

Discussion

Johannes Türk: I apologize for not having been here for the last session; I probably missed the culminating points of the workshop so far because of a problem that intimately relates to the future: that is, the care of one's children. [laughter] And I thought we'd get to that maybe later—to care, and to many other things... So, good. It's a great pleasure for me to comment on this last panel. I'll take the opportunity to remind us where we started from. [See written comments.]

... So how do you see your project[s] as responses to that, and how does the workshop as a whole allow us to re-situate our work and our time? Those are the big challenges that I want to begin with.

Richard Nash: I'll take just a—just a—minute to say very quickly that I think you're right. I sort of apologize for the reading of Pope—it gets tacked on inadequately at the end of what I was moving toward... But I think you're right to describe what I'm doing as in some ways a compromise formation located towards what I see as a “near term future”—that is, “What is the near term future for eighteenth-century studies within an academy that's changing in ways that in some ways I want to resist, in some ways I think it is not good, not propitious?” It certainly means that we're going to keep getting smaller for one, in the humanities. But I also think he's [Pope's] responding to real cultural transformation, real changes, and I think there's a certain sense in which the period that we *study*, that we are invested in reading and re-reading, has hastened a movement towards, has brought about—has contributed to—the rise of the Anthropocene. That is something we do need to be responding to, culturally. And my own sense is that one of the things we can do is to be thinking about how we re-formulate the humanities into a posthumanist project, one that thinks more ecologically and less anthropocentrically. So I'm hoping to think about strategies for reading that might enable that and might open a renewed place. The alternative to which—it seems to me—is a neoliberal university that will find less and less funding for the humanities, and require fewer and fewer job openings, and will bracket the modern humanities off into what was once the classical humanities (you know, that position where your office is in the very small wing in the very small corner of a very small department).

Just recently I found myself reading a book with the propitious title of *The Future of The “Modern Humanities.”* It was written in 1968 (auspicious year) and was the final volume in a jubilee celebration of the Modern Humanities Research Association (England's version of the MLA). The final paper is the title paper for the volume, and it was delivered by William Riley Parker, who was at that time not only the head of the MLA—for whom the Parker Prize is named—but also the chair of the department of English [at Indiana University], and he's a Miltonist. When students go through their doctoral exams they have a bust of blind Milton looking down on them and also a portrait of an even more unsympathetic William Riley Parker looking down on them... and this was the last thing he ever wrote. He in fact died during copyediting, which was probably some sort of omen about “What is the future of the humanities?” He was ready for giving up on the modern humanities in 1968 it turns out. So, this is in some ways a fulfillment of that...—but I am thinking it's up to us to re-imagine what would be the—what would be useful and productive—about retaining what I think has been enormously valuable in the humanities in some sort of reconfigured academic environment. So that's what I'm shooting for.

Türk: I'm not sure who was first—

Lupton: Well, do I get to respond—?

Türk: Oh, yes.

Christina Lupton: Well so I want to get—I want to get in quickly, because first of all, Johannes, I thought that was an incredibly eloquent summary of my argument. I'm very grateful for it, and I'm going to feed all your phrases back into it and it will become clearer. So I guess what I understand your question to do (I mean) is open a complete sort of Pandora's box of things for me in the sense that (I mean) this book project is bizarrely personal for an academic book in the sense that... I mean, in my sort of other, more political, nonacademic life, I really, deeply believe that if we give up on a future where we work less, then basically we're screwed. I mean, I think that there is a renewed sense in which we must grasp that as a political project for ourselves and our children, and that any sort of environmental discourse or discourse about how we want to defend the humanities has to start with a vision of the future where we're all going to work four hours a day instead of twelve. So for me in some ways it's very personal to go back to this moment here where people are formulating that as part of the democratic project, because now it seems laced with all of these kind of environmental things. And obviously if we're going to linger, to live—continue to live—on this planet we have to live at a much sort of less intense rate than we do. So all of this is, for me, tied up with defending the humanities as the place where we model what it might mean to live lives which are divided between kind of low impact practices and, you know, high impact activity in a way that is more or less sustainable in relation to other lives. You know, in my own life I've obviously just resolved this in some sense by going and hanging out in Scandinavia where people work half the hours of Americans—and Helge will confirm this so...—I mean, you know, it's not to me unrealizable: it's just not American [laughter], which doesn't mean that it's not the future. I guess, you know, the future isn't America anymore; the future is Scandinavia. So okay, that's the light bit, the other bits—

Helge Jordheim: The Bernie Sanders moment? [laughter]

Lupton: Yeah.

Unidentified Speaker: That's what I was thinking.

Nash: They're going to make Scandinavia great again. [laughter]

Lupton: So a couple of things I just wanted to respond to from Johannes's comments. First of all, I mean, I—with this argument—I mean, this comes at the end of a book that is very much about books in their physical form and Johannes has invoked what that might mean: to think about that physical form as a sort of path of return to a certain kind of reading practice. I'm a little undecided myself about whether I think you need the physical prop of the book in order to do this kind of reading. I mean, to some extent I think that it's certainly there in this form of the argument, but I also think that the book serves metaphorically—to go to the metaphor argument—for a certain kind of reading that would not preclude, you know, a way of thinking about the future that...you know, has relied in the past on having [physical] books that you are going to read but might as well involve downloading stuff to your Kindle or simply imagining the future in the

way that that practice once facilitated... which is to say, as one that is going to be quieter, not more agitated, not more accelerated. As the sort of margin of time that is going to come after—after the action, after retirement, after the end of the week, after your kids are in bed—you know, the “after” that is so vital to, I think, the practical work of being book owners and readers is also one that is metaphorical for me in lots of very old ways of thinking about time and, of course, very Christian ways of thinking about the future in some sort of way that would get us back to the earlier discussion.

Türk: Can I just add a phrase that just went through my head? “After now.” That would be the political slogan, right?

Lupton: Yeah, exactly. [Laughter] I might not win the election. [General murmuring, laughter] And then, I just also wanted to sort of tick the box that Johannes sort of referred to the way in which I’ve been thinking about a not-open future, and I think that’s true. And one of the reasons it’s been great to be here is to think through about the ways in which I do genuinely believe in the book as both a tool of optimism and an instrument in thinking about the grounds for that optimism being the fact that the future is to some extent already in view, already closed. I mean that it’s not about—it’s not about an openness—that it’s about something that, you know, arrives in a way that... I haven’t formulated it very well yet, but I’m sort of really interested in a kind of reverse-antiquarianism, where you would... —you handle the book as something that has literally arrived from the future and therefore feel the proximity of that future as one in which that book will have been read at the level of a sort of material practice: that would show, show the availability—the accessibility—of that future as something that is already on hand in a very sort of immediate, tactile way (that maybe goes to the touch stuff [in the discussion of Samuel Baker’s and John Han’s papers]). So I’m also interested, I guess, in some of the discussions that have come up about contingency. So one of the sections of this book is about contingency and how that’s modeled in (sort of) physical reading practices and ways of thinking about reading and time. And I would just stress here that for me contingency *is not* about an open future; it’s about the understanding that things might have been or be other than they are, which requires things to *be* in one way in order for you to see that they might have been other ways. Now, in Luhmann’s terms, this is constitutive of our modern experience because while we live in institutions that are one way (and we feel they can’t be resisted or changed by us), we are living in the awareness that they could be different; they’re not God-given institutions—they are in some sense contingent institutions, so we could theoretically have had them otherwise. But we don’t; we have them this way. And so I want to get that back in there, because for me at least that version—that very much more specific understanding of contingency as characteristic of what it feels like to live in modernity—has been very useful in thinking about some of the experiences that inflect our relationship to time and to narrative, and it’s not the same as the chance stuff, or the open future stuff... So I just want the full vocabulary available because in the last few years I’ve relied very heavily on the idea of contingency, partly through Luhmann, and I *don’t* think it’s the same as the open future. In fact, I think it might be the opposite of the open future, and I’m interested, obviously, in what Christine and others have to say about that because I think we’ve been a bit sloppy in the ways that we’ve sort of invoked contingency to imply some version of openness, whereas I think it’s something else.

