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The radical reconfiguration over the last three decades of critical studies and what constitutes 'knowledge', whereby 'theory' and writing, literature and the 'social', poetics and politics have crossed eoch other's path, has led to an irreversible interrogation of previous autonomies. It would be simple to reduce this trajectory to a superficial social history that commences around 1968 and develops, above all, through the writings, both theoretical and literary, of new historical subjects distinguished by gender, ethnicity and minority status. However, these are also symptoms of an altogether deeper current that, to use the unfashionable concept of egemonia, *draws our attention to the limits and crisis, both intellectual and institutional, of a particular historical-cultural formation and its subsequent arrangement of disciplines in the western academy. The confident nineteenth-century positivism and/or idealism that cultivated and established the present day divisions and distinctions of the social sciences and humanities (and the critical and historical sense of such terms are themselves to be investigated) is exhausted. Confronted by nervous retrenchment into orthodox backwaters or else the continual adjustment of the inherited discipline in order to continue to converse with change, the initial* dispositif *is now clearly in crisis.*

Yet crisis is, of course, the very basis of criticism. This is to suggest a theoretical modality that is neither conservative nor merely accommodating. But if positivism and idealism are no longer able to mirror the world in their languages, if the confidence of a subjective objectivity orbiting around the universal I/eye (humanism) is justly afflicted by doubt, then critical work, whether in literature or anthropology, becomes an altogether more exposed, more vulnerable, undertaking. Whatever the response to such a situation, which, of course, requires recognition as a critical situation and not something to be brushed under the carpet, it becomes clear that a local response, for example restricted to the field of 'English literature', cannot be divorced from a wider comprehension of the crisis-criticism of the humanities and its particular tutelage of 'knowledge'. It is in this direction that the new series of Anglistica *proposes to travel, drawing critical strength, above all, from an interdisciplinary approach that has historically developed within the vicinity of English literary studies, that of cultural studies. But, precisely because it is interdisciplinary, existing between and beyond existing disciplines, neither cultural studies nor the critical perspective proposed for this journal can claim the authority of an intellectual orthodoxy nor the institutional recognition of a disciplinary regime. Being vulnerable is an uncomfortable, but necessary, position to occupy; the only comfort it provides is the perpetual aperture, the opening, through which an intellectual challenge can continue on its way.*

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(editors for this issue: Lidia Curti, Patrizia Fusella)

REVIEWS AND REVIEW ESSAYS

EDITORIAL

When Leslie Roman proposed the publication in *Anglistica* of a group of papers, and ensuing collective discussion, from the Vancouver conference on "The University as/in Contested Space", I was very glad and honoured for a number of reasons: first of all, to establish a modality of exchange between the women from the Orientale, particularly those involved in this editorial group, and those from the Women's Collective at the University of British Columbia; thereby opening up the perspective for an official link between the two institutions in future. Secondly, we were already aware of the very interesting work being done by the women involved in the conference within feminist critical theory; thirdly, the papers address topics that have become of paramount importance for the Italian university and for the women who work in it. In fact, in the last couple of years academics have been involved in a total reconfiguration – or that is what it should be – of the teaching structures in higher education. It is quite typical of the Italian idealistic frame of mind to do nothing about the serious problems in higher education for decades and then attempt to change everything in the same centralized way, regardless of the so called autonomy of each institution.

The members of the editorial board and myself thought that we and others could acquire inspiration from the debate coming from other continents – we still believe this is possible – and hoped we would be able to participate directly in the debate through our own writings. However, the reform project, after an initial impulse to realise a democratic process of radical renewal that would render the university less provincial in its pedagogy and more socially and culturally pertinent in its institutional aims, has produced so much bureaucratic work that it seems to have blocked our capacity to undertake serious intellectual thinking on this matter.

The overall problematic that emerges from the various essays in the section "Dialogue/Debate/Dissent" frequently touch upon wider issues and questions that inevitably disappear from view in the institutional mechanisms of adjustment and change, thus implicitly

criticising the very direction that the Italian university seems to be taking and underlining its dangers and limits. To interrogate the confines between cultures and national languages, to consider the present day position of students, to examine critically the relationship between scholarly research and the wider, non-academic world – these and other questions, deeply embedded in istitutional processes, emerge with clarifying force in the essays by Lowe, Salecl, Threadgold. Naturally, the issues these articles raise are quite central to our university reform project, although largely overshadowed by altogether more mundane aspects invariably harnessed to the stultifying pragmatics of existing academic power. The emerging European context, to which Italian universities are supposed to adapt by moving out of their 'high culture' ideological frame, is posing significant questions over the mixing of different cultures, languages, both European and non-, given that immigration from so-called 'extra-communitarian countries' creates problems that tend to exacerbate national idiosincracies. Such questions are particularly acute for those teaching in the humanities, and in faculties such as ours directly involved in the meeting of European and extra-European languages. Within this situation, the condition of women remains a central question as the majority of the student population in this area is female while institutional power continues to be overwhelmingly male in style and composition.

For these and other reasons we do hope that Patrizia Fusella's invitation to a further debate on these pages will find a reply among intellectuals and colleagues both from this university and from outside.

The other papers, though external to the previous debate, are not distant from some of its issues, as they mostly deal with problems of borders and boundaries. Laforest, in "Whose Story, Whose World?", examines the practice of rewriting the classics by blacks and women as a way of renaming the world, a process of revision that in the case of Toni Morrison and John M. Coetzee seems to extend to a rewriting of inter-ethnic relations. In "The Deconstruction of Racial Identity in Christine Brooke-Rose's *Out*", Canepari-Labib looks at the treatment of interracial identity from within the work of one of the sophisticated white voices of postmodern Britain. In referring to the critical works of some

contemporary women writers, I have tried to underline in my essay how their moving among different cultures (Asian and American, Aboriginal and Australian, Spanish and American, Zimbambwian and British) enables them to shed a new light on the dimension the process of writing takes for women, thus adding a crucial perspective to contemporary critical theory.

Finally, Luciana Parisi refers to different kinds of boundaries – between bodies and genders, objects and subjects – as they are superseded in the biocybernetic world of Octavia Butler's *Dawn*. In the detailed analysis of this novel, Parisi describes the transition from one body to another, from one sex to another, to a post-body, post-sex dimension (in spite of the progressive perspective, perhaps a slighly dismaying one?). This transition and others are outlined in this issue of *Anglistica*: from one canon to another, from one sense of writing to another, from the university to the external world and viceversa, from one kind of university to another, hopefully a better one.

Lidia Curti

DIALOGUE/DEBATE/ DISSENT

Transnational Space and Universities in Transition

Patrizia Fusella

Universities in Transition. Call for a Debate

The Italian university is undergoing a process of radical renovation. More radical, perhaps, than the one following the student revolts in 1968, it is happening in a quieter way inside the academies themselves. This is all the more surprising if one thinks that most lecturers of today were students or young academics in 1968 but it finds an explanation in Bill Readings' words:

> The replacement of culture by the discourse of excellence is the University's response to 1968. In the face of student critiques of the contradiction between the University's claim to be a guardian of culture and its growing commitment to bureaucracy, the University has progressively abandoned its cultural claim. Forced to describe itself as either a bureaucratic-administrative or an idealist institution, it chose the former.[1]

"Excellence", "bureaucracy", "administration": these are the key elements of the current reform in western universities. Even allowing for the differences in the ways in which the institution is changing in the United States, Canada, Australia, or Europe, one finds striking similarities and a basic common cause: globalization. Also the Report to UNESCO of The International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century, while stressing the differences between developed and under-developed countries, foresees globalization as the main aspect of the next hundred years and underlines the

[1] Bill Readings, *The University in Ruins* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, England: Harvard University Press, 1996), 150.

necessity to understand it and to come to terms with it. Jacques Delors, chairman of the Commission states:

> Our Commission had the perhaps impossible task of overcoming the obstacles presented by the extraordinary diversity of situations in the world and trying to arrive at analyses that are universally valid and conclusions acceptable to everyone.
>
> Neverthless, the Commission did its best to project its thinking on to a future dominated by globalization, to choose those questions that everyone is asking and to lay down some guidelines that can be applied both within national contexts and on a world-wide scale.[2]

As far as Italy is concerned, the most recent effects of globalization can be divided in two main streams: the changes related to the new laws on the National System of Scientific and Technological Research and those dependent on the formation of the European Higher Education Area within the larger scope of a new "Europe of Knowledge".

The new law on the "organization, planning and evaluation of the national policy on scientific and technological research" (DL 204 of June 1998) underlines the necessity to define the general aims of the National Plan for Research (PNR) "with reference to the European and international dimension". The *Linee Guida del Programma Nazionale di Ricerca*, issued in May 2000, surveys both the "structural anomaly of our country as far as science and technology are concerned" and the incredible weakness of the South of Italy in comparison with the rest of Europe and other developed countries. The Italian index of economic world competitiveness in 1998 places Italy at the thirtieth position on the World Competitiveness Scoreboard, based on the analysis of forty-seven countries published by the Institute for Management Development. It

[2] *Learning: the Treasure Within*. Report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century. The report is dated 1996 and has been published in Italian in 1997 (Roma: Armando Ed.). I am quoting from the abridged version in English available for consultation on the UNESCO Website *(http://www.unesdoc.unesco.org/ima)*,10. On globalization see in particular Chapter 1 "From the local community to a world society".

is precisely because of low indexes like this that the Ministry stimulates inter-institutional co-operation and public-private partnership in research.[3] The same need for competitiveness is echoed in the joint declaration signed by the thirty-one European Ministers of Education who met in Bologna on the 19th of June 1999:

> A Europe of Knowledge is now widely recognised as an irreplaceable factor for social and human growth.... We must in particular look at the objective of increasing the international competitiveness of the European system of higher education. The vitality and efficiency of any civilisation can be measured by the appeal that its culture has for other countries. We need to ensure that the European higher education system acquires a world-wide degree of attraction equal to our extraordinary cultural and scientific traditions.[4]

The necessity to compete in global markets makes partnership inescapable. On the international level Italy joins the rest of Europe to build up a common area of knowledge able to compete on the world-wide scale, and on the national level, universities are urged to join with other public institutions and private industry or enterprise in order to carry out a type of research which is attractive to both the European and the world market.[5]

The full effects of the new laws relating to the national politics of scientific and technological research (from DL 204/1998 onwards) and to the reorganization of higher education (DL 509/1999) to European standards will be seen in the next few years,[6] but they have

[3] These guidelines, issued by the Ministero dell'Università e della Ricerca Scientifica e Tecnologica (MURST), are available on the web at *www.murst.it/ricerca/pnr/2000/lineeguida.doc.* See in particular page 8-20 and 41. The law 204/1998 is published in the *Gazzetta Ufficiale* 151 (1 July 1998) and I am quoting from art. 1, paragraph 2.

[4] *The European Higher Education Area*, available on the web site *www.murst.it/convegni/bologna99/dichiarazione/english.htm.*, 1-2.

[5] *Linee Guida*, 31-32 e *passim*.

[6] Besides law n. 509 see the previous laws regulating didactical autonomy collected in *Università Ricerca*, 8 (November-December 1997), LXXXVI-CXIV; *Università Ricerca*, 9 (January-February 1998) is fully devoted to the adoption of the system of credits and includes information on the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS).

been prepared by two wider processes of renovation which have already taken place: the concession of administrative autonomy to Italian universities and the increased co-operation among the member states of the European Union on education. These have been widely discussed and have been the subject of many books on related topics,[7] but despite this, most of us academics seem to have a dizzying feeling of being torn between the necessity to carry out the process of renovation and the search for reference points inspired by our past experience, beliefs and attitudes of mind. In the various Committees and Boards where we are called upon to make decisions and plans for the future of our university there is a noticeable absence or scarcity of elaboration of personal guidelines and underlying principles and beliefs. This absence does not necessarily mean that these principles have not been thought through but it does indicate that it is not easy to apply them when taking practical decisions.

The need to argue the present issues through and to relate them to the changes already brought about by administrative autonomy, the necessity to think through questions like globalization, bureaucracy, excellence, competitiveness and the aims of the European higher education area, the duty to be fully conscious of the motivations of our choices in Faculty Boards and similar bodies seem to me the necessary steps to take in order to keep up with the process of

[7] The following are only some of the titles one could quote: Mario Gattullo, *Quale università. Proposte per il cambiamento* (Firenze: La Nuova Italia, 1986); Raffaele Simone, *L'università dei tre tradimenti* (Bari: Laterza, 1993); Felice Froio, *Le mani sull'università. Cronache di un'istituzione in crisi* (Roma: Editori Riuniti, 1996); Adriano Bausola e Cosimo Scaglioso, *Università: quale autonomia?* (Roma: Armando Ed., 1997); Giovanni M. Bertin, Raffaele Laporta e Clotilde Pontecorvo, *Università in transizione* (Napoli: Liguori, 1985); Luciana Benadusi (a cura di), *L'istruzione superiore di primo livello. La riforma italiana nel contesto europeo ed internazionale* (Milano: Angeli, 1993); Fulvio Tessitore (a cura di), *Quale università? I problemi dell'autonomia* (Napoli: Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, 1997); Sveva Avveduto, Maurizio Rocchi e Alberto Silvani, *Due mondi a confronto. La collaborazione tra università e imprese nel campo della ricerca scientifica e tecnologica* (Milano: Angeli, 1990); Sveva Avveduto e Patrizia E. Cipollone, *La mobilità delle intelligenze in Europa. Internazionalizzazione della formazione e dottorato di ricerca* (Milano: Angeli, 1998); Eugenio Andreatta, *Studi senza frontiere. L'università incontro all'Europa* (Padova: Alborg, 1993); Matilde Callari Galli (a cura di), *I crediti didattici nei curricoli universitari* (Bologna: CLUEB, 1992).

renovation and to ensure that humanities find new ways to maintain their influence and cultural importance.

The Editorial Board of *Anglistica* would like to devote the section "Dialogue/Debate/Dissent" in the next issues to the discussion of the present situation of English Studies in European universities with reference both to the new degree syllabuses and to the financing of research. In this context the most urgent and relevant problems on the agenda in Italian universities are: 1) the adoption of the system of credits, 2) the creation of new degrees organized in two and three years cycles in order to make student mobility possible within Europe, and 3) the ways in which research in English culture, literature and language can be carried out in the universities in view of the new PNR and the recent technological developments. *Anglistica* believes that English scholars in Italy would benefit from the exchange of opinions and experiences on these issues with other Italian colleagues who are reorganizing their didactic activity in order to be ready for the new regime which must be in place by the beginning of next academic year. However, contributions on the same topics from European colleagues who are facing similar changes or by international and European colleagues working in universities where teaching is already organized on the basis of the systems of credits and the two degree cycles seem equally useful, especially if they could help Italy avoid mistakes already made in other countries.

Moreover, it is evident that the topics *Anglistica* is offering for debate call into question larger subjects, such as the future of humanities in our society, the role of literature, literary criticism, cultural studies and other disciplines in the new degree curricula, the very definition of knowledge, the concept of usable knowledges in the postmodern university, the commodification of higher education and so on.

As I have already said, the recent and proposed changes in the Italian university were anticipated and prepared for by the laws giving administrative autonomy to the universities. Based on the changes which have already taken place, it is my impression that what at first looked like a project to simplify administration through decentralization runs the risk of creating more bureaucracy. It also appears to me that the process of administrative autonomy – which dates back to the early 80s – has slowly transmuted into a system of comparative evaluation which assesses each university according to

its fulfilment of the aims of the university system. In this context performance indicators and statistics are becoming the favourite means of evaluation and comparison between universities. The resulting ranking is becoming of paramount importance for the allocation of funds.[8] If this interpretation of mine is correct, then the Italian system is starting to resemble the American where "excellence"

> ... serves as the unit of currency within a closed field.... All referential issues, that is, any questions about what excellence in the University might *be*, what the term might *mean*, [are excluded]. Excellence is ... a means of relative ranking among the elements of an *entirely closed system*.... Excellence is clearly a purely internal unit of value that effectively brackets all questions of reference or function, thus creating an internal market.[9]

However applicable this highly negative criticism is to the Italian university, the term excellence is starting to recur with worrying frequency in documents on the Italian and European university and sometimes its meaning is rather unclear. For instance, in the *Joint declaration on the harmonisation of the architecture of the European higher education system* signed at the Sorbonne in 1998, one reads:

> We are heading for a period of major change in education and working conditions.... We owe our students ... a higher education system in which they are given the best opportunities to seek and find their own area of excellence.[10]

The use of the term is more understandable but definitely worrying

[8] See the two laws known as Bassanini and Bassanini 2 passed in 1997 (n. 59/97 and 127/97); in particular the article 17 of the law 59/97. In this new context the evaluations made by the Osservatorio per la Valutazione del Sistema Universitario, created in 1993, and by similar boards (for instance, the CIVR – Comitato di indirizzo per la valutazione della ricerca – created by the already quoted law n. 204) are becoming a means for deciding the financing of the universities. On this function of the CIVR, see page 5 of *Linee Guida.*

[9] Readings, *Ruins*, 27.

[10] Available on internet at *http://www.quipo.it/netpaper/dichiarazing.html;* the declaration was made by the ministers of France, Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom.

in the *Linee Guida del Programma Nazionale di Ricerca* where research seems to be judged excellent when it is financed less by the State and more by private industry or enterprise or when it is the product of inter-institutional co-operation and public-private partnership.[11] For the time being, though, excellence doesn't seem to be as important an element in our system as in the case of the American university, but we should be on our guard and profit from the experience of other countries where excellence has become the animating principle and has developed "as the idea around which the University centers itself and through which it becomes comprehensible to the outside world".[12]

Many more topics could be suggested for the debate which *Anglistica* wants to host. In my opinion they all have in common the problem that the university reforms before us at present contain at their heart a series of unresolved dichotomies. The proposals for the reform of the university are founded on conflicting principles – which foster opposing interests – like: partnership / competitiveness; scientific growth / national economic needs; freedom of research / evaluation of the economic and social revenue from research; independence and autonomy of the universities / adaptation of the universities to the changing needs and demands of society. For instance, the changes dependent on the inclusion of the Italian university within the system of European higher education on one side appeal to an ideal of unity and unification, to the need to construct a European identity and educate European citizens, and on the other side respond to economic imperatives relative to the place of Italy and the European Union in the global market. In this context what is the role and function of humanistic disciplines like English Studies? How is our discipline going to be affected by the level of specialization necessary to the new student curricula demanded by the work-market?

How much does all this alter the role and function of the Italian university? Do we think that the new laws are altering our university in a way similar to the one Bill Readings condemns? Here is his view:

[11] For this aspect see in particular page 9 and the paragraph on "Centri di eccellenza", 41-42, in the already quoted *Linee Guida.*

[12] Readings, *Ruins*, 22.

> The University is becoming a different kind of institution, one that is no longer linked to the destiny of the nation-state by virtue of its role as producer, protector, and inculcator of an idea of national culture. The process of economic globalization brings with it the relative decline of the nation-state as the prime instance of the reproduction of capital around the world. For its part, the University is becoming a transnational bureaucratic corporation, either tied to transnational instances of government such as the European Union or functioning independently by analogy with a transnational corporation.... The current crisis of the University in the West proceeds from a fundamental shift in its social role and internal systems, one which means that the centrality of the traditional humanistic disciplines to the life of the University is no longer assured.[13]

I believe that this rather apocalyptic view describes the Italo/European university only in part, as the formation of a European culture functional to the transnational union still seems to me a possible task for the university and an important one. I cannot argue this position here as it would imply the discussion of the complex relations among concepts like culture, class, power, ideology etc. in postmodern society, but I do believe that the present challenge to the Italian university to be functional to the European Union must be accepted and that in order to win we must challenge our traditional beliefs on the link between the nation state and the university and start thinking of the university and world society. As the report to UNESCO underlines: "a world society struggles painfully to be born: education is at the heart of both personal and community development".[14]

Some of the issues I have dealt with are tackled in the following essays that we publish with the hope they are only the beginning of a stimulating and lively debate to follow in the next issues of this journal. The essays are by feminist scholars working in Australia, the United States and Slovenia and have much in common despite starting from different theoretical points of view and dealing with different aspects. One common feature in particular must be

[13] Ibid., 3.
[14] *Treasure Within*, 16.

mentioned. They have a deeply convinced constructive attitude and they show how important it is to think through one's own position in relation to the situations one has to deal with.

The short preface written by Geraldine Pratt and Leslie G. Roman serves as an introduction to these articles, but I want to spend a few words on the aspect which seems to me most relevant for the debate we are promoting. These feminist scholars accept the challenge of globalization partly with a view to constructing transnational feminisms. This implies that while taking in due account personal, local, theoretical and political differences, they are also conscious of the importance of a common purpose and of a web of connections and partnerships which will make the political presence and actions of women in universities and in societies more vigorous.

The capability to admit difference, while working for a common purpose, seems to me an important suggestion for the future of our university and as a teacher of a foreign language, literature and culture I believe that our main task should be to make our students know and accept the foreigner, the "other" who is different from them and to whom they, in turn, are "foreign".

Geraldine Pratt and Leslie G. Roman

The University as/in Contested Space

In May 1998, we invited three leading feminist scholars to the University of British Columbia to speak to the theme of the university as/in contested space; the papers that follow have been developed from these talks. This theme itself extended debates in our own group concerning how our respective disciplines regulated and at times fractured the common ground which drew us together in cultural studies. In some ways, the papers point to the less obvious sites of contested yet disciplined university knowledge: the evidence and methods exercised by university disciplines to legitimate some knowledge while minoritizing or rendering invisible altogether other forms of knowledge and ways of knowing. Yet they also point in quite different ways to the problems and opportunities for feminist dialogs at this moment in the space of universities generally as well as in specific local, regional, national, and transnational contexts. They draw attention to the shifting boundaries between, within and among nation-states in the larger context of transnational globalization. We are left with urgent questions about the future of transnational feminisms and the kind of critical feminist dialogs and pedagogies that may be necessary to inspire and/or sustain them.

The most optimistic among the analyses is that written by Terry Threadgold, Professor of English at Monash University in Australia, who cautions against being drawn into the rhetoric of corporatism of the university. She enjoins us to resist the rhetorical polarity that divides the humanities from the real business of the world (as a way of diminishing the humanities), and to harness the disorder of the contemporary university for feminist and anti-colonial ends. One important opportunity that exists is to disrupt a masculinist, anglo-centric worldview, to "silence the silences of the metropolis".

This theme is further explored by Lisa Lowe, who is more pointed in her criticism of the liberal university, and feminist strategy that builds unproblematically on enlightenment principles, particularly liberal individualism that weds human rights to property. Working through a case study of feminist organizing around workplace sexual harassment, she calls upon participatory action research that she has done with The Support Committee for Maquiladora Workers in San Diego, California, to excite our imaginings of how, as feminist academics, we might engage in and help to build toward alternative public spheres that uncover the exclusions and uneven geographies of the liberal subject, as they simultaneously work to extend human rights into excluded territories and on behalf of excluded socially situated subjects. The space of the university is one where we need not abandon enlightenment values but rather critically rethink their exclusions, through a 'globally different sense'. It is a space in which to measure out the dangers of globalizing liberal epistemology, as well as the possibilities of new ways of conceiving 'humanity' and 'human rights'.

Renata Salecl continues the critique of the liberal university, taking the view that the contemporary 'postmodern' university has become a space in which criticism has lost its edge and been watered down. Writing from a Lacanian psychoanalytic perspective, and from the dual and relational perspectives gained from teaching in Slovenia and the United States, she troubles over the various forms taken by a contemporary 'postmodern' loss of authority in the intertwined spaces of the classroom and corporate "campus". She argues that the effect is to open space for more ambiguous, insidious and potentially exploitative forms of authority vested in cultural relativism and the refusal to evaluate and debate serious epistemic differences that occur in everyday pedagogical interactions and problems. For Salecl, the ambiguous forms of authority undergird more authoritarian structures of learning and inquiry, while simultaneously closing opportunities for more openly confrontational, clearly defined and more overtly politicized debate.

These papers not only offer us ways of thinking about the space of the university – one in which many of us spend a good deal of time without making it an object of our own geographical and pedagogical inquiry; other intriguing geographies and pedagogies are

written through them. The authors deftly move through geographical scales and pedagogical registers. In the Salecl paper, for example, we move from the body to classroom to corporate campus and back to the body, the latter conceived as a surface upon which students stabilize identity and boundaries through (possibly politically impotent) gestures of tattooing and scarification.

We also see the redeployment of feminist geographical writing in new spaces, notably in Threadgold's use of Gibson-Graham and Jane Jacob's geographical writing on capitalism and cities, respectively, as vehicles for imagining new futures, both inside and outside the university. Threadgold uses Gibson-Graham's critique of discourses of globalization in a novel way; Lisa Lowe's engagement with globalization as "a problem of knowledge" is equally creative, involving a reading of liberal citizenship and epistemology as another uneven production of capitalist imperialism, as another symptom of globalization.

The three authors are positioned differently, not only geographically but also theoretically, and we explore and attempt to sharpen some of these differences in a conversation that was staged by our collective after the paper presentations; the edited transcript follows the papers here. The conversation is compelling because it enables the authors to clarify and amplify their positions in less formal ways, but it also allows them to engage with their differences around, in particular, the utility and dangers of universal conceptions of human rights, the drawbacks and possibilities of identity politics, and (at the time of the interview May 1, 1998), some of the ominous signs of ethnic, racialized and religious balkanizations inspired in part by emergent forms of what Salecl calls 'fundamentalist populism' and 'anti-internationalist' sentiments. Salecl finds echoes of such 'Big Other' inspired balkanization in U.S. Women's Studies classrooms while Lisa Lowe's focus on the economic racialization of the U.S., draws our attention to the work of an existing transnational feminist alliance to secure safer and better working conditions for Maquiladora Workers. Their different positions raise questions about the transnational spaces for political work across national borders as well as for the disciplinary correlary in university spaces – interdisciplinary scholarship.

Where they arrive is not a blurring of positions, but an

appreciation of the fact that they are working out of different traditions, in different contexts, and toward somewhat different ends. As they particularize their theoretical/political positions through concrete stories about their own feminist political interventions in different places, we witness attempts to understand common experiences (e.g., the regulation of family values in Slovenia and Australia) while insisting on critical differences (e.g. the virtues of different pedagogical strategies when teaching high theory and about everyday social relations). We choose to see this as a process of creating webs of connections and relationality that admit difference, surely one of the objectives of a transnational feminism that builds across local and theoretical/political diversity. Taken together, despite their different theoretical/disciplinary and geographic locations, the essays and the subsequent interview go well beyond any current orthodoxies or "doxas" about "difference" as irreconcilable or so uncontested as to be fixed in space/place.[1] If read relationally as part of a broader conversation in transnational feminism, they persuade us that alterity is neither absolute nor transhistorical.

[1] R. Felski, "The Doxa of Difference", *Signs*, 23, 1 (1997), 1-21.

Terry Threadgold

The Sphynx, Cardinal Wolsey's Hat and Metropolis Now

> For what moment of time is more emblematic of the open-endedness of history than "now", and what objects are more suggestive of the open-endedness of evaluation than those consigned to the dustbin of history? (Rey Chow, 1998: xiv) Choosing blindness has serious consequences for all of us because race, class and gender, already reifications of force and meaning, can be turned into what Patricia Williams calls "phantom words." ... The ghost registers *and* it incites, and that is why we have to talk to it graciously, why we have to learn how it speaks, why we have to grasp the fullness of its lifeworld, its desires and its standpoint. (Gordon, 1997: 207-208)

Contested space: ruins?

It is sometimes the case that we speak of the university as a contested space *as if it had not been that before*, even in quite recent memory. Is the university in ruins? Is this really war? Are we really all bureaucrats now? Is this a postcolonial or a neocolonialist space? In memory of what? Or with no memory at all? In this paper I want to explore some of the ways of storying (theoretical and everyday) which mediate cross-generational, cross-cultural and cross-gender relations in the contested space of today's university. I want to explore the spatial, temporal and other metaphors that discursively connect the university to the metropolis (or the (post)metropolis) now and to try to find some different metaphors for telling future histories. And I do not want to forget the sphynx who, it seems to me, has never been very good at ruin. In all of this I am taking seriously the instructions from the collective who asked me to think of the university in relation to

memory, memorial, museum and metropolis. I will focus specifically on the Humanities, perhaps the most contested of all contemporary university spaces but also the one where 'ruin' has been a constant theme in recent years.

In Australia, the 'new' humanities (Ruthven, 1992) were about questioning and challenging the boundaries of the disciplines, insisting on the diversity of multicultural student populations and cultural realities, about the imbrication of cultural studies in governmentality and policy, about the internationalization of subaltern studies and the critique of eurocentrism, about women's studies and critical legal studies. The humanities in 1998 are newly inflected, mediated and shaped by a very specific form of (neo-) colonization of the university by faculties of Business and Economics and by the commodification of public discourse involved in now ubiquitous processes of corporatisation and economic rationalism. In these contexts, it is not just the walls of the disciplines that crumble but the walls of the university itself. The university is forced to become part of the polis, even of the metropolis and of the globe. And, despite the obviously top-heavy and very powerful corporate bureaucracies that are emerging in our Australian universities, even they do not have much say about this.

Nevertheless there are those who will question whether the crumbled walls are to be read as 'ruin' (Readings, 1996). What is clear is that Readings is correct when he argues that the move from the relationship between 'Culture', the nation-state and the university to the global ideology of Excellence (in Australia the equivalent was the Quality agendas in the late eighties and nineties) has led to a considerable confusion of, and muddling of, the differences between 'accountability' and 'accounting' (Readings, 1996: 18). Where I think Readings is wrong is in his assumption that once 'Culture' with a capital 'C' and its links with the making and maintenance of the nation-state become outmoded or contested spaces (and this argument itself needs challenging) there is actually nothing left but (1) 'Excellence': "a non-referential principle that allows the maximum of uninterrupted internal administration", and (2) Cultural Studies, where "the critique of culture as ideology becomes obsolete" (Readings, 1996: 120). In Readings's argument, the contestation that has produced these results is constituted as transnational. Although there

are surface similarities and some global effects, these things have not taken quite the same forms in the Australian context where they have all been specifically related to struggles about race, class (as Chow 1988 argues they have been in the USA) and gender, struggles which are not foregrounded in Readings's account of the Canadian and North American contexts. Thus, although there is not space to argue the details here, feminist scholars in Australia have often found the bureaucratization/accountability that came with 'Quality' singularly helpful in challenging patriarchal structures within the university sector (Yeatman, 1990; Luke, 1996; Threadgold, 1998a) and 'ethnic' scholars have in the past managed to turn conservative government and corporate diversity management agendas to radical use (Bottomley and de Lepervanche, 1984; Gunew and Rizvi, 1994; Theophanous, 1995). Nor, in Australia, has cultural studies been a site where "ideology has become obsolete". Indeed the same critical theory that contested the colonizing influences of the British literary canon in Australia, now inhabits the space of cultural studies, making that a place where Aboriginal and multicultural literatures can also be taught. In the effort to archive and institutionalize multicultural literatures, it was indeed postcolonial theory and the European theory which had preceded it, again 'foreign invaders' from Europe, which opened first theoretical then pragmatic spaces for these new endeavors. Whatever else we may feel about postmodernist and postcolonialist debates, they have undoubtedly precipitated a widespread acceptance of the fact that positionality – where you stand in relation to what you say – is central to the construction of knowledge. In other words they have made it more difficult to talk about literature in terms of universal propositions, or about texts without reference to their contexts. This has resulted in an impetus to consider local elements: histories, socio-politics and ethnic specificities (Gunew, 1994: 1).

Such agendas are centrally involved in challenging dominant literary ideologies. They have produced fraught class/race/gender relations that explain to some extent the playing out of the 'culture wars' and the 'political correctness debates' in the Australian context. I read these as being as much about a very *literary* nostalgia for Britain among the literati in this country (Davis, 1997) and as constituting a strong reaction to anything that seems anti-British.

"Anti-British" encompasses various forms of Australian nationalism, including the one which was introduced by the Whitlam Labour Government in the seventies and perpetuated by the Keating government into the nineties which used 'multiculturalism' as a way of constituting a new and decidedly un-British national identity as a prelude to an Australian Republic (Ang and Stratton, 1998) and all kinds of endeavors seen as deriving from foreign (often French) theory, including feminisms. But I stress; you have to move in literary circles, and among journalists trained in the sixties in those circles, to find this nostalgia for Britain in contemporary Australia.

In 1992 Sneja Gunew wrote:

> Yoked together in Australian journalism are the twin contagions of poststructuralism and deconstruction – the foreign malady for which we need to advance the healthy anti-bodies of common-sense and accessible (that is, undemanding) public debate (for which read anti-intellectualism).... A related image is that of the foreign, often French, intellectual contagion.... Associated with the notion of the (foreign) noise which is either a disruption of communication or a message is the concept of plain language and this can take many forms.... Academic language itself is also a problem. Apparently there is an intrinsic problem with referring to certain bodies of theory simply because these are read with interest around the world and have become part of a critical apparatus and dialogue. Some intellectuals do perceive themselves as concerned with setting curricula and of having an input in defining the national literature. They form part of a larger world-wide project to make cultural difference a category in critical analysis akin to race and gender. Recent attacks on deconstruction in ways which reveal the writer's complete misunderstanding of the terrain (Donnelly, 1991) and earlier attacks on semiotics have exhibited similar traits and are the products, presumably, of those who are possibly quite genuinely outraged by the fact that some of us wish to be part of international intellectual life rather than simply taking our bearings from what has been endorsed by Anglo-Celtic Australian translations of Oxbridge. (Sneja Gunew, 1992: 36-39)

Gunew makes the above comments in response to an article by Robert Dessaix which attacks 'multi-culturalism' (as a literary phenomenon)

calling it an intellectual and academic 'conspiratorial cell' of secret multicultural lobbyists (Gunew, 1992: 37). In 1994, 1995 and 1997, I have been having the same kind of exchanges in Victoria with the same two men named in Gunew's text, Donnelly and Dessaix – proving I suppose that they still are not listening. These are among the men who claim regularly to be silenced by political correctness when, as Davis points out: "... any progressive political organization would kill for the media coverage enjoyed by most of the poor suffering victims of this supposed censorship" (Davis, 1997: 60). Gunew's comments are relevant here because they articulate so clearly many of the major areas of contestation in the Australian Humanities both then and now.

Cardinal Wolsey's Hat

It is here that I would like to return to my title. Let me begin to tell you a story by quoting from Stephen Muecke's essay "Captain Cook's Shoes":

> Mabo has given us the opportunity to say that the country we thought was fully occupied, fully covered by a history which has its point of origin and completion in London, *is not finished at all in that sense.* The narrative has to take a different turn. We now pay our dues to the dead in a different way. Our cultural excess is now to be expended *in an Aboriginal memorial* for which the emblems are genocide and the martyrdom of black deaths in custody. So the affirmation of new forms of Australian cultural life already means that the national dead are in the process of becoming the Aboriginal dead. (Muecke, 1994: 126)

I quote this in order to begin thinking about different histories and *many* truths, not as a: "blind, dogmatic gesture of rejecting the values of the modern (for one can write this only as a modern)" but to recognize "that to civilise is at the same time to colonise, and that somebody is always hurt on the way" and to "consider seriously the frightening possibility that the history of modernity may be of necessity a history of constant betrayal of its central propositions" (Chakrabarty, 1992: 108). Muecke, in this paper, uses Stephen

Greenblatt's new historicist opposition between resonance and wonder to talk about two different approaches to the understanding of historical objects and the function of museums.

Greenblatt's essay opens with the depiction of a cultural object, Cardinal Wolsey's hat, in the library at Christ Church, Oxford. Here the issue is resonance, the hat as trace of a dense network of social forces of which it was once part, a trace which gives rise to thoughts of "the peregrinations of Wolsey's hat", suggesting that "cultural artefacts do not stay still, that they exist in time, and that they are bound up with personal and institutional conflict, negotiations, appropriations" (Greenblatt, 1990: 161). Greenblatt's concern is that in the postmodernist museum "resonance" has replaced wonder: "the power of the object displayed to stop the viewer in his tracks, to convey an arrested sense of uniqueness, to evoke an exalted attention" (Greenblatt, 1990: 170). That wonder, for Greenblatt, "the mystique of the object itself" displaces the vulgar "spectacle of proprietorship" which always resonates in the objects that are to be the focus of the modernist, wondering museum-gaze (Greenblatt, 1990: 178-179). Thus, metaphorically, Greenblatt protects himself from the knowledge that the buying and selling of "great art", or the stealing of objects from indigenous peoples or others for display in museums, is never separate from the accumulation of economic or symbolic capital nor from uneven power relations.

This is then the context in which Greenblatt's thoughts turn to museums and their differences and his own skepticism about recent attempts to turn museums "from temples of wonder into temples of resonance" (Greenblatt, 1990: 180). He refers of course to a change in the technologies of curating and museums which might be called a modern versus postmodern moment, or a monocultural versus multicultural one, but his point also has to do with new historicist textual methodology which in its focus on resonance at the expense of literary wonder has made something of the same move. Greenblatt's examples are from two museums, the State Jewish Museum in Prague, which for him is not so much about artefacts as about memory, "a memorial complex", the "most purely resonant museum I have ever seen" (Greenblatt, 1990: 173) and the Musee d'Orsay, or rather the transfer of the paintings from the Jeu de Paume and the Louvre to this new site. Here he discusses the movement of the Impressionist and

Post-Impressionist masterpieces into the new context of the literally resonating vaulted former railway station, where they are now surrounded by the period's sculpture and decorative arts so that the museum makes "a remarkable group of highly individuated geniuses into engaged participants in a vital, conflict-ridden, immensely productive period in French cultural history" (Greenblatt, 1990: 180). For Greenblatt the paintings have somehow been reduced in stature, resonance has triumphed over wonder. Muecke's story is more interested in the kind of innovation and resistance that Greenblatt records in passing in the example of a Mayan Coca-Cola stand "a remarkably elegant shelter with a soaring pyramidal roof constructed out of ingeniously intertwining sticks and branches" and attesting to the continuity of the Mayan despite "frequent colonial attempts to drive them or imagine them out of existence" (Greenblatt, 1990: 176). This, for Muecke, would be an example of the kind of "artful politics" which refuses to "tolerate the intolerable" and makes from it a resonating object of wonder (Muecke, 1994: 125-129).

I want in this paper to talk about Muecke's sense of changing memorials and to use it, as it intersects with Greenblatt's musing on museums, as a way of thinking about the resonance and wonder of the Humanities now, but also about the histories which have involved – nearly all of them – anti-colonial gestures, not tolerating the intolerable, but translating it into an artful politics. These histories involve feminisms and many kinds of theory, cultural studies and postcolonialism, multiculturalism, disciplines and interdisciplinarity and many metaphors. Among these some of those that have been shaping my discourse so far have included museums, memorials and monuments (Piederse, 1997). Later I will suggest those of the metropolis and the city. But the histories we have to acknowledge also include the commodification of public discourse and the transformations of the public sphere and the role of intellectuals within it, the currently dominant narratives of internationalization and globalization, and learning to speak with these as well as with textual and cultural theory. They must also deal with the story of the body of the academic, the site where attempts to reconcile the multiple and often conflicting demands of the paradigm changes in the Australian academy over the past twenty years are regularly and often painfully played out (Barcan, 1996). The discourses which

speak themselves in and through this body are the scholarly, the modernist/postmodern, the bureaucratic and the managerial/corporate and this hybrid body currently suffers, is hard-pressed, as it learns to map a space and a terrain which seems to devour time and the energy for thought, to deny the space for ethical personal and public social relations.

Bodies in pain, you will say, are not very good at artful politics. I ask you to remember the Mayan Coca-Cola stand and indeed, Mabo. But there are those – often not in very much pain – who persist in seeing these many histories not as the reasonably unpredictable mix of positive and negative effects that they are, but instead as processes which have involved the willful destruction (ruin) of all that was valuable in the world as we knew it – an Anglo-centric world invaded by the 'foreign'. In such contexts, the university and the disciplines are re-figured as memorials to a past that has been wantonly and irrevocably lost, the sites of a nostalgia for all that was good and is now devalued, debased. We might respond to such reactions in Derrida's words:

> ... the question of the archive is not, we repeat, a question of the past.... It is a question of the future, the question of the future itself, the question of a response, of a promise and of a responsibility for tomorrow. (Derrida, 1996: 36)

It is arguable that contemporary Australian universities bear more relationship to contemporary cities, to cities of the future, than to memorials to the period of imperial might which is still articulated in the nostalgia for a lost past in a time prior to 'foreign' invasion. Like the metropolis, the university now is a place where "people connected by imperial histories are thrust together" in unpredictable assemblages, still "regulated by its (imperialism's) constructs of difference and privilege", but just as "imperialist manipulations of space never had unchallenged surety, either in the past or in the present", they are also places "which are saturated with possibilities for the destabilisation of imperial arrangements" (Jacobs, 1996: 4). As Said once said of another context, the university is a "geography which struggles" (Said, 1993: 3) and: "These struggles produce promiscuous geographies of dwelling in place in which categories of

Self and Other, here and there, past and present, constantly solicit one another" (Jacobs, 1996: 5).

Promiscuous geographies are not to everyone's liking but they are here to stay in a context where the fiction of *terra nullius* has been definitively deconstructed. This is why we have to confront the 'intolerable', learn to speak with it, begin to engage in an artful politics. If you are one of those anti-theorists who continues to believe in *one* truth and *one* objectivity, if you believe yourself simultaneously to be beset by foreign viruses and other ills, of course you will be at something of a disadvantage in the present context, fighting on too many fronts at once, and probably therefore hard-pressed to get out of this one story. If, like many women, children, people of color, members of the working class and feminists (and I neither equate nor entirely separate these categories) you have lately been investigating other stories, learning to recognize the power that is to be had in acknowledging the discursive as well as material construction of realities (what is often called "not believing in truth or meaning or objectivity"), then you just may be able to rewrite the story and extricate yourself from the current fix: and here we move towards an artful politics.

If we believe that there is real conflict between the values of a critical humanities education and a market economy, then we fly in the face of history and *we* have come to believe *their* rhetoric. Our values are not outmoded and they have never been separate from commerce but we will have to learn to say so in languages *they* can understand. Moreover the forces of capitalism and the economy, local or global, are nowhere near as powerful as they themselves would have us believe.

Some time ago when he first pointed to what he then called the "marketisation of public discourse" Norman Fairclough argued that there appeared to be "an absence in the order of discourse; the absence of a language – of discursive practices – through which authority relations and institutional identities different from either traditional or marketised forms can be constituted". (Fairclough 1996: 71-83). We need in other words, a different way of thinking about and constituting the issues – a way that will avoid this unhelpful and inaccurate kind of polarization. We need a language, a discourse for articulating the new kinds of values that might renegotiate and rewrite

the ethos of the market-based discourse and our own Kantian Humanities inheritance from within and in negotiation with one another.

Using what we know to argue with capital: dialogues with difference

If we believe the discourses of hegemonic capitalism, as J.K. Gibson-Graham (1996) point out, it appears that "all space is constituted by the operations of capital", that there is no "outside" of capitalism. They argue, however, that it is possible to use poststructuralist and feminist understandings of discourse to reposition ourselves and to rethink capitalist hegemony "as a (dominant) discourse rather than as a social articulation or structure". It then becomes possible, they argue, to see how the dominant discourse makes a rich diversity of noncapitalist activities and practices "invisible" (Gibson-Graham, 1996: xi). It does this by constituting all of its others as failing "to measure up to it as the true form of economy", so that noncapitalist forms of economy all appear to be "insufficient" rather than "positive and differentiated others" (Gibson-Graham, 1996: 7). Here we can immediately locate the current constructions of the Humanities as non-vocational, non-profit-making.

The very hegemony of the Freudian narratives of heroism and phallocentrism associated with these versions of capitalism (Gibson-Graham, 1996: 7-11) are what make it difficult to theorize economic difference, to free the entrapped stories of "a plurality and heterogeneity of economic forms" (Gibson-Graham, 1996: 11) from the "covering", "penetrating" hegemonic story. The parallels between the inability to imagine a non-normative heterosexism and the inability to imagine economic development that is not capitalist penetration are almost too obvious to require comment. Gibson-Graham argue that this kind of deconstruction could demonstrate the hegemony of capitalism to be a "provisional and unstable dominance", ... "temporarily fixed and always under subversion" (Gibson-Graham, 1996: 15, 14), and that it could indicate that "there is no essence of capitalism like expansionism or property ownership or power or profitability or capital accumulation" so that "capitalism

must adapt to (be constituted by) other forms of economy just as they must adapt to (be constituted by) it" (Gibson-Graham, 1996: 14-15).

Having questioned the hegemony of capital, Gibson-Graham next turn their attention to "querying globalization" (chapter 6) focussing the discussion initially on the representation of globalization in a number of apparently radical "left discussions" which accept globalization as a reality, greeting it with either celebration or dismay "as the penetration (or imminent penetration) of capitalism into all processes of production, circulation and consumption, not only of commodities but also of meaning" (Gibson-Graham, 1996: 121). They turn to Sharon Marcus's radical deconstruction of the "rape script", her description of rape as a "culture of fear", her insistence that women do not have to be positioned as they are in this narrative, that it can be written, and lived, differently:

> But how, Marcus prompted me to ask, was this message of fear conveyed by analyses of globalization? How had globalization become normalized so as to preclude strategies of real opposition, as in Marcus's view the normalization of rape has hindered feminist strategies for real or active resistance within the event of rape itself? Within the discourse of globalization fear of capital flight and subjection to heightened exploitation are positioned as legitimate responses to the so-called 'realities' of globalization - just as fear of violation, passivity or paralysis in the face of violence become legitimate responses to the 'realities' of rape. (Gibson-Graham, 1996: 122)

In the globalization script then, globalization always involves the violation and death of all other forms of economy, thus "normalizing an act of non-reciprocal penetration" (Gibson-Graham, 1996: 125). "After the experience of penetration – by commodification, market incorporation, proletarianization, MNC (Multi-National Corporation) invasion – something is lost, never to be regained" (Gibson-Graham, 1996: 125, the brackets are mine). I ask you to think again here of the stories of the academy I have been telling you and of the most recent fearful, fate worse than death, and passive responses to corporate and other kinds of theoretical invasion. Gibson-Graham offers two possible answers. One is to rewrite the script and the second is to stop accepting the victim role.

In the case of their work, the rewriting of the script involves refusing to see the MNC as indomitable, to see it instead as "a sometimes fragile entity, spread out and potentially vulnerable" (Gibson-Graham, 1996: 127). Quite apart from the actuality of this vulnerability in the "effects of the Asian economic turbulence that has wreaked havoc on emerging markets since last summer" (Los Angeles Times, Feb 19, 1998, p. D1), demonstrating once again the uncontrollability and unboundedness of capital in the context of a rampant proliferation of global credit which has set money free from the "real economy" (Gibson-Graham, 1996: 136-7), it is not difficult to imagine the Australian universities at the present time as 'spread out and potentially vulnerable MNCs'.

