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Poetry, Critique, Imitation

Here is an invitation; or, to put it a little more suspiciously, an interpellation:

> Come live with me and be my love,
> And we will all the pleasures prove,
> That valleys, groves, hills, and fields,
> Woods, or steepy mountains yields. (*England's Helicon* 1887, 229)[1]

The words of the passionate shepherd, as he has come to be known, were first printed in 1599 in a verse anthology attributed to William Shakespeare and titled *The Passionate Pilgrim*. They had already been sung in a play, Shakespeare's *Merry Wives of Windsor*, two years before, which may have encouraged the *Pilgrim*'s editor in his fraud. (It was no honest mistake: the book is full of other poems Shakespeare didn't write, and would likely rather have died than write.) Much later, in 1653, Izaak Walton's meditative angler heard a milkmaid singing, and got the attribution right, recognizing "that smooth song which was made by Kit. Marlow, now at least fifty years ago" (Walton 2014, 58).[2] In between, the lines were transcribed into countless commonplace books by admiring readers; transcribed, and often altered, adapted, reimagined, under various names, or no name at all. In that first printing, and also in the second, the anthology *England's Helicon*, they are followed by a poem in response:

> If all the world and love were young,
> And truth in every Shepherd's tongue,
> These pretty pleasures might me move,
> To live with thee and be thy love. (*England's Helicon* 1887, 231)

In *Pilgrim*, there are only these four lines; in *Helicon*, where Marlowe's name first appears, the printer includes what is now usually given as the full text of both poems, which acquire there the titles under which they have mostly traveled since, "The Passionate Shepherd to His Love" and "The Nymph's Reply to the Shepherd." Scholars attribute the second to Sir Walter Raleigh, ten years older than Marlowe, a courtier who had enjoyed, in the course of long service, both high favor and dangerous scorn from Queen Elizabeth. His poem is a counterargument; whether to call it a critique is a question to which I will return. For the moment, I will observe that in mak-

1 I quote both poems from *England's Helicon*. For the texts in *The Passionate Pilgrim*, see Shakespeare 2002, 365–366.

2 Walton's transcription includes a sixth stanza added to the second edition which, as his editor Marjorie Swann relates, "otherwise survives only in the Thornborough Commonplace Book and a broadside in the Roxburghe Collection" (Walton 2014, 249–250).

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ing his answer, Raleigh follows his original closely: he adopts the form of Marlowe's tetrameter couplets, and he echoes the language, the constellations of words and also phrases, especially "live with me and be my love." His poem is an answer, and also an imitation.

In carrying over such phrases, Raleigh anticipates Schlegel's advice to the poetic critic in the review of *Wilhelm Meister* that has given the present discussion its basic terms:

> The poet and artist [...] will want to represent the representation anew, and form once more what has already been formed; he will add to the work, restore it, shape it afresh. He will only divide the whole into articulated parts and masses [*Glieder und Massen*], not break it down into its original constituents, which in respect of the work are dead things, because their elements are no longer of the same nature as the whole [...]. (Schlegel 2002d, 281; Schlegel 1967, 140)

As I understand Schlegel, a phrase like "poetic critique" can stand for any number of tense antitheses that animate his philosophy – I am not sure we should call them dialectical; probably better to say, as he would, ironic, meaning that each term stands off slightly from the other and sees it from a certain distance, even as they are compounded in a single concept. "Irony is the form of paradox," he claims in his *Critical Fragments*, and adds, with characteristic enthusiasm for the topic, "paradox is everything simultaneously good and great" (Schlegel 2002a, 241).[3] Another such tense pairing is that of part and whole. "In poetry too," he writes in his *Critical Fragments*, "every whole can be a part and every part really a whole" (239). Part and whole are perspectives, and to perceive both simultaneously is to attain to a "clear consciousness of eternal agility, of an infinitely teeming chaos" (Schlegel 2002c, 264). The ironic multiplication of perspectives is an opening onto the infinite. Such claims do not exactly amount to a method, but the *Meister* essay has a practical recommendation for splitting the difference. The poetic critic should divide the whole into "articulated parts and masses." Not, however, all the way down to its original, simplest constituents; into molecules, we might say, but not into atoms. What is at stake is the survival of the original in the text that critiques it. Cut a work into its simples, and you "destroy his living unity" (Schlegel 2002d, 281), which is exactly what the ordinary, scalpel-happy critic habitually does. The poetic critic, by contrast, will work with parts large enough, articulated enough – parts with parts – that the design of the original, the voice, the style, the genius, remains alive and active. In writing *about* the object of his criticism the poetic critic is willing to be *like* it, to admit its principles of organization, its mustering of parts, into his own making.

