tic questions I raise about Kleist's text are necessarily invalid, or even misleading, just because there are many other crucial and critical questions to be posed (from the perspective of psychoanalysis, materialist feminism, critique of ideology, etc.). I sense that in many ways my and Yaeger's answers complement each other: I focus on how silence manages, ironically, to speak; she focuses on how (woman's) speech has been forced into silence.

It is certainly true that my initial and guiding interest in Kleist's tale was stylistic and rhetorical. This interest involved a certain formalistic emphasis, to be sure, but I would agree with Bakhtin (the other partner in my essay) that "the study of verbal art can and must overcome the divorce between an abstract 'formal' approach and an equally abstract 'ideological' approach" (*Dialogic Imagination* 259; see n. 24 of my essay). My emphasis led me to place more weight on the way in which something that has been suppressed into silence finds indirect, intersubjective means of expression. I fully welcome Yaeger's comments (both theoretical and interpretive) that stress the identity of that suppressed "something"—namely, reproductive labor under the patriachy—and the concrete social forces that do the suppressing. I had thought that my essay did at least point to such ideological concerns (e.g., the alienation of father from daughter; the silence often imposed by the father, or the patriarchy; the complicity of the narrator; the counterposition offered by the midwife vis-à-vis the doctor). My intent was not to see the marquise herself as the "empty center" but rather to show how she, together with another figure, struggles for expression under a system of suppression. Of course, my "optimistic" reading stresses the (strange) communication that is nonetheless possible in this tale and the tale's occasionally comic irony, but I do not regard this (limited) approach as misleading, as keeping the reader from considering the enforced failure of direct communication and the element of tragic violence.

Finally, I fully sympathize with Yaeger's concern that my essay may appear to be one more instance in a tradition of (male) appropriation of the image and labor of woman. While it is true that my essay does not attempt systematically to discover "in the dialectical course of history the traces of violence that deform repeated attempts at dialogue," it also does not attempt itself to (re)acquire a stance of "gynecologic objectivity" over the figure of woman and midwife. On the contrary, I hoped to show (how Kleist shows) that within the deformed history of monologic, doctoral patriarchy there is still the possibility for some form of ironic and subversive dialogue. I did not intend to praise censorship, so to speak, in the name of the imaginative circumventions it generates, that is, to advocate the oppression (of women) because it engenders a more complicated (woman's) speech and desire. Rather, I meant to show that despite the suppression of direct speech certain literary and philosophical forms of ironic dialogism do manage to create expression. In my reading, the "universalization of hermeneutics" (and rhetoric) of which Gadamer speaks in his debate with Habermas ("Rhetorik, Hermeneutik, Ideologiekritik") is not intended to deny the need and desirability for a critique of ideology that will, we hope, make new and freer forms of dialogue possible.

I thus look forward to reading Yaeger's analysis of Kleist that will focus on a different aspect of communication—on men's attempted appropriation of women's reproductive labor. I am sorry that my study may have appeared to be a continuation of such appropriation. I am grateful for the insightful comments and the opportunity for clarification.

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Wallace Stevens

To the Editor:

In "'That Which Is Always Beginning': Stevens's Poetry of Affirmation" (100 [1985]: 220–33), Steven Shaviro justifiably tries to rescue Stevens from canonical readings that see him as an "ironic modernist" or a "Romantic idealist," as a poet confined to the "humanistic problematic of subjectivity and . . . the formalist tradition of poetic self-reflexivity" (220). But Shaviro's revision reinscribes Stevens's (later) poetry along another Romantic-modern trajectory—a Deleuzean Nietzscheanism—that continues to obscure crucial aspects of the poet's accomplishment.

Shaviro claims to be situating Stevens's poetry in a "new space" beyond "our usual critical paradigms" (220). But the space mapped here is not a new one but another version of the modernist effort to discover a (groundless) grounding in the event of life itself. Despite his frequent appeals to a "logic of difference" (232n8), Shaviro's own paradigmatic invocation of last resort is directed toward an idea of unity, albeit a "new kind of unity, the unity of a world in fragments, a whole composed of multiplicities without totalization or unification" (221). There is more than a hint of organicism in Shaviro's critical paradigm, and this notion of wholeness (however deftly qualified) leads back through Deleuze and Nietzsche (both noted by Shaviro) to the German Romantics and particularly to Friedrich Schlegel. Schlegel too, we recall, valorized the world as an abundant chaos (*Fülle*) and prescribed a poetry identified with a never-ending process of becoming (in the *Fragments*). Nor is there any need to stop with the Romantics: the paradigm of encompassing unity (however unrealizable) traces back eventually to the Platonic

Idea and the Aristotelian concept of wholeness—precisely the targets of deconstruction.