A crucial precursor to this kind of re-thinking, as both Grosz (1994) and Gibson-Graham argue, may be a feminist move, a discursive one, a re-imagining of the male body to provide different metaphors and narratives of capitalism. Thus we might view the body of capitalism as:

> ... open, penetrable, as weeping or draining away instead of as hard and contained, penetrating, and inevitably overpowering. Consider the seminal fluid of capitalism – finance capital (or money) – which has more traditionally been treated as the lifeblood of the economic system. ... As seminal fluid, however, it periodically breaks its bounds, unleashing uncontrollable gushes of capital that flow every which way, including into self-destruction.... a wet dream ... that in stock market crashes stains the markets around the globe. (Gibson-Graham, 1996: 135-136)

You will recall the dominance of the myth of invasion and infection (penetration) that permeates the discourse of those who are anti-foreign theory, anti-feminism and anti-multiculturalism. What is remarkable (or perhaps utterly predictable) is the way in which metaphors of infection also characterize representations of flows of capital and immigration. Capital is the "virus of abstraction" (Wark, 1994: xii), "'the market' ... continually seeks new arenas/bodies in which to establish a medium, or circuitry, through which contamination by capital may flow", and "the market can communicate many diseases", not least of which is "the huge increase

in international migration and the establishment of large immigrant 'underclasses'"(Gibson-Graham, 1996: 141). And yet, "markets/circuits cannot control who or what flows through them" so that the contamination wrought by the market – "immigrant economies made up of self-employed and communal family-based enterprises (as well as small capitalist enterprises)" which "operate their own labor and capital markets, often on a global scale" – produce "productive incoherences" which challenge the very hegemony of the market and of capital (Gibson-Graham, 1996: 141-142). Once again the hegemonic virus turns out to be something other than it was feared to be.

In my review of Women's and Gender Studies in the Humanities for the Australian Academy of the Humanities in 1997 (Threadgold, 1998a), I suggested that historically Women's Studies might have operated as a 'non-capitalist space' within the Humanities (it was certainly often staffed by voluntary labor, always under-funded), that its success had been partly a consequence of the fact that those apparently in control did not know what flowed through it and did not bother to learn its discourse or to find out how to speak with it. I would see one measure of its theoretical success in the practical policy implications of the current managerialisation of equal opportunity and affirmative action legislation in Australian Universities. It might then be a model for re-thinking the ways in which we might interact with new contexts, not ignoring them and allowing them to take over, but learning how to speak with them, in order to stop the haunting.

To some of the new corporate agendas, like internationalization, like engagement with communities, the work of the Humanities is coming to have exchange as well as surplus value. Here I come back to the fact that capital cannot actually control what flows through it, that it does not always bother to 'penetrate' what Lash and Urry (1994: 18) have called "areas of immunity", places where there appear to be no markets but where, precisely because these places occur "in the interstices of the (capitalist) market, ... other kinds of non-capitalist commodities may be exchanged" (Gibson-Graham, 1996: 143). I want to suggest, contra to those who fear colonization by capital, that this is in fact the opportunity to exchange some non-capitalist commodities in immune spaces and thus to begin to transform the discourses of capital and colonization from within. At the same time, at the most

obvious level, such partnerships would deconstruct the old binaries – (1) humanities versus business/science/industry, (2) humanities versus vocation. At a less obvious level this new 'crisis' of university corporatization offers new spaces, in the gaps and fissures of older systems, for new and different conversations which might actually effect habit-change, rather than a desperate clinging to old habits in the face of new challenges, on both sides (Threadgold, 1997: 49-52).

Remapping: relocations

The Humanities cannot – in this economic and global context – be only a modernist museum. It may be partly that, but it must also be a memorial to forgotten, repressed and constantly re-membered pasts, and it must recognize its status as part of the metropolis. That means paying attention to its margins, to its new and hybrid spaces, rethinking metaphors of center and periphery, and engaging in new and different kinds of conversations. It is possible to keep the wonder in the objects in the museum, and we must make connections to communities through history as memorial, but we must also understand the resonances with the metropolis and the world of which we are part.

I do not know how many of you, like me, have been reading postmodern geographies, but there is much in the current discussions of conservation and the restructuring of city scapes that could be useful in helping universities, and those who work in them, to understand their own sedimented and contested histories and to find new narratives and metaphors for imagining new explicitly gendered and multicultural and international futures. It is notable in these new spaces of geography that the heritage industry is still hard at work conserving monuments to empire in the heart of the postmodern, postcolonial city (Jacobs, 1996: 53, ch. 3), that Aboriginal people, involved in new alliances, are initiating "unruly place-making events" (Jacobs, 1996: 147, ch. 6), that globalization brings "large numbers of foreign workers into almost every segment of the local labor market" (Soja, 1996: 304) and that there is a pervasive industrial restructuring of production and the labor process. It is worth looking for useful images of futures in some of these accounts of geographies and cities.

I want to use Soja's comparison of Los Angeles and Amsterdam to return briefly to Mark Davis's (1997) account of generationalism in Australian universities, for if Soja is even half right, then it is the presence in the heart of Amsterdam of "the contemporary influence of several generations of vigorous twentysomething activism" that has "produced a services complex of remarkable diversity and interpersonal sensitivity, in which basic needs take precedence over market demands to a degree difficult to find almost anywhere else" (Soja 1996: 309). The absence of that 'twentysomething activism' is very marked in Australian universities and there is an urgent need to make space for it. That absence must not be forgotten as we look at the characteristic spaces of other contemporary (post)metropolises:

> ... older industrial areas either in severe decline or partially revived through adaptation of more flexible production and management techniques; new science-based industrial districts or technopolises typically located in urban peripheries; craft-based manufacturing clusters or networks drawing upon both the formal and informal economies; concentrated and producer services districts, especially relating to finance and banking but also extending into the entertainment, fashion and culture industries; and some residual areas where little has changed.... The tendency towards increasing social and economic polarization that seems to accompany the new urbanization processes. (Soja, 1996: 305, 306)

There are real parallels here not only with the geography of university campuses and the economic polarization that now characterizes them but also with the "veiled cartographies of power and exploitation... the spatialization of patriarchal power" (Soja, 1996: 110), that imagined and formed these cityspaces. That imagination was also imperialist and colonizing, producing citizen bodies marked by difference, color and inequality in cityspaces of unassimilated otherness and deprivileging – all perpetrated against the rhetoric of community, equality and consensus. Civic discourse, from the time of the Athenian polis, with its focus on the body and the city, was always obsessed with the fear of the unruly, pollution, contagion and disease. It always enclosed, segregated, unruly elements. This is why in periods of social 'crisis' "when centers and peripheries will not hold",

"bodies, cities and texts become key sites of hegemonic and counter-hegemonic contestations" (Soja, 1996: 115). So do the corporate, patriarchal, neocolonialist citadels of contemporary universities where, as in cities, the disorder can be harnessed for political use.

Let me remind you of the fear of industry, the working classes and the city that Weber (1987) attests as the reason for the 'isolation' of the ancestors of current university disciplines in the late nineteenth century. Cities then were also feminized, crowded places associated with hysteria, seeping fluids, criminality and crowds:

> At the heart of the urban labyrinth lurked not the Minotaur, a bull-like male monster, but the female Sphinx, the 'strangling one', who was so called because she strangled all those who could not answer her riddle: female sexuality, womanhood out of control, lost nature, loss of identity. (Wilson, 1991: 7)

The "strangling one" is now often coded differently: the unemployed, Asian immigrants, black youth, the poverty of the urban underclasses, gangs, drug cultures and capitalism, economic rationalism and globalization. The metaphors and the fears have not changed and the anxieties about women have not gone away. But there is a lesson to be learned here. The Sphynx, in whatever chameleon form she takes, has never been very good at 'ruins' and the Sphynx survives. The radical othernesses, which contest the city space and trouble the white citizen body, do not and will not go away. They have already learned to turn the intolerable into an artful politics. Thus, whether the new geographies of the city provide us with new metaphors or not, the present and the future are where we have to look, and we will have to find new partnerships and form new coalitions in the full recognition that the spaces we inhabit and the spaces that make us as we make them *will remain* contested spaces, but places where interventions *can* be made, where economic restructuring agendas do not have to produce ruin, where the hegemony of certain discourses can be challenged. To believe these things, to refuse pessimism, to enjoy "the stimulation of a little confusion" (James, 1875: 384), will produce the kind of artful politics that will be needed to remake ourselves in new contexts. Above all it will not do to construct fictions of wonder without

resonance, the aestheticisation of ruins, in willful disregard for the otherness which always constituted the stuff out of which these aesthetic masterpieces were made.

Poetry and monuments

Writing of Wordsworth's poem "Tintern Abbey" Marjorie Levinson asks: "Why would a writer call attention to an ancient ruin and then studiously ignore it, as it were repudiating its material and historical facticity?"(Levinson, 1986: 15). Her answer is complex, insisting that Wordsworth at the scene of writing, and subsequent critics at the scene of reading the poem have ignored the intertextual resonances that might have been gleaned from a situated reading, all of them, Wordsworth included, complicit in "... an attempt to green an actualized political prospect and to hypostatize the resultant fiction, a product of memory and desire" thus defining "a negative ideal: the escape from cultural values" (Levinson, 1986: 15, 16). Levinson's reading uses materials she argues have been long familiar to Wordsworth scholars, but uses them for "the purposes of textual intervention", relocating the wonder of the artefact in the resonating contexts of the time: fears of foreign invasion, the French and English revolutions, the war industry, poverty. In these contexts, she argues: "'Tintern Abbey' evinces the poet's desire to house his experience, past and future, in a mental fortress.... the narrator achieves his penetrating vision through the exercise of selective blindness" (Levinson, 1986: 23-24). Seeking to understand the meanings an English abbey may have had in an early nineteenth century semiotic and social context, Levinson explores the relationship between the catholic and protestant histories of the dissolution of the monasteries, the connections between the dissolution, the formation of a landed middle class and the industrial revolution, the links between the secularization of church lands and the beginnings of the commercialization of English life. In these complex contexts she then seeks to reconstruct, from other contemporary poetry and tourist guide books, just what Tintern Abbey must have looked like to Wordsworth in 1798. What she sees, intertextually, is the contrast between the classical ruins of the abbey and the surrounding countryside. Tintern itself was an iron-working village active in 1798 in wartime, the

region was marked by industrial and commercial activity, the abbey was surrounded by forests peopled by vagrants, the casualties of England's failing economy and wartime displacement, the abbey grounds were crowded with tourists and beggars, the dispossessed and the unemployed. It is of this reality then that Wordsworth constructs his fragile pastoral prospect "artfully assembled by acts of exclusion" (Levinson, 1986: 32). Thus it is that the poem's abstract "'still, sad music of humanity' drowns out the noise produced by real people in real distress" (Levinson, 1986: 45).

Wordsworth's romanticism then is constituted here as an artful politics but a solipsistic one – "mind ... and memory, not as energy – but as a barricade to resist the violence of historical change" (Levinson, 1986: 53). What I think we have to ask is whether it is a dynamic of memory as a psychic ongoingness, an engagement with the present and the future, or as flight from dread, that we would want to install in the university as monument, as memorial. I want to suggest a preference for the former and here I will return to the significance of shoes and hats and to the function of their resonances.

Rewriting memorial

I will conclude with some reflections on the Vietnam Veterans' Memorial in Washington D.C, on the Mall, and its published book of objects, which, like Captain Cook's shoes, and Cardinal Wolsey's hat, can help us think about the difference (Allen, 1995). The Australian historian Greg Dening wrote about the Memorial in 1997 in an essay called "History as Memorial". What was remarkable for Dening, as it was for me when I visited the memorial, was its difference, its difference from all of the rest of the "white, macho, phallic, rhetoric" (Dening: 20) of the monuments in the Washington Mall, huge marble monuments to nation, to heroism, to civil strife and to war, as well as to history, science and the arts. The sheer enormity and opulence of this Mall, and its nation-building monuments, lie at the center of Washington the metropolis. In the Mall a multicultural population of tourists make the rounds of the monuments. A little way down the road, towards Union Station, homeless men, mostly black, sit in the sun outside a shelter, buskers, mostly black, play for the tourist's coin.

The Vietnam Veterans' Memorial is black too, its two polished black granite arms stretch out from the highest central point where they meet in the sign of a V. The V slashes into the earth, into the grass which grows above the monument. Inscribed on the wall are the names of the 58,000 who died in Vietnam, ordered only by the day they died. One arm of the monument points to the Washington Memorial and beyond that to the Capitol and the Library of Congress, the other to the Lincoln Memorial, white and towering, monument to civil war. From the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, high up, the Vietnam Memorial is barely visible through the trees.

> 'It's a black gash of shame', critics protested, catching their racist and sexist fears in one.... It was a black armband of a memorial, its opponents might have said.... The design was discovered in a competition with 1421 anonymous entries', ... 'the designer a twenty one year old woman, Maya Ling Lin, of Chinese origins, a Yale University undergraduate, too young to have had any experience of the war, without credentials. Being Asian-American, female, young, was a little too cross-cultural for many. (Dening: 20-21)

There was terrible debate about the memorial, built in 1982, and as a result, there are now also two groups of memorial statuary, adding some of the narrative and realism that was seen to be absent from the abstract memorial, called "a tombstone to death and defeat" (Allen, 1995: 10). The first is a group of three soldiers, one black, all in battle dress, wearily looking at the wall, as if searching for their names perhaps. It stands at one end of the V. The second, at the other end, a little way off in a clearing, is the Vietnam Women's Memorial, built in 1993, representing three women caring for a wounded soldier. One wearily holds the soldier's head, another looks with alarm towards the sky, the third, her back to this group, kneels, bent over a soldier's helmet.

It is not however the realist statuary that moves the silent watchers at the wall, as they file past its shining surface, their living faces and bodies united with, reflected in, the names of the dead, silently looking at the objects left at the wall today, a wreath with a birthday card, a newspaper cutting wrapped in plastic, the report of a young soldier's death in a local newspaper, with a note, all left at the

wall for the dead. "I had an impulse to cut open the earth", she later wrote, "an initial violence that in time would heal". (Allen, 1995: 10) Elsewhere in Washington, tourists laugh, chatter, and eat as they visit the monuments to nation. Here, the huge crowd is utterly silent, as if in a cathedral. Many weep as the reflecting wall and its resonant objects refuse such closed narratives, offer no solutions, pose more questions: but one has a sense that it is more than the slash in the earth which is thereby healing, that the huge sadness of the place and of its reliquary objects enable the articulation and the ongoingness of a national, if very localized, process of grief. Those who twice a day collect the offerings at the wall to become part of the national heritage of the Memorial Collection, say that:

> ... through the years the collection has been changing. At first what was typically left was something personal.... Gradually, as donors became aware of the collection, they carefully prepared their letters or objects.... Toys and other objects of the 1950s and early 1960s are now appearing more frequently. Intuitively, [the keepers of the collection] sense a generation passing. The parents of the Vietnam dead are themselves dying. From their attics and closets come the keepsakes of dead children.... (Allen, 1995: 13-14)

What is also changing it seems, however slightly, is the attitude to the Vietnamese dead, who are not memorialized here, despite the irony that the memorial was designed by a young Vietnamese woman (Lowe, 1996; Berlant, 1997). One of the objects left at the wall and memorialized in *Offerings at the Wall* is a photograph of a young Vietnamese man and a small girl. It was left with a letter:

> Dear Sir,
> For twenty-two years I have carried your picture in my wallet. I was only eighteen that day that we faced one another on that trail in Chu Lai, Vietnam. Why you didn't take my life I'll never know.... Forgive me for taking your life, I was reacting the way I was trained, to kill V.C. ... Forgive me, Sir. (Allen, 1995: 52-53)

Greg Dening asks what kind of memorial Australia might offer to "close the longest war in our history, the 209 years war between koori

and murray and the thousands of aboriginal groupings and those who took their land from them", referring to 'our' history, as Muecke does, as the history of Aboriginal dead (Dening: 21). He cannot imagine what it might look like, whose names would be on it, where it would be, but he knows it should be therapeutic, that what our Australian Prime minister has called a "black armband view of history" is a necessary part of accepting responsibility for the future, a way of building monuments that memorialize in unexpected and open ways, that silence the silences of the metropolis, defiantly refusing the exclusions of monologic narratives of nation and citizenship, "allowing the people to choose the things to keep, not a museum curator" (Allen, 1995: 13). The objects on the title page of Allen's book are a pair of battered shoes, bearing a purple heart. The shoes resonate. For Dening, in the absence of a memorial, new and changing ways of knowing offer some temporary alternative.

I like to think that the only memorials we have temporarily, are our histories. These temporary memorials I think, should have some of the characteristics of Maya Lin's memorial. They should be therapeutic. People should weep when they read them. They should break long silences and make those that read them ask questions that had never been asked. Readers should see their own reflection in them. They should be sensitive to the fact that writing, in its creativity, will, like the visual images of art, be a scandal to all sorts of fundamentalisms. That's the history I would like to write. Call it "black armband if you like" (Dening: 21).

As with memorials and monuments, museums, metropolises, and corporations, universities, as sites of contestation, cannot allow the wonder of objects to silence their resonances, cannot any longer take refuge in established and fixed habits of thought. The walls may be down, but ruins, even famous ones, are not always what they seem. Opening them up to new collaborations and negotiations, even new and productive silences, making visible what they seem to exclude, will certainly force the acknowledgment of the sphinx's presence still vibrant at their center, but will also make it possible to create an artful politics from the otherwise intolerable. That must be part of the responsibility we take for the future.

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Renata Salecl

Disbelief in the Big Other in the University and Beyond

In high fashion, the dominant trend of the last few years has been the so-called new simplicity: the clothes are unpretentious in their style, colors are dark and the name of the designer is not to be seen on the surface.[1] The goal of this fashion is to accentuate the individual's inner qualities; the dress merely helps the individual to express what he or she is by himself or herself. The fashion thus does not try to change the individual into someone else or create an image in which the individual would like to see himself or herself; it merely enhances the already existing individuality of the individual. Today, the individual is not supposed to buy high fashion in order to follow some imposed ideal of beauty, the clothes merely help the individual to take himself or herself as an ideal.

The emergence of this ideology of new individuality can be best illustrated by analyzing the change in the naming of Calvin Klein's perfumes in recent years. The list of the names of these perfumes can help us trace a genealogy of the perception of subjectivity in contemporary society. Some years ago, Klein produced perfumes that were named Eternity, Escape and Obsession. When we hear the word Eternity we immediately think about something timeless: perfume with such a name alludes to what is beyond the subject's bodily constraints. By using the perfume Escape, the subject also evades the misery of his or her everyday life. An escape from this misery might come with the help of magic love, which the subject can incite by using the perfume Obsession. All three perfumes, Eternity, Escape and Obsession, are

[1] The most renowned propagators of the fashion of new simplicity are Giorgio Armani, Donna Karan, Calvin Klein and Jill Sander.

advertised with the images of beautiful, half-naked young men and women. These images have explicit sexual connotations and also allude to something beyond the agony of our everyday existence. These advertisements accept sexual difference (so we have male and female versions of the same perfume) and the use of the perfume is supposed to make the sexes more attractive to each other.

In the nineties, discussions in the domain of post-structuralism and gender theory contributed to a radical change in the perception of sexual difference. In theoretical circles, it became fashionable to emphasize that sexual difference is socially constructed and performatively enacted. Paradoxically, fashion started following this trend, to the point of stressing the utter bisexuality of the subject. Contemporary design accordingly became asexual. Calvin Klein followed this new trend with his new perfume, One, which can be used by men and women. The advertisements for this perfume show young androgenic people whose sexual identity is difficult to discern. This asexual trend continues with the new Klein perfume – Be, which was advertised with the slogan: "To be. Not to be. Just be". The advertising posters still consist of the images of androgynous youth, but now they look like worn-out crack addicts.

In the past, the name of the perfumes used to allude to the secret of the subject's charm: what is in the woman more than herself is her Trésor (Lancome), which can also be understood as Tendre Poison (Dior). These names for perfumes indicate the nature of the precious object in the subject: this object resembles a perfume's whiff – it is nothing one can physically discern, but it is alluring and poisonous at the same time. If designers of these old perfumes still tried to figure out how to depict the nature of the libidinal object in the subject, contemporary perfume fashion follows the trend of so-called identity politics. Here the problem is no longer how to depict the nature of the sublime object in the subject, which is beyond the subject's grasp; today, the subject himself or herself is the entity that has to be promoted as a whole. This subject, of course, is not monolithic, but someone who is always changing his or her identity. The nature of this change is best exemplified with the newest Calvin Klein perfume, Contradiction, which is advertised with the motto: "She is always and never the same".

The subject today no longer believes in the normative ideals offered by society and instead takes himself or herself as the creator of

his or her identity. (This trend is illustrated in the advertising for the new Hugo Boss perfume, Hugo Woman, which says: "Don't imitate. Innovate".) However, the fact that today the subject is supposed to have every possibility to make out of himself or herself a "work of art" does not make him or her feel free from social constraints. Although the subject may no longer believe in the old authorities that regulate his or her life, the subject nonetheless searches for new points of identification and invents new rules to regulate the horrible nature of this new acquired freedom to be just "oneself".

This change in the naming of perfumes illuminates the nature of the change in the perception of contemporary subjectivity. I would like to discuss the role of the university in shaping this subjectivity, and ask: what kind of changes do we encounter today in intersubjective relations in educational spaces, when subjects no longer identify with authorities in the way they used to? How does the subject's changed relationship to authority affect society at large?

The university today functions, more and more, as an 'ivory tower' – as a space supposedly detached from politics. The university as a secluded place is not only an American phenomenon; the rest of our world is increasingly following this idea. Even in post-communist countries one finds a similar trend. In Slovenia, for example, it is very fashionable for university professors to claim that politics is such a dirty business that they don't want to have anything to do with it. One is mistaken if one thinks that at the time of communism universities were places for dissident movements. Although some of the professors might have engaged in clandestine political activities (and some of the students did so as well), the majority of the oppositional intelligentsia were not part of university structures. In communism, to become a university professor often meant that the person was a trusted cadre. If they were lucky, dissidents were placed in research institutes where they were prevented from influencing students.

The communists were very much afraid of the power of words, thus they feared the dissident professors. In communism, the power of the word was the thing to fear. So, for example, the central committee would sometimes devote a whole session to the discussion of a poem, because in between the lines they felt that the poet was criticizing the regime.

Today, however, we have a general disbelief in the power of the word, not only in the West but in post-socialist countries. Communists feared the power of the written word but post-socialist rulers, similar to Western rulers, do not care at all about the social critiques that might be produced at a university. At the same time, universities-as-secluded-places are open to all kinds of radicalism, which has almost no effect on the rest of society. So, for example, in America one finds the largest number of Marxists in the university.

My point is not that society simply ignores the criticism that goes on in universities. I claim that it is the university itself that has helped to create a space in which criticism necessarily gets watered down. We embrace the idea that one needs to be tolerant of the views of others – their cultural and sexual practices – that one must be open to various theoretical views and so on. Here I am targeting certain views of cultural studies. While no one would disagree with the idea of tolerance, the very logic of this embrace of differences often resides in a special form of conformism.

Let me give a personal example here: when discussing with my American students political and theoretical issues I often openly state my opinion, saying: "I believe that here x is more right than y". By stressing my views I hope to engage my students in a debate in which they will express their opinions. I eagerly expect to hear students critiquing my views. However, the response that I often encounter is surprise on the side of the students that a professor in cultural studies will openly state her opinion. What the students are constantly taught today is to be open to all opinions, to give all theories equal credit and so on. Here, precisely the idea of openness, in the final instance, waters down the critical edge of theory or political practice.

Now, my idea is not to claim that the professor should unreservedly promote her theoretical or political views and encourage students to follow her. What I find dangerous is a professor's stand that she is open to all kinds of views while between the lines she usually clearly favors one theory over the other. This kind of openness paradoxically prevents criticism – since I can engage in a debate with another only if I can discern his or her theoretical position, while people who appear tolerant to all kinds of views easily pacify possible opponents in advance.

In the university we therefore, on the one hand, find the ideology

that the student should just be himself or herself, that the student should constantly express his or her views; but on the other hand, the students are also encouraged to give equal value to all theories. That is why so many writings today are a melange of fashionable theories without making crucial distinctions between them. Similarly, one encounters in today's university a growing tendency towards cultural relativism. An Asian student is almost expected to do work that reflects her culture. A black student working on Shakespeare will often be asked by his or her tutor "how come you don't write about black writers?". A Bosnian refugee will have the most chances to get a scholarship if she claims that she wants to do research on rape in the Balkan war. While no one would deny the importance of studying local cultures and minority literature, I find it extremely problematic when it is the minority students who are supposed to do this work and not the majority students. In this call for authenticity one also encounters an underlying racist prejudice and a further attempt to marginalize minorities. Such a cultural relativist approach, which insists that one is constantly supposed to reflect on one's culture, greatly contributes to the inability of cultural theory to assess power relations in society at large.

My real concern with cultural studies is precisely that they have lost their political edge. There has been a watering down of politics in textual analysis. The part of cultural studies that came out of the Birmingham Centre for Cultural Studies was highly politicized and professors like Stuart Hall were personally involved in union movements. But this political edge has unfortunately been lost in recent years.

This fashion of cultural relativism and embracing cultural differences goes hand in hand with a certain 'disbelief' in society's institutions, or better, a disbelief in the whole symbolic network that we live in, which Lacanian psychoanalysis describes with the notion "the big Other". Now "big Other" is a term that designates a set of society's institutions and in general the whole social symbolic order in which the subject is born. Here, language is the primal mechanism of the social symbolic structure. So the big Other is not only simply institutions, authorities and so on but the whole symbolic structure into which we are born. And language would be the mechanism of this symbolic structure.

The impotence of authorities

A generally accepted thesis is that in today's society the way the subject identifies with the symbolic order has changed. The dissolution of the traditional family structure changed the subject's relation towards authority, which means that the subject nowadays appears as someone who is in a position to freely choose his or her own identity, including even his or her sexual orientation. In the pre-modern society, initiation rituals situated the subject in the social structure and assigned to him or her a special place as well as his or her sexual role. In the modern, Enlightenment society, we no longer have initiation rituals, but the authority of the law (i.e. symbolic prohibition) is still at work here. The law is linked to the role of the father; and in taking a position against this law, i.e. by distancing himself or herself from this law, the modern subject acquires his or her "freedom". In contrast, in post-modern society we have a total disbelief in authority and in the power of the symbolic order, which Jacques Lacan named the big Other.

This change in the belief in the big Other affects educational practices. If you analyze the shift between the modern, Enlightenment type of teaching and the post-modern more permissive type of teaching you see a radical shift. The Enlightenment type of teaching was based on the well known theories of Kant (1966; 1951)[2] and other philosophers of that period who embraced the idea that the teacher had to discipline the student so that the student would be able to recognize the moral law in him or herself and become a so-called "free citizen". Kant describes the idea that the subject can, in a way, judge and critique the law only by first being disciplined or submitted to the law itself. For him, to be educated meant not only to acquire cultural information but primarily to go through certain drills of

[2] See Kant (1966), esp. p. xxiv in which he says "the critique of pure reason is really the tribunal for disputes of reason", emphasizing the place for evaluative judgments in the practical activities of reason. Also see Kant (1951), esp. p. 137 in which he addresses the moral imperative of political communities to conduct political reflection and behavior in principled ways such that the actual or potential claims of other "rational" creatures are respected. For good introductory Kantian accounts of the Enlightenment which emphasize rational self-determination see O'Neill (1990).

submission and then to be able to distance oneself from the knowledge that one has acquired through the drill.

The whole ideology of the sixties and seventies radically ended this perspective when the theory of permissive education started with the premise that the subject him or herself already has qualities by him or herself – that education should not limit the individuality of the subject but only help enhance it. So the school should give up on rules and discipline and so on, in order to bring out the inner qualities of the individual. This goes against the previous ideas – that inner qualities come with a submission to the law first.

The whole idea behind permissive education was that, with the help of a non-totalitarian style of teaching, the subject would be able to accept democratic politics and oppose totalitarianism. That is the political edge or dimension behind the conviction: that the subject will embrace freedom and democracy if he or she is not submitted to a harsh regime in schooling.

There is a discussion in psychoanalysis about the deadlocks of permissive education. Although you don't have rules or discipline in an extremely permissive educational system, there is nonetheless a certain kind of discipline arising out of the special relationship between the teacher and the student. The danger of teaching that appears extremely open to everything is that sometimes it can be more cruel. Open discourse can produce underlying messages and fantasies (which are sometimes very sexist and racist and so on). Students primarily identify with the unsaid, with what is said between the lines, because the whole teaching experience is based on this transference – on the belief or disbelief in the teacher (Apple, 1999; Britzman, 1998; Felman, 1982, 1987; Fink, 1993; Gallop, 1995; Karmamcheti,1995; Pitt, 1997, 1998; Simon, 1995).[3]

[3] Probably most well known for introducing pyschoanalysis in contemporary educational cultural studies debates is Shoshana Felman. Felman's Lacanian thesis is that "ignorance" is not the simple absence of knowledge but rather needs to be conceptualized dynamically in relation to a socially situated knowing subject. In Felman (1987) she makes clear that the subject presumed to know elicits transference which may vastly complicate demands placed on faculty and teachers by students, resulting in the contradictory mix of resistance and erotic attraction. Karmamcheti (1995) also argues that transference is further complicated and disrupted when the teacher is a minority/subaltern woman whose authority does not lead to erotic transference.

Today what is happening is that this disbelief in authorities has not simply resulted in the subject's liberation from the law or other forms of social coercion. The post-modern subject no longer accepts the power of the institutions or society's power to fashion his or her identity, and sometimes believes in the possibility of self-creation, maybe in the form of playing with his or her sexual identity. However, in this process of freeing the subject from the big Other, one can also observe the subject's anger and disappointment in regard to the very authority of the big Other. It thus appears as if it was not the subject who recognized that the big Other does not exist and that the authority is just a fraud, but that the big Other has somehow 'betrayed' the subject. The father's authority, for example, revealed itself only as a mask of his impotence; the social rituals in institutions appear more and more as a farce. However, this apparent liberation of the subject from authority can also be understood as a 'forced' choice that the subject had to make when he or she acknowledged the impotence of the authority.

What does this disbelief in the big Other mean? We always knew that the big Other is just a fiction and that people somehow pretend when they follow state, school, religious, or family rituals. Most of the time we believe only that someone else believes in these rituals, which is why we follow them in order to avoid offending the others. This belief in the belief of the others is well exemplified in the parents' pretense that they are playing Santa Claus because children believe in it. But when children find out that Santa Claus is just a fiction, they go on pretending to believe in it, so that they will not offend their parents, who still think their children believe in Santa Claus. What we have today is precisely the disbelief in the fiction of the big Other. The logic of this disbelief is exemplified in the well-known anecdote from the Marx brothers. When Groucho Marx was once caught in an obvious lie, his response was: "Whom do you believe – my words or your eyes?". The belief in the big Other is the belief in words, even when they contradict one's own eyes. What we have today is therefore precisely a mistrust in mere words (i.e. in the symbolic fiction). People want to see what is behind the fiction.

But the encounter with what is behind the fiction can be most traumatic for the subject. An example of the fictional character of the big Other are the rules of politeness in speech. When we meet

someone, we usually say, "How nice to see you", even if we actually think, "Drop dead, I really hate you". If we stop using the polite words, we do not achieve a simple liberation from the fictional character of politeness, but encounter violence, which radically disrupts social bonds.

Lacan's famous definition of psychosis is that what is excluded from the symbolic returns as an unsymbolizable real. Psychotics are the ones who do not identify with the fiction of the symbolic order, since for them the symbolic falls into the real. A psychotic, for example, does not believe in the fictional character of God, but has direct contact with God: he hears voices of God, God's eyes are constantly pursuing him, and so forth.

On another level, today's disbelief in the fictional character of the father's authority has caused a return of the father as hidden evil figure – the father who is a harasser, abuses children, has insatiable sexual desires, i.e. a father who very much resembles the character of the Freudian father of the primal horde, who was the possessor of all women and denied his sons access to enjoyment.

The disbelief in the symbolic fiction and the search for the real thing was also obvious at the time of the tragic death of Princess Diana. In public polls, the majority of British people state that the monarchy is a relic of the past – an archaic institution that needs to be either abolished or radically changed. So people no longer believe in the fictional character of the kingdom; however, at the time of Diana's funeral, people were terribly upset that the queen did not show enough emotion. People wanted the queen to show physical signs of sorrow, to address the nation and to hang the flag in front of the Royal Palace at half-mast. On the one hand, therefore, we have disbelief in the fiction of monarchy, but, on the other hand, we have a desperate appeal that the fiction cease to be a fiction and that people see what is behind it – that the queen cry, change the centuries-old rituals concerning the flag, and so forth.

The public identification with Diana also shows the changes that have come about in the way the public identifies with its idols. In the past, the idols were supposed to be active for the ordinary people: the latter perceived the idols as having abilities they do not have – for example, bravery, intelligence. But Diana was the idol who was passive for the people. Hers greatly resembled the usual attitude of an

ordinary man who complains about the institution but is actually part of it, who likes to help others, but does not sacrifice his or her own well-being. If in the past people tended to identify with an idol who was not like them, in the case of Diana they identified with someone who was exactly like them – for example, passive, not too intelligent.

One of the ways in which the subject today deals with the absence of the big Other is the turn to narcissistic self-admiration. The lack of identification with some ego ideal (a symbolic role or authority-ideal) has resulted in the subject's identification with some imaginary role (i.e. ideal ego) in which the subject finds himself or herself likable. This narcissistic search for the perfect image results in the subject's obsession with changing his or her body with the help of excessive dieting, exercise, plastic surgery, etc. Another aspect of the subject's concern with the non-existence of the big Other is discernible in the contemporary phenomena of the so-called "culture of complaint". Western societies nowadays brim with people's complaints about all kinds of injustices in their private and public lives: people search for the culprits who deprived them of their enjoyment, wealth, respect, etc. The disbelief in the power of the big Other has resulted in the belief that there are various small others (institutions and authorities in the subject's immediate environment) who are guilty of causing the troubles in the people's lives. And the legal as well as financial compensation that the subjects seek is supposed to reinstall the lost equilibrium at least for a moment.

One also finds this phenomenon in the educational system. The whole problem of the narcissistic logic of self-expression is that the classrooms sometimes promote, in my opinion, really too much support for the idea that everything that comes into your mind is worth saying. (This applies not only to students but to teachers too.) I do not embrace old totalitarian styles of teaching in which the students have no chance to debate but I do not believe that school should encourage this narcissistic indulgence in self-expression.

The fact that subjects face a radical change in the belief in the big Other or that they know very well that the big Other actually does not exist does not mean that the symbolic structure is not operative. Subjects are still very much marked by the symbolic prohibition although they may no longer identify with the authorities who are supposed to be the bearers of this prohibition.

The symbolic structure today appears to be more and more

replaced by imaginary simulacra, with which the subjects identify. Life seems like a computer game in which the subject can play with his or her identity, can randomly follow fashion rituals, has no strong national or religious beliefs, etc. But the fact that life appears as a screen on which everything is changeable has resulted in a desperate search for the real behind the fiction. For some young people and for some body artists, the cut in the body appears as an escape from the imaginary simulacra that dominate our society.

Young people usually explain their obsession with tattooing and body-piercing as ways to escape the pressures of the dominant fashion industry. The media constantly bombard them with images of beauty, and one of the ways to oppose this enforced identification is to take a real action – to mark the body in a way that cannot be changed. In recent years, social theory has widely discussed the issue of identity, which appeared not only as something socially constructed, but also as something multiform and changeable. The paradox of the contemporary cuts in the body is that, at the same time, they seem to be a realization of these theoretical beliefs and a reaction against them. Making a cut in the body does not mean that the subject is merely playing with his or her identity; by irreversibly marking the body, the subject also protests against the ideology that makes everything changeable. The body thus appears as the ultimate point of the subject's identity. Since the subject does not want to simply play with the imaginary simulacra presented by the dominant fashion ideologies, he or she tries to find in the body the site of the real.[4]

[4] One also finds a similar phenomenon among second generation immigrants who are returning to the most brutal forms of initiation rituals – like cliterodectomy. These are immigrants who are fully integrated in society but are suddenly finding in the tradition (some kind of quite imaginary tradition) a site of the real. And for them I would not say that they are returning to a pre-modern type of society or cultural formation, but they are in a way reacting to the radical individualization that is happening in today's society. Individualization was, with modernity, an answer to the traditional forms of society. Through this individualization, with the kind of empty Kantian cogito, the subject was able to critically distance himself or herself from tradition, and critique it – oppose it. Individualization was a way to make a break with the group, with tradition. Now paradoxically a return to a group and tradition is an answer to the deadlock of individualization. So I would say the cut [or tattooing] of the body and the immigrant's returning to initiation practices are two different answers to the same deadlock of contemporary society – of the place of subjectivity today.

The search for new rules

When we say that people today no longer believe in the power of traditional authorities, one should not forget that people are paradoxically trying to find some stability in their lives with the help of all kinds of rules that they themselves create. For example, people resort to various self-help manuals to put their love life in order. *The Rules* (Fein and Scheneider, 1996), a recent best-seller, gives women guidelines on seducing men: a woman must make herself elusive and unavailable to incite a man's desire. A man must thus be allowed to be a chaser and a woman must restrain herself and make herself hard to get. *The Rules* thus strongly advises a woman not to call a man she is interested in, not to accept his last-minute invitation for a date, not to show him too much attention, and, especially, not to sexually consummate the relationship before it is clear that the man is fully committed to her. These instructions sound like the old-fashioned patriarchal moral codes that mothers have long preached to their daughters, but they are not a simple return to an old tradition. acknowledges the fact that today we no longer have paternal authorities who encourage women to be mysterious and restrain themselves when they first meet men. In contrast to past generations, most women today are willing to pursue men and are also not shy about having sex with them early in the relationship. Feminism brought significant changes to women's lives, which they are not willing to give up in order to find "true" love. But the extinction of old sexual prohibitions did not make people's love lives any easier. Love today remains a matter of seduction. What is in the subject more than himself or herself is still the object that incites passionate attachments. And barriers and symbolic prohibitions greatly contribute to the attractiveness of the love object. Since today most people reject the old patriarchal ideas of courtship and are not willing to return to the old rituals of seduction, the authors of *The Rules* decided to offer a feminist version of the old prohibitions. After the great success of the book, the authors even established a whole movement for "Rules girls": advice on the Internet, women's support groups, etc. For example, a woman who is tempted to contact a man she likes can get in touch with a "Rules support group", where other women will help persuade her to restrain herself and not call the man.

But what does a woman do when she finally succeeds in her seduction? For the authors of *The Rules*, marriage is still the most desirable goal a woman should pursue. But even while married, the woman needs to keep herself elusive and not too available. To achieve this goal, the women are now given new guidelines in the form of *The Rules 2* (Fein and Schneider, 1998). This book tries to be politically correct and also offers rules for homosexual couples.

How can we understand this search for rules? Although the new guidelines for seduction are similar in content to the old ones, there is nonetheless a significant difference between them. In the past, the codes of seduction were deeply embedded in traditional mores, while today they appear as something one invents: rules are thus understood as mere technical devices that may help women to achieve a desired goal – to find a partner. This change from the old courtship rituals to new rules must be understood in the before-mentioned context of the changed relationship of the subject towards authorities and the symbolic order in general.

The subject today plays with his or her identity and does not allow any authority to fashion his or her life; but at the same time, this subject desperately searches for new guidelines to bring some "order" into this free play with identities. One finds examples of this search for new rules not only in seduction, but also in the public debates about cyberspace and genetic science; and in the university, the rules are supposed to limit sexual harassment.

Cyberspace initially seemed to open up unlimited possibilities of new forms of communication, but then questions arose of moral rules and the function of law in cyberspace. How can law decide what is allowed and what is prohibited in cyberspace? Can a written attack sent on the Internet be understood as rape? How does computer-fashioned child pornography differ from pornography that uses living children? Another complicated legal case is posed when a person enters someone else's computer system, steals his or her fictional name and then uses a written message to sexually attack a third party. What is rape here: the first attack, which concerns the takeover of another's identity, the written sexual attack, or both?

One finds a similar search for rules in the debates about genetic engineering. With the new developments in genetic cloning it may be possible in the future to create a new human being out of the genetic

material of a dead one. If until now subjects utterly feared death, in the future, eternal life will become something to be frightened of. This eternal life will resemble the psychoanalytic notion of the death drive – the force that is the remainder of symbolization but which also constantly undermines the symbolic order that tries to keep it at bay. Since we fear that such indestructible life might be the future product of our scientific development, we desperately try to find some control over science with the help of new guidelines to be devised by various ethical committees.

How can we understand this search for new rules? Theorists who analyze the new risks that accompany scientific development point out that society today becomes a laboratory, but there is no one responsible for its outcomes (Beck, 1998). Scientific research in bioengineering and the nuclear industry, for example, can bring radical changes in the organization of society and in people's lives; but there is no authority to control the risks created in the interplay between science, social institutions, and politics.

The traditional patriarchal type of family with the strong father figure is in decline in today's developed countries. Although many conservatives want to return to this form of family organization, there is no way back.[5] (And one should also not expect that a way back would be a solution.) But paradoxically, today the new forms of corporations are trying to replace the old family structures.[6] Of

[5] The American male movement called "The Promise Keepers" decided to prevent the further decline of the patriarchal family by encouraging men to take charge of their families again. It holds that men need first to apologize to their wives for putting the burden of leading the family on their shoulders and should then retake control. The ideology of this movement is that, by nature, men should be in power in their families, so that, when regaining control of them, men are only assuming a position that was always supposed to be theirs. Another presupposition of this movement is that families should stick together and allow the father to reign, however bad family relations might be. One can imagine that a woman whose alcoholic, irresponsible husband suddenly wants to "keep his promise" would not be thus relieved from the family burdens, but merely assigned another one – to tidy her man's throne.

[6] When, in various public surveys, young people are asked about their views on family life, they often point out that when they grow up they want to create a much more traditional family than the one in which they lived: their parents were rarely at home, they were exhausted from work, they had little time for their children, and

course, we cannot simply say that the managers have become new patriarchal father figures. On the contrary, corporations present themselves today as institutions with no one in charge: they are usually led by benevolent, permissive-looking authorities who have all the strings in their hands, but do not appear externally as authority figures.

Douglas Coupland's *Microserfs* depicts how such new benevolent authorities function in a corporation like Microsoft. Paradoxically, Microsoft named its business complex "campus", thus pretending to be just another type of schooling institution concerned about the public good and not primarily interested in profit. The ideology of this corporation relies on the myth of youth: a good hacker has to be young and hackers over 35 years old are perceived as being far too old to compete with the young ones. For employees, there is no life outside the corporation: they also work on the weekends, live mostly in communal houses near the campus, socialize among themselves and compete primarily about who will be more productive, richer and, of course, who will get close to Bill Gates. The latter is referred to by his first name, Bill, since he

their marriages usually broke up. Since today's youth have already experienced the "freedom" that comes with the non-traditional family lifestyle, it is hard to imagine that they would be willing to accept the forms of submission and gender inequality that existed in the traditional patriarchal family. Young people have a paradoxical desire to live in a firm but tolerant community. Here, corporations like Microsoft offer themselves as an alternative both to the permissive and to the traditional family. Such corporations present themselves as a permissive version of the traditional family: they offer new types of "friendly" authorities, who encourage people to play with their creativity and who do not discipline their eccentricity; but once people's work is perceived to be unprofitable, the corporations' punishment can be most 'unfriendly'.

[7] Microsoft has been extremely successful in dominating the computer software industry in recent years and many fear that its power will significantly expand in the future, when Microsoft may actually impose significant control over other telecommunication systems in the world. Some compare the power that Microsoft might have in the twenty-first century with the power the British Empire had in the last century and the Russian Communist Party in this one. In his campaign for consumer rights, Ralph Nader has been organizing a series of conferences on Microsoft, which analyze the strategies Microsoft uses to prevent other computer companies from competing with it. Paradoxically, representatives of the competitive companies were very reluctant to publicly express their disagreements with

appears as a brother – a young enthusiastic hacker.[7] But behind this benevolent image is a figure who has the capacity to punish or reward his subordinates. Bill thus initially looks like an ideal with whom young hackers easily identify, while at the same time functioning as a superego, i.e. as a master who invisibly controls his employees and constantly makes them feel guilty for not being productive enough.

This new type of corporation greatly relies on the fact that the subject's relation towards authority has changed in contemporary society. The leaders of the corporation know that young people are not willing to simply submit themselves to the authorities at their work place, but primarily want to do creative work, i.e. they want to express themselves in their work. A corporation like Microsoft plays on precisely this desire of youngsters to be creative. When Microsoft searches for new cadres among new college students, it is not primarily interested in hiring the students with the best marks, but those who have inventive desires and are willing to explore something new in life. The best recruits are those who are slightly eccentric in their intellectual or artistic pursuits and who also reject traditional authorities. The corporation relies on the fact that most youngsters today live in very permissive environments: even college today functions as an extended form of the permissive family, where the teachers are benevolent surrogate parents. The corporation presents itself as just another type of permissive institution, where employees will be able to go on living a kind of student life while being paid for playing with computers. But when new employees become part of the corporate machinery, they quickly realize the cruelty of the logic of capital that governs the corporations. The corporation thus presents itself today as a new type of permissive, warm family – only to enrich its profits. And young employees are eager to explore the prospect of not being forced to "grow up" and leave the security of family-like institutions that have pampered them

Microsoft, since they knew very well that Bill Gates can ruin them at any time. Gates's power is that he has huge amounts of money and can easily buy things from the competing firms; but his strength also comes from the fact that he is very flexible: "He will not draw his sword if he can offer his carrot". See *The Independent*, 18.11.1997.

throughout their lives. But when young hackers lose their initial creativity, the troubles usually begin: they need to deal with feelings of guilt for not being productive enough and with the fear of losing their jobs. A young hacker is thus first hired to be what he or she is by himself or herself – an unruly youngster with lots of creative ideas. He or she is then placed in a nontraditional work environment that looks like a relaxed computer playground (you get free coca cola and the dress code is not formal and so on). But when the hacker is integrated in the corporation, he or she may lose the eccentricity that made him or her a desirable employee in the first place. The fact that the subject has lost his or her creative edge and thus cannot fulfill the "desire" of the institution can cause a psychological breakdown and bring the hacker's computer career to an early end.

The new authorities thus function as superego figures who disguise themselves as benevolent doubles of their subordinates. As such, the new authorities are hard to recognize as authorities; and for subordinates it is also hard to guess what the authorities actually require of them. This uncertainty about who the authority is and what it wants contributes to the subjects' feeling of being at a loss in today's society. And one of the ways to deal with this nontransparency of authorities is to establish some kind of ersatz authority structures like support groups, ethical committees, etc., which help to create the illusion that the subjects themselves can "take charge". Isn't the search for new rules and the establishment of multiform ethical committees linked to the fact that, globally, not much can be changed in society, since big capital is increasingly independent of politics? Here, the point is not to oppose the establishment of ethical committees that discuss the impact of science; rather, it is to remember that only control over big capital can limit the risks science generates. The crucial political problem is thus how to control capital and not simply how to limit the risks of scientific development.

There is a certain similarity between a capitalist superpower like the United States and the old Roman Empire. In the last years of the Roman Empire, when society was in a radical crisis, people turned inward and engaged in "care of the self". Similarly today, when power relations are opaque and authorities disguised, people get absorbed in changing their self-images, playing with their identities,

etc. The subject's incentive to change his or her body is thus a way of dealing with increasing powerlessness in the face of changes that affect society at large.

Universities today are often organized as corporations. The question therefore arises: can the university still function as a space where there can emerge a critique of power relations? My answer is yes. But in order to do so both professors and students must be willing to take the risk of critiquing the very approach of cultural relativism which often waters down the critical edge of radical political thinking. The primary risk that one needs to take is also to stop being obsessed about what it means to be oneself and start questioning the political setting of capitalist society in a way that might challenge the established political forces.

Let me conclude with another reference to Klein – this time not to Calvin himself, but to his daughter Marsha who, in a Vanity Fair interview, was asked if being the daughter of such a famous man does not cause difficulties in her love life. In her answer, she jokingly located the problem in the fact that the last thing she usually sees before pulling down the pants of her lover is her father's name (the designer's mark on the underwear). So, regardless of how much we try to liberate ourselves from the authorities, they always return in the most unexpected places.

