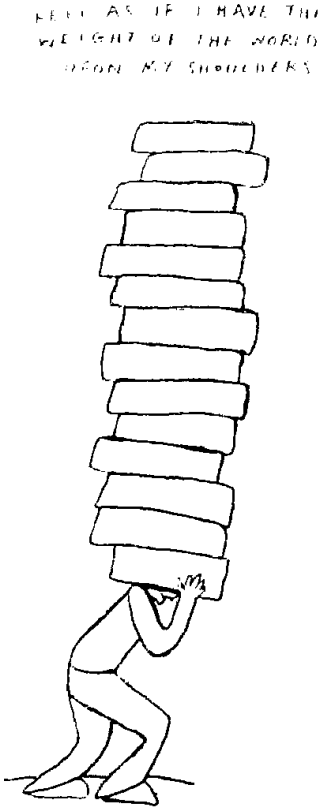


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Philosophische Fakultät

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Examenskolloquium

Examenskolloquium

English Literatures

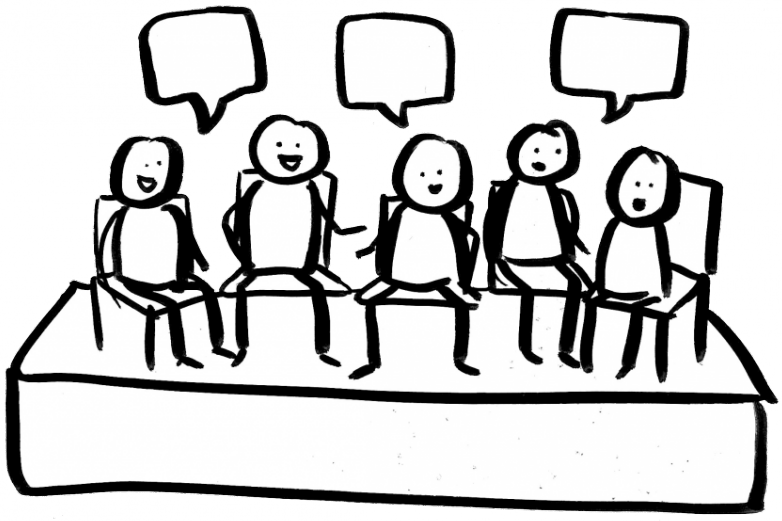


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2 Cf. English *goodness!* and *zounds!* (from *God's wounds*). [Trans.]
3 The use of the comparative form for two and the superlative for more than two in English (e.g. may the *better* boxer win: the *best* boxer in the world) is probably a remnant of the old distinction between the dual and the plural number. [Trans.]

CHAPTER 3

"Two Aspects of Language"

Roman Jakobson

The varieties of aphasia are numerous and diverse, but all of them oscillate between the two polar types just described. Every form of aphasic disturbance consists in some impairment, more or less severe, either of the faculty for selection and substitution or for combination and contexture. The former affliction involves a deterioration of metalinguistic operations, while the latter damages the capacity for maintaining the hierarchy of linguistic units. The relation of similarity is suppressed in the former, the relation of contiguity in the latter type of aphasia. Metaphor is alien to the similarity disorder, and metonymy to the contiguity disorder.

The development of a discourse may take place along two different semantic lines: one topic may lead to another either through their similarity or through their contiguity. The metaphoric way would be the most appropriate term for the first case and the metonymic way for the second, since they find their most condensed expression in metaphor and metonymy respectively. In aphasia one or the other of these two processes is restricted or totally blocked – an effect which makes the study of aphasia particularly illuminating for the linguist. In normal verbal behavior both processes are continually operative, but careful observation will reveal that under the influence of a cultural pattern, personality, and verbal style, preference is given to one of the two processes over the other.

In a well-known psychological test, children are confronted with some noun and told to utter the first verbal response that comes into their heads. In this experiment two opposite linguistic predilections are invariably exhibited: the response is intended either as a substitute for, or as a complement to the stimulus. In the latter case the stimulus and the response together form a proper syntactic construction, most usually a sentence. These two types of reaction have been labeled substitutive and predicative.

To the stimulus *hut* one response was *burnt out*; another is *a poor little house*. Both reactions are predicative; but the first creates a purely narrative context, while in the second there is a double connection with the subject *hut*; on the one hand, a positional (namely, syntactic) contiguity, and on the other a semantic similarity.

The same stimulus produced the following substitutive reactions: the tautology *hut*; the synonyms *cabin* and *hovel*; the antonym *palace*, and the metaphors *den* and

burrow. The capacity of two words to replace one another is an instance of positional similarity, and, in addition, all these responses are linked to the stimulus by semantic similarity (or contrast). Metonymical responses to the same stimulus, such as *thatch*, *litter*, or *poverty*, combine and contrast the positional similarity with semantic contiguity.

In manipulating these two kinds of connection (similarity and contiguity) in both their aspects (positional and semantic) – selecting, combining, and ranking them – an individual exhibits his personal style, his verbal predilections and preferences.

In verbal art the interaction of these two elements is especially pronounced. Rich material for the study of this relationship is to be found in verse patterns which require a compulsory parallelism between adjacent lines, for example in Biblical poetry or in the West Finnic and, to some extent, the Russian oral traditions. This provides an objective criterion of what in the given speech community acts as a correspondence. Since on any verbal level – morphemic, lexical, syntactic, and phraseological – either of these two relations (similarity and contiguity) can appear – and each in either of two aspects – an impressive range of possible configurations is created. Either of the two gravitational poles may prevail. In Russian lyrical songs, for example, metaphoric constructions predominate, while in the heroic epics the metonymic way is preponderant.

In poetry there are various motives which determine the choice between these alternants. The primacy of the metaphoric process in the literary schools of romanticism and symbolism has been repeatedly acknowledged, but it is still insufficiently realized that it is the predominance of metonymy which underlies and actually predetermines the so-called "realistic" trend, which belongs to an intermediary stage between the decline of romanticism and the rise of symbolism and is opposed to both. Following the path of contiguous relationships, the realistic author metonymically digresses from the plot to the atmosphere and from the characters to the setting in space and time. He is fond of synecdochic details. In the scene of Anna Karenina's suicide Tolstoy's artistic attention is focused on the heroine's handbag; and in *War and Peace* the synecdoches "hair on the upper lip" or "bare shoulders" are used by the same writer to stand for the female characters to whom these features belong.

The alternative predominance of one or the other of these two processes is by no means confined to verbal art. The same oscillation occurs in sign systems other than language.[1] A salient example from the history of painting is the manifestly metonymical orientation of cubism, where the object is transformed into a set of synecdoches; the surrealist painters responded with a patently metaphorical attitude. Ever since the productions of D. W. Griffith, the art of the cinema, with its highly developed capacity for changing the angle, perspective, and focus of "shots," has broken with the tradition of the theater and ranged an unprecedented variety of synecdochic "close-ups" and metonymic "set-ups" in general. In such pictures as those of Charlie Chaplin, these devices in turn were superseded by a novel, metaphoric "montage" with its "lap dissolves" – the filmic similes.[2]

The bipolar structure of language (or other semiotic systems), and, in aphasia, the fixation on one of these poles to the exclusion of the other require systematic comparative study. The retention of either of these alternatives in the two types of aphasia must be confronted with the predominance of the same pole in certain styles, personal habits, current fashions, etc. A careful analysis and comparison of these phenomena with the whole syndrome of the corresponding type of aphasia is an imperative task for joint research by experts in psychopathology, psychology, linguistics, poetics, and semiotics, the general science of signs. The dichotomy here discussed appears to be of primal significance and consequence for all verbal behavior and for human behavior in general.[3]

To indicate the possibilities of the projected comparative research, we choose an example from a Russian folk tale which employs parallelism as a comic device: "Thomas is a bachelor; Jeremiah is unmarried" (*Foma xolost*; *Erjoma nezenat*). Here the predicates in the two parallel clauses are associated by similarity: they are in fact synonymous. The subjects of both clauses are masculine proper names and hence morphologically similar, while on the other hand they denote two contiguous heroes of the same tale, created to perform identical actions and thus to justify the use of synonymous pairs of predicates. A somewhat modified version of the same construction occurs in a familiar wedding song in which each of the wedding guests is addressed in turn by his first name and patronymic: "Gleb is a bachelor; Ivanovic is unmarried." While both predicates here are again synonyms, the relationship between the two subjects is changed: both are proper names denoting the same man and are normally used contiguously as a mode of polite address.

In the quotation from the folk tale the two parallel clauses refer to two separate facts, the marital status of Thomas and the similar status of Jeremiah. In the verse from the wedding song, however, the two clauses are synonymous: they redundantly reiterate the celibacy of the same hero, splitting him into two verbal hypostases.

The Russian novelist Gleb Ivanovic Uspenskij (1840–1902) in the last years of his life suffered from a mental illness involving a speech disorder. His first name and patronymic, *Gleb Ivanovic*, traditionally combined in polite intercourse, for him split into two distinct names designating two separate beings: Gleb was endowed with all his virtues, while Ivanovic, the name relating the son to the father, became the incarnation of all Uspenskij's vices. The linguistic aspect of this split personality is the patient's inability to use two symbols for the same thing, and it is thus a similarity disorder. Since the similarity disorder is bound up with the metonymical bent, an examination of the literary manner Uspenskij had employed as a young writer takes on particular interest. And the study of Anatolij Kamegulov, who analyzed Uspenskij's style, bears out our theoretical expectations. He shows that Uspenskij had a particular penchant for metonymy, and especially for synecdoche, and that he carried it so far that "the reader is crushed by the multiplicity of detail unloaded on him in a limited verbal space, and is physically unable to grasp the whole, so that the portrait is often lost."[4]

To be sure, the metonymical style in Uspenskij is obviously prompted by the prevailing literary canon of his time, late nineteenth-century "realism"; but the

2

personal stamp of Gleb Ivanovic made his pen particularly suitable for this artistic trend in its extreme manifestations and finally left its mark upon the verbal aspect of his mental illness.

A competition between both devices, metonymic and metaphoric, is manifest in any symbolic process, either intrapersonal or social. Thus in an inquiry into the structure of dreams, the decisive question is whether the symbols and the temporal sequences used are based on contiguity (Freud's metonymic "displacement" and synecdochic "condensation") or on similarity (Freud's "identification and symbolism").[5] The principles underlying magic rites have been resolved by Frazer into two types: charms based on the law of similarity and those founded on association by contiguity. The first of these two great branches of sympathetic magic has been called "homoeopathic" or "imitative," and the second, "contagious magic."[6] This bipartition is indeed illuminating. Nonetheless, for the most part, the question of the two poles is still neglected, despite its wide scope and importance for the study of any symbolic behavior, especially verbal, and of its impairments. What is the main reason for this neglect?

Similarity in meaning connects the symbols of a metalanguage with the symbols of the language referred to. Similarity connects a metaphorical term with the term for which it is substituted. Consequently, when constructing a metalanguage to interpret tropes, the researcher possesses more homogeneous means to handle metaphor, whereas metonymy, based on a different principle, easily defies interpretation. Therefore nothing comparable to the rich literature on metaphor[7] can be cited for the theory of metonymy. For the same reason, it is generally realized that romanticism is closely linked with metaphor, whereas the equally intimate ties of realism with metonymy usually remain unnoticed. Not only the tool of the observer but also the object of observation is responsible for the preponderance of metaphor over metonymy in scholarship. Since poetry is focused upon sign, and pragmatical prose primarily upon referent, tropes and figures were studied mainly as poetical devices. The principle of similarity underlies poetry; the metrical parallelism of lines or the phonic equivalence of rhyming words prompts the question of semantic similarity and contrast; there exist, for instance, grammatical and anti-grammatical but never agrammatical rhymes. Prose, on the contrary, is forwarded essentially by contiguity. Thus, for poetry, metaphor, and for prose, metonymy is the line of least resistance and, consequently, the study of poetical tropes is directed chiefly toward metaphor. The actual bipolarity has been artificially replaced in these studies by an amputated, unipolar scheme which, strikingly enough, coincides with one of the two aphasic patterns, namely with the contiguity disorder.[8]

Notes

1 I ventured a few sketchy remarks on the metonymical turn in verbal art ("Pro relizm u mystectvi," *Vaplite*, Kharkov, 1927, No. 2).

2 Cf. B. Balazs, *Theory of the Film* (London, 1952).

3 For the psychological and sociological aspects of this dichotomy see Bateson's views on "progressional" and "selective integration" and Parsons's on the "conjunction–disjunction dichotomy" in children's development: J. Ruesch and G. Bateson, *Communication, the Social Matrix of Psychiatry* (New York, 1951), pp. 183ff.; T. Parsons and R. F. Bales, *Family, Socialization and Interaction Process* (Glencoe, 1955), pp. 119f.

4 A. Kamelgulov, *Stil' Gleba Uspenskogo* (Leningrad, 1930), pp. 65, 145. One of such disintegrated portraits cited by the monograph: "From underneath an ancient straw cap with a black spot on its shield, there peeked two braids resembling the tusks of a wild boar; a chin grown fat and pendulous and definitively spread over the greasy collars of the calico dicky and in thick layer lay on the coarse collar of the canvas coat, firmly buttoned on the neck. From below this coat to the eyes of the observer there protruded massive hands with a ring, which had eaten into the fat finger, a cane with a copper top, a significant bulge of the stomach and the presence of very broad pants, almost of muslin quality, in the broad ends of which hid the toes of the boots."

5 S. Freud, *Die Traumdeutung*, 9th edn (Vienna, 1950).

6 J. G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion*, Part 1, 3rd edn (Vienna, 1950), ch. III.

7 C. F. P. Stutterheim, *Het begrip metaphoor* (Amsterdam, 1941).

8 Thanks are due to Hugh McLean for his valuable assistance and to Justinia Besharov for her original observations on tropes and figures.

CHAPTER 4

"The Uncanny"

Sigmund Freud

The German word *unheimlich*[1] is obviously the opposite of *heimlich*, *heimisch*, meaning "familiar"; "native," "belonging to the home"; and we are tempted to conclude that what is "uncanny" is frightening precisely because it is *not* known and familiar. Naturally not everything which is new and unfamiliar is frightening, however; the relation cannot be inverted. We can only say that what is novel can easily become frightening and uncanny; some new things are frightening but not by any means all. Something has to be added to what is novel and unfamiliar to make it uncanny.

On the whole, Jentsch did not get beyond this relation of the uncanny to the novel and unfamiliar. He ascribes the essential factor in the production of the feeling of uncanniness to intellectual uncertainty; so that the uncanny would always be that in which one does not know where one is, as it were. The better orientated in his environment a person is, the less readily will he get the impression of something uncanny in regard to the objects and events in it.

It is not difficult to see that this definition is incomplete, and we will therefore try to proceed beyond the equation of *unheimlich* with unfamiliar. We will first turn to other languages. But foreign dictionaries tell us nothing new, perhaps only because we speak a different language. Indeed, we get the impression that many languages are without a word for this particular variety of what is fearful.

I wish to express my indebtedness to Dr Th. Reik for the following excerpts:

LATIN: (K. E. Georges, *Deutschlateinisches Wörterbuch*, 1898). Ein *unheimlicher* Ort [an uncanny place] – locus suspectus; in unheimlicher Nachtzeit [in the dismal night hours] – intempesta nocte.

GREEK: (Rost's and Schenkl's Lexikons). Evos – strange, foreign.

ENGLISH: (from dictionaries by Lucas, Bellow, Flugel, Muret: Sanders). Uncomfortable, uneasy, gloomy, dismal, uncanny, ghastly; (of a house) haunted; (of a man) a repulsive fellow.

FRENCH: (Sachs–Villatte). Inquiétant, sinistre, lugubre, mal à son aise.

SPANISH: (Tollhausen, 1889). Sospechoso, de mal aguëro, lúgubre, siniestro.

The Italian and the Portuguese seem to content themselves with words which we

should describe as circumlocutions. In Arabic and Hebrew "uncanny" means the same as "daemonic," "gruesome."

Let us therefore return to the German language. In Daniel Sanders' *Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache* (1860), the following remarks [abstracted in translation] are found upon the word *heimlich*; I have laid stress on certain passages by italicizing them.

> *Heimlich* adj.: 1. Also *heimelich*, *heimelig*, belonging to the house, not strange, familiar, tame, intimate, comfortable, homely, etc.
>
> (*a*) (Obsolete) belonging to the house or the family, or regarded as so belonging (cf. Latin *familiaris*): *Die Heimlichen*, the members of the household; *Der heimliche Rat* [him to whom secrets are revealed] Gen. xli. 45; 2 Sam. xxiii. 23; now more usually *Geheimer Rat* [Privy Councillor], cf. *Heimlicher*.
>
> (*b*) Of animals: tame, companionable to man. As opposed to wild, *e.g.* "Wild animals . . . that are trained to be *heimlich* and accustomed to men." "If these young creatures are brought up from early days among men they become quite *heimlich*, friendly," etc.
>
> (*c*) Friendly, intimate, homelike; the enjoyment of quiet content, etc., arousing a sense of peaceful pleasure and security as in one within the four walls of his house. "Is it still *heimlich* to you in your country where strangers are felling your woods?" "She did not feel all too *heimlich* with him." "To destroy the *Heimlichkeit* of the home." "I could not readily find another spot so intimate and *heimlich* as this." "In quiet *Heimlichkeit*, surrounded by close walls." "A careful housewife, who knows how to make a pleasing *Heimlichkeit* (*Hauslichkeit*)[2] out of the smallest means." "The protestant rulers do not feel . . . *Heimlich* among their catholic subjects." "When it grows *heimlich* and still, and the evening quiet alone watches over your cell." "Quiet, lovely and *heimlich*, no place more fitted for her rest." "The in and outflowing waves of the current, dreamy and *heimlich* as a cradle-song." Cf. in especial *Unheimlich*. Among Swabian and Swiss authors in especial, often as a trisyllable: "How *heimelich* it seemed again of an evening, back at home." "The warm room and the *heimelig* afternoon." "Little by little they grew at ease and *heimelig* among themselves." "That which comes from afar . . . assuredly does not live quite *heimelig* (*heimatlich* [at home], *freundnachbarlich* [in a neighborly way]) among the people." "The sentinel's horn sounds so *heimelig* from the tower, and his voice invites so hospitably." *This form of the word ought to become general in order to protect the word from becoming obsolete in its good sense through an easy confusion with II.* [see below]. "'*The Zecks* [a family name] *are all 'heimlich'.*" "'*Heimlich'? What do you understand by 'heimlich'?*" "*Well, . . . they are like a buried spring or a dried-up pond. One cannot walk over it without always having the feeling that water might come up there again.*" "*Oh, we call it 'unheimlich'; you call it 'heimlich.' Well, what makes you think that there is something secret and untrustworthy about this family?*'" Gutzkow.
>
> II. Concealed, kept from sight, so that others do not get to know about it, withheld from others, cf. *geheim* [secret]; so also *Heimlichkeit* for *Geheimnis* [secret]. To do something *heimlich*, *i.e.* behind someone's back; to steal away *heimlich*; *heimlich* meetings and appointments; to look on with *heimlich* pleasure at someone's discomfiture; to sigh or weep *heimlich*; to behave *heimlich*, as though there was something to conceal; *heimlich* love, love-affair, sin; *heimlich* places (which good manners oblige us to conceal). I. Sam. v. 6; "The *heimlich* chamber" [privy]. 2. Kings

x. 27 etc.; "To throw into pits or *Heimlichkeit*." Led the steeds *heimlich* before Laomedon." "As secretive, *heimlich*, deceitful and malicious towards cruel masters . . . as frank, open, sympathetic and helpful towards a friend in misfortune." "The *heimlich* art" (magic). "Where public ventilation has to stop, there *heimlich* machinations begin." "Freedom is the whispered watchword of *heimlich* conspirators and the loud battle-cry of professed revolutionaries." "A holy, *heimlich* effect." "I have roots that are most *heimlich*, I am grown in the deep earth." "My *heimlich* pranks." (Cf. *Heimtücke* [mischief]). To discover, disclose, betray someone's *Heimlichkeiten*; to concoct *Heimlichkeiten* behind my back." Cf. *Geheimnis*.

Compounds and especially also the opposite follow meaning I. (above): *Unheimlich*, uneasy, eerie, blood-curdling; "Seeming almost *unheimlich* and ghostly to him." "I had already long since felt an *unheimlich*, even gruesome feeling." "Feels an *unheimlich* horror." "*Unheimlich* and motionless like a stone-image." "The *unheimlich* mist called hill-fog." "These pale youths are *unheimlich* and are brewing heaven knows what mischief." "'*Unheimlich is the name for everything that ought to have remained . . . hidden and secret and has become visible.*'" Schelling. "To veil the divine to surround it with a certain *Unheimlichkeit*. – *Unheimlich* is not often used as opposite to meaning II. (above).

What interests us most in this long extract is to find that among its different shades of meaning the word *heimlich* exhibits one which is identical with its opposite, *unheimlich*. What is *heimlich* thus comes to be *unheimlich*. (Cf. the quotation from Gutzkow: "We call it *unheimlich*; you call it *heimlich*.") In general we are reminded that the word *heimlich* is not unambiguous, but belongs to two sets of ideas, which without being contradictory are yet very different: on the one hand, it means that which is familiar and congenial, and on the other, that which is concealed and kept out of sight. "*Unheimlich*" is customarily used, we are told, as the contrary only of the first signification of "*heimlich*," and not of the second. Sanders tells us nothing concerning a possible genetic connection between these two meanings of *heimlich*. On the other hand, we notice that Schelling says something which throws quite a new light on the concept of the *Unheimlich*, for which we were certainly not prepared. According to him, everything is *unheimlich* that ought to have remained secret and hidden but has come to light.

Some of the doubts that have thus arisen are removed if we consult Grimm's dictionary (1877, 4, Part 2, pp. 873 ff.)

We read:

Heimlich; adj. and adv. *vernaculus*, *occultus*; MHG. heîmelich, heîmlich.

(p. 874.) In a slightly different sense: "I feel *heimlich*, well, free from fear." . . .

[3] *(b) Heimlich* is also used of a place free from ghostly influences . . . familiar, friendly, intimate.

(p. 875: p) Familiar, amicable, unreserved.

4. From the idea of "homelike," "belonging to the house," the further idea is developed of something withdrawn from the eyes of strangers, something concealed, secret; and this idea is expanded in many ways . . .

(p. 876.) "On the left bank of the lake there lies a meadow *heimlich* in the wood."

(Schiller, *Wilhelm Tell*, I, 4.). . . Poetic licence, rarely so used in modern speech . . . *Heimlich* is used in conjunction with a verb expressing the act of concealing: "In the secret of his tabernacle he shall hide me *heimlich*." (Ps. xxvii. 5.) . . . *Heimlich* parts of the human body, *pudenda* . . . "the men that died not were smitten on their *heimlich* parts." (1 Samuel v. 12.) . . .

(c) Officials who give important advice which has to be kept secret in matters of state are called *heimlich* councillors; the adjective, according to modern usage, has been replaced by *geheim* [secret] . . . "Pharaoh called Joseph's name 'him to whom secrets are revealed'" (*heimlich* councillor). (Gen. xli. 45.)

(p. 878.) 6. *Heimlich*, as used of knowledge – mystic, allegorical: a *heimlich* meaning, *mysticus, divinus, occultus, figuratus.* (p. 878.) *Heimlich* in a different sense, as withdrawn from knowledge, unconscious . . . *Heimlich* also has the meaning of that which is obscure, inaccessible to knowledge . . . "Do you not see? They do not trust us; they fear the *heimlich* face of the Duke of Friedland." (Schiller, *Wallensteins Lager*, Scene 2.)

9. The notion of something hidden and dangerous, which is expressed in the last paragraph, is still further developed, so that "heimlich" comes to have the meaning usually ascribed to "unheimlich." Thus: "At times I feel like a man who walks in the night and believes in ghosts; every corner is *heimlich* and full of terrors for him." (Klinger, *Theater*, 3. 298.)

Thus *heimlich is* a word the meaning of which develops in the direction of ambivalence, until it finally coincides with its opposite, *unheimlich*. *Unheimlich* is in some way or other a sub-species of *heimlich*. Let us bear this discovery in mind, though we cannot yet rightly understand it, alongside of Schelling's definition of the *Unheimlich*. If we go on to examine individual instances of uncanniness, these hints will become intelligible to us.

II

When we proceed to review the things, persons, impressions, events and situations which are able to arouse in us a feeling of the uncanny in a particularly forcible and definite form, the first requirement is obviously to select a suitable example to start on. Jentsch has taken as a very good instance "doubts whether an apparently animate being is really alive; or conversely, whether a lifeless object might not be in fact animate"; and he refers in this connection to the impression made by waxwork figures, ingeniously constructed dolls and automata. To these he adds the uncanny effect of epileptic fits, and of manifestations of insanity, because these excite in the spectator the impression of automatic, mechanical processes at work behind the ordinary appearance of mental activity. Without entirely accepting this author's view, we will take it as a starting-point for our own investigation because in what follows he reminds us of a writer who has succeeded in producing uncanny effects better than anyone else.

Jentsch writes: "In telling a story, one of the most successful devices for easily creating uncanny effects is to leave the reader in uncertainty whether a particular

figure in the story is a human being or an automaton, and to do it in such a way that his attention is not focused directly upon his uncertainty, so that he may not be led to go into the matter and clear it up immediately. That, as we have said, would quickly dissipate the peculiar emotional effect of the thing. E. T. A. Hoffmann has repeatedly employed this psychological artifice with success in his fantastic narratives."

This observation, undoubtedly a correct one, refers primarily to the story of "The Sand-Man" in Hoffmann's *Nachtstücken*,[3] which contains the original of Olympia, the doll that appears in the first act of Offenbach's opera, *Tales of Hoffmann*. But I cannot think – and I hope most readers of the story will agree with me – that the theme of the doll Olympia, who is to all appearances a living being, is by any means the only, or indeed the most important, element that must be held responsible for the quite unparalleled atmosphere of uncanniness evoked by the story. Nor is this atmosphere heightened by the fact that the author himself treats the episode of Olympia with a faint touch of satire and uses it to poke fun at the young man's idealization of his mistress. The main theme of the story is, on the contrary, something different, something which gives it its name, and which is always re-introduced at critical moments: it is the theme of the "Sand-Man" who tears out children's eyes.

This fantastic tale opens with the childhood recollections of the student Nathaniel. In spite of his present happiness, he cannot banish the memories associated with the mysterious and terrifying death of his beloved father. On certain evenings his mother used to send the children to bed early, warning them that "the Sand-Man was coming"; and, sure enough, Nathaniel would not fail to hear the heavy tread of a visitor, with whom his father would then be occupied for the evening. When questioned about the Sand-Man, his mother, it is true, denied that such a person existed except as a figure of speech; but his nurse could give him more definite information: "He's a wicked man who comes when children won't go to bed, and throws handfuls of sand in their eyes so that they jump out of their heads all bleeding. Then he puts the eyes in a sack and carries them off to the half-moon to feed his children. They sit up there in their nest, and their beaks are hooked like owls' beaks, and they use them to peck up naughty boys' and girls' eyes with."

Although little Nathaniel was sensible and old enough not to credit the figure of the Sand-Man with such gruesome attributes, yet the dread of him became fixed in his heart. He determined to find out what the Sand-Man looked like; and one evening, when the Sand-Man was expected again, he hid in his father's study. He recognized the visitor as the lawyer Coppelius, a repulsive person whom the children were frightened of when he occasionally came to a meal; and he now identified this Coppelius with the dreaded Sand-Man. As regards the rest of the scene, Hoffmann already leaves us in doubt whether what we are witnessing is the first delirium of the panic-stricken boy, or a succession of events which are to be regarded in the story as being real. His father and the guest are at work at a brazier with glowing flames. The little eavesdropper hears Coppelius call out: "Eyes here! Eyes here!" and betrays himself by screaming aloud. Coppelius seizes him and is

on the point of dropping bits of red-hot coal from the fire into his eyes, and then of throwing them into the brazier, but his father begs him off and saves his eyes. After this the boy falls into a deep swoon; and a long illness brings his experience to an end. Those who decide in favour of the rationalistic interpretation of the Sand-Man will not fail to recognize in the child's phantasy the persisting influence of his nurse's story. The bits of sand that are to be thrown into the child's eyes turn into bits of red-hot coal from the flames; and in both cases they are intended to make his eyes jump out. In the course of another visit of the Sand-Man's, a year later, his father is killed in his study by an explosion. The lawyer Coppelius disappears from the place without leaving a trace behind.

Nathaniel, now a student, believes that he has recognized this phantom of horror from his childhood in an itinerant optician, an Italian called Giuseppe Coppola, who at his university town, offers him weather-glasses for sale. When Nathaniel refuses, the man goes on: "Not weather-glasses? not weather-glasses? also got fine eyes, fine eyes!" The student's terror is allayed when he finds that the proffered eyes are only harmless spectacles, and he buys a pocket spy-glass from Coppola. With its aid he looks across into Professor Spalanzani's house opposite and there spies Spalanzani's beautiful, but strangely silent and motionless daughter, Olympia. He soon falls in love with her so violently that, because of her, he quite forgets the clever and sensible girl to whom he is betrothed. But Olympia is an automaton whose clock-work has been made by Spalanzani, and whose eyes have been put in by Coppola, the Sand-Man. The student surprises the two Masters quarrelling over their handiwork. The optician carries off the wooden eyeless doll; and the mechanician, Spalanzani, picks up Olympia's bleeding eyes from the ground and throws them at Nathaniel's breast, saying that Coppola had stolen them from the student. Nathaniel succumbs to a fresh attack of madness, and in his delirium his recollection of his father's death is mingled with this new experience. "Hurry up! hurry up! ring of fire!" he cries. "Spin about, ring of fire – Hurrah! Hurry up, wooden doll! lovely wooden doll, spin about —." He then falls upon the professor, Olympia's "father," and tries to strangle him.

