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## PRIVATE REASON(S) AND PUBLIC SPHERES: SEXUALITY AND ENLIGHTENMENT IN KANT

*Thomas Paul Bonfiglio*

Pivoting on the essay on enlightenment as a central text and referring to other thematically relevant writings by Kant, this study qualifies the view that the Kantian concepts of enlightenment and the public sphere are represented solely in a neutral,<sup>1</sup> disinterested manner as open and democratic forums for all men and women.<sup>2</sup> By recovering unconscious inscriptions of gender, sexuality, and class in contradistinction to the dominant “democratic” reception of Kant, this essay shows how infrastructural sexual dynamics co-articulate the surface discourses of enlightenment, the public and private spheres, and the beautiful and the sublime. As non-cognitive structures, these discourses inscribe corporophobia, orality, and paranoia, as well as a particular interplay between the heterosocial and the homosocial. While not minimizing Kant’s contribution to a liberal, critical democracy, one can show that Kant’s writings and their receptions are also unwitting missionaries of some complex counter-enlightenment tendencies.

First, it is important to note that Kant’s essay on enlightenment is framed not as a question, but as an answer. Many English editions<sup>3</sup> overlook the complete title, which is “Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung?”<sup>4</sup> *Beantwortung* is a perfective substantivization of the verb *antworten* (to answer) and indicates a completed process. In spite of Nisbet’s<sup>5</sup> appropriate translation “Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?”, the essay is conventionally referred to only as “What is Enlightenment?”<sup>6</sup> which is solely interrogative, gives an impression of indeterminacy and openness, and lacks the categoricity and finality of the complete German title. This omission has led Foucault<sup>7</sup> and McCarthy<sup>8</sup> to read the essay as an instance of difference instead of an axiomatic definition that attempts to preempt alterity and operate *a priori* from a position of closure.

The answer to the question is: *Aufklärung ist der Ausgang des Menschen aus seiner selbstverschuldeten Unmündigkeit* [Enlightenment is the escape from self-imposed immaturity] (8:35). The ostensible argument in Kant’s essay is that humans are afraid to use their own faculties [der

Verstand] (8:35) and to think for themselves. They are responsible for their own prolonged state of immaturity, which is maintained by their own lack of courage. Thus Kant exhorts his readers to dare to think independently and challenge accepted norms. Although the text initially defines enlightenment, it becomes immediately preoccupied with a prolonged and vigorous critique of unenlightenment, describing it as a self-imposed condition of debt and guilt, which is visible in the compound *selbstverschuldet*.<sup>9</sup> Unenlightenment is signed as a state of punitive internment, a sort of debtor's prison for those who lack intellectually independent means, a locus that serves as a nodal point, a common denominator for some very interesting unwanted elements. Unenlightenment is a state of *Faulheit* [laziness/rottenness] and *Feigheit* [cowardice] (8:35), a place for lazy cowards that contains organic echoes. Also, "das ganze schöne Geschlecht" [the entire beautiful sex] (8:35) is afraid of becoming enlightened. This reference recalls Kant's writings on the beautiful and the sublime and is immediately followed by a description of the unenlightened as *Hausvieh* [domestic cattle] who are confined in a *Gängelwagen* [cattle cart] (8:35) and compared to preambulatory children. The restrictiveness of this condition is indicated by metaphors of terrestrial gravity, foot-shackles, and yokes. Thus the cowardly, feminine, beautiful, organic, zoological, immature, and infantile are conflated and condensed into the prison house of unenlightenment; the escape [Ausgang] is attained by a *Sprung* [leap] of *freier Bewegung* [free motion] (8:35). Man is to spring himself from his own detainment in undesirable elements, independently, into free space. The text is quite ambiguous about the appropriateness of a transition to enlightenment for these undesirable elements; they constitute a separate class and cohere about a nuclear conflation of the organic and the feminine, which are represented as contaminants.

### The Evolution of (Un)enlightenment

Kant credits Frederick the Great with an unprecedented propagation of enlightenment (8:41). He can say "was ein Freistaat nicht wagen darf: räsoniert, so viel ihr wollt und worüber ihr wollt, nur gehorcht!" [what no democratic state would dare say: argue as much as you want and about whatever you want, just obey!] (8:41). This invocation of absolutism indicates a desire to control the masses, expressed in the paradox that less freedom means more freedom:

Ein großer Grad bürgerlicher Freiheit scheint der Freiheit des Geistes des Volks vorteilhaft und setzt ihr doch unübersteigliche Schranken; ein Grad weniger von jener verschafft hingegen diesem Raum, sich nach allem seinen Vermögen auszubreiten. [A generous degree of civil freedom appears to be advantageous to the intellectual freedom of the people; it creates, however, insurmountable obsta-

cles; a little less freedom, however, actually provides the space to expand to one's fullest potential.] (8:41)

This statement is apparently benevolent and democratic. It is, however, a gentle gambit in the creation of a superior space for the philosopher and in the restriction of certain segments of the population from intellectual autonomy.<sup>10</sup> The paradox is continued so that the restriction appears to be a form of nurturing, which is configured as an organic analogy based upon the metaphor of *Hülle und Keim*: "Wenn die Natur unter dieser harten Hülle den Keim, für den sie am zärtlichsten sorgt, nämlich den Hang und Beruf zum freien Denken, ausgewickelt hat; so wirkt dieser allmählich zurück auf die Sinnesart des Volks" [When nature has, under this hard hull, developed the germ for which she most tenderly cares, namely the need and profession of free thought, this will have an effect, in turn, on the sensibility of the people] (8:41). *Hülle* [hull] may also be used with *Samen* [seed] or *Kern* [kernel], which would indicate the potentiality, but not the actuality, of growth. While also containing, in the eighteenth century, the above meanings, *Keim* had, and still has, primarily the meanings of *germ* and *sprout* (as in *bean sprout*),<sup>11</sup> signifying that which is actively germinating and breaking out of its own (private) sphere. While ostensibly protecting the development of the germ, legislation checks the spread of contaminating unenlightenment and isolates it from the public sphere. Although an organic analogy is used here to rationalize social stratification, Kant's own realm of reason and enlightenment is not subject to natural organic law, nor can it even have any cognition thereof. The course of enlightenment for the unenlightened, however, is supposed to proceed by natural process. It is important here to note that the relationship between the subject and the contaminating is never one of simple rejection. Stallybrass and White have noted that: "disgust always bears the imprint of desire. These low domains, apparently expelled as 'Other,' return as the object of nostalgia, longing, and fascination."<sup>12</sup> "What starts as a simple repulsion or rejection of symbolic matter foreign to the self inaugurates a process of introjection and negation which is always complex in its effects."<sup>13</sup>