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Lisa Lowe

Toward a Critical Modernity

1. Liberal knowledge and globalization

This essay draws from a larger project that investigates problems of knowledge, property, and aesthetics within modernity. These investigations take place through "readings" of the effects that mediate what has come to be termed "globalization". That such questions are dominated by the modern European philosophical tradition is indisputable. As such this discussion is necessarily as involved with the project of interrogating the imbrication of European philosophy and colonialism, as it is a contribution to a discussion that seeks to constitute the conditions for alternative knowledges, to recover a genealogy of counter-knowledges, to excavate "the history of the present" or to confirm "the politics of the possible".[1] To this end, in this present essay, I engage such questions as: How is the very concept of the "global" marked by universalist assumptions? If so, how can we "know" the global without reproducing and participating

In this discussion of globalization and the politics of knowledge, my thinking owes a great deal to both David Lloyd and Chandra Talpade Mohanty. I also thank Laura Flulido for teaching with me a seminar on sexual harassment and in U.S.-Mexico border, Rosa Linda Fregoso for our dialogue on feminist theory and globalization, Leti Volpp for sharing her expertise on international law and women's labor, and Mary Tong for her tireless commitment to justice in the maquiladoras.

[1] It participates, too, in feminist antiracist decolonization work that actively engages with how sexual politics are constitutive of all social relations, colonial and neocolonial, represented by projects like MOHANTY, CHANDRA TALPADE & ALEXANDER, M. JACQUI (Eds.) (1997) *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures* (London and New York: Routledge).

in a universalizing empiricism? What is the relationship between empiricism and other liberal forms: citizenship, individualism, and property? How do we in the North American university, traditionally a site for the formation and reproduction of modern citizen-subjects, make space for alternative conceptions and practices of "epistemology", "public sphere", and the "human"?

Enlightenment political philosophy presumes both an epistemological and a political subject. In *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690), Locke combines the logical methods of Bacon, Descartes and Newton to propose a paradigmatic conception of human reason out of which empiricist epistemology emerged; the subject acquires knowledge of himself and others through reason. Rationality becomes the mark of the "human" subject, and the condition for being accorded full moral treatment; it is the defining capacity for determining the "natural" equality of all those beings taken to be "human". In *The Two Treatises of Government* (1698), Locke narrates the development of that epistemological subject into the subject of the political sphere, that is, the property owning citizen who rationally chooses protection by the government. Rousseau too, despite his different revolutionary context in France, proposes in *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality* (1754) and *The Social Contract* (1762) that it is the subject who apprehends objects of knowledge through individual consciousness and philosophical reason who will choose political emancipation, which Rousseau defines as the exchange of the insecurities of nature for equal, civil freedom that is protected by laws. The epistemological subject defined by empirical method becomes, for both Locke and Rousseau, the citizen-subject of the modern political sphere whose relation to civil society and to the state is defined in terms of objects and property: what can be known, what can be owned. Kant, in *Critique of Judgment* (1790), posits an aesthetic subject, who through "taste" can judge the beautiful without recourse to the sensations of pleasure or pain. He writes: "Taste is the faculty of judging an object or a method of representing it by an *entirely disinterested* satisfaction or dissatisfaction. The object of such satisfaction is called the beautiful". This pure aesthetic judgment is granted a "universality" that presumes a "universal" communicability whose sense of the "common" founds our received ideas about the modern public sphere. Clearly, this universality and the aesthetic

subject it subtends is a regulative concept that does not exist, but it is as such the ground for defining the continuum of civilization. Kant narrates this continuum developmentally, ranging from the satisfaction in primitive charms or emotions to the more refined disinterest of civilized taste.[2] Hence, modern philosophy provides for a political subject who is the citizen with rights to property within liberal democracies, an epistemological subject who apprehends through empirical observation the world as filled with objects with discernable properties, and an aesthetic subject who has the faculty of judging the beautiful. Questions of knowing and having resonate with those of aesthetic judgment in that they are each powerful terrains that define membership in the "human" community.

Liberal epistemology universalizes through logics of equivalence that are fundamental to, and reproductive of, the conditions for the political subject of liberal society. Like the rationalizing factory that processes materials, converting them into equivalent units, liberal epistemology makes claims to knowing and understanding what it can document, measure, classify, rationalize, and ultimately, own and command; everything can be known through rational scientific methods. The political philosophical theme of modern empirical science is that these processes are emancipatory and productive of modern democratic civil society. Yet as the metaphor of the factory suggests, modern epistemology emerges out of capitalist processes that involve the violences and dislocations of colonialism, slavery, migration, and industrialization. In other words, as Paul Gilroy, Nancy Fraser, David Theo Goldberg, Carol Pateman, William Connolly and others have recently argued (and W. E. B. DuBois and Frantz Fanon before them), modernity is contradictory and precisely constituted by differences.[3] Modern capitalism has expanded through

[2] See LLOYD, DAVID (1991) "Race Under Representation", *Oxford Literary Review*, Vol. 13, Nos. 1-2, pp. 62-94.

[3] GILROY, PAUL (1993) *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press); FRASER, NANCY (1989) *Unruly Practices: Power, Discourse and Gender in Contemporary Social Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press); GOLDBERG, DAVID THEO (1993) *Racist Culture: Philosophy and the Politics of Meaning* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell); PATEMAN, CAROL (1988) *The Sexual Contract* (Cambridge: Polity Press); CONNOLLY, WILLIAM (1993) *Political Theory and Modernity* (Ithaca:

colonialisms and global development strategies that lay hold of and "respect" non-modern forms for exploitative aims. It is neither that modernity expands and commodifies something called the "traditional", nor that it simply destroys it, making it necessary to look for "pure" sites that have not as yet been incorporated in order to find "resistance", but rather that both antagonism and adaptation have been part of the processes of the emergence of modernity over time. Alternatives to modern epistemology and politics are not the "traditional" or the "other" outside, but the "what-has-been-formed" in the conjunction with, and in differentiation from modernizing forces over time.[4] In other words, modernity is always framed by an international set of differences within which its categories, methods, and subjects emerge. It is not, as some theorists would have it, that the world has become "global" at the end of the twentieth century, but rather that our understandings of modern epistemology, politics, and aesthetics must be "returned" to a globally different sense of Enlightenment modernity.

In this particular discussion, I want to focus on the global dimensions of liberal epistemology, suggesting that it may universalize through empiricist methods that rely on constituting the presence of the visible. Informed by Chandra Mohanty's classic essay, "Under Western Eyes",[5] I am also building on the work by David Theo Goldberg and Robyn Wiegman, and Avery Gordon. Goldberg argues, in *Racist Culture: Philosophy and the Politics of Meanings* (1993), for a connection between eighteenth-century empiricism's tabulation of perceivable physical differences, the emergence of scientific racism, and the founding of the disciplines of anthropology, biology, and sociology: the "sciences of people without history". Wiegman demonstrates in her *American Anatomies:*

Cornell University Press); DU BOIS, W. E. B. (1982) *The Souls of Black* Folk (New York: Penguin); FANON, FRANTZ (1968) *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. C. Farrington (New York: Grove).

[4] See LOWE, LISA & LLOYD, DAVID (Eds.) (1997) "Introduction", *The Politics of Culture in the Shadow of Capital* (Durham: Duke University Press).

[5] MOHANTY, CHANDRA TALPADE (1991) "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourse", in CHANDRA TALPADE MOHANTY, ANN RUSSO, LOURDES TORRES (Eds.) *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press).

Theorizing Race and Gender (1995) that western knowledge regimes have rationalized and racialized social hierarchies through a visual economy.[6] Gordon's critique of sociology *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination* (1996) defines "haunting" as the ghostly shadow of sociological knowledge, the counter-knowledges that are the "evidence of things not seen", as the African American writer James Baldwin put it. Haunting is the record, or trace, of the history of violent encounter, occupation, and forced miscegenation that are often rendered invisible by sociological positivism.[7] I want to suggest some ways in which liberal epistemology excludes and absents other forms of knowing as the means for producing, rational classification and the liberal subject who can "know". I inquire into which occlusions are necessary and constitutive of liberal epistemology, and how we can begin to know the "otherness" that the liberal paradigm constitutes as epistemologically "uncertain" or epistemologically "impossible". Ultimately, I am asking about the possibilities for understanding "humanity" outside of the West, and attempting to frame the possibilities for alternative public spheres within which the question of other forms of human subjectivity can be posed.

In the course of posing "globalization" as a problem of knowledge, I wish to point, too, to the impossibility of totality and totalization with respect to seizing "globalization" as a set of political economic processes and constructing it, as such, as a regularized monolithic object of knowledge. For the "imaginary" of an even expansion through homogenization of labor pools, resources, and markets – represented through the icon of the commodity that circulates and is consumed identically in every nation – is everywhere contradicted by the long and evident history of colonialisms and then global development operating precisely through uneven expansion and differentiation of localities, labor,

[6] WIEGMAN, ROBYN (1995) *American Anatomies: Theorizing Race and Gender* (Durham, Duke University Press).

[7] See GORDON, AVERY (1997) *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press). Haunting is the "evidence of things not seen", that points to what Gordon terms "the lost subjects of history, the missing ... and the blind fields they inhabit" (p. 195).

materials, and consumer practices. This is the case, for example, in colonial capitalism, where colonial regimes "develop" the colony through the industrialization of certain sectors and the deliberate maintenance of agrarian economy in others.[8] Capitalist social relations in colonial settings have not necessarily passed through European-style proletarianization but through cultural forms that may be quite incompatible with that model of development. Dipesh Chakrabarty's study of Calcutta jute mill workers, 1890-1940, for example, suggests that workers respond to capitalist discipline in ways that exceed and depart from "class consciousness".[9] Such totality is revealed as imaginary, too, when we consider the uneven impacts of globalization on women within colonized and neocolonized societies, and racialized immigrant women in the metropolitan or "advanced industrialized" world. Racialized immigrant women in Britain, Canada, and in the U.S. are figured variously and heterogeneously as labor, variable capital, the static repository of "traditional" culture, the site for reproduction rather than production, and so forth. Along with the antinomy, "private" and "public", women have been subject to the construction of "tradition" and "modernity", which perpetually locates "third world women" as the "other" of modernity, the symbol of premodern "tradition", the "to-be-modernized". Yet to the contrary, women have always been agents in the dialectical production of the heterogeneous, differentiated forms of modernity itself. Even before the currently gendered international division of labor, women under colonialism and in so-called developing nations composed the primary labor force exploited in the production of economic modernity.

What does this mean, then, that globalization is ungraspable as a totality?[10] Through an interrogation of the expansion of liberal

[8] CHANDRA, BIPAN (1980) "Colonialism, Stages of Colonialism and the Colonial State", *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, Vol. 10, No. 3, pp. 272-285.

[9] CHAKRABARTY, DIPESH (1989) *Rethinking Working-Class History: Bengal 1890-1940* (Princeton: Princeton University Press).

[10] In his discussion of Althusser, Jameson poses totality as the absent structure, epistemologically and politically forceful in its absence. While I consider globalization as something like an "absent totality", what I am working out here is something rather different in process and reference than this reading, i.e., I am interested in the ways in which epistemologies constitute certain objects and processes as "knowable" through

citizenship and epistemology as symptoms of "globalization", and an inquiry into the uneven knowledges about sexual surveillance and women's labor in export processing zones like the U.S.-Mexican border, I hope to make some general statements about the the operations of liberal universality, the absence of totality, and the politics of knowledge within globalization.

2. The intelligibility of "sexual harassment"

To illustrate the problem of the politics of knowledge with respect to globalization, I wish to investigate the issue of "knowing" "sexual harassment" within several fields of meaning – sociological, legal/political, and economic. We will see that "sexual harassment" is an "object" within a United States context that is defined by sociology and liberal legal/political discourses as a problem of discrimination, that is, as discriminatory practices that deny women the opportunity to participate in the public world of work and education, as an infringment of the citizen's "civil rights". The discourse about sexual harassment builds on the sociological literature on "sex-role differences" that posits objective gender-based roles that may be empirically observed and documented; in such analyses, "sexual harassment" is constituted by observing "a carryover into the workplace of gender-based roles deemed inappropriate to work".[11] Out

the violent constitution of certain domains, processes, and subjects as "unknowable" or "impossible". See JAMESON, FREDRIC (1981) *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press). Dipesh Chakrabarty has written about this problem with respect to South Asian work practices being "radically untranslatable" to the positivist terms of modern history. Work and labor are deeply implicated in the production of universal sociologies. The modern term, labor, he argues, translates into a general category that cannot accomodate the set of practices which, in India, are often associated with the presence and agency of gods or spirits in the very process of labor itself. CHAKRABARTY, DIPESH (1997) "Time of History and Times of Gods", in LOWE, LISA & DAVID LLOYD (Eds.) *The Politics of Culture in the Shadow of Capital* (Durham: Duke University Press).

[11] GUTEK, BARBARA (1985) *Sex and the Workplace: the Impact of Sexual Behavior and Harassment on Women, Men, and Organizations* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass), pp. 15-16.

of this sociological observation, sexual harassment has become legally defined as unwanted, unsolicited and unreciprocated conduct of a sexual nature primarily directed against women in workplaces or educational institutions; it is physical, verbal, or related to seeing or being seen. Sexual harassment, in this sense, is understood as a set of practices which deny women civil liberties, equal protection by the state, the right to work in a job of one's own choosing contractual rights, freedom of religious belief and political opinion, property rights, etc., and participates in a set of assumptions about liberal political practice and philosophy. There are two kinds of "sexual harassment": *quid pro quo* (redressed as a violation of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act beginning in the late 1970s) and the looser principle of "hostile environment" (commencing in 1986). "Sexual harassment" claims are aimed at legally protecting the "rights" of U.S. women citizens; they seek to compensate the woman for whom sexual harassment is an obstacle to her full enjoyment of citizenship rights. Just as liberal political theory posits an abstract subject of rights, sexual harassment claims reformulate this subject by suggesting that "but for" sexual harassment women would enjoy the full rights of citizenship and accede to the status of this abstract subject. Yet owing to the discrepancy between the principle of equal citizenship as a transcendent ideal and the social conditions for specific citizens who live within the structural inequalities of racialized patriarchal capitalism, the "political emancipation" endowed in citizenship for women, promised by the logic of sexual harassment claims, I would argue, works to mask the material inequalities out of which the U.S. economy has emerged and on which it depends. The inequalities exist not only between men and women, but they are reproduced throughout the racialized colonial history of the U.S., and are currently dramatized in what we might term "the international division of humanity"[12] that exists between U.S. citizens and workers in the neocolonized and developing world.

If we consider the politics of "knowing" "sexual harassment" as a governable social practice within the U.S. contexts of "sex-role" sociology, of Equal Opportunity Law, and in U.S. liberal feminist critique, we understand that the pursuit of sexual harassment claims

[12] I thank Randall Williams for this phrasing.

may produce and make knowledge about something we would call "sexual harassment", but these isolated incidents must surely be only part of a more pervasive exercise of sexual power and domination within racialized patriarchal social relations. Sexual harassment and sex-based discrimination has been often in the current U.S. news: Paula Corbin Jones, who alleges that she suffered a loss of mobility in the workplace when she did not comply with the request for sexual favors by the President of the United States, Sergeant Major McKinney, an African American officer, who was recently cleared of eighteen counts of sexual harassment by a military court, and Hunter Tylo, an actress who received $3 million settlement from a sex-discrimination suit she won after being fired from the television series "Melrose Place" for being pregnant. In regulating and marking as legal and illegal various aspects of "sexual harassment", equal opportunity laws may inadvertently work to sanction the remaining field of power relations; such laws suggest that remediation of gendered violence and oppression is possible through the law, while obfuscating the structural causes of such violence or oppression. At the same time, it abstracts and separates workplace or educational sexual practices from the larger context that would involve also the street, the home, and the entire social order in which gendered and sexualized subordinations of men and women pervade all social relations. Furthermore, the legislation of sexuality by the patriarchal state is itself always part of the disciplining apparatus that exercises social control over the much wider field of "sexuality" and sexual practices. The regulation of sexuality institutionalizes non-native concepts of appropriate sex within which non-heterosexual non-reproductive sexualities become legible as "sexual harassment".[13]

Sexual harassment legislation invests not only in government remediation, but in liberal individualism and citizenship. It builds upon the premise that liberal reform should enfranchise women with the same rights and liberties as men, rather than proposing a more "radical" challenge to the liberal system itself. The modern liberal

[13] I have understood this through the work of Judith Halberstam, who argues that the masculinity of "butch" women is policed through being "read" as sexually harassing in the context of women's bathrooms. See HALBERSTAM, JUDITH (1998) *Female Masculinity* (Durham: Duke University Press).

political understanding of citizenship as political emancipation emerged in the late eighteenth century in the wake of the French and American revolutions that overturned earlier feudal arrangements. The *Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen* (1793) enumerated the rights of man to include equality, liberty, security, and property. Yet since it is the property system that underlies the concept of "rights" in liberal democracies like the United States, the most powerful contradiction arises from the condition that each individual man's right to property violates the rights of others. Liberal political theory establishes that the right to liberty in civil society ceases to be a right when it conflicts with political life, yet if political life is that which guarantees the rights of the individual man to property, then the political sphere becomes a guarantor of capitalist relations of exploitation, in which "the private property of the one is the alienated labor of the other", as Marx succinctly argues in the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*.[14] In "On the Jewish Question", Marx defines "Political emancipation" of the citizen as the process of relegating to the domain of the private, all "non-political" particulars of religion, social rank, education, occupation, and so on, in exchange for representation on the political terrain of the state where "man is the imaginary member of an imaginary sovereignty, divested of his real, individual life, and infused with an unreal universality".[15] For Marx, then, "political emancipation" of the *citizen* in exchange for protection of the rights to citizen involves the "privatization" of particularity in exchange for protection of the rights to property, and the political state is the apotheosis of the property-system in capitalist nations. This points to the need for a critique of citizenship defined as the right to property or, in effect, the right of the capitalist to exploit, or the right of the consumer to purchase its simulacrum of humanity. Carole Pateman has argued persuasively that the founding of civil society and the state through the social contract establishes male patriarchal right over women:

[14] MARX, KARL (1972) *The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, in TUCKER, ROBERT (Ed.) *The Marx-Engels Reader* (New York: Norton), pp. 56-67.

[15] MARX, KARL (1972) "On the Jewish Question", in TUCKER, ROBERT (Ed.) *The Marx-Engels* Reader (New York: Norton).

"Women are not party to the original contract through which men transform their natural freedom into the security of civil freedom. Women are the subject of the contract. The (sexual) contract is the vehicle through which men transform their natural right over women into the security of civil patriarchal right.[16] Citizenship for women institutionalizes the disavowal of this exclusion of women from the status of liberal subjectivity and the history of the establishment of citizenship through the "ownership" of women as slaves and property.

In addition, following the work of Angela Davis on rape and the myth of the black rapist, Kimberle Crenshaw on the intersection of race and sex in anti-discrimination law, and Patricia Williams on the race and gender inequalities made invisible by contract law, I would argue that "sexual harassment" claims for women citizens that emerge in the United States during the 1970s and 1980s may risk mislocating the greatest sites of regularized sexual violence to that of white women in the middle class workplace or university rather than in the longer history of forced rape of black slave women that constitutes the "impossibility" of "sexual harassment" for black women.[17] In her analysis of the historical construction of rape as the violation of white women's bodies as the property of elite white men, Angela Davis reminds us of the historical record in which Black men were lynched as the accused "rapists" of white women. She forcefully connects the historical construction of rape as being perpetrated by Black men with the erasure of institutionalized sexual violence against Black women. The definition of "rape" as a violation of the white female body necessarily foreclosed the analysis of the circumstances surrounding the Black woman as victim of rape. By tying "the historical knot binding Black women systematically abused and violated by white men – to Black men – maimed and

[16] PATEMAN, CAROL (1988) *The Sexual Contract* (Cambridge: Polity Press), p. 6.

[17] DAVIS, ANGELA (1981) "Rape, Racism and the Myth of the Black Rapist", in *Women, Race and Class* (New York: Random House); CRENSHAW, KIMBERLE (1989) "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex", *University of Chicago Legal Forum*, pp. 139-67; WILLIAMS, PATRICIA (1991) "On Being the Object of Property", in *The Alchemy of Race and Rights* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press).

murdered because of the racist manipulation of the rape charge",[18] Davis succeeds in explaining the historical alienation of Black women from white feminist anti-rape discourse and activism. Kimberle Crenshaw argues with respect to the Anita Hill case that the history within which rape and other sexual abuses in the "workplace" (since the 1970s termed "sexual harassment") have been the condition of black women's work for centuries, has institutionalized forced sexual access to black women and reproduced by myths about black women's sexual voraciousness. In the history of the legal acceptance of black women's testimonies, a black women's word was not taken as truth. Crenshaw writes: "our own legal system once drew a connection – as a matter of law – between lack of chastity and lack of veracity. In other words, a woman who was likely to have sex could not be trusted to tell the truth. Because black women were not expected to be chaste, they were likewise considered less likely to tell the truth".[19] This history has conspired to make "sexual harassment" of Black women epistemologically "uncertain", to make it impossible the sexual violability of their bodies. In "On Being the Object of Property", Patricia Williams meditates on the always braided history of being at once the inheritor and the disinherited of Enlightenment subjectivity: the great great granddaughter of a slavewoman and a slavemaster.

Finally, this abstraction of "sexual harassment" within the first world workplace as a fixed object of knowledge for sociology and the law, coexists with the invisible and "unknown" nature of how practices such as touching, rape, bullying, battery, forced pregnancy testing, forced sterilization, forced exposure to toxic chemicals that result in high incidences of birth defects, and other practices form parts of daily gendered regimes of control and discipline in the hyperextraction of surplus value from women's labor in export processing production outside of the United States. "Sex-based discrimination" and "sexual harassment" have yet to be constituted as

[18] DAVIS, *Women, Race and Class*, p. 173.

[19] CRENSHAW, KIMBERLE (1992) "Whose Story Is It, Anyway?: Feminist and Antiracist Appropriations of Anita Hill", in MORRISON, TONI (Ed.) *Race-ing Justice, En-Gendering Power: Essays on Anita Hill, Clarence Thomas, and the Construction of Social Reality* (New York: Pantheon Books), pp. 411-12.

such in Mexican law. Indeed, no Latin American country has a national law that defines sexual harassment as a human rights violation.[20] In this regard, the second half of my presentation will address the problems of "knowing" such practices as existing in the *maquiladoras* in the U.S.-Mexican border areas of Tijuana, Ciudad Juarez, and Mexicali, fostered by the Border Industrialization Program that began in 1965 and intensified by the devaluation of the peso and by NAFRA, where women workers are not protected by the concept of liberal citizenship as defined within a U.S. context. I would argue, following Marx's critique in "On the Jewish Question", that "political emancipation" of the female U.S. citizen through the recuperation of equal rights denied her through "sexual harassment" works to obscure the global economic social formation within which such citizenship status is produced through the neocolonial exploitation of Mexican women's labor. Political emancipation of the liberal feminist woman, in this sense, can depend upon the exploitation of other women and may be used to rationalize such exploitations. *Further, I wish to argue that it is this incommensurability between "sexual harassment" as legally legible within the U.S. context and the "epistemological uncertainty" of "sexual harassment" for women in the maguiladoras that may be one point-of entry through which we might begin to grasp and "know" globalization and its processes.*

In a like critique of the relationship between U.S. liberal feminist arguments for rights and the "impossibility" of rights for the neocolonized woman, Farida Akhter, a member of a Latin American, Caribbean, Asian, African and Pacific (LACAAP) feminist group argues that the U.S. liberal feminist issue of "reproductive rights" denies the historical realities faced by Bangladeshi women. "Women in the West are making a demand for the right to choose while women in Bangladesh, for example, are offered a choice between the pill (almost always a brand of hi-h dose), IUD (copper-T), injectables (Depo-Provera and Net-en), implants (Norplant), or forced

[20] ORE-AGUILAR, GABY (1997) "Human Rights on the Eve of the Next Century: Human Rights and Non-Governmental Organizations: Sexual Harassment and Human Rights in Latin America", *Fordham Law Review.*

sterilization".[21] Akhter is not only pointing to the racist and eugenic background of the Euro-American reproductive rights movement, and to how protecting the individual reproductive rights of first world white women masks the forcible "impossibility" of reproductive rights for Bangladeshi women, but she also argues that the construction of *reproduction* as the site of female investment and rights reduces a woman's labor to reproductive functions and undermines her productive role. Furthermore, the demand for reproductive rights, as with rights to prosecute sexual harassment, aliens significantly with the right to ownership – of one's body, reproduction, and sexuality – which presumes that production of the species is a "private" issue rather than a social one. It carelessly universalizes to all women the model of bourgeois citizenship, rather than creating new social relations to reproduction and sexuality that would not presume a heterosexual woman subject and would depart from existing forms of family based on marriage, private property, gendered divisions of labor, and family laws of inheritance.

I feel obligated to underscore explicitly that my argument is not that the "sexual harassment" "known" by the sociological, legal, and liberal feminist discourses does not exist, or that it is unimportant. I abhor the individual and social pathology that presumes that all "women", or feminized bodies, are willing recipients of unwanted fondling, ogling, propositioning, rape, and other forced sexual activities as much as the next person does. My argument is, rather, that in constituting "sexual harassment"; we make legal, political, and epistemological "knowledge" of certain processes and actions that privilege propertied political subjects within certain contexts. It promotes an uneven politics of knowledge which obscures the incommensurable "knowledges" that we might have about the meaning place, and habitualness of such practices, or other practices, in other contexts. I am *not* arguing against governmental remediation or public campaigns that specifically force into evidence the racialized, classed, and geopolitical nature of "sexual harassment";

[21] AKHTER, FARIDA (1992) "The Eugenic and Racist Premise of Reproductive Rights and Population Control. Issues", *Reproductive and Genetic Engineering*, Vol. 5, No. 1, pp. 1-8.

rather I am warning against the U.S. liberal feminist investment in legal remediations which tend to see sexual harassment, sexism, and misogynistic practices as unique, irrational, unfortunate anomalies taking place in an otherwise non-discriminatory workplace environment in which men and women would under normal circumstances be treated fairly and equally. Such investments also look to the state as the sole guarantor of "rights" and tend to shore up ideologies and practices of individualism. Likewise in the "radical feminist" reworking of legal redress articulated by Catherine Mackinnon, who sees sexual harassment, along with rape, battery, and pornography, as indices of capitalist patriarchal structure and its sexualized division of labor that enforces the inferiority of women, there is also a juristic investment in a *typical* case of sexual harassment and an exaggerated trust in the legal remedy when she argues that we need to write "the pain of the victim" into the law.[22] There is also, quite abundantly, in Mackinnon's formulation, the problem of essentializing and universalizing, "women"'s experience of sexual violence. Such arguments continue to be entirely consonant with the liberal legal concept of the "person" as the locus of rights, duties, right to sue, etc. that I wish to argue is built upon the labor of subjects who cannot constitutively accede to such "personhood".

3. An international division of knowledge

Much has been written about globalization as an expansion of the capitalist mode of production in which, over the past forty years, labor-intensive assembly has relocated to Asian and Latin American sites, such as Taiwan, Sing, Hong Kong, S. Korea, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Mexico's northern border. The export-oriented industrialization model has become a major *modus operandi* for the internationalization of the labor process.[23] Export promotion

[22] MACKINNON, CATHERINE (1987) "Sex and Violence: A Perspective", in *Feminism Unmodified* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press). See critique of Mackinnon in MINSON, JEFFREY (1993) *Questions of Conduct: Sexual Harassment, Citizenship, Government* (New York: St. Martin's Press).

strategies include the attraction of foreign investment through incentives such as tax holidays, the promise of inexpensive tractable labor for transnational corporations, and the establishment of export-processing zones (EPZS) that ease importing/exporting restrictions and enhance "mixed production" techniques that create more profit for the transnational corportations. TNCs benefit from their ability to parasitically move to the cheapest sources of labor world-wide, whether in developing countries or in advanced-industrialized countries, where extensive immigration from less developed countries has created a "third world within".

Mexico's maquiladora sector, or export-processing factories along the U.S.-Mexican border, is dominated by U.S. corporations, which own at least 90 percent of the factories.[24] Maquiladoras are a source of billions of dollars a year in export earning for Mexico and now employ over 850,000 workers, at least 50 percent of whom are women.[25] In the 1980s, scholars like Maria Patricia Fernandez-Kelly and Susan Tiano argued that the targetting of women workers both exploits women's structural vulnerability in the family and society as it deepens and reproduces patriarchal gender relations in the workplace.[26] With more recent data, Leslie Salzinger has analyzed

[23] See FROEBEL, FOLKER (1980) *The New International Division of Labor* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press); NASH, JUNE & FERNANDEZ-KELLY, NIARIA PATRICIA (1983) *Men, Women and the International Division of Labor* (Albany: State University of New York Press); HARVEY, DAVID (1990) *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell); BASCH, LINDA, NINA GLICK SCHILLER & CRISTINA SZANTON BLANC (Eds.) (1994) *Nations Unbound: Transnational Projects, Postcolonial Predicaments, and Deterritorialized Nation-States* (S.I.: Gordon and Breach).

[24] In 1990, 90 percent of all maquiladoras were partially or completely U.S.-owned, although over the last five years both Korean and Japanese firms have increased their presence in this sector.

[25] Women have always constituted a large percentage of the maquiladora workforce, reaching a high point in the early 1980s of approximately 80 percent. Some of the literature and official discourse suggest that women are selected for their dexterity, skill level, and work ethic; other analysts argue that young women are recruited because they have less experience in the waged workplace, are less informed about labor rights, and are more easily intimidated against labor organizing or complaint.

the ways in which the gendered character of labor power is itself created and through managerial strategies in which "femininities" and "masculinities" are reproduced to create the most optimal conditions for labor hyperextraction.[27] Women routinely work within conditions, restrictions, and exploitations that are specifically "feminized": they are often required to wear color-coded smocks under the surveillance of male supervisors who comment on their physical and sexual traits; they receive unwanted touching, leering, verbal and physical advances from both managers and male co-workers; they are raped, beaten, fired if they attempt to refuse; the maquiladoras require them to undergo pregnancy testing as a condition of employment and deny them work if they are pregnant; if she becomes pregnant, she may be assigned to unhealthy or unsafe work to force her to resign; women workers are required to give weekly urine samples, and to answer intrusive questions about their sexual activities.[28] The 2,100-plant maquiladora sector is the largest source of revenue for Mexico, surpassing oil and tourism. For Mexico's centralized government and the large state-run unions who view the maquiladoras as a strategy for development, these revenues are a disincentive to recognizing or creating protections for women workers against sex-based discriminations, from sexual harassment to the larger set of social relations within which women are hyperexploited by maquiladora work. While Mexican labor laws are much stronger, in certain respects, than U.S. ones, there has yet to be widely recognized provision for gender or sex in these laws. In this sense, "sexual harassment" in the export processing industry cannot be defined and delimited as it is in Title VII of the Civil Rights Act,

[26] FERNANDEZ-KELLY, MARIA PATRICIA (1983) *For We Are Sold, I and My People: Women and Industry in Mexico's Frontier* (Albany: State University of New York Press); TIANO, SUSAN (1987) "Maquiladoras in Mexicali: Integration or Exploitation?", in RUIZ, VICKI & SUSAN TIANO (Eds.) (1987) *Women on the U.S-Mexico Border: Responses to Change* (Boston: Allen and Unwin).

[27] SALZINGER, LESLIE (1997) "From High Heels to Swathed Bodies: Gendered Meanings under Production in Mexico's Export-Processing Industry", *Feminist Studies*, Vol. 23, No. 3, pp. 549-574.

[28] HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH, WOMEN'S RIGHTS PROJECT (1996) *No Guarantees: Sex Discrimination in Mexico's Maquiladora* Sector, Vol. 8, No. 6 (B), pp. 1-45.

for such activities as would qualify as "sexual harassment" in the U.S. extend into and are indistinguishable from the larger network of gendered social, cultural, and economic meanings and disciplines through which women are recruited to and exploited in the maquiladoras. I refer here to the socioeconomic relations within which young women from ages 17-22, many who do not have a secondary education, have migrated with their families from Mexico's interior to seek work in the maquilas in order to provide essential income for their families; the "need" for the income combined with "sexual harassment" and "sex discrimination" are coercive factors that keep young women locked into maquiladora work.

There are a substantial number of representations of female maquiladora workers, both of managers and academics, that cast such workers as docile, unorganizable, and easily manipulated victims of transnational industries. In arguing that gendered neocolonial capitalism situates young Mexican women as a site for hyper-extraction as maquiladora labor, and that liberal epistemology constitutes the violation of human subjects by this regime as a site of "epistemological uncertainty", I do not mean to confirm this representation of women workers as "passive". To the contrary, I am precisely interested in the many ways in which maquiladora women have engaged in gender-specific struggles on the shop floor, informal organizing work stoppages, oppositions to sexual abuse, community projects, and protests against factory shutdowns.[29]

In its intensification of exploitation, transnational capitalism has exacerbated both the gendered political and economic contradictions that were active in modern state capitalisms. Making use of the structures of patriarchal societies and its modes of gender discipline in order to maximize its exploitation of female labor, transnational capital simultaneously undermines the reproduction of patriarchies by removing women from one sphere of gendered social control to

[29] See PENA, DEVON (1987) "Tortuosidad: Shop Floor Struggles of Female Maquiladora Workers", in RUIZ & TIANO (Eds.) (1987) *Women on the U.S-Mexico Border*; TONG, MARY (1993) "Reaching Across the Rio", *Beyond Borders*, Vol. 1, No. 2, pp. 12-29; SHIELDS, JANICE (1995) "'Social Dumping' in Mexico Under NAFTA", *Multinational Monitor*, pp. 20-24.

by removing women from one sphere of gendered social control to another. The reconstitution of patriarchy within the transnational capitalist system, I have argued elsewhere, produces different and more varied practices of resistance to that system, practices that do not turn exclusively on the opposition of abstract labor to capital.[30] Where the "feminized" domain of culture is in contradiction with capitalist production, there is a convergence of struggles generated by different axes of domination: capitalism, patriarchy, and the processes of racialization that take place through colonialism and immigration. The specific modes of discipline that apply to women as gendered subjects necessarily give rise to different modes of organization and politicization: for example, *maquiladora* workers in Mexico protesting the factory's regular requirement of "beauty pageants" that rearticulate patriarchal domination of women in the workplace have generated cross-border workers' organizations that have targeted more generally the gendered nature of both U.S. and transnational industry's exploitation of maquiladora workers in Mexico and Central America.[31] With the feminization and racialization of work that more and more relies upon immigrant women and women in the neocolonized world, different strategies for organizing emerge: for example, the variety of strategies for addressing the international garment industry's abuse of immigrant women workers include actions in the realms of both national and international law, consumer boycotts, and national and cross-border labor organizing modes.[32] These mixed strategies do not imply either the dispersal of struggle or the "passivity" of exploited workers; they recognize and bring into evidence a "new" subject impacted by forms of domination that are political, economic, and cultural, and

[30] See LOWE, LISA & DAVID LLOYD (Eds.) (1997) "Introduction", *The Politics of Culture in the Shadow of Capital* (Durham: Duke University Press).

[31] See HONG, KYUNGWON & MARY TONG (forthcoming) "Aguirre v. AUG: A Case Study", in SNIITH, P. C. (Ed.) *Multinational Human Resource Management: Cases and Exercises* (Dame Publishing Company).

[32] See HO, LAURA, CATHERINE POWELL & LETI VOLPP (1996) "(Dis)Assembling Rights of Women Workers Along the Global Assembly Line: Human Rights and the Garment Industry", *Harvard Civil Rights-Civil Liberties Law Review*, Vol. 31, No. 2, pp. 383-414.

specifically gendered within both national and international frameworks.

4. Alternative publics, alternative knowledges

Permit me to conclude by mentioning briefly a current project that attempts to practice an alternative definition of the "human" and "human rights" that does not look to international law or state governments, or even non-governmental organizations, as the agencies that exclusively determine their meanings. The Support Committee for Maquiladora Workers in San Diego, California, which assists workers organizing in the maquiladoras around labor, health and safety, and sexual harassment issues facilitates the conducting of surveys on "sexual harassment" in the workplace for women workers in the maquiladoras. Rather than constituting "sexual harassment" in universal and equal terms and extending these notions to the site of the maquiladoras, the survey is part of a multiple strategy cross-border feminist effort, initiated by women workers rather than by first world women, to provide tools with which to reveal the uneven "politics of knowledge" that exists between the concept of "sexual harassment" in the U.S. workplace and the gendered sets of practices in the maquiladoras. The "data" produced by this worker survey may become part of the struggle to test whether international law will extend Title VII of the U.S. Civil Rights Act extraterritorially to subjects in U.S. plants outside of the U.S., or it may be used by women in the U.S. to publicize sexual abuses in U.S. plants in order to pressure U.S. companies to reorganize their practices in the border factories. It may be used in complaints against NAFTA. It may become part of a public campaign within the U.S. to critique the limitations of U.S. liberal feminist definitions of "sexual harassment". But such struggles will be as much an effort to make evidence about the maquiladora system as such, and about the discrepancy in the international legal and economic treatment of the "human person" in the West and in the non-West, as it will be targeted towards exclusive remediation of "sexual harassment", per se. By working both within and without national legal apparatuses, perhaps the struggles to make

these alternative knowledges signify will employ a practice akin to what Terry Threadgold in *Feminist Poetics: Poiesis, Performance, Histories* (1997) elaborates as "rewriting". Threadgold describes a process of displacing and introducing otherness into order such that the very space of scientific/legal discourse is reorganized: "Rewriting, then, may vacillate between citation, reproduction, system-integrated innovation (what Kuhn calls the normal paradigm at work) and the production of something not entirely new, but 'undisciplined', derived from somewhere else, which effect 'revolution' or radical change of a kind that cannot be easily contained within the existing structures of the interested system".[33]

In *The Spoils of Freedom*, Renata Salecl juxtaposes "postmodern" and NeoKantian conceptions of "human rights", the former reading the form of rights as a part of the historically limited Enlightenment project and the latter attempting to give human rights a new philosophical foundational. Salecl concludes that "the problem we must address is how to think the universality of human rights in relation to the differences and antagonisms that traverse society".[34] In dialogue with this call, I would modestly frame a third possibility: neither a formal exercise of moral modernity, nor a neocolonial attempt to transfer universal rational forms everywhere, we might explore practices for constituting alternative publics and pedagogies that respect the "human" through the very process of bringing into evidence the series of exclusions, disappearances, and unevennesses upon which modern "humanity" has been constituted.

[33] THREADGOLD, TERRY (1997) *Feminist Poetics: Poiesis, Performance, Histories* (London: Routledge), p. 33.

[34] SALECL, RENATA (1994) *The Spoils of Freedom: Psychoanalysis and Feminism After the Fall of Socialism* (London: Routledge), p. 118.

Discipline and Place Collective*

The Limits of Liberalism: a Conversation with Lisa Lowe, Renata Salecl and Terry Threadgold

The following discussion took place after the presentation of the preceding papers at the University of British Columbia.

1. Racialization, citizenship and identity politics

LISA LOWE: I think we are all working with a critique of the liberal operation of appropriating differences and aestheticizing or

* The interview took place on May 1 1998.

Leslie G. Roman and Geraldine Pratt were the Principal Investigators for "The Discipline and Place Collective", a group of interdisciplinary cultural studies scholars at the University of British Columbia, who, for two and half years conducted critical forays into postcolonial feminist theories of the social production of space. Leslie G. Roman, Associate Professor of Educational Studies, publishes widely in cultural studies and education on feminist materialist, antiracist and postcolonial feminist pedagogy and theory. Geraldine Pratt, Professor of geography, publishes widely in feminist geography, and gender, race and labour. Richard Cavell, Associate Professor of English and Chair of the Canadian Studies Program, publishes widely on spatial production, Marshall McLuhan and Canadian Studies. Gillian Creese, Professor of Sociology, publishes widely on how gender and 'race' shape processes of migration and work through feminist materialist and postcolonial theory. Sneja Gunew, Professor of English and Women's Studies, publishes widely on multicultural, postcolonial and feminist critical theory. Penny Gurstein, Associate Professor in the School of Community and Regional Planning, publishes in the areas of community-based initiatives and qualitative policy. Kate McInturff, Instructor in the Department of English and Comparative Literature at the American University in Cairo and formerly the research assistant for the Collective, currently explores postdevelopment theory and its potential intersections with postcolonial theory. Becki Ross, Associate Professor of Sociology, currently researches the politics and practice of erotic

commodifying or converting them into a kind of universalism. At one point Renata asked me "well, if you are calling for a recognition of otherness that the Liberal paradigm excludes, isn't this the way multicultural capitalism works, or corporate capitalism works, to commodify and aestheticize?" And my answer to that would be "yes". But I would also want to point to another kind of otherness that isn't about the false object of commodified ethnic difference, but an otherness upon whose elision Liberal closure and apparent wholeness is built. I am thinking of something more like the otherness of history that is framed by Walter Benjamin, for example, as a catastrophe that historicism writes out, or that it seamlessly makes disappear ... or the genocide that is written out of a national history or national memory, the forms of violence that are the absence upon which certain forms of presence are built or erected. Otherness in the smaller commodified, aestheticized sense is, in a way, creating a kind of false or fetish object rather than opening to that other otherness that has been destroyed in some way, that is foreclosed, and inaccessible, only readable through the trace of the apparently disfigured or the forcibly absented. I think that cultural relativism now is the strategy of liberalism – to seem that it is acknowledging otherness. I think you gave a wonderful example yesterday, Renata, when I heard you describe a greeting mechanism where saying "hello, I like you, how are you doing", works as an apparent recognition that in fact masks hatred and racism. Against that I think I would pose [a different question]: how do we talk about cultural difference without dropping into cultural relativism? How do we not make, according to a logic of liberalism, all differences into equivalent forms that are interchangeable? So that you have one black, one gay, one woman, etcetera. That is very much the logic of liberal interchangeability. I think there is an alternative to that. It is a

entertainment, burlesque, go-go, striptease in postwar Vancouver, B.C., 1945-1980. Rose Marie San Juan, Associate Professor of Fine Arts, publishes in the areas of early modern, urban and cultural studies; Patricia Vertinsky, Professor of Educational Studies, publishes widely in the cultural and social history of health and the body, as well as narrative theory. Joining the Collective for the conference and the day's discussion was Professor Dorothy E. Smith, a leading feminist sociologist and pioneer of feminist standpoint theory, critical feminist materialist work on gender in and out of schools and originator of "institutional ethnography".

kind of a materialist understanding of comparative differential formations rather than just relative difference, of the ways in which, for example, in the history of the United States different kinds of formations emerge in relation to others. There are differential power relations. They are not just equivalents that can be seen on a horizontal plane. It's a matter of reading through the available contextual traces what that history of comparative differential correlation has been. So, for example, in the United States, at the end of the 19th century, African Americans through the 14th amendment, men of African descent, are admitted into the political sphere of citizenship and recognized as Americans. So they become Americans and political subjects at the same moment that Chinese men are being, through an Immigration Act, barred from further emigration and then declared as aliens ineligible for citizenship. At the same time African-Americans are being barred from the West Coast of United States as labor because it is much cheaper to use Chinese labor which is not citizen labor, but [which is] racialized in order to be more easily used and more cheaply used. And so we can think about a comparative differential history of access to different spheres of the national. There might be an admission or a participation in the political sphere at the same time that one is excluded from the laboring sphere, and enlistment in terms of the economic, but an exclusion from the cultural sphere. I think one of the things that I could argue is that Asians have been excluded from the cultural sphere in the United States, though enlisted in terms of the economic. Work by Michael Rogin (1992) and others have described how African-American contributions have been appropriated into the cultural sphere of America in a way that makes African-Americans very much a part of the cultural membership of the United States. If we thought about differential comparative formations rather than just cultural relativism we wouldn't be immune to the appropriation that cultural relativism implies, but it would be a kind of ballast or resistance to it. I just wanted to put that out as a possible clarification.

COLLECTIVE: Lisa, you seem to suggest that in the United States comparable processes of racialization were operating in relation to Asians but not other minority groups.

LISA LOWE: I think that it should be said that within the U.S. context racialization is a process that is mediated by the state. It's not a biological, natural, racial difference originally; none of us think that. The state, which is serving the needs of economic development for example, will find it necessary to bar and name certain groups as racially different. But of course David Roediger (1991) and others have argued that whiteness too emerges in the United States really only in the late 19th century as a racial category and that successive European immigrant groups then enter into that category of whiteness within the United States. So I think what I was trying to do was to create a genealogy of Asian racialization with respect to other forms of racialization in the U.S. But it has very much to do with understanding race as a relationship between the state and the economy and social relations, rather than it being just what the state names as non-white or white. There is a constant process of redefining racial categories and racial meanings. And you know I have relied very much on the work of Michael Omi and Howard Winant (1994). They describe racial formation as that ongoing centered and shifting process between the state that names particular racial categories and the social groups who in turn contest those meanings in relation to the state. What I have tried to add to that is the way in which State-defined racial meanings were very connected with the emergence of capitalism in the U.S. It isn't that I'm trying to say that Asians are the only group who are racialized, but rather that there is a specific connection between citizenship and the emergence of capitalism that Asian racialization or Asian American racialization foregrounds that might be useful to understanding the racialization of other groups. But if we see how racialization of Asians occurs, then the connection with the emergence of capitalism and the need for a cheap racialized labor force opens up how we might look at other processes of racialization.

COLLECTIVE: You raised the idea that Asian Americans were economically included but culturally excluded, and then with African-Americans, the other way around: culturally included, economically excluded. Why the one rather than the other? What might govern that?

LISA LOWE: I don't mean to say in that homogeneous unproblematic way that African-American culture is included. It is also subordinated within the American cultural context. African Americans are constructed as part of the American national culture, while Asians and Arabs are marked as 'foreign'. This has very much to do with the history of citizenship.

COLLECTIVE: Could you talk about the politics of bringing a racial identity into presence?

LISA LOWE: We have to remember first of all that identity as such is the identity of the citizen, or the abstract subject. Racial exclusions from the category of the citizen construct 'race' as those particularities which cannot be assimilated to that abstract identity or universality. So the racially-subordinated group then often organizes around their 'racial identity' in order to make it articulate or visible within the terms of the political or the cultural terrain. A national identity or a political identity requires of the marginalized others that they translate themselves through the lens of identity. A racially-subordinated group then would cohere and become visible around a 'racial identity' – black power for example. At the same time, the difficulty of that is once you emerge into visibility as an identity, there is always a problem of co-optation, being put into, as part of a mosaic, a multicultural map whose very premise is that you forget the history in order to fit into the right place on the multicultural map. I would agree with Rey Chow's (1996) notion that ethnicity is a discipline, that there are micro strategies for performing insiderness and outsiderness. What I would add to that though is that the racial category needs to be contextualized within the history of why it is necessary to articulate black power, for example. If it does not exist as a site within which to make certain kinds of histories known, it needs to be articulated, just as much as other kinds of identities would need to be. Internal contradictions and internal heterogeneities and dissymmetries exist within any category – between men and women, between young people and old people. In the Asian American situation, different Asian ethnic differences, and languages, and cultures, and class differences continually exert pressure against that 'racial identity'. The process is on the one hand negotiating with

the state that wants groups to be identities and then negotiating within the group itself about differences.

COLLECTIVE: How does that translate then into the literary? You appear to argue at the end of the first chapter of your book, *Immigrant Acts,* that writers need to represent their communities; a kind of community model is invoked in relation to literature.

LISA LOWE: I don't agree that writers need to represent their communities. That imperative certainly exists, but my book interrogates that imperative. I am reading Asian American writing as texts that give us entry into the contradictions, at once being excluded and yet also making certain kinds of claims for membership in a language and cultural body. But I don't think that is an imperative to represent a community. I think there may be writers who may write about invisibility, but it is not an imperative that everybody of a particular group be representative of that group. I think that would be to submit everyone to the same kind of mandate, another form of racialization. But I want to get back to this question about what constitutes a subversive cultural form, I want to know why we would want to be subversive and what value is being asserted here.