Daniel Fulda: Why “opposite”?

Türk: Oh yes, graduate students jump the queue. I think—

Kate Blake: Kate?

Türk: Kate first.

Blake: So my question was for Tina, actually. I really enjoyed your paper—thank you so much—and it would be great even just, I was thinking about, I would love a, like a popular version of this essay to give my freshmen on the virtues of reading and its connection to writing, because sometimes just saying, “There’s going to be a paper on this book,” is not good enough to compel them, but—it gave me a lot to think about.. —But what I—my question was about *Simple Story*, and maybe it’s more of a clarification maybe? Just walk me through, because I always—you know, I don’t really know what to do with the second part of that book and I’m trying to, I’m looking sort of at some of the quotes on pages nine and ten, about “the heroine who reads, and whose story needs reading, Matilda’s role is to make the time spent with books apparent in a way it was not in her mother’s ill-fated theatre of fulfillment,” which I think is great, and I just... My question is just sort of about how the books play a role in—that there is still that sense of absence and pain and trauma, right, and the working through and the trying to get back in touch with Dorriforth and also the transition away from a story about kind of him and his problems with, you know, interpretation and then onto her, and so I’m wondering what—how do you see this sort of centrality of books to Matilda at the same time as, you know, the pain that they cause, right? And sort of the distance and the... I mean, I guess what I’m asking is, “Is there, like, a—in her future, where they’re... you know, after the reconciliation: are there still books?”

Lupton: Ah, right. Interesting: Or do they become redundant when they’re at the point where they’re realized?

Blake: Right.

Lupton: Well, I mean, I think that for me—at least in this reading, I mean—... *A Simple Story* becomes this novel that sort of models the irreconcilability of reading and actions—which is one of the problems here, right? That, you know, and it would be writ large, the fact that in utopian fictions there is no reading either, right? You know, once you get there you don’t have to read because there’s nothing left to...—because you don’t need the future anymore because you’re in the future, and this is, I think, something that is just painfully felt for Inchbald at all levels in her own life as a woman who’s had a very social sort of moment (decade) and then has a very non-social decade in which she reads. And in everybody’s life to some extent the problem is that reading involves investment in a future. It is the nature of reading that to some extent—however pleasurable it is in the now—it’s future-oriented because it is about the fact that somehow the quality of its—you know, you go to bring it back into action—you know to bring it back into action, and the action will be better than it would’ve been beforehand, but that involves a consistent jarring problem of deferral; like, you know, why—“If I can act, why not just act now? Why wait? Why read?”—this is your undergraduates for you. So I don’t know if I think Matilda’s future would have reading in it. I mean, insofar as I think Matilda isn’t much of a character but

more of a sort of device to show a problem, I would say that she shows this problem in a way that isn't resolved. I mean, the fact that that book doesn't work it out, it doesn't work it out.... It's two bits that fall apart: one is a reading bit, one is an acting bit. How do you put them together? I don't know. You just go back to the... you go back to the acting bit. You read the reading bit, you go back to the acting bit. You begin again in the cyclical—but you don't... do you ever bring them together? No. You can't read and act at the same time unless you're, you know, texting... which is what, you know, why this is in some ways the natural zenith of a kind of accelerated media history where... you know, for someone like Kittler or Steigler this is where they all come together; action... when action and writing and reading all come together what you get is that sort of hyperbolic kind of twenty-first-century texting/acting/reading all at once! Isn't this great, it all converged?! But I guess I think in some ways... to think of it—them—as a problem is the answer.

Türk: I think next...oh, Rachel was, I think, next.

Rachel Seiler-Smith: I'm kind of now a hook because I had a similar question, but reading these papers together was really helpful for me in the sense that even though Richard, I think, is talking about some material crises, it still takes on this sort of totalizing aspect. Whereas, you know, Christina's paper is much more about the immediacy and the material practice, and both of them made me want to ask a question—sort of akin to Kate's—about pedagogy: What does this have to do with the actual thing? And I'm thinking, you know, I've read a lot of criticism on Elizabeth Inchbald, *Simple Story*, and one of the most tickling things I found about Christina's reading is when you said that Inchbald—the second half is, like, “punitive.” That close reading, actually, becomes this sort of punitive practice of, you know, “You didn't read closely or slowly enough, or at all; you need to go back and read it again,” and I'm just thinking of how—at least at IU—on student evaluations they ask, “How many hours did you spend on this class?” And they ask you to reflect on that in comparison to others, and time and again you get students who say (a lot of times business students) who say, “This took too long. This took me too long. I don't want to read close enough. I don't want to slow down; x, y, z...” And I'm wondering, when we think about reader time and we think about our students and the times they devote to our classes and to reading, and if you're thinking about leisure time, right, as a sort of democratizing futurity—which I think is great—at the same time, what does that mean for the actual immediate structure of your classrooms, possibly in the Scandinavian/British context? But, I guess, how would you apply this to the classroom is, I guess, what I want to know. And we haven't really talked about actual classroom practices yet in this “About Eighteenth-century Futures.” We've sort of referenced it, but I guess I want to know if we were to do a pedagogical model, what would it look like, you know, teaching this and talking about this in the classroom? And to Richard's end as well, I guess.

Nash: Do you want me to go first? I mean, I'm happy to do it. It's really easy for me to give the short answer to that, which is, “I have not yet attempted to teach this; I'm looking forward to it next year.” But what I am thinking, and what I'm writing my way towards, is trying to develop my own critical vocabulary as a way of taking students—asking students to engage... —and I think *Essay on Man* is probably a text where I will work this most clearly because we have the voluminous [Maynard] Mack construction of *Essay on Man*, and what I'm going to be interested in trying to do is to get students to read through the way in which a critical apparatus has been

built up around the poem in order to structure a particular reading of the poem and [ask] how, if we bring a different critical vocabulary to the poem, can we read the poem against itself and against the reading that's been built up around it? What I'm doing in imagining that practice—which right now is a future practice, and so I don't know if it works—is the idea of something like the compromise formation, where I am trying to find ways for what I consider to be incredibly valuable skills about close reading and attentive study of texts to remain viable but to now contribute to a project other than the one that I think Mack was interested in (to use him as just an example) building up, which is, it seems to me, one of cultural inheritance, and it does seem to me that the endpoint of what I will be striving for in that classroom is not to have activities where students will say, “This was an excellent course because I spent almost no time on it,” but rather, “This course took a lot of time, but the kinds of work I was doing in the class I find of value in other courses that I'm also taking,” right? That. How does the work that I'm trying to re-imagine in my classroom contribute to what is a changing landscape of higher education? And hopefully I can make peace with that and feel good about it, though I'm not sure; I'm a little nervous.

