**“Thinking”**

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The title of our volume, *“Companionable Thinking”: Spenser with…*, is concerned, manifestly, with relation. Two succinct but spacious terms of relation frame it: Latin *cum*, sublated into the adjective “companionable,” and Germanic “with,” both of which might variously, even simultaneously, imply opposition, orientation, association, combination and instrumentality.[[1]](#endnote-1) And yet, the syntactical point of relation and mediating locus of our title belongs to the activity of “thinking,” to which I turn. In thinking about thinking, I have two principal concerns. The first is *thought’s production of relations*—of concepts, of configurations. The second is *the relational production of thought*. No connection might be formed if thinking does not bring it about, and no thinking is possible for a subject without encountering an object. Thinking both produces and presupposes relation, and these concerns are consequently intwined throughout my discussion.

The first use of “to thinke” in *The Faerie Queene,* in the Proem to Book I, marks its disappointment. The poet’s thoughts, he confesses to Gloriana, are “too humble and too vile/To thinke of that true glorious type of thine” (I.Pro.4.6-7). He calls, accordingly, for them to be lofted towards their dazzling object, the “Great Lady,” by that same Great Lady herself (4.3). This failure to think, I suggest, first appears in the poem both as a familiar incarnation of the humility *topos* and as an intimate activity worthy of astonishment. Thoughts, the Proem implies, are *desiring*; they index a wish of some kind. Thoughts are, besides, necessarily dependent*;* in order to be thought at all, they require an object, the assistance of that object to approach it, and must take on something of their object. Thoughts are thus *mediated* internally by desire and externally by objects. Even the act of thinking ofa type—i.e. openly sublimatory or classificatory thinking (in this case “that true glorious type”)—isn’t summarily enforced but relies on particular objects (Great Lady). This is a remarkable admission about the formation of thought in an allegorical poem, structurally reliant as it is on producing and ordering figures and types.[[2]](#endnote-2) In the *Amoretti*, too, the poet stands immobilized, able only to “[look] still” on his bright beloved as his tongue “stopped is with thoughts astonishment” (*Am* III). Though raised “by her” into her ambit, he can scarcely conceive of his beloved. Here thought is not merely seeded with desire, but is rather overwhelmed by it, to the extent that it is no longer perceptible as thought so much as wonder. Thought’s mediation by desire and by objects is, as this sonnet suggests, *dynamic*.[[3]](#endnote-3) After all, while the negotiations of thinking have ostensibly been supplanted by the prolonged immediacy of experience (ravishment in “looking still”), we encounter this immediacy in writing, in which it has since been thought about. The subject’s (speaker) yielding to the object (beloved) mutates into the subject’s representation of the object, which it requires but cannot wholly capture. Despite the speaker’s insistence in the sonnet on the beloved’s transcendence—“the sovereign beauty”—thought and object are neither absolutely independent, nor identical.

Returning to *The Faerie Queene*’s first book*,* a third, quietly revealing instance of thought belongs to Una whom, because of her emphatic unity, we might rarely consider as engaged in thinking at all, insofar as it involves a separation from and so splitting of oneself. Forsaken by Redcrosse and wandering forlorn, Una bids the heavens judge the verity and force of her love for the duped knight: “How I him lou’d, and loue with all my might,/So thought I eke of him, and thinke I thought aright” (I.vii.49.8-9). Her moving couplet accentuates the affective investment of thought in its object and relays, moreover, that it is properly *reflective*. Una’s thinking does not merely reproduce its object, her beloved knight. The shift in tense from “thought” to “thinke” shows instead that it aims at him and reflects on the measure of its success. In so doing, Una’s thought is critiqued by its object (the beloved), forced to consider whether it lives up to its object “aright”. And yet, in loving Redcrosse still—in the chiasmic, conserving grammatical move from “lou’d” to “loue”—Una’s thought is at the same time *critical* of its object, for it can imagine a better version, the beloved transformed: loyal, clear-sighted and free from Archimago’s conjured delusions. The process of critique is thus twofold and her thought is, therefore, also *speculative*. Not merely conjectural, it involves hopeful projection into possibility—informed by the past—beyond the aridity of what exists for now.[[4]](#endnote-4) I hope, with these examples and by way of this piece, to collect and illuminate some qualities of thinking that animate Spenser’s poetry and the essays of this special issue. They include, in no particular order, thought’s propensity to be constructive, desiring, mediated, reflective, critical.