For Kant, these low domains contain nature and woman<sup>14</sup> and the masses, which are conflated in complex loci of interplay of cathexes and counterathexes. One such major locus is evolutionary theory, which serves as a nodal point, a vortex of engulfment that is replicated in numerous displacements throughout Kant's corpus. In his *Recensionen von I.G. Herders Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit* [Review of Herder's Ideas for a Philosophy of the History of Mankind] (8:43-66), Kant engages Herder's organicist philosophy and reveals himself

as an antievolutionist.<sup>15</sup> The following passage is a periphrastic critique of Herder's notion of the common origin of all life forms:

Nur eine Verwandtschaft unter ihnen, da entweder eine Gattung aus der anderen und alle aus einer einzigen Originalgattung oder etwa aus einem einzigen erzeugenden Mutterschooße entsprungen wären, würde auf Ideen führen, die so ungeheuer sind, daß die Vernunft vor ihnen zurückbebt. [One sole underlying relationship, that either one species should have emerged from another and all from a single proto-species or supposedly from a single reproductive mother's lap, would lead to ideas that are so monstrous, that reason would tremble back from them.] (8:54)

In this passage, evolution is informed by a root gynophobia that is transcoded into images of a monstrous womb and situated in binary opposition to reason, the privileged, but threatened, entity on the axis. The topology of the image narrates from references to species downward to the node of the womb and then recoils in the image of reason. Fear and trembling are later repeated in an apology for "noch eine eben nicht unmännliche Furcht, nämlich von allem zurückzubeben, was die Vernunft von ihren ersten Grundsätzen abspannt und ihr es erlaubt macht, in grenzlosen Einbildungen herumzuschweifen" [a not altogether unmanly fear that makes me tremble back from anything that unhitches reason from its first principles and lets it wander about in borderless imaginings] (8:180).

Invoking masculinity is here preemptive and implies suspicion in the (male) reader, a form of paranoid projection that only mirrors the narrator's autointerrogation. The opposition of reason and womb also informs *Muthmaßlicher Anfang der Menschengeschichte* [*Conjectural Beginning of Human History*] (8:107-124), which describes the ultimate step in the development of reason as "die Entlassung desselben aus dem Mutterschooße der Natur" [its release from the mother's lap of nature] (8:114). Privileging autonomy and isolation, these texts abhor both maternal connection and interconnection with other species and are thus vertically and horizontally antifamilial.

Kant's resistance to evolutionary theory is visible again in *Über den Gebrauch teleologischer Prinzipien in der Philosophie* [*On the Use of Teleological Principles in Philosophy*] (8:157-84), in which he critiques Forster's essay *Noch etwas über die Menschenrassen* [*More on the Human Races*].<sup>16</sup> Kant speculates that "eine philosophische Jury von bloßen Naturforschern" [a philosophical jury just of natural scientists] (8:179) would disapprove of the following "passage" from Forster, which is presented as a quotation:

"Die kreißende Erde (S. 80), welche Thiere und Pflanzen ohne Zeugung von ihres gleichen aus ihrem weichen, vom Meeresschlamme befruchteten Mutterschooße entspringen ließ, die darauf gegründete Lokalzeugungen organischer Gattungen, da Afrika seine Menschen (die Neger), Asien die seinige (alle übrige) hervorbrachte (S. 158), die davon abgeleitete Verwandtschaft Aller in einer unmerk-

lichen Abstufung vom Menschen zum Wallfische (S. 77) und so weiter hinab (vermuthlich bis zu Moosen und Flechten, nicht blos im Vergleichungssystem, sondern im Erzeugungssystem aus gemeinschaftlichem Stamme) gehenden Naturkette organischer Wesen." ["The earth in labor pains, letting plants and animals, without generation from the like, spring forth from her soft mother's lap fertilized by the sea slime, the local generation of organic species based on this, since Africa produced its humans (Negroes) Asia its own (all the rest), the deduced relationship of everything in unnoticeable gradations in a natural chain of organic life going from humans to whales and so on down (presumably to mosses and lichens, not just comparatively, but also in generation from a common stem)"] (8:179-80).

It is evident from the parenthetical page references that Kant is patching together a statement by Forster. While Lovejoy<sup>17</sup> has already documented Kant's misrepresentation of Forster, pointing out that Kant even confused his own statements about Herder with Forster's ideas, it is beneficial here to examine more closely how Kant constructed this misrepresentation. Kant seems to be accusing Forster of believing that all organic life (including humans) is interrelated and derived from simple cellular organisms, and that this process began in a parthenogenetic, spontaneous, and uncontrolled manner.

Forster's real text actually criticizes notions of the common origins of species:

Allein in diesem Sinne dürfte die Naturgeschichte wohl nur eine Wissenschaft für Götter und nicht für Menschen seyn. Wer ist vermögend den Stammbaum auch nur einer einzigen Varietät bis zu ihrer Gattung hinauf darzulegen, wenn sie nicht etwa erst unter unsern Augen aus einer andern entstand? Wer hat die kreißende Erde betrachtet in jenem entfernten und ganz in Unbegreiflichkeit verschleyerten Zeitpunkt, da Thiere und Pflanzen ihrem Schooße in vieler Myriaden Mannigfaltigkeit entsproßen, ohne Zeugung von ihres Gleichen, ohne Samengehäuse, ohne Gebärmutter? Wer hat die Zahl ihrer ursprünglichen Gattungen, ihrer Autochtonen, gezählt? Wer kann uns berichten, wie viele Einzelne von jeder Gestalt, in ganz verschiedenen Weltgegenden sich aus der gebärenden Mutter weichem, vom Meere befruchteten Schlamm organisierten? [In this sense natural history would have to be a science only for gods, not for humans. Who is capable of laying out a tree diagram of even one single variety back to its species, if it did not emerge from another one right under our eyes? Who has seen the earth in labor pains at that far off point in time covered in incomprehensibility, when animals and plants sprouted from her lap in myriad diversity, without generation from the like, without seeds, without wombs? Who has counted the number of her original species, of her autochthons? Who can tell us how many single species organized themselves in totally different areas of the world out of the birthing mother's soft earth fertilized by the sea?]<sup>18</sup>

One readily sees that Forster is actually quite skeptical about totalizing and reductionistic evolutionary theories. Kant's misreading suppresses Forster's irony and transforms his skepticism in to an advocacy of that which Forster actually critiques.

