Discussion

Oz Kenshur: Last week at a meeting of the local people, I suggested that everybody needed to read Voltaire's *Micromégas*, but I suggested that because I was thinking that the issue of scale was going to be much more prominent in the readings this week than it actually was. Because, you know, in *Micromégas* you have gigantic interplanetary, interstellar travelers and, you know, this incredible difference in scale, between them and puny Earth and puny Earthlings. And it turns out that the reason that I suggested *Micromégas* didn't pan out in terms of the actual discussion; but there's another aspect of *Micromégas* that's extremely relevant (it seems to me) and that is the issue of data versus theory. And what I'm thinking of is the fact that in Voltaire's text, the gigantic travelers keep conjecturing about what they see and they're always wrong. Right? When they finally see whales they think the Earth must be populated only by whales. And anyway it's a critique of what…—we would say it's a critique of conjecture, but in fact it really represents a strand of eighteenth-century thought that goes back to Bacon and his pure inductivist model and it goes back further to Newton (to the appropriation of Newton's famous line: "Hypotheses non fingo"). In other words, what Voltaire is doing is making an attack on theory and on hypothesis formation, and I think it would be useful given the various historical developments that we've been looking at… I think it's useful to remember that there's a large strand of eighteenth-century thought coming from Bacon which stipulated that the data speaks for itself. And that when you try to theorize about the data—or, to use a more precise term, to "hypothesize"—you would keep making mistakes. And so it seems to me that this goes against the kind of historical evolution that sometimes has emerged in various discussions here because basically it serves to remind us that a good part of the eighteenth century thought that the data spoke for itself.

Rob Schneider: I'd like to pick up on the comment by Mary (which I thought was extraordinary) about—to rephrase her—about experiencing bodily measurement or tempo as requiring a moment of disassociation, disembodiment. What I was thinking about that was in relationship to dance and music but also in terms of something you didn't mention: the military, military organization, military formation. Marches, regimentation, all of that was extraordinarily important to world history especially in this period when you had the sort of tail end of the military revolution and where the march as a musical genre becomes more prominent (which has its own duration). The idea of this sort of embodiment which requires measurement, tempo, regimentation—which we think of being in a sense natural, insofar as people respond to beat and tempo almost naturally—but here it requires a breaking down of one's natural disposition. And of course that is what basic training's all about: in order to become a soldier really with a different kind of body or different kind of reception to tempo and to measurement (which I think is emblematic of a lot of things that we talked about, although of course with its own genre, that is with the body being the locus of a certain kind of measurement, tempo, number and all of that). And I just love that idea of sort of the movement from one kind of body to a disciplined body in that sense.

Tracey Hutchings-Goetz: Yeah, just quickly: the phrase "keep in touch" comes from precisely that military context, albeit I believe it's nineteenth century, not eighteenth century. But it was the expectation that in a regimented unit in a march you'd be touching the person next to you.

Richard Nash: My hook would be from the military manuals that I read in the period, a critical piece of that has to do especially with when you watch the movement for turning to the right you need to turn as a unit; so those at the far right have to step short while those that are left step long precisely because muskets are fucking worthless one-on-one, but if you send a body as a body and they all fire at once you then lay down what is a massive shot. Which means that the marching that they're doing is people's bodies being trained to be pieces of a machine that function as a military machine, rather than as individual bodies.

Bret Rothstein: This is less of a hook and more of a shepherd's crook. It goes back in a way through Oz's statement on how the data speak for themselves to Mary's question about what an art historian or historian of visual culture would have to say about the diagrams, and it's interesting that you read them in the manner of landscape. I read them in the manner of gestures, and in both cases found myself troubled. Because while there are for instance… In Michael [Gavin]'s images there are certain kinds of gestural qualities, and even in Nick [Paige's]'s images there are certain kinds of gestural qualities. There's a fundamental problem with reading these images as mimetic because the whole premise that we often bring to mimetic imagery is that it's somehow critical and deceptive at the same time. It goes back to ocularcentrism and this long tradition of being suspect of sight. And I would simply point people toward a couple of interesting pieces that would help as they work with their diagrams. First is one of James Elkin's many, many, many, many essays, but it's one that has the extra advantage—unfairly, in some respects—of being called "Images That Are Not Art."[1] It's about scientific imagery, it's about medical imagery, and it's actually a really rich and interesting piece. And then the second thing I'd steer people towards is Michael Marrinan and John Bender's *The Culture of Diagram*….

many voices: Right, right, right…

Rothstein: I think there's a way of rethinking image that's probably in order here. Because the way that we tend to use these kinds of expression is still very much linked to a kind of pictorial/illustrative/mimetic tradition and something else—something more Benjaminian—may be in order.