This volume’s contributors engage two objects—draw them together, pull them apart, relate them—and so center the motions of thinking, its productions.[[5]](#endnote-5) Looking towards the exertions of thought reminds us that the two objects are not so much in a line of immediate exchange with one another as they are in a triangle of refracted illuminations: critic-poetry, critic-philosophical text, critic’s partially synthetic production. Neither object emerges completely exhausted—or entirely clarified—in these essays, which are often a kind of deliberate reambiguation. Rather, each is dappled, parts radiant with light and others in shadow. Looking towards the exertions of thought reminds us that the ground of play is possibility; it asks, in other words, that we recognize and reflect on the imaginative and constructive aspects of critical activity. The careful act of bringing two texts together is not only to convey an aesthetic experience or the critic’s engrossment in aesthetic objects.[[6]](#endnote-6) It is not—to speak in terms of a spate of recent methodological debates—a pose of critical passivity or even attachment bound solely to what is (or what is presumed). It involves, instead, sustained attention to the ways in which thinking is a combination of discovering and producing connections ingrained with specific wishes and intents, necessarily partial in both senses of the word: both unfinished—as DH and JM also suggest—and interested, oriented in varying degrees towards notions of totality. It is to examine how thinking has a strongly identificatory bent, even as it recollects that connections are possible, desirable, because of difference. Thinking’s connections are unpredictable. They might last (tautologously, as DH remarked above) as long as two things remain in one another’s company in the space of a thought, or they might fundamentally alter the way we conceive of something at all. Companionable thinking can be pleasurably difficult thinking; it deals in delicate negotiations.[[7]](#endnote-7) Mutual illumination runs the risk of mutual distortion and shows that the risk is worth taking.

In analyzing Spenserian thinking, Gordon Teskey’s writings—on “Courtesy and Thinking” and “Thinking Moments” in *The Faerie Queene*—are formative, extraordinary accounts. Drawing on Heidegger, Teskey contends that Spenser is a poet neither of conceptual grasping, nor pre-determined thought, but instead “of *Gelassenheit*… of ‘releasement’ or ‘letting go,’ whereby the very relaxation of effort and of mental tension gives to his project an experimental character.” Thinking with Heidegger helps capture something of the provisional, accidental quality of Spenser’s verse, and imparts to Teskey’s account of the poem’s noesis a numinous tang and attendant immediacy. “We are seeing Spenser thinking,” he explains, for *The Faerie Queene* is “an intellectual action: a poetic releasement of the self for moving into nearness with wisdom.” These luminous descriptions suggest what is elsewhere stated: a poetic thinking somehow free from objects—entirely intersubjective, between irreducible entities—or one that gently discloses the ideal union of subject and object.[[8]](#endnote-8) My sense of Spenser’s poetic thinking, shaped by Teskey’s and likewise contingent and speculative, differs with regard to the question of objects, immediacy and the assertions of thought. I take my cue from T. W. Adorno—one of this volume’s companionable thinkers—in proposing that thinking in Spenser’s poetry turns on the precarious mediations between subject and object, thought and thing, made legible and variously producible in and through poetic figuration.[[9]](#endnote-9) His poetry engages the violence of conceptual grasping, of forced resolutions into false unities, even as it bears—often unwittingly, as an effect of form—splintered possibilities of counter-totalities to be imagined, wrested and uncoiled. The poem expresses and solicits some self-releasement of thought, but much self-assertion (and much between them) besides, and would eliminate one only at the cost of both. We don’t see Spenser thinking so much as we intervene in, negotiate, reject, imitate, reshape and realize the many possible combinations of his thought mediated by the allegorical poetics of *The Faerie Queene*. Spenserian allegory inveigles and instructs, to be sure, but it doesn’t fully facilitate the immediacy of sheer witnessing. It is surprisingly difficult to—following Hazlitt—not meddle with the allegory at all. It isn’t a detachable feature so much as the complex manifestation of the poem whose forms of thinking might only be sought and created through a kind of mutual meddling. But before we delve into thinking allegory, let’s tarry awhile with the process of thinking in general: thought’s mediation by and of its objects, their reciprocal constitutions.