Türk: Helge has a hook, but he's also after Monique, the next one on the list.

Helge Jordheim: Yeah, but they're different; this is a short hook. This is interesting because that question is the one that Bruno Latour takes on in his “Facing Gaia” lectures. It is actually that question: How do we deal with the pedagogical issue? How do we communicate these kinds of, well, dystopian visions in a way that is politically mobilizing? And he tries out these different ways of doing that—largely unsuccessfully, I would say. He returns to the idea of natural religion, where we worship Gaia as a god and Gaia mobilizes us to fight for her—it's really a very strange, Schmittian political theology language, but the question is the same, right? So how do you find a way to sort of scare young people into understanding these... well, this threat facing us, right?

Türk: Yes, Rachel?

Tracey Hutchings-Goetz: Tracey.

Türk: Ah, Tracey! Sorry.

Hutchings-Goetz: It's okay, yeah. So my kind of question or comment I conceived of as a way of potentially bridging both of the papers, and that was through Jane Bennett's “vital materialism” because it seems to me, Christina, that part of—and please correct me if you don't think this is what you're doing—but it seems to me that part of what you're advocating for through these reading practices is similar to what Bennett argues for in terms of improving and honing our sensual and material practices in a way that will kind of... reflects the precarity of our ecological situations. So one of the things that she argues is that we need to learn to be more sensitive to this world around us (this material world and these nonhuman actors around us) so I wanted to see if you sort of agreed with that or disagreed with that as a potential additional framework for, you know, what you're doing and how you see these texts advocating for reading practices in Godwin and Inchbald. And then, Richard, I guess it was, you know: Do you see that

as productive? Or do you think that that might be a way to advocate for the type of reading practices you want these students to learn in the classroom?

Lupton: Well, I mean, one thing I can say for sure about Jane Bennett's kind of politics and a lot of the kind of new materialism is that... I mean, for all the things that we might learn from attention to the material world, we will not learn about how to conceive of a better future. Objects can't have a future. They don't... they're not going to teach us how to do that. So if what we're actually invested in here is thinking about a better future, then it's going to have to be a humanist project in a pretty old-fashioned way I'm afraid. I don't actually think that—I mean—no amount of attention to objects can teach us to think time, and in some ways this has been my own sort of intellectual experience in the last... Well, I guess in the last seven or eight years I've gone through sort of stages of infatuation with (sort of) new materialism and (sort of) non-humanist ways of thinking about the world. But right now I feel fairly old-fashioned, squarely old-fashionedly humanist in what I imagine to be a sort of political project. If there's one here, I think it is simply about human beings rather than about the human beings as... you know, as in interaction with objects.

Nash: Well, I'll just jump in and say that's where I'm staking my—staking out precisely the opposite ground, okay?

Lupton: Yeah, I know. Which is why it was a good question, because I have, you know, this is, you know—

Nash: There is a sense in which one of the things I was struck with coming back to—when you come back to Godwin—the texts, the way in which Godwin is advocating for reading is very much this idea... precisely the kind of reading that we assign students, right? “Don't read contemporary literature; we want you to read this literature that belongs in libraries,” you know, that... And in fact that is—I very much worry about—that's the other context that I'm bringing in here—I'm very much worried about what that position does for us in the institution of the university, because that makes us very much the curators of a cultural inheritance. You can put that argument right back in F. R. Leavis and company, and it's putting us back—and there are administrators who want to put us in that particular path and assign us the duty of, “This is where students will go to get the texts that they need to have read in order to say that they went to college while they're getting their degree to get a job in business,” and I don't want to be part of that future. So I want to be—

Lupton: That is a very specific version of it though. I mean, yeah, what I was thinking in relation to the pedagogy question was about courses—I mean the kind of courses that I think will represent the future of the humanities as I'm sort of now feeling involved in it, are courses that will foreground media experiences that were offered by, say, long novels. Like, I don't think you can slip *Clarissa* in or... You teach a course called “The Long Novel.” You know, you can teach a course—I mean, I've taught this course, and I've taught a course in Denmark called “The Long Novel.” All we read was *Tom Jones* and Franzen's *The Corrections*, you know, and it was like, “Okay, so let's just see what it means to read ‘a long novel.’” And, I mean, one of the most popular courses for the Michigan students was this thing where they had to go and unplug for the summer. Like, you know, they read—also go and read Thoreau—but basically this course was

about, you know, just going and sitting on the, you know, a lake somewhere and giving your phones up for the summer. And I joke—I mean I joke about this—but actually I think one of the most kind of marketable courses in the future of the university is going to be one that forces, you know: “Let’s force you into the phenomenology of going offline for a month and writing with pen and paper.” Like, it’s going to be a seller, that course. It’s going to be great; they’re going to be queuing up for that course, and it’s not—

Nash: Especially if you could offer it as a MOOC [laughter]

Lupton: Yeah, a remote version. But it’s not, I mean, I don’t think, I mean... —and this is where, like...—Okay, so let’s offer courses in the phenomenology of what it was like to live in a previous media environment. These are not nostalgic courses. These are going to be (I think) forward-looking courses, because they’re going to be about different, about the sort of exploration of a media environment and its others that’s going to become a completely, sort of, contemporary issue. This is my prediction, where—

Nash: It’s a wildly optimistic prediction. [laughter]

Lupton: I’m a wild optimist; my forties are my optimistic decade.

Türk: So there are two hooks. First Joanna, and—

Joanna Stalnaker: Yeah, so I’m not sure if I misunderstood what you said earlier in response to—Tracey, right?—and Jane Bennett, but what you’re saying right now makes me think that you might be more in line with Jane Bennett than you’ve just said. Because I thought the point of her argument was, you know, you start thinking of yourself in relation to objects in a different way, or (whether that be natural objects or garbage or whatever it is)... that it’s not that the objects are going to create a new future for you, but that you’re going to create a new future for humans because of the fact of seeing yourself in this network of relationships to nature but also to waste and the things that... you know, the havoc that we wreak on the environment. So, you know, if there’s this idea of a course that would bring us into a new relationship—possibly to time, to nature, to garbage and other things—then maybe it would start to do precisely the kind of thing that she seems to be advocating.

Lupton: I think that’s right, but I still think that the futuristic aspect of it, the “project” aspect of it, right, the idea—the commitment to something being other than it is now—still... the human still has to kick in. But you’re right. I mean, you’re right, there is lots there in Bennett’s project that would work for the subject of this enquiry.

Türk: Yes, Nush?