Rachel Seiler-Smith: The idea that some eighteenth-century thought argued that data speaks for itself… I wonder if people protest too much! This might go back to our conversation about anecdote versus example but—and I welcome anybody who has info on this for my own private reasons—but from what I've observed, it seems like in eighteenth-century print (rather than diagram), in eighteenth-century books whenever they introduce data sets, there's always narrative surrounding it, explaining it. So if the data "speaks for itself," why does it need this context? Even Newton; when he does his graphs and his charts has excessive narration. I looked at seventeenth-century arithmetic primers and I imagined that it might be… I looked for ones for very little children (which were very hard to find, I barely found any) and I thought it'd kind of be like *Sesame Street* where there wouldn't be narrative—there'd sort of be like little objects that represented numbers. But there weren't. It was *all* text, and how they tried to… so you had to learn to read before you could learn to enumerate (except on your hands). Right? But when it

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[1] [Editor's Note] James Elkins, "Art History and Images That Are Not Art," *The Art Bulletin* 77:4 (1995).

came to generating data in that way, it seems like there had to be a way in which the text explained the data and explained the process of getting at the data. Of course, again, going back to Mary's idea of embodied numeration, that [also] seems to be absent from what I've seen. But does anybody even have examples of where they do just print accounts without any sort of narrative explanation? Because I really have struggled to find them, where data actually "speaks for itself," perhaps even with diagrams they tended to have… captions. It's a genuine question.

Nush Powell: Just really briefly here pointing out you're not able to find primers for small children, but like Eve Bannet's argument about that—it's not that children aren't children; children are children—but that the stock of like, what we might call, "children's literature," it didn't really exist because that stuff is written for adults who'd be teaching children.[2] Right? So it's not that the child is expected to learn to read before the child can count, but the primary target for that book (even if the marketing suggests it's for small children) is for the mother or the governess or the schoolteacher, the person who will be doing the instruction.

Kenshur: Just to clarify, when I said, "The data speaks for itself" I was sort of translating it into the language of this workshop. But the inductivist model is simply that there is an accumulation of observations, and the truth emerges from that accumulation rather than from anything anticipatory. So it doesn't mean you can't narrate or—I mean, obviously there's not—I wasn't talking about graphs or, you know, other ways of presenting data. The data can be presented in a narrative way; but the point is it's simply an accumulation of observations rather than a hypothesis that tries to make sense of the observations. The observations will ultimately lead to a conclusion.

Seiler-Smith: Well, so, when… For example, when Newton charts the movement of stars and explains, "This is thus how stars move," is that an accumulation of data speaking for itself, or is that an interpretive framework: "Thus, this is how stars move." I mean, so this is what I'm saying in terms of, you know, we have account books that say, "This is how many things we have right here, thus we need to do this, etc." Right? That sort of need to *make sense of* the data, aside from just sort of (again) gathering or accumulating it. I wonder if that's actually much more difficult. So, you know… is Voltaire actually making… is he sort of both critiquing but also saying given the availability of data—or of observation—we're going to have to try and thus make sense of it in some way (through rhetoric or…)

Kenshur: Well, the notion of pure inductivism has been pretty much rejected by all philosophers and historians of science as… And people don't believe that Newton, in fact, when he wrote "hypotheses non fingo," really was able to make a claim that he doesn't hypothesize. And so in other words, you know, what I'm saying is that there was a kind of a, there was this kind of repeated notion that you weren't supposed to conjecture, you weren't supposed to hypothesize, but in fact you're quite correct in pointing out that it's not really—it doesn't really happen that way in practice.

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[2] [Editor's Note] Eve Tavor Bannet, *Eighteenth-Century Manners of Reading: Print Culture and Public Instruction in the Anglophone Atlantic World* (Cambridge University Press, 2017). In his *Centuries of Childhood, A Social History* (1960), Philippe Ariès argued that the idea of "childhood" is a modern invention and that before the late eighteenth century, children were seen either as non-people or as tiny adults.