COLLECTIVE: Well, partly you have answered it already, haven't you? In part because you want to disrupt the notion of the abstract citizen, predicated on forms of inclusion and exclusion. You want to shake those up, subvert them.

LISA LOWE: But I think there are some contexts within which certain practices can test regulation and others in which they don't. For example, if you exist in a situation in which it is illegal to speak your own language, then to write in that language is an act which contests the mandate that you be silent. On the other hand, if you refuse to speak your own language in another situation it might mean something else. For example, if it becomes legal to speak the language, and as a woman, certain male cultural nationalists are requiring you to speak from a certain position, then to not speak is very powerful as well.

2. Uses and abuses of universalism

RENATA SALECL: Let me return to what you introduced at the beginning, Lisa, as the problem of cultural relativism. I think we probably agree. The discussion that we have here is very much class-oriented and Eurocentric in some way because the whole notion of a discussion about individual tolerance or rights and so on is Eurocentric. What do you do when another culture is doing something horrible? That is always a big problem for the multicultural perspective. It is an absolute deadlock. Because you can't be tolerant at that point. If you are tolerant in this case, you are acting against individual rights. Here cultural relativism does have a political edge. [Do you] embrace differences or act against a cultural specificity? – that is the deadlock. There are no clear answers. I would not be so critical of universalism because I do think the claim to universalism has some political edge that can help us to debate these issues. Two years ago (Salecl, 1996), I was claiming that all of these notions, like human rights, equality, freedom and so on, betray their roots in a particular history in Europe. [They have] lost their rootedness when they become universalized. They detach themselves from their history. But what is crucial is that when universalism was invented it also opened up the space to criticize your own history, something you don't find in the pre-modern. That came with [the] Enlightenment. That is why I am not so critical of [the] Enlightenment. The Enlightenment establishes a possibility to critique your traditions and this didn't exist before [the] Enlightenment.

LISA LOWE: But I think that the supposition [is] that the rest of the non-European world exists in darkness.

RENATA SALECL: No, I'm not saying this. I'm only saying, "let the non-European world have access to the universal". Most of the non-European nations do claim some version of human rights. My theory is that here we really encounter the problems of cultural relativism with the idea of limiting discussion of human rights to European cultures.

LISA LOWE: I think perhaps we are saying something similar but

with different kinds of ends. In the presentation that I was giving yesterday, I was trying to describe a genealogy of the ways in which a universalist conception of the liberal knowing subject is built upon rendering other kinds of subjectivity impossible. It was built upon rendering objective knowledge, as opposed to subjective knowing. I'm not discarding the Enlightenment tradition but, rather, questioning the mandate that the rest of the world pass through it and be translated by it. Which would be the mandate that in order to be human one passes through a notion of universality. What I am arguing is that we must acknowledge the ways in which that process of colonization (and I mean that very literally: British, French (and so forth) colonialism in Asia, Africa, Latin America; Spanish colonialism in Latin America) is one of installing administration, government, economics in ways that convert and process colonized cultures and peoples into the terms of universality, whether it is as a cultural subject, or an economic subject, or a political subject. What I am arguing is that that process of colonial conversion necessarily creates another contradictory sense of the human that isn't the universal, that we can only read if we look at what cannot be translated into the universal. I understand through your book (Salecl, 1997) – and I'm very engaged with and intrigued by the notion – that universal abstract subjectivity is always an empty, vacant location. Nobody has access to it. The desire for rights is the desire for that otherness. But I would argue that through colonialism and the uneven development of the global economy, the access to that abstract locus of subjectivity is terribly uneven. And more than suggesting that universality can be extended to all, we might do better to look at the uneven access to that locus of evacuated abstract subjectivity. In other words, to make of the object of desire ...

RENATA SALECL: But the subject is not my object of desire. My idea is that it is already there. When you have a certain moment in history when you really distance yourself from tradition, at that moment this universalism as a kind of antisubjectivity emerges. And it is not that the object of desire is there, that is my point. In a way, universality is already there I would say – in communities. Let's say the real problem is that universality emerges with the development of society. That is my point. There is a break.

LISA LOWE: It's not the same as Kant's universality. It isn't in European models of the subject in society. That would have to account for the emergence of different ethnic traditions and cultural systems. It cannot all pass through the same universality.

COLLECTIVE: Although you say universalism has a history, our interest is in the specificity of those histories and context, the way that universalism gets invoked. Whereas for Renata, universalism is outside history. And that is what its use is. Renata, I think it is very difficult for us to conceive of the usefulness, the politics of universalism, when it's outside history.

RENATA SALECL: What we think of as universal is essentially linked to antagonism. It's a way to deal with the fact that society is incomplete. And [it is] here, when this kind of a lack emerges as something to deal with in a new way, that the Enlightenment universalism matters so much. And this lack is something that exists [as] the problem of the inconsistency of society across history.

COLLECTIVE: Renata, it seems that your notion of antagonism is still coming out of some kind of liberal abstraction. My understanding of antagonism involves some unequal power relations and material resources. Your understanding of an antagonism seems fundamentally linked to a psychoanalytic conception of subjectivity and it is what worries me about using psychoanalysis strictly because it doesn't account for the specificity of power relations that are in operation to enforce different views.

RENATA SALECL: Sorry, a class distinction would be an antagonism. The way the right wing and left wing respond to this antagonism is usually in completely different ways. So I am not using some abstract psychoanalytic notion. Wherever you find this inconsistency of society, the deadlock, which is class antagonism (no one would deny this, that class is what absolutely marks and makes an inconsistency in society around which groups then center themselves differently) power struggle becomes an answer to this inconsistency. The right wing usually gives a global answer to this. The left will usually claim, "OK, we are left, they are right". Well,

the right wing would say, at least in Europe, "we are the nation", or "we are the people of Slovenia".

LISA LOWE: This is a valuable discussion because I think we are really coming out of different traditions. But I wanted to say that it's not that I am against human rights. What I was trying to argue yesterday was that we need very much to have a concept of human rights but also to have local alternative public spheres within which we would contest what the human might mean and look at the genealogy and the historical process through which 'the human' has developed. So I think that we are in agreement there. What I was saying was that in Marx's analysis of the institution of citizenship and political emancipation, it is citizenship rights and the rights granted by the state that guard property and we need to remember that property is fairly essential to the emergence of the definition of citizenship.

RENATA SALECL: Yes, but think about property [in relation to] the animal rights movement. They are claiming that animals are protected, for example, only as property. Property introduces a sympathy for animals. Historically, animals are protected only when they were regarded as property. You could be compensated if someone killed your cow.

Without access to the idea of something universal: freedom, equality, democracy and so on, it was impossible for the opposition to fight. In Slovenia, the real problem is that the communists quickly reinterpreted universality in their own way and claimed that they were doing exactly the same as the opposition. You know that trick, which distinguished them from the hard-liners in Russia and other Eastern European countries. That is why, for us, it was crucial to think about universals in some way. What happened after the end of communism is that the idea of human rights almost ended. It became a fact somehow that we were now absented from human rights. It became almost a non-issue. In the pretty stable democracies you only speak about human rights when something happens. In Slovenia, it quickly became a non-issue and that was the real problem. The first right wing governments started claiming, "we have human rights now, let's drop the issue". And that is why I want to claim that the universal is something to invoke.

TERRY THREADGOLD: So in that context where the right wing government appropriates those concepts and says they no longer need to be discussed, would it help to be able to argue for those things again?

RENATA SALECL: Yes, for example, an Office for Women's Policy was introduced and there was a major debate about abortion rights. I even brought this issue of human rights to this debate. We have a very liberal policy regarding abortion. Now, human rights became a real problem when the extension of maternity leave became a big issue. I was the one fighting against the extension of maternity leave. A lot of people in America can't believe that a feminist would oppose the extension of maternity leave. The real issue behind it was the right wing's attempt to bring women back to the home. Eighty percent of women are employed and there is one year fully paid maternity leave, which is a parental leave: either parent can take it. And it is fully paid, which means all the benefits as well. So you get the same salary as you would get if you were working. It is the best system in the world. Now this system was introduced ten or fifteen years ago during communism. It became accepted, so companies, everyone, accepted one year. The right wing responded by introducing a three year maternity leave, which would be: fully paid the first year, second year: 75%, third year: 50%. The idea was that we would solve all social problems with this, including unemployment – young people would be able to stand in for someone for at least three years. And then they introduced the right of a child to have the full attention of the mother for the first crucial years. It is called the Child Right movement, which my friend, a student of criminology, is leading. And so the right wing reintroduced another version of child rights into their discourse. And also the right for a woman to make a choice. How they used the liberal notion of choice was crucial. This shows the universalism of these notions, how they can be completely reinterpreted. And so the idea of choice was that liberal abortion rights and pregnancy leave (which is only one year) don't allow a woman the choice to be simply a mother. They said that it's a one way choice, which is that women are pushed into being workers. So to introduce this possibility of the choice to be only a mother, we had to change the structure. This discourse of

choice was really very crucial, because at the beginning 50% of people supported the idea. Most women supported the idea out of tiredness. You know, they had two jobs. The idea behind it was to really push women out of the labor force, which happened in many ways. What Lisa mentioned about the workers in Mexico, is happening in Slovenia. Women workers with some small companies had to sign a letter of resignation, which is used then when they get pregnant. Women who go for one year maternity leave, if they want to stay out one year they would be told that they would not be able to get back to the same position. And it takes five years to have your case heard in court. And all of these things are already operating with the capital coming in. We succeeded after a long battle. We ended the debate, and one year's maternity leave stays, with the idea that it would be extended to a year and a half. It was very sad that we had to somehow agree with the right wingers on this extension, but we insisted that a portion of it be used by the father. Otherwise only 0.5% of men take paternity leave.

COLLECTIVE: But Renata, what I am hearing in this example with respect to those abstract categories that you are invoking and supporting, is not a question of their existing, but who can lay claim to them. And what you are showing is that anyone can lay claim to them. For the most nefarious purposes. So what is their intrinsic use? It gives legitimation, as you are showing, to the right in this instance.

RENATA SALECL: Yeah. But it can be used by the left too.

TERRY THREADGOLD: Well, yes, but...

RENATA SALECL: No, in Slovenia I was arguing about this issue of choice. I was arguing very effectively in the daily newspaper and on TV that it is not a choice at all. You know, I succeeded because it was not a choice. The idea was basically that there was only one choice, which is to be a mother. They introduced the term, career woman. A woman has a career, a man has a job. A career means you can care for children. What they also did very effectively was they were sending women into the fight. At first they were very stupid. They were sending men. But now they always have a woman on the right

wing side when the moral majority attacks. Because women know children, and they know how children need mothers. And they give examples. They quote all kinds of data from psychological studies. That is another thing, which is also crucial for racism etc.: "there is data that shows...". They send right wing women into the fight who are very well dressed and very articulate, with PhDs. They made this choice to be a career woman, but they would like to allow other women to make another choice; that was smart on their part.

TERRY THREADGOLD: The discourse that you are describing, which is attempting to put women back into the home, is exactly the discourse that the liberal conservative government in Australia is starting to use. Women must have a choice.

COLLECTIVE: Ironically, they use the liberal feminist discourse to accomplish this.

TERRY THREADGOLD: But all kinds of things have then been implemented which in fact make it impossible for women to have a choice, like increasing the benefit in terms of contributions to the health funds to families where women are at home. If you have children and you stay home with them, your health funds are cheaper then if you go to work. And so on. There are many other things that have been introduced to try and keep women at home, because this government is trying to reconstitute a nuclear family society.

I want to come back to the fact that what we are talking about here are not abstract subjects. We are talking about masculine and feminine subjects, male and female subjects, who are differently constituted in different power relationships within those structures. And you wouldn't need to go to bat for these women and for their right to do or not to do X or Y if in fact they had equal rights.

I have been doing a lot of work in the last 5 or 6 years with women in the legal profession in Australia around what happens to women and Aboriginal people in courtrooms, and that is where I begin to really question Enlightenment values. Because what you see embodied in the judges in those courtrooms, or at least what you saw 5 or 6 years ago when this all started and you often still see, is the embodiment of Enlightenment values which believes in its own truth

and its own objectivity and in the universality of its categories. And this does enormous harm and damage to individual people in those contexts because of that. In the Australian context the initiatives to try and to change that emerged from some very specific judgements where the media was very instrumental in bringing to public attention things that were happening in the courtrooms. It was not motivated by the feminist group at all. There were a couple of judges who made some pretty remarkable statements in their handing down of judgements. One who declared in a horrific case, a marital rape, that he could understand that any man after being married for 20 years might engage in a little rougher than usual behavior in order to get the sex that he wanted. A second one involved a woman who had been raped, abused, tied up, an attempt made to decapitate her and the judge actually said that he couldn't really understand the claims that this woman had been humiliated. You know, that in fact, she hadn't died. It was as bald as that. So these things hit the press and then there was a massive initiative to try and work on a number of fronts at once. But when the judge is back in his courtroom he is like a teacher in a classroom and you don't have a lot of control over actually what he does. So another thing is to try and work in the area of the Law Reform Commission and to actually force the law to rethink some of its universal categories, which are in fact very specific if you look at their histories. Provocation is one, the idea of provocation around the crimes of murder and manslaughter. Provocation has a history related to men duelling with one another in the 18th century. That is where the category emerges. It brings with it the implication that to be provoked you must have been suddenly attacked and suddenly responded in an emotional and out of control fashion. And this is of course the issue of a verdict of manslaughter, not murder. Now the problem with that category in specific cases is when you come to cases of spousal murder where a woman kills her violent husband after say 20 years of abuse. What happens is that nobody will accept the defense of provocation as self-defense because the woman didn't respond quickly to this abuse. She seems to have acted quite unreasonably at a particular moment and just killed the man. But there has been nothing immediately to provoke it. And so you get this interesting fiction of the battered woman syndrome, which never addresses the question of the battering man

and attaches a syndrome to the woman who has killed. But it gets her off, and feminist lawyers will use that defense strategically even though they don't believe it. Because they know the judges will believe it.

Another area that women have just started working with in Australia, with Aboriginal women and white women in courtrooms, is discourse analysis of what happens to women in the courtroom in hostile cross-examination, and the ways in which their narratives are co-opted, appropriated, into the defense narrative by the person who is defending the rapist, the sexual assault person or whoever. This hostile cross-examination has certain strategies of asking questions which only allow the answers yes or no, or which in fact involve the victim in whatever answer she gives, implicating herself in the narrative of the prosecution; so that her narrative is never heard. Now, there has been some success just recently in two cases where women have actually been given a good deal of information about what would happen to them in courtrooms, and how they might in fact subvert those strategies of cross-examination by answering back in ways that will not also then be hystericized in a courtroom, which is of course what has happened until now. When people say, "No, that is not what I meant. I don't want to answer that", the judge says, "You must not be so emotional dear, sit down, take a drink of water and come back when you are ready to be a cooperative witness". So there are ways of actually showing women how to respond. It's an ethical question about putting women through that and women have to be prepared to want to do that for that to work.

COLLECTIVE: I want to come back to the issue of not wanting to throw the Enlightenment out and I want to ask "why the hell not?"

LISA LOWE: I don't believe we can throw out the Enlightenment, and I wouldn't wish to argue that we can. I really want to reread the Enlightenment as not a strictly European phenomenon, but one that is always international and that is taking place as a philosophical moment in the context of colonialism. As Paul Gilroy (1993) and others have argued there is a modernity but not necessarily a strictly European one. Modernity is about the engagement and encounter

between Europe and other parts of the world. The uneven distribution of universality is a part of the story of modernity.

3. Situated knowledges, travelling theory

COLLECTIVE: Would you consider whether the location in which you are working and operating and thinking, informs your take on these questions about universalism, difference and authenticity?

LISA LOWE: I grew up in California. And my background and my training is in European intellectual history. I have been formed by thinking through Marxism because Marxism is an intellectual tradition, an Enlightenment one by the way, which I would not want to throw out and which I think offers a very powerful critique of power relations and the fundamental contradiction between capital and labor. But growing up engaged with Marxism and thinking it through as a philosophy of the subject, a theory of history and a particular political economy meant that I realized that Marxism and its schemas and teleologies do not apply to a racialized US. So one of the intellectual projects I have been involved with has been to think through the ways in which theoretical production, whether it be Marxism or feminism or liberalism, is always refuted and resisted by historical and social conditions. And so that is my location. I have also spent a lot of time thinking through and studying French and British colonialism in different contexts and thinking through the postcolonial critique of Western Europe. But my location is one of being a racialized American. I think it also makes a difference coming from a location like California. I now live on the border of California and Mexico, which has seen this acceleration of consumer capitalism and the erosion of a concept of liberal citizenship that was already unevenly distributed. Seeing the erosion of liberal citizenship in the service of capitalism and the ways in which it falls disproportionately on women and racialized minorities in California provides a certain kind of window onto what we might think of as a global system. But it also says quite a lot about what is happening globally. It is not that it is the index or the representative instance of it but it is one part of it. I live in a location where the city is very segregated. Most of the manual labor is performed by undocumented

immigrants who are paid very very little and are guaranteed no rights because they are undocumented. In fact they are hunted down by the immigration police. The border is heavily surveyed by the state and yet there is a disavowal of the need for immigrant labor.

COLLECTIVE: And I understand in fact that they don't survey it as entirely as they could because there is this need. There was an attempt, I think it might have been in Texas, to lock down the border and the farmers complained.

LISA LOWE: But they need the labor as terrorized labor. Labor that is always thinking it is going to be hunted down and so this is a particular kind of window on the way the globalization of capitalism has worked. It is not the only one. But I think one of the differences is that coming from capitalist USA is really different than coming from Eastern Europe.

RENATA SALECL: I don't think that it is your background that determines you so crucially. I have been realizing recently that people almost all over the world are interested in similar theoretical questions and are dealing with very similar dilemmas and problems.

LISA LOWE: I am not suggesting that location determines your perspective entirely but I think different locations determine your reading. Yes, there are certain kinds of texts and theories that travel, but they travel unevenly.

COLLECTIVE: My sense is that coming out of an American context determines your interpretation of multiculturalism. So the same terms are there but the meaning you give them is very much informed by where you are reading and where you think it is coming from. Can I return to the question of why you take the particular kinds of perspectives that you do on this question of universalism and concern with difference and authenticity and voice?

LISA LOWE: I consider my project a critical engagement with Enlightenment concepts, not a wanting to betray it. And that has to do with both being a contradictory subject whose subjectivity

emerges through the possibilities of Enlightenment discourse and yet defined as a woman, a racialized woman who comes from an immigrant formation. It's necessary to see how there are alternative knowledges and alternative formations that exist outside the definitions of liberal citizenship and Enlightenment values and traditions. So I take very seriously the concept of alternative modes of social organizations, alternative modes of thinking, alternative modes of knowledge, and subjectivity. In the circumstances in which I have been trained there is quite a lot of alternative knowledge available.

COLLECTIVE: I am very uncomfortable with this geographical partitioning of subjectivity: that Lisa has this position because she is American, etc. I think there is a lot of mobility, and in fact we are seeing that in this discussion. At one point it is strategic for Lisa to critique universalism. And yet when the factory workers with whom Lisa is working make use of the survey that they have done, they will likely be using the discourse of universalism to promote their rights. We have a mobile position and sometimes it is strategic to call upon this discourse and sometimes it is strategic to critique it.

RENATA SALECL: But that is the problem of cultural relativism. When the alternative modes of reasoning is something utterly violent, when an ethnic group decides to do something that they think is part of their identity but is utterly violent...

LISA LOWE: But you are taking an extreme case, which presumes that they need the concept of rationality in order to be not irrational and violent. And that unless they are translated through these concepts that they will be irrational and violent.

I will give a concrete example and it has to do with legibility as well, within a rational system. Let's say you have Chicano youth, Mexican American youth, in Los Angeles who are unemployed and are unpermitted senses of community and belonging within the schooling or official institutions. They form themselves into graffiti groups to go around painting buildings because they want to articulate a relationship to public space. They want to be visible in some way. And the police and the media then view them as criminals

and then they are criminalized as defacing public property. They are seen as delinquent and unable to function within the narrative of ethical development. And the problem here then is to read what doesn't conform to the rational. And it may not necessarily be so. To choose a spatial metaphor, they may be rewriting social space in order to survive. If you are going to be routed through a public education system that is going to punish you because you don't speak the right language and don't conform to certain kinds of norms then there may be strategy for producing other kinds of space.

4. The politics of interdisciplinarity in the university

TERRY THREADGOLD: I would like to ask whether there has been the total erosion of the boundaries of the disciplines here as there tends to be in some places in Australia. I find it quite problematic, for example, to see some of the things that are taught in cultural studies in Australian universities because the whole enterprise depends on a concept of interdisciplinarity, which is very hard to grasp unless you have struggled with a discipline first. At the moment in Australia interdisciplinarity has become a corporate agenda. Interdisciplinary is a way of saving money. And it is a way of cutting back on staffing and letting everyone mix and mingle, and it is a very different notion of interdisciplinarity than the one we all started out with. And extraordinary exploitation of young women staff, very often, is what this comes to. It's a very contradictory consequence I suppose in the histories of things like women's studies. You know, if you look at those histories in the Australian context, people were nearly always working in women's studies on top of what they were doing elsewhere. It had to be done. And people developed this pattern of working across disciplines in ways I suppose that demonstrated to people that it could be done. And then it has a negative consequence. Now they hire in this way in order to get the maximum pound of flesh from the body.

RENATA SALECL: With interdisciplinarity my problem is really what it means politically. What bothers me with interdisciplinarity is precisely that it opens up the space for the watering down and pacifying of certain discourses which were supposed to be

progressive, leftist, liberal and so on, like gender studies. Here is my fear: that interdisciplinarity is one of the ways to politically marginalize. When it comes to promotions, suddenly the disciplines come back. And my fear is that interdisciplinarity has also lost the critical edge that it had and it is now a way, not only for the exploitation of people, but also to marginalize people. My fear is that ethnic studies and minority studies departments, gender studies departments and so on were all created out of the leftist agenda but are now deep ghettos. At my school, the New School for Social Research, students who go to gender studies or women's studies departments are usually lower quality students I would say. As a professor, I prefer to teach students from philosophy, sociology and so on. Gender studies departments are becoming places where they don't even expect students to do high theory. They are doing a mélange of everything. We are allowing students to be maybe political, critical, but at the same time, the theory edge has been lost. And that is my problem. I don't know if it is the same here, but that is why a lot of people who teach in gender studies and who got interested in theory are finally pressed into reconnecting with disciplines, going into philosophy, history and so on. There has been a backlash against interdisciplinarity. Recently I was told there was a conference in Berlin about interdisciplinarity, cultural studies and so on. The editors of *October* magazine came from New York and they were defending disciplines. I wasn't at the conference but I was told that they were saying that you have to go back to disciplines for excellence. "We have to know that the painter really knows how to paint and the art historian really knows art history when we judge art" for example. One of the editors was attacking cultural studies as a watering down of theory which is quite surprising from someone who is in cultural studies herself. So my fear is that with cultural studies, we are opening up a space of marginalization. I am still defending cultural studies, but I would like to acknowledge this problem. What is happening really in general is an antitheory move.

LISA LOWE: Well, I have a comment that connects with a concern about ethnicity as a discipline. The ethnic studies department where I teach is not, for example, like U.C. Irvine's ethnic studies program – split into studies of different groups. It is the comparative study of

race and ethnicity within an international framework. And so the core sequence that undergraduates take is on comparative immigration and racialization. And it offers theories of race, theories of immigration. But it isn't about interpellating the students into a particular kind of racial identity. And at the same time I think that it's a site that is interdisciplinary, because it draws on a faculty who are trained as historians, sociologists, anthropologists. It is mostly social scientists and it changes the kind of knowledge in the university that hasn't been there before.

COLLECTIVE: We are always a little skeptical about how what appear to be progressive changes are actually being appropriated for not so progressive ends. But I am wondering if there is more that we can say about that, how one measures political change within an institutional context in relation to academic work.

LISA LOWE: I find that one of the important things is to be somebody who is both active within the university and also in other kinds of locations. It might mean working within a kind of regional situation or context. I think how one teaches and the kinds of materials that one teaches can be enriched by that. We are distinguishing interdisciplinary work as new forms of knowledge production, both in terms of methods, but also the types of materials that are thought worthy to be studied. But that is very different from institutional change where you bureaucratize it and then use it as a mechanism to consolidate faculty and make them work twice as hard or three times as hard. So there needs to be a distinction between those two. One other dimension is who actually has access to that institution's changes, depending on the historical moment. In California where affirmative action has been banned, within the next couple of years the University of California will be accessible to a very, very small population. And so I think that is a kind of institutional change as well; it is the whole problem of who gets to be educated and in what ways? Is the education that is offered to the people excluded from the very high levels of education going to be purely vocational training? Is it a form of getting tracked into certain positions within an economic system, and not one of learning and reflection and critique and so?

TERRY THREADGOLD: Yes but things are always very contradictory. It seems to me that one of the things that we are perhaps forgetting here in this discussion is the power of education itself and the classrooms in which we work to effect long-term political and institutional change. And I have always had an enormous, perhaps Pollyanna-like faith in that space. The space that can actually in the long term and very slowly change the way populations think. Our audiences in those places are huge. You know, an institution like my university which has 30,000 students on campus everyday, that is a large part of the population which you can start thinking in different ways, and I think that we should never forget that, that there is a space there for political and educational intervention.

RENATA SALECL: Today in the morning I watched the news, the main American news. At the University of Michigan, the students made riots on the streets with…

COLLECTIVE: Riots or protests?

RENATA SALECL: Riots. It was huge. And you know the cause was the ban on the serving of alcohol at football games. Football games are now without alcohol. You know it looked like a protest from the '60s. And then there was another news item on the Indonesian students fighting against the state which was a totally political thing. That contrast was shocking for me.

COLLECTIVE: To what extent do you feel you can claim the political in the kind of work that you do?

TERRY THREADGOLD: I think we do try to claim the political. In women's studies definitely, but in other spaces too.

COLLECTIVE: For me – even as someone located in women's studies – I have actually had to compromise my community based involvement which has been so much a part of me for the past 20 years. And that is an enormous sacrifice and one I resent. I am getting back into community actively now around sex trade workers and this

invigorates my teaching in ways that just reading texts and showing films and so on does not. Students are absolutely mesmerized, they will actually listen to every word I say and listen harder and be more engaged when I invite two transgenders into the classroom or invite 2 sex workers into the classroom to talk about their experience and let them know what the police are doing. How is it that we have 60 some murders of sex trade workers in Vancouver and none of the murderers have been found? Not a priority for the mayor or anybody else in the city. So I am not content to simply read texts and simply use those texts as the deliverables in the classroom and expect some kind of radical shift in consciousness.

LISA LOWE: I am assuming you are doing ethnography with transgendered communities. If that was one of the things that you were doing, then that is also about providing documentation about a different kind of subjectivity. Once you document this community it is a critique of the ways in which gender is understood in the larger…

COLLECTIVE: Oh, yeah, it is so beautiful when you are trying to teach the social construction of gender which is not an easy concept for even women's studies students in first year or for first year sociology students. This is not something that they have really thought about. And yet when you start to introduce questions of transgenderism, intersexuality, transexuality, all of a sudden their heads are going off. But at the same time that brings more clarity, oddly, to the discussion of the polarity of masculinity and feminism.

5. Pedagogical phantasms

COLLECTIVE: Renata, I am wondering if you could illuminate for us how the phantasmatic plays a role in the university, in pedagogical practices?

RENATA SALECL: I already mentioned my belief that the real problem with the relationship that happens between student and teacher is in a way transference (see paper this volume). For me this is crucial and where we can have influence, not only with our knowledge but also in our personality (which we can't control) and

what we are saying in-between the lines. This in-between the lines is where the fantasy would come into being. In analyzing political settings in my book (1996) this in-between the lines and authority function because of a point of identification, not with the words that the politician is saying, but with what the politician is aiming at between the lines without openly acknowledging it. And sometimes even unconsciously. That is where fantasies come into play. In the university, students themselves produce a fantasy structure of the discourse that is going on in the university and this can be extremely conservative.

I do believe in a certain necessity for the teacher to teach. And so usually I give a lecture for an hour or whatever and then we have a half hour or one hour (or whatever is left) debate. But basically I never engage in debates from the beginning because I think that it is impossible to debate without some analysis of concepts first. We can't debate Kant if you don't have a background. And I also don't allow personal accounts. I am very critical of this, which is sometimes difficult. But my students are bored with personal accounts. It is very hard when you have a black student telling a very emotionally charged personal story. Of course I try to wait. It is a bad treatment of students to allow that one student a personal story and then not the others. I am not very cheerful when personal accounts come. Students notice it and then they stop it. When I am teaching in the law school, I don't go with the usual trick that the students are called to pose questions and to debate. I find this very hard for the students who are shy. What I have learned during teaching is that the best papers usually come from the shy women who never speak in the class. Often I was surprised at the end of the year by the brilliance of some very shy people. I really enjoy teaching law students because it is the hardest thing to do since they are mostly business people. And they have dollar signs in their eyes at the beginning. But then you can really change them in some way that you never expect with the cultural studies students who are used to debates about this and that. What I teach lawyers is usually just to think a little bit differently, to question some things that they are not able to question in other classrooms. And that is why I also usually don't grade them so severely. Because their law career depends on the grade.

COLLECTIVE: I understand your rejection of confessional narratives. I wonder what you think about rejecting the idea of students learning from some basis of personal experience. What is the role of the everyday and the ordinary and their experience? How does that challenge and test the theory that you are teaching if you rule out any integration of their personal experience?

RENATA SALECL: It always comes, but I would definitely not encourage it when we are having a conceptual debate about a highly theoretical topic; I would not encourage personal experience because we'd lose the theoretical edge.

COLLECTIVE: Can I ask a question about the notion of transference? It comes out of very patriarchal contexts of confession and psychoanalysis. How do you negotiate that?

RENATA SALECL: I think it is difficult to use the psychoanalytic notion of transference completely in equal terms in the classroom. Transference is in a way a bad phenomenon in psychoanalysis because it emerges at the moment when the patient doesn't want to deal with his or her desire. At that moment the patient offers him or herself as the object of the desire of the analyst. You want to seduce your analyst and you offer yourself as someone who wants to enchant the analyst. That is transference. And the analyst has to reject the position, either of someone who will return love or of someone who will be your ideal. Lacan takes Socrates as the first psychoanalyst who rejects this position of being the ideal and says there is nothing in me to be loved, and with this kind of emptiness you basically encourage the analysand to start working on her desire. In the classroom transference is different of course because the teacher is not in the position of pure emptiness, but is someone who is supposed to know. So it is much more than the ideal position. But my idea is that the transference here concerns the fact that there is a relationship going on outside the simple exchange of knowledge or teaching which concerns this unspoken level of seduction. In between the lines I would say it is a kind of a transference, which is the power of the personality of the teacher. This is what really brought success to the earlier permissive education projects. They all

had extremely charismatic leaders. They abolished all rules and disciplines but they were successful because the leader was charismatic. Without his personality the project quickly dissolved.

COLLECTIVE: Is that dynamic always eroticized then?

RENATA SALECL: To a certain extent you can say yes, but in a kind of an unacknowledged way. It is very hard to be a teacher in some way because there is some kind of eroticism as part of the game. I am always afraid of the students fighting against each other for the love of the teacher. That is a very hard balance.

COLLECTIVE: I don't really understand what you are saying about transference and its implications for pedagogy. On the one hand, the psychoanalyst has to communicate to the patient that she is empty so that the process of transference gets disrupted. But you are advocating that the teacher should position herself as the authority in the classroom. But doesn't that place you in a position where you are actually encouraging transference? You have critiqued permissiveness in the classroom because of the way it encourages transference 'between the lines'. And yet, transference is going to happen one way or another. So if you embody a theoretical position rather than acting as a mediator who might help students come to their own critical perspective, isn't that a more intense situation of transference?

RENATA SALECL: No, my idea is that I am trying to encourage them precisely by openly stating what I think at a certain point about something. I am very happy if someone states exactly the opposite and states that she is thinking this. Debate becomes possible.

COLLECTIVE: But are you debating as equals in a classroom? My students will hold off from debate and then they hammer me in their course evaluations, saying that I am not open. Because they fear that if they were to lay out an alternative or oppositional stances they are going to get punished.

RENATA SALECL: I am not punishing them. No, my idea is that if I

say I am open to everything, everything has the same value. By doing this, I am actually cutting the possibility for critical edge. That is my idea. If I think that this theory is more right than the other, I am opening the possibility for the debate for them by being explicit about this, because otherwise it is between the lines that I send them the message that I believe in one theory more that the other.

COLLECTIVE: But they wouldn't take you up on the invitation for open debate because you are evaluating them. That has been my experience.

RENATA SALECL: No, because they can write in their papers on whatever they want.

COLLECTIVE: But they don't have confidence in me as a teacher to be able to adjudicate all points of view in a similar way. Do you understand what I mean?

RENATA SALECL: No.

COLLECTIVE: If they challenge what I have described as my position, because like you, I don't accept a kind of full range of opinions – a relativist position, then they feel that if they do lay out an oppositional stance, because they perceive me as having more expertise, I will be able to flatten them, destroy them, humiliate them and so on.

RENATA SALECL: No, but I am teaching a subject about which I know something and they don't. When I am teaching a course on Kant, they don't know and they come to my class to learn. So my idea is that we are learning. I am teaching them. I am an authority. And that is why they are there. And professors come to my class too because they want to learn about Kant and Descartes. Now I really discourage students from writing about Kant if they are not familiar with the terminology, because it is better if they write a paper about something that they are interested in. But I absolutely insist on the fact that they have to study one idea in the paper. The paper doesn't need to be long, but it does have to take a risk. Even if it is wrong at

the end, at least it is not a quotation, particularly a quotation from the course professor, which is usually so boring for a professor to read.

COLLECTIVE: I think that that only works though when you are teaching something that is already elevated to this state of high theory. Whereas when you are teaching something that involves a very politicized everyday set of experiences that is mediated by something more than the canon, you are not in the same kind of position of authority but you still have the university responsibility to evaluate students. So the contradiction for a feminist is that we are supposed to teach our students about egalitarian social relations and at the same time we have to manage this authority that we have over them. This is just one more instance of the university as a contested space!

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ARTICLES

Lidia Curti

Writing at the Border. Women's Voices in Cultural Theory[1]

Writing at the border – the borders of gender, of the west, of language – is at the core of many contemporary female and feminist ethnic voices, giving space to what I believe to be a seminal area in literary and critical theory.

Recent strands of critical theory, particularly cultural studies, have given attention to 'margins', meaning by this term minority groups and their culture: among others, working class youth, the poor and the underprivileged, or the various ethnic subcultures. In England, where cultural studies first developed, the attention turned to the components of the diaspora that after the dismantling of the Empire have increasingly filled its urban peripheries, Asians, West Indians, and others.

Also coming from the margins, women's studies soon occupied a very important place within this spectrum, at first with the Liberation movement based on the proud appropriation of a difference that till then had kept women on the underside; a successive phase brought the realization of the many differences that existed within feminist and female politics. The differences were due to class, ethnicity, race, geography, profession and status, and today often take the form of a debate between first and third world women, and refer back to the confrontation between West and non-West, or even between emancipation and liberation, social issues versus feminist critical thought, the latter identified with the West and postmodernism. It is

[1] An earlier extended version of this paper was published in *Communal/Plural*, 6, 2 (Sydney 1998).

useful here to recall Rey Chow's discussion of the debate between culturalism and theory:

> For those who have prided themselves on an exclusive engagement with critical teory, cultural studies is often perceived as the opposite of theoretical abstraction – as the dumpsite of vulgarities and simplicities, of phenomena that are readily transparent, comprehensible, and accessible. Moreover, as the object of cultural studies often pertain to the peoples of color, cultural studies also become identified with 'them' rather than 'us'.[2]

She speaks of a sort of class distinction between critical theory and cultural studies, defining it as a racialization of intellectual labour; on the other hand she also denounces the distancing from theory in the name of cultural 'specificity' and 'complexity'. Both these positions seem to her to be a kind of idealism.[3]

The point I wish to make is that from the start women's studies put the accent on the importance of not simply overturning the relation centre-periphery but of superseding the dichotomy by stressing the process, the movement – a sort of suspension – between such polarities as the social and the philosophical, the collective and the individual, the material and the spiritual, the local and the global: 'movement as a mode of being' in Paul Carter's words in *Living in a New Country*.[4] I am not only speaking of the 'in-between space' so brilliantly elaborated by Homi Bhabha in some of his essays but of a specificity lying in the importance of fiction and narrativity for women. Fabulation can become the mark of the 'female', fantasy another way to connect with reality and history. Female fabulation

[2] Rey Chow, *Ethics after Idealism – Theory, Culture, Ethnicity, Reading* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1998), xv.

[3] Ibid., xx. She quotes from Iain Chambers's *Migrancy, Culture, Identity*: "... 'cultural studies' is not simply a radical additive to be stirred into the different mixes of historiography, sociology, film studies or literary criticism. It is suspended between these realms. It shadows them, questioning the nature and pertinence of their languages – existing, if you like, as a wound in the body of knowledge, exposed to the infections of the world." (London & New York: Routledge, 1994), 130.

[4] See Paul Carter, *Living in a New Country: History, Travelling and Language* (London: Faber, 1992).

often uses 'pure illusionism' in a way that subverts the location of illusion.[5]

A step back is necessary here: cultural studies stemmed from literature, and soon forgot about its 'mother', moving on in quick succession to history, sociology, anthropology (or a mixture of these), in sum to the real, as opposed to fantasy, fiction, imagination, illusion. Ray Chow brilliantly argues the 'reality' of illusion in *Woman and Chinese Modernity*.[6] Women's studies have increasingly moved this scene back with its accent on story-telling, imagination and its critical elaboration of the importance of needs, desires and dreams within the world of the real.

The persistence of the theme of writing is one example of this. The most obvious reference here is French feminism, or Anglo-Saxon female thought, mainly North-American, though I wish to underline that these accents come mainly from the voice of women who move between cultures, whether migrants, exiled or indigenous: westernised Asians like Trinh T. Minh-ha, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak or Simone Lazaroo; immigrant women from North Africa to Italy and France like Maria Abbebù Viarengo and Assia Djebar or Malika Mokkedem; Native Americans and African Americans like Leslie Silko and Toni Morrison, Chicanas like Gloria Anzaldùa.

They do not write in their originary languages, most of them do not have a language of origins, sometime only memories, glimpses of different cultures and places, shreds and fragments of a past that does not belong to them. Here I am reminded of the woman at the centre of the trans-historical memory flowing through the sections of Adrienne Rich's poem, *Eastern War Time* 'a woman wired in memory ... forbidden to forget ...', an iterative presence in the many locations of the sorrow and destruction of our age.[7]

[5] I have elaborated on this in my *Female Stories, Female Bodies – Narrative, Identity and Representation* (London: Macmillan, 1998), 27 and ff.

[6] Rey Chow, *Woman and Chinese Modernity – The Politics of Reading between West and East* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 21-3.

[7] " I am a woman standing in line for gasmasks
I stand on a road in Ramallah with naked face listening
I am standing here in your poem unsatisfied
lifting my smoky mirror."
Adrienne Rich, *An Atlas of the Difficult World – Poems 1988-1991* (New York & London: Norton, 1991), 44.

They write mainly in a Western language (French, English, German or sometime Italian) a language that was not meant for these other voices and that now is no longer the exclusive language of the domination.

English has been for some time now a site where the global and the local meet; for many, another language coexisting with the original tongue, that is the language that existed before school, in some cases before exile and forced displacement. Sometimes its necessity is not only dictated by domination, but also by the communication with your immediate neighbour. This applies not only to English, but to other languages of colonisation, however minor.

In fact, it would be important to de-hegemonize the field of postcolonial studies by giving attention to the consequences and trails of lesser Empires and not only to English. As Sandra Ponzanesi points out,

> ... in the race to deconstruct and appropriate the English language, many postcolonial writers ad thinkers have forgotten the struggles of children of lesser empires such as the Italian. The result has been to reinforce the Italian consciousness in its own treasured amnesia and to marginalize promising writings in European minor languages (Portuguese, Dutch, German along with Italian) which deal with comparative aspects of the colonial aftermath.[8]

Maria Abbebù Viarengo, in her still unpublished autobiography *Scirscir'n demna* (Let's go for a walk), narrates how once she had emigrated to Turin in Italy from Ghidami in Ethiopia, she moved among three languages: the originary Oromo, Italian and the local dialect.[9] Before that, there had been other languages as well.

[8] Sandra Ponzanesi, "The Past Holds No Terror? Colonial Memories and Afro-Italian Narratives", *Wasafiri*, 31 (Spring 2000), 19.

[9] "Our language was Oromo. Our family spoke Oromo. Everybody at Ghidami spoke Oromo, but in Khartoum slowly everything changed name. Numbers were no longer – toco, lama, sadi, afour, scian, but became: one, two, three, four. Uahed, imin, talah, herbs. Uno, due, tre, quattro. I did not know in which language they wanted me to speak, the uncle and aunt we lived with spoke Italian, the school I attended spoke Arabic and English, my sister and me spoke Oromo. Slowly the other languages triumphed over Oromo..." (Maria Abbebù Viarengo, "Andiamo a spasso?", *Linea d'ombra*, 54 (Nov. 1990), 75. My translation from this first extract published in Italian.) Maria Abbebù Viarengo is the daughter of an Ethiopian mother, belonging to the ethnic group Oromo, and of a Piedmontese father. She grew up in Ghedami, Karthoum, and Asmara, and then left Africa with her father and sister for Italy where she received a university education.

Language, which is usually talked about in terms of the dividing line between us and them, the oppressor and the oppressed, the global and the local, in this case operates as mediation. Abbebù Viarengo speaks of the passage from Oromo to Piedmontese, from one vernacular to another, as a thread uniting the old and the new life. In a sense, language seems to be the only mediating element between the two.

> I have inside me fragments of many languages: Oromo, Amharic, Tigrina, English, Arabic, of gestures, tastes, religions, perfumes, costumes, feasts, sounds, music, looks, faces, places, spaces, silences.[10]

She speaks of the difficulty of identifying with one culture ('with myself or with whom others wanted me to be') while others want to file her away in a neat pigeon hole.

In more emblematic cases, women have been seen as providing a linguistic link in the collective consciousness, as mediators, translators, interpreters. This is the case of three historical/mythical figures – La Malinche, Pocahontas, Truganini – standing between their originary culture and that of the Spanish or Anglosaxon invader. They are two-faced figures in the annals of de-colonisation, available to be read as both heroine and hostage, betrayer and betrayed.

Malintzin Tenepal, Cortez's mistress known as La Malinche, is said to have sold out her Indio people by acting as courtesan and translator for Cortez, whose offspring symbolized the birth of the bastardised mestizo/Mexicano people. She is "a being in a state of circulation" in Stephen Greenblatt's words.[11] The same can be said of the Native

[10] Maria Abbebù Viarengo, "Scirscir'n demna. Extracts From an Autobiography", *Wasafiri*, 31 (Spring 2000), 21.

[11] He continues: "Dona Marina is at once a figure on the margins and at the center, both an outcast and a great lady (what the Indians call a Teleciguata – 'a great chieftainess and the daughter of great Caciques and the mistress of vassals...')". Stephen Greenblatt, "The Go-Between", in *Marvelous Possessions – The Wonder of the New World* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991), 142.

American (Algonquin) Pocahontas, who by saving John Smith's life acts as mediator with the white colonists thus becoming the prototype of the 'good Indian'; and of Truganini, the Aboriginal woman, a Bruny island interpreter and guide during Robinson's mission in Tasmania, whose body has been at the centre of nationalist discourses and practices.

The mediation is performed through the body as well as language, "both in the sexualised function of whore/wife, and/or in cultural and linguistic treachery" as Perera says.[12] Cherríe Moraga has written at length on the sexual legacy that La Malinche has passed on to any Mexicana/Chicana. She places herself 'in a long line of vendidas': Moraga's own mother, a modern-day Malinche, married a white man and she herself inhabits a space of contamination between tradition and modernity, the old and the new. In her case, she overturns the original betrayal: "... I – a half-breed Chicana – further betray my race by choosing my sexuality which excludes all men, and therefore most dangerously, Chicano men."[13]

I would also add Rigoberta Menchú who, in accepting the heritage of the Guatemalan resistance movement from her mother, realises how important it is to master the language of the conquerors, and decides to learn Spanish. She breaks the taboo against Spanish in order to communicate with the people in the resistance movement.[14] The very same language that had been the instrument of colonisation becomes a site of resistance and mediation. Language and the body are again associated in this respect.

[12] "In representations by both colonisers and colonised Trugernanner usually figures as the enabler of Robinson's project; as in the cases of Malintzin and Pocahontas this enabling is always represented in gendered terms, both in the sexualized function of whore/wife, or in the cultural and linguistic treachery of 'La Lengua' ". S. Perera, "Claiming Truganini: Australian national narrative in the year of indigenous peoples", *Cultural Studies*, Special Issue: *Australian Feminisms*, 10, 3 (Oct. 1996), 403-4.

[13] Cherríe Moraga, "From a Long Line of Vendidas: Chicanas and Feminism", in T. de Lauretis (ed.), *Feminist Studies / Critical Studies* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press,1986), 184.

[14] See *Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú, y así me nació la conciencia* (Barcelona: Argos Vergara, 1983).

Assia Djebar describes women's struggle to appropriate language, to speak, to write, as a movement back and forward, sometime one step ahead and ten behind, and a constant negotiation between tradition and modernity. She refers to language when she notes that the Algerian women, who had chosen to express themselves – to unveil their words – through participation in the war of independence, and later in the resistance against fundamentalism, now discover that old taboos are being re-established, reversing the meaning of that revelation and cancelling that conquest. The tales contained in *Femmes d'Alger* are translated, but she wonders "from which language. From Arabic? From a popular Arabic or a female Arabic, i.e. from a subterranean Arabic ...", a language coming "from lips that speak underneath a mask ... from a mouth and eyes immersed in blackness".[15]

Later on she will establish a parallel between the women's stifled voices and their bodies mutilated and mangled by torture. In the war women's bodies became bomb-carriers:

> ... women have taken bombs out of the *casbah* as if they were uncovering their breasts and those bombs backfired against them, for later some were tortured with electric shocks applied to their genitalia.[16]

Language written on the body is also the medium of political struggle in Morrison's *Beloved* and in Mahasweta Devi's stories. Toni Morrison's *Beloved* recounts the history of slavery in terms of the tortured female body. Sethe's body has literally been written upon as a reminder of her past condition. She has a tree on her back: "A chokecherry tree. Trunk, branches, and even leaves. Tiny little chokecherry leaves."[17] Later in the book, the scene of Sethe's torture is finally disclosed: 'Bit a piece of my tongue off when they opened my back. It was hanging by a shred. I didn't mean to. Clamped down on it, it come right off. I thought, Good God, I'm going to eat

[15] Assia Djebar, *Femmes d'Alger dans leur appartement* (Paris: des femmes, 1980), 13.

[16] Ibid., 180

[17] Toni Morrison, *Beloved* (London: Picador, 1988), 19.

myself up. They dug a hole for my stomach so as not to hurt the baby".[18]

The writing on the body – like the ghost of the little girl – is the reminder of slavery, a cataclysmic event remembered and forgotten at the same time; it is a trace conjoining the individual and the collective consciousness, stories and histories, standing for a savage time in which torture, self mutilation and infanticide were a form of resistance to slavery.