This is also the case in the references to whales, appropriated from another textual place, in which Forster is not expressing his own theories but is actually distancing himself instead from Camper's ideas on comparative morphology: "Camper, der als Physiolog, und von so vielen andern Seiten groß und liebenswürdig ist, zeigte mir in einem seiner Briefe, an einem Theile des Körpers, den Füßen, wie sorgfältig die Analogie der Bildung durch alle Säugetiere hindurch bis auf die Wallfische beobachtet ist" [Camper, who, as a physiologist, and in so many other ways is really great and nice, showed me, in one of his letters, and based on one part of the body, the feet, how carefully the analogy of formation is seen through all mammals right up to the whales].<sup>19</sup> Forster is actually being benignly patronizing to Camper and does not readily accept, as Kant would have us believe, that the morphological similarity between humans and whales is due to some form of shared phylogeny.

In the case of interrelationships among various manifestations of *homo*, Forster says: "Ob nun aber der Neger und der Weisse, als *Gattungen* (species) oder nur als *Varietäten* von einander verschieden sind, ist eine schwere, vielleicht unauflöbliche Aufgabe. Mit dem Schwerdt drein zu schlagen, überläßt der kaltblütige Forscher denen, die nicht anders lösen können, und doch alles lösen wollen" [Whether the Negro and the White are different from one another as species or as varieties, is a difficult, perhaps insoluble task. The cold-blooded researcher leaves whacking away at it with a sword to those who cannot solve things any other way but still want to solve everything].<sup>20</sup> Here, Forster is quite dubious of generalizations even about types of humans. In Forster, Kant is actually confronted with a standpoint on common evolution that is not very different from his own, i.e. that these hypotheses exceed the limits of science and the conventions of verifiability. Imagining a ubiquity of threat, Kant's resistance to evolution resembles a paranoid delusion that inverts agreement into disagreement and renarrates accord into opposition. Here, Kant's use of quotation marks does not report, but rather impersonates other voices to the point of caricature.

Kant's reconstruction of Forster conflates femininity and nature to Baconian proportions. The antinatal passage thinly transcodes the woman wailing in labor into an abhorrence of natural evolution, depicts the womb as structurally weak, and represents conception as contamination, as it is *Schlamm* [slime/mud] that is the inseminator. The male progenitor is absent; the process is parthenogenetic, independent of men, defective. The feminine is promiscuous and indiscriminate, letting things spring forth from any sort of self-insemination.

Kant chooses the trope *Mutterschoß* [mother's lap]—Forster does not—for womb instead of the less allusive and more common *Gebärmutter* [womb], which is used by Forster along with its figurative variant “der gebärenden Mutter” [the birthing mother]. The repetitive substitution of the figure *Mutterschoß* should arouse the suspicions of most audient readers of Kant. It acts as a condensation annexing the semantic fields of maternity, maternality, intimacy, security, and domestic education and serves as a sliding signifier along the metonymic chain of feminine substitutions, aided by the alliterative and metric connections between *Mutterschoße* and *Meeresschlamm* [sea slime] and by their close textual proximity as well. Both are trochaic dimeters, rhyme in the last unstressed syllable, and alliterate initially and medially. This structural repetition connects *Mutter* [mother] with *Meer* [sea] and *Schoß* [lap] with *Schlamm* [slime], facilitated by the internal alveolo-palatal fricative [sch], which acts as a sonic correlate for the meanings of soft, mushy, and undefined. The passage also repeats resistance to interconnectedness. It is interesting to note the different vocal tones that frame the feminine allusions: those of Kant seem dismissive, those of Forster benignly inquisitive.

#### Unenlightenment and Orality

Corporophobia privileges the visual sense above the others: hence the visual metaphors in the English *enlightenment*, the French *lumières*, as well as in the German *Aufklärung*, literally a *clearing up*. In Kant's *Anthropologie in pragmatischer Hinsicht* [*Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*] (7:117-334), sight is the noblest of the senses because it is most removed from touch, the most restricted of perceptions (7:156), and approaches the status of a pure observation. Smell is the most imposing sense, disturbs at a great distance, and opposes personal freedom (“der Freiheit zuwider”) (7:158). Interestingly, Kant presents smell, the most unsublimated and immediate sense, in opposition to freedom. Smell and taste, the second most objectionable sense, are placed in the category of the more subjective senses, offering little epistemological or empirical objective worth (7:154).

Kant locates the two deprivileged “subjective” senses in the olfactory/oral complex, which regulates ingestion. His taxonomy of the senses privileges the ocular and deprivileges the oral and, by association, the oral stage, which signifies the primary and most dependent phase, the first instance of alterity, and the necessity of individuation. Identified with maternal dependency, this stage represents, from a certain masculinist perspective, the most threatening instance of regression. The attainment of (male) enlightenment is configured in greatest opposition to oral dependency.

*Aufklärung ist der Ausgang des Menschen aus seiner selbstverschuldeten Unmündigkeit* [Enlightenment is the escape from self-imposed immaturity]. The binary structure is clear: enlightenment is the escape from the term *Unmündigkeit* [immaturity], a substantivization of the adjective *unmündig* [immature], which designates a minor. Although etymologically distinct, the word alliterates with *der Mund* [mouth] and resonates of an inability to speak.<sup>21</sup> The enlightenment essay directly represents the state of unenlightenment nineteen times by lexical choices that play negatively on the term *Mund*. The oral thus stands in opposition to the enlightened subject, not only in the terms *unmündig/Unmündigkeit*, but also in the term *Vormünder* [guardians], those who speak for and before the unenlightened, and upon whom one is (orally) dependent for the articulation of thought.<sup>22</sup> Anathema to male autonomy, unenlightenment is a state of inarticulateness, insufficiency, and dependency upon authority, characteristics interconnected via the condensation *Mund*, a repetitive metonym of hostility toward oral and maternal dependency that also carries antifamilial traces in the negative usage of *minor* and *guardian*.