In a well-known passage from 1962, Claude Lévi-Strauss pondered the relationship between opposition and integration in the activity of thinking:

[The] perceptible reality [of animals in totemism] permits the embodiment of ideas and relations conceived by speculative thought on the basis of empirical observations… [N]atural species are not chosen because they are “good to eat” but because they are “good to think” [*bonnes à penser*].[[10]](#endnote-10)

As Marjorie Garber observes, *bonnes à penser* is “not really a maxim about animals,” or about any object in particular.[[11]](#endnote-11) Yet it does imply the need for some object in general: “good to think *[with]*”. The dictum signals both the constructive capacity and composednessof thinking, which is always thinking with. But what sort of thinking? It is extremely suggestive that this very passage surfaces in influential scholarship on Spenser as evidence of the “special utility” of beasts in “the classificatorywork of culture,” and in the operations of *The Faerie Queene*.[[12]](#endnote-12) Classificatory thinking, or the mode of thought that subsumes under classes its objects, is certainly alive in Spenser’s poem and might even be the kind of thinking most readily associated with his poetry. Yet it seems peculiar to restrict the labour of thought to instrumentality and classification when Lévi Strauss refers specifically to “speculative thought.” Speculative thinking, he suggests, is neither restricted to nor entirely free from our experience of objects: the ideas and relations of thought spring from attention to objects, take flight from them, and are re-embodied as objects, and so on. (This sounds, of course, very like allegory/allegoresis, but more on that later). Now the process Lévi-Strauss describes might mean that concepts can be falsely identified with their objects, that they are reified as and so substitute for those objects themselves, a violent and commonplace process that Adorno termed “identity thinking.”[[13]](#endnote-13) But, crucially, this is not necessarily what thought is like. The loop-like structure Lévi Strauss describes—the experience of objects yielding ideas that in turn are embodied as objects—equally implies the conceptual character of experience and the objective or experiential character of thinking. Each pole, in other words, bears something—a moment, a germ—of its opposite and is, therefore, mediated, non-identical with itself. In Adorno’s terms, identity thinking—in pretending or presuming that things are exhausted in our concepts of them, or that thought submits entirely to things—suppresses “the non-identical,” or indissoluble remainder. We can, however, endeavour to think non-identity.[[14]](#endnote-14) Thinking’s orientation towards its objects and to the objective element of concept-making need not be narrowly instrumental or forgetful, nor enigmatically chummy, but might be careful and sustained: in and through, and with and against, and past, and in and out again. All thinking is productive. Speculative thinking is deliberate, constructive thinking that emerges out of our experience of the extant world—out of objects—on which it might reciprocally exert a kind of pressure. Speculative thinking strives both to attend to, and to repair, the fissure between objects and concepts, things and thoughts, facing always the enticement to present this reconciliation as already accomplished.[[15]](#endnote-15) It’s important, too, to notice that reconciliation is not unity; concept will not melt into identity with object. Reconciliation indicates instead a split that would not register as antagonistic. Perhaps—in terms of this volume’s concerns—it might be said that thinking would experience neither identity nor contradiction in relation to objects, but companionship.

What is familiar to us in Spenser’s poetry as the violence of abstraction is the subdual of the moment of production within a concept—the elision of how it is formed, of experience. But allegory isn’t pure substitution. As George Puttenham delightfully put it, allegory is “the chief ringleader and captain” of all figures, because “every speech wrested from his own natural signification to another not altogether so natural is a kind of dissimulation,” a kind of *allegoria*. Principally, *allegoria* is when we “speak in sense translative and wrested from the own signification, nevertheless applied to another not altogether contrary, but having much conveniency with it.” Allegory is everywhere and efficacious. More intriguingly, accounting for allegory’s pervasive but unsettled “wresting” with signification requires Puttenham to wrestle in return with the limits of language. Its two poles are said to “meet not,” to be “not altogether [but somewhat] contrary,” *and* to have “conveniency.”[[16]](#endnote-16) It shuttles between “natural” and “not altogether so natural,” but never commits to being entirely unnatural, conceding implicitly the codependence of these categories. Two things: first, we might notice through Puttenham that allegory involves unpredictable movement between mutually informing poles rather than straight substitution. Second, I belabour his linguistic contortions in order to lay bare the *mimetic* impulsethat marks out the mediatenessof Puttenham’s thought, even as it forms concepts. Puttenham cannot conceptualize allegory without partly imitating it. Indeed, his *Art* cannot conceptualize figures of speech without figuring them as characters: thinking takes on the quality of its objects.