Rallying from a long and serious illness, Nathaniel seems at last to have recovered. He intends to marry his betrothed, with whom he has become reconciled. One day he and she are walking through the city market-place, over which the high tower of the Town Hall throws its huge shadow. On the girl's suggestion, they climb the tower, leaving her brother, who is walking with them, down below. From the top, Clara's attention is drawn to a curious object moving along the street. Nathaniel looks at this thing through Coppola's spy-glass, which he finds in his pocket, and falls into a new attack of madness. Shouting "spin about, wooden doll!" he tries to throw the girl into the gulf below. Her brother, brought to her side by her cries, rescues her and hastens down with her to safety. On the tower above, the madman rushes round, shrieking "Ring of fire, spin about!" – and we know the origin of the words. Among the people who begin to gather below there comes forward the figure of the lawyer Coppelius, who has suddenly returned. We may suppose that it was his approach, seen through the spy-glass, which threw

Nathaniel into his fit of madness. As the onlookers prepare to go up and overpower the madman, Coppelius laughs and says: "Wait a bit; he'll come down of himself." Nathaniel suddenly stands still, catches sight of Coppelius, and with a wild shriek "Yes! 'Fine eyes – fine eyes!'" flings himself over the parapet. While he lies on the paving-stones with a shattered skull the Sand-Man vanishes in the throng.

This short summary leaves no doubt, I think, that the feeling of something uncanny is directly attached to the figure of the Sand-Man, that is, to the idea of being robbed of one's eyes, and that Jentsch's point of an intellectual uncertainty has nothing to do with the effect. Uncertainty whether an object is living or inanimate, which admittedly applied to the doll Olympia, is quite irrelevant in connection with this other, more striking instance of uncanniness. It is true that the writer creates a kind of uncertainty in us in the beginning by not letting us know, no doubt purposely, whether he is taking us into the real world or into a purely fantastic one of his own creation. He has, of course, a right to do either; and if he chooses to stage his action in a world peopled with spirits, demons and ghosts, as Shakespeare does in *Hamlet*, in *Macbeth* and, in a different sense, in *The Tempest* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, we must bow to his decision and treat his setting as though it were real for as long as we put ourselves into his hands. But this uncertainty disappears in the course of Hoffmann's story, and we perceive that he intends to make us, too, look through the demon optician's spectacles or spy-glass – perhaps, indeed, that the author in his very own person once peered through such an instrument. For the conclusion of the story makes it quite clear that Coppola the optician really *is* the lawyer Coppelius[4] and also, therefore, the Sand-Man.

There is no question therefore, of any intellectual uncertainty here: we know now that we are not supposed to be looking on at the products of a madman's imagination, behind which we, with the superiority of rational minds, are able to detect the sober truth; and yet this knowledge does not lessen the impression of uncanniness in the least degree. The theory of intellectual uncertainty is thus incapable of explaining that impression.

We know from psycho-analytic experience, however, that the fear of damaging or losing one's eyes is a terrible one in children. Many adults retain their apprehensiveness in this respect, and no physical injury is so much dreaded by them as an injury to the eye. We are accustomed to say, too, that we will treasure a thing as the apple of our eye. A study of dreams, phantasies and myths has taught us that anxiety about one's eyes, the fear of going blind, is often enough a substitute for the dread of being castrated. The self-blinding of the mythical criminal, Oedipus, was simply a mitigated form of the punishment of castration – the only punishment that was adequate for him by the *lex talionis*. We may try on rationalistic grounds to deny that fears about the eye are derived from the fear of castration, and may argue that it is very natural that so precious an organ as the eye should be guarded by a proportionate dread. Indeed, we might go further and say that the fear of castration itself contains no other significance and no deeper secret than a justifiable dread of this rational kind. But this view does not account adequately for the substitutive relation between the eye and the male organ which is seen to exist in

dreams and myths and phantasies; nor can it dispel the impression that the threat of being castrated in especial excites a peculiarly violent and obscure emotion, and that this emotion is what first gives the idea of losing other organs its intense colouring. All further doubts are removed when we learn the details of their "castration complex" from the analysis of neurotic patients, and realize its immense importance in their mental life.

Moreover, I would not recommend any opponent of the psycho-analytic view to select this particular story of the Sand-Man with which to support his argument that anxiety about the eyes has nothing to do with the castration complex. For why does Hoffmann bring the anxiety about eyes into such intimate connection with the father's death? And why does the Sand-Man always appear as a disturber of love? He separates the unfortunate Nathaniel from his betrothed and from her brother, his best friend; he destroys the second object of his love, Olympia, the lovely doll; and he drives him into suicide at the moment when he has won back his Clara and is about to be happily united to her. Elements in the story like these, and many others, seem arbitrary and meaningless so long as we deny all connection between fears about the eye and castration; but they become intelligible as soon as we replace the Sand-Man by the dreaded father at whose hands castration is expected.[5]

We shall venture, therefore, to refer the uncanny effect of the Sand-Man to the anxiety belonging to the castration complex of childhood. But having reached the idea that we can make an infantile factor such as this responsible for feelings of uncanniness, we are encouraged to see whether we can apply it to other instances of the uncanny. We find in the story of the Sand-Man the other theme on which Jentsch lays stress, of a doll which appears to be alive. Jentsch believes that a particularly favourable condition for awakening uncanny feelings is created when there is intellectual uncertainty whether an object is alive or not, and when an inanimate object becomes too much like an animate one. Now, dolls are of course rather closely connected with childhood life. We remember that in their early games children do not distinguish at all sharply between living and inanimate objects, and that they are especially fond of treating their dolls like live people. In fact, I have occasionally heard a woman patient declare that even at the age of eight she had still been convinced that her dolls would be certain to come to life if she were to look at them in a particular, extremely concentrated, way. So that here, too, it is not difficult to discover a factor from childhood. But, curiously enough, while the Sand-Man story deals with the arousing of an early childhood fear, the idea of a "living doll" excites no fear at all; children have no fear of their dolls coming to life, they may even desire it. The source of uncanny feelings would not, therefore, be an infantile fear in this case, but rather an infantile wish or even merely an infantile belief. There seems to be a contradiction here; but perhaps it is only a complication, which may be helpful to us later on.

Hoffmann is in literature the unrivalled master of conjuring up the uncanny. His *Elixire des Teufels* [The Devil's Elixir] contains a mass of themes to which one is tempted to ascribe the uncanny effect of the narrative; but it is too obscure and intricate a story to venture to summarize. Towards the end of the book the reader

is told the facts, hitherto concealed from him, from which the action springs; with the result, not that he is at last enlightened, but that he falls into a state of complete bewilderment. The author has piled up too much of a kind; one's comprehension of the whole suffers as a result, though not the impression it makes. We must content ourselves with selecting those themes of uncanniness which are most prominent, and seeing whether we can fairly trace them also back to infantile sources. These themes are all concerned with the idea of a "double" in every shape and degree, with persons, therefore, who are to be considered identical by reason of looking alike; Hoffmann accentuates this relation by transferring mental processes from the one person to the other – what we should call telepathy – so that the one possesses knowledge, feeling and experience in common with the other, identifies himself with another person, so that his self becomes confounded, or the foreign self is substituted for his own – in other words, by doubling, dividing and interchanging the self. And finally there is the constant recurrence of similar situations, a same face, or character-trait, or twist of fortune, or a same crime, or even a same name recurring throughout several consecutive generations.

The theme of the "double" has been very thoroughly treated by Otto Rank.[6] He has gone into the connections the "double" has with reflections in mirrors, with shadows, guardian spirits, with the belief in the soul and the fear of death; but he also lets in a flood of light on the astonishing evolution of this idea. For the "double" was originally an insurance against destruction to the ego, an "energetic denial of the power of death," as Rank says; and probably the "Immortal" soul was the first "double" of the body. This invention of doubling as a preservation against extinction has its counterpart in the language of dreams, which is fond of representing castration by a doubling or multiplication of the genital symbol; the same desire spurred on the ancient Egyptians to the art of making images of the dead in some lasting material. Such ideas, however, have sprung from the soil of unbounded self-love, from the primary narcissism which holds sway in the mind of the child as in that of primitive man; and when this stage has been left behind the double takes on a different aspect. From having been an assurance of immortality, he becomes the ghastly harbinger of death.

The idea of the "double" does not necessarily disappear with the passing of the primary narcissism, for it can receive fresh meaning from the later stages of development of the ego. A special faculty is slowly formed there, able to oppose the rest of the ego, with the function of observing and criticizing the self and exercising a censorship within the mind, and this we become aware of as our "conscience." In the pathological case of delusions of being watched this mental institution becomes isolated, dissociated from the ego, and discernible to a physician's eye. The fact that a faculty of this kind exists, which is able to treat the rest of the ego like an object – the fact, that is, that man is capable of self-observation – renders it possible to invest the old idea of a "double" with a new meaning and to ascribe many things to it, above all, those things which seem to the new faculty of self-criticism to belong to the old surmounted narcissism of the earliest period of all.[7]

But it is not only this narcissism, offensive to the ego-criticizing faculty, which may be incorporated in the idea of a double. There are also all those unfulfilled but possible futures to which we still like to cling in phantasy, all those strivings of the ego which adverse external circumstances have crushed, and all our suppressed acts of volition which nourish in us the illusion of Free Will.[8]

But, after having thus considered the manifest motivation of the figure of a "double," we have to admit that none of it helps us to understand the extraordinarily strong feeling of something uncanny that pervades the conception; and our knowledge of pathological mental processes enables us to add that nothing in the content arrived at could account for that impulse towards self-protection which has caused the ego to project such a content outward as something foreign to itself. The quality of uncanniness can only come from the circumstance of the "double" being a creation dating back to a very early mental stage – long since left behind, and one, no doubt, in which it wore a more friendly aspect. The "double" has become a vision of terror, just as after the fall of their religion the gods took on daemonic shapes.[9]

It is not difficult to judge, on the same lines as his theme of the "double," the other forms of disturbance in the ego made use of by Hoffmann. They are a harking-back to particular phases in the evolution of the self-regarding feeling, a regression to a time when the ego was not yet sharply differentiated from the external world and from other persons. I believe that these factors are partly responsible for the impression of the uncanny, although it is not easy to isolate and determine exactly their share of it.

That factor which consists in a recurrence of the same situations, things and events, will perhaps not appeal to everyone as a source of uncanny feeling. From what I have observed, this phenomenon does undoubtedly, subject to certain conditions and combined with certain circumstances, awaken an uncanny feeling, which recalls that sense of helplessness sometimes experienced in dreams. Once, as I was walking through the deserted streets of a provincial town in Italy which was strange to me, on a hot summer afternoon, I found myself in a quarter the character of which could not long remain in doubt. Nothing but painted women were to be seen at the windows of the small houses, and I hastened to leave the narrow street at the next turning. But after having wandered about for a while without being directed, I suddenly found myself back in the same street, where my presence was now beginning to excite attention. I hurried away once more, but only to arrive yet a third time by devious paths in the same place. Now, however, a feeling overcame me which I can only describe as uncanny, and I was glad enough to abandon my exploratory walk and get straight back to the piazza I had left a short while before. Other situations having in common with my adventure an involuntary return to the same situation, but which differ radically from it in other respects, also result in the same feeling of helplessness and of something uncanny. As, for instance, when one is lost in a forest in high altitudes, caught, we will suppose, by the mountain mist, and when every endeavour to find the marked or familiar path ends again and again in a return to one and the same spot, recognizable by some particular landmark. Or when one wanders about in a dark, strange room looking

for the door or the electric switch, and collides for the hundredth time with the same piece of furniture – a situation which, indeed, has been made irresistibly comic by Mark Twain, through the wild extravagance of his narration.

Taking another class of things, it is easy to see that here, too, it is only this factor of involuntary repetition which surrounds with an uncanny atmosphere what would otherwise be innocent enough, and forces upon us the idea of something fateful and unescapable where otherwise we should have spoken of "chance" only. For instance, we of course attach no importance to the event when we give up a coat and get a cloakroom ticket with the number, say, 62; or when we find that our cabin on board ship is numbered 62. But the impression is altered if two such events, each in itself indifferent, happen close together, if we come across the number 62 several times in a single day, or if we begin to notice that everything which has a number – addresses, hotel-rooms, compartments in railway-trains – always has the same one, or one which at least contains the same figures.

We do feel this to be "uncanny," and unless a man is utterly hardened and proof against the lure of superstition he will be tempted to ascribe a secret meaning to this obstinate recurrence of a number, taking it, perhaps, as an indication of the span of life allotted to him. Or take the case that one is engaged at the time in reading the works of Hering, the famous physiologist, and then receives within the space of a few days two letters from two different countries, each from a person called Hering; whereas one has never before had any dealings with anyone of that name. Not long ago an ingenious scientist attempted to reduce coincidences of this kind to certain laws, and so deprive them of their uncanny effect.[10] I will not venture to decide whether he has succeeded or not.

How exactly we can trace back the uncanny effect of such recurrent similarities to infantile psychology is a question I can only lightly touch upon in these pages; and I must refer the reader instead to another pamphlet[11] now ready for publication, in which this has been gone into in detail, but in a different connection. It must be explained that we are able to postulate the principle of a repetition-compulsion in the unconscious mind, based upon instinctual activity and probably inherent in the very nature of the instincts – a principle powerful enough to overrule the pleasure principle, lending to certain aspects of the mind their daemonic character, and still very clearly expressed in the tendencies of small children; a principle, too, which is responsible for a part of the course taken by the analyses of neurotic patients. Taken in all, the foregoing prepares us for the discovery that whatever reminds us of this inner *repetition-compulsion* is perceived as uncanny.

Now, however, it is time to turn from these aspects of the matter, which are in any case difficult to decide upon, and look for undeniable instances of the uncanny, in the hope that analysis of them will settle whether our hypothesis is a valid one.

In the story of "The Ring of Polycrates," the guest turns away from his friend with horror because he sees that his every wish is at once fulfilled, his every care immediately removed by kindly fate. His host has become "uncanny" to him. His own explanation, that the too fortunate man has to fear the envy of the gods, seems still rather obscure to us; its meaning is veiled in mythological language. We will

therefore turn to another example in a less grandiose setting. In the case history of an obsessional neurotic,[12] I have described how the patient once stayed in a hydropathic establishment and benefited greatly by it. He had the good sense, however, to attribute his improvement not to the therapeutic properties of the water, but to the situation of his room, which immediately adjoined that of a very amiable nurse. So on his second visit to the establishment he asked for the same room but was told that it was already occupied by an old gentleman, whereupon he gave vent to his annoyance in the words, "Well, I hope he'll have a stroke and die." A fortnight later the old gentleman really did have a stroke. My patient thought this an "uncanny" experience. And that impression of uncanniness would have been stronger still if less time had elapsed between his exclamation and the untoward event, or if he had been able to produce innumerable similar coincidences. As a matter of fact, he had no difficulty in producing coincidences of this sort, but then not only he but all obsessional neurotics I have observed are able to relate analogous experiences. They are never surprised when they invariably run up against the person they have just been thinking of, perhaps for the first time for many months. If they say one day "I haven't had news of so-and-so for a long time," they will be sure to get a letter from him the next morning. And an accident or a death will rarely take place without having cast its shadow before on their minds. They are in the habit of mentioning this state of affairs in the most modest manner, saying that they have "presentiments" which "usually" come true.

One of the most uncanny and wide-spread forms of superstition is the dread of the evil eye.[13] There never seems to have been any doubt about the source of this dread. Whoever possesses something at once valuable and fragile is afraid of the envy of others, in that he projects on to them the envy he would have felt in their place. A feeling like this betrays itself in a look even though it is not put into words; and when a man attracts the attention of others by noticeable, and particularly by unattractive, attributes, they are ready to believe that his envy is rising to more than usual heights and that this intensity in it will convert it into effective action. What is feared is thus a secret intention of harming someone, and certain signs are taken to mean that such an intention is capable of becoming an act.

These last examples of the uncanny are to be referred to that principle in the mind which I have called "omnipotence of thoughts," taking the name from an expression used by one of my patients. And now we find ourselves on well-known ground. Our analysis of instances of the uncanny has led us back too the old, animistic conception of the universe which was characterized by the idea that the world was peopled with the spirits of humane narcissistic overestimation of subjective mental processes (such as the belief in the omnipotence of thoughts, the magical practices based upon this belief, the carefully proportioned distribution of magical powers or "mana" among various outside persons and things), as well as by all those other figments of the imagination with which man, in the unrestricted narcissism of that stage of development, strove to withstand the inexorable laws of reality. It would seem as though each one of us has been through a phase of individual development corresponding to that animistic stage in primitive men, that

none of us has traversed it without preserving certain traces of it which can be re-activated and that everything which now strikes us as "uncanny" fulfills the condition of stirring these vestiges of animistic mental activity within us and bringing them to expression.[14]

At this point I will put forward two considerations which, I think, contain the gist of this short study. In the first place, if psycho-analytic theory is correct in maintaining that every emotional affect, whatever its quality, is transformed by repression into morbid anxiety, then among such cases of anxiety there must be a class in which the anxiety can be shown to come from something repressed which *recurs*. This class of morbid anxiety would then be no other than what is uncanny, irrespective of whether it originally aroused dread or some other affect. In the second place, if this is indeed the secret nature of the uncanny, we can understand why the usage of speech has extended *das Heimliche* into its opposite *das Unheimliche*;[15] for this uncanny is in reality nothing new or foreign, but something familiar and old – established in the mind that has been estranged only by the process of repression. This reference to the factor of repression enables us, furthermore, to understand Schelling's definition of the uncanny as something which ought to have been kept concealed but which has nevertheless come to light.

Notes

1 [Throughout this paper "uncanny" is used as the English translation of "*unheimlich*," literally "unhomely." – Trans.]

2 [From *Haus* = house; *Hauslichkeit* = domestic life. – Trans.]

3 Hoffmann's *Sämtliche Werke*, Grisebach Edition, 3. [A translation of "The Sand-Man" is included in *Eight Tales of Hoffmann*, translated by J. M. Cohen (London: Pan Books, 1952).]

4 Frau Dr Rank has pointed out the association of the name with "*coppella*" = crucible, connecting it with the chemical operations that caused the father's death; and also with "*coppo*" = eye-socket. [Except in the first (1919) edition this footnote was attached, it seems erroneously, to the first occurrence of the name Coppelius on this page.]

5 In fact, Hoffmann's imaginative treatment of his material has not made such wild confusion of its elements that we cannot reconstruct their original arrangement. In the story of Nathaniel's childhood, the figures of his father and Coppelius represent the two opposites into which the father-imago is split by his ambivalence; whereas the one threatens to blind him – that is, to castrate him – the other, the "good" father, intercedes for his sight. The part of the complex which is most strongly repressed, the death-wish against the "bad" father, finds expression in the death of the "good" father, and Coppelius is made answerable for it. This pair of fathers is represented later, in his student days, by Professor Spalanzani and Coppola the optician. The Professor is in himself a member of the father-series, and Coppola is recognized as identical with Coppelius the lawyer. Just as they used before to work together over the secret brazier, so now they have jointly created the doll Olympia; the Professor is even called the father of Olympia. This double occurrence of activity in common betrays them as divisions of the father-imago: both the mechanician and the optician were the father of Nathaniel

(and of Olympia as well). In the frightening scene in childhood, Coppelius, after sparing Nathaniel's eyes, had screwed off his arms and legs as an experiment; that is, he had worked on him as a mechanician would on a doll. This singular feature, which seems quite outside the picture of the Sand-Man, introduces a new castration equivalent; but it also points to the inner identity of Coppelius with his later counterpart, Spalanzani the mechanician, and prepares us for the interpretation of Olympia. This automatic doll can be nothing else than a materialization of Nathaniel's feminine attitude towards his father in his infancy. Her fathers, Spalanzani and Coppola, are, after all, nothing but new editions, reincarnations of Nathaniel's pair of fathers. Spalanzani's otherwise incomprehensible statement that the optician has stolen Nathaniel's eyes . . . so as to set them in the doll, now becomes significant as supplying evidence of the identity of Olympia and Nathaniel. Olympia is, as it were, a dissociated complex of Nathaniel's which confronts him as a person, and Nathaniel's enslavement to this complex is expressed in his senseless obsessive love for Olympia. We may with justice call love of this kind narcissistic, and we can understand why someone who has fallen victim to it should relinquish the real, external object of his love. The psychological truth of the situation in which the young man, fixated upon his father by his castration complex, becomes incapable of loving a woman, is amply proved by numerous analyses of patients whose story, though less fantastic, is hardly less tragic than that of the student Nathaniel.

Hoffmann was the child of an unhappy marriage. When he was three years old, his father left his small family, and was never united to them again. According to Grisebach, in his biographical introduction to Hoffmann's works, the writer's relation to his father was always a most sensitive subject with him.

6 "Der Doppelgänger."

7 I cannot help thinking that when poets complain that two souls dwell within the human breast, and when popular psychologists talk of the splitting of the ego in an individual, they have some notion of this division (which relates to the sphere of ego-psychology) between the critical faculty and the rest of the ego, and not of the antithesis discovered by psycho-analysis between the ego and what is unconscious and repressed. It is true that the distinction is to some extent effaced by the circumstance that derivatives of what is repressed are foremost among the things reprehended by the ego-criticizing.

8 In Ewers' *Der Student von Prag*, which furnishes the starting-point of Rank's study on the "double," the hero has promised his beloved not to kill his antagonist in a duel. But on his way to the dueling-ground he meets his "double," who has already killed his rival.

9 Heine, *Die Götter im Evil.*

10 P. Kammere, *Das Gesetz der Serie.*

11 [*Beyond the Pleasure Principle.* – Trans.]

12 Freud, "Notes upon a Case of Obsessional Neurosis," *Collected Papers*, vol. iii.

13 Seligmann, the Hamburg ophthalmologist, has made a thorough study of this superstition in his *Der böse Blick und Verwandtes.*

14 Cf. my book *Totem and Tabu*, part iii, "Animismus Magie und Allmacht der Gedanken"; also the footnote on p. 7 of the same book. "It would appear that we invest with a feeling of uncanniness those impressions which lend support to a belief in the omnipotence of thoughts and to the animistic attitude of mind at a time when our judgement has already rejected these same beliefs."

15 Cf. abstract on pp. 155–6.

of the kind capitalist culture and ideology conceal are not absorbable into a literary vision of thematic unity, ideological reconciliation, and formal completeness.

Notes

1 John Fiske, "British Cultural Studies and Television," in Robert Allen, ed., *Channels of Discourse, Reassembled* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), p. 288.
2 We occasionally translate "*méconnaît*" as "misconstrue" rather than "misrecognize." Normally, Marxist theorists refer to the nominative form – *méconnaissance*, which is translated as "misprision" or as "misrecognition." Althusser believes that "science" is possible and that one can stand outside ideology. But such science must acknowledge that it is still itself a "theoretical practice" rather than a pure "theory" that supposedly stands outside discourse.
3 Pierre Macherey, *A Theory of Literary Production*, trans. Geoffrey Wall (London: Routledge, 1978).
4 Ibid., pp. 236–7.
5 Ibid., p. 238.

CHAPTER 2

"Dialectics" (from *The Science of Logic*)

G. W. F. Hegel

The exposition of what alone can be the true method of philosophical science falls within the treatment of logic itself; for the method is the consciousness of the form of the inner self-movement of the content of logic. In the *Phenomenology of Mind* I have expounded an example of this method in application to a more concrete object, namely to consciousness. Here, we are dealing with forms of consciousness each of which in realizing itself at the same time abolishes and transcends itself, has for its result its own negation – and so passes into a higher form. . . .

It is a fresh concept but higher and richer than its predecessor; for it is richer by the negation or opposite of the latter, therefore contains it, but also something more, and is the unity of itself and its opposite. . . .

It is in this dialectic as it is here understood, that is, in the grasping of opposites in their unity or of the positive in the negative, that speculative thought consists. . . .

[Dialectic] usually takes the following more precise form. It is shown that there belongs to some subject matter or other, for example the world, motion, point, and so on, some determination or other, for example (taking the objects in the order named), finitude in space or time, presence in this place, absolute negation of space; but further, that with equal necessity the opposite determination also belongs to the subject matter, for example infinity in space and time, non-presence in this place, relation to space and so spatiality. . . . The conclusion drawn from dialectic of this kind is in general the contradiction and nullity of the assertions made. . . .

Thus all the oppositions that are assumed as fixed, as for example finite and infinite, individual and universal, are not in contradiction through, say, an external connection; on the contrary, as an examination of their nature has shown, they are in and for themselves a transition; the synthesis and the subject in which they appear is the product of their concept's own activity of conceptual reflection. If a consideration that ignores the concept stops short at their external relationship, isolates them and leaves them as fixed presuppositions, it is the concept, on the contrary, that keeps them steadily in view, moves them as their spirit or mind and brings out their dialectic.

Now this is the very standpoint indicated above from which a universal first,

[illegible] shows itself to be the other of itself. Taken quite generally, this determination can be taken to mean that what is at first immediate now appears as mediated, related to an other, or that the universal appears as particular. Hence the second term that has thereby come into being is the negative of the first, and if we anticipate the subsequent progress, the first negative. The immediate, from this negative side, has been extinguished in the other, but the other is essentially not the empty negative, the nothing, that is taken to be the usual result of dialectic; rather is it the other of the first, the negative of the immediate; it is therefore determined as the mediated – contains in general the determination of the first within itself. Consequently the first is essentially preserved and retained even in the other. To hold fast to the positive in its negative, in the content of the presupposition, in the result, this is the most important feature in rational cognition; at the same time only the simplest reflection is needed to convince one of the absolute truth and necessity of this requirement and so far as examples of the proof of this are concerned, the whole of logic consists of such. . . .

Now since the first also is contained in the second, and the latter is the truth of the former, this unity can be expressed as a proposition in which the immediate is put as subject, and the mediated as its predicate; for example, the finite is infinite; one is many, the individual is the universal. However, the inadequate form of such propositions is at once obvious. In treating of the judgement it has been shown that its form in general, and most of all the immediate form of the positive judgement, is incapable of holding within its grasp speculative determinations and truth. The direct supplement to it, the negative judgement, would at least have to be added as well. . . .

The second determination, the negative or mediated, is at the same time also the mediating determination. It may be taken in the first instance as a simple determination, but in its truth it is a relation or relationship; for it is the negative, but the negative of the positive, and includes the positive within itself. It is therefore the other, but not the other of something to which it is indifferent – in that case it would not be an other, nor a relation or relationship – rather it is the other in its own self, the other of an other; therefore it includes its own other within it and is consequently as contradiction, the posited dialectic of itself. Because the first or the immediate is implicitly the concept, and consequently is also only implicitly the negative, the dialectical moment with it consists in positing in it the difference that it implicitly contains. The second, on the contrary, is itself the determinate moment, the difference or relationship; therefore with it the dialectical moment consists in positing the unity that is contained in it. If then the negative, the determinate, relationship, judgement, and all the determinations falling under this second moment do not at once appear on their own account as contradiction and as dialectical, this is solely the fault of a thinking that does not bring its thoughts together. For the material, the opposed determinations in one relation, is already posited and at hand for thought. But formal thinking makes identity its law, and allows the contradictory content before it to sink into the sphere of ordinary conception, into space and time, in which the contradictories are held asunder in juxtaposition and temporal succession and so come before consciousness without reciprocal contact. On this point, formal thinking lays down for its principle that contradiction is unthinkable; but as a matter of fact the thinking of contradiction is the essential moment of the concept. Formal thinking does in fact think contradiction, only it at once looks away from it, and in saying that it is unthinkable it merely passes over from it into abstract negation.

Now the negativity just considered constitutes the turning point of the movement of the concept. It is the simple point of the negative relation to self, the innermost source of all activity, of all animate and spiritual self-movement, the dialectical spirit that everything true possesses and through which alone it is true; for on this subjectivity alone rests the abolishing and transcendence of the opposition between concept and reality, and the unity that is truth. The second negative, the negative of the negative, at which we have arrived, is this abolishing and transcending of the contradiction, but just as little as the contradiction is it an act of external reflection, but rather the innermost, most objective moment of life and spirit, through which a subject, a person, a free being, exists. The relation of the negative to itself is to be regarded as the second premiss of the whole syllogism. . . . Just as the first premiss is the moment of universality and communication, so the second is determined by individuality, which in its relation to its other is primarily exclusive, for itself, and different. The negative appears as the mediating element, since it includes within it itself and the immediate whose negation it is. So far as these two determinations are taken in some relationship or other as externally related, the negative is only the formal mediating element; but as absolute negativity the negative moment of absolute mediation is the unity which is subjectivity and mind.

In this turning point of the method, the course of cognition at the same time returns into itself. As self-transcending and self-preserving contradiction this negativity is the restoration of the first immediacy, of simple universality; for the other of the other, the negative of the negative, is immediately the positive, the identical, the universal. If one insists on counting, this second immediate is, in the course of the method as a whole, the third term to the first immediate and the mediated. . . .