Perhaps such an account captures something of Walter Raleigh's relation to Christopher Marlowe. But I do not want to read Marlowe and Raleigh from the stand-

3 I refrain from calling Schlegel's antitheses dialectical because though the terms provide perspective on each other, and the result is an increasingly comprehensive understanding, that relation does not develop in the specifically historical way that Hegel would describe.

point of Schlegel; my project here is to read Schlegel, and to read us, Schlegel's inheritors, from the standpoint of Marlowe and Raleigh. That will mean taking up that early modern, rhetorical concept of imitation, which is alien to Schlegel's philosophical poetry – alien because imitation is the practice basic to the rhetorical regime that Schlegel's Romanticism rejected; and to some extent, alien to contemporary literary studies, too.[4] Marlowe and Raleigh were exceptionally gifted students under that humanist regime, in the version that prevailed in Elizabeth's England. Both learned, at grammar school and at university, to write an oration like Cicero and to write verse like Horace, or Ovid. To study was always to study models, the practice known as *imitatio*. The analytic technology of rhetorical theory was at their fingertips, but the criteria of success were, first, sounding like your original (not standing back from it, stylistically or analytically), and second, and ultimately, turning the rhetorical freedom such study cultivates to the work of persuasion – whether in academic disputation or, if you found favor there, at court.[5]

So, imitation: this mode of composition after models, pedagogical and makerly: what way of writing, what way of knowing, is it? In a moment, I will return to the passionate shepherd, but let me make some very general proposals first. The most fundamental is from Aristotle, that a human being is an imitative animal, and "learns first by imitation."[6] Imitation is basic to us. Present-day neuroscientists make the point on their own terms, describing the circuit of our mirror neurons, which fire sympathetically when we observe the actions of others, as though we were performing those actions ourselves.[7] To understand, on such accounts, *is* to imitate. This kind

4 Stephen Halliwell discusses the "undoubtedly widespread Romantic rejection of mimesis" in *The Aesthetics of Mimesis* (Halliwell 2002, 360); though he gives a subtle account of how the concept was preserved, at the expense of its technical, skilled aspect, distinguishing, as Schegel's brother August Wilhelm did, between "'imitation' [*Nachahmung*] as external 'aping' [*nachäffen*] and, on the other hand, imitation, in a less than transparent formulation, as the adoption or appropriation of the principles of human action" (Halliwell 2002, 361). The classic study of the problem in English poetry is M.H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition*. See also note 8 below.

5 The classic essay on *imitatio* remains G.W. Pigman's "Versions of Imitation in the Renaissance." David Riggs gives an excellent description of what this training meant for schoolboys in *The World of Christopher Marlowe* (Riggs 2004, 25 – 77). See also my own *Scenes of Instruction in Renaissance Romance* (Dolven 2007, 15 – 64).

6 According to Aristotle, imitation is "natural to man from childhood, one of his advantages over the lower animals being this, that he is the most imitative creature in the world, and learns first by imitation" (Aristotle 1984, 1448b5).

7 There is an active scientific debate about the role of mirror neurons in social life, especially their relation to empathetic understanding, but evidence is clear that some neurons fire both in action and when in observing the same action in someone else. Mark Johnson discusses the humanistic possibilities of the idea that "understanding requires simulation" in *The Meaning of the Body* (Johnson 2007, 164). Alfred Gell, in his *Art and Agency*, approaches the same question as an anthropologist.

of understanding – and there is a long, sturdy tradition stretching between Aristotle and the MRI – is not the product of an adjustment of range, as in close or distant reading, analysis or overview.[8] It is an identification, adopting the actions, the behavior of another, discovering the how of it by doing it. Not a question of far and near, but of outside and inside; and so much of the outside is inside, already imitated, already in our bodies, before we begin to reflect upon it. Which is to say that imitation is not always, or even primarily, deliberate. The rhetorical discipline of *imitatio* can therefore be understood as an effort both to exploit and to regulate an imitative appetite for the ways of others. Imitation, in writing, is mediated for the student of rhetoric by the terms of art that crowd the field of rhetoric, but the model, and its charisma, are still foremost. Imitation is a feedback loop, in which the maker is constantly adjusting the made thing according to the criterion of the object, conforming the text she makes to the text she reads. What she makes is an imitation of the maker, too, one made out of herself.