Manushag Powell: I just had a quick anecdote about the kind of course you’re describing. Yale is doing something like this; they have been for—and, you know, it’s Yale, so this is maybe not wildly applicable, right? But—oh gosh, maybe five, six years ago—they started a program to get students off their phones by having, like, every residential college do some kind of class that requires, like, you know, use of the hands and mind unplugged from the phone. I know about this

because my mother (who did not finish college) is a master weaver, and somehow got roped into teaching hand weaving. And I was like “Ma—like nobody’s going to take that class; like, this is insane,” but in fact, like, they have to keep asking her to do more hours and adding more students. It’s been bizarrely popular. But I—you know, what does that mean for us? Because it is certainly something that you can study to do these, like, kind of artisanal, unplugged activities, but I don’t know that that saves the eighteenth century in the way...

Lupton: Well, Sean Silver at Michigan would say the opposite. I mean, what Sean wants to do is exactly this: kind of workshop-based learning that’s based on eighteenth-century artisanal practices that gets people actually reproducing the kind of origins of Enlightenment thinking through the material practices that are—that then sort of allow you to (in a sort of Latourian way) go back to the moment where the Enlightenment all went wrong... through your hands.

Powell: Well, they teach teaching eighteenth-century cookery, like, in a lab.

Lupton: And, I mean Leah [Price] and Deirdre [Shauna Lynch] teach a course at Harvard where you have to—you move through media forms each week. So the first week you write with, you know, you write on papyrus. The next week you... I mean, of course, it’s Harvard, so who... you know, not—I don’t teach at an institution that’s going to give me money for seventeen typewriters (which is the end of this). But, I mean, maybe some of you do, I don’t know....

Türk: Yeah. Transitioning to Monique, I just wanted to say that it seems to me that Hannah Arendt’s idea of “world” is actually very interesting with these questions, as well as Heidegger’s critique of self-understanding as Cartesian subjects—I think one is a response to the other. But I’ll elaborate later on; I put myself on the list. Monique?

Monique Morgan: So this is a very different line of thought. So this is for Richard: it’s a specific suggestion and then a separate specific question. So the suggestion has to do with the reading at the very end of the essay, and I thought it was a lovely reading of this image of a pebble in the lake and the expanding circles and that Pope performs the repetition in the subsequent lines... But I thought there was a bit of a missed opportunity with the last two lines—“Earth smiles around, with boundless bounty blest, / And Heav’n beholds its image in his breast”—because you have the repetition of the alliteration of the “b,” right? The “boundless bounty blest,” which then spills over boundlessly into the next line with “behold” [*sic*] and “breast,” but you have also the assonance of “around . . . boundless bounty.” And that “o” sound is spelled with circles, with “o”s on the page. When you say it, your mouth forms a circle, and so the image of the expanding circles is happening on the page but also being reproduced in the reader’s body.

Nash: So it’s a phenomenological experience. Yeah.

Morgan: Yes. But the question, which is separate, has to do with the use of “complementarity.” So in the broader stakes I understand you to be finding agential realism and complementarity useful because it allows for nonhuman agents and so allows a way out of anthropocentrism, right? But with complementarity in Pope’s *Essay on Man*... You make the duality in the poem very clear, but I’m wondering if it’s “complementarity” in the narrow sort of Niels Bohr/Karen Barad sense, and is that complementarity, like, in Pope’s poem, or is it because of various critical

apparatuses that are applied and make some aspects determinate and make other aspects illegible?

Nash: Okay, great. So this is something where I still have a good deal more work to do. But even the stress of having submitted this paper in *this* form and facing this question has moved me forward a little beyond where I am here. I'm particularly interested in mobilizing those three critical terms that I have identified as linked to one another (complementarity, entanglement, and mattering), but also in doing so... Using them both in the sense in which I take them first from Barad but also taking them in the larger—in various larger senses than the ways, the specific ways in which Barad brings them up (and obviously “complementarity” is not hers). In doing that I'm particularly interested in positioning these against privileged categories that I also see as being linked in a humanist tradition that (I'm trying to work away from). So one of the ways that Barad particularly takes Bohr's notion of complementarity and pushes on it is in the argument that complementarity makes epistemology—epistemological notions—of uncertainty rearticulated as ontological indeterminacy, and so she winds up using complementarity specifically as the complementarity of ontology and epistemology. And it's—of the various ways in which in the fuller reading of *Essay on Man* that I want to use this—it's *that* notion in particular that I want to follow out, and one of those aspects is that... The argument that I only gesture towards here but don't really carry out is that in seeing the influence of Pascal behind Pope there is... While we're used to reading Epistle One as this sort of rational doctrine that Pascal lined (that the heart knows a reason that the reason knows not) is one that I think actually structures the rhythm of the poem's four parts, so that you have that chain of being in that first epistle is echoed again in the chain of love in epistle three. And the movement that goes back and forth between—throughout—between what the first half of that poem—the first two epistles—are articulating as a sort of rational conception of man and the universe gives way to a more emotional understanding of sociability and human happiness. So that in the reading of the poem that I ultimately want to mobilize as a whole... is to see Pope's argument as ultimately, while asserting a rational doctrine, at the same time troubling that with his own complementary rhythm that he's borrowing ultimately (I think) from Pascal, and that sense... But none of those are—and this is where I get tied in knots in the version that I have now—I don't want to be saying we should all go back and read Pope and Pascal in order to understand Niels Bohr. I mean, this is, like—I don't want to be—and there's a certain sense in which I'm very much aware that what I'm doing here is I'm appropriating a particular development in physics, and partly using it to now go back and re-read poetry from the generation immediately after Newton. So that I'm trying to locate poetic responses to changes in understanding of the physical world as ways of re-reading history.

Türk: So John jumped the queue...

John Han: No.

Türk: ... and I think this is an example of how synchronization... I mean, we're still waiting for the second person with a regular contribution: Helge.

Zabel: I'm not a hook.

Türk: Yeah, yeah, you're not a hook. I put you as number eight or something—

Han: I shouldn't be jumping the queue though.

Nash: Are you a graduate student?

Türk: Oh, right, you—

Han: Yeah, yeah, come on; geez. I'm at the adult table now. [Laughter. Applause]

Nash: This is—the futurity has become the present.

Türk: That's the last chance at a jump, right?

Han: Yeah, I'll just forgo that chance

Spang: Am I on the list, Johannes?

Türk: Let me see. You are on the list, but when did you—I hope I didn't miss you the first time—

Han: Number ninety-nine

Türk: Helge is next. That I'm certain about, because the first three I identified.

Stalaker: Can you read your list?

Türk: So my list is: Helge, Joanna, Sam, Jonathan, Jesse, Christine, Rebecca, Johannes, and John.

Han: Okay, well now I might need to... —no, I'm kidding. [Laughter]

Türk: And David—but David, where were you, actually? Did I miss you?

David Alff: Just back here. [Note: Alff is seated at the far end of the room]

Türk: I mean temporally...

Lupton: We can collect, right?

Nash: I think so.

Lupton: Yeah, just give us thoughts. We're on the ball.

Nash: Yeah.

Alff: We can go 'til 5pm, right? [Laughter]

Türk: Well then there's Helge anyway.