Now more precisely the third is the immediate, but the immediate resulting from the simultaneous abolition and preservation of mediation, the simple resulting from the abolition and preservation of difference, the positive resulting from the abolition and preservation of the negative, the concept that has realized itself by means of its otherness and by the abolition and preservation of this reality has become united with itself, and has restored its absolute reality, its simple relation to itself. This result is therefore the truth. It is equally immediacy and mediation; but such forms of judgement as: the third is immediacy and mediation, or: it is the unity of them, are not capable of grasping it; for it is not a quiescent third, but, precisely as this unity, is self-mediating movement and activity. As that with which we began was the universal, so the result is the individual, the concrete, the subject; what the former is in itself, the latter is now equally for itself, the universal is posited in the

moments of the triplicity are abstract, untrue moments which for that very reason are dialectical, and through this their negativity make themselves into the subject. The concept itself is for us, in the first instance, alike the universal that is in itself, and the negative that is for itself, and also the third, that which is both in and for itself, the universal that runs through all the moments of the syllogism; but the third is the conclusion, in which the concept through its negativity is mediated with itself and thereby posited for itself as the universal and the identity of its moments.

CHAPTER 3

Grundrisse

Karl Marx

When we consider a given country from a politico-economic stand-point, we begin with its population, its subdivision into classes, location in city, country, or by the sea, occupation in different branches of production; then we study its exports and imports, annual production and consumption, prices of commodities, etc. It seems to be the correct procedure to commence with the real and the concrete, the actual prerequisite; in the case of political economy, to commence with population, which is the basis and the author of the entire productive activity of society. Yet on closer consideration it proves to be wrong. Population is an abstraction, if we leave out for example the classes of which it consists. These classes, again, are but an empty word unless we know what are the elements on which they are based, such as wage-labor, capital, etc. These imply, in their turn, exchange, division of labor, prices, etc. Capital, for example, does not mean anything without wage-labor, value, money, price, etc. If we start out, therefore, with population, we do so with a chaotic conception of the whole, and by closer analysis we will gradually arrive at simpler ideas; thus we shall proceed from the imaginary concrete to less and less complex abstractions, until we arrive at the simplest determinations. This once attained, we might start on our return journey until we finally came back to population, but this time not as a chaotic notion of an integral whole, but as a rich aggregate of many determinations and relations. The form is the one which political economy had adopted in the past as its inception. The economists of the seventeenth century, for example, always started out with the living aggregate: population, nation, state, several states, etc., but in the end they invariably arrived by means of analysis at certain leading abstract general principles such as division of labor, money, value, etc. As soon as these separate elements had been more or less established by abstract reasoning, there arose the systems of political economy which start from simple conceptions such as labor, division of labor, demand, exchange value, and conclude with state, international exchange, and world market. The latter is manifestly the scientifically correct method. The concrete is concrete because it is a combination of many determinations, i.e. a unity of diverse elements. In our thought it therefore appears as a process of synthesis, as a result, and not as a starting-point, although it is the real starting-point and, therefore, also the starting-point of observation and conception. By the former method the complete conception passes into an abstract

CHAPTER 6

"Wage Labor and Capital"

Karl Marx

Now, therefore, for the first question: *What are wages? How are they determined?*

If workers were asked: "How much are your wages?" one would reply: "I get a mark a day from my employer"; another, "I get two marks," and so on. According to the different trades to which they belong, they would mention different sums of money which they receive from their respective employers for the performance of a particular piece of work, for example, weaving a yard of linen or typesetting a printed sheet. In spite of the variety of their statements, they would all agree on one point: wages are the sum of money paid by the capitalist for a particular labor time or for a particular output of labor.

The capitalist, it seems, therefore, *buys* their labor with money. They *sell* him their labor for money. But this is merely the appearance. In reality what they sell to the capitalist for money is their labor power. The capitalist buys this labor power for a day, a week, a month, etc. And after he has bought it, he uses it by having the workers work for the stipulated time. For the same sum with which the capitalist has bought their labor power, for example, two marks, he could have bought two pounds of sugar or a definite amount of any other commodity. The two marks, with which he bought two pounds of sugar, are the *price* of the two pounds of sugar. The two marks, with which he bought twelve hours' use of labor power, are the price of twelve hours' labor. Labor power, therefore, is a commodity, neither more nor less than sugar. The former is measured by the clock, the latter by the scales.

The workers exchange their commodity, labor power, for the commodity of the capitalist, for money, and this exchange takes place in a specific ratio. So much money for so long a use of labor power. For twelve hours' weaving, two marks. And do not the two marks represent all the other commodities which I can buy for two marks? In fact, therefore, the worker has exchanged his commodity, labor power, for other commodities of all kinds and that in a specific ratio. By giving him two marks, the capitalist has given him so much meat, so much clothing, so much fuel, light, etc., in exchange for his day's labor. Accordingly, the two marks express the ratio in which labor power is exchanged for other commodities, the *exchange value* of his labor power. The exchange value of a commodity, reckoned in *money*, is what is called its *price*. Wages are only a special name for the price of labor power, commonly called the *price of labor*, for the price of this peculiar commodity which

has no other repository than human flesh and blood.

Let us take any worker, say, a weaver. The capitalist supplies him with the loom and yarn. The weaver sets to work and the yarn is converted into linen. The capitalist takes possession of the linen and sells it say, for twenty marks. Now are the wages of the weaver a *share* in the linen, in the twenty marks, in the product of his labor? By no means. Long before the linen is sold, perhaps long before its weaving is finished, the weaver has received his wages. The capitalist, therefore, does not pay these wages with the money which he will obtain from the linen, but with money already on reserve. Just as the loom and the yarn are not the product of the weaver to whom they are supplied by the employers, so likewise with the commodities which the weaver receives in exchange for his commodity, labor power. It was possible that his employer found no purchaser at all for his linen. It was possible that he did not get even the amount of the wages by its sale. It is possible that he sells it very profitably in comparison with the weaver's wages. All that has nothing to do with the weaver. The capitalist buys the labor power of the weaver with a part of his available wealth, of his capital, just as he has bought the raw material – the yarn – and the instrument of labor – the loom – with another part of his wealth. After he has made these purchases, and these purchases include the labor power necessary for the production of linens, he produces only with the *raw materials and instruments of labor belonging to him*. For the latter include now, true enough, our good weaver as well, who has as little share in the product or the price of the product as the loom has.

Wages are, therefore, not the worker's share in the commodity produced by him. Wages are the part of already existing commodities with which the capitalist buys for himself a specific amount of productive labor power.

Labor power is, therefore, a commodity to which its possessor, the worker, sells to capital. Why does he sell it? In order to live.

But the exercise of labor power, labor, is the worker's own activity, the manifestation of his own life. And this *life-activity* he sells to another person in order to secure the necessary *means* of *subsistence*. Thus his life-activity is for him only a means to enable him to exist. He works in order to live. He does not even reckon labor as part of his life, it is rather a sacrifice of his life. It is a commodity which he has made over to another. Hence, also, the product of his activity is not the object of his activity. What he produces for himself is not the silk that he weaves, not the gold that he draws from the mine, not the palace that he builds. What he produces for himself is *wages*, and silk, gold, palace resolve themselves for him into a specific quantity of the means of subsistence, perhaps into a cotton jacket, some copper coins, and a lodging in a cellar. And the worker, who for twelve hours weaves, spins, drills, turns, builds, shovels, breaks stones, carries loads, etc. – does he consider this twelve hours' weaving, spinning, drilling, turning, building, shoveling, stone breaking as a manifestation of his life, as life? On the contrary, life begins for him where this activity ceases, at table, in the public house, in bed. The twelve hours' labor, on the other hand, has no meaning for him as weaving, spinning, drilling, etc., but as *earnings* which bring him to

the table, to the public house, into bed. If the silk worm were to spin in order to continue its existence as a caterpillar, it would be a complete wage-worker. Labor power was not always a *commodity*. Labor was not always wage labor, that is, *free labor*. The *slave* did not sell his labor power to the slave owner, any more than the ox sells its services to the peasant. The slave, together with his labor power, is sold once and for all to his owner. He is a commodity which can pass from the land of one owner to that of another. He is *himself* a commodity, but the labor power is not *his* commodity. The serf sells only a part of his labor power. He does not receive a wage from the owner of the land; rather the owner of the land receives a tribute from him.

The serf belongs to the land and turns over to the owner of the land the fruits thereof. The *free laborer*, on the other hand, sells himself and, indeed, sells himself piecemeal. He sells at auction eight, ten, twelve, fifteen hours of his life, day after day, to the highest bidder, to the owner of the raw materials, instruments of labor and means of subsistence, that is, to the capitalist. The worker belongs neither to an owner nor to the land, but eight, ten, twelve, fifteen hours of his daily life belong to him who buys them. The worker leaves the capitalist to whom he hires himself whenever he likes, and the capitalist discharges him whenever he thinks fit, as soon as he no longer gets any profit out of him, or not the anticipated profit. But the worker, whose sole source of livelihood is the sale of his labor power, cannot leave the *whole class of purchasers, that is, the capitalist class*, without renouncing his existence. He belongs not to this or that capitalist but to the *capitalist class*, and, moreover, it is his business to dispose of himself, that is, to find a purchaser within this capitalist class. . . .

Now, the same general laws that regulate the price of commodities in general of course also regulate *wages, the price of labor.*

Wages will rise and fall according to the relation of supply and demand, according to the turn taken by the competition between the buyers of labor power, the capitalists, and the sellers of labor power, the workers. The fluctuations in wages correspond in general to the fluctuations in prices of commodities. *Within these fluctuations, however, the price of labor will be determined by the cost of production, by the labor time necessary to produce this commodity – labor power.*

What, then, is the cost of production of labor power?

It is the cost required for maintaining the worker as a worker and of developing him into a worker.

The less the period of training, therefore, that any work requires, the smaller is the cost of production of the worker and the lower is the price of his labor, his wages. In those branches of industry in which hardly any period of apprenticeship is required and where the mere bodily existence of the worker suffices, the cost necessary for his production is almost confined to the commodities necessary for keeping him alive and capable of working. The *price* of his labor will, therefore, be determined by the *price of the necessary means of subsistence.*

Another consideration, however, also comes in. The manufacturer in calculating his cost of production and, accordingly, the price of the products, takes into account the wear and tear of the instruments of labor. If, for example, a machine costs him 1,000 marks and wears out in ten years, he adds 100 marks annually to the price of the commodities so as to be able to replace the worn-out machine by a new one at the end of ten years. In the same way, in calculating the cost of production of simple labor power there must be included the cost of reproduction, whereby the race of workers is enabled to multiply and to replace worn-out workers by new ones. Thus the depreciation of the worker is taken into account in the same way as the depreciation of the machine.

The cost of production of simple labor power, therefore, amounts to *the cost of existence and reproduction of the worker*. The price of this cost of existence and reproduction constitutes wages. Wages so determined are called the *wage minimum*. This wage minimum, like the determination of the price of commodities by the cost of production in general, does not hold good for the *single individual* but for the *species*. Individual workers, millions of workers, do not get enough to be able to exist and reproduce themselves; *but the wages of the whole working class* levels down, with their fluctuations to this minimum.

Now that we have arrived at an understanding of the most general laws which regulate wages like the price of any other commodity, we can go into our subject more specifically.

Capital consists of raw materials, instrument of laborer and means of subsistence of all kinds, which are utilized in order to produce new raw materials, new instruments of labor, and new means of subsistence. All these component parts of capital are creations of labor, products of labor, *your accumulated labor*. Which serves as a means of new production is capital.

So say the economists.

What is a Negro slave? A man of the black race. The one explanation is as good as the other.

A Negro is a Negro. He only becomes a slave in certain relations. A cotton-spinning jenny is a machine for spinning cotton. It becomes my *capital* only in certain relations. Torn from these relationships it is no more capital than gold in itself is *money* or sugar the price of sugar.

In production, men not only act on nature but also on one another. They produce only by cooperating in a certain way and mutually exchanging their activities. In order to produce, they enter into specific, determinate connections and relations with one another and only within these social connections and relations does their action on nature, does production, take place.

These social relations into which the producers enter with one another, the conditions under which they exchange their activities and participate in the whole act of production, will naturally vary according to the character of the means of production. With the invention of a new instrument of warfare, firearms, the whole internal organization of the army necessarily changed; the relationships within which individuals can constitute an army and act as an army were transformed and the relations of different armies to one another also changed.

Thus the social relations within which individuals produce, *the social relations*

of production, change, are transformed, with the change and development of the material means of production, the productive forces. The relations of production in their totality constitute what are called the social relations, society, and, particularly, a society at a specific stage of historical development, a society with a peculiar, distinctive character. *Ancient* society, *feudal* society, *bourgeois* society are such totalities of production relations, each of which at the same time denotes a particular stage of development in the history of mankind.

Capital, also, is a social relation of production. *It is a bourgeois production relation*, a production relation of bourgeois society. Are not the means of subsistence, the instruments of labor, the raw materials of which capital consists, produced and accumulated under given social conditions, in particular social relations? Are they not utilized for new production under given social conditions, as specific social relations? And is it not just this specifically social character which turns the products serving for new production into *capital*?

Capital consists not only of means of subsistence, instruments of labor, and raw materials, not only of material products; it consists just as much of *exchange values*. All the products of which it consists are *commodities*. Capital is, therefore, not only a sum of material products; it is a sum of commodities, of exchange values, of *social magnitudes*.

Capital remains the same, whether we put cotton in place of wool, rice in place of wheat, or steamships in place of railways, provided only that the cotton, the rice, the steamships – the body of capital – have the same exchange value, the same price as the wool, the wheat, the railways in which it was previously incorporated. The body of capital can change continually without the capital suffering the slightest alteration.

But while all capital is a sum of commodities, that is, of exchange values, not every sum of commodities, of exchange values, is capital.

Every sum of exchange values is an exchange value. Every separate exchange value is a sum of exchange values. For instance, a house that is worth 1,000 marks is an exchange value of 1,000 marks. A piece of paper worth a pfennig is a sum of exchange values of one-hundred hundredths of a pfennig. Products which are exchangeable for others are commodities. The particular ratio in which they are exchangeable constitutes their *exchange value* or, expressed in money, their *price*. The quantity of these products can change nothing in their quality of being *commodities* or representing an *exchange value* or having a definite price. Whether a tree is large or small it is a tree. Whether we exchange iron for other products in ounces or in hundred-weights, does this make any difference in its character as commodity, as exchange value? It is a commodity of greater or lesser value, of higher or lower price, depending upon the quantity.

How, then, does any amount of commodities, of exchange value, become capital?

By maintaining and multiplying itself as an independent social *power*, that is, as the *power of a portion of society*, by means of its *exchange for direct, living labor power*. The existence of a class which possesses nothing but its capacity to labor is a necessary prerequisite of capital.

It is only the domination of accumulated, past, materialized labor over direct, living labor that turns accumulated labor into capital.

Capital does not consist in accumulated labor serving living labor as a means for new production. It consists in living labor serving accumulated labor as a means of maintaining and multiplying the exchange value of the latter.

What takes place in the exchange between capitalist and wage-worker?

The worker receives means of subsistence in exchange for his labor power, but the capitalist receives in exchange for his means of subsistence labor, the productive activity of the worker, the creative power whereby the worker not only replaces what he consumes but *gives to the accumulated labor a greater value than it previously possessed*. The worker receives a part of the available means of subsistence from the capitalist. For what purpose do these means of subsistence serve him? For immediate consumption. As soon, however, as I consume the means of subsistence, they are irretrievably lost to me unless I use the time during which I am kept alive by them in order to purchase new means of subsistence, in order during consumption to create by my labor new values in place of the values which perish in being consumed. But it is just this noble reproductive power that the worker surrenders to the capitalist in exchange for means of subsistence received. He has, therefore, lost it for himself.

Let us take an example: a tenant farmer gives his day laborer five silver groschen a day. For these five silver groschen the laborer works all day on the farmer's field and thus secures him a return of ten silver groschen. The farmer not only gets the value replaced that he has to give the day laborer; he doubles it. He has therefore employed, consumed, the five silver groschen that he gave to the laborer in a fruitful, productive manner. He has bought with the five silver groschen just that labor and power of the laborer which produces agricultural products of double value and makes ten silver groschen out of five. The day laborer, on the other hand, receives in place of his productive power, the effect of which he has bargained away to the farmer's five silver groschen, which he exchanges for means of subsistence, and these he consumes with greater or less rapidity. The five silver groschen have, therefore, been consumed in a double way, *reproductively* for capital, for they have been exchanged for labor power which produced ten silver groschen, *unproductively* for the workers, for they have been exchanged for means of subsistence which have disappeared forever and the value of which he can only recover by repeating the same exchange with the farmer. *Thus capital presupposes wage labor; wage labor presupposes capital. They reciprocally condition the existence of each other; they reciprocally bring forth each other.*

Does a worker in a cotton factory produce merely cotton textiles? No, he produces capital. He produces values which serve afresh to command his labor and by means of it to create new values . . .

relationship of exchange between one thing and another, between one measure of production and another such measure."]

6 "Nothing can have an intrinsick value." (N. Barbon, l. c., p. 6); or as Butler says – "The value of a thing is just as much as it will bring."

7 "What are we to think of a law that asserts itself only by periodical revolution? It is just nothing but a law of Nature, founded on the want of knowledge of those whose action is the subject of it." (Friedrich Engels, "Umrisse zu einer Kritik der National ökonomie," in the "Deutsch-französische Jahrbücher," edited by Arnold Ruge and Karl Marx (Paris, 1844).)

8 "A ridiculous presumption has latterly got abroad that common property in its primitive form is specifically a Slavonian, or even exclusively Russian, form. It is the primitive form that we can prove to have existed amongst Romans, Teutons, and Celts, and even to this day we find numerous examples, ruins though they be, in India. A more exhaustive study of Asiatic, and especially of Indian forms of common property, would show how from the different forms of primitive common property, different forms of its dissolution have been developed. Thus, for instance, the various original types of Roman and Teutonic private property are deducible from different forms of Indian common property." (Karl Marx, "Zur Kritik," &c., p. 10.)

CHAPTER 8

"Hegemony" (from "The Formation of the Intellectuals")

Antonio Gramsci

The relationship between the intellectuals and the world of production is not as direct as it is with the fundamental social groups but is, in varying degrees, "mediated" by the whole fabric of society and by the complex of superstructures, of which the intellectuals are, precisely, the "functionaries." It should be possible both to measure the "organic quality" [*organicità*] of the various intellectual strata and their degree of connection with a fundamental social group, and to establish a gradation of their functions and of the superstructures from the bottom to the top (from the structural base upwards). What we can do, for the moment, is to fix two major superstructural "levels": the one that can be called "civil society," that is, the ensemble of organisms called "private," that of "political society" or "the State." These two levels correspond on the one hand to the function of "hegemony" which the dominant group exercises throughout society and, on the other hand, to that of "direct domination" or command exercised through the State and "juridical" government. The functions in question are precisely organizational and connective. The intellectuals are the dominant group's "deputies" exercising the subaltern functions of social hegemony and political government.

These comprise:

1 The "spontaneous" consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group; this consent is "historically" caused by the prestige (and consequent confidence) which the dominant group enjoys because of its position and function in the world of production.

2 The apparatus of state coercive power which "legally" enforces discipline on those groups who do not "consent" either actively or passively. This apparatus is, however, constituted for the whole of society in anticipation of moments of crisis of command and direction when spontaneous consent has failed.

CHAPTER 10

"The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction"

Walter Benjamin

In principle a work of art has always been reproducible. Man-made artifacts could always be imitated by men. . . . [P]rint is merely a special, though particularly important, case. During the Middle Ages engraving and etching were added to the woodcut; at the beginning of the nineteenth century lithography made its appearance. . . . Just as lithography virtually implied the illustrated newspaper, so did photography foreshadow the sound film. . . . Around 1900 technical reproduction had reached a standard that not only permitted it to reproduce all transmitted works of art and thus to cause the most profound change in their impact upon the public; it also had captured a place of its own among the artistic processes. For the study of this standard nothing is more revealing than the nature of the repercussions that these two different manifestations – the reproduction of works of art and the art of the film – have had on art in its traditional form.

Even the most perfect reproduction of a work of art is lacking in one element: its presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be. This unique existence of the work of art determined the history to which it was subject throughout the time of its existence. This includes the changes which it may have suffered in physical condition over the years as well as the various changes in its ownerships.[1] The traces of the first can be revealed only by chemical or physical analyses which it is impossible to perform on a reproduction; changes of ownership are subject to a tradition which must be traced from the situation of the original.

The presence of the original is the prerequisite to the concept of authenticity. Chemical analyses of the patina of a bronze can help to establish this, as does the proof that a given manuscript of the Middle Ages stems from an archive of the fifteenth century. The whole sphere of authenticity is outside technical – and, of course, not only technical – reproducibility.[2] Confronted with its manual reproduction, which was usually branded as a forgery, the original preserved all its authority; not so *vis-à-vis* technical reproduction. The reason is twofold. First, process reproduction is more independent of the original than manual reproduction. For example, in photography, process reproduction can bring out those aspects of the original that are unattainable to the naked eye yet accessible to the

lens, which is adjustable and chooses its angle at will. And photographic reproduction, with the aid of certain processes, such as enlargement or slow motion, can capture images which escape natural vision. Secondly, technical reproduction can put the copy of the original into situations which would be out of reach for the original itself.

Above all, it enables the original to meet the beholder halfway, be it in the form of a photograph or a phonograph record. The cathedral leaves its locale to be received in the studio of a lover of art; the choral production, performed in an auditorium or in the open air, resounds in the drawing room.

The situations into which the product of mechanical reproduction can be brought may not touch the actual work of art, yet the quality of its presence is always depreciated. This holds not only for the art work but also, for instance, for a landscape which passes in review before the spectator in a movie. In the case of the art object, a most sensitive nucleus – namely, its authenticity – is interfered with whereas no natural object is vulnerable on that score. The authenticity of a thing is the essence of all that is transmissible from its beginning, ranging from its substantive duration to its testimony to the history which it has experienced. Since the historical testimony rests on the authenticity, the former, too, is jeopardized by reproduction when substantive duration ceases to matter. And what is really jeopardized when the historical testimony is affected is the authority of the object.

One might subsume the eliminated element in the term "aura" and go on to say: that which withers in the age of mechanical reproduction is the aura of the work of art. This is a symptomatic process whose significance points beyond the realm of art. One might generalize by saying: the technique of reproduction detaches the reproduced object from the domain of tradition. By making many reproductions it substitutes a plurality of copies for a unique existence. And in permitting the reproduction to meet the beholder or listener in his own particular situation, it reactivates the object reproduced. These two processes lead to a tremendous shattering of tradition which is the obverse of the contemporary crisis and renewal of mankind. Both processes are intimately connected with the contemporary mass movements. Their most powerful agent is the film. Its social significance, particularly in its most positive form, is inconceivable without its destructive, cathartic aspect, that is, the liquidation of the traditional value of the cultural heritage. . . .

The uniqueness of a work of art is inseparable from its being imbedded in the fabric of tradition. This tradition itself is thoroughly alive and extremely changeable. An ancient statue of Venus, for example, stood in a different traditional context with the Greeks, who made it an object of veneration, than with the clerics of the Middle Ages, who viewed it as an ominous idol. Both of them, however, were equally confronted with its uniqueness, that is, its aura. Originally the contextual integration of art in tradition found its expression in the cult. We know that the earliest art works originated in the service of a ritual – first the magical, then the religious kind. It is significant that the existence of the work of art with reference to its aura is never entirely separated from its ritual function.[3] In other words, the

unique value of the "authentic" work of art has its basis in ritual, the location of its original use value. This ritualistic basis, however remote, is still recognizable as secularized ritual even in the most profane forms of the cult of beauty.[4] The secular cult of beauty, developed during the Renaissance and prevailing for three centuries, clearly showed that ritualistic basis in its decline and the first deep crisis which befell it. With the advent of the first truly revolutionary means of reproduction, photography, simultaneously with the rise of socialism, art sensed the approaching crisis which has become evident a century later. At the time, art reacted with the doctrine of *l'art pour l'art*, that is, with a theology of art. This gave rise to what might be called a negative theology in the form of the idea of "pure" art, which not only denied any social function of art but also any categorizing by subject matter. (In poetry, Mallarmé was the first to take this position.)

An analysis of art in the age of mechanical reproduction must do justice to these relationships, for they lead us to an all-important insight: for the first time in world history, mechanical reproduction emancipates the work of art from its parasitical dependence on ritual. To an ever greater degree the work of art reproduced becomes the work of art designed for reproducibility.[5] From a photographic negative, for example, one can make any number of prints; to ask for the "authentic" print makes no sense. But the instant the criterion of authenticity ceases to be applicable to artistic production, the total function of art is reversed. Instead of being based on ritual, it begins to be based on another practice – politics. . . .

With the emancipation of the various art practices from ritual go increasing opportunities for the exhibition of their products. It is easier to exhibit a portrait bust that can be sent here and there than to exhibit the statue of a divinity that has its fixed place in the interior of a temple. The same holds for the painting as against the mosaic or fresco that preceded it. And even though the public presentability of a mass originally may have been just as great as that of a symphony, the latter originated at the moment when its public presentability promised to surpass that of the mass.

With the different methods of technical reproduction of a work of art, its fitness for exhibition increased to such an extent that the quantitative shift between its two poles turned into a qualitative transformation of its nature. This is comparable to the situation of the work of art in prehistoric times when, by the absolute emphasis on its cult value, it was, first and foremost, an instrument of magic. Only later did it come to be recognized as a work of art. In the same way today, by the absolute emphasis on its exhibition value the work of art becomes a creation with entirely new functions, among which the one we are conscious of, the artistic function, later may be recognized as incidental.[6] This much is certain: today photography and the film are the most serviceable exemplifications of this new function . . .

Mechanical reproduction of art changes the reaction of the masses toward art. The reactionary attitude toward a Picasso painting changes into the progressive reaction toward a Chaplin movie. The progressive reaction is characterized by the direct, intimate fusion of visual and emotional enjoyment with the orientation of the expert. Such fusion is of great social significance. The greater the decrease in

the social significance of an art form, the sharper the distinction between criticism and enjoyment by the public. The conventional is uncritically enjoyed, and the truly new is criticized with aversion. With regard to the screen, the critical and the receptive attitudes of the public coincide. The decisive reason for this is that individual reactions are predetermined by the mass audience response they are about to produce, and this is nowhere more pronounced than in the film. The moment these responses become manifest they control each other. Again, the comparison with painting is fruitful. A painting has always had an excellent chance to be viewed by one person or by a few. The simultaneous contemplation of paintings by a large public, such as developed in the nineteenth century, is an early symptom of the crisis of painting, a crisis which was by no means occasioned exclusively by photography but rather in a relatively independent manner by the appeal of art works to the masses.

Painting simply is in no position to present an object for simultaneous collective experience, as it was possible for architecture at all times, for the epic poem in the past, and for the movie today. Although this circumstance in itself should not lead one to conclusions about the social role of painting, it does constitute a serious threat as soon as painting, under special conditions and, as it were, against its nature, is confronted directly by the masses. In the churches and monasteries of the Middle Ages and at the princely courts up to the end of the eighteenth century, a collective reception of paintings did not occur simultaneously, but by graduated and hierarchized mediation. The change that has come about is an expression of the particular conflict in which painting was implicated by the mechanical reproducibility of paintings. Although paintings began to be publicly exhibited in galleries and salons, there was no way for the masses to organize and control themselves in their receptions. Thus the same public which responds in a progressive manner toward a grotesque film is bound to respond in a reactionary manner to surrealism.

The characteristics of the film lie not only in the manner in which man presents himself to mechanical equipment but also in the manner in which, by means of this apparatus, man can represent his environment. A glance at occupational psychology illustrates the testing capacity of the equipment. Psychoanalysis illustrates it in a different perspective. The film has enriched our field of perception with methods which can be illustrated by those of Freudian theory. Fifty years ago, a slip of the tongue passed more or less unnoticed. Only exceptionally may such a slip have revealed dimensions of depth in a conversation which had seemed to be taking its course on the surface. Since the *Psychopathology of Everyday Life* things have changed. This book isolated and made analyzable things which had heretofore floated along unnoticed in the broad stream of perception. For the entire spectrum of optical, and now also acoustical, perception the film has brought about a similar deepening of apperception. It is only an obverse of this fact that behavior items shown in a movie can be analyzed much more precisely and from more points of view than those presented on paintings or on the stage. As compared with painting, filmed behavior lends itself more readily to analysis because of its incomparably more precise statements of the situation. In comparison with the stage scene, the

filmed behavior item lends itself more readily to analysis because it can be isolated more easily. This circumstance derives its chief importance from its tendency to promote the mutual penetration of art and science. Actually, of a screened behavior item which is neatly brought out in a certain situation, like a muscle of a body, it is difficult to say which is more fascinating, its artistic value or its value for science. To demonstrate the identity of the artistic and scientific uses of photography which heretofore usually were separated will be one of the revolutionary functions of the film.[7]

By close-ups of the things around us, by focusing on hidden details of familiar objects, by exploring commonplace milieus under the ingenious guidance of the camera, the film, on the one hand, extends our comprehension of the necessities which rule our lives; on the other hand, it manages to assure us of an immense and unexpected field of action. Our taverns and our metropolitan streets, our offices and furnished rooms, our railroad stations and our factories appeared to have us locked up hopelessly. Then came the film and burst this prison-world asunder by the dynamite of the tenth of a second, so that now, in the midst of its far-flung ruins and debris, we calmly and adventurously go traveling. With the close-up, space expands; with slow motion, movement is extended. The enlargement of a snapshot does not simply render more precise what in any case was visible, though unclear: it reveals entirely new structural formations of the subject. So, too, slow motion not only presents familiar qualities of movement but reveals in them entirely unknown ones "which, far from looking like retarded rapid movements, give the effect of singularly gliding, floating, supernatural motions."[8] Evidently a different nature opens itself to the camera than opens to the naked eye – if only because an unconsciously penetrated space is substituted for a space consciously explored by man. Even if one has a general knowledge of the way people walk, one knows nothing of a person's posture during the fractional second of a stride. The act of reaching for a lighter or a spoon is familiar routine, yet we hardly know what really goes on between hand and metal, not to mention how this fluctuates with our moods. Here the camera intervenes with the resources of its lowerings and liftings, its interruptions and isolations, its extensions and accelerations, its enlargements and reductions. The camera introduces us to unconscious optics as does psychoanalysis to unconscious impulses. . . .

