In *Primal Scenes: Literature, Philosophy, Psychoanalysis* (1986) Ned Lukacher drew a parallel between Freud’s concept of the traumatic primal scene and Heidegger’s account of Western metaphysics as a forgetting of Being. Moreover, Lukacher noticed that if one thought these very different primal scenes in relation to one another, one would immediately encounter the question of temporality that is fundamental to each. In Freud, of course, time is constitutive of trauma, since trauma works retroactively through time. But can the same be said of time in Heidegger? *Time-Fetishes: The Secret History of Eternal Recurrence* reconfirms that it can. Of course, those who abhor psychoanalytic readings of philosophy will probably take little interest in Lukacher’s project. But Lukacher has made a strong case for the idea that Western tradition is haunted by a trauma eternally acted out instead of worked through. *Time-Fetishes* further argues that the symptom of this acting out is the construction of a temporal fetish (or simulacrum) in the place where the trauma has been reencountered in the history of philosophy, literature, and the arts.
Indeed, *Time-Fetishes* is largely an account of a basic metaphysical problem—the difference between Being and becoming—that Lukacher revisits in terms of its eternal traumatic recurrence. Importantly, the book’s subtitle emphasizes Nietzsche’s well-known doctrine of eternal return, which complements a Freudian emphasis on traumatic repetition and its phantasmic effects. The recurrence of the time-fetish as fantasm constitutes a surreptitious spectral history exposed most significantly by Nietzsche, who, according to Lukacher, was more intrepid than his predecessors in confronting the traumatic primal scene associated with the metaphysics of Being and becoming, namely, the trauma of what Georges Bataille called “le fond impossible des choses” [the impossible depth of things].

In *On Nietzsche* Bataille explains that the “inner experience” is a “separation experience” related “to a vital continuum” to which we may hazard to return through laughter, sexual feeling, and ecstasy. Yet, being separated, we never possess clear recollections of that return and therefore must resort to various objectifications to “reach the core of the being that we are” (186). Writing in the early 1940s, Bataille summarizes the central problem that concerns Lukacher: consciousness is an anguished separation experience that cannot marry Being and becoming. For Bataille, the leap into becoming is Dionysian (intoxicating, erotic, ecstatic, frenzied): “I dissolve into myself like the sea” (184). Afterward, however, one necessarily returns to a state of individuality and separateness: to a condition of particular Being denied access to Dionysian experience except by way of contrivances like art (lyric poetry, painting, symphonic music, etc.). Experience, then, is a consciousness of the difference between Being and becoming that is reminiscent of Jacques Lacan’s concept of alienation, in which having one thing comes at the price of not having another. For Bataille, alienation either from Being or from becoming is traumatic, since both conditions lack something. The Dionysian consciousness experiences ecstatic feelings but lacks their objectification and recoverability; the Apollonian consciousness experiences self-objectification and knowledge but lacks emotional dynamism and continuity. Bataille argues that to be suspended in this difference is suffering, because Being and becoming are fundamentally wedded, despite our inability to experience them as such.

Lukacher touches on this aspect of suffering when he discusses Titian’s *Bacchus and Ariadne* (1523), handsomely reproduced on the cover of *Time-Fetishes*. A detail depicts Bacchus leaping rather awkwardly from his chariot to make his way to Ariadne, who has just been abandoned by Theseus. According to Lukacher, Titian’s painting was known to Nietzsche and may have been fateful for the theory of eternal return. The painting is an allegory of the rapprochement between Being and becoming in which Bacchus is the

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personification of Being and Ariadne the personification of becoming. The interest in this painting, Lukacher says, is to be found in Bacchus's leap from his chariot as described in late antiquity by Ovid, since this leap represents “the active principle that cause[s] Being to spring toward the world of becoming” (48). In short, the painting is “an esoteric allegory of eternity’s longing for time and time’s longing for eternity” (48–9). In leaping toward and fixing his gaze on Ariadne, Bacchus pulls her “back from an imminent nothingness and into the cymbal-filled din of the bacchanal” (49). In Friedrich Hölderlin’s account, too, Dionysus serves as an interpretant for Titian’s painting: “Is not Hölderlin’s point that Dionysus is an allegory of the movement of the starry cosmos that brings the immensity of the natural world into some relation with human history? The leap is a kind of dance, and the dance is an allegory of the disruptive and unsettling relation of the time of universal nature to the time of human existence” (49). As such, Dionysus is a khôragus, or choral conductor, who leads the universal motion of the heavens, a figure that ties into Lukacher’s prior analysis of Plotinus, in which the khôragus “names a tremendous reserve or reservoir from whence springs the gift . . . the emergent event of Being that Heidegger calls Ereignis” (27–8). In observing this connection, we see the extent to which the analyses in Time-Fetishes are interrelated. That said, it should be pointed out that Titian’s painting, like Plotinus’s khôragus, is a time-fetish that instantiates the formalization and stabilization of a painful contradiction between the eternal and the evanescent: the fact that they cancel each other out even as they require one another for completeness.