Seiler-Smith: Okay, so they were… It was hot air… [laughter]

Kenshur: Yeah, yeah they were mistaken about, they were mistakenly describing what they considered to be this kind of procedure (which in fact nobody does).

Elmer: Nick Valvo has been waiting patiently. Nick Paige, do you still have a hook?

Nick Paige: I can wait.

Elmer: You can wait? Okay, then Nick Valvo.

Paige: [*sotto voce*] off the hook. [laughter]

Nick Valvo: So I was really struck by Mary's sort of synthetic formulation that maybe what we have been talking about here is an inversion between what had been (I think) a midcentury understanding of the relationship between theory and empiricism in terms of how they fit into what I've been thinking of as kind of a history of inhumanity or history of humanity (which I guess amounts to the same thing in some sort of Hegelian way). So then in light of this question of embodiment and disassociation—which was another one of your [Mary Favret's] very beautiful remarks—I was wondering, "What is it exactly that we have to disassociate from? What is it that we have to denigrate within or without ourselves in order to produce the human, the affective, the humane?"—all of these things. It won't surprise you what I think about this, I want to know what you guys think about this.

Elizabeth Bond: I think there's something about the analogy of the mirror, right, which is very, very visible in these sources. I think the… I am starting to think about a different chapter, I think I'm starting to work on this summer, but there's also this idea that maybe you write a public letter so you can hold it out and look at what it tells you about yourself in a way that is different than writing to a family member. You know, there's something about the mirror that—

Valvo: Like in Hegel's aesthetics…

Bond: Yeah, and this may go back to performance...

Valvo: The boy throwing the rock into the pond to watch the ripples and experience himself.

Favret: But then in that instance there's also… I mean, a certain impersonality, right? because the impersonality of print, somehow you have to circuit it through this impersonal…

Bond: It becomes abstracted and then…

Favret: Right. Not simply abstracted, but impersonal.

Valvo: So do you have to experience the impersonality of yourself? Like, is that the point?

Paige: Well, there's this weird thing where we say, "As I say in my book." There I am in print, you know, this strange mirroring and doubling and splitting off.

Brad Pasanek: The Edward Young line is "contract intimacy with the stranger within."[3]

John Han: I was kind of surprised that no one really brought up Adam Smith, the invisible hand, the theory of moral sentiment—the notion that somebody is imagining, abstracting a slave being whipped, right? And that somehow, I think, speaks to the whole, that abstraction feeding back to the body. Right?

Hutchings-Goetz: Well, but, sympathy is like… Adam Smith and sympathy is one model for feeling amongst others in the eighteenth century, right? So just because that's the one that we've inherited, right… And it's in many ways a fundamentally cognitive model. Right? "How would I feel if I were that person?" right, as opposed to… and then it becomes felt in the body, right, the cognitive precedes that corporeal affect, right, in Smith (and to a certain extent in Hume).

Han: I think Hume is more cognitive. I think Adam Smith is more, it's theory of moral sentiment, there's the issue of morality implicit in Smith. I don't think it's, yeah, it's not corporality, it's—

Powell: You don't get that straight away from the body. I don't think that's—

Hutchings-Goetz: Okay, yeah, this is a debate for a different time; but I just want to point out that it's one model amongst many, right?

Han: Yeah, yeah. Right.

Ryan Sheldon: Yeah, so just to try to pull a couple of these things together. Thinking about the inductive model (and protesting too much), one of the things that's really important there is that the nature of the protest matters. Right? It matters rhetorically, and it matters affectively too. Right? And so that's one of the things that is really interesting to me about the idea of numbers as affectively charged objects—and one of the things that's really interesting about thinking about number in the eighteenth century (where they do kind of exist, where do you have this coming into existence of cultural artifacts in a way, like the novel) is that people can have different responses to them, right. So that's my pitch for Defoe, that's one of the things that's really interesting about the quotes on mortality, is that they're terrifying, and one of the things that's terrifying about them is that they do have this kind of mirroring effect—I think especially in that moment because it's a moment where now you understand yourself as a member of an innumerable body politic for the first time, and so you exist in that but you're totally abstracted within it. It's a way of sort seeing something that you belong to, knowing that it's a construct, but also knowing that in its artificiality it gives you a frame of reference for understanding something that is otherwise not physical, not perceivable—and so that's really the tension. And then the way people argue around that I think is a really, really sort of fruitful point for looking at

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[3] Edward Young, *Conjectures on Original Composition* cited in Brad Pasanek, *Metaphors of Mind* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2015), 164.

the way that, you know, numbers and facts work in this period. But also, you know, the way that they're not factual and they're not numerical or even quantitative.