The growing proletarianization of modern man and the increasing formation of masses are two aspects of the same process. Fascism attempts to organize the newly created proletarian masses without affecting the property structure which the masses strive to eliminate. Fascism sees its salvation in giving these masses not their right, but instead a chance to express themselves.[9] The masses have a right to change property relations; Fascism seeks to give them an expression while preserving property. The logical result of Fascism is the introduction of aesthetics into political life. The violation of the masses, whom Fascism, with its *Führer* cult, forces to their knees, has its counterpart in the violation of an apparatus which is pressed into the production of ritual values.

All efforts to render politics aesthetic culminate in one thing: war. War and

war only can set a goal for mass movements on the largest scale while respecting the traditional property system. This is the political formula for the situation. The technological formula may be stated as follows: Only war makes it possible to mobilize all of today's technical resources while maintaining the property system. It goes without saying that the Fascist apotheosis of war does not employ such arguments. Still, Marinetti says in his manifesto on the Ethiopian colonial war:

> For twenty-seven years we Futurists have rebelled against the branding of war as antiaesthetic . . . Accordingly we state: . . . War is beautiful because it establishes man's dominion over the subjugated machinery by means of gas masks, terrifying megaphones, flame throwers, and small tanks. War is beautiful because it initiates the dreamt-of metalization of the human body. War is beautiful because it enriches a flowering meadow with the fiery orchids of machine guns. War is beautiful because it combines the gunfire, the cannonades, the cease-fire, the scents, and the stench of putrefaction into a symphony. War is beautiful because it creates new architecture, like that of the big tanks, the geometrical formation flights, the smoke spirals from burning villages, and many others . . . Poets and artists of Futurism! . . . remember these principles of an aesthetics of war so that your struggle for a new literature and a new graphic art . . . may be illumined by them!

This manifesto has the virtue of clarity. Its formulations deserve to be accepted by dialecticians. To the latter, the aesthetics of today's war appears as follows: If the natural utilization of productive forces is impeded by the property system, the increase in technical devices, in speed, and in the sources of energy will press for an unnatural utilization, and this is found in war. The destructiveness of war furnishes proof that society has not been mature enough to incorporate technology as its organ, that technology has not been sufficiently developed to cope with the elemental forces of society. The horrible features of imperialistic warfare are attributable to the discrepancy between the tremendous means of production and their inadequate utilization in the process of production – in other words, to unemployment and the lack of markets. Imperialistic war is a rebellion of technology which collects, in the form of "human material," the claims to which society has denied its natural material. Instead of draining rivers, society directs a human stream into a bed of trenches; instead of dropping seeds from airplanes, it drops incendiary bombs over cities; and through gas warfare the aura is abolished in a new way.

"*Fiat ars – pereat mundus*," says Fascism, and, as Marinetti admits, expects war to supply the artistic gratification of a sense perception that has been changed by technology. This is evidently the consummation of "*l'art pour l'art*." Mankind, which in Homer's time was an object of contemplation for the Olympian gods, now is one for itself. Its self-alienation has reached such a degree that it can experience its own destruction as an aesthetic pleasure of the first order. This is the situation of politics which Fascism is rendering aesthetic. Communism responds by politicizing art.

Notes

1 Of course, the history of a work of art encompasses more than this. The history of the *Mona Lisa*, for instance, encompasses the kind and number of its copies made in the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries.

2 Precisely because authenticity is not reproducible, the intensive penetration of certain (mechanical) processes of reproduction was instrumental in differentiating and grading authenticity. To develop such differentiations was an important function of the trade in works of art. The invention of the woodcut may be said to have struck at the root of the quality of authenticity even before its late flowering. To be sure, at the time of its origin a medieval picture of the Madonna could not yet be said to be "authentic." It became "authentic" only during the succeeding centuries and perhaps most strikingly so during the last one.

3 The definition of the aura as a "unique phenomenon of a distance however close it may be" represents nothing but the formulation of the cult value of the work of art in categories of space and time perception. Distance is the opposite of closeness. The essentially distant object is the unapproachable one. Unapproachability is indeed a major quality of the cult image. True to its nature, it remains "distant, however close it may be." The closeness which one may gain from its subject matter does not impair the distance which it retains in its appearance.

4 To the extent to which the cult value of the painting is secularized the ideas of its fundamental uniqueness lose distinctness. In the imagination of the beholder the uniqueness of the phenomena which hold sway in the cult image is more and more displaced by the empirical uniqueness of the creator or of his creative achievement. To be sure, never completely so; the concept of authenticity always transcends mere genuineness. (This is particularly apparent in the collector who always retains some traces of the fetishist and who, by owning the work of art, shares in its ritual power.) Nevertheless, the function of the concept of authenticity remains determinate in the evaluation of art; with the secularization of art authenticity displaces the cult value of the work.

5 In the case of films, mechanical reproduction is not as with literature and painting, an external condition for mass distribution. Mechanical reproduction is inherent in the very technique of film production. This technique not only permits in the most direct way but virtually causes mass distribution. It enforces distribution because the production of a film is so expensive that an individual who, for instance, might afford to buy a painting no longer can afford to buy a film. In 1927 it was calculated that a major film, in order to pay its way, had to reach an audience of nine million. With the sound film, to be sure, a setback in its international distribution occurred at first: audiences became limited by language barriers. This coincided with the Fascist emphasis on national interests. It is more important to focus on this connection with Fascism than on this setback, which was soon minimized by synchronization. The simultaneity of both phenomena is attributable to the depression. The same disturbances which, on a larger scale, led to an attempt to maintain the existing property structure by sheer force led the endangered film capital to speed up the development of the sound film. The introduction of the sound film brought about a temporary relief, not only because it again brought the masses into the theaters but also because it merged new capital from the electrical industry with that of the film industry. Thus, viewed from the outside, the sound film promoted national interests, but seen from the inside it helped to internationalize film production even more than previously.

6 Bertolt Brecht, on a different level, engaged in analogous reflections: "If the concept of 'work of art' can no longer be applied to the thing that emerges once the work is transformed into a commodity, we have to eliminate this concept with cautious care but without fear, lest we liquidate the function of the very thing as well. For it has to go through this phase without mental reservation, and not as noncommittal deviation from the straight path; rather, what happens here with the work of art will change it fundamentally and erase its past to such an extent that should the old concept be taken up again – and it will, why not? – it will no longer stir any memory of the thing it once designated."

7 Renaissance painting offers a revealing analogy to this situation. The incomparable development of this art and its significance rested not least on the integration of a number of new sciences, or at least of new scientific data. Renaissance painting made use of anatomy and perspective, of mathematics, meteorology, and chromatology. Valéry writes: "What could be further from us than the strange claim of a Leonardo to whom painting was a supreme goal and the ultimate demonstration of knowledge? Leonardo was convinced that painting demanded universal knowledge, and he did not even shrink from a theoretical analysis which to us is stunning because of its very depth and precision . . ." – Paul Valéry, *Pièces sur l'art*, "Autour de Corot" (Paris), p. 191.

8 Rudolf Arnheim, *Film als Kunst* (Berlin, 1931), p. 138.

9 One technical feature is significant here, especially with regard to newsreels, the propagandist importance of which can hardly be overestimated. Mass reproduction is aided especially by the reproduction of masses. In big parades and monster rallies, in sports events, and in war, all of which nowadays are captured by camera and sound recording, the masses are brought face to face with themselves. This process, whose significance need not be stressed, is intimately connected with the development of the techniques of reproduction and photography. Mass movements are usually discerned more clearly by a camera than by the naked eye. A bird's-eye view best captures gatherings of hundreds of thousands. And even though such a view may be as accessible to the human eye as it is to the camera, the image received by the eye cannot be enlarged the way a negative is enlarged. This means that mass movements, including war, constitute a form of human behavior which particularly favors mechanical equipment.

CHAPTER 12

"Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses"

Louis Althusser

Ideology is a "Representation" of the Imaginary Relationship of Individuals to their Real Conditions of Existence

In order to approach my central thesis on the structure and functioning of ideology, I shall first present two theses, one negative, the other positive. The first concerns the object which is "represented" in the imaginary form of ideology, the second concerns the materiality of ideology.

THESIS 1: Ideology represents the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence.

We commonly call religious ideology, ethical ideology, legal ideology, political ideology, etc., so many "world outlooks." Of course, assuming that we do not live one of these ideologies as the truth (e.g. "believe" in God, Duty, Justice, etc. . . .), we admit that the ideology we are discussing from a critical point of view, examining it as the ethnologist examines the myths of a "primitive society," that these "world outlooks" are largely imaginary, i.e. do not "correspond to reality."

However, while admitting that they do not correspond to reality, i.e. that they constitute an illusion, we admit that they do make allusion to reality, and that they need only be "interpreted" to discover the reality of the world behind their imaginary representation of that world (ideology = *illusion/allusion*).

There are different types of interpretation, the most famous of which are the *mechanistic* type, current in the eighteenth century (God is the imaginary representation of the real King), and the "*hermeneutic*" interpretation, inaugurated by the earliest Church Fathers, and revived by Feuerbach and the theologico-philosophical school which descends from him, e.g. the theologian Barth (to Feuerbach, for example, God is the essence of real Man). The essential point is that on condition that we interpret the imaginary transposition (and inversion) of ideology we arrive at the conclusion that in ideology "men represent their real conditions of existence to themselves in an imaginary form."

Unfortunately, this interpretation leaves one small problem unsettled: why do men "need" this imaginary transposition of their real conditions of existence in order to "represent to themselves" their real conditions of existence?

The first answer (that of the eighteenth century) proposes a simple solution: Priests or Despots are responsible. They "forged" the Beautiful Lies so that, in the belief that they were obeying God, men would in fact obey the Priests and Despots, who are usually in alliance in their imposture, the Priests acting in the interests of the Despots or *vice versa*, according to the political positions of the "theoreticians" concerned. There is therefore a cause for the imaginary transposition of the real conditions of existence: that cause is the existence of a small number of cynical men who base their domination and exploitation of the "people" on a falsified representation of the world which they have imagined in order to enslave other minds by dominating their imaginations.

The second answer (that of Feuerbach, taken over word for word by Marx in his *Early Works*) is more "profound," i.e. just as false. It, too, seeks and finds a cause for the imaginary transposition and distortion of men's real conditions of existence, in short, for the alienation in the imaginary of the representation of men's conditions of existence. This cause is no longer Priests or Despots, nor their active imagination and the passive imagination of their victims. This cause is the material alienation which reigns in the conditions of existence of men themselves. This is how, in *The Jewish Question* and elsewhere, Marx defends the Feuerbachian idea that men make themselves an alienated (= imaginary) representation of their conditions of existence because these conditions of existence are themselves alienating (in the *1844 Manuscripts*: because these conditions are dominated by the essence of alienated society – "*alienated labor*").

All these interpretations thus take literally the thesis which they presuppose, and on which they depend, i.e. that what is reflected in the imaginary representation of the world found in an ideology is the conditions of existence of men, i.e. their real world.

Now I can return to a thesis which I have already advanced: it is not their real conditions of existence, their real world, that "men" "represent to themselves" in ideology, but above all it is their relation to those conditions of existence which is represented to them there. It is this relation which is at the center of every ideological, i.e. imaginary, representation of the real world. It is this relation that contains the "cause" which has to explain the imaginary distortion of the ideological representation of the real world. Or rather, to leave aside the language of causality, it is necessary to advance the thesis that it is the *imaginary nature of this relation* which underlies all the imaginary distortion that we can observe (if we do not live in its truth) in all ideology.

To speak in a Marxist language, if it is true that the representation of the real conditions of existence of the individuals occupying the posts of agents of production, exploitation, repression, ideologization and scientific practice, does in the last analysis arise from the relations of production, and from relations deriving from the relations of production, we can say the following: all ideology represents

in its necessarily imaginary distortion not the existing relations of production (and the other relations that derive from them), but above all the (imaginary) relationship of individuals to the relations of production and the relations that derive from them. What is represented in ideology is therefore not the system of the real relations which govern the existence of individuals, but the imaginary relation of those individuals to the real relations in which they live.

If this is the case, the question of the "cause" of the imaginary distortion of the real relations in ideology disappears and must be replaced by a different question: why is the representation given to individuals of their (individual) relation to the social relations which govern their conditions of existence and their collective and individual life necessarily an imaginary relation? And what is the nature of this imaginariness? Posed in this way, the question explodes the solution by a "clique," by a group of individuals (Priests or Despots) who are the authors of the great ideological mystification, just as it explodes the solution by the alienated character of the real world. We shall see why later in my exposition. For the moment I shall go no further.

THESIS II: Ideology has a material existence.

I have already touched on this thesis by saying that the "ideas" or "representations," etc., which seem to make up ideology do not have an ideal (*idéale* or *idéelle*) or spiritual existence, but a material existence. I even suggested that the ideal (*idéale, idéelle*) and spiritual existence of "ideas" arises exclusively in an ideology of the "idea" and of ideology, and let me add, in an ideology of what seems to have "founded" this conception since the emergence of the sciences, i.e. what the practicians of the sciences represent to themselves in their spontaneous ideology as "ideas," true or false. Of course, presented in affirmative form, this thesis is unproven. I simply ask that the reader be favorably disposed towards it, say, in the name of materialism. A long series of arguments would be necessary to prove it.

This hypothetical thesis of the not spiritual but material existence of "ideas" or other "representations" is indeed necessary if we are to advance in our analysis of the nature of ideology. Or rather, it is merely useful to us in order the better to reveal what every at all serious analysis of any ideology will immediately and empirically show to every observer, however critical.

While discussing the ideological State apparatuses and their practices, I said that each of them was the realization of an ideology (the unity of these different regional ideologies – religious, ethical, legal, political, aesthetic, etc. being assured by their subjection to the ruling ideology). I now return to this thesis: an ideology always exists in an apparatus, and its practice, or practices. This existence is material.

Of course, the material existence of the ideology in an apparatus and its practices does not have the same modality as the material existence of a paving-stone or a rifle. But, at the risk of being taken for a Neo-Aristotelian (NB Marx had a very high regard for Aristotle), I shall say that "matter is discussed in many senses," or

rather that it exists in different modalities, all rooted in the last instance in "physical" matter.

Having said this, let me move straight on and see what happens to the "individuals" who live in ideology, i.e. in a determinate (religious, ethical, etc.) representation of the world whose imaginary distortion depends on their imaginary relation to their conditions of existence, in other words, in the last instance, to the relations of production and to class relations (ideology = an imaginary relation to real relations). I shall say that this imaginary relation is itself endowed with a material existence.

Now I observe the following.

An individual believes in God, or Duty, or Justice, etc. This belief derives (for everyone, i.e. for all those who live in an ideological representation of ideology, which reduces ideology to ideas endowed by definition with a spiritual existence) from the ideas of the individual concerned, i.e. from him as a subject with a consciousness which contains the ideas of his belief. In this way, i.e. by means of the absolutely ideological "conceptual" device (*dispositif*) thus set up (a subject endowed with a consciousness in which he freely forms or freely recognizes ideas in which he believes), the (material) attitude of the subject concerned naturally follows.

The individual in question behaves in such and such a way, adopts such and such a practical attitude, and, what is more, participates in certain regular practices which are those of the ideological apparatus on which "depend" the ideas which he has in all consciousness freely chosen as a subject. If he believes in God, he goes to Church to attend Mass, kneels, prays, confesses, does penance (once it was material in the ordinary sense of the term) and naturally repents and so on. If he believes in Duty, he will have the corresponding attitudes, inscribed in ritual practices "according to the correct principles." If he believes in Justice, he will submit unconditionally to the rules of the Law, and may even protest when they are violated, sign petitions, take part in a demonstration, etc.

Throughout this schema we observe that the ideological representation of ideology is itself forced to recognize that every "subject" endowed with a "consciousness" and believing in the "ideas" that his "consciousness" inspires in him and freely accepts, must "*act* according to his ideas," must therefore inscribe his own ideas as a free subject in the actions of his material practice. If he does not do so, "that is wicked."

Indeed, if he does not do what he ought to do as a function of what he believes, it is because he does something else, which, still as a function of the same idealist scheme, implies that he has other ideas in his head as well as those he proclaims, and that he acts according to these other ideas, as a man who is either "inconsistent" ("no one is willingly evil") or cynical, or perverse.

In every case, the ideology of ideology thus recognizes, despite its imaginary distortion, that the "ideas" of a human subject exist in his actions, or ought to exist in his actions, and if that is not the case, it lends him other ideas corresponding to the actions (however perverse) that he does perform. This ideology talks of

actions: I shall talk of actions inserted into *practices*. And I shall point out that these practices are governed by the *rituals* in which these practices are inscribed, within the *material existence of an ideological apparatus*, be it only a small part of that apparatus: a small mass in a small church, a funeral, a minor match at a sports' club, a school day, a political party meeting, etc.

Besides, we are indebted to Pascal's defensive "dialectic" for the wonderful formula which will enable us to invert the order of the notional schema of ideology. Pascal says more or less: "Kneel down, move your lips in prayer, and you will believe." He thus scandalously inverts the order of things, bringing, like Christ, not peace but strife, and in addition something hardly Christian (for woe to him who brings scandal into the world!) – scandal itself. A fortunate scandal which makes him stick with Jansenist defiance to a language that directly names the reality.

I will be allowed to leave Pascal to the arguments of his ideological struggle with the religious ideological State apparatus of his day. And I shall be expected to use a more directly Marxist vocabulary, if that is possible, for we are advancing in still poorly explored domains.

I shall therefore say that, where only a single subject (such and such an individual) is concerned, the existence of the ideas of his belief is material in that *his ideas are his material actions inserted into material practices governed by material rituals which are themselves defined by the material ideological apparatus from which derive the ideas of that subject*. Naturally, the four inscriptions of the adjective "material" in my proposition must be affected by different modalities: the materialities of a displacement for going to mass, of kneeling down, of the gesture of the sign of the cross, or of the *mea culpa*, of a sentence, of a prayer, of an act of contrition, of a penitence, of a gaze, of a hand-shake, of an external verbal discourse or an "internal" verbal discourse (consciousness), are not one and the same materiality. I shall leave on one side the problem of a theory of the differences between the modalities of materiality.

It remains that in this inverted presentation of things, we are not dealing with an "inversion" at all, since it is clear that certain notions have purely and simply disappeared from our presentation, whereas others on the contrary survive, and new terms appear.

Disappeared: the term *ideas*.
Survive: the terms *subject*, *consciousness*, *belief*, *actions*.
Appear: the terms *practices*, *rituals*, *ideological apparatus*.

It is therefore not an inversion or overturning (except in the sense in which one might say a government or a glass is overturned), but a reshuffle (of a non-ministerial type), a rather strange reshuffle, since we obtain the following result.

Ideas have disappeared as such (insofar as they are endowed with an ideal or spiritual existence), to the precise extent that it has emerged that their existence is inscribed in the actions of practices governed by rituals defined in the last instance by an ideological apparatus. It therefore appears that the subject acts insofar as he

is acted by the following system (set out in the order of its real determination): ideology existing in a material ideological apparatus, prescribing material practices governed by a material ritual, which practices exist in the material actions of a subject acting in all consciousness according to his belief.

But this very presentation reveals that we have retained the following notions: subject, consciousness, belief, actions. From this series I shall immediately extract the decisive central term on which everything else depends: the notion of the *subject*.

And I shall immediately set down two conjoint theses:

1 there is no practice except by and in an ideology;
2 there is no ideology except by the subject and for subjects.

I can now come to my central thesis.

Ideology Interpellates Individuals as Subjects

This thesis is simply a matter of making my last proposition explicit: there is no ideology except by the subject and for subjects. Meaning, there is no ideology except for concrete subjects, and this destination for ideology is only made possible by the subject: meaning, *by the category of the subject* and its functioning.

By this I mean that, even if it only appears under this name (the subject) with the rise of bourgeois ideology, above all with the rise of legal ideology,[2] the category of the subject (which may function under other names: e.g., as the soul in Plato, as God, etc.) is the constitutive category of all ideology, whatever its determination (regional or class) and whatever its historical date – since ideology has no history.

I say: the category of the subject is constitutive of all ideology, but at the same time and immediately I add that *the category of the subject is only constitutive of all ideology insofar as all ideology has the function (which defines it) of "constituting" concrete individuals as subjects*. In the interaction of this double constitution exists the functioning of all ideology, ideology being nothing but its functioning in the material forms of existence of that functioning.

In order to grasp what follows, it is essential to realize that both he who is writing these lines and the reader who reads them are themselves subjects, and therefore ideological subjects (a tautological proposition), i.e. that the author and the reader of these lines both live "spontaneously" or "naturally" in ideology in the sense in which I have said that "man is an ideological animal by nature."

That the author, insofar as he writes the lines of a discourse which claims to be scientific, is completely absent as a "subject" from "his" scientific discourse (for all scientific discourse is by definition a subject-less discourse, there is no "Subject of science" except in an ideology of science) is a different question which I shall leave on one side for the moment.

As St Paul admirably put it, it is in the "Logos," meaning in ideology, that we "live, move and have our being." It follows that, for you and for me, the category

of the subject is a primary "obviousness" (obviousnesses are always primary): it is clear that you and I are subjects (free, ethical, etc. . . .). Like all obviousnesses, including those that make a word "name a thing" or "have a meaning" (therefore including the obviousness of the "transparency" of language), the "obviousness" that you and I are subjects – and that that does not cause any problems – is an ideological effect, the elementary ideological effect.[3] It is indeed a peculiarity of ideology that it imposes (without appearing to do so, since these are "obviousnesses") obviousnesses as obviousnesses, which we cannot *fail to recognize* and before which we have the inevitable and natural reaction of crying out (aloud or in the "still, small voice of conscience"): "That's obvious! That's right! That's true!"

At work in this reaction is the ideological function which is one of the two functions of ideology as such (its inverse being the function of *misrecognition* – *méconnaissance*).

To take a highly "concrete" example, we all have friends who, when they knock on our door and we ask, through the door, the question "Who's there?," answer (since "it's obvious") "It's me." And we recognize that "it is him," or "her." We open the door, and "it's true, it really was she who was there." To take another example, when we recognize somebody of our (previous) acquaintance ((*re*)-*connaissance*) in the street, we show him that we have recognized him (and have recognized that he has recognized us) by saying to him "Hello, my friend," and shaking his hand (a material ritual practice of ideological recognition in everyday life – in France, at least; elsewhere, there are other rituals).

In this preliminary remark and these concrete illustrations, I only wish to point out that you and I are *always already* subjects, and as such constantly practice the rituals of ideological recognition, which guarantee for us that we are indeed concrete, individual, distinguishable and (naturally) irreplaceable subjects. The writing I am currently executing and the reading you are currently[4] performing are also in this respect rituals of ideological recognition, including the "obviousness" with which the "truth" or "error" of my reflections may impose itself on you.

But to recognize that we are subjects and that we function in the practical rituals of the most elementary everyday life (the hand-shake, the fact of calling you by your name, the fact of knowing, even if I do not know what it is, that you "have" a name of your own, which means that you are recognized as a unique subject, etc.) – this recognition only gives us the "consciousness" of our incessant (eternal) practice of ideological recognition – its consciousness, i.e. its *recognition* – but in no sense does it give us the (scientific) *knowledge* of the mechanism of this recognition. Now it is this knowledge that we have to reach, if you will, while speaking in ideology, and from within ideology we have to outline a discourse which tries to break with ideology, in order to dare to be the beginning of a scientific (i.e. subjectless) discourse on ideology.

Thus in order to represent why the category of the "subject" is constitutive of ideology, which only exists by constituting concrete subjects as subjects, I shall employ a special mode of exposition: "concrete" enough to be recognized, but abstract enough to be thinkable and thought, giving rise to a knowledge.

As a first formulation I shall say: *all ideology hails or interpellates concrete individuals as concrete subjects*, by the functioning of the category of the subject.

This is a proposition which entails that we distinguish for the moment between concrete individuals on the one hand and concrete subjects on the other, although at this level concrete subjects only exist insofar as they are supported by a concrete individual.

I shall then suggest that ideology "acts" or "functions" in such a way that it "recruits" subjects among the individuals (it recruits them all), or "transforms" the individuals into subjects (it transforms them all) by that very precise operation which I have called *interpellation* or hailing, and which can be imagined along the lines of the most commonplace everyday police (or other) hailing: "Hey, you there!"[5]

Assuming that the theoretical scene I have imagined takes place in the street, the hailed individual will turn round. By this mere one-hundred-and-eighty-degree physical conversion, he becomes a *subject*. Why? Because he has recognized that the hail was "really" addressed to him, and that "it was *really him* who was hailed" (and not someone else). Experience shows that the practical telecommunication of hailings is such that they hardly ever miss their man: verbal call or whistle, the one hailed always recognizes that it is really him who is being hailed. And yet it is a strange phenomenon, and one which cannot be explained solely by "guilt feelings," despite the large numbers who "have something on their consciences."

Naturally for the convenience and clarity of my little theoretical theater I have had to present things in the form of a sequence, with a before and an after, and thus in the form of a temporal succession. There are individuals walking along. Somewhere (usually behind them) the hail rings out: "Hey, you there!" One individual (nine times out of ten it is the right one) turns round, believing/suspecting/knowing that it is for him, i.e. recognizing that "it really is he" who is meant by the hailing. But in reality these things happen without any succession. The existence of ideology and the hailing or interpellation of individuals as subjects are one and the same thing.

I might add: what thus seems to take place outside ideology (to be precise, in the street), in reality takes place in ideology. What really takes place in ideology seems therefore to take place outside it. That is why those who are in ideology believe themselves by definition outside ideology: one of the effects of ideology is the practical *denial* of the ideological character of ideology by ideology: ideology never says, "I am ideological." It is necessary to be outside ideology, i.e. in scientific knowledge, to be able to say: I am in ideology (a quite exceptional case) or (the general case): I was in ideology. As is well known, the accusation of being in ideology only applies to others, never to oneself (unless one is really a Spinozist or a Marxist, which, in this matter, is to be exactly the same thing). Which amounts to saying that ideology *has no outside* (for itself), but at the same time *that it is nothing but outside* (for science and reality).

Spinoza explained this completely two centuries before Marx, who practiced it but without explaining it in detail. But let us leave this point, although it is heavy

with consequences, consequences which are not just theoretical, but also directly political, since, for example, the whole theory of criticism and self-criticism, the golden rule of the Marxist-Leninist practice of the class struggle, depends on it.

Thus ideology hails or interpellates individuals as subjects. As ideology is eternal, I must now suppress the temporal form in which I have presented the functioning of ideology, and say: ideology has always-already interpellated individuals as subjects, which amounts to making it clear that individuals are always-already interpellated by ideology as subjects, which necessarily leads us to one last proposition: *individuals are always-already subjects*. Hence individuals are "abstract" with respect to the subjects which they always-already are. This proposition might seem paradoxical.

That an individual is always-already a subject, even before he is born, is nevertheless the plain reality, accessible to everyone and not a paradox at all. Freud shows that individuals are always "abstract" with respect to the subjects they always-already are, simply noting the ideological ritual that surrounds the expectation of a "birth," that "happy event." Everyone knows how much and in what way an unborn child is expected. Which amounts to saying, very prosaically, if we agree to drop the "sentiments," i.e. the forms of family ideology (paternal/maternal/conjugal/fraternal) in which the unborn child is expected: it is certain in advance that it will bear its father's name, and will therefore have an identity and be irreplaceable. Before its birth, the child is therefore always-already a subject, appointed as a subject in and by the specific familial ideological configuration in which it is "expected" once it has been conceived. I hardly need add that this familial ideological configuration is, in its uniqueness, highly structured, and that it is in this implacable and more or less "pathological" (presupposing that any meaning can be assigned to that term) structure that the former subject-to-be will have to "find" "its" place, i.e., "become" the sexual subject (boy or girl) which it already is in advance. It is clear that this ideological constraint and pre-appointment, and all the rituals of rearing and then education in the family, have some relationship with what Freud studied in the forms of the pre-genital and genital "stages" of sexuality, i.e. in the "grip" of what Freud registered by its effects as being the unconscious. But let us leave this point, too, to one side. . . .

Let me summarize what we have discovered about ideology in general.