In two chapters on Shakespeare, Lukacher develops Renaissance understandings of the difference between aion and tempus in terms of what some figures of that period knew as aevum time. “The aevum is an angelic realm between God and mortals, whose denizens live throughout infinite time but who were created by God and are thus not co-eternal with Him” (70). Aevum time, a somewhat crude resolution of the difference between Being and becoming, is a temporal fetish complicated in Shakespeare by way of anamorphic construction. According to Lukacher, anamorphic perspectives slow becoming down to retard rhythms of experience. In fact, the anamorphosis is a suspension or caesura in which “we glimpse uncanny or terrible perspectives on the future, or surpassingly beautiful images of desire. Shakespeare’s anamorphic time-fetishes are images not of eternity but of the infinite time of the aevum” (72). In Shakespeare these suspensions or hiatuses make up a temporality in which specters show themselves. This is already clear in Hans Holbein the Younger’s portrait The French Ambassadors (1533), a painting that has become emblematic for Lacan’s study of anamorphosis. If one looks at the work awry, one sees the phantasmic image of a skull. It is here, of course, that Lukacher gets at the trauma of the difference of Being
and becoming. He argues that Shakespeare had profound intuition into the construction of anamorphic time-fetishes in which traumatic materials surface. By way of Derrida’s *Specters of Marx*, Lukacher notices that anamorphic disruptions constitute a disjunction or unhinging of time that concerns disruptions in the consistency of appearances. Lacan made the same point in a seminar on anxiety. Trauma is undecidable in its consistency or inconsistency with respect to appearances.

In turning to Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment thinkers like Kant, Schopenhauer, Hegel, Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Derrida, Lukacher equates eternal time with identity and chronological time with difference. Central to Lukacher’s speculations are questions involving Being, becoming, and the will. These analyses crescendo to an exploration of Nietzsche’s doctrine of eternal recurrence, though what will probably put off some readers is that for those who do not have a detailed knowledge of Nietzsche’s doctrine—apparently, it is spread out in elusive fragments among a number of texts, including Nietzsche’s *Nachlass*—Lukacher provides no overall sketch. In pondering the reason for this, it is important to realize that for Lukacher there actually is no coherent doctrine to be summarized and that at best one has, in Nietzsche, an explosion and dissemination of tiny fragments, some of which are hurtling out into zones of madness. Consider a fragment from the *Nachlass*, quoted by Lukacher, in which eternal recurrence is meant to exterminate those who cannot hear the words “There is no salvation.” Nietzsche comments: “I want wars in which the vital and courageous drive out the others—you ought to expel them, shower them with every manner of contempt, or lock them up in insane asylums, drive them to despair” (126). Lukacher also delves into a curious fragment in which Nietzsche engages Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar*. In a passage from *The Gay Science* about how Brutus was right to kill his friend for the sake of freedom and independence of soul, Lukacher enlists us to accept the idea that “it is impossible not to regard this ‘independence’ and ‘freedom’ as code words for eternal return” (130). Perhaps. But even if such associations are obscure, Nietzsche seems to reencounter (that is, repeat) himself both as himself and as an other in identifying with Shakespeare. From this perspective, Brutus’s independence and freedom may well be a Nietzschean precondition for eternal recurrence as the recurrence of oneself as an other.

Lukacher’s argument is not easy to grasp, because he characterizes Nietzsche as someone who resists the kind of formal appropriation one finds in, say, Pierre Klossowski, for whom eternal return is a “vicious circle.” For Lukacher, Nietzsche’s eternal recurrence is the most destructive philosophical intuition that any philosopher has ever had. Thus he stresses its
monstrosity and provides accounts of it that verge on the incomprehensible. Klossowski, however, stabilizes the eternal return by positing a time-fetish in its place: the vicious hermeneutical circling through Being (“The Circle says nothing through itself, except that existence has meaning only in being existence”) and becoming (“It is not the fact of being there that fascinates Nietzsche in this moment, but the fact of returning in what becomes”) (65). In contrast, Lukacher’s eternal recurrence is the recurrence of something beyond the Being-becoming dyad, similar to what Foucault seems to have had in mind when he spoke of a pensée en dehors. In the last chapter, on Heidegger and Derrida, Lukacher clarifies this kind of recurrence by explicating Nietzsche’s famous remark from the Nachlass concerning the forgetting of his umbrella. Lukacher allegorizes this statement as follows:

The umbrella is Nietzsche’s word for the trace of the most primordial difference, more primordial than the ontico-ontological difference between Being and beings; the umbrella names the trace of that which leaves no trace, the difference between time and eternity, or time and time’s other, between our time and true time, and between calculable time and a more primordial temporality. The real problem is that of remembering that the umbrella remains forgotten, and not of confusing oneself into thinking that the umbrella one thinks one has is really the umbrella one thinks it is. Of course, Nietzsche’s midday umbrella, forgotten or remembered, up or down, is his way of naming the experience of time’s antinomy, the antinomy of the aporia and the fetish of time. (141–2)

Here Nietzsche’s most radical trait of difference, pronounced in a time of madness, exposes the problematic of Being and becoming more radically than ever before. That Heidegger misappropriates eternal recurrence to avoid this more radical avenue is among Lukacher’s final arguments in Time-Fetishes. (This point is further corroborated in Heidegger’s Zollikon lectures, which directly address the forgetting of one’s umbrella.)

Readers familiar with Lukacher’s Primal Scenes, but also with Daemonic Figures: Shakespeare and the Question of Conscience (1994), will notice that Time-Fetishes belongs to a unified intellectual project, for just as Primal Scenes introduces us to the idea of a primal philosophical scene of traumatic recurrence, Daemonic Figures advances the idea of a ghostly figure that insistently mediates self-consciousness with an enigmatic ground of Being. The daemon, in fact, is the imaginary specter that haunts and temporalizes the difference between the way things appear ontically (immanently in the now) and the way they ought to be ethically (transcendentally in the future). The daemon, that is, holds Being in relation to time and is itself a kind of time-fetish. In Time-Fetishes Lukacher critiques the formation of such time-fetishes and thus implicitly negates his own prior construction of daemonic figurality. All things considered, Time-Fetishes can be thought of as part of an im-
pressive and consistent work in progress (rare these days), a work that manifests a will to return again and again to the troubled ground of its specters opened by the fissuring of Being and time.

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