reveals this conflict and the possibilities for emancipation that are implicit in it. “The deepest promise interpretation makes to the mind,” Adorno writes, “is perhaps the assurance it gives that what exists is not the ultimate reality— or perhaps we should say: what exists is not just what it claims to be... . Interpretation ... means to become conscious of the traces of what points beyond mere existence.” 61 This emphasis on interpretation in Adorno is the closest tie between his philosophy of history and the art historical understanding of appropriation. Appropriation awakens an insatiable hermeneutic desire and reveals an alterity at the heart of every text and image. According to Adorno, the philosophy of history reveals, at the heart of history, a nonidentity. This nonidentity is the antagonism between domination’s identity-creating drive, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the resistance of the nonidentical, which offers the promise of an exit from prehistory. The interpretations of history in Nietzsche and Heidegger share with Benjamin and Adorno an interest in pointing to the moment’s emergence. This moment must be made. Their works are these moments: Nietzsche’s project of evaluation and interpretation; Heidegger’s deconstruction of the history of metaphysics; Benjamin’s interpretation of the nineteenth century in *The Arcades Project*; and Adorno’s interpretative critique of Hegel, Heidegger, and Benjamin. 62 Despite their fundamental differences, these projects aim to return events to the “there” of their emergence, by means of repetition. In the case of *The Arcades Project*, repetition appears in the form of quotation, and Benjamin’s understanding of quotation as the repetition of the possibilities in its source materials will inform the readings in the following chapters. 63

Governmentality and Fiction Like interpretation in Adorno, Foucault’s genealogical history of the present reveals nonidentity in what seems identical to itself. Foucault aims to reveal the historicity of what seems to be natural and, in particular, to resist what he presents in *The History of Sexuality* as the naturalized belief in a biopolitical “‘right’ ... beyond all the oppressions or ‘alienations,’ ... to rediscover what one is and all that one can be.” 64 In his later works, Foucault expands the notion of biopolitics as he develops his concept of “governmentality,” which also requires a biopolitical notion of a hidden essence of the self: “This form of power applies itself to immediate everyday life which categorizes the individual, marks him by his own individuality, attaches him to his own identity, imposes a law of truth on him which he must recognize, and which others have to recognize in him.” 65 Governmentality directs flows and organizes heterogeneity with the aim of allowing the potential of these heterogeneous elements to be best realized: “To govern, in this sense, is to structure the possible field of action of others.” 66 Governmentality manages the population and the market while intervening as little as possible so as to allow them to realize their full potential. 67 Quotational writing, it seems, manages texts— rearranges, represents, reuses them— just as governmentality manages bodies. 68 And just as governmentality encourages subjects to discover their truth in confessional practices, quotational literature might seem to aim to allow its source material to speak the truths that are obscured in its original context. But quotational writing may also resist the governmental management of texts; it may depend on the smallest difference separating it from governmentality’s “attachment to identity.” Coextensive with governmentality are forms of resistance, ways to imagine “an alternate production of subjectivity.” 69 Foucault defines this resistance in a number of ways. He calls it the “will not to be governed thusly,” the will not to become the object of this or that particular form of government. 70 This will also appears in Foucault as “critique,” whose principles Foucault finds in Kant’s “What is Enlightenment?”; and as self-stylization and self-government, which Foucault sees in Baudelaire and in antiquity’s forms of asceticism. Resistance is not self-discovery but self-invention. For Foucault, “To be modern is to take oneself as object of a complex and difficult elaboration.” 71 The modern, critical will not to be governed thus creates a subject with a history: “one has to make one’s own

history, fabricate history, as if through fiction.” 72 It would be possible to investigate a wide range of avant-garde practices as just the kind of fictionalizing that Foucault proposes, beginning with Dada’s attempts to develop a “way of life.” 73 Foucault describes his books as “fictions,” and this makes sense in the context of his critique of identity as the object of self-discovery. Genealogy doesn’t reveal a historicity; it creates it. For Foucault, genealogy is a creative act that requires an expanded notion of authorship. In “What Is an Author?,” Foucault argues that the conventional notion of authorship— the creativity, originality, and freedom often ascribed to it— is a restricted and restricting multiplicity: it “impedes the free circulation, the free manipulation, the free composition, decomposition, and recomposition of fiction.” 74 The identification of the author as a figure isolates and restricts its forces. Although Foucault writes that it would be “pure romanticism ... to imagine a culture in which the fictive would operate in an absolutely free state,” it is possible to imagine a society in which there would be no author function but, instead, another “system of constraint ... that will have to be determined or, perhaps, experienced and experimented.” 75 Quotational writing may be just such a system of constraint, one that is analogous to governmentality’s minimalist intervention in the flows of capital, bodies, and knowledge. But governmentality requires something that quotational writing does not: it limits the circulation of bodies by producing identities based on a subject’s hidden truths. Instead of thinking euphorically or melancholically of authorship as dead or superseded, it would be more useful to adopt Foucault’s own model of the simultaneity of paradigms. 76 Quotational literature coexists with conventional forms of authorship, displacing and transforming them, but maintaining synecdochal and metonymic ties to them. Just as sovereignty survives the advent of governmentality, authorship remains relatively intact in an age that has begun to experiment with other ways of understanding what Foucault calls “fiction.” And just as Foucault finds the origins of governmentality in the Christian pastorate, the origins of this new form of fictionalizing— which is most prominent in the avant-gardes of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries but explicitly presaged by Baudelaire and Lautréamont— may be found in ancient forms of writing such as the commonplace book. Commonplaces A commonplace book contains quotations excerpted from its owner’s reading, arranged under carefully organized headings, and meant to be used as a resource for oratory and writing. Although the commonplace book is usually thought of as an early modern invention, there has been a continuous history of collecting quotations since ancient Greece. 77 In his writings and lectures on Greek and Roman ascetic practices, Foucault mentions the practice of collecting *hupomnēmata*, notes and quotations copied while reading. He emphasizes that, as in the early modern practice of assembling commonplace books, “the effect expected from reading ... is not to have understood what an author meant,” but, instead, to create “a set of true propositions for yourself” that allow for the “building of a solid framework of propositions that are valid as prescriptions, of true discourses that are at the same time principles of behavior.” 78 Commonplace writers do not make texts their own, but make themselves into the kind of subject proposed by the copied texts. 79 Copying is an embodied and embodying practice in which the writing subject is constituted in a process that, according to Foucault reader Béatrice Han, cannot be characterized as either active or passive: copying “gives the theme of constitution a passive dimension that prevents subjectivation from being understood solely as an active recognition, and therefore opens it to the unmasterable ‘outside’ constituted by the power relations in which the individual always finds himself already enmeshed.” 80 Foucault’s interest in the commonplace book and in ancient ascetic practices belongs to his investigation of the difference between the ancient “care of the self and the [modern] knowledge of the self.” 81 A subject caring for itself, in Foucault’s sense, is a subject creating itself, and not a subject discovering itself. In his reading of ancient philosophy, the self has no secret to discover. There is no hidden intentional center for collectors of commonplaces, who are more interested in the