Spenser’s “continued allegory” is especially strange, for allegory is, by usual definition, continuous, and the doubled continuity gestures to the unresolved, reciprocal mediations between object and concept, material and metaphysics, where x is and is not y, and y is and is not x. *The Faerie Queene* involves both the making sensuous of ideas, and the making ideal of moving images, a twofold mediation. It is fluctuation at fleeting standstills, provisional shapes of thought, because the structure of allegory is entangled with the activity of thinking and interpretation. Classification and reification are certainly forms of thought that allegory models and solicits. Yet a richer form of thinking, and in relation to Spenser, one more rarely acknowledged, is speculative thinking, an attempt at thinking *non-identity* that both partakes of and seeks to resist our usual modes of identity thinking. And, as we saw with Una, this critically cuts both ways: the object critiques thought that fails to fully exhaust it—as we know too well from *The Faerie Queene*, there is always a remainder—and yet, as we know less well, thought, too, critiques the object in its present condition in flashes and bursts of how it could be otherwise in different conditions, in better ones. Thought’s critique of the extant object is productive: it yields a new construction fashioned out of the old and suspended in possibility. Genuine solidarity between thought and thing—as opposed to antagonism under the false aspect of identity—is the wished-for end of this kind of thinking. It deals in possibility and longs for its delivery into action, actuality. It is thus both confessional and therapeutic.[[17]](#endnote-17)

The expectant thrill of speculative thinking lies in how it seeks (produces) possibility that cleaves to objects even as we’re moved to classify them. AsPuttenham’s figuring of figures in order to expound them shows, the mimetic urge in the rhetorical (rather than strictly significative) aspect of language attests to its own unfulfillment. Imitation marks the attempt to reach across the rift between concept and object; but longing for nearness is not reconciliation. Companionable thinking in its speculative mood is promissory, a utopian gesture whose productions exist *in potentia*, which is to say, they are yet unrealized. It offers an *anticipation* of reconciliation, which—Adorno cautions—is both essential and in some ways inimical to genuine transformation.[[18]](#endnote-18) To be enamored of possibility alone can be implicitly to sanction the prevailing conditions from which it is produced. It can fetishize immediacy, and take as indicative the optative subjunctive. (We might fairly object that inhabiting and sharing in the realm of aesthetic possibilities, uninhibited by the constraints of our given realities, is a significant pleasure of reading literature. The illusion of immediacy is powerful and need not aim to be transformative.) But to continue my argument about speculative thinking that is neither confined nor indifferent to the world: for this kind of thinking to be companionable, even collective, it would take its productions not for their own reality, but instead as spurs to a different reality that demand a return to and transformation of the old. It would comprise *turns*: from this world, to the possible, and back again.

Consider, for a moment, a thinker from a clashing philosophical stance to that of Adorno—relational ontology. In his late work, *Poetics of Relation*, Édouard Glissant (re)theorizes “opacity,” a complex concept that at its broadest refers to “that which protects the Diverse”: the unknowable, irreducible alterity of things that resists attempts to be made fully understood—reductively transparent—and thus exposes the limits and violence of explanatory schema. JM further considers Glissant’s account of opacity’s relationship to singularity below, but for my purpose what is most significant is opacity’s temporality: at present it does not exist, or at least operate, for all. Opacities (do not yet) live as possibility.

But perhaps we need to bring an end to the very notion of a scale. Displace all reduction…. Opacities can coexist and converge, weaving fabrics.To understand these truly one must focus on the texture of the weave and not on the nature of its components…. Thought of self and thought of other here become obsolete in their duality. Every Other is a citizen and no longer a barbarian… I would be incapable of projecting from one to the other. This-here is the weave, and it weaves no boundaries. The right to opacity would not establish autism; it would be the real foundation of Relation, in freedoms. [[19]](#endnote-19)