The duplicate mirror-structure of ideology ensures simultaneously:

1 the interpellation of "individuals" as subjects;
2 their subjection to the Subject;[6]
3 the mutual recognition of subjects and Subject, the subjects' recognition of each other, and finally the subject's recognition of himself;[7]
4 the absolute guarantee that everything really is so, and that on condition that the subjects recognize what they are and behave accordingly, everything will be all right: Amen – "*So be it.*"

Result: caught in this quadruple system of interpellation as subjects, of subjection to the Subject, of universal recognition and of absolute guarantee, the subjects

"work," they "work by themselves" in the vast majority of cases, with the exception of the "bad subjects" who on occasion provoke the intervention of one of the detachments of the (repressive) State apparatus. But the vast majority of (good) subjects work all right "all by themselves," i.e. by ideology (whose concrete forms are realized in the Ideological State Apparatuses [ISAs]). They are inserted into practices governed by the rituals of the ISAs. They "recognize" the existing state of affairs (*das Bestehende*), that "it really is true that it is so and not otherwise," and that they must be obedient to God, to their conscience, to the priest, to de Gaulle, to the boss, to the engineer, that thou shalt "love thy neighbour as thyself," etc. Their concrete, material behavior is simply the inscription in life of the admirable words of the prayer: "Amen – *So be it.*"

Yes, the subjects "work by themselves." The whole mystery of this effect lies in the first two moments of the quadruple system I have just discussed, or, if you prefer, in the ambiguity of the term *subject*. In the ordinary use of the term, subject in fact means: (1) a free subjectivity, a center of initiatives, author of and responsible for its actions; (2) a subjected being who submits to a higher authority, and is therefore stripped of all freedom except that of freely accepting his submission. This last note gives us the meaning of this ambiguity, which is merely a reflection of the effect which produces it: the individual *is interpellated as a (free) subject in order that he shall (freely) accept his subjection*, i.e. in order that he shall make the gestures and actions of his subjection "all by himself." *There are no subjects except by and for their subjection.* That is why they "work all by themselves."

"*So be it!* . . ." This phrase which registers the effect to be obtained proves that it is not "naturally" so ("naturally": outside the prayer, i.e. outside the ideological intervention). This phrase proves that it *has* to be so if things are to be what they must be, and let us let the words slip: if the reproduction of the relations of production is to be assured, even in the processes of production and circulation, every day, in the "consciousness," i.e. in the attitudes of the individual subjects occupying the posts which the socio-technical division of labor assigns to them in production, exploitation, repression, ideologization, scientific practice, etc. Indeed, what is really in question in this mechanism of the mirror recognition of the Subject and of the individuals interpellated as subjects, and of the guarantee given by the Subject to the subjects if they freely accept their subjection to the Subject's "commandments"? The reality in question in this mechanism, the reality which is necessarily *misrecognized* (*méconnue*) in the very forms of recognition (ideology = misrecognition/ignorance) is indeed, in the last resort, the reproduction of the relations of production and of the relations deriving from them.

Notes

1 I use this very modern term deliberately. For even in Communist circles, unfortunately, it is a commonplace to "explain" some political deviation (left or right opportunism) by the action of a "clique."

2 Which borrowed the legal category of "subject in law" to make an ideological notion: man is by nature a subject.
3 Linguists and those who appeal to linguistics for various purposes often run up against difficulties which arise because they ignore the action of the ideological effects in all discourses – including even scientific discourses.
4 NB: this double "currently" is one more proof of the fact that ideology is "eternal," since these two "currentlys" are separated by an indefinite interval; I am writing these lines on April 6, 1969, you may read them at any subsequent time.
5 Hailing as an everyday practice subject to a precise ritual takes a quite "special" form in the policeman's practice of "hailing," which concerns the hailing of "suspects."
6 By "Subject," Althusser means the deity. [Eds.]
7 Hegel is (unknowingly) an admirable "theoretician" of ideology insofar as he is the "theoretician" of Universal Recognition who unfortunately ends up in the ideology of Absolute Knowledge. Feuerbach is an astonishing "theoretician" of the mirror connexion, who unfortunately ends up in the ideology of the Human Essence. To find the material with which to construct a theory of the guarantee, we must turn to Spinoza.

CHAPTER 18

"Culture, Ideology, Interpellation"

John Fiske

The term *culture*, as used in the phrase "cultural studies," is neither aesthetic nor humanist in emphasis, but political. Culture is not conceived of as the aesthetic ideals of form and beauty found in great art, or in more humanist terms as the voice of the "human spirit" that transcends boundaries of time and nation to speak to a hypothetical universal man (the gender is deliberate – women play little or no role in this conception of culture). Culture is not, then, the aesthetic products of the human spirit acting as a bulwark against the tide of grubby industrial materialism and vulgarity, but rather a way of living within an industrial society that encompasses all the meanings of that social experience.

Cultural studies is concerned with the generation and circulation of meanings in industrial societies. . . .

Some basic Marxist assumptions underlie all British works in cultural studies. . . . [T]hey start with the belief that meanings and the making of them (which together constitute culture) are indivisibly linked to social structure and can only be explained in terms of that structure and its history. Correlatively, the social structure is held in place by, among other forces, the meanings that culture produces; as Stuart Hall says, "A set of social relations obviously requires meanings and frameworks which underpin them and hold them in place."[1] These meanings are not only meanings of social experience, but also meanings of self, that is, constructions of social identity that enable people living in industrial capitalist societies to make sense of themselves and their social relations. Meanings of experience and meanings of the subject (or self) who has that experience are finally part of the same cultural process.

Also underlying this work is the assumption that capitalist societies are divided societies. The primary axis of division was originally thought to be class, though gender and race have now joined it as equally significant producers of social difference. Other axes of division are nation, age group, religion, occupation, education, political allegiance, and so on. Society, then, is not an organic whole but a complex network of groups, each with different interests and related to each other in terms of their power relationship with the dominant classes. Social relations are understood in terms of social power, in terms of a structure of domination and subordination that is never static but is always the site of contestation and struggle.

Social power is the power to get one's class or group interest served by the social structure as a whole, and social struggle – or, in traditional Marxist terms, the class struggle – is the contestation of this power by the subordinate groups. In the domain of culture, this contestation takes the form of the struggle for meaning, in which the dominant classes attempt to "naturalize" the meanings that serve their interests into the "commonsense" of society as a whole, whereas subordinate classes resist this process in various ways and to varying degrees and try to make meanings that serve their own interests. Some feminist work provides a clear example of this cultural struggle and contestation. Angela McRobbie and Lisa Lewis, for instance, both show how young girls are able to contest the patriarchal ideology structured into such films as *Flashdance* or the pop stars Madonna and Cindy Lauper and produce feminine readings of them.[2]

The attempt of the dominant classes to naturalize their meanings rarely, if ever, results from the conscious intention of individual members of those classes (though resistance to it is often, though not always, both conscious and intentional). Rather, it must be understood as the work of an ideology inscribed in the cultural and social practices of a class and therefore of the members of that class. And this brings us to another basic assumption: culture is ideological.

The cultural studies tradition does not view ideology in its vulgar Marxist sense of "false consciousness," for that has built into it the assumption that a true consciousness is not only possible but will actually occur when history brings about a proletarian society. This sort of idealism seems inappropriate to the late twentieth century, which appears to have demonstrated not the inevitable self-destruction of capitalism but its unpredicted (by Marx) ability to reproduce itself and to incorporate into itself the forces of resistance and opposition. History casts doubt on the possibility of a society without ideology, in which people have a true consciousness of their social relations.

Structuralism, another important influence on British cultural studies, also denies the possibility of a true consciousness, for it argues that reality can only be comprehended through language or other cultural meaning systems. Thus the idea of an objective, empirical "truth" is untenable. Truth must always be understood in terms of how it is made, for whom, and at what time it is "true." Consciousness is never the product of truth or reality but rather of culture, society, and history.

Althusser and Gramsci were the theorists who offered a way of accommodating both structuralism (and, incidentally, Freudianism) and the history of capitalism in the twentieth century with Marxism. For Althusser, ideology is not a static set of ideas imposed upon the subordinate by the dominant classes but rather a dynamic process constantly reproduced and reconstituted in practice – that is, in the ways that people think, act, and understand themselves and their relationship to society.[3] He rejects the old idea that the economic base of society determines the entire cultural superstructure. He replaces this base/superstructure model with his theory of overdetermination, which not only allows the superstructure to influence the base but also produces a model of the relationship between ideology and culture that is not determined solely by economic relations. At the heart of this theory is

the notion of ideological state apparatuses (ISAs), by which he means social institutions such as the family, the educational system, language, the media, the political system, and so on. These institutions produce in people the tendency to behave and think in socially acceptable ways (as opposed to repressive state apparatuses such as the police force or the law, which coerce people into behaving according to the social norms). The social norms, or that which is socially acceptable, are of course neither neutral nor objective; they have developed in the interests of those with social power, and they work to maintain their sites of power by naturalizing them into the commonsense – the only – social positions for power. Social norms are ideologically slanted in favor of a particular class or group of classes but are accepted as natural by other classes, even when the interests of those other classes are directly opposed by the ideology reproduced by living life according to those norms.

Social norms are realized in the day-to-day workings of the ideological state apparatuses. Each one of these institutions is "relatively autonomous," according to Althusser, and there are no overt connections between it and any of the others – the legal system is not explicitly connected to the school system nor to the media, for example – yet they all perform similar ideological work. They are all patriarchal; they are all concerned with the getting and keeping of wealth and possessions; and they all endorse individualism and competition between individuals. But the most significant feature of ISAs is that they all present themselves as socially neutral, as not favoring one particular class over any other. Each presents itself as a principled institutionalization of equality: the law, the media, and education all claim, loudly and often, to treat all individuals equally and fairly. The fact that the norms used to define equality and fairness are those derived from the interests of the white, male, middle classes is more or less adequately disguised by these claims of principle, though feminists and those working for racial and class harmony may claim that this disguise can be torn off with relative ease.

Althusser's theory of overdetermination explains this congruence between the "relatively autonomous" institutions by looking not to their roots in a common, determining economic base but to an overdetermining network of ideological interrelationships among all of them. The institutions appear autonomous only at the official level of stated policy, though the belief in this "autonomy" is essential for their ideological work. At the unstated level of ideology, however, each institution is related to all the others by an unspoken web of ideological interconnections, so that the operation of any one of them is "overdetermined" by its complex, invisible network of interrelationships with all the others. Thus the educational system, for example, cannot tell a story about the nature of the individual different from those told by the legal system, the political system, the family, and so on.

Ideology is not, then, a static set of ideas through which we view the world but a dynamic social practice, constantly in process, constantly reproducing itself in the ordinary workings of these apparatuses. It also works at the micro-level of the individual. To understand this we need to replace the idea of the individual with

that of the subject. The individual is produced by nature, the subject by culture. Theories of the individual concentrate on differences between people and explain these differences as natural. Theories of the subject, on the other hand, concentrate on people's common experiences in a society as being the most productive way of explaining who (we think) we are. Althusser believes that we are all constituted as subjects-in-ideology by the ISAs, that the ideological norms naturalized in their practices constitute not only the sense of the world for us, but also our sense of ourselves, our sense of identity, and our sense of our relations to other people and to society in general. Thus we are each of us constituted as a subject in, and subject to, ideology. The subject, therefore, is a social construction, not a natural one. A biological female can have a masculine subjectivity (that is, she can make sense of the world and of her self and her place in that world through patriarchal ideology). Similarly, a black person can have a white subjectivity and a member of the working classes a middle-class one.

The ideological theory of the subject differs in emphasis, though not fundamentally, from that developed in psychoanalysis by placing greater emphasis on social and historical conditions, particularly those of class. Althusser drew upon Freudian theory to develop his idea of the subject. As Ann Kaplan notes, feminists too have used psychoanalytic theory, though much more sophisticatedly, to theorize the gendered subject. This gendered subject is more rooted in psychological processes, the ideological subject of Althusser in historical and social ones.

But both theories stress the role played by the media and language in this constant construction of the subject, by which we mean the constant reproduction of ideology in people. Althusser uses the words *interpellation* and *hailing* to describe this work of the media. These terms derive from the idea that any language, whether it be verbal, visual, tactile, or whatever, is part of social relations and that in communicating with someone we are reproducing social relationships.

In communicating with people, our first job is to "hail" them, almost as if hailing a cab. To answer, they have to recognize that it is to them, and not to someone else, that we are talking. This recognition derives from signs, carried in our language, of whom we think they are. We will hail a child differently from an adult, a male differently from a female, someone whose status is lower than ours differently from someone in a higher social position. In responding to our hail, the addressees recognize the social position our language has constructed, and if their response is cooperative, they adopt this same position. Hailing is the process by which language identifies and constructs a social position for the addressee. Interpellation is the larger process whereby language constructs social relations for both parties in an act of communication and thus locates them in the broader map of social relations in general.

Hailing is obviously crucial at the start of a "conversation," though its ideological work continues throughout. Look, for instance, at the opening statements of the anchor and reporter on a US network news report in April 1991:

Anchor: There is growing concern tonight about the possible economic impact that a nationwide railroad strike set for midnight tonight

poses. The unions and the railroads remain deadlocked. Wyatt Andrews brings us up to date on what President Bush and Congress may do about it.

Reporter: By morning 230,000 rail workers might not be working on the railroad and the strike threatens millions of Americans. Just as thousands of commuters may find no train leaving the station beginning tonight at midnight.

The word *strike* hails us as anti-union, for "striking" is constructed as a negative action by labor unions that "threatens" the nation. By ascribing responsibility to the unions, the word hides the fact that management plays some role, possibly even a greater one, in the dispute. The report opposes the unions not to management but to "the railroads" and thus excludes the unions from them. This exclusion of the unions from the railroads allows the unspoken management to become synonymous with them, and ideology continues its work by constructing the railroads not as an industry but as a national resource and so uses them as a metonym for the nation and, by extension, of "us." Recognizing ourselves in the national "us" interpellated here, we participate in the work of ideology by adopting the anti-union subject position proposed for us. This subject-as-ideology is developed as the item progresses:

Passenger A: Gas, miles, time. The highways are going to be packed. Not much we can do, though.

Passenger B: I'm going to stay home. I've got an office in my home and I'm going to just stay there and work.

Reporter: But the commuter inconvenience is nothing compared to the impact on freight trains. Up to half a million industrial jobs may be at stake. Whether it's cars in the heartland or chemicals in Kansas City, the railroads still carry more freight than either trucks or airplanes, meaning that the strike would threaten the heart of industrial America in the heart of this recession.

Railroad Official: If we don't get this strike settled quickly a lot more people are going to be out of work, a lot more product is not going to be shipped and this economy's recovery is going to be set back immensely.

Reporter: Negotiations meanwhile seem to be at bedrock bottom, on wages, on health care, and the number of workers per train. Both sides even late today were on opposite tracks. The unions complain the railroads blocked raises and stonewalled the negotiations for three years. The railroads accuse the unions of protecting legions of workers who essentially do nothing.

Railroad Official: The issue with our union is between who works and who watches. That's the issue of whether we have excess people in the cab who don't have anything to do.

The national "we" is constructed as hard-working producers at the personal level by the passengers and at the industrial level by the reporter. The repeated use of

the "heart" metaphor not only makes "America" into a living, breathing body (like the one "we" inhabit), but it constructs the unions as a potentially lethal disease, if not a stiletto-wielding assassin! The railroad official continues to conflate "the railroads" (by which he means "the management") with the national subject of the hard-working producer.

So far, the dispute has been cast solely in terms of the bad effects the unions have upon this national "us," and only in the reporter's next segment do we receive a hint that there are causes of the dispute that may both justify it and implicate management in it. These hints are left floating, so we have no way of assessing the reasonableness of the wage claims, for instance. The generalized terms – "on wages, on health care, on the number of workers per train" – contrast with the concrete realities of 230,000 unionists not working and of the millions of Americans, thousands of commuters, and up to half a million jobs that are threatened. We might like to think about the ideological practice of not allowing the unions to speak for themselves "live," but of putting their case into the words of the reporter management "us." Unionists would not, for instance, describe their negotiating opponents as "the railroads," nor would they categorize their arguments as mere "complaints" while according management's the stronger status of "accusations."

The news item concludes by continuing the ideological practice that by now seems so natural and familiar:

> *Reporter*: What exactly happens in the morning? If you are a commuter, check locally. Some Amtrak and commuter trains will be operating and some of the unions say they will strike only freight lines and not passenger trains. In Washington, watch Capitol Hill. Tomorrow President Bush is likely to ask Congress to impose a solution: the move, the unions say, plays right into the railroads' hands. The unions have all along warned the railroads would stall the negotiations and force tonight's strike all in the snug belief that Congress would bail them out.

As Mimi White points out . . . this view of ideology as a process constantly at work, constructing people as subjects in an ideology that always serves the interests of the dominant classes, found powerful theoretical support in Gramsci's theory of hegemony. Originally, *hegemony* referred to the way that one nation could exert ideological and social, rather than military or coercive, power over another. However, cultural theorists tend to use the term to describe the process by which a dominant class wins the willing consent of the subordinate classes to the system that ensures their subordination. This consent must be constantly won and rewon, for people's material social experience constantly reminds them of the disadvantages of subordination and thus poses a constant threat to the dominant class. Like Althusser's theory of ideology, hegemony does not denote a static power relationship but a constant process of struggle in which the big guns belong to the side of those with social power, but in which victory does not necessarily go to the big guns – or, at least, in which that victory is not necessarily total. Indeed, the theory of hegemony foregrounds the notion of ideological struggle much more than does Althusser's ideological theory, which at times tends to imply that the power of ideology and the ISAs to form the subject in ways that suit the interests of the dominant class is almost irresistible. Hegemony, on the other hand, posits a constant contradiction between ideology and the social experience of the subordinate that makes this interface into an inevitable site of ideological struggle. In hegemonic theory, ideology is constantly up against forces of resistance. Consequently it is engaged in a constant struggle not just to extend its power but to hold on to the territory it has already colonized.

Notes

1 Stuart Hall, "The Narrative Construction of Reality," *Southern Review* 17 (1984), pp. 1–17.
2 Angela McRobbie, "Dance and Social Fantasy," in Angela McRobbie and Mica Nava, eds, *Gender and Generation* (London: Macmillan, 1984), pp. 130–61; Lisa Lewis, *Gender Politics and MTV: Voicing the Difference* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990).
3 Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* (London: New Left Books, 1971), pp. 127–86.

subordinate mode of human relationship, where the oppressed must recognize the masters' difference in order to survive.

But our future survival is predicated upon our ability to relate within equality. As women, we must root out internalized patterns of oppression within ourselves if we are to move beyond the most superficial aspects of social change. Now we must recognize differences among women who are our equals, neither inferior nor superior, and devise ways to use each others' difference to enrich our visions and our joint struggles.

The future of our earth may depend upon the ability of all women to identify and develop new definitions of power and new patterns of relating across difference. The old definitions have not served us, nor the earth that supports us. The old patterns, no matter how cleverly rearranged to imitate progress, still condemn us to cosmetically altered repetitions of the same old exchanges, the same old guilt, hatred, recrimination, lamentation, and suspicion.

For we have, built into all of us, old blueprints of expectation and response, old structures of oppression, and these must be altered at the same time as we alter the living conditions which are a result of those structures. For the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house.

As Paulo Freire shows so well in *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, the true focus of revolutionary change is never merely the oppressive situations which we seek to escape, but that piece of the oppressor which is planted deep within each of us, and which knows only the oppressors' tactics, the oppressors' relationships.

Change means growth, and growth can be painful. But we sharpen self-definition by exposing the self in work and struggle together with those whom we define as different from ourselves, although sharing the same goals. For Black and white, old and young, lesbian and heterosexual women alike, this can mean new paths to our survival.

We have chosen each other
and the edge of each others battles
the war is the same
if we lose someday
women's blood will congeal
upon a dead planet
if we win
there is no telling
we seek beyond history
for a new and more possible meeting.[2]

Notes

1 From "Rape: A Radical Analysis, An African-American Perspective," by Kalamuya Salaam, in *Black Books Bulletin*, vol. 6, no. 4 (1980).

2 Seabury Press, New York, 1970. From "Outlines," unpublished poem.

CHAPTER 11

"Notes Toward a Politics of Location"[1]

Adrienne Rich

I am to speak these words in Europe, but I have been searching for them in the United States of America. A few years ago I would have spoken of the common oppression of women, the gathering movement of women around the globe, the hidden history of women's resistance and bonding, the failure of all previous politics to recognize the universal shadow of patriarchy, the belief that women now, in a time of rising consciousness and global emergency, may join across all national and cultural boundaries to create a society free of domination, in which "sexuality, politics, . . . work, . . . intimacy . . . thinking itself will be transformed."[2]

I would have spoken these words as a feminist who "happened" to be a white United States citizen, conscious of my government's proven capacity for violence and arrogance of power, but as self-separated from that government, quoting without second thought Virginia Woolf's statement in *Three Guineas* that "as a woman I have no country. As a woman I want no country. As a woman my country is the whole world."

This is not what I come here to say in 1984. I come here with notes but without absolute conclusions. This is not a sign of loss of faith or hope. These notes are the marks of a struggle to keep moving, a struggle for accountability.

Beginning to write, then getting up. Stopped by the movements of a huge early bumblebee which has somehow gotten inside this house and is reeling, bumping, stunning itself against windowpanes and sills. I open the front door and speak to it, trying to attract it outside. It is looking for what it needs, just as I am, and, like me, it has gotten trapped in a place where it cannot fulfill its own life. I could open the jar of honey on the kitchen counter, and perhaps it would take honey from that jar; but its life process, its work, its mode of being cannot be fulfilled inside this house.

And I, too, have been bumping my way against glassy panes, falling half-stunned, gathering myself up and crawling, then again taking off, searching.

I don't hear the bumblebee any more, and I leave the front door. I sit down and pick up a secondhand, faintly annotated student copy of Marx's *The German Ideology*, which "happens" to be lying on the table.

I will speak these words in Europe, but I am having to search for them in the United States of North America. When I was ten or eleven, early in World War II, a girlfriend and I used to write each other letters which we addressed like this:

Adrienne Rich
14 Edgevale Road
Baltimore, Maryland
The United States of America
The Continent of North America
The Western Hemisphere
The Earth
The Solar System

You could see your own house as a tiny fleck on an everwidening landscape, or as the center of it all from which the circles expanded into the infinite unknown.

It is that question of feeling at the center that gnaws at me now. At the center of what?

As a woman I have a country; as a woman I cannot divest myself of that country merely by condemning its government or by saying three times "As a woman my country is the whole world." Tribal loyalties aside, and even if nation-states are now just pretexts used by multinational conglomerates to serve their interests, I need to understand how a place on the map is also a place in history within which as a woman, a Jew, a lesbian, a feminist I am created and trying to create.

Begin though, not with a continent or a country or a house, but with the geography closest in – the body. Here at least I know I exist, that living human individual whom the young Marx called "the first premise of all human history."[3] But it was not as a Marxist that I turned to this place, back from philosophy and literature and science and theology in which I had looked for myself in vain. It was as a radical feminist.

The politics of pregnability and motherhood. The politics of orgasm. The politics of rape and incest, of abortion, birth control, forcible sterilization. Of prostitution and marital sex. Of what had been named sexual liberation. Of prescriptive heterosexuality. Of lesbian existence.

And Marxist feminists were often pioneers in this work. But for many women I knew, the need to begin with the female body – our own – was understood not as applying a Marxist principle to women, but as locating the grounds from which to speak with authority *as* women. Not to transcend this body, but to reclaim it. To reconnect our thinking and speaking with the body of this particular living human individual, a woman. Begin, we said, with the material, with matter, mama, madre, mutter, moeder, modder, etc., etc.

Begin with the material. Pick up again the long struggle against lofty and privileged abstraction. Perhaps this is the core of revolutionary process, whether it calls itself Marxist or Third World or feminist or all three. Long before the nineteenth century, the empirical witch of the European Middle Ages, trusting her

senses, practicing her tried remedies against the anti-material, anti-sensuous, anti-empirical dogmas of the Church. Dying for that, by the millions. "A female-led peasant rebellion"? – in any event, a rebellion against the idolatry of pure ideas, the belief that ideas have a life of their own and float along above the heads of ordinary people, women, the poor, the uninitiated.[4]

Abstractions severed from the doings of living people, fed back to people as slogans.

Theory – the seeing of patterns, showing the forest as well as the trees – theory can be a dew that rises from the earth and collects in the rain cloud and returns to earth over and over. But if it doesn't smell of the earth, it isn't good for the earth.

I wrote a sentence just now and x'd it out. In it I said that women have always understood the struggle against free-floating abstraction even when they were intimidated by abstract ideas. I don't want to write that kind of sentence now, the sentence that begins "Women have always. . . ." We started by rejecting the sentences that began "Women have always had an instinct for mothering" or "Women have always and everywhere been in subjugation to men." If we have learned anything in these years of late twentieth-century feminism, it's that that "always" blots out what we really need to know: When, where, and under what conditions has the statement been true?

The absolute necessity to raise these questions in the world: where, when, and under what conditions have women acted and been acted on, as women? Wherever people are struggling against subjection, the specific subjection of women, through our location in a female body, from now on has to be addressed. The necessity to go on speaking of it, refusing to let the discussion go on as before, speaking where silence has been advised and enforced, not just about our subjection, but about our active presence and practice as women. We believed (I go on believing) that the liberation of women is a wedge driven into all other radical thought, can open out the structures of resistance, unbind the imagination, connect what's been dangerously disconnected. Let us pay attention now, we said, to women: let men and women make a conscious act of attention when women speak; let us insist on kinds of process which allow more women to speak; let us get back to earth – not as paradigm for "women," but as place of location.

Perhaps we need a moratorium on saying "the body." For it's also possible to abstract "the" body. When I write "the body," I see nothing in particular. To write "my body" plunges me into lived experience, particularity: I see scars, disfigurements, discolorations, damages, losses, as well as what pleases me. Bones well nourished from the placenta; the teeth of a middle-class person seen by the dentist twice a year from childhood. White skin, marked and scarred by three pregnancies, an elected sterilization, progressive arthritis, four joint operations, calcium deposits, no rapes, no abortions, long hours at a typewriter – my own, not in a typing pool – and so forth. To say "the body" lifts me away from what has given me a primary perspective. To say "my body" reduces the temptation to grandiose assertions.

This body. White, female; or female, white. The first obvious, lifelong facts. But I was born in the white section of a hospital which separated Black and white women

in labor and Black and white babies in the nursery, just as it separated Black and white bodies in its morgue. I was defined as white before I was defined as female.

The politics of location. Even to begin with my body I have to say that from the outset that body had more than one identity. When I was carried out of the hospital into the world, I was viewed and treated as female, but also viewed and treated as white – by both Black and white people. I was located by color and sex as surely as a Black child was located by color and sex – though the implications of white identity were mystified by the presumption that white people are the center of the universe.

To locate myself in my body means more than understanding what it has meant to me to have a vulva and clitoris and uterus and breasts. It means recognizing this white skin, the places it has taken me, the places it has not let me go.

The body I was born into was not only female and white, but Jewish enough for geographic location to have played, in those years, a determining part. I was a *Mischling*, four years old when the Third Reich began. Had it been not Baltimore, but Prague or Lodz or Amsterdam, the ten-year-old letter writer might have had no address. Had I survived Prague, Amsterdam, or Lodz and the railway stations for which they were deportation points, I would be some body else. My center, perhaps, the Middle East or Latin America, my language itself another language. Or I might be in no body at all.

But I am a North American Jew, born and raised three thousand miles from the war in Europe.

Trying as women to see from the center. "A politics," I wrote once, "of asking women's questions."[5] We are not "the woman question" asked by somebody else; we are the women who ask the questions.

Trying to see so much, aware of so much to be seen, brought into the light, changed. Breaking down again and again the false male universal. Piling piece by piece of concrete experience side by side, comparing, beginning to discern patterns. Anger, frustration with Marxist or Leftist dismissals of these questions, this struggle. Easy now to call this disillusionment facile, but the anger was deep, the frustration real, both in personal relationships and political organizations. I wrote in 1975: *Much of what is narrowly termed "politics" seems to rest on a longing for certainty even at the cost of honesty, for an analysis which, once given, need not be reexamined. Such is the dead-endedness – for women – of Marxism in our time.*[6]

And it has felt like a dead end wherever politics has been externalized, cut off from the ongoing lives of women or of men, rarefied into an elite jargon, an enclave, defined by little sects who feed off each others' errors.

But even as we shrugged away Marx along with the academic Marxists and the sectarian Left, some of us, calling ourselves radical feminists, never meant anything less by women's liberation than the creation of a society without domination; we never meant less than the making new of all relationships. The problem was that we did not know whom we meant when we said "we."

The power men everywhere wield over women, power which has become a model for every other form of exploitation and illegitimate control.[7] I wrote these words in 1978

at the end of an essay called "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence." Patriarchy as the "model" for other forms of domination – this idea was not original with me. It has been put forward insistently by white Western feminists, and in 1972 I had quoted from Lévi-Strauss: *I would go so far as to say that even before slavery or class domination existed, men built an approach to women that would serve one day to introduce differences among us all.*[8]

Living for fifty-some years, having watched even minor bits of history unfold, I am less quick than I once was to search for single "causes" or origins in dealings among human beings. But suppose that we could trace back and establish that patriarchy has been everywhere the model. To what choices of action does that lead us in the present? Patriarchy exists nowhere in a pure state; we are the latest to set foot in a tangle of oppressions grown up and around each other for centuries. This isn't the old children's game where you choose one strand of color in the web and follow it back to find your prize, ignoring the others as mere distractions. The prize is life itself, and most women in the world must fight for their lives on many fronts at once.