The dangers of such a model of knowledge are obvious enough, in a critical age: is this not a pedagogy of conformity? If imitation requires immersion, absorption, arguably submission, what becomes of critical distance? Is such a thing as critical imitation possible? In making an answer, let me turn back to Marlowe and Raleigh, and then to John Donne, who is one of many poets to continue the little tradition Marlowe started. The original poem is a charming pastoral enticement. It is also, it should be said, already self-skeptical. It piles gift on gift, a generous, rustic copia – but the gifts tend toward manufacture, starting with a bed of roses and a cap of straw and ending up with gold buckles and amber studs. Innocence turns gradually to artifice. The poem has a peculiar double ending, too, bringing the first line back to close the penultimate stanza, then doing it again, as though against some implicit resistance:

> A belt of straw and ivy buds,
> With coral clasps and Amber studs;
> And if these pleasures may thee move,
> Come live with me, and be my love.
>
> The shepherd swains shall dance and sing
> For thy delights each May morning:

"To see (or to know) is to be sensuously filled with what is perceived, yielding to it, mirroring it – and hence imitating it bodily" (Gell 1998, 100).

8 Walter Benjamin is a twentieth-century touchstone, and he takes a long retrospect: the imitative faculty, he argues, is something modernity has eroded; the analytic power to recognize similarity is "nothing but a rudiment of the once powerful compulsion to become similar and to behave mimetically. There is perhaps not a single one of his higher functions in which his mimetic faculty does not play a decisive role" (Benjamin 2004–2006, 2.720). Michael Taussig's *Mimesis and Alterity* is an influential recent account of how "the practice of mimesis in our day" is "inseparable from imaging and thinking itself" (Taussig 1992, 70). I discuss the basis of style in imitation, and its relation to a history of maker's knowledge, in my *Senses of Style* (Dolven 2018, 110–121).

If these delights thy mind may move,
Then live with me, and be my love. (*England's Helicon* 1887, 230)

Has she said no, the first time? There is a subtle hardening of his stance from invitation, "if [...] come," to a more strenuous, not to say coercive logic, "if [...] then." In this internal doubling, or tripling, the poem anticipates its successors, returning to that pristine original invitation under increasing suspicion. Is it therefore already self-critical? An instance already of poetic critique? Self-imitation does open up a distance inside the poem, when the reader measures ending against beginning, the difference between imitation and mere repetition. But for a university man like Marlowe, such a subtle show of cynicism, and still subtler threat, would find a ready audience among his sophisticated peers. The poem stands only so far away from itself.

Raleigh's response is closely studious of its model. It tracks Marlowe's list-making, his syntax, the structure of his argument, including the double ending. The work it wants to do, it does from the inside. His intervention – the objection of his nymph – is to point out that the shepherd has forgotten about the passage of time. I have always wondered if Raleigh's nymph does not hear the clock ticking even in Marlowe's first line, "Come live with me and be my love," where the transit from "live" to "love" is almost a conjugation, from present to past, as 'drive' to 'drove,' or even 'tick' to 'tock.' Be that as it may, the imitation makes the problem explicit. Notice the beautiful diminuendo of the fourth stanza:

Thy gowns, thy shoes, thy beds of roses,
Thy cap, thy kirtle, and thy posies,
Soon break, soon wither, soon forgotten,
In folly ripe, in reason rotten. (231)

Six gifts become three verbs of damage and loss, resolving finally to the two halves of an open-and-shut maxim. It is a wonderfully artful undercutting of Marlowe's seasonless bounty, one that unsettles the more because it accepts so many of the terms of its original. Is this, then, poetic critique? The likenesses are indexes of difference, measured from the inside looking out, rather than the outside looking in. That said, such revenges against the *carpe diem* tradition are their own kind, which Raleigh inhabits as a matter of conventional counter-convention. He inquires somewhat less into the motives of his nymph than Marlowe does of his shepherd.

What then of John Donne? Here is "The Bait," in its entirety:

Come live with me, and be my love,
And we will some new pleasures prove
Of golden sands, and crystal brooks,
With silken lines and silver hooks.