Hall Bjørnstad: I want to add one number to this discussion, which I feel captures Mary's point, that is a number that persists in the bigram coding that we have been discussing. So in French the most common "myriad" number is hundred times hundred, but, interestingly, if you say "hundred times" in French, *cent fois*, you're also saying "without faith" or "without trust" [*sans foi*]. And indeed in seventeenth-century text you will see this duality acted. So the one example I have is in a certain important place in Pascal he says, "hundred times I looked for a sign of a higher meaning in nature"—but he did it "a hundred times," so "without trust, without faith," and so the response is already in the question.

Nash: We're not just full of hot air… But throughout our conversation I find myself going back and thinking about two senses of number that once upon a time were very important and urgent to me in thinking about this period and keep coming up for me in this workshop which is "what is the power of the individual?"—whether it is the individual as an outlier or as a surprise, or as a particular concentration and distillation? What's the power of the many and the mass, and the degree to which there is (for me) two different experiences of approaching to truth: one being some sense of insight that seems precisely focused and one being some sense of approximation that takes on power by inclusion? And in the very particular question… If you go back and start reading the lectures of [Isaac] Barrow on time and space and motion; they're very verbal. They're very—a lot of words, a lot of philosophy, a lot of discussion. And if you work through that to Newton and his contemporaries, you're going to find that there's a lot of language, but it's not all hot air. And a huge amount of the rhetorical power of the *Principia* is that all that discussion can, in fact, be formulated in a very coy, very taut, simple articulation, which is a kind of mathematical statement that is really emerging as a novel instrument in this period.
That is… my original interest in mathematics in this period, was precisely in thinking about the rhetoric of mathematics and the idea of thinking of equations as statements that are so much more powerful than the hot air of language is something that's very much up for grabs. And the use of notation is far from standard. So you have various locations—whether you're talking about journals, about philosophical transactions, or across Europe, when you're talking about publishers like Samuel Smith where you get these treatises being written but they're often not yet speaking a common language, precisely because there is no agreed upon notation and it's still being sorted out. But it does seem to me that a lot of the interest for this period in questions of quantity and quantification is, "How can we articulate succinctly?" and there's this notion that mathematical argument allows for that kind of concentration. So that seems to me not "hot air" but also a mode that is not terribly familiar to us; and yet it seems to me that I felt some of the same power in the presentations we're seeing about "How do we look at data and what does data tell us?" whether that is…. Because the question is in a way, "How do we articulate what will generate a diagram that has a more approximate meaning?" So that there is a single distillation of a general group where the power of the approximation comes from the visual but the power of the precision comes from the ability to articulate it in a particular equation. That's the sentiment I have.

Seiler-Smith: Can I reply? Just to say, by "hot air" I meant their claim that data can speak without being qualified or even interpreted—this idea that data can be just observation and

therefore noninterpretive and non-qualitative, even in how we actually ask the questions and then develop the methods to gather that data. And then in how we actually represent that data, the signifiers of things, and that attempt at rhetorical signification that doesn't have a rhetoric (which it does). So that's why I think there's hot air, I'm suggesting that, but also you could just say I guess that they had to write a lot of hot air to get at that succinctly. So to me to just have that formulation and say, "Well, this speaks for itself,"—well, no, it didn't. It had a citation, a citationality. That notation has a longer history, right, of hot air that needed to be used in order to produce vast signification.

Nash: I'm happy to go back and forth on that.