The theme of torture and rape is present in the heroic account given by the West Bengal writer Mahasweta Devi in her short-stories. Devi's stories use the female body to narrate the history of Bengal, of its many oppressions and rebellions, of the subaltern as object. In the story *Draupadi*, the heroine is a revolutionary, first on the side of her husband Dulna and then alone. Once captured, she is subjected to mutilation and multiple rape. Her violated mangled body is used by her as the instrument of denunciation against the corrupt Bengali officer who has ordered the torture: by refusing to cover it up, to hide it, she turns it from 'an unarmed target' into an offensive weapon.

> Draupadi stands before him, naked. Thigh and pubic hair matted with dry blood. Two breasts, two wounds.... Draupadi's black body comes even closer. Draupadi shakes with an indomitable laughter that Senayak simply cannot understand.[19]

The story reveals that this is the place where male leadership stops, this is the moment when Dopdi, until then a revolutionary for her husband's sake, commences to act *for* herself. Spivak comments: "It is when she crosses the sexual difference into the field of what could only happen to a woman that she emerges as the most powerful subject ..."[20]

The body is not only written upon in a negative way, it also writes, creating a space of survival and expression. The lesbian writer

[18] Ibid., 249.

[19] Mahasweta Devi, "Draupadi", in Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *In Other Worlds. Essays in Cultural Politics* (London: Methuen,1987), 196.

[20] Ibid., 184.

Gloria Anzaldúa, divided between different cultures and identities (many times 'mestiza', a half-breed among three cultures, Indian-Mexican, American, and Chicana – the latter a hybrid self), talks of the productive relationship between language and oppression, writing and cultural identity:

> Blocks (*Coatlicue* states) are related to my cultural identity. The painful periods of confusion that I suffer from are symptomatic of a larger creative process: cultural shifts. The stress of living with cultural ambiguity both compels me to write and blocks me.[21]

Christina Stead has also written of the difficulties of writing in exile in *For Love Alone*. She sees in writing a set of hybrid discursive practices that mimic and subvert, and at the same time reproduce colonial and patriarchal cultural hegemony and, in so doing, inscribe the position of the (post)colonial woman writer.

Yet for Anzaldúa in this positionality words become bodily and concrete :

> Words are blades of grass pushing past the obstacles, sprouting on the page; the spirit of the words moving in the body is as concrete as flesh and as palpable; the hunger to create is as substantial as fingers and hand. ... I look at my fingers, see plumes growing there. From the fingers, my feathers, black and red ink drips across the page. *Escribo con la tinta de mi sangre.* I write in red. Ink.[22]

The passage from language to writing, from writing to the body, is effected here quite clearly. Similarly Trinh T. Minh-ha structures her language, both in her essays and in her films, across the female body and writing. In her work, she moves between writing and visuality, cinema and music, documentary and fiction. Her own books are invaded by stills from her films, and the films by her writing. In *Surname Viet Given Name Nam*, the faces of the women she is interviewing are inscribed with words, with writing.

[21] Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands / La Frontera* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1992), 74.

[22] Ibid., 71.

Trinh connects the relation between body and language to the one between writing and feeding. Women's writing for her is linguistic flesh, organic matter, 'nurturing writing'. It draws its corporeal fluidity from images of water and other female fluids, 'a flow of life, of words running over or slowly dripping down the pages': "This keeping-alive and life-giving water exists simultaneously as the writer's ink, the mother's milk, the woman's blood and menstruation".[23]

So does Simone Lazaroo, the writer in-between her identity as Eurasian and Australian, who goes back to Singapore where she was born to look for a way to be in 'a world waiting to be made'. She provides a definition of hybridity describing her Great Grandmother's cooking in the middle of Malacca:

> ... under the gaze of suspicious and canny local women, ingredients from Portugal were bound with ingredients from Malacca into a cuisine that only a cook with no traditions of cooking, a cook with nothing to lose, could possibly have invented.[24]

Gloria Anzaldúa links the female body to writing through more terrestrial images, relating it to living in a borderland, as Chicana, as lesbian, as writer. Writing is like a cactus needle embedded in the flesh. The more one tries to remove it, the deeper it gets into the flesh. The act of writing gives birth to the soul through the body: "When I write it feels like I'm carving bone. It feels like I'm creating

[23] Trinh T. Minh-ha, *Woman Native Other – Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1989), 38. We find this image of liquidity referring to the female language and body in both feminist theory and novels. Elizabeth Grosz, connecting to the Irigarayan metaphysics of fluids, says: "Body fluids flow, they seep, they infiltrate; their control is a matter of vigilance never guaranteed ...", or further on: "... the female body has been constructed not only as a lack or absence, but with more complexity, as a leaking, uncontrollable, seeping liquid; as formless flow; as viscosity, entrapping, secreting ..." See Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies – Toward a Corporeal Feminism* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994) respectively p. 194 and p. 203.

[24] Simone Lazaroo, *The World Waiting to be Made* (Fremantle: Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 1994), 48.

my own face, my own heart – a Nahuatl concept".[25] But writing is also like a vampire who draws blood from the body in an incessant flow. The final image in the first part of the book, "Atraversando Fronteras / Crossing Borders" is one where the symbols of the old tradition, with its fierce divinities and rites, mingle with those of the new, the tokens of electronic writing:

> I sit here before my computer, Amiguita, my altar on top of the monitor with the Virgen de Coatlalopeuh candle and copal incense burning. My companion, a wooden serpent staff with feathers, is to my right while I ponder the ways metaphor and symbols concretize the spirit and etherealize the body. The Writing is my whole life, it is my obsession.[26]

The old rites are subverted and appropriated: "This vampire which is my talent does not suffer other suitors. Daily I court it, offer my neck to its teeth. This is the sacrifice that the act of creation requires, a blood sacrifice...".[27]

Writing for women is a crucial necessity, the connection between a privatised and a public self; but is at the same time difficult and troublesome. It is often tied to the theme of split identity due to the passage from one language and culture to another, like 'swimming in an alien element'.

The Zimbabwian Tsitsi Dangarembga speaks of two young women's difficult progress to independence in *Nervous Conditions.* The novel tells of the many turns and directions that the struggle for independence may take: the heroine discovers "other struggles to engage in besides the consuming desire to emancipate myself and my family".[28] The contradictions are many, and come not only from the conflict between Englishess and native culture but above all from the forms they take within the family itself. Nyasha, who is initially the strong one, yields to the 'nervous conditions', but she has paved the

[25] Anzaldúa, *Borderlands* ..., 73

[26] Ibid., 75.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Tsitsi Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions* (London: The Women's Press, 1988), 152. The title of the novel comes from Frantz Fanon's sentence: "The condition of the native is a nervous condition".

way for Tambu who, through a long and painful process of expansion, reaches the goal of writing: "Quietly, unobtrusively and extremely fitfully, something in my mind began to assert itself, to question things and refuse to be brainwashed, bringing me to the time when I can set down this story.... the story I have told here, is my own story, the story of four women whom I loved, and our men, this story is how it all began".[29]

The movement back to literature means writing more than speaking. It may be because writing in its materiality is both an emission of the body (the hand rather than the mouth) and a body itself, it leaves a trace, it is less ephemeral; because it is tied to the conquest of an hitherto unexplored continent, traditionally left to men who, on the other hand, have often chosen women as narrators in their writing. Mythical stories are fabulations of women but were not created by women; women have been men's metaphors as Gayatri Spivak says; now they become the affabulators. According to Hélène Cixous, women's black unexplored continent is their bodies and their writing.[30]

Writing and narration are the site of women's power and survival, an element that is at one time known and unknown. It moves between an ancestral culture and an acquired one. The movement is complex, never unidirectional, the culture on either side is neither unaltered nor constant. Narrative brings 'the impossible within reach' and is where woman is and is not at the same time.[31] In *The World Waiting to be Made*, Simone Lazaroo reminds us of how stories gave some cohesion to her many identities:

> When people called us names in Australia – slope, coon, chocolate faces – my mother stroked our hair and told us floating stories, stories

[29] Ibid., 204.

[30] Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clément, *The Newly-Born Woman* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987).

[31] 'Tale-telling brings the impossible within reach. With it, I am who It is, Whom I am seen to be, yet I can only feel myself there where I am not, vis-à-vis an elsewhere I do not dwell in.' See Trinh, 'Other than myself/my other self'', in *Travellers' Tales - Narrative of Home and Displacement*, ed. by G. Robertson et al. (London and NY: Routledge, 1994), 11.

> to help us believe in bright futures. Like a medicine man, a magician, a bomoh, she brought us back to ourselves".[32]

And further on, she says: "In Malacca, 'having your story stolen' is equivalent to having lost your soul; craziness is lurking just around the corner".[33]

Fiction creates hybrid shapes and languages; its characters (sometimes monsters, sometimes shadows, sometimes ghosts) inhabit borders, intermediate spaces, and move in an indistinct zone at the intersection between the human and the animal, the natural and the supernatural, the beautiful and the horrid, the self and many other selves. The ghost, the monster, often stands for hybridity, for the in-between space on the border of the past, of the original world and the one to be made, like the body of Infinitely Great Grandmother in Lazaroo's novel.

This borderland, a space where there is neither the global nor the local, or where both suffer translation and transmutation, where the conflict between tradition and modernity discloses 'a riot of social meanings', as Aihwa Ong puts it, has established itself in feminist theory, to the point of giving it new shapes, shades and directions.[34]

The confrontation with the ethnic other undermines all simple dichotomies between universalism and separation, creating an intermediate space of negotiation; a complex and shifting itinerary with which feminist theory has come to terms. As Donna Haraway says:

> Feminist discourse and anti-colonial discourse are engaged in this very subtle and delicate effort to build connections and affinities, and not to

[32] Lazaroo, *The World*, 40. In a similar way, Maria Viarengo remembers the many names she had: "I have heard myself defined as hanfez, klls, meticcia, mulatta, caffelatte, half-cast, ciuculatin, colored, armusch. I have learnt the art of seeming, I always seemed what the others wanted. I have been Indian, Arabian, Latin-American, Sicilian. (Viarengo, "Andiamo a spasso", 74; my translation)

[33] Lazaroo, *The World*, 42.

[34] Aihwa Ong, "Colonialism and Modernity: Feminist Re-Presentations of Women in Non-Western Societies", *Inscriptions*, 3/4 (1988), 88.

produce one's own and another's experience as a resource for another closed narrative.[35]

This has been suggested by many of the images and metaphors emerging from the texts I read: body matter and fluids, feeding and cooking, ghosts and *bomohs* are drawing the contours of a new uncertain map for the future of literary theory.

[35] Donna Haraway, "Reading Buchi Emecheta: Contexts for Women's Experience in Women's Studies", *Inscriptions*, 3/4 (1988), 111.

Marie Hélène Laforest

Whose Story, Whose World? Speaking the Unspoken in Toni Morrison and John M. Coetzee

> Though I have spoken English since childhood, I was not brought up in a culture that anyone would recognize as English. English in South Africa is what one might call a deeply entrenched foreign language; and there is a sense in which I have always approached English as a foreigner would, with a foreigner's sense of the distance between himself and it. (John M. Coetzee) [1]

> My childhood efforts to join America were continually rebuffed. So I finally said, 'you got it'. America has always meant something other to me –them. I was not fully participant in it and I have found more to share with Third World peoples in the diaspora; may be it's for political reasons. (Toni Morrison)[2]

In 1986 South African writer, John M. Coetzee, published *Foe* which critics described as a retelling of *Robinson Crusoe,* Daniel Defoe's 1719 adventure novel. The following year, in 1987, *Beloved* by African American novelist Toni Morrison appeared, inspired by the 1856 documented story of Margaret Garner and hailed as a rewriting of the slave narratives.[3] The popularity of Defoe's text and its

[1] J.M. Coetzee http//.//www.threepennyreview.com/index.html

[2] Toni Morrison "Living Memory: a meeting with Toni Morrison", in Paul Gilroy, *Small Acts. Thoughts on the Politics of Black Cultures* (London: Serpent's Tail, 1993), 180.

[3] *Beloved* has been particularly compared to the *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave* (1854) and Harriet Jacobs' *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861). Morrison has explained the importance of the slave narratives in the following terms: "Whatever the style and circumstances of these narratives, they were written to say principally two things. One: "This is my historical

significance for the birth of the novel stand in sharp contrast with the forgotten infanticide committed by Margaret Garner, despite the shock wave it sent throughout the United States. *Foe* and *Beloved* were published within a year of each other, a close sequence, which excludes the possibility of Morrison reading *Foe* before writing her text. Still, both novels are inhabited by a chain of echoes which cannot be easily ignored. They throw light on what it has meant to interrogate slavery and its aftermath at the end of the twentieth century.

Rewriting has a long literary history, but the approach to an old text has varied considerably throughout the centuries. *Robinson Crusoe* and *The Tempest,* the two canonical texts which more than any others have come to symbolize the master/slave relationship were themselves re-elaborated immediately after their publication in the eighteenth and seventeenth centuries. *Robinson Crusoe* was rewritten in order to make it conform more closely to the traditional adventure story genre. Thus, eliminating the psychological insights Defoe had introduced and which have given the text the power it still holds today.[4] The slave narrative, too, had become an extremely popular genre; as such, it was written many times over and became stereotyped.

Imitation and conformity to genre, once highly praised, have given way, today, to originality as a narrative value: originality of structure and language. Crossing of genres and fragmented narratives have become commonplace, while new metaphors and new coinages have enriched the West's figurative wellspring. The contribution of postcolonial writers in this process cannot be underestimated: with more than one culture to draw from and having adopted an 'Adamic' perspective, they have "renamed the world".[5]

life – my singular, special example that is personal, but that also represents the race." Two: "I write this text to persuade other people – you the reader, who is probably not black – that we are human beings worthy of God's grace and the immediate abandonment of slavery." Toni Morrison, "The Site of Memory", in William K. Zinsser ed., *Inventing the Truth: The Art and Craft of Memoir* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1995), 86.

[4] The famous abridged edition known as the Amsterdam Coffee-House piracy published in 1719 eliminated the features which did not conform to the typical travel-adventure story.

[5] Derek Walcott has warned, however, that this Adamic naming "has the tartness of experience". Derek Walcott, "The Muse of History", in Orde Coombs ed., *Is Massa Day Dead?* (New York: Anchor Press, 1974), 6.

The question of originality has been faced by Coetzee and Morrison differently. Coetzee's sparseness and his search for the Flaubertian 'mot juste' contrast with Morrison's lyrical style. Coetzee cites Zbigniew Herbert and Robert Musil, among others, as models for his writing; he admires the Polish poet for "his dryness to the point of dessication," and the German novelist for pushing syntax "to the bounds of the possible".[6] The protagonist of *Foe*, Susan Barton, seems to put his manifesto into words:

> I forgot you are a writer who knows above all how many words can be sucked from a cannibal feast, how few from a woman cowering from the wind. It is all a matter of words and the number of words, is it not? (94)[7]

Morrison, instead, links her writing style to African American music. Writing, like music, "must have the ability to use found objects, the appearance of using found things, and it must look effortless".[8] She has been explicit about her writing project,

> I have wanted always to develop a way of writing that was irrevocably black. I don't have the resources of a musician but I thought that if it was truly black literature, it would not be black because I was, it would not even be black because of its subject matter. It would be something intrinsic, indigenous, something in the way it was put together – the sentences, the structure, texture and tone – so that anyone who read it would realize.[9]

The stature of the two ex-centric writers – Coetzee, two time Booker

[6] As he writes, "This is about some of the writers without whom I would not be the person I am", Coetzee also indicates Brecht, Rilke, T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, and Faulkner as his literary fathers. *http://www.threepennyreview.com/index.html.*

[7] This and all other quotations are taken from J.M. Coetzee, *Foe* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986).

[8] Toni Morrison, "Living Memory", 181.

[9] Ibid. Morrison's commitment to a black aesthetic does not exclude the fact that her writing is entrenched in the Western tradition. The most evident influences are the Bible (also an integral part of African American culture), Greek mythology, William Faulkner, and Virginia Woolf.

Prize winner and Morrison, Pulitzer and Nobel prize winner – prevents from assigning their work any facile correspondence. However, as writers in the 1980's they are not only aware of the critical movements which have invested the end of the millenium, but they have drawn inspiration directly from them, as is reflected in the organizing themes of the novels and in the metadiscourses embodied in their texts. Coetzee's voice and Morrison's, indeed, reflect the feminist as well as the postmodern and postcolonial discourses in ways that surprisingly converge.[10] This is also true of the original metaphors they have created, which often coincide.

Spectrality in contemporary literature has already been defined as a postmodern motif. It has become common and has been explained in terms of the difficulty of describing the postmodern condition of liminality which followed in the wake of the unsettling of positivist certainties.[11]

Neither Morrison nor Coetzee, would, however, explain recourse to this motif in those terms. For Morrison, ghosts are part of the African American tradition. "Just as long as they don't call me a magical realist, as though I don't have a culture to write out of," she has asserted.[12] Coetzee, through Susan Barton, claims the tradition of ghost stories as belonging to Western literature. He uses a dialogue between Susan and Foe to remind the reader that this tradition exists. Susan tells Foe that he has already written a ghost story and must therefore know that "ghosts can converse with us, and embrace and kiss us too" (134). Looking at slavery in the fac has meant for both writers to have recourse to the same strategy of giving substance to ghostly figures, and one of the ghosts, in both cases, incarnates a lost daughter.

[10] To critics like Patricia Waugh, "literary fiction can never imitate or 'represent' the world, but always imitates or 'represents' the discourses which in turn construct that world". Patricia Waugh, *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction* (London and New York: Routledge, 1984) , 100.

[11] See Anna Maria Cimitile "Of Ghosts, Women and Slaves", *Anglistica*, 3.2 (1999).

[12] Morrison, "Living Memory", 181.

The scars of slavery

Beloved focuses on the slavery holocaust. It deals directly with "the psychic subtexts that lie within and beneath the historical facts".[13] At Sweet Home enslavement has marked the Garners' 'men' forever. In Paul D's words, "One crazy, one sold, one missing, one burnt and me licking iron with my hands crossed behind me. The last of the Sweet Home men"(72).[14] The reversal of the official myth of the happy slave and the deconstruction of more 'liberal' forms of slavery as practiced by the Garners run throughout the novel. Morrison depicts slavery in all its inhumanity, not shunning from describing the tools of physical torture – the continuous rape of milk, dignity and selfhood, the chains of the chain gangs, and the bit in Paul D's mouth – and from staging in all its horror the psychological scars of the 'peculiar institution' whose traces remain on Sethe's back in the form of a tree.

> It's a tree, Lu. A chokecherry tree. See, here's the trunk –it's red and split wide open, full of sap, and this here's the parting for the branches. You got mighty lot of branches. Leaves, too, look like, and dern if these ain't blossoms. Tiny little cherry blossoms, just as white. Your back got a whole tree on it. In bloom. What God have in mind, I wonder. I had me some whippings, but I don't remember nothing like this" (79).

Baby Suggs, Sethe, and Paul D, the Sweet Home slaves, are the survivors who tell their stories. Once on the other side of the Ohio river, from the house on 124 Bluestone Road, they can recall their past and reflect on what it has meant to be considered human chattel.

> ... in all of Baby's life, as well as Sethe's own, men and women were moved around like checkers. Anybody Baby Suggs knew, let alone loved, who hadn't run off or been hanged, got rented out, loaned out,

[13] Marylyn Sanders Mobley, "A Different Remembering: Memory, History and Meaning in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*", in Harold Bloom ed., *Toni Morrison: Modern Critical Views* (New York: Chelsea House, 1990), 57.

[14] All quotes are from Toni Morrison, *Beloved* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1987).

> bought up, brought back, stored up, mortgaged, won, stolen or seized. So Baby's eight children had six fathers. What she called the nastiness of life was the shock she received upon learning that nobody stopped playing checkers just because the pieces included her children (23).

Foe, too, is set in the Americas. Not unlike Defoe who had transposed Selkirk's story from the Juan Fernandez island to a place "off the river Oronoque, commonly called the Great River"(61), Coetzee displaces Crusoe from South America to the Caribbean and southern United States.[15] Thus Cruso's island is no abstract space, but the place where slavery had proved more profitable and durable. By choosing this locale, Coetzee indicates that he is concerned precisely with the institution of slavery.

Several metaphors are literalized to indicate his intent. He starts from the beginning, that is, from Greek logocentric thought, the basis of Western rationalism, coupling Aristotelian ethics and the condition of slaves. Whereas in Aristotle, humankind was divided into two categories: those born to be rulers and those condemned to be "hewers of wood and drawers of water," in Cruso's mouth, this dualism becomes, "If Providence were to watch over all of us," [said Cruso,] "who would be left to pick the cotton and cut the sugar-cane?" (23) The brutal treatment of Africans is also literalized in Friday's tonguelessnes. No longer a metaphor for the silence to which Africans were subjected, Friday is literally without a tongue.

Also, the Middle Passage is evoked though the ships' route which is that of the triangular trade. "... the very next day ... a merchantman named the John Hobart making for Bristol with a cargo of cotton and indigo, cast anchor off the island and sent a party ashore" (38). The Hobart, as Susan Barton will soon guess, has just dropped off its cargo of slaves and loaded on board the typical products from the Caribbean and the southern United States, indigo and cotton, before sailing to Bristol. The repressed history of slavery which Morrison

[15] This and other quotes are from Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985). Susan Barton herself speaks of sailing back to the Americas after their rescue (44). Echoes of *Robinson Crusoe* are also found in Coetzee's 1983 novel, *Life and Times of Michael K*. See John Skinner, *The Stepmother Tongue* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), 246.

denounces is constantly evoked, even *in absentia*. When Cruso falls ill with a fever and begins to tremble and rave, he "shouts in Portuguese", then calls out "Masa or Massa, a word with no meaning I can discover," Susan adds (29). Cruso has hidden his past as a slave owner, but in his sleep, he, himself, invokes the slaves' address to white men like him, "Massa".[16] Vain are his efforts to "begin his story with his arrival on the island" (34). His repressed history can not remain submerged.[17] Here *Beloved* and *Foe* coincide, both depicting slavery as a haunting force. What whites and blacks have not dared face, the unspoken, reappears as a ghost or as a shadow.[18] The unspoken truth of slavery, as Paul Gilroy explains, is its compatibility with the rational principles of Enlightenment thought.

> ... the alternative conventional alternative response [which] views plantation slavery as a pre-modern residue that disappears once it is revealed to be fundamentally incompatible with enlightened rationality and capitalist industrial production.[19]

The modern institution which brutalized non Europeans, exterminated the native Americans, enslaved Africans, indentured the Irish and the Asians was an integral part of the European Enlightenment. However, "the bitter history of sugar" as Derek Walcott puts it, is considered an aberration, "external factors that do not touch the heart of modernity and the triumphs of progress, political democracy and cultural enlightenment".[20]

[16] Portugal is where Robinson Crusoe in Defoe's text owns a plantation. Foe's raving cries have also been read as Foe's control of the woman's body, as they are uttered after he has had sex with Susan. See Jane Wilkinson, *Remembering "TheTempest"* (Rome: Bulzoni editore, 1999).

[17] Susan Barton, unlike Cruso, is well aware of the impossibility of repressing one's past. She who, on seeing Friday, already knows where he fits in her world.

[18] Shakespeare's *The Tempest* is often evoked in *Foe*. This makes of the novel a re-writing of the two most significant imperial narratives. According to critic Anne Barton, one of the reasons which has made of *The Tempest* the Shakespearean play which has most often been rewritten is because "a surprising amount of *The Tempest* depends upon the suppressed and the unspoken". Anne Barton, "Introduction" William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, Anne Barton ed. (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968), 16.

[19] Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic* (London and New York: Verso, 1995), 49.

[20] Ibid.

Like Morrison, Coetzee focuses on the physical and psychological pain of Friday's condition and of the millions of men taken from Africa, the sixty million and more which figure as epigraph to *Beloved*.

> Well, then: picture the hundreds of his fellow-slaves – or their skeletons – still chained in the wreck, the gay little fish (that you spoke of) flitting through their eyesockets and the hollow cases that had held their hearts (141).

He also has Susan Barton imagine the cutting of Friday's tongue: "I saw pictures in my mind of pincers gripping his tongue and a knife slicing into it …". What is more, the severance of his tongue evokes another mutilation, the emasculation of the black man.

> What Cruso wanted me to see, what I averted my eyes from seeing, was the thick stub at the back of the mouth, which ever afterwards I pictured to myself wagging and straining under the sway of emotion as Friday tried to utter himself, like a worm cut in half contorting itself in death-throes. From that night on I had continually to fear that evidence of a yet more hideous mutilation might be thrust upon my sight (119).

Coetzee depicts Friday as condemned to be the shadow of those who have enslaved him, as if an invisible leash linked him to Foe first, and then to Susan. This idea is carried through to the end of the novel when Susan discovers that Friday has a scar "like a necklace, left by a rope or chain" (155). It is the reader's turn to imagine Friday's sufferings with an iron collar which left a ring around his neck. The two writers' imaginations focus on the same physical part. Beloved, too, has a scar where her throat was cut by her mother and she makes Sethe feel the same sensation of choking she experienced. In a confrontation between Denver and Beloved on the subject, the reader's attention is drawn to the iron collar applied to slaves.

> I saw your face. You made her choke.
> I didn't do it.
> You told me you loved her.
> I fixed it, didn't I? Didn't I fix her neck?

> After. After you choked her neck.
> I kissed her neck. I didn't choke it. The circle of iron choked it (101).

The enemy

Blame for these tortures is cast in no uncertain terms on "whitepeople". Morrison is careful to join the two words to indicate not people with white skin, but those who believe in and put into practice white supremacist ideas.

> Except for an occasional request for color she [Baby Suggs] said practically nothing – until the afternoon of the last day of her life when she got out of bed, skipped slowly to the door of the keeping room and announced to Sethe and Denver the lesson she had learned from her sixty years a slave and ten year free: that there is no bad luck in the world but whitepeople. "They don't know when to stop," she said, and returned to her bed, pulled up the quilt and left them to hold that thought forever" (104).

In Coetzee, too, the 'enemy' is named. He is the one who has created the Other and defined himself in opposition to the Rest of the world. As proposed by Mary Louis Pratt, he is the enemy who has defined the "planetary consciousness" which constructed modern Eurocentrism, "that hegemonic reflex that troubles westerners even as it continues to be second nature to them".[21] Foe is the foe (de foe in Caribbean patwah) par excellence, the white middle-class male, who has written the Other into his script and has been epitomized by Robinson Crusoe.[22] The script is one Susan knows well as is clear from the first pages of the novel. No amnesia, no easy innocence, no

[21] Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes. Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992),16.

[22] Coetzee's description of Cruso is like the one found in Defoe's text. "He wore (let me give my description of him all together) a jerkin, and drawers to below his knees, such as we see watermen wear on the Thames, and a tall cap rising in a cone, all of these made of pelts laced together, the fur outwards, and a stout pair of sandals" (8).

whim of creating the world anew: no sooner does Susan see Friday, she recognizes him as "a thing of darkness", servant and cannibal.[23] The textual practice of the West is in the background:

> Oral texts, written texts, lost texts, secret texts, texts appropriated, abridged, translated, anthologized, plagiarized; letters, reports, survival tales, civic description, navigational narrative, monsters and marvels, medicinal treatises, academic polemics, old myths replayed and reversed ..." the international scientific exploration a corpus of travel related writing.[24]

It is her awareness of these texts which Susan voices; the inscription of the Other in a subordinate position is part of her knowledge of the world. She, therefore, insists that she has a past, that neither her life nor Cruso's can start on the island, as Cruso asserts.[25] This is evident from her encounter with Friday. When she sees him, her mind goes back to the knowledge of him she has received from the Western text:

> a dark shadow fell upon me, not a cloud but of a man with a dazzling halo about him. The man squatted down beside me. He was black ... I have come to an island of cannibals (5-6).

For Susan, Friday belongs to the realm of darkness and is a cannibal. At the same time, however, Coetzee makes her aware of her own position in the phallogocentric order: above Friday/Caliban but below Cruso/Prospero.[26] Indeed, despite her ability to remember and retell the story of the island, because she is a woman, she feels

[23] Another reference to *The Tempest's* often cited lines, "... this thing of darkness I/ Acknowledge mine" (V.1.275-276).

[24] Pratt, *Imperial Eyes,* 23.

[25] Her past is that of a white woman complicit with the white man's imperial project. Not only that; she demythologizes the construction of the white woman as pure by recounting how she slept in the Portuguese captain's bed and then, of course, how she also gives herself to Cruso.

[26] There are several instances in which Coetzee forces Susan to admit her complicity in the imperial project, as when she comes to stand for 'whites' when she says, "No matter what he is to himself (is he anything to himself? –how can he tell us?), what he is to the world is what I make of him" (122).

inferior to Foe who has traditionally controlled the word and who, once again, is given control over her words.

> I have set down the history of our time on the island as well as I can, and enclose it herewith. It is a sorry, limping affair (the history, not the time itself) – "the next day", its refrain goes, "the next day ... the next day" – but you will know how to set it right (47).

Thus both Coetzee and Morrison stage the contemporary displacement of the white male as the sole subject of knowledge. Morrison directly; Coetzee through parody.[27] Both fictionalize the unhinging of the forms of knowledge based on a dualistic and hierarchical vision of the world which took place with postmodernist thinking. Morrison's concern with the hierarchy enacted by "whiteness, masculinity and rationality" is depicted through the relationship between Schoolteacher and the slaves of Sweet Home after Mr.Garner's death.[28] The slaves are Schoolteacher's objects of study. He is searching for confirmation of a knowledge which has been handed down to him together with his uncle's slaves, the Calibans. A milestone in the development of pseudo-scientific theories in Britain was the publication of Edward Long's 1774 *History of Jamaica*. As historian Peter Fryer points out,

> Long was not the sole source of pseudo-scientific racism. It was nourished also by a series of theories and 'discoveries' in the biological sciences of the eighteenth century: notably, the infant's science of anthropology. This was the great century of classification....[29]

Morrison depicts Schoolteacher in the very process of measuring the characteristics of slaves and classifying them:

[27] Old clichés are re-proposed parodically in *Foe*, as when Coetzee describes Susan's crushed hope of communicating with Friday through music (36) or when a dispirited Susan realizes that neither Friday nor Cruso has any sexual interest in her (98).

[28] Gilroy, *Small Acts*, 45.

[29] Peter Fryer, *Staying Power: The History of Black People in Britain* (London: Pluto Press, 1984), 166.

> Schoolteacher'd wrap that string all over my head, 'cross my nose, around my behind. Number my teeth. I thought he was a fool. And the questions he asked was the biggest foolishness of all (191).

As Sethe all too well remembers, she heard Schoolteacher giving instructions on how to proceed in reifying them: "No, no. That's not the way. I told you to put her human characteristics on the left; her animal ones on the right. And don't forget to line them up"(193). She also recalls how Mrs. Garner defined characteristics when she asked her: "Like a feature of summer is heat. A characteristic is a feature. A thing that's natural to a thing"(195). From then on the struggle against this anthropological form of knowledge becomes one of the driving forces of the novel.

> And no one, nobody on this earth, would list her [Sethe's] daughter's characteristics on the animal side of the paper. No. Oh no. Maybe Baby Suggs could worry about it, live with the likelihood of it; Sethe had refused – and refused still (251).

Sethe will fight to prevent that the world be divided between the definers and the defined.[30] The defined include all ex-centric subjects, all those who have had to struggle to acquire the power to define themselves: not only the colonized, but also the peripheral European subjects and women.

The women

Ever since the second wave of feminism at the end of the 1960's, women have been decentering the white male subject; male writers, however, were not as quick or as willing to focus their narratives on the female figure or to relinquish their proprietary rights over women. "Having defined them in language and thus generated them, he [man]owns them, controls them, and encloses them on the printed

[30] These words are used following the exchange between Sixo and Schoolteacher: "Clever, but schoolteacher beat him anyway to show him that definitions belonged to the definers – not the defined"(190).

page."[31] Still Coetzee, attentive to women's request to have access to representation, creates a female castaway, Susan Barton, as the central character in *Foe*. Unlike Morrison's Sethe "whose strength will not break under the weight of the atrocities that push her maternal bonds into [such] isolation—away from her community, out of history itself", Susan appears with all the contradictions of her position as a gendered subaltern.[32] "For I am a free woman who asserts her freedom by telling her story according to her own desire" (131), she asserts, but at the same time her inability to write their story on the island is affected by what Gilbert and Gubar have called "anxiety of authorship".[33] Although she writes long accounts of her story for Foe, in the form of letters and in the first person, as a woman, she cannot assume the authority of telling that story. She is compelled to find a male who has had access to the pen to give her a voice. She even lacks the word to express the birthing of a story by a woman and throughout the novel speaks of "fathering" a text. She is unable to invent the word 'mothering'.[34] Yet, she wishes that "there were such a being as a man-Muse, a youthful god who visited authoresses in the night and made their pens flow" (126).

In *Beloved*, instead, Sethe is a female and mother archetype, she is the maternal heroine driven, out of maternal love, to commit an infanticide. Morrison's works are all characterized by the centrality of female characters – decidedly so in *The Bluest Eye* and *Sula*, women, at any rate, never play second fiddle to men, even when men are protagonists, as in *Song of Solomon*. Milkman is able to find himself thanks to the force of the female line in his family, to the powerful figure of Pilate. However, it is in *Beloved* that femaleness

[31] Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic. The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1984), 12.

[32] Stephanie A. Demetrakopoulos "Maternal Bonds as Devourers of Women's Individuation in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*", *African American Review* 26.1 (1992), 53.

[33] Gilbert and Gubar, 49.

[34] "The patriarchal notion that the writer fathers his text just as God fathered the world is and has been all-pervasive in Western literary civilization, so much so that, as Edward Said has shown, the metaphor is built into the very word, *author*, with which writer, deity, and *pater familias* are identified". Gilbert and Gubar, *Woman Writer*, 4.

and motherhood culminate.[35] 124 Bluestone Road is peopled by women. It is on their shoulders that the heavy burden of motherhood rests: birthing, nurturing, survival. Not only Sethe, whose quest is to take her milk to her daughter, but Baby Suggs and Denver are also mother figures. Baby Suggs is transformed by Morrison into a matriarch, an ancestral figure who is engaged in re-connecting and re-membering her people after slavery. She gathers all black people in the Clearing to teach them to love themselves. Denver, the daughter, is turned into a mother for Sethe after she loses all contact with the outside world. She feeds Sethe and re-establishes their ties with the community, essential to survival. These women deprived of connections during slavery, deprived of the word, are all able to take their lives into their own hands and recreate themselves through the telling of their stories.[36]

> I did it. I got us all out. Without Halle too. Up till then it was the only thing I ever did on my own. Decided. And it came off right, like it was supposed too. We was here. Each and every one of my babies and me too. I birthed them and I got em out and it wasn't no accident. I did that. I had help, of course, lots of that, but still it was me doing; me saying, *Go on*, and *Now*. Me having to look out. Me using my own head (162).

Taking her life in her own hand is the supreme achievement for a

[35] The search for foremothers on the part of contemporary black women has brought to light forgotten figures of the past; among these, Sojourner Truth whom Morrison evokes directly in the scene when Stamp Paid takes a dead Baby Suggs in his arms. "When he picked her up in his arms, she looked to him like a girl, and he took the pleasure she would have knowing she didn't have to grind her hipbone anymore – that at last somebody carried *her*" (171). In Sojourner Truth's famous 1851 "Ain't I a woman" speech, she speaks of slave women and poor black women as not having ever been carried. "That man over there says that women need to be helped into carriages, and lifted over ditches, and to have the best place everywhere. Nobody ever helps me into carriages, or over mud-puddles, or gives me any best place! And ain't I a woman?"

[36] Appropriation of the word by slaves and former slaves has meant going against the law. "Lady Jones [a mixed woman] did what whitepeople thought unnecessary if not illegal: crowded her little parlor with the colored children who had time for and interest in book learning" (102).

former slave. Morrison constantly reminds the reader of this through the recurrence of "me" which is also the last word Sethe utters in the novel. After Paul D tells her, "You your best thing, Sethe. You are", she replies, "Me? Me?" in pleasure and wonder (273).

Survival

Rewriting of past stories implies, as Adrienne Rich has suggested, "the act of looking back with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction – it is for us more than a chapter in cultural history: it is an act of survival".[37] Both Coetzee and Morrison are engaged in these two processes. Both writers have invested immensely in a re-interpretation of the woman/slave/master triad, since their survival as members of minorities – one oppressive, the other oppressed – precisely depends on the revision of the relations between dominant and subaltern.

Coetzee, as a white South African, member of the dominant groups who have oppressed the majority population of the cape of Africa, has very much at stake in the new South Africa. The Robinson/Friday relation around which life in the country was organized came to an end in 1994 and, in order for "those who look like him" to remain in South Africa, they have to find new ways of relating to the majority of their countrymen.[38] They must rewrite the script of their relations.

Morrison, on her part, member of an oppressed minority, who has fought for its rights with some success, has at heart the future of the African American community. An understanding of slavery and of the scars it has left on the psyche of both blacks and whites is

[37] Adrienne Rich, "When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision", in *Adrienne Rich's Poetry*, ed. Barbara Charlesworth Gelpi and Albert Gelpi (New York: Norton, 1975), 90.

[38] "The elections of April 1994 [which followed,] were conducted remarkably peacefully, but the transition from white minority rule to a non-racial democratic state in South Africa remains a time of trauma, confusion and violence, although the dominant mood is optimistic." Denis Walder, *Post-Colonial Literatures in English. History, Language, Theory* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), 153.

necessary to bridge the chasm between those two sectors of the U.S. population. For, if the Africans were reduced by slavery and its legacy – apartheid, segregation, institutionalized racism – to the state of non-person, Euro-Americans, as Toni Morrison herself has pointed out, dehumanized themselves in the process.

Power of the word

In order not to be defined by others, former slaves and ex-centric subjects must speak in their own voices, self-validate their voices. Morrison even gives the power of speech to the pre-verbal infant, Beloved. She is the one who recounts her and the dead slaves' experience of the Middle Passage. Telling the self becomes the source of unexpected pleasure for Sethe, as she had discovered it was for Beloved. "Sethe learned the profound satisfaction Beloved got from storytelling"(58). It was a way to feed her. "But, as she began telling about the earrings, she found herself wanting to, liking it" (58).

Storytelling is about memory. The very definition of 'story' as Coetzee's character, Susan, says, must include memory. "... is that the secret meaning of the word story, do you think: a storing place of memories?"(59). Memory, the central theme in *Beloved*, expressed in the tension between forgetting and remembering, is also the pivotal element in the writing of the story of the island.[39] To Cruso's assertion that "Nothing is forgotten. Nothing I have forgotten is worth the remembering", Susan answers, "You are mistaken! ... There is no shame in forgetting ..." (17-18). The same words could have passed between Morrison and her characters, as when Sethe remembers the majestic sycamores of the Southern landscape and feels ashamed of herself for forgetting for a second that people had been hanged from them.

Reflections on what is involved in re-telling a story are coupled with the poignant question of whose story gets told and from whose

[39] "It is Toni Morrison's ambition to create a form and a storytelling, that keeps alive the struggle to remember, the need to forget, and the inability to forget." Roger Sale, "Toni Morrison's *Beloved*", *Massachusetts Review* 29.1 (Spring 1998), 85.

point of view. This idea is intrinsic to the very architecture of *Beloved* which is constructed through the multiple viewpoint technique and by what Ian Kott has called the "secrecy of narrative" – each episode is recounted in such a way as to reveal gradually the slaves' past at Sweet Home. Sethe's "re-memories" and 'dis-rememberings' of Beloved's death are followed by Paul D's recollections of the same event, later by Stamp Paid's, and the community's.

In *Foe*, viewpoint and the impossibility of an objective truth is expressed through a constant tension between Susan's narration and Foe's writing. Susan provides Foe with the story he is to translate into more readable form. He adds several details to her tale, embellishing it, making it more palatable to readers. In his version, Foe endows Cruso with a carpenter's chest and a musket – objects which are absent in Susan's tale (94). Susan wonders whether she should also add more 'strange elements'; that is, fictional ones, to produce a more interesting text. In a parodical twist, the additions she thinks up: the building of a boat, the landing of cannibals, and the sack of corn to be planted on the terraces are taken straight from Defoe (67).[40]

What is involved in storytelling is of great concern to Foe and Susan. Through their exchanges, Coetzee lays bare the devices which construct reality: "It is thus that we make up a book: loss, then quest, then recovery; beginning, middle, then end", Foe affirms" (117). It is originality, however, which elevates a story. Foe finds particularly novel "the reversal in which the daughter takes up the quest abandoned by her mother" (117).

> The world is full of stories of mothers searching for sons and daughters they gave away once, long ago. But there are not stories of daughters searching for mothers. There are no stories of such quests because they do not occur. They are not part of life (77).

[40] Defoe's text reappears in Susan's questions to Cruso: "When I had exhausted my questions to Cruso about the terraces, and the boat he would not build, and the journal he would not keep, and the tools he would not save from the wreck, and Friday's tongue, there was nothing left to talk of save the weather" (34).

It is, of course, the same quest, the same reversal, which is enacted by Beloved who returns from the dead in order to be reunited with her mother. She returns as a pre-verbal infant, a circumstance which Morrison expresses through a water metaphor. Beloved literally emerges from water, "I come out of blue water..." (213) and a water imagery accompanies her reunion with Sethe.[41] At her first appearance at 124, "Sethe's bladder filled to capacity". She ran to the back of the house "and the water she voided was endless ... there was no stopping water breaking from a breaking womb and there was no stopping now"(51). After this re-enactment of Beloved's birth, mother and daughter become inseparable. Beloved's union with Sethe keeps her in the Kristevan realm of the maternal semiotic. But she still has access to language. According to Jean Wyatt, Morrison "challenges psychoanalysis which opposes the maternal and the paternal forms of signification as she "rewrites the entry into the symbolic in terms that retain the oral and the maternal".[42] The same trope recurs in Coetzee. When Susan thinks of a better life for Friday, she imagines a pre-Oedipal Friday linked to a mother symbolized by water: "He may cross to the time before Cruso, the time before he lost his tongue, when he lived immersed in the prattle of words as unthinking as fish in water ..." (60). In Susan's vision, immersed in the semiotic, as she, as a woman, is, Friday would be a happier person. Both writers exploit the Lacanian /Kristevan 'imaginary/semiotic phase' and the association of the maternal (water) with childish babble.

Images, however, in Foe's view, do not make for the strength of a text, as he himself asserts, "Till we have spoken the unspoken we have not come to the heart of the story"(141). Coincidentally, "spoken the unspoken" is echoed in Morrison as "unspeakable thoughts unspoken" (199). Thus, while Coetzee sets out to describe the unspoken, the repressed story of black/white relations, Morrison defines the same story as not only unspoken, but as "unspeakable", referring to the shameful inhumanity of Europeans and the Africans'

[41] Susan Barton, too, appears as a water creature as she emerges from the waves, but unlike Aphrodite, she has a past, many previous stories.

[42] Jean Wyatt "Giving Body to the Word. The Maternal Symbolic in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*", PMLA 108.3 (May 1993), 482.

shame at having been treated as less than human. "... every mention of her past life hurt. Everything in it was painful or lost. She and Baby Suggs had agreed without saying so that it was unspeakable" (58).

For both writers "speaking the unspoken" takes place through control of the uttered word. It is for this reason that both pay particular attention to the characters' mouths. The "mirror of the soul" is no longer the eye, since it has become the "imperial eye/I" and can no longer be trusted. It is indeed by closing her eyes that Susan "gather[s] strength and send[s] out a vision of the island to hang before you like a substantial body ..." (53). In *Beloved,* when Denver recounts to her sister the truths of life she holds from the women in her family, she reports Sethe's attention to people's mouths.

> She said there ain't nothing to go by with whitepeople. You don't know how they'll jump. Say one thing, do another. but if you looked at the mouth sometimes you could tell by that. She said this girl talked a storm, but there wasn't no meanness around her mouth (77).

Here as in *Beloved,* the mouth is revealing. At the end of the novel, in the submarine scene, Susan pries open Friday's mouth with her finger.[43]

> His teeth part. I press closer, and with an ear to his mouth lie waiting. At first there is nothing. Then if I can ignore the beating of my own heart, I begin to hear the faintest faraway roar; as she said, the roar of waves in a seashell; and over that, as if once or twice a violin-string were touched, the whine of the wind and the cry of a bird.... From his mouth, without a breath, issue the sounds of the island.

This scene is repeated and becomes the closing image of the novel. Here, too, Susan forces open Friday's mouth, and a "stream" flows to all the corners of the earth.

[43] Foe also speaks of the "eye of the story" which Susan rephrases as the mouth of the story (141). Immediately afterwards, the mouth is identified with Friday's (142).

> From inside him comes a slow stream, without breath, without interruption. It flows up through his body and out upon me; it passes through the cabin, through the wreck; washing the cliffs and shores of the island, it runs northward and southward to the end of the earth. Soft and cold, dark and unending, it beats against my eyelids, against the skin of my face (157).

If the letter 'o', which expresses the round, vicious cycle of his life, is the only letter Friday learns to write, once his lips are opened, it is his despair and anger which passes through. It is an endless scream, as in Munch's famous painting, "The Scream", to shout his pain and ask for redress. This, he has been doing for centuries.[44]

Human pain and suffering can be alleviated by words as men/women exist within language. This vision belongs as much to the prose poet Morrison as to the post-structuralist linguist Coetzee. In *Beloved,* words are clearly made for healing.[45] In *Jazz* (1992), Morrison had already indicated how words could rescue human beings, even in the most desperate situations.[46] In *Beloved*, voices can cure. "Sethe didn't know if it was the voice, or Boston or velvet, but while the whitegirl talked, the baby slept" (33). Or "It was the voice full of velvet and Boston and good things to eat that urged her along..." (34). Denver, too, retrieves a sense of self by hearing kindness in people's words. "Oh, Baby, said Mrs. Jones. "Oh, Baby". Denver looked up at her. She did not know it then, but it was the word 'baby' said softly and with such kindness, that inaugurated her life in the world as a woman" (248). When the women bring food to 124 Bluestone Road and Denver enters the community, she discovers what Morrison had been suggesting throughout the novel, "All he [Nelson Lord] did was smile and say, Take care of yourself, Denver," but she heard it as though it were what language was made for" (252).

[44] However, Friday's pleas have remained unheard as the last words of the text indicate, "It [the scream] beats against my eyelids, against the skin of my face" (157).

[45] This is part of the African American tradition in which the compelling force of words is a fundamental topos.

[46] Felice saves Joe Trace by telling him that Dorcas had let herself die. Only after this revelation, can Joe and Violet let "music float[ed] in on us through the open window. Mr. Trace moved his head to the rhythm and his wife snapped her fingers in time". Toni Morrison, *Jazz* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1992), 214.

Since for Coetzee writing writes us and "poetry creates its own, autonomous standard of truth", he uses words to create another scenario in black/white relations.[47] Without words, without stories, the world would be a desolate place.

> Friday may have lost his tongue but he has not lost his ears – that is what I say to myself. Through his ears Friday may yet take in the wealth stored in stories and so learn that the world is not, as the island seemed to teach him, a barren and a silent place ..." (59).

Redemption

The island was left a barren place by Cruso. Unlike Robinson in Defoe's novel who, by shaking "the husks of corn out of it [bag] on one side of my fortification under the rock", soon sees corn stalks sprouting from the ground, Cruso has planted nothing on the island.

> I carefully saved the ears of this corn ... and laying up every corn, I resolved to sow them all again, hoping in time to have some quantity sufficient to supply me with bread.[48]

Cruso has only terraced the land, mapped its territory to establish control over it. As Susan says, he has no intention of generating any form of life there.[49] "And what will you be planting, when you plant?' I asked. 'The planting is not for us,' said he. 'We have nothing to plant –that is our misfortune" (33). The parallel with the African situation is clear. During colonization, Africa, for instance, produced more cocoa than any other area, but not a single chocolate plant had

[47] Coetzee's deconstruction of the "Law of the Father" was already evident in his 1977 novel, *In the Heart of the Country*. "I was born into a language of hierarchy, of distance and perspective. It was my father tongue." J.M. Coetzee, *In the Heart of the Country* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1977), 97.