There will the river whispering run,
Warmed by thy eyes, more than the Sun;

> And there th'enamoured fish will stay,
> Begging themselves they may betray.
>
> When thou wilt swim in that live bath,
> Each fish which every channel hath,
> Will amorously to thee swim,
> Gladder to catch thee, than thou him.
>
> If thou to be so seen be'st loth,
> By Sun or Moon, thou dark'nest both,
> And, if my heart have leave to see,
> I need not their light, having thee.
>
> Let others freeze with angling-reeds,
> And cut their legs with shells and weeds,
> Or treach'rously poor fish beset,
> With strangling snare or windowy net.
>
> Let coarse, bold hands from slimy nest
> The bedded fish in banks out-wrest,
> Or, curious traitors, sleeve-silk flies
> Bewitch poor fishes' wand'ring eyes:
>
> For thee, thou need'st no such deceit,
> For thou thyself art thine own bait;
> That fish that is not caught thereby,
> Alas, is wiser far than I. (Donne 2010, 134–136)

Donne likely wrote this poem during his miscellaneous years as a personal secretary and minor official in London, in the very late sixteenth, perhaps early seventeenth centuries; he must have seen its predecessors in manuscript, or he read a copy of *England's Helicon*. He takes up Marlowe's opening lines, but already with a small perversity: the modulation from meadow to brookside, and the barb of the silver hook dangling at the end of the last line. (That pun on "line" is active throughout.) The tetrameter and the rhyme scheme are inherited, and handled with equal skill. The catalogue of gifts is inherited, too, but altered, not just, as in Raleigh, negated. Donne's speaker lists not objects, but features of the waterscape flattering to the addressee, how her eyes will warm the cold water, and how the fish will come to pay amorous tribute. (Forsaking their freedom as they come: Donne admires the latitude of a fish, that "every channel hath" in the three-dimensional meadow of deep water; it is this freedom they will give up for her.) If she is reluctant to be seen, fear not, her beauty will so outshine sun and moon that they will be darkened by the contrast, and he will see her by her own radiance. Flattery, flattery, flattery, even as the invitation has shifted, from "come live with me," to "strip and bathe for me." Raleigh's time-lesson has been learned by someone.

But only tacitly. With the fifth stanza, Donne changes tack. (Perhaps because his line of persuasion is not working? – the labile rhetoric of the poem invites us to imagine it as an act of seduction in real time, adapting to its target throughout.) "Let others freeze with angling reeds," he says; let those other fishermen injure themselves in

the chase, deceiving the fish with snares and nets and lures. "For thee, thou need'st no such deceit, / For thou thyself art thine own bait." The passionate fisherman's argument has been pointing toward this moral, if "moral" is the word, as he tangles his own admiration with that of the amorous fish – the fish that correspond with the shepherd's sheep in the original, yes? – and it feels like a natural conclusion, a final act of flattery decorously transposed out of pastoral for sheer variety's sake. But a little tug on those lines draws up the snare. What does it mean, to be your own bait? This woman, to whom he is speaking – she must be a fisherman too, but one who needs no lure, needs no mediation; who need neither labor, nor lie; her beauty perfects her agency. Then again, recall that she is the object of the fishes' attention, too, each fish "Gladder to catch thee, than thou him"; and of course, it is she for whom the speaker is fishing, perhaps with the bait of the poem. If she is the catch, and also her own bait – how is that different from the desirability of the object of desire? Is not beauty always its own bait? Donne's bait and switch, if you like, has dangled the promise of a fisherman's agency before his catch, but the poem catches the flickering light we read by like a fly tied from a silken sleeve.

You could say, in the language of twentieth-century critical theory, that Donne's poem is an exercise in immanent, rather than transcendent, critique; it is involved with the language of its object, used as leverage against itself; it looks for no fulcrum elsewhere. As Adorno puts it, in his essay "Cultural Criticism and Society": "A successful work, according to immanent criticism, is not one which resolves objective contradictions in a spurious harmony, but one which expresses the idea of harmony negatively by embodying the contradictions, pure and uncompromised, in its innermost structure" (Adorno 1997, 31). A good poem, that is, is critical by being complicit. For Adorno, this is true of the object of study (the poem), and it will necessarily be true of the study itself. Donne's study establishes between itself and its predecessors a set of analogies – shepherd to fisherman, sheep to fish, nymph to both; analogies, not to say complicities – in order to examine the contradictions that emerge. There is the collapsing triangulation of the nymph as her own bait; and the more stubborn triangulation with the other fisherman, who are her competitors, or are they his? (At all events they, not she, would seem to be the audience for the mock-abjection of the final lines.) Such ingenious permutations make for a skeptical anatomy of the tradition into which "The Bait" is entered, as a critical intervention of exceptional rigor and determination. The question is, what is the gain of imitation, *imitatio* – of the specific skill by means of which Donne makes his entry?