creation of texts and themselves than in the intentions of their sources. In “The Lives of Infamous Men,” Foucault uses Oulipo-like terms to describe his project of publishing a book and also an entire series of books that would contain quotations from archival documents written between 1660 and 1760; it would be a “rule- and game-based book” (un livre de convention et de jeu).⁸² The project envisioned in “The Lives of Infamous Men” was never realized, but Foucault did complete a number of other quotational works: the letters collected in *Le désordre des familles: Lettres de cachet des Archives de la Bastille au XVIIIe siècle* (co-edited with historian Arlette Farge) and the longer texts, “presented by” Foucault with a minimum of commentary, made up by the documents related to Pierre Rivière’s crimes and to Hercule Barbin. In these books, Foucault claims to limit himself to what one critic describes as an “organizing presence.”⁸³ In his foreword to *I, Pierre Rivière*, Foucault writes that such documents “give us a key to the relations of power, domination, and conflict within which discourses emerge and function, and hence provide material for a potential analysis of discourse.”⁸⁴ They return to the moments of conflict in which modern medical, legal, psychological, and criminological power formed, and Foucault claims that this should enable the reader to imagine the conflicts having turned out otherwise.⁸⁵ New Questions Quotational writers manage and administer texts and documents with the aim of liberating themselves from the histories that find their origin there. They use governmentality’s methods to exercise their “will not to be governed,” even if they often seem to manage texts to reveal their hidden truths. Their works raise questions that Foucault poses at the end of “What Is an Author?”: “What are the modes of existence of this discourse? Where has it been used, how can it circulate and who can appropriate it for himself? What are the places in it where there is room for possible subjects? Who can assume these various subject functions?”⁸⁶ These questions coexist with the questions asked of and by more conventionally authored texts. In a preface to a book about Guy Debord, T. J. Clark asks a series of questions that point to the kind of experimentation with authorship proposed by Foucault: Why is it so difficult to think (and demand and construct) “representation” as plural rather than singular and centralized: representations as so many fields or terrains of activity, subject to leakage and interference between modes and technologies, and constantly crossed and dispersed by other kinds of activity altogether: subject, as a result, to retrieval and cancellation— to continual reversals of direction between object and image, and image and receiver? Why should a regime of representation not be built on the principle that images are, or ought to be, transformable (as opposed to exchangeable)— meaning disposable through and through, and yet utterly material and contingent; shareable, imaginable, coming up constantly in their negativity, their non-identity, and for that reason promoted and dismantled at will?⁸⁷ Clark sees Debord as opening up a field of experimentation that is similar to that called for by Foucault at the end of “What Is an Author?,” a field that would supplement the thriftiness of authorship with the transformations that *détournement* makes possible.⁸⁸ The literary “will not to be governed” would allow images and texts to speak truth, but not truth considered as adequation or even revelation. Clark seems more Foucauldian than Debordian here; his questions go beyond the Situationists by displacing that movement’s understanding of *détournement* as the return to a kernel of truth and as the overcoming of alienation. For Foucault and in Clark’s version of *détournement*, the truth of quotational texts would not be a fact, message, or unalienated human essence but a transformability, a potential for being used as elements in the creation of a way of life or a Baudelairean self. Quotation points to the nonidentity that allows for transformation. This is the aspect of quotation that Antoine Compagnon emphasizes when he relates the French verb *citer* (“to cite”) to the Latin *citare* (“to set in motion”) and writes that “the essence of quotation is ... a *dunamis*, a power.” The interpretation of quotation must engage with its force and aim not to “neutralize it.”⁸⁹ Quotational texts require a kind of commentary that takes account not only of what is repeated

but also of how the return to a destabilizing, Zarathustrian bite occurs. Readers of quotational texts must adopt something like Breton's method in *Communicating Vessels*, in which he writes of looking for "promises." 90 It is just such a promise that Adorno finds in surrealism: the "claim to happiness" that emanates from surrealism and that may have been the impetus for Benjamin's adoption of quotation as his method for "fanning the spark of hope in the past."

Greaney, Patrick (2014-03-01). *Quotational Practices: Repeating the Future in Contemporary Art* (Kindle Locations 510-511). University of Minnesota Press. Kindle Edition.