[48] Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*, 94-95.

[49] Not even that of generating a child with her. "Yet I will confess, had I been convinced I was to spend the rest of my days on the island, I would have offered myself to him again, or importuned him, or done whatever was necessary to conceive and bear a child ..." (36).

been built there. The ship captain reinforces this thought when he tells Susan, "Let me tell you," said he: "One half of Africa is desert and the rest a stinking fever-ridden forest"(110). While keeping the complexity of the master/slave, dominant/subaltern relations, at the time Coetzee wrote the novel, he saw clearly the outcome of apartheid and post-apartheid policies.[50]

> He has learned that 'fraternity ineluctably comes in a package with liberty and equality', and that the 'vain and essentially sentimental yearning' that expresses itself in the reform movement in South Africa today [1987] is a yearning to have fraternity without paying for it. [51]

There is a price to be paid, however. In the case of South Africa, where the possession of land is a crucial issue, the price to be paid in order to remain in Africa is extremely high for Africans of European descent. Coetzee elaborates further on this theme in his 1999 novel *Disgrace*. The brutal treatment of blacks is described through a chain of horror and violence on the bodies of dogs, a particularly forceful metaphor that runs through the novel.[52]

What Morrison said in *Beloved*, "Freeing yourself was one thing; claiming ownership of that freed self was another" (95), holds true here as well. In post-apartheid South Africa, despite the existence of

[50] Susan is often assailed by doubts, as she understands she has contributed to protracting the imperialist project. "I tell myself I talk to Friday to educate him out of darkness and silence. But is that the truth?" (85) Or when she says, "Sometimes I believe it is I who have become the slave. No doubt you would smile, if you could understand" (87).

[51] J.M. Coetzee, *Doubling the Point. Essays and Interviews*, edited by D. Attwell (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 97.

[52] As Coetzee did in *Foe,* here too, he alternates between a metaphorical and literal use of words. At times the dogs are the animals themselves; in other instances, they stand for black Africans. *Disgrace* can be read as a sort of 'sequel' to *Foe*, just like *Foe* was seen as "an attempt to break through the narrative and existential impasse of the previous novel" [*In the Heart of the Country*]. Jane Wilkinson, *Remembering "The Tempest"* (Rome: Bulzoni editore, 1999), 80, 84. Wilkinson has also read *In the Heart of the Country* as "a restaging of the Miranda-Prospero-Caliban triad". In the case of Toni Morrison, her three novels, *Jazz*, *Beloved*, and *Paradise* were planned as a trilogy.

the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the country is steeped in hate. The long era of institutionalized violence has bred individual violence. "If all of us imagined violence as violence against ourselves, perhaps we would have peace", Coetzee has suggested.[53]

In *Disgrace*, he stages a white man, David Lurie, whose daughter is living on a remote farm in the South African countryside. Lucy has been abandoned by her girlfriend/lover and lives alone. Her closest neighbor is a black man named Petrus who used to be her help. One day, while David is visiting with his daughter, she is raped by friends of Petrus. The cycle of rape on African soil is thus uninterrupted, for if black Africans were raped of their land and violated in their spirit and dignity, today it is they who are raping the white female body. Following her rape, Lucy becomes pregnant and decides to give birth to the child against her father's advice. Coetzee represents Lucy as doggedly accepting time and the future. Lucy – which is also the name of the skeleton found in present-day Ethiopia, foremother of humankind – will be the mother of a new people, of a fully Creole child, bringing to fulfillment the destiny of the European/African encounter.

Redemption takes the form of mothering and of caring. Both acts, in both writers, must be carried out by whites: white Lucy will rear her hybrid child, just like white Susan Barton has taken care of Friday, and white Amy has nursed Sethe. Coetzee and Morrison suggest that there might have been another mapping of the world, another possibility in black/white relations. This possibility is enacted first and foremost by women. Both writers insist on a new ethic and aesthetic. Once again, their views are expressed through the same device: naming. In *Beloved* all the women are nurturers – Baby Suggs, Sethe, Lady Jones, the community women – but the figure of Amy stands out because she is white, an Irish indentured servant. Amy's infinite humanity leads her to nurse Sethe and to act as midwife, helping bring Denver to life. "Then she did the magic: lifted Sethe's feet and legs and massaged them until she cried salt tears"(35). Amy is a character who looks to the future; she is indeed headed for Boston "to buy some velvet". As the slaves did in the

[53] Atwell, *Doubling the Point,* 337.

wake of Emancipation, Amy inserts next to her name her 'entitlements': 'Miss' and 'Boston'. "You gonna tell her? Who brought her into this here world?... You better tell her. You hear? Say Miss Amy Denver. Of Boston" (85).

In *Foe*, the same name appears: "'And here is Amy', said the girl – Amy, from Deptford, my nurse when I was little"; these words are spoken by the girl who calls herself Susan Barton (129). "Miss Amy Denver of Boston" and "Amy, from Deptford" are the names of nurturers, of love dispensers. Amy derives from Middle English 'Amye', from Old French 'Amée', literally 'Beloved'. The two Amys in both writers have the same caring function; in addition, they constitute the early memory of the two daughters, Denver and Susan. The girls were therefore taught a new female language not dominated by the 'law of the father'. By refusing separation from their mothers – Beloved, on the one hand, says, "I am Beloved and she is mine" (214), and Susan, the daughter tells her mother ,"I have followed you everywhere," and, "I will not be sent away" (74,77) – their entry into language will not exclude the semiotic.

> I am left destitute with a daughter to care for. I have a maid servant named Amy or Emmy. Amy or Emmy asks my daughter what life she means to follow when she grows up (this is her earliest memory)" (76).

Amy means 'loved' like Beloved. The title of the novel, name of the character, and epigraph derive from the Bible, Epistle 9 to the Romans: "I will call them my people who were not my people; and her beloved which was not beloved". Canadian writer, Margaret Atwood, who reviewed *Beloved* when it appeared, places the epigraph in its context by quoting the lines that follow. "And it shall come to pass that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people; there shall they be called the children of the living God" (Romans 9:25/ 9:26). Atwood points out that "this passage proclaims, not rejection, but reconciliation and hope ... Here, if anywhere, is her own comment on the goings-on in her novel, her final response to the measuring and dividing and excluding "schoolteachers" of this world".[54]

[54] Margaret Atwood, "Haunted by Their Nightmares", *New York Times Book Review* (Sept. 13, 1987), 50.

More skeptical than Atwood, and intent on rendering in all its complexity the dominant/subaltern dialectic, Coetzee nonetheless invests women with the improvement of race relations through Susan. Susan tries in all possible ways to dialogue with Friday and is also, always ready to contradict Foe, the master. "'We are all alive, we are all substantial, we are all in the same world'". Cruso asserts. "You have omitted Friday". Susan interjects (152). Through Susan who is writing a new text and Lucy, the lesbian bearing a Caliban, the progenitor of a new people, Coetzee brings to completion the creolization of the world disrupted, interrupted, and negated by the Western narrative.

Michela Canepari-Labib

The Deconstruction of Racial Identity in Christine Brooke-Rose's *Out*

Out, published in 1964, inaugurates Brooke-Rose's first experimental tetralogy, marking a new phase in the author's career. The scope of this article is to assess the value the novel assumes in Brooke-Rose's production as a whole, focusing in particular on the deconstructive effort the author exhibits in this first, perhaps slightly tentative, experimental text.

The deconstruction my title refers to, though, is a kind of unconscious deconstruction. While sharing some common features with Derridean deconstruction (such as the central role granted to figures of marginality), it still bears the personal mark of Brooke-Rose herself.

Brooke-Rose actually discovered post-structuralist theory only five years after the publication of *Out*, when she moved to France and realised that she was not alone in what she had been trying to do with her first experimental texts, namely to investigate new ways to organise the narrative and to integrate within it her concern with language (in particular the idea that there exist several different languages interacting in the same person, and that language is all we have to apprehend reality). In fact, although all these thematics were already present in embryonic form in her realist novels of the Fifties, it is only with *Out* (and the many radical narratological choices she makes here for the first time), that she succeeded in integrating them adequately. Furthermore, in this novel Brooke-Rose shows a tremendous insight, unwittingly providing a narrative parallel to the theories not only of Derrida, but of Lacan and Barthes, amongst others.

Brooke-Rose's journey from realism to experimentalism

As she admits, after the first four realist novels she published during the 1950s, Brooke-Rose realised that it would have been too easy to carry on writing in the same way.[1] As her dissatisfaction with the realist tradition intensified, she started to look for new ways to deal with her main concerns. Although the general intellectual atmosphere obviously stimulated her development, the change of perspective in her works and her fundamentally different approach to her narrative material were brought about by more personal reasons, namely an illness she suffered from in 1962, which she believed would prove fatal.

Although she eventually recovered completely, not only did this experience impose practical constraints on the process of the writing of *Out*, obliging her to write "one sentence a day falling back on the pillows",[2] but it also awoke in her a new awareness, changing her perspective on life and increasing her interest in the underdog theme which would remain a constant in her work. It is precisely this thematics which becomes the focus of *Out*, where Brooke-Rose investigates what it means to be sick and to be made an outsider because of sickness.

Furthermore, in this novel we can detect both the interest in scientific books that her illness stimulated, and the impact the *nouveaux romans* published a few years before had on her writing (in particular Robbe-Grillet's, whose undeniable influence on *Out* is counterbalanced by Brooke-Rose's ironic treatment of his *chosisme*).[3]

The results of these changes can be observed in her first

[1] Christine Brooke-Rose, "A Conversation with Christine Brooke-Rose" (1989), in Friedman and Martin, eds., *Utterly Other Discourse* (Illinois: Dalkey Archive Press, 1995), 30.

[2] Brooke-Rose, "Christine Brooke-Rose in Conversation", *P.N. Review*, 29/35, (September-October 1990), 32.

[3] For example, various instruments used to observe reality in detail are metaphorically associated to aspects which are incongruous with the use that science normally makes of them. Brooke-Rose, *Out* (1964), in *The Christine Brooke-Rose Omnibus* (Manchester: Carcanet, 1986), 11, 20-1, 39, 71, 102, 163. Hereafter references to this novel will be included in the text and given in parentheses.

experimental novel, where it appears evident that behind the rejection of the formal devices instituted by realism there lies a completely different conception of the world. Brooke-Rose's search for new representational tools was meant to be a calling into question not simply of the realist mode of narrative *per se*, but of narrative as a reflection of the world, and it was precisely because the reality behind the narrative was perceived differently that new devices capable of accounting for this reality had to be sought.

Thanks to the theories of Einstein, Heisenberg and Freud, amongst others, with the beginning of the 20th century, both the universe and the subject became de-centred, and because they were perceived as affected by indeterminable factors, faith in absolute knowledge began to fade, replaced by what Brooke-Rose calls "a philosophy of indeterminacy and a multivalent logic".[4] In parallel to the structuralists and post-structuralists, shortly after the beginning of her career as an experimental writer, Brooke-Rose would state that "reality *is* language",[5] presenting the situation of the contemporary writer in the following terms:

> Once upon a time, out there, were the Gods, the Vices and Virtues, the Personifications, and the Gods and Personifications died. So then several times upon a time, out there was Nature, and when Nature also revealed itself, at an ever-increasing pace, to be made in our mortal image, once upon another time, out there, was Reality, which also turned out to be discourse, languages, systems of significance, continuing their own negation, signifying nothing. It is thus discourse that kills...discourse that becomes a substitute for the supposed Real.... it has been going on a long time, this intolerable super-consciousness of mankind's discursive nature, further elaborated by Foucault, Derrida *et al.*[6]

This notion of reality as constructed through and through by language, is therefore at the heart of Brooke-Rose's new conception of

[4] Brooke-Rose, *A Rhetoric of the Unreal* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 7.

[5] Brooke-Rose, "View Point", *Times Literary Supplement* (1 June 1973), 614.

[6] Brooke-Rose, *Stories, Theories and Things* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 161-2.

the novel, whose ambition was then to make the reader aware of the fact that what s/he has been led to believe to be real is actually a non-original product. Her experimental texts demonstrate how a writer can create a different reality for readers by modifying the way s/he organizes the narrative and the language s/he uses. Hence, by laying bare the devices through which the text can and does manipulate its readers, Brooke-Rose proves that language has the power to affect the world in a concrete way, suggesting that by changing the way society uses language, society itself can be changed.

Because of the close relationship posited between the "world" and the "word", the questioning of realism Brooke-Rose conducts in all her texts through her different narratological choices turns her novels into an interrogation not only of the "world" created in the narrative, but also of the world that readers have been accustomed to believe is natural and which, the author maintains, is equally determined by language. Furthermore, as part of this world, the notion of identity is also questioned and disrupted. By dislocating the sense of identity which is created progressively in realist narratives through precise narratological choices, Brooke-Rose also dislocates the conventional sense of identity proper to the Western, Cartesian philosophical tradition reflected by realism. If the rounded character of 19th century narratives stood for the ideal (and idealistic) individual, normally distinguished by her/his fixed identity, Brooke-Rose's unstable, incoherent, psychologically fragmented narrators stand for the new individual seen as lying behind the surface of each human being, an individual whose conscious self coexists with the unconscious and whose fragmentary identity is perpetually changing and is determined by the language the individual is exposed to.

As a consequence of the particular status Brooke-Rose assigns to her narrators, the worlds her novels construct, filtered through their eyes, appear so unusual as to give the impression of referring to a different reality altogether. By defamiliarising the real, Brooke-Rose obliges the reader to face the element of uncertainty necessarily present in all descriptions of the world, demonstrating the coercion implicit in any claim to convey universal truths. To the perfectly coherent worlds of 19th century narratives, Brooke-Rose thus opposes worlds which do not cohere, worlds in which the ontological status of the individual and her/his world is openly problematic.

Haunted by the ontological questions her novels raise, readers are obliged to question the ontology of their own selves and their own realities.

It is with *Out* that for the first time she replaces the narrator of realist fictions with an anonymous and impoverished narrator whose physical and psychological realities are never described and who remains completely undramatised throughout the novel. This central consciousness is simply "hit" by external phenomena, apparently unable to act upon the reality around her/him. Passively receiving and registering external stimuli in a highly objectified (even though subjective) narrative, s/he coincides with what Genette, drawing on a concept introduced by Russian Formalism, would call "focal character".[7] Furthermore, since Brooke-Rose eliminates all indication of the narrator's actual presence such as personal pronouns, the narrator her/himself is simply reduced to – and can only be deduced from – her/his focal position, and as a consequence of the fact that readers are allowed to see only what the focal characters see, the whole narrative is delivered in what Genette would call "internal focalisation".

By positing such narrators at the centre of her narrative, letting them speak and think directly without any intermediary and adopting what she calls "free direct speech", i.e. direct speech not inserted in a dialogue, Brooke-Rose is therefore able to make the recuperation of the narrator in a traditional sense into an arbitrary imposition of meaning. Analogically, the definition of a fixed and immutable identity so dear to Cartesian philosophy is exposed as an imposition of significance and as the result of the urge to render more coherent (and therefore meaningful) a reality which, as Robbe-Grillet puts it, quite simply "is".[8] Consequently, her narrators become the means through which the novels challenge both received conceptions of identity and the entire process of naturalisation that readers, relying on the parameters defined by the realist tradition, try to impose on the narrative. In order to fight the reader's habit of naturalising the narrative, Brooke-Rose now presents different versions of the same

[7] Gérard Genette, *Figures III* (Paris: Du Seuil, 1972), 206-11.
[8] Alain Robbe-Grillet, *Pour un nouveau roman* (Paris: Minuit, 1963), 53.

event, and by increasingly blurring the distinction between language and reality, she prevents the reader from deciding whether something is occurring, recurring or simply being remembered.

Further, since one of the primary ways of naturalising fiction corresponds to the identification of the narrator, we see how Brooke-Rose endeavours to impede the banalisation implied in the concept of naturalisation by replacing the traditional narrator with a central consciousness who gets dispersed and reduced to a mere focal point thanks to her/his multiple names. As Barthes would state a few years after the publication of her novel, "All subversion, or all submission, of the narrative text, therefore begins with the proper name ... what is transient, today, is not the narrative, but the character; what cannot be written any longer, is the proper name".[9]

In Hegel's philosophy it was the name that granted the individual recognition and identity.[10] Similarly, in the realist novel, the name functioned as the anchoring point of all the semes which constituted the character (understood as a precise individuality), by being repetitively attached to a single name. Once the name disappears, and once the semes can no longer converge in any precise space, the claims they make to reveal the real individuality of a particular character lessen and the name loses its function. The same semes are attached to more than one name and individuality gets refracted and fragmented, the semes pointing not to a single, unified identity, but to shifting, variable ones, behind which no entity such as the character of realist tradition can be singled out.

Thus, although Brooke-Rose's novels are unable to remove the easy assumptions created by realist narratives completely, they at least disturb the powerful illusion of an unchanging reality and an absolute truth, marked as they are by the author's interest in scientific discourse and, in particular, her discovery of Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle (1926), which in its popular, basic form states that the means of observation influence the thing observed and that, as a consequence, it is impossible to determine with absolute

[9] Roland Barthes, *S/Z* (1970), in *Oeuvres Complètes* Vol. II (Paris: Seuil, 1994), 618. Unless otherwise stated, all the translations in this article are mine.

[10] G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807) (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), 311.

certainty the result of scientific observation. Moreover, Brooke-Rose was also struck by the theorem Heisenberg formulated in 1958, in which scientific language is presented as, essentially, a metaphor structuring reality.

In fact, if the aim of all deconstruction, according to Derrida, is to reverse the hierarchies on which the metaphysics of presence at the root of all Western philosophy is based,[11] then the reversal of the cause/effect dichotomy implied by Heisenberg's Principle must have appeared to Brooke-Rose to fit her (unconsciously deconstructive) intentions perfectly.

The coercive language of science in *Out*

This is particularly true in *Out*, where the idea of reversal is central and Heisenberg's principle and, more generally, Brooke-Rose's interest in scientific discourse, assume fundamental importance. The whole novel focuses in fact on the reversal of the colour barrier caused by the malady the white races contracted from the radiation they absorbed during the "displacement" – presumably the result of a nuclear holocaust – which made all the Colourless of the novel sick, thus turning the Coloured population into the hegemonic race. Since her very first novel, symptomatically entitled *The Languages of Love*, Brooke-Rose has shown how deeply she is interested in language, the way it works and the way it can produce meaning. Here her interest in language is taken a step further; her belief that the way in which metaphoric terms interact with each other is far more important than their relation with their implicit proper term has become fundamental. In *Out*, the writer seems in fact for the first time to appropriate Kittay's belief that any unit of discourse can be used as a frame for metaphors, and by positing a discursive system as her frame, she uses the various discourses within that system as metaphors, making them interact with one another.[12]

Scientific discourse thus becomes part of the author's narrative

[11] Jacques Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy* (1972) (London: The Harvester Press, 1982), 329.

[12] Eva Feder Kittay, *Metaphor: Its Cognitive Force and Linguistic Structure* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 64-8.

for the first time in this novel; recognising the poetic possibilities of specialised jargon, Brooke-Rose juxtaposes it to other discourses, in particular that of fiction. However, although she makes use of learned/scientific references in her texts, they are never gratuitous, contrary to what some critics seem to think (see for example Shirley Toulson);[13] their use is always justified by the way in which they interact with one another and with the rest of the narrative. Consequently, although recognition of the sources of these discourses has been seen by Brooke-Rose's readers as the means by which they could access the text, it is often irrelevant to an understanding of what the author is striving for. By inserting references to various cultural domains in a different context, and by juxtaposing them with new elements, Brooke-Rose tries (and actually manages) to reactivate these references and give them new meaning. Readers can only seize this meaning if they concentrate on how the elements work in the text and, instead of merely attempting to identify their origin, make an effort to see what is actually happening on the page. In opposition to the pleasure of recognition that realist texts offered their readers, the pleasure Brooke-Rose offers hers is thus the pleasure of discovery: the discovery of the new meaning that an old and overused reference can assume, of the arbitrary fixation of meaning and of the possibilities language can offer. In particular, Brooke-Rose wants to teach her readers to appreciate the poetical possibilities of all language, including specialised jargon, and it is precisely in order to do so that in *Out* she turns scientific discourse into a metaphor for an illness and a race.

I would therefore submit that it is possible to argue against the lack of political commitment in her two experimental tetralogies implied by critics such as Daniela Carpi, who in 1996 dismissed her as an ivory tower intellectual separated from reality.[14] By engaging with issues which cannot be judged as extraneous to politics, Brooke-Rose's novels do not simply offer a denunciation of particular

[13] Shirley Toulson, "Christine Brooke-Rose", in D. Kirkpatrick and J. Vinson, eds., *Contemporary Novelists* (London: St. James' Press, 1986).

[14] Daniela Carpi, "Christine Brooke-Rose: la defezione del linguaggio", in *L'ansia della scrittura. Parola e silenzio nella narrativa inglese contemporanea* (Napoli: Liguori, 1996).

versions of reality as dictated by the policies (racist, sexist or other) of certain societies, but also suggest ways to act on these realities in order to challenge them and avoid being suffocated by them.

In particular, in the case of *Out*, among the various readings the novel offers, this political dimension is very strong, as the centrality given in this text to differences of race turns it into a powerful statement about human nature and the practice of racist discrimination. Consequently, Brooke-Rose's text can be read as staging a war between what Barthes would call the "acratic" language spoken by the individual (i.e. the narrator) – whose language expresses a relative representation of reality – and the scientific language spoken by the system which, once acratic, has been made into "encratic" and, by being imposed as universally true, has achieved hegemony.[15]

Since Brooke-Rose juxtaposes scientific discourse with poetic discourse specifically to demonstrate to her readers that both scientific and poetic languages are metaphorical and that what they speak is not the truth about reality but the result of particular conventions, the definitions of Brooke-Rose as the "English Robbe-Grillet" that have been made by many critics are clearly unjustified. Contrary to the early Robbe-Grillet, who insisted on the necessity of modelling the language of literature on the supposedly natural language of science, Brooke-Rose endeavours in fact to expose the falsity of this idea of a natural reality and language. To her, all use of language is metaphorical and therefore corresponds to an interpretation and the mere act of visioning is a form of re-organisation. By observing scientific language through the lens of poetic language, by pushing Robbe-Grillet's statements to their logical conclusions and by treating his accurate descriptions of phenomena ironically, Brooke-Rose demonstrates in *Out* that the claims made by science to be simply describing what it supposes to be "reality" in a transparent language are fundamentally false and dogmatic.

Despite the objective tone of the narrator's discourse, the ambiguities of *Out* are never solved and the author is thus able to

[15] Barthes, "La guerre des languages" (1973), in *Oeuvres Complètes* Vol. II.

contest the claim of scientific discourse to deliver fundamental truths, demonstrating that it derives from the need of this discourse to assure its own survival by being made encratic. The introduction of the discourse of science in the novel is justified by the fact that the central character mingles the discourse he used in his working life (we must assume he was a chemist prior to the "displacement") with other parts of more recent discourses. But, it also allows Brooke-Rose to expose the way the claims of universality made by scientific discourse are the tools used by the Colonial system of the novel to conceal the will to power inherent in the language it speaks and to justify the policy of racial discrimination it perpetrates.

Throughout the novel, the Coloured stress those elements which differentiate their society (allegedly organised on the basis of scientific truths) from the previous Colourless one (largely based on emotions and prejudices). We see how the language the Coloured system uses to replace the old myths on which the Colourless society was based is so powerful that not only do all the Coloured believe in it without ever questioning the legitimacy of the description of the world the system offers them, but it also gains for the system the support of most of the Colourless, who equally think that modern chemistry is wonderful and that the new science can provide the answer to everything (36). In this new world, science is therefore made into the new religion,[16] but, like all religions, this faith reveals itself as inherently dogmatic, and just as the exegetes supposedly found proof in the Bible of the inferiority of woman, so the scientists find evidence of the Colourless' inferiority in chemistry and physics. Consequently, because on the basis of tribal history the fundamental difference between the Coloured and the Colourless lies in the cold-heartedness of the Whites as opposed to the warmth of the Coloured (149), the second law of thermodynamics is turned into a metaphor for discrimination: "warmth cannot flow from a cold to a hot body, from a weak body to a strong, from a sick spirit to a healthy spirit.... It is thus very difficult for the strong to love the weak, and for the healthy to love the sick" (101).

Hence, in parallel to Lévi-Strauss (who in 1958 introduced the

[16] One of the phrases the Coloured repeat throughout the novel is in fact "That's an article of faith" (51).

notion of *bricolage*) and the structuralists (who were elaborating the concept of intertextuality), Brooke-Rose shows that the new myths proposed by the scientific society of *Out* fundamentally correspond to a reshuffling of old myths and prejudices. Through her exposure of the perpetuation of ancient prejudices, her novel can be read as a strong denunciation of the racist politics adopted by many countries. Her creation of new continents such as "Afro-Eurasia", "Sino-America" and "Chinese-Europe" (131), makes up a "zone" in McHale's sense of a fictional space in which countries which are not contiguous in the real world-atlas are juxtaposed.[17] This not only justifies both the technological innovations and the reversal of the colour barrier the novel introduces, but also gives *Out* an allegorical dimension which makes it possible to apply its political denunciation to many different situations in which a discriminatory policy is adopted.[18] Because what is at stake in Brooke-Rose's novel is the will to power inherent in any use of language, the impact that language has on any individual's mind, and the process through which the identity of any individual is constituted, the novel can indeed be read as a powerful statement about human nature.

For this reason, McHale's insistence on the unfamiliarity of the world the novel depicts appears irrelevant as the devices Brooke-Rose uses are meant to defamiliarise reality.[19] This however is done to make readers aware that even the systems they encounter in their lives could make a coercive use of language and construct their own reality proclaiming it to be THE reality. In Brooke-Rose's novel, then, destabilisation and discovery must be followed by recognition, making readers realise that the devices they have been using to make sense of the written text can be applied to other areas of their experience and history. Culture, as Said would observe in his *Culture*

[17] Brian McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction* (New York and London: Routledge, 1987).

[18] This approach further confirms Brooke-Rose's unconscious deconstructive effort, as it is congruous with Derrida's position; for him, "The more indeterminate the date [and the geography], the more ample its possible sitting." Quoted by Valentine Cunningham, *In the Reading Gaol* (Oxford, UK and Cambridge, USA: Blackwell, 1994), 44.

[19] McHale, "I draw the line as a rule between one solar system and another" (1992), in Friedman and Martin, eds., *Utterly*, 194.

and Imperialism, may in fact predispose one society to the domination of another (supporting and preparing the imperialist enterprise), but it also has the power to radically question the whole notion of imperialism.[20] Because of this, *Out* could and should be read as a novel of opposition which articulates a discourse of suspicion, positing itself as a denunciation of imperialism and showing history repeating itself, despite the claim the system of the novel makes to have done away with the past. For instance, although the system of *Out* presents its era as one of "international and interracial enlightenment" (43), claiming the absence of any racial segregation, the Colourless are nonetheless restricted to the "Colourless Settlement" (163), just as Blacks and Jews were relegated to their ghettos in Apartheid South Africa and Nazi Europe. If the Colourless become ill, they can only gain admittance to the "Colourless Hospital", next to which there lies the "Colourless Cemetery" (105), an image, reminiscent of Hawthorne, which emphasises the power of the medical establishment in the society of the novel.[21] Although the Coloured claim their society to be egalitarian, the Colourless make up a vast reservoir of servants. Finally, despite the claim that everybody has the right to freedom, "Compulsory blood tests, permissive death and compulsory birth control" (82) are suggested by the man in the street, echoing proposals in Nazi Germany for the forced sterilization of the Jews.

Hence, even though the discrimination against the Colourless remains barely spoken, it is nonetheless very real, and the fact that it is attributed to the malady they contracted during the displacement strongly connects the discriminatory practices of the society of *Out* to those of other oppressive regimes, recalling the recurrence of the theme of sickness in both Fascist and Nazi propaganda.[22] Although the illogical prejudices which ruled the previous era have supposedly

[20] Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1993), xiii.

[21] Hawthorne wrote that when a colony is founded, among the earliest practical necessities is to allot a portion of the virgin soil as a cemetery, and another portion as the site of a prison.

[22] See for example Léon Degrelle, *Révolution des ames* (1938) and Adolf Hitler *Mein Kampf* (1925-1926).

been supplanted by an objective and unbiased approach, it is admitted that among the ruling Coloured "there is an irrational fear of the Colourless that lingers on" (51), the Colourless are considered "dirty" and "lazy" – just as J.M. Coetzee's Whites consider South African "Hottentots" "idle"[23] and Frantz Fanon's see Blacks in general as "sick".[24] The irrational fear the Colourless have to confront could therefore be read as another version of the colour prejudice to which Fanon's Black Man is introduced, the unreasoning hatred which neutralises the efforts the Black Man makes so as to rationalise the world.[25] As in *Out* the proof that the malady of the Colourless is not infectious is not enough to extirpate the Coloured's fear, so the fact that the scientists admitted, *in vivo* and *in vitro*, that Blacks were morphologically and hystologically analogous to the Whites, was still not enough for them to accept inter-racial relationships, a prejudice still ingrained in the popular culture of many societies.[26]

In the same way that the prejudiced Whites, in Fanon, are frightened of the Blacks and expect them to be evil, in *Out*, the Coloured woman, Mrs. Mgulu, who likes to pose as a liberal who believes abstractly in the equality of all human beings, still doesn't allow any Colourless, hence "sick", woman to touch her. Despite her claims, she keeps perceiving the Colourless as different, and the interest she takes in the Colourless is reduced to the patronising attitude which so often characterises the Colonisers' *mission civilisatrice*, and thus simply corresponds to mastery masquerading as charity. Mrs. Mgulu in fact perpetuates the objectification of the Colourless. By so doing, she becomes an accomplice of the system's discriminatory policy, just as by concentrating on the body as the site of pain, many theoretical discussions on the issue of torture objectify the victims and produce their Otherness.[27]

The notion of responsibility, already proposed in one of the

[23] J.M. Coetzee, *White Writing* (London: Yale University Press, 1988), 11-35.

[24] Frantz Fanon, *Peau Noire, Masques Blancs* (Paris: Seuil, 1952), 97.

[25] Ibid., 95.

[26] Iibid., 96.

[27] The issue of how the liberal writer and reader should approach his/her material has been central in the Post-Colonial literature of the last few decades, but space limits prevent me from addressing it here.

author's early realist novels ("We are all responsible, all the time, for everything"),[28] therefore assumes a stronger impact in *Out*. Here Brooke-Rose more consistently suggests that everybody who is responsible, one way or another, for making the other into the different and inferior Other, is to be blamed for the racist policies adopted by various systems. Although not actively taking part in the oppression of the victims, those who help the system to perpetrate its violence, either by passively accepting it, or by helping to create the social and political conditions in which it became possible, are equally responsible. Like Mrs. Mgulu, those who have convinced themselves there is nothing they can do to stop the horrors of state oppression and who, instead of concentrating on "prevention", limit themselves to the "cure" to ease their conscience, must be considered the historical and economic accomplices to the systems' policy of injustice and discrimination.

In *Out*, Brooke-Rose shows how the scientific system's "technique for living" and "Unemployment" and "Pension" pill schemes, supposedly intended to help the Colourless cope with their situation, are simply other means by which the Coloured keep the Colourless under control and restrict their freedom, as is openly demonstrated by the fact that as soon as someone refuses to take the pills they become compulsory. She is thus suggesting something similar to the notion originally proposed by Sartre in 1961, when he wrote that Western humanism "was nothing but an ideology of lies, a wonderful justification for pillage; its tender attitudes and sensitivity were only alibis for our aggressions".[29] Not only does humanism provide a justification, but it plays an important part in the constitution of the colonialist ideology, thus itself becoming a form of ideological control. In fact, if the main effect of colonialism, as Fanon claims, is to dehumanise the native, then this process finds its justification precisely in the humanistic assumption of a "universal man" (the coherent "I" of Cartesian philosophy which structuralism unveiled as a product of language), whose nature humanism set out

[28] Brooke-Rose, *The Sycamore Tree* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1958), 117.

[29] Jean Paul Sartre, "Preface", in Fanon, *Les damnées de la terre* (France: Editions la Découverte, 1985), 18.

to explain, necessarily producing the "non-human" Other against which "Man" could be defined.

By exposing the oppression inherent in these forms of humanism, by denouncing the fact that everybody, to a greater or lesser extent, is guilty of it, and by implying that anybody would act identically to obtain and maintain power, Brooke-Rose's novel speaks of a fundamental idiosyncrasy in human beings, namely that everyone has a latent disposition for oppression, and that the Coloniser inside each person referred to by Sartre is only waiting to be given the opportunity to make his/her voice heard.[30] The reasons for this, she suggests, lie deep in the very nature of human beings, and are inherent in their very humanity, as the language which makes a biological being into a human is always a language of authority intrinsically disposed to coercion and colonisation.

Brooke-Rose seems in fact to follow (or herald) Lacan's general philosophy of the genesis of the individual as a human being. For both authors, the "human being" as such is in fact only born in and because of language. Moreover, in *Out*, as well as in all her other novels, she stages the struggle which each individual and system enact in order to have their languages recognised by Others as dominant, just like Lacan's Oedipal father who, representing the Law, intervenes in the unmediated relationship of mother and child typical of what Lacan calls the Mirror Phase in the attempt to have his language recognised as the lawful language of authority.

Right from Brooke-Rose's very first novels, language is actually conceived as such a powerful tool that it has concrete effects on reality.[31] With *Out*, she emphasises not only that each individual permanently exercises the power of language, but also that when this language is spoken by an entire class, country, or race, it gives rise to the concrete horrors humanity has witnessed throughout history.

However, it would be a mistake, Brooke-Rose seems to suggest, to believe that these processes remain aberrant exceptions. According

[30] Ibid., 19.

[31] See for example *The Languages of Love* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1957), 160; and *The Sycamore Tree*, 210. This power is increasingly identified with the manipulatory capacity of language which Brooke-Rose would to a large extent expose in *The Dear Deceit* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1960).

to the Lacanian theory she seems to follow, whether consciously or unconsciously, the mechanisms at work are intrinsic to language and to human nature. Brooke-Rose therefore seems to make Hegel's lesson her own, acknowledging the fact that because the Master always needs a Servant in order to be recognised as a Master, the idea of an intrinsic mastery is negated. The Other, like the "I", is thus exposed as a dialectical position constructed by the language of authority spoken by the system; because these positions are culturally and historically determined, it is suggested that everybody is bound, sooner or later, to be constructed as the Other. As a consequence of this reversal between the "I" and the "Other", the "Master" and the "Servant" (already anticipated by Hegel), after the reversal of identity brought about by the "displacement", the Colourless need the Coloured ex-Servants for recognition (84-5).

Because this struggle for recognition between the "I" and the "Other" is undertaken, in colonial situations, by two entire races, the war between encratic and acratic languages Barthes was to write about becomes a war between different sections of humanity which speak different languages, namely the "weak" and "strong" humanities referred to in *Out* (108). It becomes apparent, then, that both in *Out* and in real colonial situations what is at stake is the survival of both the individual and the system in question. It is precisely in the attempt not to be submerged by the language of Others that both individuals and systems tend to secure themselves within the language they recognise as theirs, fighting against outsiders, the bearers of other models of intelligibility which must equally be assumed to be trying to impose their own language.

Brooke-Rose therefore suggests that without recognising that the seeds of their own destruction as Masters lie in the very process through which they try to obtain recognition, the systems operate a necessary narcissistic reflection of the One in the Other, projecting the evil intrinsic in themselves onto Others and turning them into scapegoats they can blame for the annihilation which was inherent, from the very beginning, in themselves. This is why the initial weakness of the enemy has to be turned into an immense strength, and why, recalling Hitler and Mussolini's treatment of the Jews, the system of *Out* turns a weak old man into a menacing presence.

Emphasis is therefore given to the fact that the creation of the Other is rendered possible by the will to power intrinsic in the language of authority, which, in the case of *Out*, is the scientific language spoken by the physicians. This is why, in the society of the novel, the scientific notion of entropy provides the justification for the system's refusal of any contact with the exterior, as it is only when the system is closed that entropy (as disorder among the atoms) does not increase, thereby allowing the system to survive (101). The invocation of this scientific notion therefore provides a justification for the rejection of all outsiders operated by oppressive regimes which do not recognise that it is precisely the fights they enact in order not to be invaded that dissipate their energy and will eventually lead to their ruin.[32] This is the reason why one of the articles of faith in *Out* states that "Everything that moves increases risk" (57); why the Colourless are not allowed to read books, and why art – banned by Plato from his Republic and turned into one of the targets of state censorship in oppressive regimes – is banned from this society and becomes a thing of the past.

The power intrinsic in the metaphorical substitutions typical of art is what is perceived as most threatening by the necessarily static and rigid systems of oppressive regimes; and it is this that assumes particular importance in the scientific system depicted in *Out*. The characteristic feature of metaphor is its capacity to create associations which activate new meanings, thus adding new connotations to the literal and univocal denotation the system imposes on words and, in the case of Brooke-Rose's novels, entire discourses. Consequently, metaphor becomes a way to stir up the stagnation imposed by the system because of its fear of extinction, a way to travel through language and to make language travel, revealing the existence of different possibilities of meaning and exposing the arbitrary imposition of an unambiguous interpretation of the world operated by the system.

This is why both Plato and the scientific system of Brooke-

[32] The exclusion of all outsiders was actually the leading principle of Mussolini's Fascist ideology, summarised as "Everything in the State, nothing against the State, nothing outside the State". Benito Mussolini, *Fascism: Doctrine and Institutions* (Roma: Ardita, 1935), 40.

Rose's novel would exclude poetic language from their societies, and why the system of *Out* is always suspicious of the main character who, because of his mental sickness, is incapable of actively organising a discourse according to the habitual structures dictated by the system. Being unable to actively select which segments belong to one discourse and which to some other, Brooke-Rose's central consciousness passively registers the various phenomena he is struck by, mingles them and distorts them in his "sick" mind, and thus creates an altogether new discourse pervaded by unexpected connotations. By taking scientific discourse literally, and by juxtaposing scientific expressions to other elements and inserting them into new contexts, he unwittingly creates precisely the metaphors which the scientific system has tried to ban. In this way, he assumes the part of the outsider who endangers the stability of the system and who, by not submitting to its rules, becomes uncontrollable. In fact, although one of the "articles of faith" of this society recites that everything (and everybody) has its own mechanics and is enabled to function thanks to a sort of inner motor which is perfectly controllable by the new science, the narrator's mechanics remain unexplained, as his metaphoric discourse jams the mechanisms according to which the system would expect him to work. Hence the attempts of the system to integrate him so as to make him simply "one of the Colourless" (whose actions and reactions are completely predictable and consequently controllable); hence the efforts made to find him a job; the attempt to make him take the dole pills; the continual reminders that he must learn to "relate", that he must learn to "adapt" to his new "displaced" situation and that he must learn to "participate" in the new version of Reality the Coloured system has imposed; hence, more importantly, the privilege of "psychoscopy" he is granted.

"Psychoscopy" is a science-fictional procedure comparable perhaps to an electroencephalogram. Allegedly recording not only the electronic impulses of the brain but also the emotions, fears, intentions etc. of the person, it comes to represent both the advancement and power of science. In this "enlightened" society, doctors have total control over people's lives, in so far as not only, due to their malady, do people depend on them for their survival, but, more fundamentally, because, like all emissaries of the various

systems, they have the power to construct individuals in very concrete ways.[33]

Brooke-Rose seems therefore to suggest that because discourse, in words Foucault would use years later, "can be both an instrument and an effect of power",[34] any act of language (in particular, here, the language of science spoken by the doctors) becomes an instrument for manipulation and control, a powerful tool which can create what it represents, and as such becomes complicit in the perpetration of the system's power and the creation of the Other.

Thus, thanks to "psychoscopy" (through which the dominant language of science is delivered in the form of the written biogram traced by the machine), the doctors in *Out* are actually able to construct the individual. Not only does the practice of psychoscopy keep people permanently under control by rendering the mechanisms of neurosis completely predictable, but it also enables the doctors to decide what each individual will do next. As the doctor who is "psychoscopying" the narrator says: "Your profile is coming up very clearly indeed on the oscillograph, and the profile provokes its own continuation, did you know that, the profile moulds you as it oscillates? Diagnosis provokes its own cause, did you know that? To put it more succinctly, diagnosis prognosticates aetiology" (138-9).

The "displacement" has therefore brought about not only a reversal of the colour barrier and of identities, but also, and most importantly, a reversal of cause and effect (the primary reversal from which all the others follow). Here we can see how Brooke-Rose's re-formulation of Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle, not only serves to expose the claims of scientific discourse to deliver universal truths, but also enables her to emphasise the ambiguity implicit in the very concepts of cause and effect.

Further, by proceeding in her reasoning, Brooke-Rose metaphorically exploits Heisenberg's Principle so as to denounce the consequences the reversal of cause and effect might have in colonial situations where torture is practised.

Expanding on a concept she had already introduced in one of the

[33] "I am your doctor, father, God. I build you up." (138). See also pp. 110, 167.

[34] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, Vol. I (1976) (London: Penguin Books, 1981), 101.

short stories in *Go When You See the Green Man Walking* – where it was insinuated that although labels are just a game, sometimes they turn out to speak the truth[35] – Brooke-Rose suggests in *Out* not only that it is precisely the reversal between cause and effect which enables language to create the Other simply by defining an individual as such, but also that, in order to turn an individual into the Other, the violence which distinguishes the system's language of propaganda must be made concrete in the physical injuries that the language of torture imposes on the victim's body. In fact, if what defines man is, according to Western philosophy, a universal essence of "manhood" which is common to all human beings and is not shared by the lower Others, the systems must destroy that essence in order to turn full human beings into the Others. So, through imprisonment and torture, the systems try "to make the one, the body, emphatically and crushingly *present* by destroying it, and to make the other, the voice, *absent* by destroying it".[36] As a consequence, the person is left with just an injured body (the material body Descartes identified with the primary Other). Perceived as lacking the "essence of humanity", s/he can therefore become the "sub-human" Other the systems have been waiting for.

Furthermore, just as in the society of *Out* one of the Coloured's articles of faith is that the past – history and memory – does not exist (thereby obliterating all memory of mastery the Colourless might have), the regimes construct the victims' memory according to their wishes through the physical pain and mental distress they inflict on their victims through torture, thereby obtaining incriminating declarations from innocent people who, to put an end to the pain, conform to the torturers' truth and confess crimes they have never committed.

Because torture uses punishment to find evidence and creates the guilt the individual is accused of, I would like to suggest that this practice could and should be seen as the reversal of a trial and, as such, that it could be considered as an extreme exemplification of Heisenberg's Principle. By pushing this argument to its logical

[35] Brooke-Rose, *Go When You See the Green Man Walking* (London: Michael Joseph, 1970), 142.

[36] Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 49.

consequences, then, the political commitment of Brooke-Rose's novel appears evident: a strong link is posited in the text between the scars the torturer leaves on his victims (i.e. the signs the systems write on their bodies to create their Otherness) and the biogram the oscillograph traces during the psychoscopy, moulding the individual according to the doctors' desire.

Although psychoscopy is a bloodless practice, the image of the oscillographer is sinisterly reminiscent of the device Franz Kafka uses in "The Penal Colony" (1919) to denounce the complicity between writing and torture: the infernal apparatus which literally writes on the victims' flesh the crimes they have been convicted of. It is therefore the "civilised" ability to write which creates the Other, making whoever participates in delivering this "civilisation" to the "barbarians" partially guilty of the construction of the Other.[37]

Writing thus becomes the practice through which the personal history of the individual can be created, just as it is that which creates the history of humanity in general, because, as Hegel taught in 1822 in the lectures on which his *Philosophy of History* is based, it is only by writing down events that history can begin.[38] This precondition of history – introduced in *Out* by textual segments such as "Somewhere in the archives there will be evidence that this occurred, if it is kept, and for those who wish to look it up. Other episodes, however, cannot be proved in this way" (79) – gives an immense power to all systems willing to use language coercively, as if it were sufficient to change the words in order to change the event and the reality it will represent to future generations, enabling the systems to re-write the history of individuals, nations and races according to their wishes.[39]

[37] Although Brooke-Rose underlines here the oppressive potential of language – in opposition to Derrida, who emphasises how language subverts any totalitarianism – the notion of written language she proposes in this novel seems to partially herald the deconstruction of the speech/writing dichotomy Derrida would accomplish in *Of Grammatology*. See Derrida, *Of Grammatology* (1967) (London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1976), 109.

[38] Hegel, *The Philosophy of History* (1822) (Buffalo: Prometheus Books, 1991), 61.

[39] It was in fact the language adopted by the Nazis which obscured the horror of the elimination of human beings as vermin. Again, during both Fascism and Apartheid, the official reports produced on the death of prisoners such as Matteotti (1924) and Stephen Biko (1977) consisted of a mixture of euphemism, pseudo-scientific descriptions and bureaucratic formulas concealing the horrors perpetrated.

History thus becomes another fiction, all historical reports simply another example of the "palimpsest history" Brooke-Rose would later discuss in her essay of 1991: yet another relative concept which depends on the means of observation available and – as the narrator of *Out* repeats – on the "mind" behind it. In this as well as in several other novels, Brooke-Rose therefore challenges the traditional notions of history as a reliable report of events and of memory as faithful, problematising the concept of historical truth and demonstrating how the past, both racial and individual, is a further text, a construction of words through which a sense of identity is created.

Consequently, because, as we read in *Out*, "the development of phenomena is correlative to that of consciousness" (110), and because the existence of the phenomenon depends on the language the consciousness has at its disposal to describe it, the Colourless, like all colonised populations throughout history, are perceived – and, consequently, come into existence – as inferiors.

However, despite the system's endeavours to obliterate his individuality, the narrator will never be totally integrated, and despite the attempts by scientific discourse to put a halt to the endless chain of meanings that the metaphoric nature of his language is able to create, the plural language he speaks not only demonstrates how scientific discourse is no more or no less metaphorical than poetic language, but also that there exist different possible meanings that could be imposed on the world other than those dictated by the scientific discourse of the system, whose claims to deliver universal truths are therefore undermined.

Furthermore, by perceiving the microscopes and other technical instruments – the three-dimensional signifiers of scientific discourse – used by the doctors as "conventional weapons" (76), the character implicitly, even though unconsciously, acknowledges the will to power inherent in language and heralds Barthes's definition of language as an intimidatory tool.[40] Moreover, by inquiring continually as to whether the scientific language spoken by the Coloured "bear[s] any relation to the real thing" (84), the narrator is in fact questioning the notion of a transparent language which the system tried to impose.

[40] Barthes, " La guerre", in *Oeuvres,* 1612.

Throughout the novel he tries to discover the truth which supposedly lies behind language, the secret behind the layers of words, and the final answer which stands not only for the diagnosis the doctors should have formulated after his psychoscopy, but also for the answer to all the "whys", the explanation of all that seems incongruous, all that religion tells us we will find at the moment of death and that science claims to have in its pocket. If the character fails to grasp the secret, however, it is not because his mental instability renders him incapable of adequate cognition, but because the truth that scientific discourse promised is non-existent: it is precisely his metaphorical and "insane" discourse, by invoking the terminology of the scientific discourse, that makes this exposure. Consequently, despite the efforts of the system to integrate him, the central consciousness becomes increasingly alienated from all institutions; and the endless chain of metaphoric associations he produces becomes so powerful that it inhibits his ability to deal with reality in the terms dictated by the system, pushing him into a state of semi-permanent hallucination which makes him doubt his own identity and existence.