There is something to be learned from comparison with a much later contribution to the chain of replies, William Carlos Williams' "Raleigh Was Right":

> We cannot go to the country
> for the country will bring us
> no peace
> What can the small violets tell us

that grow on furry stems in
the long grass among lance-shaped
leaves?

Though you praise us
and call to mind the poets
who sung of our loveliness
it was long ago!
long ago! when country people
would plow and sow with
flowering minds and pockets
at ease—
if ever this were true.

Not now. Love itself a flower
with roots in a parched ground.
Empty pockets make empty heads.
Cure it if you can but
do not believe that we can live
today in the country
for the country will bring us
no peace. (Williams 1991, 2.88–2.89)

Williams' poem may be an answer – or a taking sides – but it is no imitation; not rhythmically, not in diction, not even in the "Come live" tag that is the poem's second name.[9] And though its own anti-pastoral sentiments are sympathetic, it stands far enough outside its original that it has little power to critique its tradition. There is no real feeling for what the genre meant, nor how it might have been transmuted, over time, nor for the specificity of Raleigh's response; and though the poem betrays a certain obdurate longing, Williams' speaker acknowledges no complicity, no entanglement. It is historically symptomatic of its own moment – how could it not be – but it does not attempt historical understanding; and if there is some pathos in its rejection of history ("long ago!"), still, the rejection itself is largely successful.

Perhaps Williams' poem is something like an instance in poetry of what for Schlegel would be ordinary critique; the kind of critique Adorno might call transcendental, for standing apart from its object, setting up criteria that are removed, uncompromised. It has resolved its object into primitive parts for analysis that carry with them no risk of contamination. Imitation is an alternative to such transcendental detachment. Still, it is not, in fact, the alternative that Schlegel has to offer, and I

9 Though John Beer, who heard me present this paper at the Poetic Critique conference, observed afterward that the lines "but do not believe / that we can live today" reprise Marlowe's live/love conjugation, and that Williams might be taken to be exploring something like the seductions of disenchantment; the speaker is enjoining his own listener to a shared cynicism that the poem wants to expose, rather than endorse. So read, the poem is still no imitation, but takes a critical attitude towards its anti-pastoral attitude (and the title, "Raleigh Was Right," comes to seem calculatedly, exaggeratedly peremptory and defensive).

want to conclude by sharpening that difference, in order to suggest that there is a specific critical power in imitation that is not to be derived from the post-Romantic critical tradition; a distinct version of poetic critique that Schlegel may glimpse, but cannot follow. I said earlier that imitation, as a basic practice, was alien to him. Here he is, in the *Athenaeum Fragments* of the same year, discussing the translation of the Classics.

> 393. In order to translate perfectly from the classics into a modern language, the translator would have to be so expert in his language that, if need be, he could make everything modern; but at the same time he would have to understand antiquity so well that he would be able not just to imitate it but, if necessary, recreate it [*zugleich aber das Antike so verstehn, daß ers nicht bloß nachmachen, sondern allenfalls wiederschaffen könnte*]. (Schlegel 2002b, 257; Schlegel 1967, 239)

That re-creation recalls his sense of the poetic critic's power to "add to the work, restore it, shape it afresh." Translation sounds a good deal like imitation. But it is important that understanding, *verstehen*, and imitation, *nachmachen*, come in that order, both in his sentence, and in the career of the translator.[10] "Where we should exercise to know, we exercise as having known" (Sidney 1973, 112), says Philip Sidney in 1580, in his great *Defense of Poetry*. By exercise, he means imitate, and it is natural to him to think of imitation and translation as modes of coming to know, from which understanding should be derived. That is not how Schlegel thinks, nor is it native to the critical tradition, poetic or otherwise. So, while his poetic critic refuses the detachment of analysis – "Why," he asks, "should we not both breathe in the perfume of a flower and at the same time, entirely absorbed in the observation, contemplate in its infinite ramifications the vein-system of a single leaf?" (Schlegel 2002d, 273) – the perfume and the vein-diagram are both modulations of a receptive sensibility. They are not maker's knowledge, let alone impersonation. They are interdicted from imitation.