We . . . often find it difficult to separate race from class from sex oppression because in our lives they are most often experienced simultaneously. We know that there is such a thing as racial-sexual oppression which is neither solely racial nor solely sexual. . . . We need to articulate the real class situation of persons who are not merely raceless, sexless workers but for whom racial and sexual oppression are significant determinants in their working/economic lives.

This is from the 1977 Combahee River Collective statement, a major document of the US women's movement, which gives a clear and uncompromising Black–feminist naming to the experience of simultaneity of oppressions.[9]

Even in the struggle against free-floating abstraction, we have abstracted. Marxists and radical feminists have both done this. Why not admit it, get it said, so we can get on to the work to be done, back down to earth again? The faceless, sexless, raceless proletariat. The faceless, raceless, classless category of "all women." Both creations of white Western self-centeredness.

To come to terms with the circumscribing nature of (our) whiteness.[10] Marginalized though we have been as women, as white and Western makers of theory, we also marginalize others because our lived experience is thoughtlessly white, because even our "women's cultures" are rooted in some Western tradition. Recognizing our location, having to name the ground we're coming from, the conditions we have taken for granted – there is a confusion between our claims to the white and Western eye and the woman-seeing eye,[11] fear of losing the centrality of the one even as we claim the other.

How does the white Western feminist define theory? Is it something made only by white women and only by women acknowledged as writers? How does the white Western feminist define "an idea"? How do we actively work to build a white Western feminist consciousness that is not simply centered on itself, that resists white circumscribing?

It was in the writings but also the actions and speeches and sermons of Black

United States citizens that I began to experience the meaning of my whiteness as a point of location for which I needed to take responsibility. It was in reading poems by contemporary Cuban women that I began to experience the meaning of North America as a location which had also shaped my ways of seeing and my ideas of who and what was important, a location for which I was also responsible. I traveled then to Nicaragua, where, in a tiny impoverished country, in a four-year-old society dedicated to eradicating poverty, under the hills of the Nicaragua–Honduras border, I could physically feel the weight of the United States of North America, its military forces, its vast appropriations of money, its mass media, at my back; I could feel what it means, dissident or not, to be part of that raised boot of power, the cold shadow we cast everywhere to the south.

I come from a country stuck fast for forty years in the deepfreeze of history. Any United States citizen alive today has been saturated with Cold War rhetoric, the horrors of communism, the betrayals of socialism, the warning that any collective restructuring of society spells the end of personal freedom. And, yes, there have been horrors and betrayals deserving open opposition. But we are not invited to consider the butcheries of Stalinism, the terrors of the Russian counterrevolution alongside the butcheries of white supremacism and Manifest Destiny. We are not urged to help create a more human society here in response to the ones we are taught to hate and dread. Discourse itself is frozen at this level. Tonight as I turned a switch searching for "the news," that shinily animated silicone mask was on television again, telling the citizens of my country we are menaced by communism from El Salvador, that communism – Soviet variety, obviously – is on the move in Central America, that freedom is imperiled, that the suffering peasants of Latin America must be stopped, just as Hitler had to be stopped.

The discourse has never really changed; it is wearingly abstract. (Lillian Smith, white anti-racist writer and activist, spoke of the "deadly sameness" of abstraction.)[12] It allows no differences among places, times, cultures, conditions, movements. Words that should possess a depth and breadth of allusions – words like *socialism*, *communism*, *democracy*, *collectivism* – are stripped of their historical roots, the many faces of the struggles for social justice and independence reduced to an ambition to dominate the world.

Is there a connection between this state of mind – the Cold War mentality, the attribution of all our problems to an external enemy – and a form of feminism so focused on male evil and female victimization that it, too, allows for no differences among women, men, places, times, cultures, conditions, classes, movements? Living in the climate of an enormous either/or, we absorb some of it unless we actively take heed.

In the United States large numbers of people have been cut off from their own process and movement. We have been hearing for forty years that we are the guardians of freedom, while "behind the Iron Curtain" all is duplicity and manipulation, if not sheer terror. Yet the legacy of fear lingering after the witch hunts of the fifties hangs on like the aftersmell of a burning. The sense of obliquity, mystery, paranoia surrounding the American Communist party after the Khrushchev

Report of 1956: the party lost 30,000 members within weeks, and few who remained were talking about it. To be a Jew, a homosexual, any kind of marginal person was to be liable for suspicion of being "Communist." A blanketing snow had begun to drift over the radical history of the United States.

And, though parts of the North American feminist movement actually sprang from the Black movements of the sixties and the student left, feminists have suffered not only from the burying and distortion of women's experience, but from the overall burying and distortion of the great movements for social change.[13]

The first American woman astronaut is interviewed by the liberal-feminist editor of a mass-circulation women's magazine. She is a splendid creature, healthy, young, thick dark head of hair, scientific degrees from an elite university, an athletic self-confidence. She is also white. She speaks of the future of space, the potential uses of space colonies by private industry, especially for producing materials which can be advantageously processed under conditions of weightlessness. Pharmaceuticals, for example. By extension one thinks of chemicals. Neither of these two spirited women speak of the alliances between the military and the "private" sector of the North American economy. Nor do they speak of Depo-Provera, Valium, Librium, napalm, dioxin. *When big companies decide that it's now to their advantage to put a lot of their money into production of materials in space . . . we really get the funding that we need,* says the astronaut. No mention of who "we" are and what "we" need funding for; no questions about the poisoning and impoverishment of women here on earth or of the earth itself. Women, too, may leave the earth behind.[14]

The astronaut is young, feels her own power, works hard for her exhilaration. She has swung out over the earth and come back, one more time passed all the tests. It's not that I expect *her* to come back to earth as Cassandra. But this experience of hers has nothing as yet to do with the liberation of women. A female proletariat – uneducated, ill nourished, unorganized, and largely from the Third World – will create the profits which will stimulate the "big companies" to invest in space.

On a split screen in my brain I see two versions of her story: the backward gaze through streaming weightlessness to the familiar globe, pale blue and green and white, the strict and sober presence of it, the true intuition of relativity battering the heart; and the swiftly calculated move to a farther suburb, the male technocrats and the women they have picked and tested, leaving the familiar globe behind: the toxic rivers, the cancerous wells, the strangled valleys, the closed-down urban hospitals, the shattered schools, the atomic desert blooming, the lilac suckers run wild, the blue grape hyacinths spreading, the ailanthus and kudzu doing their final desperate part – the beauty that won't travel, that can't be stolen away.

A movement for change lives in feelings, actions, and words. Whatever circumscribes or mutilates our feelings makes it more difficult to act, keeps our actions reactive, repetitive: abstract thinking, narrow tribal loyalties, every kind of self-righteousness, the arrogance of believing ourselves at the center. It's hard to look back on the limits of my understanding a year, five years ago – how did I look without seeing, hear without listening? It can be difficult to be generous to earlier selves, and keeping faith with the continuity of our journeys is especially hard in

the United States, where identities and loyalties have been shed and replaced without a tremor, all in the name of becoming "American." Yet how, except through ourselves, do we discover what moves other people to change? Our old fears and denials – what helps us let go of them? What makes us decide we have to reeducate ourselves, even those of us with "good" educations? A politicized life ought to sharpen both the senses and the memory.

The difficulty of saying I – a phrase from the East German novelist Christa Wolf.[15] But once having said it, as we realize the necessity to go further, isn't there a difficulty of saying "we"? *You cannot speak for me. I cannot speak for us.* Two thoughts: there is no liberation that only knows how to say "I"; there is no collective movement that speaks for each of us all the way through.

And so even ordinary pronouns become a political problem.[16]

64 cruise missiles in Greenham Common and Molesworth.
112 at Comiso.
96 Pershing 11 missiles in West Germany.
96 for Belgium and the Netherlands.

That is the projection for the next few years.[17]

Thousands of women, in Europe and the United States, saying *no* to this and to the militarization of the world.

An approach which traces militarism back to patriarchy and patriarchy back to the fundamental quality of maleness can be demoralizing and even paralyzing. . . . Perhaps it is possible to be less fixed on the discovery of "original causes." It might be more useful to ask, How do these values and behaviors get repeated generation after generation?[18]

The valorization of manliness and masculinity. The armed forces as the extreme embodiment of the patriarchal family. The archaic idea of women as a "home front" even as the missiles are deployed in the backyards of Wyoming and Mutlangen. The growing urgency that an anti-nuclear, anti-militarist movement must be a feminist movement, must be a socialist movement, must be an anti-racist, anti-imperialist movement. That it's not enough to fear for the people we know, our own kind, ourselves. Nor is it empowering to give ourselves up to abstract terrors of pure annihilation. The anti-nuclear, anti-military movement cannot sweep away the missiles as a movement to save white civilization in the West.

The movement for change is a changing movement, changing itself, demasculinizing itself, de-Westernizing itself, becoming a critical mass that is saying in so many different voices, languages, gestures, actions: *It must change; we ourselves can change it.*

We who are not the same. We who are many and do not want to be the same.

Trying to watch myself in the process of writing this, I keep coming back to something Sheila Rowbotham, the British socialist feminist, wrote in *Beyond the Fragments*:

> A movement helps you to overcome some of the oppressive distancing of theory and this has been a . . . continuing creative endeavour of women's liberation. But some paths are not mapped and our footholds vanish. . . . I see what I'm writing as part of a wider claiming which is beginning. I am part of the difficulty myself. The difficulty is not out there.[19]

My difficulties, too, are not out there except in the social conditions that make all this necessary. I do not any longer *believe* – my feelings do not allow me to believe – that the white eye sees from the center. Yet I often find myself thinking as if I still believed that were true. Or, rather, my thinking stands still. I feel in a state of arrest, as if my brain and heart were refusing to speak to each other. My brain, a woman's brain, has exulted in breaking the taboo against women thinking, has taken off on the wind, saying, *I am the woman who asks the questions.* My heart has been learning in a much more humble and laborious way, learning that feelings are useless without facts, that all privilege is ignorant at the core.

The United States has never been a white country, though it has long served what white men defined as their interests. The Mediterranean was never white. England, northern Europe, if ever absolutely white, are so no longer. In a Leftist bookstore in Manchester, England, a Third World poster: *WE ARE HERE BECAUSE YOU WERE THERE.* In Europe there have always been the Jews, the original ghetto dwellers, identified as a racial type, suffering under pass laws and special entry taxes, enforced relocations, massacres: the scapegoats, the aliens, never seen as truly European but as part of that darker world that must be controlled, eventually exterminated. Today the cities of Europe have new scapegoats as well: the diaspora from the old colonial empires. Is anti-Semitism the model for racism, or racism for anti-Semitism? Once more, where does the question lead us? Don't we have to start here, where we are, forty years after the Holocaust, in the churn of Middle Eastern violence, in the midst of decisive ferment in South Africa – not in some debate over origins and precedents, but in the recognition of simultaneous oppressions?

I've been thinking a lot about the obsession with origins. It seems a way of stopping time in its tracks. The sacred Neolithic triangles, the Minoan vases with staring eyes and breasts, the female figurines of Anatolia – weren't they concrete evidence of a kind, like Sappho's fragments, for earlier woman-affirming cultures, cultures that enjoyed centuries of peace? But haven't they also served as arresting images, which kept us attached and immobilized? Human activity didn't stop in Crete or Catal Huyuk. We can't build a society free from domination by fixing our sights backward on some long-ago tribe or city.

The continuing spiritual power of an image lives in the interplay between what it reminds us of – what it *brings to mind* – and our own continuing actions in the present. When the labrys becomes a badge for a cult of Minoan goddesses, when the wearer of the labrys has ceased to ask herself what she is doing on this earth, where her love of women is taking her, the labrys, too, becomes abstraction – lifted away from the heat and friction of human activity. The Jewish star on my neck must serve me both for reminder and as a goad to continuing and changing responsibility.

When I learn that in 1913, mass women's marches were held in South Africa which caused the rescinding of entry permit laws; that in 1956, 20,000 women

assembled in Pretoria to protest pass laws for women, that resistance to these laws was carried out in remote country villages and punished by shootings, beatings, and burnings; that in 1959, 2,000 women demonstrated in Durban against laws which provided beerhalls for African men and criminalized women's traditional home brewing; that at one and the same time, African women have played a major role alongside men in resisting apartheid, I have to ask myself why it took me so long to learn these chapters of women's history, why the leadership and strategies of African women have been so unrecognized as theory in action by white Western feminist thought. (And in a book by two men, entitled *South African Politics* and published in 1982, there is one entry under "Women" [franchise] and no reference anywhere to women's political leadership and mass actions.)[20]

When I read that a major strand in the conflicts of the past decade in Lebanon has been political organizing by women of women, across class and tribal and religious lines, women working and teaching together within refugee camps and armed communities, and of the violent undermining of their efforts through the civil war and the Israeli invasion, I am forced to think.[21] Iman Khalife, the young teacher who tried to organize a silent peace march on the Christian–Moslem border of Beirut – a protest which was quelled by the threat of a massacre of the participants – Iman Khalife and women like her do not come out of nowhere. But we Western feminists, living under other kinds of conditions, are not encouraged to know this background.

And I turn to Etel Adnan's brief, extraordinary novel, *Sitt Marie Rose*, about a middle-class Christian Lebanese woman tortured for joining the Palestinian Resistance, and read:

> She was also subject to another great delusion believing that women are protected from repression, and that the leaders considered political fights to be strictly between males. In fact, with women's greater access to certain powers, they began to watch them more closely, and perhaps with even greater hostility. Every feminine act, even charitable and seemingly unpolitical ones, were regarded as a rebellion in this world where women had always played servile roles. Marie Rose inspired scorn and hate long before the fateful day of her arrest.[22]

Across the curve of the earth, there are women getting up before dawn, in the blackness before the point of light, in the twilight before sunrise; there are women rising earlier than men and children to break the ice, to start the stove, to put up the pap, the coffee, the rice, to iron the pants, to braid the hair, to pull the day's water up from the well, to boil water for tea, to wash the children for school, to pull the vegetables and start the walk to market, to run to catch the bus for the work that is paid. I don't know when most women sleep. In big cities at dawn women are traveling home after cleaning offices all night, or waxing the halls of hospitals, or sitting up with the old and sick and frightened at the hour when death is supposed to do its work.

In Peru: "Women invest hours in cleaning tiny stones and chaff out of beans, wheat and rice; they shell peas and clean fish and grind spices in small mortars. They buy bones or tripe at the market and cook cheap, nutritious soups. They repair clothes until they will not sustain another patch. They . . . search . . . out the cheapest school uniforms, payable in the greatest number of installments. They trade old magazines for plastic washbasins and buy second-hand toys and shoes. They walk long distances to find a spool of thread at a slightly lower price."[23]

This is the working day that has never changed, the unpaid female labor which means the survival of the poor.

In minimal light I see her, over and over, her inner clock pushing her out of bed with her heavy and maybe painful limbs, her breath breathing life into her stove, her house, her family, taking the last cold swatch of night on her body, meeting the sudden leap of the rising sun.

In my white North American world they have tried to tell me that this woman – politicized by intersecting forces – doesn't think and reflect on her life. That her ideas are not real ideas like those of Karl Marx and Simone de Beauvoir. That her calculations, her spiritual philosophy, her gifts for law and ethics, her daily emergency political decisions are merely instinctual or conditioned reactions. That only certain kinds of people can make theory; that the white-educated mind is capable of formulating everything; that white middle-class feminism can know for "all women"; that only when a white mind formulates is the formulation to be taken seriously.

In the United States, white-centered theory has not yet adequately engaged with the texts – written, printed, and widely available – which have been for a decade or more formulating the political theory of Black American feminism: the Combahee River Collective statement, the essays and speeches of Gloria I. Joseph, Audre Lorde, Bernice Reagon, Michele Russell, Barbara Smith, June Jordan, to name a few of the most obvious. White feminists have read and taught from the anthology *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, yet often have stopped at perceiving it simply as an angry attack on the white women's movement. So white feelings remain at the center. And, yes, I need to move outward from the base and center of my feelings, but with a corrective sense that my feelings are not *the* center of feminism.[24]

And if we read Audre Lorde or Gloria Joseph or Barbara Smith, do we understand that the intellectual roots of this feminist theory are not white liberalism or white Euro-American feminism, but the analyses of Afro-American experience articulated by Sojourner Truth, W. E. B. Du Bois, Ida B. Wells-Barnett, C. L. R. James, Malcolm X, Lorraine Hansberry, Fannie Lou Hamer, among others? That Black feminism cannot be marginalized and circumscribed as simply a response to white feminist racism or an augmentation of white feminism; that it is an organic development of the Black movements and philosophies of the past, their practice and their printed writings? (And that, increasingly, Black American feminism is actively in dialogue with other movements of women of color within and beyond the United States?)

To shrink from or dismiss that challenge can only isolate white feminism from

the other great movements for self-determination and justice within and against which women define ourselves.

Once again: Who is we?

This is the end of these notes, but it is not an ending.

Notes

1 Talk given at the First Summer School of Critical Semiotics, Conference on Women, Feminist Identity and Society in the 1980s, Utrecht, Holland, June 1, 1984. Different versions of this talk were given at Cornell University for the Women's Studies Research Seminar, and as the Burgess Lecture, Pacific Oaks College, Pasadena, California.

2 Adrienne Rich, *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1976), p. 286.

3 Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The German Ideology*, ed. C. J. Arthur (New York: International Publishers, 1970), p. 42.

4 Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English, *Witches, Midwives and Nurses: A History of Women Healers* (Old Westbury, NY: Feminist Press, 1978).

5 Adrienne Rich, *On Lies, Secrets, and Silence: Selected Prose 1966–1978* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1979), p. 17.

6 Ibid., p. 193. [A.R., 1986: For a vigorous indictment of dead-ended Marxism and a call to "revolution in permanence," see Raya Dunayevskaya, *Women's Liberation and the Dialectics of Revolution* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1985).]

7 Adrienne Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence," [*Blood, Bread, and Poetry: Selected Prose 1979–1985* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1986)].

8 Rich, *On Lies, Secrets, and Silence*, p. 84.

9 Barbara Smith, ed., *Home Girls: A Black Feminist Anthology* (New York: Kitchen Table/Women of Color Press, 1983), pp. 272–83. See also Audre Lorde, *Sister, Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (Trumansburg, NY: Crossing Press, 1984). See Hilda Bernstein, *For Their Triumphs and for Their Tears: Women in Apartheid South Africa* (London: International Defence and Aid Fund, 1978), for a description of simultaneity of African women's oppressions under apartheid. For a biographical and personal account, see Ellen Kuzwayo, *Call Me Woman* (San Francisco: Spinsters/Aunt Lute, 1985).

10 Gloria I. Joseph, "The Incompatible Ménage à Trois: Marxism, Feminism and Racism," in Lydia Sargent, ed., *Women and Revolution* (Boston: South End Press, 1981).

11 See Marilyn Frye, *The Politics of Reality* (Trumansburg, NY: Crossing Press, 1983), p. 171.

12 Lillian Smith, "Autobiography as a Dialogue between King and Corpse," in Michelle Cliff, ed., *The Winner Names the Age* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1978), p. 189.

13 See Elly Bulkin, "Hard Ground: Jewish Identity, Racism, and Anti-Semitism," in E. Bulkin, M. B. Pratt, and B. Smith, *Yours in Struggle: Three Feminist Perspectives on Anti-Semitism and Racism* (Brooklyn, NY: Long Haul, 1984; distributed by Firebrand Books, 141 The Commons, Ithaca, NY 148-50).

14 *Ms.* (January 1984), p. 86.

15 Christa Wolf, *The Quest for Christa T*, trans. Christopher Middleton (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1970), p. 174.

16 See Bernice Reagon, "Turning the Century," in Smith, *Home Girls*, pp. 356–68; Bulkin, "Hard Ground," pp. 103, 190–3.

17 Information as of May 1984, thanks to the War Resisters League.

18 Cynthia Enloe, *Does Khaki Become You? The Militarisation of Women's Lives* (London: Pluto Press, 1983), ch. 8.

19 Sheila Rowbotham, Lynne Segal, and Hilary Wainwright, *Beyond the Fragments: Feminism and the Making of Socialism* (Boston: Alyson, 1981), pp. 55–6.

20 *Women under Apartheid* (London: International Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa in cooperation with the United Nations Centre Against Apartheid, 1981), pp. 87–99; Leonard Thompson and Andrew Prior, *South African Politics* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1982). An article in *Sechaba* (published by the African National Congress) refers to "the rich tradition of organization and mobilization by women" in the Black South African struggle ([October 1984], p. 9).

21 Helen Wheatley, "Palestinian Women in Lebanon: Targets of Repression," *TWANAS, Third World Student Newspaper*, University of California, Santa Cruz (March 1984).

22 Etel Adnan, *Sitt Marie Rose*, trans. Georgina Kleege (Sausalito, CA: Post Apollo Press, 1982), p. 501.

23 Blanca Figueroa and Jeanine Anderson, "Women in Peru," *International Reports: Women and Society* (1981). See also Ximena Bunster and Elsa M. Chaney, *Sellers and Servants: Working Women in Lima, Peru* (New York: Praeger, 1985), and Madhu Kishwar and Ruth Vanita, *In Search of Answers: Indian Women's Voices from "Manushi"* (London: Zed, 1984), pp. 56–7.

24 Gloria Anzaldua and Cherrie Moraga, eds, *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* (Watertown, MA: Persephone, 1981, distributed by Kitchen Table/Women of Color Press, Albany, New York).

CHAPTER 7

"Imitation and Gender Insubordination"

Judith Butler

Here is something like a confession which is meant merely to thematize the impossibility of confession: As a young person, I suffered for a long time, and I suspect many people have, from being told, explicitly or implicitly, that what I "am" is a copy, an imitation, a derivative example, a shadow of the real. Compulsory heterosexuality sets itself up as the original, the true, the authentic; the norm that determines the real implies that "being" lesbian is always a kind of miming, a vain effort to participate in the phantasmatic plenitude of naturalized heterosexuality which will always and only fail.[1] And yet, I remember quite distinctly when I first read in Esther Newton's *Mother Camp: "Female" Impersonators in America*[2] that drag is not an imitation or a copy of some prior and true gender; according to Newton, drag enacts the very structure of impersonation by which any *gender* is assumed. Drag is not the putting on of a gender that belongs properly to some other group, i.e. an act of expropriation or appropriation that assumes that gender is the rightful property of sex, that "masculine" belongs to "male" and "feminine" belongs to "female." There is no "proper" gender, a gender proper to one sex rather than another, which is in some sense that sex's cultural property. Where that notion of the "proper" operates, it is always and only improperly installed as the effect of a compulsory system. Drag constitutes the mundane way in which genders are appropriated, theatricalized, worn, and done; it implies that all gendering is a kind of impersonation and approximation. If this is true, it seems, there is no original or primary gender that drag imitates, but *gender is a kind of imitation for which there is no original*; in fact, it is a kind of imitation that produces the very notion of the original as an *effect* and consequence of the imitation itself. In other words, the naturalistic effects of heterosexualized genders are produced through imitative strategies; what they imitate is a phantasmatic ideal of heterosexual identity, one that is produced by the imitation as its effect. In this sense, the "reality" of heterosexual identities is performatively constituted through an imitation that sets itself up as the origin and the ground of all imitations. In other words, heterosexuality is always in the process of imitating and approximating its own phantasmatic idealization of itself – *and failing*. Precisely because it is bound to fail,

and yet endeavors to succeed, the project of heterosexual identity is propelled into an endless repetition of itself. Indeed, in its efforts to naturalize itself as the originally heterosexuality must be understood as a compulsive and compulsory repetition that can only produce the *effect* of its own originality; in other words, compulsory heterosexual identities, those ontologically consolidated phantasms of "man" and "woman," are theatrically produced effects that posture as grounds, origins, the normative measure of the real.[3]

Reconsider then the homophobic charge that queens and butches and femmes are imitations of the heterosexual real. Here "imitation" carries the meaning of "derivative" or "secondary," a copy of an origin which is itself the ground of all copies, but which is itself a copy of nothing. Logically, this notion of an "origin" is suspect, for how can something operate as an origin if there are no secondary consequences which retrospectively confirm the originality of that origin? The origin requires its derivations in order to affirm itself as an origin, for origins only make sense to the extent that they are differentiated from that which they produce as derivatives. Hence, if it were not for the notion of the homosexual as copy, there would be no construct of heterosexuality *as* origin. Heterosexuality here presupposes homosexuality. And if the homosexual as copy *precedes* the heterosexual as origin, then it seems only fair to concede that the copy comes before the origin, and that homosexuality is thus the origin, and heterosexuality the copy.

But simple inversions are not really possible. For it is only *as* a copy that homosexuality can be argued to *precede* heterosexuality as the origin. In other words, the entire framework of copy and origin proves radically unstable as each position inverts into the other and confounds the possibility of any stable way to locate the temporal or logical priority of either term.

But let us then consider this problematic inversion from a psychic/political perspective. If the structure of gender imitation is such that the imitated is to some degree produced – or, rather, *re*produced – by imitation (see again Derrida's inversion and displacement of mimesis in "The Double Session"), then to claim that gay and lesbian identities are implicated in heterosexual norms or in hegemonic culture generally is not to *derive* gayness from straightness. On the contrary, *imitation* does not copy that which is prior, but produces and *inverts* the very terms of priority and derivativeness. Hence, if gay identities are implicated in heterosexuality, that is not the same as claiming that they are determined or derived from heterosexuality, and it is not the same as claiming that that heterosexuality is the only cultural network in which they are implicated. These are, quite literally, *inverted* imitations, ones which invert the order of imitated and imitation, and which, in the process, expose the fundamental dependency of "the origin" on that which it claims to produce as its secondary effect.

What follows if we concede from the start that gay identities as derivative inversions are in part defined in terms of the very heterosexual identities from which they are differentiated? If heterosexuality is an impossible imitation of itself, an imitation that performatively constitutes itself as the original, then the imitative parody of "heterosexuality" – when and where it exists in gay cultures – is always

and only an imitation of an imitation, a copy of a copy, for which there is no original. Put in yet a different way, the parodic or imitative effect of gay identities works neither to copy nor to emulate heterosexuality, but rather, to expose heterosexuality as an incessant and *panicked* imitation of its own naturalized idealization. That heterosexuality is always in the act of elaborating itself is evidence that it is perpetually at risk, that is, that it "knows" its own possibility of becoming undone: hence, its compulsion to repeat which is at once a foreclosure of that which threatens its coherence. That it can never eradicate that risk it attests to its profound dependency upon the homosexuality that it seeks fully to eradicate and never can or that it seeks to make second, but which is always already there as a prior possibility.[4] Although this failure of naturalized heterosexuality might constitute a source of pathos for heterosexuality itself – what its theorists often refer to as its constitutive malaise – it can become an occasion for a subversive and proliferating parody of gender norms in which the very claim to originality and to the real is shown to be the effect of a certain kind of naturalized gender mime.

It is important to recognize the ways in which heterosexual norms reappear within gay identities, to affirm that gay and lesbian identities are not only structured in part by dominant heterosexual frames, but that they are *not* for that reason *determined* by them. They are running commentaries on those naturalized positions as well, parodic replays and resignifications of precisely those heterosexual structures that would consign gay life to discursive domains of unreality and unthinkability. But to be constituted or structured in part by the very heterosexual norms by which gay people are oppressed is not, I repeat, to be claimed or determined by those structures. And it is not necessary to think of such heterosexual constructs as the pernicious intrusion of "the straight mind" one that must be rooted out in its entirety. In a way, the presence of heterosexual constructs and positionalities in whatever form in gay and lesbian identities presupposes that there is a gay and lesbian repetition of straightness, a recapitulation of straightness – which is itself a repetition and recapitulation of its own ideality – within its own terms, a site in which all sorts of resignifying and parodic repetitions become possible. The parodic replication and resignification of heterosexual constructs within non-heterosexual frames brings into relief the utterly constructed status of the so-called original, but it shows that heterosexuality only constitutes itself as the original through a convincing act of repetition. The more that "act" is expropriated, the more the heterosexual claim to originality is exposed as illusory.

Although I have concentrated in the above on the reality-effects of gender practices, performances, repetitions, and mimes, I do not mean to suggest that drag is a "role" that can be taken on or taken off at will. There is no volitional subject behind the mime who decides, as it were, which gender it will be today. On the contrary, the very possibility of becoming a viable subject requires that a certain gender mime be already underway. The "being" of the subject is no more self-identical than the "being" of any gender; in fact, coherent gender, achieved through an apparent repetition of the same, produces as its *effect* the illusion of a prior and volitional subject. In this sense, gender is not a performance that a prior subject

elects to do, but gender is *performative* in the sense that it constitutes as an effect the very subject it appears to express. It is a *compulsory* performance in the sense that acting out of line with heterosexual norms brings with it ostracism, punishment, and violence, not to mention the transgressive pleasures produced by those very prohibitions.