Glissant’s passage—in Betsy Wing’s rendering—describes the domination-free inflection of relating (“weaving”) between irreducible opacities, or singular subjects, but is more remarkable for the rhetorical weaving it *performs* in its interlacement of grammatical moods: “this-here” is the weave. It begins with a kind of interrogative-imperative (perhaps) and moves into an imperative proper (displace), followed by a startling indicative: “*Opacities can coexist and converge, weaving fabrics.*” It ends, however, with a series of conditionals, briefly interrupted by the deictic indicative whose final word, “boundaries,” breaks the shape of the rhythmic, parallel clauses that ‘bounds’ would have preserved. Boundary is shattered mimetically.[[20]](#endnote-20) It wouldn’t be right to claim that this passage asserts that opacities are all there is, because it asserts at the same time that opacities are *not yet*. Glissant’s passage speculates the possibility of opacities, one that emerges from the fact that the right to opacity, or “freedoms,” is *not* universal. Language performs what it desires, and the mimetic impulse aims to heal the fissure between what the world is and what it could be. Opacities, and the Relation they would facilitate, emerge speculatively in figuration, in thinking’s critique of its object and the object’s critique of thought. Yet Glissant’s essay, “For Opacity,” ends thus: “We clamor for the right to opacity for everyone.”[[21]](#endnote-21) Thinking shifts from the realm of possibility in a collective cry to our world, a demand for the right to opacity for all, which carries with it renewed commitment to imagined possibility. The end to the very capacity “of projecting from one to the other” (a strange thought), the end to hierarchies (“scale”) and the development of freely coexisting opacities alone, is wished for rather than realized. This might be what thinking and encounter *would* look like, but they require, at first, the notion of a whole to be fought for, collective intervention, rebuilding.[[22]](#endnote-22) Glissant’s passage thus affords two versions of opacity: taken indicatively, an imaginary solution to social contradiction; taken speculatively, a cue for social action, possibility unsealed in history that shapes future realisations. In both cases opacity is *poetic*, which is to say, made. The question is how, and for whom?

I will conclude, along these lines, with an unexpected scene of companionable thinking from the Legend of Holiness, which might seem at first exemplary of solitariness—even escapism—but is, I submit, an instance of collective transcendence, answerable to experience. I refer to the episode in canto x, in which the Redcrosse Knight meets Contemplation. To “contemplate” refers in postclassical Latin to religious meditation and philosophical speculation. Its prefix “con,” though principally an intensifier, imbues the verb with the ghost of relation, “together with,” while “tem” stems from the Indo-European root “*temə-*,” or “to cut.” The etymons are exquisitely fitting. Contemplation is at once to think in close touch with experience, and to make a cut in the cloth of experience. At times the cut is so powerful, it effaces the contact on which it depends. Spenser’s *Contemplation*, literally (allegorically) thinking made sensuous, is a heightened allegory of allegory. Both starkly visceral and insubstantially quick, he is at once the congelation and precipitation of thought. His “carcas long vnfed” (I.x.48) lends him an alien animality and deadness; emaciated as he is, he cannot shrink into equivalence with thought. Yet his spirit is as piercing as “Eagles eie, that can beholde the Sunne” (x.47), which is to say, as powerful as the Eagle’s *capacity* to see. His contradictory being reiterates that potentiality is the stuff of thinking, though always intermixed with the unfamiliar kernel of its objects. As Redcrosse stands gazing at the heavenly city, via Contemplation,

he *might* see

The blessed Angels to and fro descend

From highest heuen, in gladsome companee

And with great ioy into that Citty wend

As commonly as friend does with friend (x.56; emphasis added).

The subjunctive encroaches even into this moment of revelation, of near immediacy, as a kind of nested possibility in possibility. The uncertain angels in “gladsome companee” are mediated by comparison to the familiarity of earthly friendship, as the simile lures them into appearing. This is a brilliant intrusion, for it implies that if this vision is transcendent, it transcends in intimate contact, in company, with the world. Indeed, the moment as a whole is facilitated for Redcrosse by Contemplation (ambiguously companionate) within the world. The status of the vision is dazzlingly indeterminate, mediately immediate—“too exceeding shyne” (x.67)—and the knight longs to remain:

O let me not (quoth he) then turne again

Backe to the world, whose ioyes so fruitlesse are (x.63).

But the line bends, for speculative criticism is this *turne again*, a turn from the world and into possibilities it raises, a turn from its constructions and against itself into the world, precisely because of their distance. Redcrosse is soon said “[t]o Vna back… to retyre” (x.68), and his return is a step in fulfilling Una’s expectant, loving imagining of him with which we began. The episode thus shows that possibility entails a return to what’s past, which must be pledged to futurity. We might notice the world awaken to possibility in Redcrosse’s very complaint, being not without joy, but with “joys” that are fruitless at present. Thinking as companionable (with Contemplation) yields to imagined companions (the Angels) yields to a companionable return to the world that, at the same time, cleaves to otherworldly possibility (to Una). The hill on which the knight first encounters old Contemplation and the high Mount from which he glimpses New Jerusalem turn, in a few stanzas, to the “great hill” that is the old Dragon. But, as this volume hopes to show, with and against this poetry, thought will turn again.