Jordheim: Now?

Türk: Yeah.

Jordheim: Okay, I'm going to make this try to not sound like rambling. I think I'd just like to thank the organizers, to start with, for pairing these—giving us another fantastic pairing, that I think is... I didn't see how well this fit before the discussion started, but now I just feel like this is the most crucial thing that we'll ever discuss. [Laughter] So I want to see if we can think about both of these papers in terms of the question of limits. You said "closure"... I just... Thinking about terminology we might use "limits"—limits—spatial limits and temporal limits. And it sort of also to go back to that UNESCO report from the 70s called *Limits to Growth*, because that's really in a sense what we're discussing. So how do we think about limits now? How do we think about crisis? And they're linked in the sense that crisis, as you know, etymologically is about drawing limits, right? So it's a limit in time, or a limit in space and you move beyond that. And then I wanted to sort of point to eighteenth-century—long eighteenth-century—books that have become incredibly important for me for thinking about this, and one is Fontenelle's *Dialogue on the Plurality of Worlds*. That—for me and the work I do in conceptualizing the world—has become this incredibly important book. Partly because it's read all over Europe, but partly also because it's a book that people read [as on] the endlessness of the universe. It isn't. It's a book on human anthropology seen from outside. What happens to us as humans in the moment that there might be people looking at us? What happens to us as humans when we see our planet is limited and [consider] the possibility of other planets being there? It's really—it's a huge move as I see it for thinking about humanist...—and I'm not sure if I agree with you that humanism is necessarily anthropocentric, because I think that is a move to think about humanism in a non-anthropocentric way because you think about the idea of seeing humans from outside our species in a certain sense. I think it's incredibly important and interesting. It can be used for suggesting that move that you're referring to.

The other thing is in time—and this is what you put so beautifully—is how to think about—and I discussed this with Johannes the other day... Living in—in Norwegian we have this word: "aftertime." You can live in the "aftertime." So how do you live with the idea, or how do you live when everything has happened? When sort of the story is ended, when the revolution sort of passed, when growth has ended? How do you live, and how do you imagine that living, right? Because that's the question that you're asking. So how can we now have a pedagogy to think about how it is to live in the aftertime, where all those sort of modern spatial/temporal configurations (that we have been so used to) are slipping, in a certain sense. So we need to think about what it would mean to be—and I don't mean sort of post-apocalyptic "after the catastrophe," but just after many of those things that we've taken for granted are not that valid anymore. So thinking—so it's something about seeing our position partly from beyond the spatial limit. Looking down, in a certain sense, and partly beyond the temporal limit, looking back and projecting how the aftermath—how the aftertime—really would look. And the fantastic book for that is Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister's Wanderjahr*, but not where he's still in the process of the *Bildung*, but the second volume where everything's just finished. He's finished; his process of building a revolution has passed. He's just living. He's helping people. He's a doctor; he goes around meeting people

and helping them in this weird sort of strangely—almost post-apocalyptic—landscape. So it's just a book about living when everything that... Where the open future, it isn't really closed, it's just behind you in a certain sense. It's an open future that's behind you.

Jonathan Sachs: Is that called middle age? [laughter]

Jordheim: So that was my rambling intervention.

Türk: Oh yeah, okay. So we go to Joanna with a real contribution.

Stalnaker: Okay, I'm not sure if it should be framed as a "real contribution," but I'll try, I'll try.

Türk: Meaning not a hook.

Stalnaker: No, no, no, I understand, but I'm just not sure I'm feeling able to do anything real right now. So I guess these questions might be related, or they might not. Richard, I was really interested in this question of the sort of microcosm and macrocosm, reconfiguring the place of the human with the difficulty of piercing the vast immensity of the universe, in relation to what we've been saying about deep time, you know, doing that in a similar way with this tiny sliver of human history in it. And I guess what I wanted to ask you was, you know, we've talked a certain amount about close reading in (as a method)—you've used close reading as a method for getting at that in Pope—and I guess I just wanted to ask you a little bit about the question of sort of microcosm and macrocosm in reading strategy. So I'm not technologically astute at all because I'm always trying to unplug, so I don't know how to do distant reading of the kind ... or surface reading with these sort of machine readings of poetry, but I have found, you know, in my work on, you know, eighteenth-century descriptive projects, you know, the question of these huge, sprawling, multi-volume works—how do you read them; how do you deal with them? How do you sort of go back and forth between a real attention to form on the level of, you know, a sentence or verse or whatever it is and then the macrocosm of this sprawling work, and does it actually have a shape? And if so how do you account for that shape? So I guess my question would be sort of how you think of that both in terms of your own reading practices and in terms of your teaching? Which brings me to something that I think is related for Tina: just to talk a little bit more about the question of multi-volume books as opposed to, you know, "the book" in this way, because of course you're dealing with a multi-volume book—or at least a two-volume book—in the first case, and, you know, how do you see the sort of promise of the future and also the book? You know, a book has an ending, right, but it—you sort of buy the first book in a subscription series or whatever. I'm thinking of my son, who's an avid reader of the *Percy Jackson* series and, you know, there's this promise that there will be always a new series and, you know—and now he has to wait a year for the next book and he really can't understand that he's going to have to wait that long, so.

Türk: Oh, so we go to Sam.

Samuel Baker: Yes, so I have just a comment for Richard and then a question for Tina that's the allegory of a question for Richard; I guess we'll see how that works. So my comment for Richard is just that I think you're a little hard on ol' F. R. Leavis; he might be a friend for you. The early

Leavis—like if you look at *Culture and Environment* [1933], right?—he’s really posing his whole project as a, you know, like an engagement with a society that’s left behind what he values. But what he values isn’t exactly humanism; it might be compatible, it might be like what you’re seeing because it’s about culture and environment, right? You know, so like... Granted the great tradition—that does look a lot like that Classicism that you see, eighteenth-century studies and the study of literature in general is being turned into, but I think there are some resources for you there. Simon During is writing very well right now on Leavis in ways I think... which I think you might find very interesting. So my question for Tina is just a question about Godwin’s metaphysics, right, and about not contingency but necessity. I just think it’s so interesting that the way I understand Godwin, I might be wrong about this—this is, like, my cartoon Godwin, the history of philosophy—my understanding of Godwin is that he thinks that the future’s closed, right? Everything’s necessarily going to happen in the way that it happens, and we’re reading not because our reading is going to help us intervene in an open future, but because it’s in the speculative mode (that reading opens up to us) that we can come to, like, a higher ... a better attitude with what’s going to happen. And so it’s, it’s a stoic cosmology, right? that reading is like this stoic reconciliation to what’s going to happen and I said—I used the word “speculation” advisedly because it connects to me with Christine’s paper, right?—I think that for Godwin reading is this zone for metaphysical pondering on something that however you could see...you’re not figuring it out, but you could *see* it. And I’m not sure exactly what to do with that, but it does seem to me that—just because I’m sure these are short papers—that you talk about Godwin in really provocative ways that resonate so much with what I know of Godwin’s metaphysics, but then you didn’t directly address that, so I’m curious how you would? Or if you think that I’ve got it wrong, and there’s some other way that you read Godwin’s metaphysics, right? that would be more conducive to your argument.