To claim that there is no performer prior to the performed, that the performance is performative, that the performance constitutes the appearance of a "subject" as its effect is difficult to accept. This difficulty is the result of a predisposition to think of sexuality and gender as "expressing" in some indirect or direct way a psychic reality that precedes it. The denial of the *priority* of the subject, however, is not the denial of the subject; in fact, the refusal to conflate the subject with the psyche marks the psychic as that which exceeds the domain of the conscious subject. This psychic excess is precisely what is being systematically denied by the notion of a volitional "subject" who elects at will which gender and/or sexuality to be at any given time and place. It is this excess which erupts within the intervals of those repeated gestures and acts that construct the apparent uniformity of heterosexual positionalities, indeed which compels the repetition itself, and which guarantees its perpetual failure. In this sense, it is this excess which, within the heterosexual economy, implicitly includes homosexuality, that perpetual threat of a disruption which is quelled through a reenforced repetition of the same. And yet, if repetition is the way in which power works to construct the illusion of a seamless heterosexual identity, if heterosexuality is compelled to *repeat itself* in order to establish the illusion of its own uniformity and identity, then this is an identity permanently at risk, for what if it fails to repeat, or if the very exercise of repetition is redeployed for a very different performative purpose? If there is, as it were, always a compulsion to repeat repetition never fully accomplishes identity. That there is a need for a repetition at all is a sign that identity is not self-identical. It requires to be instituted again and again, which is to say that it runs the risk of becoming de-instituted at every interval.

So what is this psychic excess, and what will constitute a subversive or de-instituting repetition? First, it is necessary to consider that sexuality always exceeds any given performance, presentation, or narrative which is why it is not possible to derive or read off a sexuality from any given gender presentation. And sexuality may be said to exceed any definitive narrativization. Sexuality is never fully "expressed" in a performance or practice; there will be passive and butchy femmes, femmy and aggressive butches, and both of those, and more, will turn out to describe more or less anatomically stable "males" and "females." There are no direct expressive or causal lines between sex, gender, gender presentation, sexual practice, fantasy and sexuality. None of those terms captures or determines the rest. Part of what constitutes sexuality is precisely that which does not appear and that which, to some degree, can never appear. This is perhaps the most fundamental reason why sexuality is to some degree always closeted, especially to the one who would express it through acts of self-disclosure. That which is excluded for a given gender presentation to "succeed" may be precisely what is played out sexually, that

is, an "inverted" relation, as it were, between gender and gender presentation, and gender presentation and sexuality. On the other hand, both gender presentation and sexual practices may corollate such that it appears that the former "expresses" the latter, and yet both are jointly constituted by the very sexual possibilities that they exclude.

This logic of inversion gets played out interestingly in versions of lesbian butch and femme gender stylization. For a butch can present herself as capable, forceful, and all-providing, and a stone butch may well seek to constitute her lover as the exclusive site of erotic attention and pleasure. And yet, this "providing" butch who seems *at first* to replicate a certain husband-like role, can find herself caught in a logic of inversion whereby that "providingness" turns to a self-sacrifice, which implicates her in the most ancient trap of feminine self-abnegation. She may well find herself in a situation of radical need, which is precisely what she sought to locate, find, and fulfill in her femme lover. In effect, the butch inverts into the femme or remains caught up in the specter of that inversion, or takes pleasure in it. On the other hand, the femme who, as Amber Hollibaugh has argued, "orchestrates" sexual exchange,[5] may well eroticize a certain dependency only to learn that the very power to orchestrate that dependency exposes her own incontrovertible power, at which point she inverts into a butch or becomes caught up in the specter of that inversion, or perhaps delights in it.

Psychic Mimesis

What stylizes or forms an erotic style and/or a gender presentation – and that which makes such categories inherently unstable – is a set of *psychic identifications* that are not simple to describe. Some psychoanalytic theories tend to construe identification and desire as two mutually exclusive relations to love objects that have been lost through prohibition and/or separation. Any intense emotional attachment thus divides into either wanting to have someone or wanting to be that someone, but never both at once. It is important to consider that identification and desire can coexist, and that their formulation in terms of mutually exclusive oppositions serves a heterosexual matrix. But I would like to focus attention on yet a different construal of that scenario, namely, that "wanting to be" and "wanting to have" can operate to differentiate mutually exclusive positionalities internal to lesbian erotic exchange. Consider that identifications are always made in response to loss of some kind, and that they involve a certain *mimetic practice* that seeks to incorporate the lost love within the very "identity" of the one who remains. This was Freud's thesis in "Mourning and Melancholia" in 1917 and continues to inform contemporary psychoanalytic discussions of identification.[6]

For psychoanalytic theorists Mikkel Borch-Jacobsen and Ruth Leys, however, identification and, in particular, identificatory mimetism, *precedes* "identity" and constitutes identity as that which is fundamentally "other to itself." The notion of this Other *in* the self, as it were, implies that the self/Other distinction is *not*

primarily external (a powerful critique of ego psychology follows from this); the self is from the start radically implicated in the "Other." This theory of primary mimetism differs from Freud's account of melancholic incorporation. In Freud's view, which I continue to find useful, incorporation – a kind of psychic miming – is a response to, and refusal of, *loss*. Gender as the site of such psychic mimes is thus constituted by the variously gendered Others who have been loved and lost, where the loss is suspended through a melancholic and imaginary incorporation (and preservation) of those Others into the psyche. Over and against this account of psychic mimesis by way of incorporation and melancholy, the theory of primary mimetism argues an even stronger position in favor of the non-self identity of the psychic subject. Mimetism is not motivated by a drama of loss and wishful recovery, but appears to precede and constitute desire (and motivation) itself, in this sense; mimetism would be prior to the possibility of loss and the disappointments of love. Whether loss or mimetism is primary (perhaps an undecidable problem), the psychic subject is nevertheless constituted internally by differentially gendered Others and is, therefore, never, as a gender, self-identical.

In my view, the self only becomes a self on the condition that it has suffered a separation (grammar fails us here, for the "it" only becomes differentiated through that separation), a loss which is suspended and provisionally resolved through a melancholic incorporation of some "Other." That "Other" installed in the self thus establishes the permanent incapacity of that itself to achieve self-identity; it is as it were always already disrupted by that Other; the disruption of the Other at the heart of the self is the very condition of that self's possibility.[7]

Such a consideration of psychic identification would vitiate the possibility of any stable set of typologies that explain or describe something like gay or lesbian identities. And any efforts to supply one – as evidenced in Kaja Silverman's recent inquiries into male homosexuality – suffer from simplification, and conform, with alarming ease, to the regulatory requirements of diagnostic epistemic regimes. If incorporation in Freud's sense in 1914 is an effort to *preserve* a lost and loved object and to refuse or postpone the recognition of loss and, hence, of grief, then to become *like* one's mother or father or sibling or other early "lovers" may be an act of love and/or a hateful effort to replace or displace. How would we "typologize" the ambivalence at the heart of mimetic incorporations such as these?[8]

How does this consideration of psychic identification return us to the question, what constitutes a subversive repetition? How are troublesome identifications apparent in cultural practices? Well, consider the way in which heterosexuality naturalizes itself through setting up certain illusions of continuity between sex, gender, and desire. When Aretha Franklin sings, "you make me feel like a natural woman," she seems at first to suggest that some natural potential of her biological sex is actualized by her participation in the cultural position of "woman" as object of heterosexual recognition. Something in her "sex" is thus expressed by her "gender" which is then fully known and consecrated within the heterosexual scene. There is no breakage, no discontinuity between "sex" as biological facticity and essence, or between gender and sexuality. Although Aretha appears to be all too

glad to have her naturalness confirmed, she also seems fully and paradoxically mindful that that confirmation is never guaranteed, that the effect of naturalness is only achieved as a consequence of that moment of heterosexual recognition. After all, Aretha sings, you make me feel like a natural woman, suggesting that this is a kind of metaphorical substitution, an act of imposture, a kind of sublime and momentary participation in an ontological illusion produced by the mundane operation of heterosexual drag.

But what if Aretha were singing to me? Or what if she were singing to a drag queen whose performance somehow confirmed her own?

How do we take account of these kinds of identifications? It's not that there is some kind of *sex* that exists in hazy biological form that is somehow *expressed* in the gait, the posture, the gesture; and that some sexuality then expresses both that apparent gender or that more or less magical sex. If gender is drag, and if it is an imitation that regularly produces the ideal it attempts to approximate, then gender is a performance that *produces* the illusion of an inner sex or essence or psychic gender core; it *produces* on the skin, through the gesture, the move, the gait (that array of corporeal theatrics understood as gender presentation), the illusion of an inner depth. In effect, one way that genders gets naturalized is through being constructed as an inner psychic or physical *necessity*. And yet, it is always a surface sign, a signification on and with the public body that produces this illusion of an inner depth, necessity, or essence that is somehow magically, causally expressed.

To dispute the psyche as *inner depth*, however, is not to refuse the psyche altogether. On the contrary, the psyche calls to be rethought precisely as a compulsive repetition, as that which conditions and disables the repetitive performance of identity. If every performance repeats itself to institute the effect of identity, then every repetition requires an interval between the acts, as it were, in which risk and excess threaten to disrupt the identity being constituted. The unconscious is this excess that enables and contests every performance, and which never fully appears within the performance itself. The psyche is not "in" the body, but in the very signifying process through which that body comes to appear it is the lapse in repetition as well as its compulsion, precisely what the performance seeks to deny and that which compels it from the start.

To locate the psyche within this signifying chain as the instability of all iterability is not the same as claiming that it is [an] inner core that is awaiting its full and liberatory expression. On the contrary, the psyche is the permanent failure of expression a failure that has its values, for it impels repetition and so reinstates the possibility of disruption. What then does it mean to pursue disruptive repetition within compulsory heterosexuality?

Although compulsory heterosexuality often presumes that there is first a sex that is expressed through a gender and then through a sexuality, it may now be necessary fully to invert and displace that operation of thought. If a regime of sexuality mandates a compulsory performance of sex then it may be only through that performance that the binary system of gender and the binary system of sex come to have intelligibility at all. It may be that the very categories of sex of sexual identity

of gender are produced or maintained in the *effects* of this compulsory performance, effects which are disingenuously renamed as causes, origins, disingenuously lined up within a causal or expressive sequence that the heterosexual norm produces to legitimate itself as the origin of all sex. How then to expose the causal lines as retrospectively and performatively produced fabrications, and to engage gender itself as an inevitable fabrication, to fabricate gender in terms which reveal every claim to the origin, the inner, the true, and the real as nothing other than the effects of *drag*, whose subversive possibilities ought to be played and replayed to make the "sex" of gender into a site of insistent political play? Perhaps this will be a matter of working sexuality *against* identity even against gender, and of letting that which cannot fully appear in any performance persist in its disruptive promise.

Notes

1 Although miming suggests that there is a prior model which is being copied it can have the effect of exposing that prior model as purely phantasmatic. In Jacques Derrida's "The Double Session" in *Dissemination*, trans. Barbara Johnson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981) he considers the textual effect of the mime in Mallarmé's "Mimique." There Derrida argues that the mime does not imitate or copy some prior phenomenon, idea, or figure but constitutes – some might say *performatively* – the phantasm of the original in and through the mime:

> He represents nothing, imitates nothing, does not have to conform to any prior referent with the aim of achieving adequation or verisimilitude. One can here foresee an objection: since the mime imitates nothing, reproduces nothing, opens up in its origin the very thing he is tracing out, presenting, or producing, he must be the very movement of truth. Not, of course, truth in the form of adequation between the representation and the present of the thing itself or between the imitator and the imitated but truth as the present unveiling of the present. . . But this is not the case. . . we are faced then with mimicry imitating nothing: faced so to speak with a double that couples no simple, a double that nothing anticipates, nothing at least that is not itself already double. There is no simple reference. . . This speculum reflects no reality: it produces mere "reality-effects". . . In this speculum with no reality in this mirror of a mirror a difference or dyad does exist since there are mimes and phantoms. But it is a difference without reference or rather reference without a referent, without any first or last unit, a ghost that is the phantom of no flesh . . . (p. 206)

2 Esther Newton, *Mother Camp: "Female" Impersonators in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972).

3 In a sense one might offer a redescription of the above in Lacanian terms. The sexual "positions" of heterosexually differentiated "man" and "woman" are part of the *Symbolic*, that is an ideal embodiment of the Law of sexual difference which constitutes the object of imaginary pursuits but which is always thwarted by the "real." These symbolic positions for Lacan are by definition impossible to occupy even as they are impossible to resist as the structuring telos of desire. I accept the former point and reject the latter

one. The imputation of universal necessity to such positions simply encodes compulsory heterosexuality at the level of the Symbolic and the "failure" to achieve it is implicitly lamented as a source of heterosexual pathos.

4 Of course, it is Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990) which traces the subtleties of this kind of panic in Western heterosexual epistemes.

5 Amber Hollibaugh and Cherrie Moraga, "What We're Rollin Around in Bed With: Sexual Silences in Feminism," in Ann Snitow, Christine Stansell, and Sharon Thompson, eds, *Powers of Desire: The Politics of Sexuality* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1983), pp. 394–405.

6 Mikkel Borch-Jacobsen, *The Freudian Subject* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988); for citations of Ruth Leys's work, see the following two endnotes.

7 For a very fine analysis of primary mimetism with direct implications for gender formation, see Ruth Leys, "The Real Miss Beauchamp: The History and Sexual Politics of the Multiple Personality Concept," in Judith Butler and Joan W. Scott, eds, *Feminists Theorize the Political* (New York and London: Routledge, 1992). For Leys, a primary mimetism or suggestibility requires that the "self" from the start is constituted by its incorporations; the effort to differentiate oneself from that by which one is constituted is, of course, impossible, but it does entail a certain "incorporative violence," to use her term. The violence of identification is in this way in the service of an effort at differentiation, to take the place of the Other who is, as it were, insulted at the foundation of the self. That this replacement, which seeks to be a displacement, fails, and must repeat itself endlessly, becomes the trajectory of one's psychic career.

8 Here again, I think it is the work of Ruth Leys which will clarify some of the complex questions of gender constitution that emerge from a close psychoanalytic consideration of imitation and identification. Her forthcoming book manuscript will doubtless galvanize this field: *The Subject of Imitation*.

CHAPTER 8

"Homographesis"

Lee Edelman

In the Fall of 1987, when I was invited to participate in the conference that inaugurated the Center for Lesbian and Gay Studies at Yale, the organizers asked me to join other gay scholars in a panel whose title insistently posed for us the question of identity: "What's Gay about Gay Literature? What's Lesbian about Lesbian Literature?" Although the rubric for our session was substantially different by the time the conference program appeared, the mode of its title remained pointedly – and almost aggressively – interrogative; now, however, the question it raised was more trenchant and more skeptical: "Can There Be a Gay Criticism?" All of these questions implicitly presupposed that our interest and energy as gay literary critics is, or at any rate should be, focused on determining the specificity of a gay or lesbian critical methodology. They seemed to call upon those of us working from lesbian, gay, bisexual, "queer," non-heterosexual, or antihomophobic perspectives not only to confront the inscriptions of sexuality within the texts about which we write, but also to make legible within our own criticism some distinctively gay theoretical enterprise. The questions, in short, demanded of us a willingness to assert and affirm a singular, recognizable, and therefore reproducible critical identity: to commodify lesbian and gay criticism by packaging it as a distinctive flavor of literary theory that might find its appropriate market share in the upscale economy of literary production. In the process these questions directed us to locate "homosexual difference" as a determinate entity rather than as an unstable differential relation, and they invited us to provide our auditors with some guidelines by which to define "the homosexual" or "homosexuality" itself. How, they seemed to ask, can literary criticism see or recognize "the homosexual" in order to bring "homosexuality" into theoretical view? How, that is, can "homosexuality" find its place in the discourse of contemporary criticism so that it will no longer be unmarked or invisible or perceptible only when tricked out in the most blatant thematic or referential drag?

This imperative to produce "homosexual difference" as an object of cognitive and perceptual scrutiny remains central, of course, to a liberationist politics committed to the social necessity of opening, or even removing, the closet door. It partakes of the desire to bring into focus the historical, political, and representational differences that are inscribed in our culture's various readings of

dark hosts; we cannot write, our voting is vain; what need of education, since we must always cook and serve? And the Nation echoed and enforced this self-criticism, saying: Be content to be servants, and nothing more; what need of higher culture for half-men? Away with the black man's ballot, by force or fraud, – and behold the suicide of a race! Nevertheless, out of the evil came something of good, – the more careful adjustment of education to real life, the clearer perception of the Negroes' social responsibilities, and the sobering realization of the meaning of progress.

So dawned the time of *Sturm und Drang*: storm and stress to-day rocks our little boat on the mad waters of the world sea; there is within and without the sound of conflict, the burning of body and rending of soul; inspiration strives with doubt, and faith with vain questionings. The bright ideals of the past, – physical freedom, political power, the training of brains and the training of hands, – all these in turn have waxed and waned, until even the last grows dim and overcast. Are they all wrong, – all false? No, not that, but each alone was over-simple and incomplete, – the dreams of a credulous race-childhood, or the fond imaginings of the other world which does not know and does not want to know our power. To be really true, all these ideals must be melted and welded into one. The training of the schools we need to-day more than ever, – the training of deft hands, quick eyes and ears, and above all the broader, deeper, higher culture of gifted minds and pure hearts. The power of the ballot we need in sheer self-defense, – else what shall save us from a second slavery? Freedom, too, the long-sought, we still seek, – the freedom of life and limb, the freedom to work and think, – the freedom to love and aspire. Work, culture, liberty, – all these we need, not singly but together, not successively but together, each growing and aiding each, and all striving toward that vaster ideal that swims before the Negro people, the ideal of human brotherhood, gained through the unifying ideal of Race; the ideal of fostering and developing the traits and talents of the Negro, not in opposition to or contempt for other races, but rather in large conformity to the greater ideals of the American Republic, in order that some day on American soil two world-races may give each to each those characteristics both so sadly lack. We the darker ones come even now not altogether empty-handed: there are to-day no truer exponents of the pure human spirit of the Declaration of Independence than the American Negroes; there is no true American music but the wild sweet melodies of the Negro slave; the American fairy tales and folk-lore are Indian and African; and, all in all, we black men seem the sole oasis of simple faith and reverence in a dusty desert of dollars and smartness. Will America be poorer if she replace her brutal dyspeptic blundering with light-hearted but determined Negro humility? or her coarse and cruel wit with loving jovial good-humor? or her vulgar music with the soul of the Sorrow Songs?

Merely a concrete test of the underlying principles of the great republic is the Negro Problem, and the spiritual striving of the freedmen's sons is the travail of souls whose burden is almost beyond the measure of their strength, but who bear it in the name of an historic race, in the name of this the land of their fathers' fathers, and in the name of human opportunity.

CHAPTER 4

Orientalism

Edward Said

Taking the late eighteenth century as a very roughly defined starting point Orientalism can be discussed and analyzed as the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient – dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient. I have found it useful here to employ Michel Foucault's notion of a discourse, as described by him in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* and in *Discipline and Punish*, to identify Orientalism. My contention is that without examining Orientalism as a discourse one cannot possibly understand the enormously systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage – and even produce – the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period. Moreover, so authoritative a position did Orientalism have that I believe no one writing, thinking, or acting on the Orient could do so without taking account of the limitations on thought and action imposed by Orientalism. In brief, because of Orientalism the Orient was not (and is not) a free subject of thought or action. This is not to say that Orientalism unilaterally determines what can be said about the Orient but that it is the whole network of interests inevitably brought to bear on (and therefore always involved in) any occasion when that peculiar entity "the Orient" is in question. How this happens is what this book tries to demonstrate. It also tries to show that European culture gained in strength and identity by setting itself off against the Orient as a sort of surrogate and even underground self . . .

. . . Orientalism is not a mere political subject matter or field that is reflected passively by culture, scholarship, or institutions; nor is it a large and diffuse collection of texts about the Orient; nor is it representative and expressive of some nefarious "Western" imperialist plot to hold down the "Oriental" world. It is rather a *distribution* of geopolitical awareness into aesthetic scholarly, economic, sociological, historical, and philological texts, it is an *elaboration* not only of a basic geographical distinction (the world is made up of two unequal halves, Orient and Occident) but also of a whole series of "interests" which, by such means as scholarly discovery, philological reconstruction, psychological analysis, landscape and sociological description, it not only creates but also maintains; it is, rather than

expresses, a certain will or *intention* to understand, in some cases to control, manipulate, even to incorporate, what is a manifestly different (or alternative and novel) world; it is, above all, a discourse that is by no means in direct, corresponding relationship with political power in the raw but rather is produced and exists in an uneven exchange with various kinds of power, shaped to a degree by the exchange with power political (as with a colonial or imperial establishment), power intellectual (as with reigning sciences like comparative linguistics or anatomy, or any of the modern policy sciences), power cultural (as with orthodoxies and canons of taste, texts, values), power moral (as with ideas about what "we" do and what "they" cannot do or understand as "we" do). Indeed, my real argument is that Orientalism is – and does not simply represent – a considerable dimension of modern political-intellectual culture, and as such has less to do with the Orient than it does with "our" world . . .

What German Orientalism had in common with Anglo-French and later American Orientalism was a kind of intellectual *authority* over the Orient within Western culture. This authority must in large part be the subject of any description of Orientalism, and it is so in this study. Even the name *Orientalism* suggests a serious, perhaps ponderous style of expertise; when I apply it to modern American social scientists (since they do not call themselves Orientalists, my use of the word is anomalous), it is to draw attention to the way Middle East experts can still draw on the vestiges of Orientalism's intellectual position in nineteenth-century Europe.

There is nothing mysterious or natural about authority. It is formed, irradiated, disseminated; it is instrumental, it is persuasive; it has status, it establishes canons of taste and value; it is virtually indistinguishable from certain ideas it dignifies as true, and from traditions, perceptions, and judgments it forms, transmits, reproduces. Above all, authority can, indeed must, be analyzed. All these attributes of authority apply to Orientalism, and much of what I do in this study is to describe both the historical authority in and the personal authorities of Orientalism.

My principal methodological devices for studying authority here are what can be called *strategic location*, which is a way of describing the author's position in a text with regard to the Oriental material he writes about, and *strategic formation*, which is a way of analyzing the relationship between texts and the way in which groups of texts, types of texts, even textual genres, acquire mass, density, and referential power among themselves and thereafter in the culture at large. I use the notion of strategy simply to identify the problem every writer on the Orient has faced: how to get hold of it, how to approach it, how not to be defeated or overwhelmed by its sublimity, its scope, its awful dimensions. Everyone who writes about the Orient must locate himself *vis-à-vis* the Orient; translated into his text, this location includes the kind of narrative voice he adopts, the type of structure he builds, the kinds of images, themes, motifs that circulate in his text – all of which add up to deliberate ways of addressing the reader, containing the Orient, and finally, representing it or speaking in its behalf. None of this takes place in the abstract, however. Every writer on the Orient (and this is true even of Homer) assumes some Oriental precedent, some previous knowledge of the Orient, to which

he refers and on which he relies. Additionally, each work on the Orient *affiliates* itself with other works, with audiences, with institutions, with the Orient itself. The ensemble of relationships between works, audiences, and some particular aspects of the Orient therefore constitutes an analyzable formation – for example, that of philological studies, of anthologies of extracts from Oriental literature, of travel books, of Oriental fantasies – whose presence in time, in discourse, in institutions (schools, libraries, foreign services) gives it strength and authority.

It is clear, I hope, that my concern with authority does not entail analysis of what lies hidden in the Orientalist text, but analysis rather of the text's surface, its exteriority to what it describes. I do not think that this idea can be overemphasized. Orientalism is premised upon exteriority, that is, on the fact that the Orientalist, poet or scholar, makes the Orient speak, describes the Orient, renders its mysteries plain for and to the West. He is never concerned with the Orient except as the first cause of what he says. What he says and writes, by virtue of the fact that it is said or written, is meant to indicate that the Orientalist is outside the Orient, both as an existential and as a moral fact. The principal product of this exteriority is of course representation: as early as Aeschylus's play *The Persians* the Orient is transformed from a very far distant and often threatening Otherness into figures that are relatively familiar (in Aeschylus's case, grieving Asiatic women). The dramatic immediacy of representation in *The Persians* obscures the fact that the audience is watching a highly artificial enactment of what a non-Oriental has made into a symbol for the whole Orient. My analysis of the Orientalist text therefore places emphasis on the evidence, which is by no means invisible, for such representations *as representations*, not as "natural" depictions of the Orient. This evidence is found just as prominently in the so-called truthful text (histories, philological analyses, political treatises) as in the avowedly artistic (i.e., openly imaginative) text. The things to look at are style, figures of speech, setting, narrative devices, historical and social circumstances, *not* the correctness of the representation nor its fidelity to some great original. The exteriority of the representation is always governed by some version of the truism that if the Orient could represent itself, it would; since it cannot, the representation does the job, for the West, and *faute de mieux*, for the poor Orient. "Sie können sich nicht vertreten, sie müssen vertreten werden [They cannot represent themselves; they must be spoken for]," as Marx wrote in *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*.

Another reason for insisting upon exteriority is that I believe it needs to be made clear about cultural discourse and exchange within a culture that what is commonly circulated by it is not "truth" but representations. It hardly needs to be demonstrated again that language itself is a highly organized and encoded system which employs many devices to express, indicate, exchange messages and information, represent, and so forth. In any instance of at least written languages there is no such thing as a delivered presence, but a *re-presence*, or a representation. The value, efficacy, strength, apparent veracity of a written statement about the Orient therefore relies very little, and cannot instrumentally depend on the Orient as such. On the contrary, the written statement is a presence to the reader by virtue

of its having excluded, displaced, made supererogatory any such *real thing* as "the Orient." Thus all of Orientalism stands forth and away from the Orient: that Orientalism makes sense at all depends more on the West than on the Orient, and this sense is directly indebted to various Western techniques of representation that make the Orient visible, clear "there" in discourse about it. And these representations rely upon institutions, traditions, conventions, agreed-upon codes of understanding for their effects, not upon a distant and amorphous Orient . . .

It may appear strange to speak about something or someone as holding a *textual* attitude, but a student of literature will understand the phrase more easily if he will recall the kind of view attacked by Voltaire in *Candide*, or even the attitude to reality satirized by Cervantes in *Don Quixote*. What seems unexceptionable good sense to these writers is that it is a fallacy to assume that the swarming, unpredictable, and problematic mess in which human beings live can be understood on the basis of what books – texts – say; to apply what one learns out of a book literally to reality is to risk folly or ruin. One would no more think of using *Amadis of Gaul* to understand sixteenth-century (or present-day) Spain than one would use the Bible to understand, say, the House of Commons. But clearly people have tried and do try to use texts in so simple-minded a way, for otherwise *Candide* and *Don Quixote* would not still have the appeal for readers that they do today. It seems a common human failing to prefer the schematic authority of a text to the disorientations of direct encounters with the human. But is this failing constantly present, or are there circumstances that, more than others, make the textual attitude likely to prevail?

Two situations favor a textual attitude. One is when a human being confronts at close quarters something relatively unknown and threatening and previously distant. In such a case one has recourse not only to what in one's previous experience the novelty resembles but also to what one has read about it. Travel books or guidebooks are about as "natural" a kind of text, as logical in their composition and in their use, as any book one can think of, precisely because of this human tendency to fall back on a text when the uncertainties of travel in strange parts seem to threaten one's equanimity. Many travelers find themselves saying of an experience in a new country that it wasn't what they expected, meaning that it wasn't what a book said it would be. And of course many writers of travel books or guidebooks compose them in order to say that a country is like this, or better, that it is colorful, expensive, interesting, and so forth. The idea in either case is that people, places, and experiences can always be described by a book, so much so that the book (or text) acquires a greater authority, and use, even than the actuality it describes. The comedy of Fabrice del Dongo's search for the battle of Waterloo is not so much that he fails to find the battle, but that he looks for it as something texts have told him about.

A second situation favoring the textual attitude is the appearance of success. If one reads a book claiming that lions are fierce and then encounters a fierce lion (I simplify, of course), the chances are that one will be encouraged to read more books by that same author, and believe them. But if, in addition, the lion book instructs one how to deal with a fierce lion, and the instructions work perfectly, then not

only will the author be greatly believed, he will also be impelled to try his hand at other kinds of written performance. There is a rather complex dialectic of reinforcement by which the experiences of readers in reality are determined by what they have read, and this in turn influences writers to take up subjects defined in advance by readers' experiences. A book on how to handle a fierce lion might then cause a series of books to be produced on such subjects as the fierceness of lions, the origins of fierceness, and so forth. Similarly, as the focus of the text centers more narrowly on the subject – no longer lions but their fierceness – we might expect that the ways by which it is recommended that a lion's fierceness be handled will actually *increase* its fierceness, force it to be fierce since that is what it is, and that is what in essence we know or can *only* know about it.

A text purporting to contain knowledge about something actual, and arising out of circumstances similar to the ones I have just described, is not easily dismissed. Expertise is attributed to it. The authority of academics, institutions, and governments can accrue to it, surrounding it with still greater prestige than its practical successes warrant. Most important, such texts can *create* not only knowledge but also the very reality they appear to describe. In time such knowledge and reality produce a tradition, or what Michel Foucault calls a discourse, whose material presence or weight, not the originality of a given author, is really responsible for the texts produced out of it. This kind of text is composed out of those preexisting units of information deposited by Flaubert in the catalogue of *idées reçues*.