But here is Schlegel again, just a year later, in his *Critical Fragments:*

> 55. A really free and cultivated person ought to be able to attune [*stimmen*] himself at will to being philosophical or philological, critical or poetical, historical or rhetorical, ancient or mod-

10 Schlegel makes the same point, insisting on the same priority of understanding to imitation, in his *On the Study of Greek Poetry*, which he wrote in 1795: "Only he who thoroughly knows [*ganz kennt*] Greek poetry *can* imitate [*nachahmen*] it" (Schlegel 2001, 77; Schlegel 1979, 331), he says, and again: "One cannot properly imitate [*nicht richtig nachahmen*] Greek poetry as long as one does *not* actually *understand* [*gar nicht versteht*] it" (Schlegel 2001, 84; Schlegel 1979, 347). Schlegel's attitude in that text toward imitation is complicated, but his references to imitation as a technical skill, to "slavishly imitative artists who only imitate the particular" (Schlegel 2001, 58), are unfailingly disparaging. His ideal of imitation is directed not at the work but at the spirit it conveys: the genius does not allow himself "to be restricted by the peculiarity that the outward form, the husk of the universal spirit, may still yet carry with it" (Schlegel 2001, 47). Halliwell discusses this attitude in *The Aesthetics of Mimesis* (Halliwell 2002, 360 – 363).

> ern: quite arbitrarily, just as one tunes an instrument, at any time and to any degree. (Schlegel 2002a, 242; Schlegel 1967, 154)

Attunement is not imitation. But there is something in this ideal person of the rhetorician's versatility, the cultivated skill of the imitator, the student who can tune what she makes to the objects of her study. If Schlegel denounces the "countless legions of derivative imitators [*nachahmende Echokünstler*]" (Schlegel 2001, 30; Schlegel 1979, 239) in his own moment, he shares some of the humanists' ideals of attunement. There is a great and, at the present moment, neglected pedagogical power in the exercises that build that capacity; one might say, coopting Schlegel's argument, that imitation, in taking over contiguous words and thoughts, might keep the original alive in the hand and mouth of the student. That is no small thing in itself, at a moment when the humanities are struggling for enrollments. (And when creative writing is thriving.) There is a special critical potential in imitation, too. Donne manipulates lyric structures from the inside, immanently, exposing otherwise invisible contradictions. Imitation has a power to open up the difference from the original as an exemplary contradiction, by its variances, and by its exaggerations, the strategic hypertrophy of the imitator's skill. (Hal Foster has discussed a strain of contemporary art that practices critique by "mimetic exacerbation" [Foster 2017, Ch. 3]; John Donne might find himself in good company there.) And that is a skill that comes only by its practice.

And then again – with all that said, there is, in the provisional self-surrender of the imitator, in that absorbing feedback between maker and model, something that resists assimilation to post-Romantic critique; at least, to that variety of critique that depends for its power on strict difference from its object. It is a resistance that makes imitation a more provocative alternative to such critique than description, say, or surface reading, the critical opposites for which so much contemporary literary argument has reached, in its search for other ways of reading.[11] "Come live with me and be my love" is an ideal test of imitation's powers and its risks, for it is just what we are afraid of: that the poem will interpellate us into its form of life; that in loving it we will lose our ability to think freely, objectively. But to be a truly free and cultivated person – and here, let "cultivated" refer to the practical, learnable skills of poem-making; skills anyone can learn – to be a truly free and cultivated person means you can choose when to imitate, when to step back, and not demand that the contradiction be reconciled in advance.

11 It strikes me as a contemporary blind spot that critics discontent with critique as a mode of engagement have not looked to the long pedagogical tradition of imitation; it speaks to the institutional separations between faculties of creative writing and literature. The touchstones for the current debate in the United States are Rita Felski's *The Limits of Critique* (2015), and the series of responses to it published in *PMLA*; also influential has been Stephen Best and Sharon Marcus, "Surface Reading: An Introduction" (2009).

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