Türk: Should we take one more and then have a response phase and then go through the rest of the list? Yes? Are you ready? Okay, then Jonathan is the next and then—

Sachs: I have very little to say, actually, except to pile on a little bit to what Joanna was saying in response to Tina. And that is that you describe yourself as an optimist and you’ve given us a very optimistic account of what the book can do, but I think there’s a really profound question in what Joanna was getting at, which is: “What happens when the book is not the promise of the future, but actually an obstacle to that future?” Right, when you’re reading a ten-volume descriptive book and you know you need to, you know—

Powell: It’s definitely an obstacle in my future.

Sachs: Yeah, but at some point you need to, right,... yeah, but there are some books that exist not as a promise but as a threat. [laughter] You know, we know we need to reckon with them, but how, right? So I just—that was just a pondering... But I also wanted to try to point out what I see as a kind of overlap and distinction between the two papers, which is the way that for you, Richard, that you’re trying to look at past—I want to call them “objects,” but that pushes against my point—past poems immaterially, as that which might contain residue or traces to tell us about our future, right? And in Tina’s case what you’re suggesting is that the book exists in the future and is a kind of material promise sitting in front of us that’s going to take us to a future. So there’s an issue I think of directionality and materiality that cuts quite nicely across both papers; that they

seem to be working in different directions with different approaches to materiality and immateriality but in quite sympathetic ways. I'll leave it at that.

Nash: Okay, shall I go first? So thank you for that; I'm still digesting that, but I think you're right, and I'm going to leave my response to you at that...For now, anyway. Samuel, I had not been thinking that I should be more sympathetic to F. R. Leavis, but as soon as you started saying that I realized that I probably should be, so you've given me something to do. Thank you for that. And for, "How do I bridge close reading and distant reading?"—so here my answer would be, "As I do everything: non-systematically and probably badly but, I hope, productively." And the particular instance that I'm aware of here is that in Mack's edition of *Essay on Man*, he—the word "pervasive" appears in one of the opening lines, and his gloss (because almost every line of that poem is glossed) is that the *OED* records this as the first use of "pervasive" in the English language. Well that's no longer true; that was true in 1908, but now the *OED* is better and it goes back to Hooke. But also now you can now go to *ECCO* and you can search for "pervasive," so this is one of the—one of the forms of distant reading is...—and that's what actually led me around to realize that when Pope uses that term he's picking it up from what is a really widespread theological debate with a lot of very obscure pamphlets and in the midst of which appears Mallet's poem, *The Excursion*, as one of the other earlier uses, and the more I was reading into this the more I found myself thinking, "Oh, I'm beginning to think that..."—and because we know Pope read Mallet—"that that poem is behind this opening image Pope's using." So there's a certain sense in which in this...I just look at distant reading—and the various tools that we have available to us—as enabling ever more bizarre and idiosyncratic ideas that I want to pursue much more rapidly than may contribute to feedback—in some sort of feedback loop—into the close reading that I then want to do, and that quite frankly is how I'm doing this, which I suspect is not the best way to use these tools, but when I get a new tool I tend to play with it.

Lupton: Okay, so... Helge, I think, "How to live in the 'aftertime'?"—I really like that. I mean, it raises the question of whether we want to consider the possibility of giving up on a future as in fact an incredibly optimistic acceptance of the fact that we don't have to go anywhere anymore. That in fact, you know, teaching our kids to keep things just the same might be an ethical imperative of a new kind. Yeah. So the—Joanna and Jonathan I'm going to do together, the sort of media question—so, I mean, in my, in this project, there's a reason why this book ends in the early nineteenth century, and that is because serial publication becomes the norm. And so to some extent in terms of my history this story that I'm telling about the unit of the book ends with true serialized publication of the novel, but these multi-volume eighteenth-century novels aren't serialized publications. They're just multi-volume novels. And to some extent as soon as one is reading something from the past, even if it had a seriality in its own moment, one is accessing that narrative (or that form) in the form that I'm interested in, which is something that's already...it's already happened. And it's happening again as a sort of reading experience, requires access to it in that sort of complete form. And I would say that that is also where the ten-volume—I mean, your son may well be threatened in some sense by the infinite future of the *Percy Jackson* series, but this is very different from the idea that there's ten volumes that already exist that you might or might not want to get through but which, in their already existing, offer you the opportunity to do that at your own whim. It's very—it's really different, I think—and there's something very relaxing about something's already existing and yet being your future while its future is already finished. So it's something about that that I like. But it's not that I ha-

ven't thought about these things; it's just, and I—it's very important, I think that I—you know, this wouldn't work as a nineteenth-century project because the phenomenology of reading Dickens for his contemporaries is just very, very different from the thing that I'm talking about, and there's all kinds of questions about finding and, you know, stuff as well, but I'm on the case. [Laughter]

So the hard one is Godwin's metaphysics. So, yes, I have thought about... I mean, Godwin ultimately believes, I think, not in an open future—but he does believe enough in a sort of malleable, immediate future to join with Coleridge, for instance, in planning the, you know, the colony in America. And at the same time, I mean, I... Basically, we're on the same page. I agree with you because I think that what Godwin is imagining for reading is very different from what we imagine as kind of, you know—it's not pain. It's not like, "Oh, I'm going to say this thing, you're going to read it, and you're going to have this 'ah-ha' moment, and it's going to reveal for you something that wasn't evident to you before, and you will be now enlightened." It is much more performative than that, in the sense that in order to understand the future Godwin believes that you have to *sit down and read*. And to sit down and read is already to be in the future because if you have—if everyone has time to sit down and read in the way that he imagines, then the future's already arrived. There's something very, very—the logic of that is very mixed up, so...

Baker: Yeah, it's like communing with the future, which is the idea that's come up earlier.

Lupton: Exactly. That's right, yeah. So it's not—it really isn't instrumental; reading isn't instrumental to the future. It *is* the future, because insofar as everyone can do it, the more everyone can do it the more we're already in the future. There's something about that that ties in with the metaphysics, in the sense that it suggests a kind of known future rather than a mysterious future and also suggests this kind of physiology of revelation that just requires you to sit with it even if you're, you know, only doing that two hours a day, somehow.

Baker: Now I'm thinking about the flashback plots in his novels as enacting that too.

Sachs: And the way he writes them serially backwards.

Lupton: Yes, I have a reading of *Caleb Williams* as well in the longer... yeah.

Nash: Can I hook on that? Because isn't it important in that notion that what you're reading is specifically not the present, but reading that from the past, which somehow has deserved to survive into the present? Which...Isn't there...?