Elmer: Take it outside. I want to take the moderator's prerogative and jump a little bit and return to the question of affect and affect of presentation. If there's one thing we've been having consistently across the two days, it's people tacking between explanation and data (of one kind or another—the data takes forms, but it's definitely)… this is incumbent upon anybody who presents on this particular topic: to figure out a way to stylistically navigate the images, the data, the results with work and with explanation and persuasion. And one of the things that really I have found very winning—and this goes I think a little bit to Mary's observation that this is a personality-full workshop—is how well, I think, and how stylishly, that has been done by our visitors because—and this then maybe gets to a deeper thing, I'm not quite sure. I was very struck by Brad's comment (I think this was an answer to my question?) about walking down a hall and seeing an older colleague…yeah, Tucker—and saying, you know, "Here's what I'm doing" and seeing this kind of horrified, stricken face and then thinking, "Ha! I'm doing the right thing!" [laughter] There's a kind of *joie de vivre* in that response, and I was just trying to think of, you know… Because I certainly also walked up and down the hall and talked to my older colleagues when I first started out and was also doing things that they were horrified by and stricken by, but I don't think I went away feeling, "Yes!" You know? I just went, "Oh, well, you know, I'm right, you're wrong, whatever." It was a… and there's a kind of wit, I mean—so this is also true in the way Brad, I think, presented his paper –and I'll just use him but there are other examples as well—where, you know, you have this picture of yourself as someone who's headed towards aesthetic nihilism, who wants to figure out a way beyond the blandishments of the word. And yet what you've given us, and you claim to have dashed it off (I assume you're probably right), what you've given us is an extremely wrought and very witty piece of work which tacks extremely well between the data you have. And there was a lot of *personalizing* of the work. I remember in the very first day when Michael was talking about why he's undertaken the project that he's undertaken and you said something like, "I'm not, I find all this unsurprising,"—but so you may find it unsurprising, but I'm constantly surprised by all this and I don't really know why I want to do this but I know I want to. There was sort of a real personal thing there, you know. Nick, I think, didn't didn't present himself as, you know, *sui generis*—though everybody else seems to think you are, you know, in terms of, "Can only Nick Paige do this?" [laughter] and so there's a kind of style. And this is also true of Simon (I think, maybe, you know, a lot with Simon) and there's this wonderful moment: "And then we got all this information and then there's this guy… Robespierre. I don't know! So I have to talk to my expert friend to tell me about Robespierre." And, you know, that's lovely and disingenuous, and so there's something about the way this work which asks the question—which Brad asks most forcefully but I think Nick does too—that asks us to take a step back from, you know, aesthetic categories, aesthetic

responses … but that then pulls the aestheticism, if you like, into the performance of the scholarship itself.

Favret: It's compensatory.

Elmer: Compensatory? I don't know, maybe it's just rhetorically savvy, you know where—you know, if you're gonna get people interested in your graphs and word clouds, you need to figure out a way to bring back, you know, some of the old-fashioned pleasure of … —I don't know, that's probably a very banal thing to say.

Pasanek: This is good. Thank you very much; that really helps me clarify something. I've been trying, thinking about this maybe under the sign of Malcolm Bull. So my *joie de vivre*, my excitement when Chip is like, "Oh my God, what are you doing?" It's not I've gotten it right; it's that I know I've gotten it "wrong." So—if this makes sense—so that's the "failing" thing, the reading like a loser. So I know that he's got it right, and when he's upset that means I've got it wrong. Hooray, right? Which brings in this question of, like… Malcolm Bull is an extremely stylish writer. He's not writing like a loser, but he's praising this idea of reading like a loser, which has me thinking, like, what he's doing—or maybe what I want to do—is maybe something like Wittgetnstein's ladder, but upside down. So you put the ladder into the hole, you climb down it and then you're in some terrible space and then you ask the people to pull the ladder up! And that's what the aesthetic nihilistic endgame looks like, yeah.

Elmer: You're having a good time in the hole. [laughter]

Rothstein: I'm going to dip into the sixteenth century again and address the mention that Mary made of error, and in particular this idea of being alleviated of the burden of error. It's not your phrasing, but something along those lines, and I would just make a plea for actually embracing error.

Favret: Right, that's what I would—yup—

Rothstein: And one really—for the sixteenth century—one really nice touchstone for that is an article by our colleague Constance Furey called "Erring Together" which came out in *The Journal of Religious History* last fall (a year ago last fall) but it's an extraordinary study of Erasmus and More and the spiritual friendships, the intellectual friendships, the academic friendships that arise from error and correction, the back and forth that is such a vital component of *this* kind of meeting and of the numbers who have assembled here and the numbers they brought to bear on this meeting.