In the same essay, the description of unenlightenment via oral metaphors frames the discussion of the public sphere, which privileges the unbound male scholar and omits references to the oral; they cease as the discussion begins and reappear as the discussion ends. The last oral reference before the discussion of the public sphere and the first oral reference thereafter act as parallel bookends that discuss the paradoxical situation that the *Vormünder* [guardians] should themselves remain *unmündig* [immature].<sup>23</sup> Interestingly, the prefatory reference also presents an image of jettisoning the yoke of *Unmündigkeit* (“das Joch der Unmündigkeit selbst abgeworfen”) (8:36) imposed by the *Vormünder*, while simultaneously warning—against revolution—that a people can only attain enlightenment gradually. It is as if the philosopher unbound jettisons both the yoke of *Unmündigkeit* and the yoke of the masses and then moves freely in the public sphere, which is not an oral but a literary sphere. Kant says that the public use of reason is performed by a “Gelehrter . . . vor dem ganzen Publikum der Leserwelt” [scholar before the entire public of the literate world] (8:37). This is not the public, but the published use of reason.<sup>24</sup>

### The Feminine Beautiful and the Masculine Sublime

In saying that women are unenlightened, Kant refers to them as *das ganze schöne Geschlecht* [the entire beautiful sex] (8:35), the same phrase that begins the third section of the *Beobachtungen über das Gefühl des Schönen und Erhabenen* [Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and the Sublime] (2:205-56), which bifurcates beauty and sublimity along

the lines of femininity and masculinity respectively.<sup>25</sup> Characterizing this early work as “precritical” and skipping to the aesthetic discussions in the *Kritik der Urteilskraft* [*Critique of Judgment*] (5:165-486) are common gambits in the canonization of Kant, blotting the continuity of gendered discourse in Kant’s opus.

A recent instance of blindness and gendering can be found in Paul de Man’s<sup>26</sup> treatment of Kant’s discussion of the sublime, which focuses exclusively on the *Critique of Judgment*. De Man’s perspective is clearly poststructural and language-oriented, and he leaves unread the inscriptions of masculinity in Kant’s aesthetics. He makes only one glib reference to the *Observations* and says that Kant’s inclusion of gender in aesthetic concepts makes for “difficult reading.”<sup>27</sup> Indeed, the entire problem lies in reading *an sich*: “The bottom line in Kant as well as in Hegel, is the prosaic materiality of the letter and no degree of obfuscation or ideology can transform this materiality into phenomenal cognition of aesthetic judgement.”<sup>28</sup> De Man also asserts “how decisively determining the play of the letter and of the syllable, the way of saying . . . as opposed to what is being said . . . is in this most un-conspicuous of stylists.”<sup>29</sup> De Man does indeed aptly reveal the linguistic inability of the text to represent the noumenality of the sublime. The victor in this struggle is the medium of language, which writes itself as much as it is written. De Man’s reading suppresses the possibility that the representation of the sublime in Kant is not only thwarted by the resistant materiality of language alone, but also by other suppressed agendas that are competing for representation. In a sensitive reading, the lexical field is interrupted by these other resonances. The problem is not only linguistically unrepresentable mystification alone, but also an ideology of gender that interferes with the course of the narrative.

A good example of this can be found in the following passage from the *Critique of Judgment* that de Man examines: “If we are to call the sight of the ocean sublime, we must not think of it as we ordinarily do, as implying all kinds of knowledge . . . as a vast kingdom of aquatic creatures . . . all these produce merely teleological judgments. To find the ocean nevertheless sublime we must regard it as the poets do, merely by what the eye reveals [*was der Augenschein zeigt*]. If it is at rest, as a clear mirror of water only bounded by the heavens; if it is stormy, as an abyss threatening to overwhelm everything.”<sup>30</sup> The emotionally threatened description of the ocean seems to be a contradiction here. It is, by definition, supposed to be sublime and, therefore, transcendental and non-experiential. How is the reader to reconcile disinterested visual perception with an overwhelming fear of engulfment? Is the eruptive presence of the fear of engulfment to be understood as a mere spasm of language? Or of a vocal spasm indicating that

other, perhaps phobic voices are trying to speak here as well?<sup>31</sup> Following these voices leads one to a locus of fear that conflates nature and woman. It also leads one to see how Kant's discourse of the aesthetic encodes the containment, regulation, and public restriction of the feminine (body).<sup>32</sup>

The third section of the *Observations* concerns the nature of the sublime and the beautiful in heterosexual interaction. It is framed as a tract on gender equality that laudably discourages authoritarianism (2:242) and advocates behavioral androgyny (2:228). It also, however, and somewhat paradoxically, asserts that man and woman are not of one kind ("nicht von einerlei Art") (2:228) but are two separate species of human ("zwei Menschengattungen") (2:228). The anatomy of difference in the body of the text distributes conjugal energies accordingly. (Feminine) beauty displays *Leichtigkeit* [ease] and the absence of *peinliche Bemühung* [uncomfortable effort]. Women have "nichts von sollen, nichts von müssen, nichts von Schuldigkeit" [nothing of ought, nothing of must, nothing of guilt] (2:231). They lack self-control, decisiveness, and a militaristic notion of duty. The masculine sublime, striving and overcoming obstacles, elicits *Bewunderung* [wonder/admiration]. This sublime consists in a continual repression and sublimation of the sensual. It is distanced from the sensual complex and rests in a superordinate position of control, standardizing the sensual manifold as if a commodity of exchange. Kant holds that "die schöne Gestalt . . . von allen Männern ziemlich gleichförmig beurtheilt werde" [the beautiful form is judged rather uniformly by all men] (2:237). These are general principles of the perception of beauty, a notion of *de gustibus non disputandum est*, not because one cannot ultimately decide on taste, but because a uniformity of opinion makes discussion unnecessary. Commodification is displayed in the example of Circassian and Georgian girls, who are uniformly held to be beautiful, especially by Turks, Arabs, and Persians, "weil sie sehr begierig sind, ihre Völkerschaft durch so feines Blut zu verschönern" [because they are so desirous of beautifying their stock by such fine blood] (2:237). This corporealizes and commodifies the feminine as a means of breeding. Hindustani merchants engage in the trade of these women<sup>33</sup> and procure them for wealthy men in their native country (2:237-38). This discourse of the sublime, anticipating the specter of the spontaneously generating mother in the *Anthropology*, transcodes the phobic into a structure of nonlocal abstract perceptions and configures the feminine as a general(izable) commodity that ought not possess a deregulated ontology and thus access to a form of spontaneous action or generation. In addition, the separation of woman as another species of human more boldly underscores the aforementioned fear of connection with other species.