Lupton: Well it's kind of about content, but it's kind of not. So there's an interesting anecdote from Godwin where, you know—so you would think that reading *Caleb Williams* might then qualify as reading—it's in the present, but it's reading from the past, right? Except there's people who read *Caleb Williams* wrong, according to Godwin, like his friend, who read it as a novel. This was so horrifying to him because you were meant to read it slowly, and the idea that you just sat down and gobbled it up in one reading was the wrong thing. So within that text—which could flip either way—there's the possibility of two kinds of reading. So it's not completely coupled to what you're reading; partly it is *how* you're reading it, which is, I think... I mean, we

have analogies for this, because in some ways we don't care what our kids are reading as long as they're "off their phones and reading," it's good. Like, it could almost...but it couldn't quite be anything—but it could *almost* be anything, and Godwin kind of feels this too about reading, I think. But certainly it's not about reading stuff that's just hot off the press. But there's a wide understanding of this as a kind of contradiction in this period that, you know—I mean, Lackington (the bookseller) reports that whenever something happens that's exciting, the sale of books falls because people only read stuff in book form when they're not reading newspapers that are sort of feeding them this plugged in stuff, you know?

Nash: I think we've encountered this in the classroom.

Sachs: Quick, I mean there's... Coleridge also talk explicitly about this, right, the idea is that there's—reading a book is very different from reading a newspaper. And you can trace, in many cases, the metaphorical use of arboreal features—sorry, of bookish features—in Coleridge's writing (that he uses explicitly to push against newspapers).

Lupton: Yeah.

Türk: So in one row now: Jesse, Christine, Rebecca, Johannes, and David, and then I'm afraid we need to close it. And if you don't mind... I mean, we can go a few minutes over, but, you know...

Jesse Molesworth: I'll actually make it short. I mean, Richard, Pope believed in genius. I mean, Pope believed that he was uniquely positioned as, you know, Dryden's successor, as Milton's successor, to "vindicate the ways of God to man." He...The man believed in hierarchies; this is what *The Dunciad* is about, the lament about the loosening of hierarchies that he sees within his world. His—you know—when he says, "Whatever is, is right," that is an expression not simply of God's mastery in creating the world, but it's also an expression of his own mastery as a poet in making this particular line. So, you know, I mean there's a certain, you know—for me this, you know, clear sense of genius that emerges makes it difficult for me to accept, you know, this view of Pope as an ecological thinker. I'm just going to raise that objection.

Christine Zabel: I have two comments or reflections I just would like to share. One is where I want to second this—or what you said, that we need to engage more in distinguishing contingency and open future—and I think in might be difficult to always manage to distinguish them in very concrete terms, but I think conceptually we should do it at least. And I think one key term might be "necessity." You have mentioned it before, too, and I think contingency (at least in philosophical terms, but also in a logical term) is something that is non—there is non-necessity to what is coming, a non-necessity to the existence of something. And I think—and the more I think about it, open future seems to me very problematic. Because "open future"... I think we need a more relational term, as you just suggested with "pace"—that is, "acceleration and slowness"—and "open future" always implies also the closing up of future, because a "future" implies there is a future and it is a set of choices, and the set of choices kind of give causal—other set of choices. And it's always closing up and opening up again, and we need a more relational term in order to grasp that problem, I think. And in this way I would say in my project the speculation part would be the contingency part, because if—when my Duvillard guy, for example,

tries to speculate the life insurances or life annuities he tries to come up with the maximum profit, or calculate the maximum profit of life annuities and how long you might have to survive in order to get there, but he calculates the chances on it. There is no necessity at all that it will be the case, and you cannot know; there's no way to know. And in logical terms it might be right or wrong; you cannot know. And I think that is a big difference; there is no necessity to contingency and there is a kind of cost in necessity, at least for... Yeah, the more I think about it, I don't like "the open future" at all. We need a more... Like "pace" it is relational, there can be acceleration and slowness; but open future is just one side. We need... I don't know if we can come up with something different—and I think in that way opening a book is an encapsulated choice so it is an openness, not a contingency (I would say). And also with the plans, it is encapsulating choices in a way, that it would be a set of choices that you have of the future, which would be an openness but also a closing, so—and then I just wanted to give another reflection. I encounter very often in this—in discussion with an Americanist Anglophone world when it comes to eighteenth-century studies or early modern studies—that it is very interesting to me, being trained in Germany and France, that at least in continental Europe (I'm not sure if that is the case for Britain as well), there is this total fear of—especially early modernist or—to say something that is at all political. And it has longstanding repercussions of how Germans or French people do history, because there is this angsting about narratives or plots as well in history because you could actually engage with presentist questions. And here in the States I encounter much more of this, "We need this in order to survive." It is the contingency of the humanities that is maybe more at stake. And I don't know, I just encounter these two different—very different traditions about this, what I see maybe as a German angsting about—I think being an early modernist is kind of a removal of, or a distancing of, presentist questions. Although everybody would say of course your own question[s] have repercussions on the research that you're doing. But that's it. You should leave it with that. And here I encounter much more of this desire to actually engage with presentist questions, also see the need for it. And I don't know, I... It's just, like, my personal experience, but I also try to bring these two traditions together or in conversation with each other because I notice this European suspicion towards also American academia who have narratives and that there is this fear that you force history into narrative, and I think it might be helpful to have a discussion about that across the Atlantic. It's just a reflection I had when reading the papers.

Türk: Rebecca?

Spang: So ... I started out and I was going to ask somewhat flippantly of Richard: "Do we need 'neoliberal'?" And now I actually feel pretty strongly that we don't, that "neoliberal" has become such a catch-all word for basically "everything I don't like," that as soon as you use it you're simply saying, "I don't like this." And I find that to actually be quite a temper-tantrummy kind of behavior, and I'm not sure it's one that's part of making a very effective argument. Because I think you do make a very, very strong argument in your paper, but it's one I recognized through Johannes's gloss on Tina's paper. Because you [Johannes] said that buying a book is a promise, and so I was thinking about that and my immediate thought was, "Is it only in buying a book that you make yourself a promise? Are there other kinds of purchases?" And then suddenly—before you mentioned Dickens, but now re-enforced by your mention of Dickens—I thought of Miss Havisham's wedding dress. There are other sorts of things that one buys that are part of a promise.

Sachs: Always “stuff and money” with you. [Laughter]

Spang: It is. And so then thinking about the kind of promise that was and the kind of promise that that didn’t fulfill, I realized that what I think is happening in Richard’s paper is simply that he is demonstrating—“modeling,” we would say—love of Pope. Not papacy [laughter], but love of Pope, and that this is something that really... And that through loving the poetry—there is also something there about loving the world in which it was possible for people to write poetry and that if we can, in some tiny little way, shape, or form, inspire in our students (our children of sorts) a love of poetry, Pope, and the world that made it possible, then in fact we don’t have to go beyond the “now.” We can be “after now,” because we love what there is. And so that brought me to my final thought about reading as action when I thought about reading *to* a small child. It is not the same thing as reading to oneself.

Türk: So I think I have John and David, and I can actually go last, and I’m not sure if you want to respond at all; I mean, you can just say—

Han: I just had a quick comment about different futures for the material book, and I’m thinking—and this was already brought up—like *ECCO*, right? The way in which the eighteenth-century book was experienced in a certain way, but then the way we recover it now gives it a new future, right? And I’m wondering if that would occur with current material books now. Like, what’s the *ECCO* of *Harry Potter*, right? What’s that going to look like, right? I mean, we’re already kind of seeing it with iPhones and the way you read it, but I’m just curious. I mean, there seems to be a lot that we recover from having the digitization of the actual source text. So....