Thus, while maintaining the terminology and tone of scientific discourse, the narrator's speech creates metaphors which demonstrate how false the system's assumption of a natural language is. Behind language (scientific or other) lies not reality, but more language, a mediation which refers to another mediation, creating an endless series which progresses and regresses *ad infinitum*, as if in accordance with what Brooke-Rose would discover to be one of Derrida's favourite phrases: "there have never been anything but supplements".[41] Just as behind language we can only find more language, so behind pronouns lies not the essential identity of the individual, but a further linguistic construct which originates from the accumulation of the different languages the individual is exposed to.

In spite of this, however, we cannot read the claims Brooke-Rose's novel seems to make about the linguistic construction of identity and reality as an attempt on her part to reduce everything to the status of linguistic construct, in the sense of a purely speculative,

[41] Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, 159.

immaterial sign which does not have any repercussions on reality. Just as each individual is able to change her/his identity through language so, through language, the author argues, a different identity can be imposed upon her/him. Indeed, if on one hand she insists on the linguistic construction of reality, on the other she seems to acknowledge the traumatic effects of language, advocating instead that the imposition or acquisition of a linguistic identity actually results in precise corporeal effects which turn the individual either into the oppressor or the oppressed.

It is for this reason that, despite its emphasis on the rhetoricity of history, this novel seems simultaneously to admit and reject the total engulfing of "world" by "word". The lack of temporal and geographical specificity in Brooke-Rose's narrative can be considered as one of her novel's weaknesses, as it deprives it of the singularity of time, place, and person which would strengthen its denunciation of racial discrimination. At the same time, however, it is the very lack of spatial and temporal particularisation that enables the allegorical reading I have suggested.

By exemplifying the risks of xenophobia present in any form of nationalism, the novel draws on real practices of white colonialism and connects with a cruel past of victimisation. For, in spite of the author's effort to demonstrate the linguistic construction of reality, it seems to me that *Out* retrieves and refers to the real history of real nations, thereby emphasising not only that history has lost its epistemological innocence, that it is always, partially, text, but also that the totally linguistic nature of history, as well as of any other aspect of reality, is not reasonably defensible. This, I would like to add, is especially true in countries where the civilised ability to write imposes a cruel colonial writing on the bodies of the colonised, the wounds of the victims of torture re-affirming the consistency, the concreteness and the reality of their bodies.

Whether this result corresponds to the aim the author has been striving for throughout the text, is not completely clear. Brooke-Rose seems to be trapped in a contradictory position, trying – by defending both the linguistic nature of reality and the concreteness of certain aspects of that same reality – to have it both ways. This contradiction (also at the root of many postmodern and post-structuralist works), would later be resolved, in the author's more mature work, thanks to

her imaginative use of language, to her development of a more personal position *vis à vis* Robbe-Grillet and the *nouveau roman* and to the more systematic interest she would take in the theories elaborated in those years. As I mentioned at the very beginning of this article, *Out* represents an incredible achievement in terms of both its literary merit and its remarkable insights into what Brooke-Rose would later discover were the principal subjects of the intellectual debate of the time (amongst others: the status of reality, the power of language and the constitution of identity), whereas it seems to be a bit tentative and not completely convincing in terms of its theoretical apparatus.

On the one hand, Brooke-Rose seems in fact quite willing to subscribe to theories which claim the absolute rhetoricity of the real (and which, by confining everything – the body, pain, oppression – to a linguistic construct, often seem to minimise historical aberrations founded on discriminatory practices). At the same time, however, she gives the impression of wanting to distance herself from the position of many postmodernists who relish the free play of language as a way of evading the real consequences of ideological constructs; by stressing the traumatic effects that language and ideology have upon real bodies, she seems to acknowledge their concreteness and substantiality and, consequently, their ability to suffer.

It looks therefore as if there is a contradiction between the position the author was to defend outside the context of this novel (whether in her later fiction or her critical work), and the theoretical result her novel seems to achieve.

Through her narrator, Brooke-Rose is in fact able to show not only how the notion of a rational and conscious self is undermined by the presence, in all mental activities, of the unconscious, but also that because identity is the result of an act of language, it can be continually re-constructed through every speech act accomplished by the individual, whatever name the individual is designated by. Her central consciousness, then, comes across not as a cohesive, but as a refracted and multiple individuality, a schizophrenic subject whose identity is permanently shifting. The humanist concept of identity is thus destroyed in this novel, and what finally remains is simply an "identity" deconstructed piece by piece.

Although in Western tradition the linguistic construction of

identity and the deferral of language have often been dismissed as negative, these are precisely what enable Brooke-Rose's character to assume several different identities simply by means of words, thus precluding his total integration into, and suffocation by, the system. For instance, because the questions he is asked in relation to the job he had before the "displacement" come to stand for an enquiry about his selfhood, it is by means of language that the narrator, giving a different answer each time, can assume different identities and create himself as "electrician", "gardener", "schoolmaster", "fortune-teller", "crane-operator", "physicist", "alchemist", "humanist", "psychopath", "odd-job man" and so on.

Despite the risk of complete degeneration implied by the assumption of many different identities on his part, the narrator realises that "With a little concentration from within it is possible after all, to divide oneself and remain whole. At least for a time." (116). By facing his deconstructed identity, he survives not only the risk of disintegration, but also the system's attempt to integrate him and impose a fixed and controllable identity on him. "Sooner or later, however, the correct identity, the Colourless identity that belongs, will be, is called out" (49), he repeats while waiting at the Labour Exchange and the Hospital; but in fact this never happens, and all the system's attempts at categorisation fail.

Conclusions

The narrator's shifting identity therefore puts him outside the system and makes him invisible to everybody, turning him into a different person according to the different interlocutor he is confronted with. However, if this process (the basis of any social intercourse in real life) fails to provide the character with recognition from the Other and the identity that, allegedly, would follow, it is also what enables him to endure. Furthermore, it demonstrates the futility of such a struggle for recognition, as the identity which is now recognised is only temporary. With each new moment and each new person who grants us recognition, identity will change again.

The positions of the "I", the "You" and "the Other" being created by and through language, are simply provisional constructs, social and political acts performed in language, which keep being

revised, deconstructed and reconstructed. Essential identity, suggests Brooke-Rose, does not exist. However, it is precisely the absence of an intrinsic identity and the much abused power of language to change things into other things, humans into sub-humans, identity into other identities, that enables human beings to oppose the coercive use colonisers make of it. Thus, too, by making "mental love" to his wife (i.e. telling and listening to stories from their past), the central consciousness is enabled to recover what the system had tried to destroy.[42]

The discourse of the narrator unwittingly opposes new metaphorical associations to the stereotypes and scientific truths on which his society is based. In what seems an early insight into what Derrida would refer to with the words "no meaning can be determined out of context, but no context permits saturation",[43] old formulas are thus reactivated, and, thanks to the new meaning they assume, made to suggest that "Knowledge certain or indubitable is unobtainable" (60).

Like the poetic language of literature, the discourse of the central consciousness therefore offers an alternative and equally valid truth to that proposed by scientific discourse. It breaks the circularity of historical repetition denounced by the novel by creating lateral paths which deviate from the closed course of the circle, replacing the chain of repetition with a more imaginative and dynamic model. The narrator's repetition of sentences and entire passages, either with almost imperceptible variations or placed in different contexts, thus assumes a double role, acting both as enchanting refrains and dynamic elements. If he is able to do this, it is because he gives free play to the process of metaphoric association that the system tries to restrict.

[42] Here, however, we again find a slight contradiction. Although Brooke-Rose is quite clearly attempting to emphasise that language, if used imaginatively, can enable the individual to oppose the attempts at coercion enacted by the system, she simultaneously seems to deprive this claim (and subsequently also the "system's coercive attempts") of any substantiality. Despite the claim that "Memory has occurred, in a state of comatose suspension" (95), in fact, because two different versions of the narrator's first meeting with his wife are given (92), language is shown once again to construct the past and the reality it supposedly describes, with the consequence that reality itself appears somehow to be dematerialised.

[43] Derrida, *Living on*, 81.

Hence, if Brooke-Rose investigates and shows the reader the dangers implicit in language and its potential for illusion, she simultaneously suggests the possibility for a different use of that very language, one which would enable the reader not simply to passively receive the reality, truth and identity the systems impose on each individual, but to participate in the construction of that reality and expose all the cultural fictions (identity included) which societies live by, thereby nullifying the systems' attempt at colonisation.

We can therefore see how at the heart of Brooke-Rose's narrative there is a fundamental ambiguity in her attitude towards language. Perceived as both dangerous and useful, as that which can render the individual both strong and weak, language, fundamentally, is both a means of alienation and a creative device through which text and character can prolong their lives.

A constant focus also in her later production, this notion clearly underlies the entire novel, but it is perhaps in the final passages that in her attempt to draw the conclusions of what her text has been propounding, Brooke-Rose most openly acknowledges this duplicity of language. Trying to avoid providing a neat, coherent ending, she writes some the most poetic lines of her career:

> The fire leaps up bright orange, with a yellow shower, circles of red, oh, close your eyes ... the sun hits the back of the neck, the dust fills up the head, bombarding the cells that run amok, emitting helium particles until the human element disintegrates and radiates into the huge consciousness of light, under the eyelids a gold triangle, a yellow shower, circles of orange and the head goes leaden, grey in a hundred and sixty microseconds, three million two hundred and thirty one thousand six hundred and forty two years one hundred and seventy three days point nine. And a billion more besides. We are merely marking time and time is nothing, nothing. A moment of agony, of burning flesh, an aspect of the human element disintegrating to ash, and you are dead. But that's another story (198).

The Beckett-like sad and melancholic tones of the conclusion seem to suggest the total capitulation of the narrator to the system's language of authority and the complete disintegration of his self. Yet, the last few words the character pronounces and the phrase he has

been repeating in different forms throughout the novel – "Sometimes it is sufficient to imagine a way of life for the way of life to occur" (193) – not only pose the final ambiguity in terms of what actually happens in the world of the novel, but also, and more importantly, remind the reader of the power of language, which, after the conclusion of one story, permits the beginning of another.

It is therefore the very creativity of language that enables Brooke-Rose's narrator to survive and create, through his imaginative use of language, marginal variations of Truth. Against the systematicity of theory, her narrators propose a deconstructed version of it; against the systems' rigidity, they introduce ambiguities and uncertainties, and against the attempted imposition of a fixed and unchanging identity, they oppose a fluid, ever-changing one. In a "scientific" world where doubt will always be a sort of luxury, Brooke-Rose introduces doubts on both the ontological and narrative levels, calling upon the entire Western World and every user of language to interrogate the old myths and consequently change the relations of power. By so doing, Brooke-Rose urges readers to re-consider many of their assumptions, stimulating them to re-think the world so as to include all those positions that have until now been marginalised.

Luciana Parisi

Essence and Virtuality: the Incorporeal Desire of Lilith

This article embraces three areas of study: molecular biology, science fiction and materialist philosophy. This indiscriminate weaving attempts to turn the binarism between reality and fiction into a 'flatline' of connections without analogies.[1] Re-calling Haraway's suggestion that the difference between science fiction and reality is "a mere optical illusion",[2] the article connects the futurist scenario of Octavia Butler's *Dawn* with the evolutionary theories of symbiosis and of the aquatic ape. This connection involves the submersion of the capacities of a body and the subversion of the economy of reproduction and of the entropic cycle of pleasure dominating the rhetoric of survival of the human species. Similarly, this networking method of analysis of Butler's text aims to question the postmodern impasse in feminist theories between "essentialism" and "constructivism".

The feminist critique on the neutrality of nature and sex has mostly been carried out through a cultural and historical analysis of the attributes assigned to nature by a specific gender. Man, the human form of modernity *par excellence*, has been questioned by a political female voice revealing the cultural construction inscribed upon an

[1] The notion of "flatline" is used by Deleuze and Guattari in the plateaus "Rhizome" and "Becoming animal" in *A Thousand Plateaus. Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (London: Athlone Press, 1987); with this term they refer to a horizontal plane of concepts as opposed to the hierarchy of metaphysical thought, which is transcendent and vertical.

[2] See Donna Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs and Women. The Reinvention of Nature* (London: F.A. Books, 1991).

assumed passive body. The female body as a space of reproduction of the male/human species has been analysed as space constructed by a specific patriarchal culture. As a consequence, the neutrality of nature and sex has been challenged by the analysis and strategies of gender aiming to move beyond the analogy of sex/gender by proposing a political subjectivity without fixed identity. Donna Haraway's cyborg constituted the ultimate example of such a move, pushing the barriers between animals, humans and machines, and exposing the problematic position that the "unnatural" female body occupies in the informatic era.

Nevertheless, the cultural critique of nature often vacillates in the waters of its own monster. In conceiving of a noumenal nature that can only be constructed and deconstructed by human knowledge, such a critique refers to that which cannot be known as "alien" or "sublime". Such an approach re-proposes the teleological understanding of nature based on the Kantian analogy between man and god. Rather than approaching nature by moving beyond the identity of sex/gender and operating a cultural deconstruction of the female body, this article proposes to radically break with teleological thought. In disclosing the intensive field of connections and continuities, this analysis of *Dawn* will disrupt any separation or hierarchy between nature and culture, the alien and the human. In connecting the molecular ethics of Spinoza, the microbial theory of endosymbiosis and Lilith's encounter with the Oankali, this article proposes the understanding of the body in terms of multiplicity and becoming. Rather than considering already formed sex and gender, this article looks at pre-individual agents of complexity in the process of actualization of a body, a singular mode of being and becoming. This is not a repetitive catharsis of the same and yet it does not appeal to the noumenal that can only be conceived through principles of analogy between man and nature. Quite the contrary, as Lilith's encounter with starfish creatures demonstrates, such a process lays out an intensive feeling of the body in a differential network of active agents merging on a flatline of intensities. Here, nature is neither the realm of the given nor of the constructed, and sex is not finalised to pleasure and reproduction. In *Dawn*, the axis of sex/gender, body/mind, fiction/reality are dissolved into a matrix of desire that never allows flows to be interrupted and repressed by the structures of

the self. Lilith's encounter with the Oankali marks a passage towards an intense becoming of a body.

Dawn or the awakening of the body

> Awakening was hard, as always. The ultimate disappointment. It was a struggle to take in enough air to drive off nightmare sensation of asphyxiation. Lilith Yapo lay gasping, shaking with the force of her effort. Her heart beat too fast, too loud. She curled around it, fetal, helpless. Circulation began to return to her arms and legs in flurries of minute, exquisite pains.[3]

After years of unrecorded dreams, Lilith is finally awake. Her body strives to re-acquire the biorhythm of the heart beating through the circulation of the blood. However, pervading her body's cells and neurones, the surrounding environment reduces her immunity system of self-defence to a laugh. Yet, she feels much more than a conflict between the self and the other, the known and the unknown. This is not simply an alien penetration of the pure organism. Her body is caught in the middle of a passage, a genetic trade proliferating inside her body as much as coming from outside.

This environment dissolves the faces of her identity. Lilith does not realise where she is and why she is there. Her body feels different, modified as if it was no longer hers.

> Opening and closing her jacket, her hand touched the long scar across her abdomen. She had acquired it somehow between her second and third Awakenings, had examined it fearfully, wondering what had been done to her. What had she lost or gained, and why? And what else might be done? She did not own herself any longer.[4]

This sense of loss communicates a dispossession of the body from the self, a state of opening without shelter which often resonates as dangerous, but that ultimately results in the capacity of a body of being affected. The power of being affected, as Spinoza underlines, is

[3] Octavia Butler, *Dawn* (New York: Popular Library, 1987), 3.
[4] Ibid., 4-5.

not determined by emotions, which are merely subjective reactions to external conditions. Affection, on the contrary, conveys intensity, an unqualified passion operating through an impingement upon the body.[5] Intensity operates at the level of the body never solidified into the organism. At this level of passional suspension, a body "exists more outside of itself, more in the abstracted action of the impinging thing, and the abstracted context of that action, than within itself".[6] Intensity can be felt yet never simply experienced. For Spinoza, the essence of a body cannot be confined to its actual existence. The power of being affected deploys indefinite potential emerging from the encounters with other bodies.[7] Lilith's essence is not exhausted by her human existence. Her body surprisingly reveals a power to become something else.

For two hundred and fifty years, she has been kept dormant by the Oankali species orbiting in a spaceship around the earth. Her body has been preserved through catatonic phases whilst her biology was trained to mesh with alien race. In spite of regressing towards nothingness and finitude, this suspended living marks her becoming intense. As Deleuze and Guattari gloss, death is "what is felt in every feeling, what never ceases and never finishes happening in every becoming – in the becoming-another-sex, the becoming-god, the becoming-a-race, etc., forming zones of intensity on the body without organs".[8] Death points neither at a final end nor at a linear inorganic regression opposed to life drives and organic development. "It is absurd to speak of a death desire that would presumably be in qualitative opposition to the life desires".[9]

Nevertheless, Freud maintains a dualistic qualitative distinction between Eros and Thanatos, eliminating the libido and imposing a regulating and indifferent neutral energy that renders the conversions

[5] Baruch Spinoza, *Ethics. The Collective Works of Spinoza,* trans. E. Curley (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1985), part III, definitions 2, 3.

[6] Brian Massumi, "The Autonomy of Affects", in Paul Patton, ed., *Deleuze: A Critical Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1992), 225.

[7] Spinoza, *Ethics*, II, proposition 10, scholium.

[8] Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *AntiOedipus. Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, preface by Michel Foucault, trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane (London: Athlone Press, 1983), 330.

[9] Ibid., 329.

between the two drives impossible.[10] Moving away from Freud's death instinct, Deleuze and Guattari argue that there is no transcendent principle of death without model and experience. "The experience of death is the most common of occurrences in the unconscious, precisely because it occurs in life and for life, in every passage or becoming, in every intensity as passage or becoming."[11]

Catatonia involves a subversion of the death instinct: a molecular a-death, a continuum never ceasing to be distributed through the becoming of a body. In suspending the biorhythm of her body, the Oankali were preserving Lilith's time. At each awakening, however, her body was eager to live and survive. Jdahya, her Oankali guide, explicitly says to her: "You wanted your time back – the time we've taken from you. You didn't want to die".[12] These are not forces of life rebelling against death. The potential becomings of a body surpass the actual point of death and enfold its virtual essence. For Spinoza essence is never unbounded yet never determined by existence. Essence is defined as the power or *conatus* of an actual body existing in a web of affective relations with other actual bodies.

Lilith's body never ceases to be affected by the Oankali trade. Even when suspended in catatonia, her body participates in a genetic continuum unfinalised to points of death and life. Her genetic particles are extracted and engineered by the tentacled manipulations of the ooloi, pushing her body away from the faces of identity and representation.

Identity, the form of the self aiming to represent *a priori* the complexity of a body, is not central to Octavia Butler's trilogy *Xenogenesis*, and especially to *Dawn*. The ontological burden of the self inscribed in the split between identity and copy, real and artificial is substantially transformed without returning the potential of a body to the laws of the Same. Lilith's body becomes a viral medium in the passage between the world of the humans and that of the Oankali. It incorporates a threshold of change within the economy of filiation

[10] Deleuze and Guattari refer to Freud in *The Ego and the Id*, trans. Joan Riviere (New York: Norton, 1961), where he asserts the impossibility of an immediate qualitative conversion and the necessity of neutral energy. See *AntiOedipus*, 333.

[11] Deleuze and Guattari, *AntiOedipus*, 330.

[12] Butler, *Dawn*, 24.

and reproduction. Her body transforms the arborescent origin of the human species into a plane of untraceable encounters only depending on the capacity of a body to affect and be affected.

The lines to follow in *Xenogenesis* are "of an other nature" embracing the fluidity of a "matter/mater/matrix" continuum. In reversing Platonism, Irigaray refers to the "myth of the cave" and turns the world of representation into the female material/maternal dens and cavities leaking out from the contoured projections of the gaze.[13] The cave is used by the philosopher as a metaphor (i.e., a projection) of the womb, where he is imprisoned and from which he has to depart in order to be born. The uterine matrix is conceived as a symmetrical cave masking a material incommensurability through the game of representation. Substituting the indefinite obscure matrix with the enlightened world of Ideas, the prisoner will speculate and detach himself from uterine infection, the material and the maternal. His indeterminable origin will be a place where he is no longer allowed to go back without his optical instruments of measure and distance. The matter/matrix is seen as an empty space to inseminate in order for the philosopher to be born and reproduced.

Self-reproduction without contamination with the material. This illusion is at the heart of the patriarchal economy detaching the mind from the body, the abstract from the material. The speculation on the origin is only attainable through the (illusion of) unilinear genetic transmission impossible to occur without reversal affection. Such a reversal discloses the presence of a matter/matrix continuum, a female intensity never simply ascribable to the woman's organism and subject.

The matrix-ship connection

The first chapter of *Dawn* opens with a female environment. As the title recites, this is a "womb". Octavia Butler is taking us back to the fluids and flows of matter rather than to the origins of the terrestrial ape, the birth of the human race, the formation of the white male

[13] Luce Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*, trans. Gillian C. Gill (Ithaca New York: Cornell University Press, 1985).

subject. But what is this return that at the same time discloses a becoming? What does catatonia involve in this becoming? These questions are certainly familiar with the digital environment of cyberpunk, cyberspace or the matrix, where the flatline between the organic and inorganic, life and death constitutes the emergence of the complexity of time and space – a feedback between networked lines of the past and the future – and where the dissolution of the human illusion of progression and reproduction always indicates a path towards contamination.

Lilith awakes in a living space ship, an interplanetary womb with fleshy walls, conductive corridors and shrinking doors. The entire environment is an agglomerate of plants, knee-high tufts of thick, fleshy leaves growing from the soil and indistinguishable from animals. The trees are structures meant to support the shape of the ship and to provide "food, oxygen, waste disposal, transport conduits, storage and living space, work areas, many things".[14]

This dormant intelligent ship can be chemically induced to perform innumerable functions. Yet, the relationship between the Oankali and the ship is not hierarchical. The matrix is not something external to the Oankali. Rather, "[t]here is an affinity, but it's biological – a strong, symbiotic relationship. We serve the ship's needs and it serves ours. It would die without us and we would be planetbound without it".[15] The ship is an immense cyberspace where everything is in contact with everything else without the "possibility of distinguishing what is touching from what is touched".[16]

This is not a space of origin or a re-articulation of the female as subject and signifier. The non-dimensional space of the matrix entails a spatium of female potentials moving beneath the molar forms and functions of the organism. Rather than an empty incubator of the semen for reproduction, the matrix is populated by non-organised genetic material, also called organelles (mitochondrial DNA in molecular biology) and is constituted by bacterial recombinations leaking outside linear transmission and self-reproduction. The

[14] Butler, *Dawn*, 35.

[15] Ibid., 33.

[16] Luce Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One*, trans. Catherine Porter (New York: Cornell University Press, 1985), 26.

Oankali themselves carry the drive of recombination: "in a minuscule cell within a cell – a tiny organelle within every cell of our bodies".[17] The matrix-ship is not the womb of the woman, but a wandering womb in a body. It delineates a hysterical zone of desire never fully repressed by the biology and culture of the organism.

It is therefore evident that *Dawn* embraces the cybernetic revolution. The opposition between Nature (the realm of the given) and Culture (the province of the mutable) has been dissolved by a matrix of flows and desires. The matrix-ship is no less natural than artificial, it touches on contagion as opposed to filiation, on genetic recombinations as opposed to sexual reproduction and genetic heredity. In *Dawn*, genetic recombinations are a key to the lines of becoming-a-race, becoming-another-sex induced by the Oankali trade. These recombinations resonate as much with the past as with the future: genetic engineering has always been a mode of proliferation for the Oankali.

> We do what you would call genetic engineering. We know you had begun to do it yourself, but it's foreign to you. We do it naturally.... It's part of our reproduction but it's much more deliberate than what any mated pair of humans have managed so far.[18]

Genetic recombinations are indeed incompatible with the reproductive model of origin and finitude, life and death constituting the principles of the humans' existence, and also of their genetic structure. As Jdahya explains to Lilith, "[y]ou are hierarchical. It's a terrestrial characteristic.... When human intelligence served it instead of guiding it, when human intelligence did not even acknowledge it as a problem.... That was like ignoring a cancer".[19] The self-destructive war of the human race aspired to a point of final death/collapse. But Lilith has been rescued and, at the same time, captured by the Oankali species trading genes without origins in order to fuel a genetic continuum, a matter/matrix potential of becoming. This involves neither the outcome of predefined parts nor the assumption of a

[17] Butler, *Dawn*, 39.
[18] Ibid., 37.
[19] Ibid., 37.

pregiven whole. Following Spinoza, this matrix is an immanent substance.[20]

There is nothing for the substance to create and reproduce. It is already equipped with everything, but for no reason is it a determinate One. Substance is infinitely composed of coexistent attributes of which we know only two, extension and thought. The body, a mode of extension, and the mind, a mode of thinking. Between the two attributes there is neither separation nor reduction, but continuum and singularity. There is no hierarchical ladder between these attributes: all that is in action or passion in the mind is in action or passion in the body.[21] Not only are mind and body one and the same thing constituting autonomous attributes of thought and extension, but also more adequately, "the mind is nothing else but the idea of the actually existent body".[22]

The continuum of mind and body emerges from the attributes of a univocal substance. As Lloyd underlines: "[i]ndividual minds and bodies alike are caught up in a prior unity of 'substance extended' and 'substance thinking'".[23] These attributes mutually define a mode of existence through the weaving of a longitudinal axis of speed and slowness – extension – and a latitudinal axis of affection – thought. The longitudinal and the latitudinal axes offer instances of an intensive mode of existence through an immanent combination among "the simplest bodies", according to differential velocities, and among "anonymous forces", according to capacities of affection. Such a combination is not determined by the forms and structures of the self. "Bodies are distinguished from one another in respect of motion and rest, quickness and slowness, and not in respect of substance".[24] From this standpoint, the power of Lilith's body can only be defined in relation to the kinetic encounter with the Oankali genetic continuum whose elements are "ultimate parts of an actual infinity, laid out on the same plane of consistency or composition".[25] This is a Spinozist plane of Nature without projections.

[20] Spinoza, *Ethics*, I, proposition 6.
[21] Ibid., III, 2, note.
[22] Ibid., III, 3, proof.
[23] Genevieve Lloyd, *Spinoza and the Ethics* (London: Routledge, 1996), 49.
[24] Spinoza, *Ethics*, II, axiom 1, lemma 1.
[25] Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 254.

The most re-nown framework of the evolution of the species also establishes a unity of nature. However, this is merely based on principles of analogy and difference among bodies (as species), organised in a ladder of relations through hierarchies and differences of degree and kind, of organs and functions. Unity fragments the plane of Nature "into irreducible, uncrossable, heterogeneous compositions."[26] The matter/matrix continuum of intensities is therefore divided into differentiated (i.e., already actualised) bodies organised by the principle of the original and the copy. The plane of Nature individuated by Spinoza turns this split between quantity and quality into intensive velocities. "Speed and slowness, movement and rest, tardiness and rapidity subordinate not only the forms of structures, but also the types of development".[27] This plane is produced by a schizogenetic multiplicity (i.e. a non-linear combination of genetic particles) irreducible to the arborescent economy of exchange.

Darwinian evolutionism confirms the necessity for genetic exchange in order to grant variation: the predominance of meiotic sex or sexual reproduction is the basis of such exchange. Evolution, for Darwin, is a force reacting against the pressures of a pre-dominant natural selection.[28] For schizogenesis, on the contrary, there are no progressive novelties to achieve, but an immanent synthesis of forces, where genetic elements directly enter into a relation of movement and rest, acceleration and deceleration. Schizogenesis entails a continuous composition and distribution of particles never determined by a single actualisation. In *Xenogenesis* and particularly in *Dawn,* evolution returns as an anti-origin. *Xenogenesis* demands of forces and particles to conjugate alongside a genetic flatland where no added dimension is needed.

> "We are Oankali." "Oankali. Sounds like a word in some Earth language." "It might be, but with different meaning." "What does it mean in your language?" "Several things. Traders for one" "You are traders?" "Yes." "what do you trade?" "Ourselves." "You mean...each other? Slaves?" "No. We've never done that." "What then?" "Ourselves." "I don't understand."[29]

[26] Ibid., 254.

[27] Ibid., 255.

[28] Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, trans. Hugh Tomlison (London: Athlone Press, 1983), 42.

Lilith finds this trade without sacrifice, without the repression of the desiring body by the economy of exchange, incomprehensible. For the Oankali, evolution is not induced by any external member. It simply proceeds from a genetic traffic independent of exchange and reproduction. Schizogenesis does not require the achievement of the ultimate summit, but the realisation of the limits of specular pleasure. Whereas desire subverts the illusion of filiative exchange, pleasure is consumed by localised organs of reproduction concentrating intensities into one point. Pleasure is central to the formation of the organism (i.e., hierarchically organised), and of the subject (i.e., the self as signifier of the body).

In "Beyond the Pleasure Principle", Freud identifies pleasure and reproduction as conditions of organic survival springing from a tension between Eros and Thanatos. He affirms that sexual reproduction re-balances the death tendency of the multicellular organism in favour of the immortality of germinal life. In this articulation, sexual instincts or Eros, also conceived of as the "preserver of all things" or as "life instinct", aim at the coalescence of portions of living substance, which operates in opposition to death instincts "brought into being by the coming into life of inorganic substance".[30] Freud refers to the entropic hypothesis of the second law of thermodynamics to demonstrate the existence of a primordial cyclic tension between two distinctive flows: life and death drives. The life process of the individual organism leads, for internal reasons, to an abolition of chemical tensions, that is, to death, whereas a union with the living substance of a different individual increases those tensions and lets the substance live. Although this union implies a great expenditure of energetic and chemical tensions, it is considered necessary for the introduction of "vital differences"

[29] Butler, *Dawn*, 22.

[30] Sigmund Freud, "Beyond the Pleasure Principle", in the *Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* (London: Hogarth Press, 1920-22), Volume XVIII, 61.

into the living substance. The thermodynamic hypothesis links sexual reproduction with sex selection according to a cycle of expenditure and re-balance which is based on the assumption that sexual mating brings rejuvenating variations to the germline.

Freud understands drives as physical forces and explains their complementarity through Fechner's constancy principle. His aim is to demonstrate that the organism keeps the quantity of energy or excitation as low as possible in order not to approach death. This energy is kept low enough not to "overstimulate" the organism that will release the excessive energy otherwise accumulating.[31] The complementary function of death and life drives emerges from this dynamic cycle linking the overcoming of death to sexual pleasure. The tendency towards entropy (increasing chaos and death) is eventually overcome by a discharge of tension (ejaculation and sexual reproduction). This cyclic dynamics of death and life requires localised pleasure aimed at reproduction. As Grosz affirms:

> Particularly in Freud's phylogenetic perspective, sex or pleasure and death are internally linked. The pleasurable sexual activities of individuals are closely linked to the reproduction of the species, and the reproduction of the species is continentally dependent on the life, reproduction and death of individuals.[32]

Pleasure enfolds the entropic tendency of the organism based on consumption and gratification. It is as driven to climax as limited to the restoration of physical energy through sexual reproduction. Yet, this restoration always includes the repetition of a peak, the constant achievement of a climax, a monorythm without variation. The entanglement of pleasure with reproduction reinforces evolutionary theories retaining sex selection (the association of reproductive sex with the reproduction of the species) as fundamental to the survival and variation of the species. The internal entropic tendency of the organism – conceived as a semi-closed system – is overcome by

[31] Elisabeth Grosz, *Space, Time and Perversion. Essays on the Politics of Bodies* (New York & London: Routledge, 1995), 200.

[32] Ibid., 201.

reproductive discharge, a climax of filiation leading to the rejuvenation of the species.

However, complexity theories argue that closed thermodynamic systems are more an exception than a rule. Therefore, open and "far from equilibrium systems" depending on turbulence rather than on entropic collapse have come to substitute the thermodynamic emphasis on equilibrium and constancy.[33] Similarly, the evolutionary framework based on hierarchical differences among species (according to principles of analogy) has been turned by molecular biology into a map of population of codes and their differential relations: a question of affect and velocities among codes on a territory.[34]

The contagion of touch

As opposed to discharging pleasure, genetic trades involve the activities of an intensive touch. In spite of economies, trades do not include the exchange of commodities ruled by the principle of constant reproduction. Quite the contrary, trades count on affect never finalised to the release of energy. The mission of the Oankali trade is to unfold a female erotic out of sight and balance. The success of the trade demands that: "[p]leasure ... must be delayed as long as possible because it interrupts the continuous process of positive desire".[35] Only through a genetic contact never needing the interrupting pleasure, will the Oankali keep on trading and acquiring human genes.

More primordial than the visible and without any necessity of distance, the tangible is the sense of coming into contact in a middle zone, without inside or outside: a flatland, as Irigaray would say, where the two lips touch and link the inside to the outside as a continuum. Irigaray put it very adequately, "Long before your birth you touched yourself innocently. Your/my body doesn't acquire its

[33] See Ilya Prigogine and Isabel Stengers, *Order Out of Chaos. Man's New Dialogue with Nature*, foreword Alvin Toffler (USA: Bantam Books, 1984).

[34] See Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 47-48.

[35] Ibid., 155.

sex through an [external] operation".[36] Touch functions as an immediate diffuser of genetic contagion, inducing degrees of intensive desire unrelated to the vertical escalation of climatic points. Tactile proximities enfold the construction of a plateau through "continuous regions of intensity constituted in such a way that they do not allow themselves to be interrupted by any external termination, any more than they allow themselves to build towards a climax".[37] Touch gives access to a plateau of intensities without confinement and distance.

The Oankali seem to have learned much more from touch than from sight. The grey mass of tentacles on their body serves to hear, to smell, and to see. All of their senses are caught in intimate contact; they are above all tactile and operate only through touch. To the Oankali, the senses of sight and hearing are primarily part of the tactile environment of their sensory organs.

> Yet it was true that he had no eyes. She could see now that there were only dark patches where tentacles grew thickly. The same with the sides of his head where ears should have been.... In fact, he said, you should be aware that I can see wherever I have tentacles – and I can see whether I seem to notice or not.[38]

Lynn Margulis' theory of symbiogenesis develops the genetic function of touch even further.[39] In the most exemplary theories of evolution, the ladder of life starts with the appearance on earth of cells with nuclei (i.e., eukaryotic cells) considered to be at the origin of development of multicellular organisms (animals, plants). The primordial importance of the eukaryotic cell consequently affirms the centrality of sexual reproduction or meiotic sex involving "the reduction by half of the number of chromosomes to make sperm, eggs, or spores, and the fertilisation that re-established the original chromosomal number".[40]

[36] Irigaray, *This Sex*, 212.

[37] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 158.

[38] Butler, *Dawn*, 16.

[39] See Lynn Margulis and Dorion Sagan, "The Riddle of Sex, *The Science Teacher*, Vol. 52, number 3 (March 1985), 185-191.

[40] Ibid., 187.

Whereas evolutionary biologists sustain that sexual mating in animals (i.e., the mixture of the haploid egg and sperm) is a necessary stage for the development of genetic variation and sexual diversity,[41] endosymbiosis demonstrates that bacterial and parthenogenic organisms – fungi, dandelions, but also certain lizards and rotifers – produce as many successful modes of sex and as many genetic variables as two people do through sexual mating.

Endosymbiosis breaks with the "zoocentrism" of the theories of evolution confined to the formation of *Homo Sapiens* and its modes of reproduction, and demonstrates that "each eukaryotic 'animal' cell is, in fact, an uncanny assembly, the evolutionary merger of distinct prokaryotic metabolism".[42] This theory focuses on the emergence of multicellular life across differential lines, novel alliances among bacteria integrated by "more or less orgiastic encounters (eating, infecting, engulfing, feeding on, having sex and so on)".[43] The assemblage of bacterial genes entails a process of "aparallel evolution" or "genetic drifting" which questions natural selection as the principle of evolution and innovation. As Margulis states, "the evolutionary innovation of eukaryosis involved far more than the accumulation of mutations: it required integration of heterologous genomes".[44] The eukaryotic cell itself only arises from a fusing recombination of several bacteria directly attracted to each other through processes of incorporation. These processes only occur through touch.

By a brief contact genes are sent, bacteria proliferate, recombine and populate bodies. This tactile transmission of particles does not require penetration and is not guided by the binarism of death and

[41] Margulis and Sagan provide a critique of evolutionary theories conceiving of sexuality as a single process (linking sex with reproduction). In particular, they question the "Red Queen Hypothesis", which sustains that sexual mating induces a greater genetic diversity, considered as a compensation for the "energetic cost" employed in meiotic sex. In particular, see Lynn Margulis and Dorion Sagan, *What Is Sex?* (Italy-Nevraumont: Simon & Shuster, 1997), 118-121.

[42] Dorion Sagan, "Metametazoa: Biology and Multiplicity", in J. Gray & S. Kwinter, eds., *Incorporations*, Zone 6 (New York: rzone, 1992), 363.

[43] Ibid., 366.

[44] Lynn Margulis, *Mystery Dance: On the Evolution of Human Sexuality* (New York: Summit Books, 1991), 321.

life drives. A body, therefore, is always populated by a multiplicity of bodies assembled by infectious contacts rather than by linear filiation. Bacteria recombine by means of a tactile merge of genes and disclose a plane of desire committed to neither reproduction nor pleasure. As Sagan glosses:

> bacteria trade variable quantities of genes with virtually no regard for species barriers. Indeed despite a lingering Linnaean nomenclature, bacteria are so genetically promiscuous, their bodies are so genetically open, that the very concept of species falsifies their character as a unique life form. Bacteria are omnisexual.[45]

The hierarchies of the tree of reproduction and origin are substituted by a complex and transversal composition of genetic material. This is a genetic web displaying a female tactility without projections and demanding that the pleasure of the organism be lost into a distributing desire. The binary aggregates of the organism between the sexes and between sexuality and reproduction are dismantled by a shared, horizontal plane of connected intensities. "This is a far cry from filiative production or hereditary reproduction ... there are as many sexes as there are terms in symbiosis, as many differences as elements contributing to a process of contagion".[46]

Rather than starting from the already organised body, symbiogenesis is concerned with the contagious environment of "unnatural participation" between interkingdoms: "a human being, a bacterium, a virus, a molecule, a microorganism".[47] This is the environment where Lilith finds herself as an in-between line of connection for the humans and the Oankali. She is not asked to initiate a new lineage for the survival of an alien species. The Oankali do not simply aim to use her body for reproduction and pleasure. Her body is instead desired to disclose its potential becomings by coming into contact with a genetic continuum which enfolds a female intensive essence and existence. Lilith is on the verge of disclosing the human species to the symbiotic complexity of

[45] Dorion Sagan, "Metametazoa", 378.
[46] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus,* 242.
[47] Ibid., 242.

a body by disrupting the illusion of filiation and the imperative of finalised pleasure.

Aquatic pressures

> Your people will change. Your young will be more like us and ours more like you. Your hierarchical tendencies will be modified and if we learn to regenerate limbs and reshape our bodies, we'll share those abilities with you. That's part of the trade. We're overdue for it.[48]

Lilith's encounter with Jdahya, her Oankali guide, reveals the genetic capacities of these creatures of a sea-slug appearance. In manipulating her genetic cells, the olooi, the relatives of the Oankali, have allowed Lilith's body to absorb a cancer without surgical intervention. But, it is suggested, this is only a tiny modification compared to the contagions that the trade will spread. The trade will induce a necessary mutation in the genetic structure of the humans, hierarchically programmed to extinction.

> You have a mismatched pair of genetic characteristics. Either alone would have been useful, would have aided the survival of your species. But the two together are lethal. It was only a matter of time before they destroyed you.[49]

The trade requires a mutual recombination of genetic material on the basis of the symbiotic capacities of the humans and the Oankali. To Lilith, the trade means a dispersion of human characteristics, a genetic mutation that discloses her body's sea memories; a leap into the unknown shocks the security system of the self.

"'If this is what they found me for, I wish they'd left me.' Medusa children. Snakes for hair. Nest of night crawlers for eyes and ears."[50] The Oankali are pushing marine pressures on the hierarchical and aggressive structures of terrestrial mammals like humans.

[48] Butler, *Dawn*, 40.
[49] Ibid., 36.
[50] Ibid., 41.

The Oankali multispecies history includes a blending with the olooi who, as Nikanj, the ooloi child, tells Lilith, used to live on a white-sun water world, "in great shallow oceans".[51] As Lilith remarks, the Oankali look like starfishes coming from the oceans. Their sensory arms are tactile eyes, nose and ears, their skin is smooth and cool, they can breathe underwater and perceive with their snaky hair. Regardless of recurrent feelings of confusion and rejection, Lilith cannot retreat from the trade any more than the Oankali can. She feels almost addicted to fuelling it as if positively caught into a genetic continuum.

> We are as committed to the trade as your body is to breathing. We were overdue for it when we found you. Now it will be done – to the rebirth of your people and mine.[52]

The Oankali commitment to the trade is above all driven by an intensive desire rather than promised by a subjective pleasure. Instead of rescuing the humans for the purpose of reproduction, the Oankali themselves have been captured by their fascinating structure, the singularity of their mismatched genetic material. They too have become addicted to the human genome. As Jdhaya explains to Lilith: "A partner must be biologically interesting, attractive to us, and you are fascinating. You are horror and beauty in rare combination. In a very real way, you've captured us, and we can't escape".[53]

Rather than a pleasure to fulfil, the Oankali manifest a desire of incorporation mainly entailing listening and learning. They are "powerfully acquisitive"; surely cybernetic rather than thermodynamic creatures. "We are not hierarchical.... But we are powerfully acquisitive. We acquire new life – seek it, investigate it, manipulate it, sort it, use it."[54] There is no external termination to their positive desire of incorporation. They have been captured into a symbiotic loop: being fed by and feeding a genetic continuum. This is open feedback inevitably inducing a body's potential to emerge.

[51] Ibid., 61.
[52] Ibid., 41.
[53] Ibid., 154.
[54] Ibid., 37.

Similarly, Lilith is increasingly triggered by a desire to come into contact with the sea. She cannot refuse to become marine. Her body has been chosen to enliven the aquatic memories of the humans. It will re-animate the bio-geological passage of the human apes from the land to the sea provoked by the withdrawal of *terra firma* into the oceans. This passage, however, is not arbitrary. Marine pressures highly resonate with femaleness *only* as an intensive affinity springing from bio-geological thresholds. This affinity cannot be exhausted by a principle of identity and property. The link between women and water is often limited by symbols and representations, where water signifies the womb and the mother. Quite the contrary, this affinity opens up femaleness to the immensity of water, leaking outside the constraints of the organism and the subject.

As Elaine Morgan's work *The Descent of Woman* demonstrates, the affinity between women and water implies a shift in the evolution of apes into humans.[55] Whereas Darwin's *The Descent of Man* (1871) individuates a linear inheritance between primates and "homo sapiens", Morgan challenges the "Tarzanlike" figure of the prehominid male, coming down from the trees and then becoming a mighty hunter. Breaking with this androcentric interpretation of evolution and searching for a threshold of mutation from apes into humans, Morgan finds out that it was a female ape that opened the path of such becoming.

The most famous savannah theory claims that hominids are descendents of the apes that left the trees and moved onto the grassy plains or savannah. There they moved on from being vegetarians to meat-eaters and finally hunters. According to this theory, the modifications of the ape's body are a direct result of its becoming a plain dweller and hunter. In becoming bipedalist, the ape was able to survey across the plains, being able to run faster after the prey whilst carrying weapons within his newly acquired free hands. Similarly, it suggests that the ape also lost most of his body hair in order to keep cool while chasing the prey in the sunshine.

In contrast to this view, Morgan argues for the theory of the

[55] Elaine Morgan, *The Descent of Woman. The Classic Study of Evolution*, (London: Souvenir Press, 1972).

"aquatic ape" comparing the physiological and morphological features of the female body, unique among land mammals, with aquatic creatures. She explains that when the first torrid heat waves of the Pliocene invaded the African continent and caused the forest to fall in the drought, all the apes were forced to retreat to the plains. Large areas of the northern half of the African continent were engulfed by the sea and, during this period, hairy human apes of the Miocene type adapted to the aquatic environment. For the next twelve million years or so, these creatures lived in or near the water, evolving an erect posture to keep their heads above water and developing a smooth skin. Once the waters receded and new ecological opportunities were offered, these apes did not disperse but saved their acquired marine traits. Thus, discarding the rather incoherent explanation that bipedalism allowed the ape to run faster (four legs are surely faster than two), Morgan explains that it was immersion in the sea other than dwelling on the plains that obliged the ape to keep a straight position on two legs. As a result of swimming in the sea, the ape gradually developed a smooth skin losing most of her bodily hair. Most interestingly of all, Morgan argues that it is the specialised anatomy of women that presents the marine scars of a body living inside and near the water. In particular, the morphology of the female ape changed once water remained the only environment where she could survive, her sole line of escape.[56]

The affects of the sea on her body are evident by the displacement of organs on her body. For example, buttocks developed as a protective feature from sitting on the beach and the vagina migrated from the rear to an inward and forward position. These modifications, among many others, involved a completely different outcome of sexual and reproductive modes compared to other apes. As Theweleit reports, Sandor Ferenczi, in his formulation of a genital theory in psychoanalysis, also focuses on the link between femaleness and water arguing that living species first evolved out of the sea.[57] Before the drying of waters, he states, fertilisation took place through a simple contact between exposed

[56] Ibid., 19.

[57] Klaus Theweleit, *Male Fantasies*, trans. Stephen Conway, Erica Turner, Chris Turner, foreword Barbara Ehrenreich (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1987), 292.

organs. There was no need for penetration in order to copulate, and penetration was not associated with ejaculation. It was only when these creatures were forced to live on land that: "the female interiors were forced to being penetrated by the erectile penises the male had developed and to being turned 'into oceans'".[58] To Ferenczi, this development indicates the emergence of male aggression in the sexual act.

Similarly, Morgan argues that male aggression was reinforced when males had to learn to approach females frontally because of the induced aquatic transformation (e.g., the displacement of the vagina from the rear to an inner and forward position). Whereas the combination of sexuality and violence is absent in other mammals, it has become a specific characteristic of the human species. The female aquatic mammals refused frontal penetration, but were however subjected to it after the males "lost the ability to react [i.e., letting the prey go] to the gesture of submission".[59] The relation between copulation, sexuality and violence is not however as consequential as it appears. Morgan underlines that the entire system of intimate and loving behaviour became part of the human act of copulation so as to overcome violence. This confirms that the humans are the only land mammals who have conjugated sexual love with copulation. This conjugation provides the territory mapped by the pleasure principle, the libido repressed and channelled by the economy of reproduction. Meiotic sex constitutes a level of organisation of multicellular organisms enclosing bacterial recombinations into a genetic structure of reproduction. Nevertheless, these evolutionary phases are never ultimate, they do not move in a linear progression, but include an indefinite number of re-arrangements.

In her attempt to argue that the origin of human (male) aggression is related to the modifications of the ape sea-body, Morgan presents a complex natural and social insight which overcomes the binary machine of biological or social explanations,

[58] Ibid., 292.

[59] Ibid., 293. Theweleit refers to a previous time when the gesture of submission was enough to satisfy the potential aggressor.

sex and gender dualisms. Morgan's study on the connection between femaleness and water touches on the presence of a multilayered essence entailing processes of bio-geological and socio-cultural organisations. This study has revealed that the singular aquatic scars of a female body are never limited to organic structures.

The marine scars emerging from Lilith's body disclose a path of becoming-another-sex, another-race, another-species that collapses the teleology of the laws of origin, creation and evolution. To Lilith the middle passage of the trade constitutes a zone where the essence of a body becomes fluid, smooth and wet like water. Lilith *learns and runs* only in order to "stop and start over at 'zero': her-body sex".[60] This zero is not a black hole of nothingness, an empty space to be fulfilled or simply a point of departure. Zero marks a multiplicity laying out a genetic continuum between Lilith and the Oankali. Zero, as opposed to the One, constitutes a pre-individual field of existence always on the verge of actualization, of becoming. Lilith's encounter with the Oankali displays the capacity of becoming of a body emerging from such an anti-genealogical matrix.