When this discourse leaves the standardized realm of beauty and crosses over into perceptions of morality in the feminine visage, it then becomes relative: “So ist der Geschmack bei verschiedensten Mannspersonen jederzeit sehr verschieden” [Here, taste is always very different for the most diverse of manly persons] (2:237). Thus the feminine becomes de-moralized, and questions of morality an object of diverse male perception and public debate. Unlike beauty, morality is not intrinsic to the feminine: it occurs in the forum of male opinion and cognition and is thus safe for deregulation in the public sphere. (Feminine) morality is an instance of doubt, skepticism, and distanced non-threatening debate. (Feminine) beauty is an instance of threat that is to be regulated, standardized, and restricted from free permutation.

#### Paranoia and the Public Sphere

The section of the *Anthropology* entitled “Der Charakter des Geschlechts” [The Character of the Sexes] (7:303-11), often cited in feminist critiques of Kant, has yet to be read for its examples of mechanisms of displacement and denial and for its protracted discussion of jealousy and flirtation within its patriarchal project. A reading oriented toward these phenomena can offer insight into concepts central to the discussion of enlightenment.

Kant begins the essay with the surprising view that feminine, more than masculine, behavior is the proper object of anthropological study for the philosopher. Jauch<sup>34</sup> admirably delineates the ideology of this utterance: because of his physical superiority in the state of nature, man already possesses an articulated self. Woman, however, needs to develop an articulated self and is to do so via the media of art and culture. Thus Kant’s statements about woman are descriptive and didactic and intend an egalitarian feminine individuation. Jauch does not observe that this is, however, a tutorial individuation, a form of planned rather than independent enlightenment that paradoxically configures the individuating woman in a state of *Unmündigkeit*. Thus there are vestiges of authority in this prescribed separate but equal state.

The text configures sexuality as binary, involving reciprocal domination and subjugation (“ein Theil mußte dem anderen unterworfen und wechselseitig einer dem andern irgendwohin überlegen sein”) (7:303). Woman’s natural function is to master the man’s drive (“sich der Neigung des Mannes zu ihr zu bemeistern”) (7:303), and feminine weaknesses are among the few tools that woman has to guide masculinity and use it to her advantage (“die Männlichkeit zu lenken und sie zu jener ihrer Absicht zu gebrauchen”) (7:303). Her only theater of action is the home, where she holds a “Regiment” (7:304) and wages domestic war with her tongue (“den Hauskrieg mit der Zunge”)

(7:304). This apology for female aggression serves to vindicate male authority. He has “das Recht des Stärkeren” [the right of the stronger one] (7:304) and the right to use his strength, because woman can render him disarmed (“entwaffnet”) and defenseless (“wehrlos”). Thus, in preemptive defense, he assumes the authoritative position. Otherwise, she will pursue her self-interested goal of dominating the entire species (“die Eroberung des ganzen Geschlechts”) (7:305).

It is precisely this representation of woman, however, that amplifies some muted counter-democratic voices. Oppressive urges, generated by the indeterminacies of sexuality and repressed by the censorship of a democratic morality, are transformed into euphemized justifications of hierarchical order: “Wer soll dann den oberen Befehl im Hause haben? . . . Die Frau soll herrschen und der Mann regieren; denn die Neigung herrscht, und der Verstand regiert” [Who should have the high command at home? . . . The woman should rule and the man should govern; for bias rules, and intelligence governs] (7:304). This invokes egalitarian rhetoric, but it also simultaneously validates male dominance. The transformation displaces the problem into political discourse and then obscures the element of servitude by foregrounding the image of egalitarianism. The inversion allows the primitive dynamic to slip in undercover, detected subliminally but not superficially.

A similar occasion of communication via displacement and denial is found in a gratuitous anecdote that is ostensibly intended to illustrate the function of jealousy. The anecdote appears as a footnote and requires closer scrutiny:

Die alte Sage von den Russen: daß die Weiber ihre Ehemänner im Verdacht hielten, es mit anderen Weibern zu halten, wenn sie nicht dann und wann von diesen Schläge bekommen, wird gewöhnlich für Fabel gehalten. Allein in Cooks Reisen findet man: daß, als ein englischer Matrose einen Indier auf Otaheite sein Weib mit Schlägen züchtigen sah, jener den Gallanten machen wollte und mit Drohungen auf diesen losging. Das Weib kehrte sich auf der Stelle wider den Engländer, fragte, was ihm das angehe: der Mann müsse das thun! [The old tale about the Russians: that they suspect their husbands of fooling around unless they get hit by them every now and then, is usually held to be a myth. But in Cook's travels one finds: that, when an English sailor saw an Indian in Tahiti disciplining his wife with blows, he wanted to play the gallant gentleman and went after him with threats. The wife turned on the spot against the Englishman and asked him what business it was of his: this is what husbands are supposed to do!] (7:304)

Marginalized as a footnote, distanced from the center of discourse, and transformed into a joke, this multi-layered passage effects, on an unconscious level, an affirmative representation of spousal abuse. In *Wit and its Relation to the Unconscious*,<sup>35</sup> Freud demonstrated the triadic technique of jokes that involves a narrator, an audience, and an outsider. Narrator and audience share a hostile attitude toward the outsider that is subject to mechanisms of repression,

ensorship, and guilt. The pleasure of the joke is gained through the lifting of censorship by the techniques of displacement and condensation.