1. See “with, prep., adv., and conj.” *OED Online*. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. “Type” in its properly classificatory sense—a “class” of beings or objects—appears in the nineteenth century; Spenser likely has something like “symbol” or “figure” in mind. Yet it’s important to note the cognitive movement common to both senses—that of subsuming the object into a higher category, of saying what it falls under or represents. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. My use of the term “mediation” is Hegelian – neither arbitrary resolution, nor compromise, it describes a mutually constitutive relation between opposites that require and condition one another. See T. W. Adorno, *Hegel: Three Studies*, trans. S. W. Nicholsen (Cambridge MA: MIT, 1993), 8-9. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. DH adds that Una’s projection is based on an introjection of the (beloved) object from the past, which enhances for me the mutually shaping relationship between past, present and future in speculative thinking. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Earlier examples of thinking *with* are Gordon Teskey, “Edmund Spenser meets Jacques Derrida: On the Travail of Systems,” *Spenser Review* 43.3.50 (Winter 2014), Joe Moshenska, “Why Can’t Spenserians Stop Talking About Hegel? A Response to Gordon Teskey,” *Spenser Review* 44.1.2 (Spring-Summer 2014), and Jeff Dolven, “Obstinate Spenser,” *Spenser Review* 47.1.2 (Winter 2017). [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. I note this in distinction to Rita Felski’s account in *Hooked* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020) of “attunement,” or “things ‘coming together’ in expected or unexpected ways” (78). [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. On allegory, dialectics and the demands placed on thought, see Namratha Rao, “Ground-plots of Invention: Poetics of the Material and Difficult Thinking in *The* *Faerie Queene,*” forthcoming in *English Literary Renaissance* 52.3 (2023). [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. Teskey, *Spenserian Moments*, 318, 322, 326. See also 311-15. Earlier versions of these essays appeared in *Spenser Studies* (2003, 2007). [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. See Eynard’s essay in this volume for an examination of dissonance in the two writers. [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. *Totemism*, trans. Rodney Needham (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969), 162. [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. Garber, *Loaded Words* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012) 97. [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. Joseph Lowenstein, “Gryll’s Hoggish Mind”, 246-7. [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E. B. Ashton (London: Continuum, 2007), 5. [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. Moshenska on Spenser and Hegel (2014) ends with the intriguing remark that Adorno describing “the truth of the nonidentical” within Hegel’s system could be writing about *TFQ*. See the essays by Wadoski and Kane in this volume on counterfactual imagining and reverie. [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
15. See Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 17. [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
16. Puttenham, *The Art of English Poesy*, ed. F. Whigham and W. A. Rebhorn (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007), 271, 270. [↑](#endnote-ref-16)
17. See Simon Jarvis, “What is speculative thinking?”, *Revue Internationale de Philosophie* (2004), 69-83 and Deborah Cook, “From the Actual to the Possible: Non-identity Thinking,” *Adorno and the Need in Thinking*, ed. Donald Burke et al. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 167-81. [↑](#endnote-ref-17)
18. Adorno, *Hegel*, 27. [↑](#endnote-ref-18)
19. Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, trans. Betsy Wing (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 2010), 62; 190. Wing captures the movement between verb tenses followed by clustering conditionals. See *Poétique de la relation* (Paris: Gallimard, 1990), 204. [↑](#endnote-ref-19)
20. Fr. “L’ici-là est la trame, qui ne trame pas frontières” is more interesting in that “frontières” is a four-syllable word typically pronounced as two, thus both preserving (audibly) *and* violating (visually) the symmetry of the line. [↑](#endnote-ref-20)
21. *Ibid*, 194. [↑](#endnote-ref-21)
22. This passage and *PR* raise several issues—about *how* a totality of singularities might develop, about the place of conflictual politics, about what it means to be “incapable” of projection, or for there to be no difference between subject and object etc.—that cannot be explored here. For this discussion, I emphasize the negativity (not-yet-ness) of “opacities” as *preceding* political action that emerges from my analysis of the passage’s shifting verb tenses. Other passages, however, lend “opacities” an aesthetic immediacy. Peter Hallward, *Absolutely Postcolonial* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), 66-126 addresses some of these questions in his (contentious) compelling account of the shift in emphasis in Glissant’s thought from “specificity” to “singularity.” See also (contra Hallward) Celia M. Britton, “Globalization and Political Action in the Work of Edouard Glissant,” *Small Axe* 13.3 (2009), 1-11. [↑](#endnote-ref-22)