[60] Irigaray, *Speculum*, 29.

REVIEWS and REVIEW ESSAYS

Anna Maria Cimitile

Ghostly Modernity

Jean-Michel Rabaté, *The Ghosts of Modernity* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1996), pp. xxii + 258
Peter Buse and Andrew Stott, eds., *Ghosts: Deconstruction, Psychoanalysis, History* (London: Macmillan, 1999), pp. ix + 268

How used are we to an envisioning of our time as a ghostly, haunted time? Many contemporary studies of modernity, reading it from different perspectives, be they literary criticism or cultural studies, philosophy, sociology, or even, most frequently, an approach at the croosroad between them all, are configuring a 'spectralised' contemporaneity.[1]

The interest in ghostly matters and the ensuing ghostly figurations of history and culture correspond to a preponderant presence of theory in contemporary literary criticism and cultural studies. What is, then, the relation between ghosts and theory? Psychoanalysis, poststructuralism, deconstruction, feminism combine in varied, productive ways and in the process delineate what looks more and more like a "vanishing present". But what are the implications of our phantasmatic representations of reality, and why do they happen at this particular conjuncture, which we may call postmodern or even posthuman?[2] Are ghosts what is left *after* and beyond humanism? Posthumanism – to which the theories mentioned above all contribute – stands not for the oblivion or vanishing of subjectivity altogether, but for a re-figuration of the "human"; it stands for a situating that is not a killing of the subject but rather a questioning of subjective agency. If posthumanism is read in this light, then the ghosts enlivened by

[1] Constitutive of such contemporaneity is also the gaze we cast on past periods and the way we re-figure them: Janet Oppenheim's cultural history is an example of this: *The Other World: Spiritualism and Psychical Research in England, 1850-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1985) has pointed to the embedding of the spiritualist culture in the everyday world and cast a spectral perspective on late-Victorian materialism and empiricism.

[2] "Posthumanism" is one definition we have given of our contemporaneity. For a useful, introductory collection of essays see Neil Badmington, ed., *Posthumanism* (London: Palgrave, 2000).

contemporary "theory" – be they literary figures under analysis or invented metaphors of critical thought – become the site of a forceful and politically charged critique of modernity.

Theory offers a positive interrogation/spectralisation of the real, then. Jean-Michel Rabaté, *The Ghosts of Modernity* (1996) and Peter Buse and Andrew Stott, eds., *Ghosts: Deconstruction, Psychoanalysis, History* (1999) both revise modernity by looking at it through theory. In particular, the collection of essays, addressing the recurrence of the ghost as metaphor in modern culture, reads theory as the site where the engagement with spectrality is seen as most sustained, and where the possibilities of ghostliness as a theoretical tool are best explored. Deconstruction and psychoanalysis are most present in the books here reviewed; both acknowledge their debt to Jacques Derrida's work, whose impact on literary studies has been great.[3]

But what is modernity? What is that allows for its ghostly figuration? In Rabaté "modernity" includes Verlaine's and Mallarmé's poetry, Breton's surrealism, Barthes's semiotics, Broch's "nightmare of history", Beckett's positive "nothingness" of reality; the essays in *Ghosts* add Marx and Marxism, Freud and psychoanalysis, Benjamin and the urban space, all shown to have a lot more entanglements with spectrality than they would have alleged. Modernity's complexity is well represented in this sample and the two books convincingly expose ghostliness as the economy of such complexity.

The sense of history is the first to be interrogated in the modern "constellation" configured by both books. Dealing with ghosts means investigating history and our sense of it, as well as the role and meaning of tradition for us, be it in culture, politics or literature. It is this aspect of spectrality that Rabaté discusses in *The Ghosts of Modernity*. He opens his study with a re-evaluation of T. S. Eliot's "Tradition and the Individual Talent", where the historical sense is defined as "a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence"; Rabaté posits the essay against Nietzsche's assertion that newness must refute tradition in order to be – which offers a more common version of modernity – and argues that the past retains a strong role in/for modernity and that it is with its 'ghosts' that the latter constantly comes to terms. A haunted modernity is the less usual but stimulating outcome of Rabaté's reading; it becomes a useful 'tool' for revisiting some key aspects of modernism, from its poetics to historical thought to the collective character of avant-garde literary works.

[3] In particular, the editors of the collection take Derrida's *Specters of Marx* (1993) as their inspiration. There Derrida blended deconstruction and psychoanalysis in an insightful re-reading of materialist Marxism.

Rabaté's close textual analyses concentrate on works ranging from the second half of the nineteenth century onwards, but the modern philosophy addressed goes back to Pascal and Kant as well as Hegel, although Freud's psychoanalysis remains one central object of investigation, while offering at the same time the method of analysis to this study. Mourning is the one Freudian motive linking the different texts and themes explored. "Modernism postulates both the necessity and the impossibility of mourning" (xvi): as it is Rabaté's argument that this is also true of a wider history beginning with the Enlightenment and including contemporary writers such as Derrida, his "modernity" sifts into postmodernity and questions the boundaries between modernism and postmodernism.

If history is made in the space between mourning and its impossibility, which is the role of writing in its making? How does writing participate of a spectral modernity? The question posited by Rabaté is: Which place to speak/write from? The answer, a link or bridge between times: "I wish to conjure up the figure of a ghostly writer who imagines himself posthumous so as to mediate between his past and future and to judge the present" (3). Modernity read in this light is "by definition never contemporaneous with itself, since it constantly projects, anticipates, and returns to mythical origins, but that also teaches us more about the 'present', which it historicizes.... Such a modernity resists any attempt to supersede it and any effort to declare it obsolete, even if these efforts come from a so-called postmodernity" (3). The central metaphor is "the transformation of the writer into a specter, because his own past returns whenever he imagines that he can predict, arrange, or control the future" (3). Ghostliness is one with writing and the latter is the place of a readjusted temporality which is in my opinion close to the Derridean differance, and is here envisaged as the modality of presence of the 'modern' present.

"[T]hat act of reminiscence that abolishes time" (12) is the momentous realisation of such present. For Rabaté there are perceptions or sensations leading to it; one of them is colour. "Colour" is therefore the topic discussed at length in this study. In the first chapter, in an analysis of a central passage from Joyce's *Ulysses* (the opening of the third chapter of the novel), Rabaté investigates Joyce's colour imagery and its implications in the text. He resorts to Aristotle as well as Berkeley to argue about the role of colour for a definition of substance. The threshold between materiality and immateriality, visible and invisible, is explored as the *locus* of a ghostly being of reality. The relevance of colour to a discussion of spectrality is also stressed in the second chapter of the book, "André Breton's Ghostly Stance", and in chapter 8, "Shades of the Color Gray", where the analysis insists on the link between colours and the evanescence of matter in Samuel

Beckett, while optics is also central to the discussion of Beckett's *Film* and *Ill Seen Ill Said*.

Spectrality is also used as a figure for the undecidability of meaning. Pointing to the unfixed, slipping character of language and sense, this study then reads it as a major feature of modern writing. The title of the first chapter is "The Master of Colors That Know". It is explained as a misreading of the Italian "*maestro di color che sanno*" in the *Ulysses* extract under analysis. The chapter also offers an analysis of Freud's essay on Leonardo. The link between the two investigations is the slip of interpretation: Freud is also said to have based his reading on a misreading of the Italian "*nibbio*" in Leonardo's *Notebooks*, a word for "kite" which he took to mean "vulture". In a Benjaminian fashion, 'mis'-translations are read as productive of meaning; slips in reading become the ghostly space of existence of interpretation itself, and of the "object" that comes into being in that interpretation. The chapter on Breton similarly insists on the slip of tongue as the ghostly site of meaning, the true place of signification, while language is again seen as the space of the emergence of the ghostly in the analysis of Beckett's production. Summing up his analyses we can say that *meaning is a ghost* for Rabaté.

The ghostliness of meaning questions the notion of the subject as original 'origin' of sense and ultimate 'self-presence'. The third chapter offers one of the best analyses in the book and is on "Roland Barthes, Ghostwriter of Modernity" and the spectral space of photography ("a history of ghosts and shadows"). Like Breton, Barthes "sees reality as haunted and as projecting emanations that can even be recorded ... directly by cameras" (81). Which is the place of the "subject" in such spectral reality? Rabaté sees the return to subjectivity in the later work by Barthes as an assumption of the role of the ghost by the subject. Barthes's "phantom" is "the thing resurrected but not exactly at the right place" (70); it is this "phantom" that he expects to emerge in a photograph. As elsewhere in Rabaté's study, here too ghosts go alongside a certain shift or slipping, a displacement that *is* the ghostly itself. Rabaté insists on the link between obliquity and the ghostly as a mark of the represented real and quotes Robbe-Grillet on Barthes to stress how this aspect of the ghostly is also Barthes's very modality of speaking: "'Indeed, he has not said anything, he has slipped endlessly from one elusive meaning to another which also eludes us'" (71-72). The Freudian play of displacement and condensation is aptly mentioned as a main site for the insurgence of the ghostly in Barthes.

Spectrality has a political edge in Rabaté's reading. Obliquity, openness of meaning, *signifiance* are posited *against* the fascist dangers of closure: Barthes's way of speaking is read as his denunciation of "the 'fascism' of all

assertive language" (72). Derrida's work comes to mind insofar as it has always declared the perils of Hegelianism and opposed deconstruction to them.[4] Here Rabaté's analysis proves the all too frequent denunciation of the apolitical character of poststructuralism to be untenable; if this is obvious for some, the attack is still very much on, coming especially from those current trends identified as "return to history" or "new pragmatism", against which Rabaté posits, successfully in my opinion, his reading.

Spectrality can also represent a being-in-translation. "Verlaine and Mallarmé between the Angels and the Ghosts of Languages" offers an interesting reading of spectrality in this sense. It takes its cue from the relevance of English for the two French poets, and discusses the translations from one tongue to another as the locus of a necessary detour in order for language to be fully 'realized'. English is said to have a metalinguistic function for both poets, for whom it serves "to review or revise language": "Whether they translate or not, the other language serves, in effect, to make their own tongue look alien. They have to alienate themselves from their 'natural' mother-tongues in order to make them fully their own" (104). Rabaté does not engage with contemporary translation studies, but the topic addressed in this chapter offers stimulating subject matter to supplement its insights into language and culture.

The critic does not address postcolonial studies either, but his analyses have some resonances with recent theory. Rabaté analyses Barthes's notion of "culture", pointing to its envisioning as a space of mourning (73). He also insists on the concepts of nation and national heritage as understood by Mallarmé, for whom the relation with other languages is the privileged and only way into one's own language and national culture: "'... a word is almost never viewed with such precision as from the outside, where we are: that is, from abroad'" (quoted on page 109). A national culture is better understood and performed when viewed from "elsewhere" then. The being abroad need not be literal: it is a state of mind, a way of relating oneself to one's own environment with the supplement of an exteriority, as is the English language for Mallarmé. The nation as a 'detour' seems to me the understated but interesting outcome of the analysis.

Chapter 6 brings the discussion back to modernism's sense of history. "Broch's Modernity as Crime, or the Sleepwalking of Theory" reads in Broch's *Sleepwalkers* an indictment of modernism as a criminal assassination of history, a "disintegration of values". The revived spirit of nationalism is the one ghost around which the discussion revolves. Insofar

[4] See Jacques Derrida, *Positions*, translated and annotated by Alan Bass (London: The Athlone Press, 1987).

as it generates evils like fascism, mass hysteria, totalitarianism, modernism is a crime for Broch; it is "the culmination of the atomization of values". Broch feels the predicament of the philosopher who first questions and then is compelled to redeem the assumptions of his own times, even if these will finally question the foundations of his own beliefs. The sleepwalking of the novel becomes the embodiment of a knowledge that lingers between past and present:

> Sleepwalking entails that we act without knowing the reason or the logic of our action. The philosopher as sleepwalking rationalist becomes a mere ghost of a hidden rationality that can never be fully perceived. Yet this blindness is not complete, for in the midst of the trance, a flickering light might appear.... the sleeper only wakes up to a new pain testifying to hard-won discernment. (147)

Spectrality does not homologate: the ghostly modernity envisaged by Rabaté is not homogeneous. In his book the ghostly character of modernity comes out as a 'constellation' that brings together elements which are distant in time and space. One emergent aspect of this ghostliness is certainly its 'abiding' in the slipping character of representation and language. The imbrication of this unfixity with the 'writing' of history is the underlying motive of most analyses and is also present in the conclusion to the book, "The 'Moderns' and Their Ghosts", which exposes two different debates on the nature and existence of ghosts: one between Spinoza and Boxel and the other between Marx and Stirner. Here the historical sense of the 'moderns' is directly linked with spectrality; Rabaté, who took as his starting point Abraham and Torok's theory of the phantom, comes to a Lyotardian "future perfect" as the temporality of modernity:

> ... any modernity or postmodernity will be in themselves "spectral", endlessly generating ghosts ready to haunt an unwitting future.... modernity is the effect of a retroactive projection, of a "future perfect" that plays with its fictions and ghosts as much as with prospective hypotheses and wagers. A haunted modernity will have been (always already) an anterior future tense deploying the spectrum of rival readings and rereadings, of incompatible and proliferating virtualities dubbed "postmodernity". (230)

A refiguration of history is also one of the stakes in Peter Buse and Andrew Stott, eds., *Ghosts: Deconstruction, Psychoanalysis, History*. How is history

redefined by ghosts? How can a concept of spectrality be applied to historiography? Ghosts disrupt any teleological order and yet historicity is disseminated with spectral traces. The co-editors propose a revision of our sense of history through a negotiation with those traces.

Ghosts is a collection of essays investigating ghostly thinking. Here literature, philosophy, psychoanalysis are addressed to ascertain a powerful recurrence of the metaphor of haunting in modern culture. The essays explore the forms, meanings, effects, as well as the implications of this iterated 'presence' of the ghost in the texts analysed. In their "Introduction" Buse and Stott argue that the presence of ghosts has always been refused or negated by the very texts where they appeared: from Freud to Adorno, dealing with spectres has meant an attempt to rationalise them, to reduce their characterising undecidability – as suspension between past and present, presence and absence, life and death – to a defined and defining 'otherness' to the norm.

Buse and Stott historicise this attitude towards 'ghosts' and individuate its spring in the Enlightenment. The (post)modernity configured by a ghostly thinking precisely opposes that rationalising, enlightened philosophy. In this sense the 'spectrality' of deconstruction as well as psychoanalysis contributes to the revisioning of Enlightenment. The editors acknowledge their debt to Jacques Derrida's *Specters of Marx* insofar as that text posits the question of ghosts as of their elusiveness, without wanting to reinscribe their undecidability.

"Theory", "fictions" and "culture" are the ghostly spaces investigated in the book. Spectrality in theory is addressed in the first section of the collection. Willy Maley reads the haunting role of Engels in Marx and Marxism, and posits the question of co-authorship as a question of ghostwriting. Meanwhile Roger Luckhurst associates spectrality with the question of origins in his essay, where he explores the 'entanglement with the occult' of psychoanalysis. In "Psychoanalysis and Telepathy" Freud described the occult as a threat to his discipline, but also saw the analogies between the two; the urge to define his practice against spiritualism was constantly frustrated by the ambivalence of Freudian thought with regard to that dangerous 'other'. Luckhurst argues that psychoanalysis was haunted, despite all its efforts to fence off that 'menace', by *haunting itself*.

If the first two essays discuss spectrality in two 'founding fathers' of modernity, the third essay of this section similarly uncovers a 'ghosting of modernism' in another important figure, Walter Benjamin. Christina Britzlolakis revisits the urban modernism of Benjamin's work to find there a spectral envisioning of reality. "Urban phantasmagoria" is what she calls the cityscape as figured by Benjamin. Breton and Surrealism but also T. S. Eliot

and Joyce are the "Phantasmagorians" that, along with him, produce a ghostly metropolis as the space of modernism.

The spectrality effect is often interestingly linked to commodification in these essays. In Benjamin, the commodity culture and the rule of exchange value are seen to be directly connected with the phantasmatic character of modern reality; in a Marxian fashion Britzolakis points to the effects of commodification on meaning as an instance of spectralization: the "ordinary [is turned] into the spectral, producing a figurative surplus of meaning" (77). Gifts, commodities and the exchange-value world of capitalism are also discussed in Nigel Mapp's essay, whose project is the development of a connection between dialectics and deconstruction with respect to the ways in which Adorno and Derrida deal with abstraction and transcendentalism.

In the section on fiction, the spectrality effect is interestingly seen at work in questions of property: Ruth Parkin-Gounelas notes how in gothic fiction "the ghost is invariably the agent, either as protector or claimant, of property under threat" (132). The other 'ghost' looming large in this part of the book is obviously Freud's "The Uncanny", here brought in close conjunction with the spectre of Marxism by both the topic (property) and the approach to it. The combination has fruitful outcomes in the analyses, as is the case in Natalka Freeland's essay on *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, where she reads theft as the menace to property *from within* and assimilates it to the ghost haunting the castle, thus making wealth, the most material of things, haunted.

A collection whose one focus is on the ghostly aspects of materialism could not leave money out of its investigations. According to Mandy Merck money is a "densely impacted issue" in the film *Ghost*. Black labour invisibly transmuted into money or white wealth is well articulated with racial and sexual difference in the analysis, which posits the ghost of the film at the juncture of this complex articulation. Merck individuates a resonance, often at work in the spectral medium of cinema, between the ghost motif and the theme of racial substitution, and sees the two cleverly combined in *Ghost*.

Racial difference and property are also the issues in Ken Gelder and Jane M. Jacobs's essay, which addresses the question in the specific form of the Aborigines' claim to the land. For the authors, in contemporary Australia the opposition between whites' and Aborigines' claims to the land always implies an ambivalent role on both sides: if the Aborigines' claim is perceived as both "proper" and "disturbing", the 'postcolonial' whites' claim, being based on an appeal to their innocence with respect to the processes of colonisation, quite logically casts them as 'out of place' on

Australian soil. The essay reads the postcolonial Australian ghost stories as always presenting a dispossession rather than a confident sense of property; here the uncanny is explicitly presented as the distinguishing feature of postcoloniality.

Technology as a characterising feature of modernity is also the topic of a few essays and is read in relation with ghostliness. In the section on culture, Steven Connor traces what he calls a "cultural phenomenology" of the séance in the late Victorian period. He analyses the entanglements of spiritualism with materialism, the "grotesque mimicry of materialist language and modes of thought" characterising Victorian supernaturalism (203). His operation is the inverse of that performed by most studies on spectrality: rather than looking for the ghostly aspects of Enlightenment and rational realms, he detects "the machine in the ghost", as his title announces. Connor sets out to show how the "auditory-vocalic space" is the 'matter' through which the "phantasmal body of the séance" is constructed; he then establishes a link between "the scene of the séance and the imaginary desires and demands occasioned by emerging forms of communicative technology" (telephone, grammophone, radio) (207). The evolution of ghost phenomena is no longer opposed but interestingly shown to be deeply related to the developing logic of technological communication, a stance also taken by Clive Bloom in his essay.

The collection ends with an essay by Ralph Noyes where the features of the ghost are presented by way of a linguistic and etymological exploration of some of the many words used to refer to spectres. A differant modernity is traced in the "plurality of meaning", to quote here Barthes, that all the different names for ghosts bring to the fore.

The two books rewrite modernity by looking at its ghosts. The use of spectrality as a metaphor or interpretive tool takes different turns in Rabaté and in the collection of essays. Thus shared motives, such as the interrogation of history, lead to different envisionings of modernity. If Rabaté reads modernity to incorporate its protensive postmodernity, Buse and Stott's collection rather seems to expand postmodernity backwards. No choice is to be made between the outcomes of the readings: these can be taken as supplementary in their different configurations of modernity as a ghostly space. Both figure modernity as an uncanny thing, a form of "unsettled settledness", and for once this is not represented as a weak point: modernity's strength is precisely in this uncanniness or liminality.

Theory spectralises, but this does not mean a vanishing or reduction of the real, nor a 'falseness' of our representations; rather, spectrality ties together value and its disintegration, the ghost being itself the impossible,

elusive 'materialisation' of a being or presence whose logic is beyond the true/false model and the order of oppositions in general. Some time ago, but already (always?) in a "post-" conjuncture, Derrida gave his version of a spectral modernity and well pointed to its character by writing it "differance".[5]

[5] See Derrida, "Differance", *Speech and Phenomena and Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of the Sign* (Evanston: Northwestern U.P., 1973), 129-160.

Oriana Palusci (a cura di), *La tipografia nel salotto: saggi su Virginia Woolf* (Torino: Tirrenia Stampatori, 1999), pp. 286

Reviewed by C. Maria Laudando

This collection of essays devoted to Virginia Woolf whets the reader's appetite from the very beginning with its intriguing title: "la tipografia del salotto", "the handpress in the drawing room". By conveying an image which is concrete and at the same time powerfully symbolic and suggestive, the title anchors the radical, challenging experimentation of Virginia's activity as a female reader, writer and editor within the apparently quiet, domestic walls of her everyday life. In her foreward to the volume, Oriana Palusci emphasizes the hybrid and defiant coalescence of private and public commitments, symbolic and material interests, adumbrated in the installation of a handpress in the Woolfs' drawing room. To begin with, the "editorial adventure" the couple embarked on in spring 1917 helps to discredit the myth of a certain ethereal languor and fastidious aloofness traditionally associated with the Muse of the Bloomsbury Group while pointing out her vindication of creative autonomy and economic independence. In more than one way, Virginia invests a huge amount of mental energy in the Hogarth Press as if this were a surrogate for the experience of motherhood - an experience denied her on account of her mental fragility. In a very concrete sense her domestic handpress enables her to publish the fruits of her 'labour' directly, without any humiliating exposure to other people's thwarting manipulation or violence (in a parenthetical aside, Palusci reminds the reader that Virginia's first two novels were published by Gerald Duckworth, her stepbrother who had molested her as a child). Thus, meaningfully, the turning point of Virginia's career in modernist terms comes to coincide with the new logotype of a 'woolf' stamped on her first radical experiments such as "The Mark on the Wall" and *Jacob's Room*.

The Woolfs' editorial strategy was a challenge to the contemporary profit- and mass-oriented publishing market – Palusci underlines their austerity: "non vi erano copie omaggio, neppure per i collaboratori più illustri, come l'amico Tom (T. S. Eliot)" (p. 7). Their new approach goes hand in hand with the iconoclastic and pioneering spirit that urges Virginia incessantly to attempt fresh modes of writing. The domestic handpress guarantees both material support and a close, nurturing supervision of her unconventional 'offspring': "tutto avveniva, soprattutto per i volumi di Virginia – dal concepimento alle incisioni – in ambito familiare. Virginia scriveva, Leonard componeva i caratteri, e la pittrice Vanessa Bell, sorella di Virginia, spesso e volentieri illustrava le copertine" (p. 8).

If the focus on the title shifts from "handpress" to "drawing room", the

latter term opens up another, no less vital, source of inspiration both for the Woolfian *écriture* and for the present volume. As the ideal place for receiving guests and organizing parties, the privileged space for social interaction, the exchange of ideas and the entanglement of human relationships, drawing rooms are spaces that had always exerted a sort of irresistible fascination upon Virginia's sensibility, as all her writings from her autobiographical notes to her essays vividly bring to the fore. Hence the idea of a book modelled upon the dialogic, open, unpredictable character of a party: its 'convivial' spirit, reminiscent of the spirit of a Socratic symposium, helps to account for the plurality of critical approaches represented in this volume. Their very variety testifies to the vitality of the Woolfian debate in Italy, mapping out a field of cross-fertilization from a number of seminal perspectives such as gender issues, cultural research, post-feminist revisioning and so on. Each, from the different orientation endorsed by its respective author, consciously engages in this uncertain, precarious common ground, where the questions raised continue to proliferate, discouraging definite answers: "since", as Palusci nicely puts it, "Virginia Woolf is at the pulsating heart of infinite discourses and trajectories gendered in the feminine" (p. 8).

However, what most strikes the reader in the intricate network of this book, in which an impressive number of themes and problems overlap from one paper to another, is the clear, commanding structuring of so many variegated threads of critical discourses. The very sequence of the eighteen essays seems to respond to a unifying principle, pivoted on Virginia Woolf's lifelong problematization of the relationship between the acts of writing/reading/editing and the emergence of a modern female consciousness. The opening essay by Carla Locatelli measures the theoretical implications of Woolfian eccentric 'autobiographies' from the vantage point of a postmodern deconstruction of the writing subject as an open *sujet en procès*. Woolf's own insight into the process of self-defacement implied in any autobiographical attempt ("we are the words; we are the music; we are the thing itself. And I see this when I have a shock", cit. on p. 18) as well as her acute awareness of the cultural negotiations at stake in her project of self-writing/reading are convincingly discussed as an anticipation of later feminist theory on the issue, or, to be more precise, of a "theory-practice" which "inaugurates and marks the opening of a conceptual rearticulation of subjectivity as gendered subjectivity" (p. 20). Seen in this light, Woolf's pioneering tactic becomes a powerful tool with which to resist and rethink patriarchal hyperdeterminations of genres like the 'essay' and 'narrative' while leaving open the crucial question of her identity as a woman: "... what is a woman? I assure you, I do not know. I do not believe that you know" (cit. on p. 21).

The evanescence and radical instability of Woolf's writing project lies at the core of the following paper as well, where Rossana Bonadei resorts to Deleuze and Guattari's notion of the "rhyzome" in order to better appreciate the writer's incessant struggle to escape both gender constrictions and the equally suffocating narrowness of that "damned egotistical I" (cit. on p. 31). Particular attention is devoted to the liminal space-time figures of travelling, transit and the threshold as privileged cyphers for Woolf's inextricably enmeshed development both as writer/reader and as woman. By this means the paper offers suggestive insight into the plural and hybrid topography of the author's *écriture*, ending with an unusual tribute to *Flush* as an extreme example of "deterritorialized writing that plays even with differences of species" (p. 37).

If the first two contributions provide the reader with the epistemological framework of the whole collection, there follows a series of papers which deal with the relationship between Woolf and other women writers and/or artists who played a similar decisive role within the international avant-garde of that time. Thus, Paola Zaccaria, from a psychoanalytical perspective, investigates a number of cultural differences between Virginia and H. D.. By analyzing, for example, the context of their formation, or the haunting influence of their respective parent figures, she seeks to explain the distinctive character of their later development as female authors: on the one hand, Woolf's textualization of her mother's loss appears to issue in a more kinetic, fluid and sceptical writing; on the other, H. D.'s deep need for stability and continuity could account for her more solid rearticulation of mythical archetypes connected with her mother, Helen.

With Vita Fortunati's contribution, as the title intriguingly suggests: "Uno sguardo incrociato: scrittura e pittura in Virginia e Vanessa", the focus of discourse invests a twofold, dense web of criss-crossing relations, by intertwining the deep and complex bond of sisterhood between Virginia and Vanessa Bell with the exquisitely intertextual bond of the 'sister arts' in relation to their respective artistic languages. The liminal fringes of this essay deserve particular attention: opening with a cautionary, stimulating reflection on the apparently synonymous terms of 'conspiracy' and 'complicity' as deployed in Jane Dunn's study on the subject ('complicity' implying a more secretive nuance of ambiguity than 'conspiracy'), it ends with the provocative reference to two 'enigmatic' portraits of Virginia by Vanessa that seem to suggest all the elusiveness and ambiguity that characterized their absorbing relation. In both cases, the writer is shown in an attitude of utter, silent concentration, denying the spectator the view of her eyes: a detail that, on one side, could point to the creative freedom

vindicated by both sisters (the comparison with Lily Briscoe's portrait comes immediately to mind); on the other, it could even insinuate the suspicion that the searching, visionary power of 'those' eyes were somehow too disturbing for her personal intimate portrait-painter.

No less problematic appears the relationship between Virginia Woolf and her great rival Katherine Mansfield, whose innovative role within the international sphere of Modernism has recently benefited from a more balanced acknowledgment by several scholars. Profiting from a similar critical orientation, Ornella De Zordo argues that, in spite of the numerous differences that separated them (differences of origin, class, education, critical fortune and so on), both writers came to face the same crucial contradiction underlying their attempts to reconcile artistic status to female subjectivity. On the thematic level, this element of affinity can be appreciated in the 'restless' daughters who inhabit both their narratives and their non-fiction: young women, that is, animated by strong artistic ambitions and as such divided between the oscillating poles of attraction towards and repulsion against the maternal figure. Instead, the relationship between Virginia Woolf and Dorothy Richardson is played out more definitely as an opposition, as Vittoriana Villa persuasively makes clear in the following essay, starting from the reserve Richardson herself advanced against all the comparisons and parallels carried out by contemporary critics. In line with this position, the two authors are seen to initiate two rather different paths of experimentation with gender and genre issues, Woolf's ideal of an androgynous, impersonal text/subject being incompatible with Richardson's striving for a more militant "feminine equivalent of the current masculine realism".

After this network of relations emerging from the critical revaluation of a female modernist tradition, Myra Jehlen's discourse opens the section of the book devoted to specific texts by Virginia Woolf. Even though a substantially chronological order is respected, most of the essays included in this section provide a redefinition of consolidated interpretations of the Woolfian corpus of writings. Jehlen herself, for example, offers fresh insights into the imperialistic 'political unconscious' at work in *The Voyage Out*, highlighting the protagonist's painful process of ripening as catalyzed by her experience of the Empire. From this experience, Rachel gradually gains awareness of how closely her autonomy depends on her virginity, letting herself die rather than abdicate such an 'empire' of her own in the more lethal confinement of marriage.

A radical questioning of the 'empire' established by literary forefathers is dramatized at the core of Virginia Woolf's *Night and Day*, according to Maria del Sapio Garbero. This text is here thoroughly revalued as a decisive step in

Woolf's career, insofar as it grasps the complicated relationship between 'tradition and individual talent', viewed from the 'gendered' perspective of the young protagonist's deep dissatisfaction with the burden of the patriarchal past. Seen in this light, Katherine's cultural crisis already prefigures the author's successive endeavours to find a voice and room of her own.

Two papers devoted to Virginia Woolf's short stories precede the examination of her third novel, *Jacob's Room*, unanimously considered her first effective breakthrough in narrative experimentation. This strategic arrangement of the shorter fiction at the threshold of the writer's literary turning point, seems itself to corroborate the idea that Virginia Woolf's engagement with the genre functions as a creative 'workshop in progress' throughout her life, providing vital nourishment for her career as one of the major novelists and essayists of her age. In a number of short stories (from "The Mark on the Wall" to "The Death of a Moth"), the pervasive theme of the 'gaze' is catalyzed by luminous fragments of reality. Carmen Concilio anchors this theme to Woolf's modernist poetics, a poetics which ultimately condemns to failure all 'pictorial', 'photographic' attempts at capturing the true essence of reality - described elsewhere by Cristina Saffiotti in terms of "an irresistible visual compulsion" (*Textus* XII (1999), 1, p. 149). "An Unwritten Novel" and "Solid Objects" are analyzed by Maria Stella, who weaves a superb contrapunctual network of cross-references between the stories, Virginia Woolf's elastic and dynamic 'theory-practice' of the genre and the way it contributes to the major phases of her writing. On the one hand, with the inconclusive form of its interior monologue, "An Unwritten Novel" dramatizes the very material idea of the short story as the residual trace of the narrator's creative efforts at an 'unwritten novel'. On the other, the apparently 'solid' and authoritative frame of the omniscient narrator in " Solid Objects" is subtly and perversely eroded by the male protagonist's obsessive fascination with fragments of trash, a fatal obsession explicable in Freudian terms as the drive of the self towards the inorganic and ultimately towards death. The two short stories thus become paradigmatic of Virginia Woolf's preoccupation with the problematic relationship between the text as a 'solid', concrete object (in this respect, her accurate editorial practice is enlightening), the text as an object of consumption, and the text as a sort of precipitate of frustrated energies of the imagination.

Mirella Billi's essay on *Jacob's Room* focuses on the desolate landscape of the modern world, privileging the elements of literary experimentation that the novel shares with the *Waste Land* and *Ulysses*, written in the same period, whereas Francesca Orestano highlights the deep influence exercised by Roger Fry's critical works upon the writer's mind during the composition of her third novel. The two poles of attraction are announced in the title of this

paper: "*Jacob's Room* as Demise of Perspective and 'Triumph of Death'". Beside the technical complexity of the text as an attempt to reject realistic representation (following a series of arguments developed in Reynolds's *Discourses*, which Fry edited, not to speak of the decisive impact of Cézanne), is Fry's revaluation of the Old Masters which makes it possible to recognize in the Medieval genre of the 'Triumph of Death' an additional, less acknowledged, source of inspiration for the novel's main theme.

But the intricate interplay between painting and writing is explored or, better, exploited to the full in a later novel, the one that is still in all probability the most appreciated and popular in the Woolfian macrotext, *To the Lighthouse*. As well as acknowledging an impressive number of intertextual echoes (from Impressionist and Post-impressionist painters to the new art of photography in experimental works by Coburn or Virginia Woolf's own beloved relative, Julia Cameron), Laura Di Michele investigates the visual, vocal and rhythmic correspondences between the process of writing and painting that are foregrounded in the novel. This osmotic interaction not only supports the very structure of the novel, but, through its suggestive web of colour metaphors and symbolic gestures, it also punctuates the decisive steps taken by the painter Lily Briscoe/the novelist Virginia Woolf in their courageous struggle against the dominant cultural stereotypes on knowledge/art/life. The dense imbrication of 'visual' and 'verbal' levels is also at the centre of Siciliani's attention, as she insists upon the exquisitely metafictional issues at stake in the 'journey' to the lighthouse. The novel is, accordingly, commented on as a palimpsest of parallel experimental forms structured through a 'tunnelling process' which, far from reaching the core of inner reality, tends rather to reveal the unsurmountable distance that separates art from life.

After the success of *To the Lighthouse*, which marked a turning point in the Woolfs' budget, Virginia Woolf did not hesitate to try a new kind of narrative which was to meet more equivocal responses: *Orlando*, a text that has received due appreciation only in the last decade (Sally Potter's film both testifying and contributing to critical debate). Orlando's scandalous 'fluidity' is investigated in Paola Dobrilla's paper. The adjective 'fluid' is seen to impregnate all levels and aspects of the novel: from the water imagery that proliferates as a sort of parallel to the androgynous metamorphosis of the protagonist, to the fluid/hybrid dimension that invests the blurring of genres and styles parodied in the novel. In the same year the author published another book, *A Room of One's Own*. Though frequently exploited as a seminal text for women or gender studies, it has only rarely been closely analyzed in its intratextual complexity. This is the aim of Anna Brawer's fine reading in which the topic of "Women and Fiction" interacts with *Life's*

Adventure, the subtext that provides the reader with a 'hidden' key to the whole book.

The two papers which close the volume are both concerned with the tremendous impact of war on Virginia Woolf's life and art. Palusci discusses the ideological affinity and mutual influence discernible between the author of *Orlando* and *Three Guineas* and Katharine Burdekin, a radical writer long ignored by critics, the author of such similarly disruptive writings as *Proud Man* and *Swastika Night*. Both novelists not only condemn the growing militarism of the Thirties but also bring to the fore the disturbing dependency of Nazi ideology on a despotic, patriarchal frame of mind, all too familiar in England itself, and aimed at repressing any form of 'gendered' dissent. Finally, in Gillian Beer's intriguing essay, the two wars mark, as it were, the initial and final 'borders' of the Woolfian narrative landscape: in the first case, the trauma of the event is signalled by its very absence in *Jacob's Room* and *To the Lighthouse*; in the second, the war projects apocalyptic shadows on the author's later texts, as with other writers of the age like Elizabeth Bowen and Sylvia Towsend Warner. Beer accords particular attention to Woolf's last novel, *Between the Acts*, with its contradictory division between the attempt to restore a communal sense of 'Englishness' and the acute awareness Virginia had always felt of her female condition as that of an outsider and homeless person.

One last remark. The volume ends with an impressive bibliography of Woolf's reception in Italy, drawn up with the "maniacal" care Palusci's readers expect from her editorial ventures. But the reading does not stop here: the spell of so many interlacing voices continues. Some are more exciting than others, but all quiver with the emotion of sharing with other women the open-ended venture of questioning their own reading/writing and provisional focus.

Silvia Albertazzi, *Lo sguardo dell'altro. Le letterature postcoloniali* (Roma: Carocci, 2000); Elio Di Piazza, *L'avventura bianca. Testo e colonialismo nell'Inghilterra del secondo Ottocento* (Bari: Adriatica Editrice, 1999); Alessandra Marzola, *Englishness. Percorsi nella cultura britannica del Novecento* (Roma: Carocci, 1999)

Reviewed by Stefano Manferlotti

The influence of Frantz Fanon's *Les damnés de la terre* (1961) on the so-called postcolonial writers and on the critics who have studied and still study postcolonialism would be difficult to overstate. Ngugy wa Thiong'o (his

opinion can be read in *An Introduction to Post-Colonial Theory*, ed. by P. Childs and P. Williams, 1997) goes perhaps too far in maintaining that "the literature of the early postcolonial period should be read as a series of imaginative footnotes to Frantz Fanon", but it is evident that from its very appearence *Les damnés de la terre* has proved to be an important source of inspiration for both writers and students: if we want to confine ourselves to some outstanding figures in the field of postcolonial criticism, the essays of Edward Said and Homi Bhabha would be inconceivable without the example of this great Martiniquan intellectual. Silvia Albertazzi is therefore right to quote him throughout her *Lo sguardo dell'altro. Le letterature postcoloniali.* She supplements Fanon's statements with her personal views and with a close analysis of what has been said in the last few decades about this vast and difficult subject. Books like *Lo sguardo dell'altro* are both useful and necessary, because essays on this subject are relatively recent in Italy and Europe, which means that every effort to define what she calls "the postcolonial canon" must be favourably received. Divided into five chapters, *Lo sguardo dell'altro* begins by analyzing imperialism and its cultural by-products (for example, the so-called "colonialization of the imaginary"), then discusses the all-important themes of nationality, of the various examples of diaspora, of the relationship between oral and written literature and between postcolonial and postmodern. The writers whose works are cited or discussed are numerous and come from countries with very different cultures: Achebe, Asturias, Ben Jelloun, Rushdie, Chatterjee, Coetzee, Ghosh, Bowering (what George Bowering says about the way Canadians are looked at by Americans and Europeans is hilarious but true) and many others, thus giving the reader a rich outline of the multifarious questions connected with postcolonial literature. Like almost every postcolonial critic, however, Albertazzi holds onto a too directly ideological and committed view of the problem, which more often than not leads her to an equally ideological examination of the creative texts. To give just one example, the structure of Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* is seen as the formal correspondent of a particular kind of mughal painting, which is very difficult if not impossible to demonstrate, whereas the influence of European writers like Sterne, Grass, Canetti, and Calvino on Rushdie's novel is clear and undeniable. Another consequence of such an attitude is the difficulty in analyzing the work of apparently uncommitted writers. This explains, for instance, why the fiction of Kazuo Ishiguro, who is undeniably an excellent though uncommitted postcolonial novelist, is never mentioned in these essays.

As I said before, Fanon's book has proved to be fundamental for the development of new perspectives on the relationship between literary texts and colonialism, especially, and for obvious reasons, in the field of English

literature. This is the case of the well-thought-out study *L'avventura bianca. Testo e colonialismo nell'Inghilterra del secondo Ottocento* by Elio Di Piazza, in which both Fanon's *Les damnés de la terre* and Said's *Orientalism* are referred to in the opening pages. To their names, however, the author adds those of renowned historians and economists like Eric Hobsbawm, Christopher Hicks and John Robinson in order to strengthen his inquiry into the complex process through which colonized countries have been economically, conceptually and culturally depleted. According to Di Piazza, colonialism and imperialism "characterize different periods in the economic and social history of western countries. While the former developed within the society of commercial and industrial capital, the latter grew out of the action of financial capital". Following a Marxist perspective as linear as it is solid, Di Piazza examines the ideological and formal aspects of English literature in the second half of the eighteenth century, taking into account both low-brow (e.g. the adventure novel) and high-brow literature. The fiction of Stevenson, Ballantyne, Kipling and others (particularly interesting are the pages dedicated to the travel diaries of less known figures like Edward Eyre and William Kinglake) is perused in order to emphasize the most important aspects of the so-called "colonial text". In its construction, argues the author, a peculiar role was played by the fraudulent use of otherwise revolutionary works written by scientists such as Darwin, Spencer and Thomas Huxley, and by a number of "myths", among which that of the frontier is perhaps the most remarkable.

As its very title declares, *Englishness. Percorsi nella cultura britannica del Novecento* by Alessandra Marzola is entirely dedicated to the definition of Englishness and everything connected to it in the twentieth century, including the "colonial discourse". In seven chapters, each introduced by an essential and exhaustive reconstruction of the historical events, Marzola examines the many strategies, both deliberate and unconscious, which led to the construction of contemporary British identity as we know it. From the end of Rural England to the triumph of the postmodern metropolis, through the development of the arts and the advent of central phenomena like juvenile protest and feminism, Marzola is extremely successful in the arduous task of giving the reader an exhaustive picture of British culture at the end of the twentieth century, a picture given also by means of the reproduction of texts which are not easily found elsewhere. It is surprising, however, that in a book clearly addressed to an Italian audience no mention is made of the many and often valuable essays written in Italy on the same general subject or on specific topics (see, for instance, the pages about Rushdie and Kureishi). An Index of Persons is also missing, which might have been very useful to the reader.

SUMMARIES

Michela Canepari-Labib

The Deconstruction of Racial Identity in Christine Brooke-Rose's *Out*

This essay clarifies some of the means and goals of Christine Brooke-Rose's production as a whole and focuses in particular on the deconstructive effort the author exhibits in her first experimental text. By concentrating on her treatment of racial identity, this article inserts *Out* in a broader post-colonial discourse and shows how the author exploits the imaginative force of the novel in order to create a poetic text. The novel as a *genre* is thus revived and given new force.

Lidia Curti

Writing at the Border. Women's Voices in Cultural Theory

Writing at the border – the borders of gender, of the West, of language – is at the core of many contemporary female and feminist ethnic voices. This essay seeks to show how they can open up important perspectives in literary and critical theory.

Discipline and Place Collective

The Limits of Liberalism: a Conversation with Lisa Lowe, Renata Salecl and Terry Threadgold

In the Botanical Gardens of the University of British Columbia, following the international and interdisciplinary conference we held on the theme of the university as/in contested space, our "Discipline and Place Collective" continues to dialog with the conference keynoters, three leading feminist scholars – Lisa Lowe, Renata Salecl, and Terry Threadgold – teaching and working in Australia, Slovenia and California. Despite differences in their theoretical, geographical and political positions, they discover common ground in their critique of liberalism's appropriation and commodification of "difference". Just how far and where they take their critique of liberalism, modernism and the Enlightenment is the subject of lively disagreement, which in turn is taken up by the members of "The Discipline and Place Collective".

Patrizia Fusella

Universities in Transition. Call for a Debate

The radical process of renovation started in the Italian university with administrative autonomy and carried out by more recent laws is put in relation with changes in other universities and with documents by the European Ministers of Education and Unesco. Some of the risks implied in the changes are underlined together with broader issues on knowledge and education in the era of transnational space, globalization and economic world competitiveness. In view of the new degree

syllabuses and the adoption of the system of credits (which must be in place by the beginning of the academic year 2001-2), these are offered as possible topics for a debate on English Studies and research in English that *Anglistica* would like to host in the next issues.

Marie-Hélène Laforest

Whose Story, Whose World? Speaking the Unspoken in Tony Morrison and John M. Coetzee

This analysis of Morrison's *Beloved* and Coetzee's *Foe* reveals that the two novels reflect feminist, postmodern and postcolonial discourses in ways that surprisingly converge. In addition, their commitment to rewrite the script of black/white relations leads both Morrison and Coetzee to invest women with the task of developing a new ethic and aesthetic.

Lisa Lowe

Toward a Critical Modernity

This essay is framed as a contribution to a discussion that seeks to constitute the conditions for alternative knowledges, to recover a genealogy of counter knowledges, and confirm "the politics of the possible". In particular, how do we in the North American university, traditionally a key site for the formation and reproduction of the liberal subject, make space for alternative conceptions and practices of 'epistemology', 'public sphere', and 'human'? This paper begins with an identification and critique of the Enlightenment epistemological subject, and then traces the ways that legal definitions of workplace sexual harassment invest not only in government remediation but liberal individualism and citizenship. A collaboration between university researchers and The Support Committee for Maquiladora Workers in San Diego is briefly described as a project that attempts to practice an alternative definition of the "human" and "human rights".

Luciana Parisi

Essence and Virtuality: the Incorporeal Desire of Lilith

This article draws on Spinozian materialist ethics, and on the evolutionary theory of endosymbiosis, in order to carry the analysis of *Dawn* by Octavia Butler beyond the critical frame of textual analysis. In particular, the article focuses on the transformation of the protagonist's body caught up in a complex genetic trade that challenges both the biology of sex and the cultural constraints of gender. This analysis indirectly problematises the impasse in feminist theories between essentialism and constructivism, nature and culture, that has often relegated the body to a passive and innocent material subsequently inscribed by historical and cultural

powers. The method of analysis deployed in this article serves to map out the virtual capacities of understanding a body irreducible to the economy of reproduction and pleasure.

Renata Salecl

Disbelief in the Big Other in the University and beyond

The subject today no longer believes in the normative ideals offered by society and instead takes himself or herself to be the creator of his or her identity. The university has helped to create itself as a space in which authority is less overt and criticism is watered down. We embrace the ideals of cultural and theoretical relativism. This openness paradoxically prevents criticism. In the classroom, the permissive teacher may open the possibilities for students identifying with unstated, underlying messages and fantasies. From the classroom to the corporate campus, these practices may lead to other forms of less overt social coercion. Professors and students must now take the risk of critiquing cultural relativism, stop obsessing about the self, and refocus on the political setting of capitalist society.

Terry Threadgold

The Sphynx, Cardinal Wolsey's Hat and Metropolis Now

Is the Australian university in ruin? This paper explores spatial, temporal and other metaphors that connect the university to the metropolis, and looks for new metaphors (including those offered by Gibson-Graham's writing on capitalism and globalization, and Jane Jacob's portrayal of the postcolonial city) as ways of thinking about possible futures for the university. This involves refusing the discourse of corporatization of the university, and binaries between the Humanities (including Women's Studies) and business/science/industry, and reinventing our histories so as to break long silences, refuse monologic narrations of nation and citizen, and open opportunities for new collaborations and negotiations.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

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Examples:
Jacqueline Rose, *Sexuality in the Field of Vision* (London: Verso, 1986), 19.
Ibid.
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Jean Louis Comolli, "Machines of the Visible", in Teresa de Lauretis and Stephen Heath, eds., *The Cinematic Apparatus* (London: Macmillan, 1980).
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Galbraith Miller Crump, *The Mystical Design of "Paradise Lost"* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press; London: Associated University Presses, 1975).
Emile Benveniste, "La nature des pronoms", in *Problèmes de linguistique générale* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966).
Perry Anderson, "Components of the National Culture", *New Left Review* 50 (July-August 1968), 44.
John Hollander, *Melodious Guile. Fictive Pattern in Poetic Language* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1988), 73 (hereafter cited as MG).
P. D. Brett, S. W. Johnson and C. R. T. Bach, *Mastering String Quartets* (San Francisco: Amati Press, 1989), 32.
Maria Stella, "Il poeta e la lettura del cuore", in *La figlia che piange: saggi su poesia e metapoesia*, a cura di Agostino Lombardo (Roma: Bulzoni, 1995), 169-180.