Shaviro distinguishes his reading of Stevens from J. Hillis Miller's deconstructive approach by echoing these lines from "Notes toward a Supreme Fiction": "It was not a choice / Between, but of"—but of "the whole, / The complicate, the amassing harmony" (232n7). It is this idea of the whole (which is severely problematized in the later poetry) that becomes the basis of Shaviro's theological interpretation of Stevens. From this perspective, Stevens writes a poetry of metamorphosis that functions in complicity with the larger metamorphoses of the complicate whole. The human imagination or desire is identified with the "universal 'will to change'" (222; partly a quotation from Stevens) and ultimately with the idea of fate or necessity, the "will of wills" (230; quotation from Stevens). Thus, the "wholly private movement of desire . . . is already latent in the natural world" (224). The ultimate reach of Stevens's poetry renews the "great affirmations of Nietzsche" that there is "nothing besides the whole" and that humankind is one with the "innocence of becoming" (230; partly a quotation from Nietzsche).

That there is a Nietzschean dimension to Stevens's poetry is not in question. Many critics have discussed this relation. What is in question is whether Shaviro's critical model is adequate to deliver a postmodern Stevens. Perhaps the most remarkable feature of Stevens's later poetry is the concept of the poem as a theme. This meditation on the idea of language increasingly dominates these later poems and threatens to eclipse the poet's sense of living wholeness as well as his dichotomy between imagination and reality. Such issues, however, are canceled out by Shaviro's approach, which presents Stevens as an unmeditative writer who produces a "nonsense poetry" (232n10; quotation from Hugh Kenner). Thus, Shaviro valorizes a metamorphic space that "fills the being before the mind can think" (222; quotation from Stevens). Like most other commentators, Shaviro reads Stevens's poetry as if it embodied the idealized picture of poetry that Stevens sometimes endorses.

Stevens's poetry, however, remains steadfastly meditative. It is an important anticipation of the provocative interaction of poetry and philosophy that energizes the current critical scene. Stevens no doubt celebrates the "force of being alive" (227), but this is not the essential "background or context" of his poetry (232n2). His later poetry in particular problematizes this living world. Shaviro admits that the world described by this poetry is "inescapably linguistic" (230) but denies that language is Stevens's "ultimate horizon" (232n10). For Stevens, though, the case is not so simple. His late paradigmatic allegiances remain divided between nature and language models.

In these later poems the logic of difference is not resolved in the "amassing harmony" of a "multiple, untotalizable 'unity'" (232n4); it traces instead to this paradigmatic uncertainty. Being "part [of everything] is an exertion that declines," Stevens observes and Shaviro notes (225). But for Shaviro this recognition is not an acknowledgment of separation from the organic whole but rather an affirmation of the "relation of part to whole." For the Stevens of the later poems, however, there are *two* possible wholes, the poem and the world, and although he tries to "mate" them (in "A Primitive like an Orb"), they continue to the end to remain at odds. Perhaps this is why Shaviro's "new kind of unity" lacks unification and why "Stevens's poetry of unlimited affirmation does not assert anything" (229). Indeed, such inflated notions of unity and affirmation remain empty.

The space of Stevens's late poetry is irreducibly double or plural, a scene viewed through the bifurcated optics of the poet-philosopher. But this doubleness is less a cause of impotence than the unlimited affirmation that Shaviro celebrates. Stevens's late meditation on language leads him away from his organic paradigm of earth and toward the human city of history (as in "An Ordinary Evening in New Haven"), a city that remains alive not as a multiple unity but as an ever-problematic multiplicity rooted in the doubleness of language itself. What matters for the human city is not the innocent "becoming" of unlimited affirmation but rather the limited affirmations and negations of a problematic "world."

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To the Editor:

On first reading Steven Shaviro's essay, I saw it simply as an exercise in oxymoronics, but I eventually discerned its non-sense nature in de-*term*ining the inability to decide undecidability in reading individual lines from Stevens's poems. I want to question some specific passages and make a general observation.

Shaviro states, "Stevens proposes a radical perspectivism in which the unity of the mind or of the world, the mountain height from which all possible perspectives may be viewed simultaneously, is only another perspective" (221). I do not understand the radicality of this relativism, which grows out of turn-of-the-century pragmatism ("radically" attacked by Lenin in *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*), which was introduced into American poetry by Gertrude Stein and T. S. Eliot, who elaborated it formally in his thesis on Bradley, and which J. Hillis Miller discusses at length in *Poets of Reality*. Shaviro also states, "This unity of divergent viewpoints is also a unity of different and irreconcilable beginnings. Beginnings cannot be traced to an origin for