Türk: Yes?

Alff: Yeah, so I think the choice of Pope for critiquing the modern university is really fortuitous, not just because of *Essay on Man*, not just because of Windsor Forest as [a] sort of retreat from the city, but also for *The Dunciad*, in which the emblem of intensification and over-production is exactly the material basis for Tina’s optimism in the book—because there’s Grub Street, the cave of poverty and poetry, Lintot’s rubric post, and I’m wondering how a late eighteenth-century representation of book as time beside, time after now, time exempt from toil... What does it matter that that experience relies upon (presupposes) a time/labor/material-consuming industry that had to exist to make that experience possible?

Türk: So my short—what I thought was actually how to relate, you know, the questions we’ve talked about to a practice in the classroom. And I find myself—and I’ve repeatedly said this—since maybe two or three years, increasingly wary (is that the right word?) of the idea that what actually we do is to perform a certain intelligence. So I’m very skeptical of the original theses or the attempt to in a way promote oneself by thinking something surprising and I’ve come to recognize more and more that in the activities—intellectual activities—that a certain thickness of the world is actually necessary—and that’s why I was pointing to Hannah Arendt—and is a constitutive part of what we do. And so it’s a mistake to think that we are Cartesian subjects and in this quote “new wave” of realism, and especially in European academia there’s this new realist turn in a way in the wake of a French philosopher at the Sorbonne... I forgot his name, even. And I think that’s a profoundly bad direction to go, because it seems to me what you’re pleading for

is (in a way) thickening the world again, right? Because my sense is that it gets very thin. Like, the world is extremely thin because we're constantly asked to re-act and usually in the form of, you know, projects that are merely conceived as intellectual and that are in a certain way detached both from an embodied sense of being in the world—from being sensitive, even, to a certain social environment. And so to me really the task is not to discover creativity or to—you know—other forms of temporality as another resource that we just can feed into goal-oriented behavior. But rather to really break down the goal-oriented desire to be constantly making progressive contributions, to go forward, to be original—and rather focus on embedding those into something like a thick reality that carries its own intelligence, that maybe is only recognized at a slower speed, and so actually to write less, but thicker books, is actually the way to go.

Concerning—I wanted to end—and you're welcome to add more things, but I wanted to end by a small comment, I think. I wanted to thank Rebecca again for having gone through all the incredible accelerations that were necessary in order to create this slow space of reading over the last days, in which to my mind a lot more has been happening than just, you know, discussing papers but... you know, experiencing someone's fatigue or their leaning backwards in their chair or their facial expression or seeing the beauty of some of you thinking was actually equally part of this. Yeah, so thank you, Rebecca, especially [since] I'm not sure how the future will look like: I know that she has incredible administrative additional future burdens on her, so she might be willing—and I hope so—to steer us for another year or so, but that concerns institutional future, so I—yeah—thank you for this workshop but also for your, you know, steadfast, robust, at times idiosyncratic, and resourceful really steering of the Center for Eighteenth-Century Studies over the last years in spite of a lot of difficulties that you have also gone through also personally which.... yeah.¹ And [to the room] thank you for coming, so—

[Applause]

Nash: May we take a minute to try to reply? [Laughter]

Spang: Encore, encore!

Nash: So, Rebecca, I like your comment and would rush to say, “Yes, I can give up ‘neoliberal’ if I hadn’t already given up ‘posthuman’ and discovered to my regret that I need to drag it back,” so I’m going to think about that, but I couldn’t help but think when you were asking, “What else can one buy besides books?” is “Well, one can buy credit hours,” and there is just someone who was telling me the other day, “Well, what you do at IU is there’s a little shopping cart on top of where your courses are when you register.” I’m not sure that I’m ready to give up neoliberalism. I like the ideal that I’m in love with Pope. I do need to respond to Jesse, who would jump right in and say that I’m mis-loving Pope, and say that you are... I agree with you, and that’s one of the differences in the project I’m doing now and what I’ve done before that makes me very nervous about this kind of presentist argument. I’ve never been a presentist, and it seems to me to be one of the differences between what I’m doing now and what you [Molesworth] are doing. And one of the things you’re doing is you’re recovering what eighteenth-century writers believed in and you are telling that story and you want to tell it in a very strong way—even a provocative way—

¹ Editor’s Note: At the time of these comments, Spang had recently been named Director of the Liberal Arts and Management Program and was about to become President of the Bloomington Faculty Council. Both her parents had died within the previous year.

in order to get people to think about what *those* people believed. And there's a certain sense in which I'm trying to get back—and I'm very tentative about this because I'm hesitant about doing presentist arguments—I'm trying to get back at reading Pope against Pope. So that the fact that Pope believed in genius—he didn't just believe in genius; he actually believed in God, right? There's a lot that Pope believed in that I am in many ways discovering elements in Pope's poetry that work against what Pope asserts. So there is a sense in which I take the criticism that you're mounting there, but I'm hoping that I can find a way to incorporate that fully and make an argument that is simultaneously presentist and relevant and yet also historically alert. To that end, I do want to say that I especially appreciate the reference to *The Dunciad*. Among other things, I strongly believe that *Essay on Man* is part of a project that includes *The Dunciad* and certainly grows out of what began with the first *Dunciad* and contributes to the full *Dunciad*. I want to say I skipped over one point with Jesse: that Pope not only believed in genius but I would point out that when he writes those lines, "whatever is, is right," it's also worth thinking about the... John gave us Pope as a sixteen-year-old boy in Windsor Forest, but when he's writing *Essay on Man*, he's also a forty-six year old man knowing he's not going to live a long time—will write the next year about "this long disease, my life"—and attending to his ninety-odd-year-old mother who (in the course of his writing this poem) has a small stroke, falls into the fireplace, is severely burned and winds up dying from that. So "whatever is, is right" is not just an assertion of belief as I would read it, but also an assertion of the belief that one must have given the realities of elder care and what you're actually living with. It's that kind of complicated reading that I'm hoping to recover... and while I accomplished very little else while thinking about how ominous today might be, I did write a brief first paragraph of doggerel verse that begins "Oh blindness to the future! kindly giv'n," and then goes skewing astray into a *Dunciad*-like parody of what my paper is trying to argue in Popian couplets. I do think you're exactly right in that line that Monique quotes, "Earth beholds"—I don't have the quote from memory, but that line that you were pointing me to is echoed in *The Dunciad* in Tibbald's "monster-breeding breast"—and that's actually in *The Dunciad* 1728 version before it shows up in the positive version in *Essay on Man*. So I think that there is that sense where Pope is re-working Duncical material to serious ends, in part so he can come back with "Salvo Two" of the *Dunciad* world, which... "Makes a mighty trade school in the land" was the line in this particular doggerel. So that's my brief response to everyone and all at once. Thank you very much.

Lupton: I'm happy to let Johannes have had my last word.

Spang: Well, thank you everybody again. Thank you Johannes, Richard, and Tina for this wonderful last session. I wish it didn't have to end, but so it does. Thank you, everybody.

[Applause]