This joke dialogues between the narrator and a projected male German audience whose shared unconscious hostility toward the feminine is checked by socio-political codes of gentlemanliness and egalitarianism. The repression involved evokes primitive violent reactive mechanisms that must be sufficiently transformed so as to evade censorship, and it is the unnoticed evasion that catalyzes the pleasurable reaction. Here, the dissimulating transformations interpolate displacement and denial. The initial displacement from Germans to Russians is itself a denial: we do not do this; the Russians do. This is followed by another denial: the Russians do not really do this either; it is merely a myth. Russia thus offers a convenient contiguous metonym for the displacement. The next displacement, which bears the affirmation, is to Tahiti, horizontally farther and vertically lower on a Eurocentric scale of civilization. The real outsider here is the ethical code that censors violence. The feminine is the appropriated other, common property of narrator and audience. The English gentleman, precoded for a Western sense of propriety, becomes the fool who is fooled by the appearance of impropriety. The comic moment expels the ethical censor, diffuses censorship, and validates hostility by introducing the desired figure of the servile woman.

This hostility toward the feminine is an unwitting reaction to the indeterminacies of sexuality, which engender anxieties that inform the *Anthropology* and its representation of the feminine as indiscriminately sexual and, therefore, to be regulated. In sexual matters, the male has a self-contained notion of taste (“Geschmack für sich”), but the woman makes herself the object of taste for everyone (7:308). In marriage, the man woos only his wife, but the wife seeks the attention of all men (“aller Männer Neigung”) (7:307). Men are jealous only when in love, but women are always jealous, preferring a large circle of suitors (“Anbeter”). The male is principled and discreet, while the woman is unprincipled and promiscuous. Heterosocial communication is presented as an innocent contact for the man but a sexually charged liaison for the woman. These representations of the feminine as erotic, indiscriminate, conspiratorial, and domineering indicate the infrastructure of a basic paranoid delusion.

In Freud’s description of heteroerotic and homoerotic male paranoid jealousy,<sup>36</sup> the paranoiac represses his own erotic urges, projecting them instead onto his partner. The desire for heterosexual transgression is transformed into the perception of the partner’s flirtation with other men and thereby justified: she is flirting with other

men, therefore I may flirt with other women. Heteroerotic paranoid jealousy involves reference to one's own indiscretions and (hetero)erotic inclinations. Homoerotic paranoid jealousy, however, fully denies one's own erotic urges: it is not I who loves him, it is she. Here, projection and denial censor and repress homoerotic impulses.

Exploring homoerotic paranoid jealousy in Kant, Monique David-Ménard<sup>37</sup> extrapolates from this paranoia to Kant's solutions to problems of objectivity and reference. Her discussion focuses on the second part of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, which examines insoluble arguments between antinomies and shows that it is rationally impossible to choose one side or the other. The example cited in Kant involves the antinomy of determinism vs. free will and holds that neither proposition is capable of defining itself without reference to and negation of the other. Each side represses cognition of its own presuppositions and concentrates instead on the presuppositions that the other one overlooks. In this conflict, reason itself reaches a decisional impasse. David-Ménard then makes analogical connections to the behavior of paranoiacs, who are blind to their own projections and acutely preoccupied with the unfalsifiable motivations of the despised other. Just as the paranoiac refers to the other and not to the self, so do thesis and antithesis suppress self-reference. Just as the paranoiac claims that the other is unaware of unconscious motivations, so do thesis and antithesis claim that the other is unaware of the foundational problems in the argument. Just as the paranoid mentality exists vis-à-vis the projected other as object of hate, so are thesis and antithesis incapable of autonomous justification. And, just as paranoia can be seen as a transformation of an underlying sexual problematic, so can this idiom of antinomical reasoning be viewed as sexually generated. David-Ménard thus sees this philosophical system as a transformation of male homoerotic sexuality, as "la transformation de l'homosexualité en savoir, le passage de l'objectalité paranoïaque à l'objectivité scientifique" [the transformation of homosexuality into knowledge, the passage from paranoid objectality to scientific objectivity].<sup>38</sup> She views this as a successfully transformed paranoid delusion, citing Freud as cited by Lacan: "J'ai réussi là où le paranoïaque échoue" [I have succeeded where the paranoiac fails].<sup>39</sup> For Kant, success is gained in transcending this impasse to knowledge by restricting cognition to a description of the limits of internal and the absence of external intuitions. Kant's solution is also an *Aufhebung* of the confining circularity of this libidinal dynamic. The superordinate position assures prophylaxis in the perpetuation of the philosopher's homosexual game.

David-Ménard's somewhat reductive algorithm of paranoia should not be used to seek out homophobia in Kant's discourse. This would be a fool's errand, both in view of Kant's progressive individualist ideologies and of the fact that homosexuality was not a discursive concept in the eighteenth century. The value of this psychodynamic model lies in its utility for analyzing a particular idiom of interplay among the heterosocial, the homosocial, and the political and for illuminating a subtly gendered Kantian body politic. In Kant's treatment of male jealousy, the repeated representation of woman as continually seeking sexual liaisons with men contains traces of erotic fascination that are repressed, negated, and projected onto the feminine. This generates spheres of interaction that distance and contain the feminine but distance and *privilege* the masculine. These would be, respectively, the private and public spheres.

In the essay on enlightenment, Kant's discussion of the private and public spheres argues that not everyone should call established practices into question. There must be, for the sake of order, a division between those who openly question and those who obey (8:37). Thus Kant differentiates between the unrestricted *public* (*öffentlich*) and the restricted *private* (*privat*) uses of reason. Their primary metaphors are, respectively, the scholar before his reading public and the obedient civil servant. A closer reading reveals, however, that the private sphere is actually a condensation of many undesirable elements from which the philosopher unbound seeks to distance himself.<sup>40</sup>

*Privat* refers to the private as opposed to the public, to the home (as in home phone number, home address, etc.) and to one's intimate and sexual life as well, connotations supported by the application of the term *häuslich* [domestic, literally *house-like*] (8:38) to this sphere. The private sphere has personal, emotional, and sexual connotations that are excluded from the realm of reason and enlightenment. It is "sehr enge eingeschränkt" (8:37) [very narrowly restricted, literally *boxed-in*] (8:37), a *Mechanism* and a *Maschine*, and consists of passive *Glieder*, a term that can mean members, bodily parts, family members, and sexual organs. The singular form *Glied* is also a common trope for *penis* and appears here in the phrase *passives Glied*, echoing the emasculated condition of the unenlightened. This is a regulated sphere for the control of contaminating elements, e.g. the unenlightened, the familial, and the sexual.