Kenshur: Just to add to that… I just wanted to say Kathryn Shultz, who now is one of the best *New Yorker* writers, she was added to their staff I think because she wrote this incredible book called *Being Wrong*, which is basically a whole volume in praise of being wrong, and it's really terrific.

Elmer: Nick.

Paige: What I have to say is… It's not very sharp. I mean to say that, I mean, my relation to… at a certain part of the project I was convinced I needed to learn R, because in R you can apparently do sexier graphs than in Excel. But I've learned to embrace kind of the clunkiness of my bar graphs and line graphs. Because, I mean, it's important that they not be aesthetic objects in any way. And perhaps my perplexity with, say, Melanie's network graph (we were talking about this last night) or Michael's word-cloud associations is that somehow they're kind of too beautiful, and I don't know how to actually unpack them. Whereas I think of mine as, "They're just tools"—one graph is just a tool to kind of then say, "Okay, wait, I've got to produce a new graph now to understand why that graph's composed as it is," and so they're just kind of rungs on a ladder, if you like. But I like that kind of, that kind of banal dimension to them. And of course it's never "data" speaking for itself.

Elmer: So you're speaking—you're speaking very eloquently for it!

Paige: And so then ultimately I come up with a theory and I didn't really expose it here—but so I have this idea that the way to understand the evolution of the novel passes through kind of a history of technology. But, you know, I think that that's a theory. I am going to posit it, for example; I am deliberately not saying that novels are *like* technological artifacts; I'm going to be saying that novels *are* technological artifacts. However… I'm perfectly happy with someone coming along later and saying, "Ah, I see why you say that they're behaving that way but in fact there's something else." Right? But I… that's fine. I'm not trying to have the last word, and my data's not speaking for itself.

Gavin: Well, I mean, whenever people are sort of, you know, repeating the same thing over and over again, that's when you realize that it's probably wrong. And so, like, this comes back to the question of introducing error. Like, oh my gosh, data fucking speaks to me all the time because it's always telling me I'm wrong. All. The. Time. And it's… like it won't shut the fuck up.

Elmer: That's "qualitative."

Gavin: So that's my experience of it! So when… and, you know, oh my gosh, the distances from one to the other are actually calculated correctly! Do you know how long that takes, to figure out how to hard code, how to grade circle distances from London? It's crazy.

Paige: But there are all sorts of neat surprises.

Gavin: Yeah, I ended up, it's cool… but it does not persuade.

Bond: I think there's something, isn't there, about coding and these digital approaches that's very much connected to theory? So I think you're both having the same process.

Paige & Gavin: Yes

Melanie Conroy: I think there's also a question, you know—especially since a lot of us think of ourselves as much as "cultural critics" as we do literary scholars or historians… You know, network diagrams (for example) are very difficult to understand, especially for people who are

trained in literary studies. But that's also the way that Netflix is deciding which movies to recommend to you, Amazon is deciding what kinds, you know, of books to recommend to you; so I think that, you know, nevertheless it's good to have at least a subset of kind of cultural critics familiar with the ways in which, for example, the art of the internet is changing. So I think there's a balance between using things like visualization to speak to people about questions that they're already invested in, versus kind of exploring new connections between, say, literature and the internet.

Rothstein: My hook again is a more shepherd's crook. I want to go back again to your statement about charts being banal—which I *applaud*. Because I think the idea that these images can have an oppositional quality to them is important, it gets at my earlier suggestion that we think in more Benjaminian terms about the active components of these kinds of images. But I hesitate, because it sounded as if you were suggesting that there was at least a degree of maybe neutrality or, if not, invisibility, and certainly not transparency to your images. But they are heavily, thoroughly entangled with a vocabulary of economics textbooks, accounting books; and so I think that they have their own expressive work they're performing in addition to the oppositional, that kind of resistance to the glossy …. They have an eloquence.

Paige: I mean, the eloquence of a tool.

Elmer: Sarah.