In a recent study of enlightenment in Kant, Jane Flax<sup>41</sup> illuminates a "gendered geography"<sup>42</sup> and "gendered dichotomies"<sup>43</sup> in Kant's construction of the public and private spheres. Flax holds that the private sphere is associated with femininity and domesticity: "The power

of domestication (woman) is so great that its overcoming requires the counterforce of an entirely different sphere: the public world . . . in this account autonomy is understood as the opposite of connection, walking alone, not holding someone's hand. Good guardians enable us to grow up and leave home/childhood, but to do so they must have access to the public world.<sup>44</sup> The public sphere emerged by an act of mitosis, by splitting off from the private sphere. It is within the public sphere, an immune center, that the Kantian subject is located. For Stallybrass and White, the emergence of the eighteenth century man of reason within the public sphere is a gesture of independence and immunity from contaminating realms: "A 'neutral,' 'middling,' 'democratic,' 'rational' subject was laboriously constructed by a rejection of all specific and particular domains."<sup>45</sup> "This refined public sphere occupied the centre. That is to say, it carved out a domain between the realm of kings and the world of the alley-ways and taverns, and it did so by forcing together the high and the low as contaminated equivalents."<sup>46</sup> The enlightened male subject is thus located in a position independent of and superordinate to the domestic and feminine. This effects a monosexual dialogue, a forum of unbinding and coincidental communication among autonomous male subjects, each speaking "als Gelehrter . . . vor dem ganzen Publikum der Leserwelt" [as a scholar before the entire public of the literate world] (8:37). In this state, one "genießt einer uneingeschränkten Freiheit, sich seiner eigenen Vernunft zu bedienen und in seiner eigenen Person zu sprechen" [enjoys an unlimited freedom to serve oneself of one's reason and to speak in one's own person] (8:38). This is the published public sphere, that cleared frontier, resexualized and defeminized, for open debate among individuated and decentered men at great and respected distance.

The construction of the public sphere is founded upon dichotomies that display hierarchical privileging. They do not, however, consist of mutually exclusive and independent entities but betray a submerged fascination, a repressed desire for the other characteristic of antinomical discourses. The achievement of this idiom of enlightenment is thus marked by the persistence of abstractions and generalizations in the service of binomial reasoning, which reduces indeterminate fields of inquiry to dyadic clashes and poses questions as if bifurcated *a priori*. This bifurcation engenders gratuitous gendering and essentialist generalizations about behavior that affix the metaphors *feminine* and *masculine* to undesirable and desirable character traits respectively. This is a transference of libidinal dynamics, a remapping of submerged matrices of eroticism onto the matrix of cognition, a reprocessing by mechanisms of denial and displacement. The transformation of sexu-

ality into knowledge, even into knowledge that is arguably the cognitive kingpin of enlightened egalitarianism, retains traces of an archaic dynamic that privilege certain discourses over others. Paradoxically, however, these traces also betray ambivalences that problematize the polarities of dualistic thinking themselves: e.g. the simultaneous suppression and desire of the feminine and the fact that the male is the preferred other, but only at a distance and within a deregulated public sphere.

Kantian Enlightenment is a *clearing up* (Aufklärung) that involves simultaneous disambiguation and decontamination. This *clearing up* is effected by a bifurcation into sterile (public) and contaminated (private) spheres and by a sublimation of the self into the former, a sublimation that is also a *making sublime*. The private sphere is constituted out of debris rejected in the process of self-cleansing: the organic, the uterine, the feminine, and the masses, as well as their surplus meanings. An associative network of metonymies and condensations maintains the cohesion of these diverse elements in the private sphere, which is regulated by inversion, displacement, and denial of authoritarian structures. These mechanisms serve to obscure the presence of some persistent irritants, unintended stowaways on the project of enlightenment.

#### NOTES

1. Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton, 1979), 8. Kantianism is located within a larger tradition that Rorty refers to as a “Cartesian-Kantian pattern” that is “an attempt to escape from history—an attempt to find non-historical conditions of any possible historical development” (9). Even within the linguistic turn, this gesture has remained largely intact: “This emphasis on language . . . does not essentially change the Cartesian-Kantian problematic, and thus does not give philosophy a new self-image. For analytic philosophy is still committed to the construction of a permanent, neutral framework for inquiry, and thus for all of culture” (8). For a feminist discussion of the gendering of this mentality, see Nancy Chodorow, *The Reproduction of Mothering* (Berkeley, 1978) and Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice* (Cambridge, MA, 1982).

2. *Women Studies Abstracts* lists only eight gender-oriented inquiries into Kant between 1974 and 1994. *The Philosopher's Index* lists over three thousand inquiries into Kant in toto in the same period.

3. An appreciation of these elements in Kant's discourse can only be effected by reading the German sources, for it is perhaps the reliance on English translations, which were themselves troped by the ideologies and secondary revisions of the past, that has partially hindered the revisionist reception of Kant.

4. Immanuel Kant, *Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung? in Kants Werke. Akademie-Textausgabe* (Berlin, 1968), 8:33-42. This edition is an exact mechanical reproduction of the first nine volumes of the standard *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, published by the *Königliche Preussische Akademie der Wissenschaften* (Berlin, 1902-38). Both editions have identical volume and page numbers. All subsequent passages from Kant are referred to only by volume and page number; the translations are my own.

5. "Answer to the Question, What is Enlightenment?," trans. H. B. Nisbet, in Kant's *Political Writings*, ed. Hans Reiss (Cambridge, 1970), 54-60.

6. Even Nisbet's paginal header is only "What is Enlightenment?" The dominant reference to the essay as being a question is remarkably ahistorical. The December 1783 issue of the *Berlinische Monatschrift* included an invitation to readers to indeed *answer* the question "Was ist Aufklärung?," to which Kant, Moses Mendelsohn, and others responded. Kant's essay is, in fact, an answer to the question posed in that journal.

7. Michel Foucault, "What is Enlightenment?," in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York, 1984).

8. Thomas McCarthy, "The Critique of Impure Reason: Foucault and the Frankfurt School," *Political Theory* 18:3 (1990):437-69, esp. 451.

9. *Selbstverschuldet* contains the reflexive *selbst* (self) and the adjective *verschuldet*, which indicates indebtedness, literally *an owing of money*. *Verschuldet* is built upon the root *Schuld*, which means both *debt* and *guilt*.

10. See Willi Goetschel, *Constructing Critique: Kant's Writing as Critical Praxis* (Durham, 1994). Goetschel views Kant's statement as not a legitimation, but instead a "small ironic barb at Frederick the Great" (149). This observation fits well into Goetschel's attempt to demonstrate the complex literary nature of Kant's discourse. He does not discuss, however, that this could also be, ironically, an invocation of hegemony.

11. See Jacob und Wilhelm Grimm, *Deutsches Wörterbuch*, (Leipzig, 1873), 5:451-454. Grimm first designates *Keim* with the Latin equivalents *germen* [embryo] and *pullula* [sprout] and sees it as that which first grows from a seed (Kern). Grimm also designates the verb form *keimen* as *germinare* [to sprout forth] and *pullulare* [to sprout]. The first New High German data cited by Grimm are eighteenth century examples from Schiller, Goethe, and Kant.

12. Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* (Ithaca, 1986), 191.

13. Stallybrass and White, 193.

14. The philosophical conflation of nature and woman has been illuminated by Susan Bordo, "The Cartesian Masculinization of Thought," *Signs* 11:3 (1986):439-56. See also Susan Bordo, *The Flight to Objectivity* (Albany, 1987). See also Robin Schott, *Cognition and Eros: A Critique of the Kantian Paradigm* (Boston, 1988).

15. For a discussion of Kant's resistance to evolutionary theory, see A. O. Lovejoy, "Kant and Evolution," in *Forerunners of Darwin 1745-1859*, ed. Bentley Glass (Baltimore, 1959), 173-207.

16. Georg Forster, *Noch etwas über die Menschenraßen*, in *Georg Forsters Werke* (Berlin, 1991), 8:130-56.

17. Lovejoy, 196.

18. Forster, 143.

19. Forster, 141.

20. Forster, 142.

21. The word is a victim of a popular folk etymology that suppresses the historical homophony between *der Mund* and *die mund*, which meant a form of protection and disappeared from the language after the middle ages, thus freeing the *usure* of *der Mund* to slip into the semantic field of *mündig* (mature) and produce oral resonances.

22. The conventional English translations of *tutelage* and/or *immaturity* for *Unmündigkeit* are remarkably unresonant and eclipse association with the oral; this applies as well to the choice of *guardian* for *Vormund*, which is also metonymically insufficient, but which properly conveys dependency.

23. The very last oral reference before the public sphere discussion mentions the "Vormünder, die selbst aller Aufklärung unfähig sind" [guardians, who themselves are

incapable of any and all enlightenment] (8:36). The first oral reference after the public sphere discussion mentions again “daß die Vormünder . . . selbst wieder unmündig sein sollen” [that the guardians themselves should remain immature] (8:38). Kant does, indeed, ostensibly present this situation as undesirable. His repetitive preoccupation with it, however, reveals a submerged fascination. Again, in Kant’s discourse, the undesirable bears the imprint of desire.

24. Goetschel uses the term “Publicizing Enlightenment” to characterize the special relationship among reason, publication, and enlightenment in Kant (144-66).

25. The earlier justification of this bifurcation as an actual respectful valorization of the feminine has been analyzed in Sarah Kofman, “The Economy of Respect: Kant and Respect for Women,” *Social Research* 49 (Summer 1982):383-404. Kofman says, “respect is a negative sentiment. In opposition to love, which attracts, it implies a repulsion, the distancing of that which fascinates; or better, it implies quasi-simultaneous attraction and repulsion: that the object which fascinates and seduces is found concealed and at the same time discovered” (394). See also Heidemarie Bennent, *Galanterie und Verachtung: Eine philosophie-geschichtliche Untersuchung zur Stellung der Frau in Gesellschaft und Kultur* (Frankfurt, 1985).

26. Paul de Man, “Phenomenality and Materiality in Kant,” in *Hermeneutics: Questions and Prospects*, ed. Gary Shapiro and Alan Sica (Amherst, 1984), 121-44.

27. De Man, 138.

28. De Man, 144.

29. De Man, 144.

30. Kant in de Man, 133.

31. De Man tends to see only the impossibility of sublime representation, a reading equally applicable to many neo-platonic texts, especially those in the German tradition. Such texts should really offer little resistance to a deconstructionist reading with marxist/materialist echoes.

32. See Olga Valbuena, “The ‘Charming Distinction’: *Ur-teil* as the En-gendering of Reason in Kant’s Thought,” *Genders* 4 (Spring 1989):87-102. Valbuena has aptly demonstrated the considerable thematic continuity of both of the texts on the aesthetic. She connects the representation of the beautiful and the sublime with the distancing from nature and privileging of reason: “In contrast to the beautiful, which actually connects the beholder with alterity, with nature, the sublime wrenches him from this feeling of continuity, of being at one with the sensible. For that reason, he who experiences the sublime will . . . need to call upon supersensible reason to introduce a higher form of harmony in the subject” (94).

33. Kant does refer to this trade in women as malevolent (boshaft) (2:237), which leads Ursula Jauch, in *Immanuel Kant zur Geschlechterdifferenz* (Wien, 1988), 66, to conclude that Kant does not approve of this and only uses it to make his point about generalizable beauty. Jauch does not observe that this instance of deflection and denial could actually facilitate a palatable representation of commodification.

34. Jauch, 38-45.

35. Sigmund Freud, *Der Witz und seine Beziehung zum Unbewußten*, in *Gesammelte Werke* (Frankfurt, 1960) 6:1-269.

36. Sigmund Freud, “Über einige neurotische Mechanismen bei Eifersucht, Paranoia, und Homosexualität” in *Gesammelte Werke* (Frankfurt, 1960), 13:193-207.

37. Monique David-Ménard, “La raison philosophique est-elle homosexuelle? soit: Kant avec Freud,” in *Philosophie et Culture*, ed. Venant Cauchy (Montreal, 1988), 5:77-85.

38. David-Ménard, 84.

39. David-Ménard, 82.

40. See Foucault, 36-37. Even Foucault takes this distinction at face value. He does not seek to unearth, in this binary distinction, a discourse of power that subjugates certain segments of the population.

41. Jane Flax, *Disputed Subjects: Essays on Psychoanalysis, Politics, and Philosophy* (New York, 1993).

42. Flax, 75.

43. Flax, 76.

44. Flax, 77.

45. Stallybrass and White, 199.

46. Stallybrass and White, 109.