Sarah Knott: So I'm puzzling over the affective question of the figure of the literary critic in these papers. I'm just going to lay out the puzzle. I don't have a question. I have a very strong response to the affective pose, and I am simply going to report on it. So my report on it as a historian is twofold: one, how astonishing it has felt to hear terms that I as a cultural historian a decade ago would have associated with Gradgrindian bean-counting history and exactly the kind of historians we thought of as being outside the room when we created the Eighteenth-Century Center—and so to hear that bean-counting come from the voices of literary critics has been really dizzying and fascinating and disarming. So I'm disarmed about that. But I'm also… I'm not disarmed by the urge to cut down Wordsworth again or to re-scare-quote "good and bad poetry," because I thought we'd already done that. And so what I'm not disarmed by is: so many of the moves that are so charming in your paper (where you parodied the potential criticism of the reader as well as your own hesitations as a critic, if that makes sense). So for me there were ways in which I felt—as a cultural critic, not just as a historian—uninvited into certain kinds of digital humanities debates, because I wasn't interested in the beasts that were being slain. And to make that more concrete, what I—so, just to take you as an example, Brad, in an unfair way— one kind of move that those older Gradgrindian historians would have found, would have been to sort of talk about the *corps* that they were working with in a different sort of fashion, I think, and one way in which new cultural historians want to talk about the *corps* you're working with would have been to talk about exclusions and to say, "Yeah, we're never, ever going to posit women and laboring folks as after-effects. We didn't like that scholarship, and we're not going to do it again." And yet there's a way in which (for me at least) your approach to your archive amplifies, it has a way of amplifying those exclusions (which we've already dealt with). And so I just want to invite you to speak to—maybe it's a generation of scholarship or maybe it's just other scholarship, which still wants to problematize the digitized archives within which much of

this scholarship is working. And to say there are so many exclusions, there are so many other modes of analysis about the eighteenth century that we could put in play, and I want to say that I can make—I want to make a critical move that isn't already parodied in your own disarming self-critique. And so I felt… yeah, that's my reportage.

Elmer: Brad, do you want to respond?

Pasanek: I'm thinking; it's such a good question. I don't know, I'm not sure this is a response to it… so maybe everyone can respond? But I'll say one thing, maybe… I'm thinking, there we go, yeah, so it's not over, the culture wars—this is like T.S. Eliot—but it's not, I mean, it always goes underground and the war continues in strange ways. The problem with digital humanities is that our electronic archives, which are supposed to be flat, democratic spaces in which all points are equally represented—like Moretti's, who's always like, "Austen is just another point among other points." The problem is that they're all generated from pre-Culture-War bibliography that just reinscribe the 1960's notion of what a canon would be in the first place. And so I don't know if this lets you in or if this is… I don't know who's inside whose gates. Right? But part of the problem is: those are the only sets of texts I have to work with. This is like Michael's textual point: these are the digitized texts. And so I have, there's a way in which in running over that terrain we just reanimate the structure of… yeah. So these horrible dichotomies, binaries, hierarchies, right, and so I want a kind of flattening effect, but I'm not sure how to produce it because, yeah, the very terrain on which I would sort of mount that argument is unlevel, yeah.

Knott: Can I make one—?

Pasanek: Yeah, please.

Knott: So could we not think about implied readers in the texts that you're producing and have more than one implied reader? So not just the bloke down the corridor, but actually other kinds of implied readers that you can… because it seems to me that there are…. that that's such a legitimate answer to me. Why is that legitimate answer not on the page? Because it's, yeah, why not pluralize implied readers of your project, so that your project becomes more borrow-able and more arguable with.

Elmer: Rebecca. I think this is going to be the last word.

Rebecca Spang: "Relentlessly textual." This is a frustration that I have had with Simon DeDeo because he wants to say that we are analyzing the French Revolution, and I say that we are analyzing the major speeches from the French Revolution that Mavidal and Laurent put into the *Archives parlementaires* when they were editing in the 1860s-1890s. And he says, "Oh! Well that doesn't let us talk about how societies change" and I say, "No, it just tells us about these thirty-three volumes." And so in my capacity as a—not exactly a Gradgrind social historian, but as an archival social historian—I think there are limits to what we can do through analyzing the *Archives parlementaires* if we actually want to be talking about something other than the *Archives parlementaires*; which I, as a historian, kinda want to do. I mean, I'm fascinated by the *Archives parlementaires*, I've got now a side project on secretaries—for autobiographical

reasons, obviously—but, so I'm very interested in how that document got compiled, but that's not the end goal for me.