In the light of all this, consider Napoleon and de Lesseps. Everything they knew, more or less, about the Orient came from books written in the tradition of Orientalism, placed in its library of *idées reçues*; for them the Orient, like the fierce lion, was something to be encountered and dealt with to a certain extent *because* the texts made that Orient possible. Such an Orient was silent, available to Europe for the realization of projects that involved but were never directly responsible to the native inhabitants, and unable to resist the projects, images, or mere descriptions devised for it. Earlier in this chapter I called such a relation between Western writing (and its consequences) and Oriental silence the result of and the sign of the West's great cultural strength, its will to power over the Orient. But there is another side to the strength, a side whose existence depends on the pressures of the Orientalist tradition and its textual attitude to the Orient; this side lives its own life, as books about fierce lions will do until lions can talk back. The perspective rarely drawn on Napoleon and de Lesseps – to take two among the many projectors who hatched plans for the Orient – is the one that sees them carrying on in the dimensionless silence of the Orient mainly because the discourse of Orientalism, over and above the Orient's powerlessness to do anything about them, suffused their activity with meaning, intelligibility, and reality. The discourse of Orientalism and what made it possible – in Napoleon's case, a West far more powerful militarily than the Orient – gave them Orientals who could be described in such works as the *Description de l'Égypte* and an Orient that could be cut across as de Lesseps cut across Suez. Moreover, Orientalism gave them their success – at least from their

point of view, which had nothing to do with that of the Oriental. Success, in other words, had all the actual human interchange between Oriental and Westerner of the Judge's "said I to myself, said I" in *Trial by Jury*.

Once we begin to think of Orientalism as a kind of Western projection onto and will to govern over the Orient, we will encounter few surprises. For if it is true that historians like Michelet, Ranke, Tocqueville, and Burckhardt *emplot* their narratives "as a story of a particular kind," the same is also true of Orientalists who plotted Oriental history, character, and destiny for hundreds of years. During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the Orientalists became a more serious quantity, because by then the reaches of imaginative and actual geography had shrunk, because the Oriental European relationship was determined by an unstoppable European expansion in search of markets, resources, and colonies, and finally, because Orientalism had accomplished its self-metamorphosis from a scholarly discourse to an imperial institution. Evidence of this metamorphosis is already apparent in what I have said of Napoleon, de Lesseps, Balfour, and Cromer. Their projects in the Orient are understandable on only the most rudimentary level as the efforts of men of vision and genius, heroes in Carlyle's sense. In fact Napoleon, de Lesseps, Cromer, and Balfour are far more *regular*, far less unusual, if we recall the schemata of d'Herbelot and Dante and add to them both a modernized, efficient engine (like the nineteenth-century European empire) and a positive twist: since one cannot ontologically obliterate the Orient (as d'Herbelot and Dante perhaps realized), one does have the means to capture it, treat it, describe it, improve it, radically alter it. . . .

On June 13, 1910, Arthur James Balfour lectured the House of Commons on "the problems with which we have to deal in Egypt." These, he said, "belong to a wholly different category" than those "affecting the Isle of Wight or the West Riding of Yorkshire." He spoke with the authority of a long-time member of Parliament, former private secretary to Lord Salisbury, former chief secretary for Ireland, former secretary for Scotland, former prime minister, veteran of numerous overseas crises, achievements, and changes. During his involvement in imperial affairs Balfour served a monarch who in 1876 had been declared Empress of India; he had been especially well placed in positions of uncommon influence to follow the Afghan and Zulu wars, the British occupation of Egypt in 1882, the death of General Gordon in the Sudan, the Fashoda Incident, the battle of Omdurman, the Boer War, the Russo-Japanese War. In addition his remarkable social eminence, the breadth of his learning and wit – he could write on such varied subjects as Bergson, Handel, theism, and golf – his education at Eton and Trinity College, Cambridge, and his apparent command over imperial affairs all gave considerable authority to what he told the Commons in June 1910. But there was still more to Balfour's speech, or at least to his need for giving it so didactically and moralistically. Some members were questioning the necessity for "England in Egypt," the subject of Alfred Milner's enthusiastic book of 1892, but here designating a once-profitable occupation that had become a source of trouble now that Egyptian nationalism was on the rise and the continuing British presence in Egypt no longer so easy to defend. Balfour, then, to inform and explain.

Recalling the challenge of J. M. Robertson, the member of Tyneside, Balfour himself put Robertson's question again: "What right have you to take up these airs of superiority with regard to people whom you choose to call Oriental?" The choice of "Oriental" was canonical; it had been employed by Chaucer and Mandeville, by Shakespeare, Dryden, Pope, and Byron. It designated Asia or the East, geographically, morally, culturally. One could speak in Europe of an Oriental personality, an Oriental atmosphere, an Oriental tale, Oriental despotism, or an Oriental mode of production, and be understood. Marx had used the word, and now Balfour was using it; his choice was understandable and called for no comment whatever.

> I take up no attitude of superiority. But I ask [Robertson and anyone else] . . . who has even the most superficial knowledge of history, if they will look in the face the facts with which a British statesman has to deal when he is put in a position of supremacy over great races like the inhabitants of Egypt and countries in the East. We know the civilization of Egypt better than we know the civilization of any other country. We know it further back; we know it more intimately; we know more about it. It goes far beyond the petty span of the history of our race, which is lost in the prehistoric period at a time when the Egyptian civilisation had already passed its prime. Look at all the Oriental countries. Do not talk about superiority or inferiority.

Two great themes dominate his remarks here and in what will follow: knowledge and power, the Baconian themes. As Balfour justifies the necessity for British occupation of Egypt, supremacy in his mind is associated with "our" knowledge of Egypt and not principally with military or economic power. Knowledge to Balfour means surveying a civilization from its origins to its prime to its decline – and of course, it means *being able to do that*. Knowledge means rising above immediacy, beyond self, into the foreign and distant. The object of such knowledge is inherently vulnerable to scrutiny; this object is a "fact" which, if it develops, changes, or otherwise transforms itself in the way that civilizations frequently do, nevertheless is fundamentally, even ontologically stable. To have such knowledge of such a thing is to dominate it, to have authority over it. And authority here means for "us" to deny autonomy to "it" – the Oriental country – since we know it and it exists, in a sense, *as* we know it. British knowledge of Egypt *is* Egypt for Balfour, and the burdens of knowledge make such questions as inferiority and superiority seem petty ones . . .

To say simply that Orientalism was a rationalization of colonial rule is to ignore the extent to which colonial rule was justified in advance by Orientalism, rather than after the fact. Men have always divided the world up into regions having either real or imagined distinction from each other. The absolute demarcation between East and West, which Balfour and Cromer accept with such complacency, had been years, even centuries, in the making. There were of course innumerable voyages of discovery; there were contacts through trade and war. But more than this, since the middle of the eighteenth century there had been two principal elements in the relation between East and West. One was a growing systematic knowledge in

Europe about the Orient, knowledge reinforced by the colonial encounter as well as by the widespread interest in the alien and unusual, exploited by the developing sciences of ethnology, comparative anatomy, philology, and history; furthermore, to this systematic knowledge was added a sizable body of literature produced by novelists, poets, translators, and gifted travelers. The other feature of Oriental–European relations was that Europe was always in a position of strength, not to say domination. There is no way of putting this euphemistically. True, the relationship of strong to weak could be disguised or mitigated, as when Balfour acknowledged the "greatness" of Oriental civilizations. But the essential relationship, on political, cultural, and even religious grounds, was seen – in the West, which is what concerns us here – to be one between a strong and a weak partner.

Many terms were used to express the relation: Balfour and Cromer, typically, used several. The Oriental is irrational, depraved (fallen), childlike, "different"; thus the European is rational, virtuous, mature, "normal." But the way of enlivening the relationship was everywhere to stress the fact that the Oriental lived in a different but thoroughly organized world of his own, a world with its own national, cultural, and epistemological boundaries and principles of internal coherence. Yet what gave the Oriental's world its intelligibility and identity was not the result of his own efforts but rather the whole complex series of knowledgeable manipulations by which the Orient was identified by the West. Thus the two features of cultural relationship I have been discussing come together. Knowledge of the Orient, because generated out of strength, in a sense *creates* the Orient, the Oriental, and his world. In Cromer's and Balfour's language the Oriental is depicted as something one judges (as in a court of law), something one studies and depicts (as in a curriculum), something one disciplines (as in a school or prison), something one illustrates (as in a zoological manual). The point is that in each of these cases the Orientalist *contained* and *represented* by dominating frameworks. Where do these come from?

Cultural strength is not something we can discuss very easily – and one of the purposes of the present work is to illustrate, analyze, and reflect upon Orientalism as an exercise of cultural strength. In other words, it is better not to risk generalizations about so vague and yet so important a notion as cultural strength until a good deal of material has been analyzed first. But at the outset one can say that so far as the West was concerned during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, an assumption had been made that the Orient and everything in it was, if not patently inferior to, then in need of corrective study by the West. The Orient was viewed as if framed by the classroom, the criminal court, the prison, the illustrated manual. Orientalism, then, is knowledge of the Orient that places things Oriental in class, court, prison, or manual for scrutiny, study, judgment, discipline, or governing.

During the early years of the twentieth century, men like Balfour and Cromer could say what they said, in the way they did, because a still earlier tradition of Orientalism than the nineteenth-century one provided them with a vocabulary, imagery, rhetoric, and figures with which to say it. Yet Orientalism reinforced, and

was reinforced by, the certain knowledge that Europe or the West literally commanded the vastly greater part of the earth's surface. The period of immense advance in the institutions and content of Orientalism coincides exactly with the period of unparalleled European expansion; from 1815 to 1914 European direct colonial dominion expanded from about 35 percent of the earth's surface to about 85 percent of it.[1] Every continent was affected, none more so than Africa and Asia. The two greatest empires were the British and the French; allies and partners in some things, in others they were hostile rivals. In the Orient, from the eastern shores of the Mediterranean to Indochina and Malaya, their colonial possessions and imperial spheres of influence were adjacent, frequently overlapped, often were fought over. But it was in the Near Orient, the lands of the Arab Near East, where Islam was supposed to define cultural and racial characteristics, that the British and the French encountered each other and "the Orient" with the greatest intensity, familiarity, and complexity. For much of the nineteenth century, as Lord Salisbury put it in 1881, their common view of the Orient was intricately problematic: "When you have got a . . . faithful ally who is bent on meddling in a country in which you are deeply interested – you have three courses open to you. You may renounce – or monopolize – or share. Renouncing would have been to place the French across our road to India. Monopolizing would have been very near the risk of war. So we resolved to share."[2]

And share they did, in ways that we shall investigate presently. What they shared, however, was not only land or profit or rule; it was the kind of intellectual power I have been calling Orientalism. In a sense Orientalism was a library or archive of information commonly and, in some of its aspects, unanimously held. What bound the archive together was a family of ideas[3] and a unifying set of values proven in various ways to be effective. These ideas explained the behavior of Orientals; they supplied Orientals with a mentality, a genealogy, an atmosphere; most important, they allowed Europeans to deal with and even to see Orientals as a phenomenon possessing regular characteristics. But like any set of durable ideas, Orientalist notions influenced the people who were called Orientals as well as those called Occidental, European, or Western; in short, Orientalism is better grasped as a set of constraints upon and limitations of thought than it is simply as a positive doctrine. If the essence of Orientalism is the ineradicable distinction between Western superiority and Oriental inferiority, then we must be prepared to note how in its development and subsequent history Orientalism deepened and even hardened the distinction. When it became common practice during the nineteenth century for Britain to retire its administrators from India and elsewhere once they had reached the age of fifty-five, then a further refinement in Orientalism had been achieved; no Oriental was ever allowed to see a Westerner as he aged and degenerated, just as no Westerner needed ever to see himself, mirrored in the eyes of the subject race, as anything but a vigorous, rational, ever-alert young Raj.[4]

Orientalist ideas took a number of different forms during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. First of all, in Europe there was a vast literature about the Orient inherited from the European past. What is distinctive about the late

eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, which is where this study assumes modern Orientalism to have begun, is that an Oriental renaissance took place, as Edgar Quinet phrased it.[5] Suddenly it seemed to a wide variety of thinkers, politicians, and artists that a new awareness of the Orient, which extended from China to the Mediterranean, had arisen. This awareness was partly the result of newly discovered and translated Oriental texts in languages like Sanskrit, Zend, and Arabic; it was also the result of a newly perceived relationship between the Orient and the West. For my purposes here, the keynote of the relationship was set for the Near East and Europe by the Napoleonic invasion of Egypt in 1798, an invasion which was in many ways the very model of a truly scientific appropriation of one culture by another apparently stronger one. For with Napoleon's occupation of Egypt processes were set in motion between East and West that still dominate our contemporary cultural and political perspectives. And the Napoleonic expedition, with its great collective monument of erudition, the *Description de l'Egypte*, provided a scene or setting for Orientalism, since Egypt and subsequently the other Islamic lands were viewed as the live province, the laboratory, the theater of effective Western knowledge about the Orient. I shall return to the Napoleonic adventure a little later.

With such experiences as Napoleon's the Orient as a body of knowledge in the West was modernized, and this is a second form in which nineteenth- and twentieth-century Orientalism existed. From the outset of the period I shall be examining there was everywhere amongst Orientalists the ambition to formulate their discoveries, experiences, and insights suitably in modern terms, to put ideas about the Orient in very close touch with modern realities. Renan's linguistic investigations of Semitic in 1848, for example, were couched in a style that drew heavily for its authority upon contemporary comparative grammar, comparative anatomy, and racial theory; these lent his Orientalism prestige and – the other side of the coin – made Orientalism vulnerable, as it has been ever since, to modish as well as seriously influential currents of thought in the West. Orientalism has been subjected to imperialism, positivism, utopianism, historicism, Darwinism, racism, Freudianism, Marxism, Spenglerism. But Orientalism, like many of the natural and social sciences, has had "paradigms" of research, its own learned societies, its own Establishment. During the nineteenth century the field increased enormously in prestige, as did also the reputation and influence of such institutions as the Société asiatique, the Royal Asiatic Society, the Deutsche Morgenländische Gesellschaft, and the American Oriental Society. With the growth of these societies went also an increase, all across Europe, in the number of professorships in Oriental studies; consequently there was an expansion in the available means for disseminating Orientalism. Orientalist periodicals, beginning with the *Fundgraben des Orients* (1809), multiplied the quantity of knowledge as well as the number of specialties.

Yet little of this activity and very few of these institutions existed and flourished freely, for in a third form in which it existed, Orientalism imposed limits upon thought about the Orient. Even the most imaginative writers of an age, men like Flaubert, Nerval, or Scott, were constrained in what they could either experience

of or say about the Orient. For Orientalism was ultimately a political vision of reality whose structure promoted the difference between the familiar (Europe, the West, "us") and the strange (the Orient, the East, "them"). This vision in a sense created and then served the two worlds thus conceived. Orientals lived in their world, "we" lived in ours. The vision and material reality propped each other up, kept each other going. A certain freedom of intercourse was always the Westerner's privilege; because his was the stronger culture, he could penetrate, he could wrestle with, he could give shape and meaning to the great Asiatic mystery, as Disraeli once called it. Yet what has, I think, been previously overlooked is the constricted vocabulary of such a privilege, and the comparative limitations of such a vision. My argument takes it that the Orientalist reality is both antihuman and persistent. Its scope, as much as its institutions and all-pervasive influence, lasts up to the present.

But how did and does Orientalism work? How can one describe it all together as a historical phenomenon, a way of thought, a contemporary problem, and a material reality? Consider Cromer again, an accomplished technician of empire but also a beneficiary of Orientalism. He can furnish us with a rudimentary answer. In "The Government of Subject Races" he wrestles with the problem of how Britain, a nation of individuals, is to administer a wide-flung empire according to a number of central principles. He contrasts the "local agent," who has both a specialist's knowledge of the native and an Anglo-Saxon individuality, with the central authority at home in London. The former may "treat subjects of local interest in a manner calculated to damage, or even to jeopardize, Imperial interests. The central authority is in a position to obviate any danger arising from this cause." Why? Because this authority can "ensure the harmonious working of the different parts of the machine" and "should endeavour, so far as is possible, to realise the circumstances attendant on the government of the dependency."[6] The language is vague and unattractive, but the point is not hard to grasp. Cromer envisions a seat of power in the West, and radiating out from it towards the East a great embracing machine, sustaining the central authority yet commanded by it. What the machine's branches feed into it in the East – human material, material wealth, knowledge, what have you – is processed by the machine, then converted into more power. The specialist does the immediate translation of mere Oriental matter into useful substance: the Oriental becomes, for example, a subject race, an example of an "Oriental" mentality, all for the enhancement of the "authority" at home. "Local interests" are Orientalist special interests, the "central authority" is the general interest of the imperial society as a whole. What Cromer quite accurately sees is the management of knowledge by society, the fact that knowledge – no matter how special – is regulated first by the local concerns of a specialist, later by the general concerns of a social system of authority. The interplay between local and central interests is intricate, but by no means indiscriminate.

In Cromer's own case as an imperial administrator the "proper study is also man," he says. When Pope proclaimed the proper study of mankind to be man, he meant all men, including "the poor Indian"; whereas Cromer's "also" reminds us that certain men, such as Orientals, can be singled out as the subject for *proper* study.

The proper study in this sense – of Orientals – is Orientalism, properly separate from other forms of knowledge, but finally useful (because finite) for the material and social reality enclosing all knowledge at any time, supporting knowledge, providing it with uses. An order of sovereignty is set up from East to West, a mock chain of being whose clearest form was given once by Kipling:

> Mule, horse, elephant, or bullock, he obeys his driver, and the driver his sergeant, and the sergeant his lieutenant, and the lieutenant his captain, and the captain his major, and the major his colonel, and the colonel his brigadier commanding three regiments, and the brigadier his general, who obeys the Viceroy, who is the servant of the Empress.[7]

As deeply forged as is this monstrous chain of command, as strongly managed as is Cromer's "harmonious working," Orientalism can also express the strength of the West and the Orient's weakness – as seen by the West. Such strength and such weakness are as intrinsic to Orientalism as they are to any view that divides the world into large general divisions, entities that coexist in a state of tension produced by what is believed to be radical difference. . .

The point I am trying to make here is that the transition from a merely textual apprehension, formulation, or definition of the Orient to the putting of all this into practice in the Orient did take place, and that Orientalism had much to do with that – if I may use the word in a literal sense – *preposterous* transition. So far as its strictly scholarly work was concerned (and I find the idea of strictly scholarly work as disinterested and abstract hard to understand: still, we can allow it intellectually), Orientalism did a great many things. During its great age in the nineteenth century it produced scholars; it increased the number of languages taught in the West and the quantity of manuscripts edited, translated, and commented on; in many cases, it provided the Orient with sympathetic European students, genuinely interested in such matters as Sanskrit grammar, Phoenician numismatics, and Arabic poetry. Yet – and here we must be very clear – Orientalism overrode the Orient. As a system of thought about the Orient, it always rose from the specifically human detail to the general transhuman one; an observation about a tenth-century Arab poet multiplied itself into a policy towards (and about) the Oriental mentality in Egypt, Iraq, or Arabia. Similarly a verse from the Koran would be considered the best evidence of an ineradicable Muslim sensuality. Orientalism assumed an unchanging Orient, absolutely different (the reasons change from epoch to epoch) from the West. And Orientalism, in its post-eighteenth-century form, could never revise itself. All this makes Cromer and Balfour, as observers and administrators of the Orient, inevitable.

The closeness between politics and Orientalism, or to put it more circumspectly, the great likelihood that ideas about the Orient drawn from Orientalism can be put to political use, is an important yet extremely sensitive truth. It raises questions about the predisposition towards innocence or guilt, scholarly disinterest or pressure-group complicity, in such fields as black or women's studies. It necessarily

provokes unrest in one's conscience about cultural, racial, or historical generalizations, their uses, value, degree of objectivity, and fundamental intent. More than anything else, the political and cultural circumstances in which Western Orientalism has flourished draw attention to the debased position of the Orient or Oriental as an object of study. Can any other than a political master–slave relation produce the Orientalized Orient perfectly characterized by Anwar Abdel Malek?

> a) On the level of the *position of the problem*, and the problematic . . . the Orient and Orientals [are considered by Orientalism] as an "object" of study, stamped with an otherness – as all that is different, whether it be "subject" or "object" – but of a constitutive otherness, of an essentialist character. . . This "object" of study will be, as is customary, passive, non-participating, endowed with a "historical" subjectivity, above all, non-active, non-autonomous, non-sovereign with regard to itself: the only Orient or Oriental or "subject" which could be admitted, at the extreme limit, is the alienated being, philosophically, that is, other than itself in relationship to itself, posed, understood, defined – and acted – by others.
>
> b) On the level of the *thematic*, [the Orientalists] adopt an essentialist conception of the countries, nations and peoples of the Orient under study, a conception which expresses itself through a characterized ethnist typology . . . and will soon proceed with it towards racism.
>
> According to the traditional orientalists, an essence should exist – sometimes even clearly described in metaphysical terms – which constitutes the inalienable and common basis of all the beings considered; this essence is both "historical," since it goes back to the dawn of history, and fundamentally a-historical, since it transfixes the being, "the object" of study, within its inalienable and nonevolutive specificity, instead of defining it as all other beings, states, nations, peoples, and cultures – as a product, a resultant of the vection of the forces operating in the field of historical evolution.
>
> Thus one ends with a typology – based on a real specificity, but detached from history, and, consequently, conceived as being intangible, essential – which makes of the studied "object" another being with regard to whom the studying subject is transcendent; we will have a homo Sinicus, a homo Arabicus (and why not a homo Aegypticus, etc.), a homo Africanus, the man – the "normal man," it is understood being the European man of the historical period, that is, since Greek antiquity. One sees how much, from the eighteenth to the twentieth century, the hegemonism of possessing minorities, unveiled by Marx and Engels, and the anthropocentrism dismantled by Freud are accompanied by europocentrism in the area of human and social sciences, and more particularly in those in direct relationship with non-European peoples.[8]

Abdel Malek sees Orientalism as having a history which, according to the "Oriental" of the late twentieth century, led it to the impasse described above.

Notes

1 Harry Magdoff, "Colonialism (1763–c. 1970)," *Encyclopaedia Britannica* 15th edn (1974), pp. 893–4. See also D. K. Fieldhouse, *The Colonial Empires: A Comparative Survey from*

the Eighteenth Century (New York: Delacorte Press, 1967), p. 178.

2 Quoted in Afaf Lutfi al-Sayyid, *Egypt and Cromer: A Study in Anglo-Egyptian Relations* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1969), p. 3.

3 The phrase is to be found in Ian Hacking, *The Emergence of Probability: A Philosophical Study of Early Ideas About Probability, Induction and Statistical Inference* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1975), p. 17.

4 V. G. Kiernan, *The Lords of Human Kind: Black Man, Yellow Man, and White Man in an Age of Empire* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1969), p. 55.

5 Edgar Quinet, *Le Génie des religions* in *Œuvres complètes* (Paris: Paguerre, 1857), pp. 55–74.

6 Evelyn Baring, Lord Cromer, *Political and Literary Essays, 1908–1913* (1913; reprint edn Freeport, NY, 1969), p. 35.

7 See Jonah Raskin, *The Mythology of Imperialism* (New York: Random House, 1971), p. 40.

8 Anwar Abdel Malek, "Orientalism in Crisis," *Diogenes* 44 (Winter 1963), pp. 107–8.

CHAPTER 5

Borderlands/La Frontera

Gloria Anzaldua

Movimientos de rebeldía y las culturas que traicionan

Esos movimientos de rebeldía que tenemos en la sangre nosotros los mexicanos surgen como ríos desbocanados en mis venas. Y como mi raza que cada en cuando deja caer esa esclavitud de obedecer, de callarse y aceptar, en mi está la rebeldía encimita de mi carne. Debajo de mi humillada mirada está una cara insolente lista para explotar. Me costó muy caro mi rebeldía – acalambrada con desvelos y dudas, sintiendome inútil, estúpida, e impotente.

Me entra una rabia cuando alguien – sea mi mamá, la Iglesia, la cultura de los anglos – me dice haz esto, haz eso sin considerar mis deseos.

Repele. Hable pa' 'tras. Fuí muy hocicona. Era indiferente a muchos valores de mi cultura. No me deje de los hombres. No fuí buena ni obediente.

Pero he crecido. Ya no soló paso toda mi vida botando las costumbres y los valores de mi cultura que me traicionan. También recojo las costumbres que por el tiempo se han provado y las costumbres de respeto a las mujeres. But despite my growing tolerance, for this Chicana *la guerra de independencia* is a constant.

The Strength of My Rebellion

I have a vivid memory of an old photograph: I am six years old. I stand between my father and mother, head cocked to the right, the toes of my flat feet gripping the ground. I hold my mother's hand.

To this day I'm not sure where I found the strength to leave the source, the mother, disengage from my family, *mi tierra, mi gente,* and all that picture stood for. I had to leave home so I could find myself, find my own intrinsic nature buried under the personality that had been imposed on me.

I was the first in six generations to leave the Valley, the only one in my family to ever leave home. But I didn't leave all the parts of me: I kept the ground of my

Notes

1 *Hear, There, and Everywhere* 28 (January 1970).
2 Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (London, 1979), pp. 102–4.
3 Style Project, written testimony, A4.
4 Ibid., written testimony, A1.

CHAPTER 9

Television Culture

John Fiske

[T]elevision broadcasts programs that are replete with potential meanings, and . . . it attempts to control and focus this meaningfulness into a more singular preferred meaning that performs the work of the dominant ideology. We shall need to interrogate this notion later, but I propose to start with a traditional semiotic account of how television makes, or attempts to make, meanings that serve the dominant interests in society, and how it circulates these meanings amongst the wide variety of social groups that constitute its audiences. I shall do this by analyzing a short segment of two scenes from a typical, prime-time, long-running series, *Hart to Hart*, in order to demonstrate some basic critical methodology and to raise some more complex theoretical questions that will be addressed later on in the book.

The Harts are a wealthy, high-living husband and wife detective team. In this particular episode they are posing as passengers on a cruise ship on which there has been a jewel robbery. In scene 1 they are getting ready for a dance during which they plan to tempt the thief to rob them, and are discussing how the robbery may have been effected. In scene 2 we meet the villain and villainess, who have already noticed Jennifer Hart's ostentatiously displayed jewels.

Scene 1

HERO: He knew what he was doing to get into this safe.
HEROINE: Did you try the numbers that Granville gave you?
HERO: Yeh. I tried those earlier. They worked perfectly.
HEROINE: Well you said it was an inside job, maybe they had the combination all the time.
HERO: Just trying to eliminate all the possibilities. Can you check this out for me? (*He gestures to his bow tie.*)
HEROINE: Mm. Yes I can. (*He hugs her.*) Mm. Light fingers. Oh, Jonathan.
HERO: Just trying to keep my touch in shape.
HEROINE: What about the keys to the door?
HERO: Those keys can't be duplicated because of the code numbers. You have to have the right machines.
HEROINE: Well, that leaves the window.
HERO: The porthole.

HEROINE: Oh yes. The porthole. I know they are supposed to be charming, but they always remind me of a laundromat.

HERO: I took a peek out of there a while ago. It's about all you can do. It's thirty feet up to the deck even if you could make it down to the window, porthole. You'd have to be the thin man to squeeze through.

HEROINE: What do you think? (*She shows her jewelry.*) Enough honey to attract the bees?

HERO: Who knows? They may not be able to see the honey for the flowers.

HEROINE: Oh, that's the cutest thing you've ever said to me, sugar. Well, shall we? (*Gestures towards the door.*)

Scene 2

VILLAIN: I suppose you noticed some of the icing on Chamberlain's cup cake. I didn't have my jeweler's glass, but that bracelet's got to be worth at least fifty thousand. Wholesale.

VILLAINESS: Patrick, if you're thinking what I know you're thinking, forget it. We've made our quota one hit on each ship. We said we weren't going to get greedy, remember.

VILLAIN: But darling, it's you I'm thinking of. And I don't like you taking all those chances. But if we could get enough maybe we wouldn't have to go back to the Riviera circuit for years.

VILLAINESS: That's what you said when we were there.

VILLAIN: Well maybe a few good investments and we can pitch the whole bloody business. But we are going to need a bit more for our retirement fund.

The Codes of Television

Figure 1 shows the main codes that television uses and their relationship. A code is a rule-governed system of signs, whose rules and conventions are shared amongst members of a culture, and which is used to generate and circulate meanings in and for that culture. Codes are links between producers, texts, and audiences, and are the agents of intertextuality through which texts interrelate in a network of meanings that constitutes our cultural world. These codes work in a complex hierarchical structure that figure 1 oversimplifies for the sake of clarity. In particular, the categories of codes are arbitrary and slippery, as is their classification into levels in the hierarchy; for instance, I have put speech as a social code, and dialogue (i.e. scripted speech) as a technical one, but in practice the two are almost indistinguishable: social psychologists such as Berne[1] have shown us how dialogue in "real life" is frequently scripted for us by the interactional conventions of our culture. Similarly, I have called casting a conventional representational code, and appearance a social one, but the two differ only in intentionality and explicitness. People's appearance in "real life" is already encoded: in so far as we make sense of people by their appearance we do so according to conventional codes in our

culture. The casting director is merely using these codes more consciously and more conventionally, which means more stereotypically.

Figure 1 The codes of television

An event to be televised is already encoded
by *social codes* such as those of:

Level one:
"REALITY"

appearance, dress, make-up, environment, behavior, speech, gesture, expression, sound, etc.
these are encoded electronically by:
technical codes such as those of:

Level two:
REPRESENTATION

camera, lighting, editing, music, sound
which transmit the
conventional representational codes, which shape the representations of, for example:
narrative, conflict, character, dialogue, setting, casting, etc.

Level three:
IDEOLOGY

which are organized into coherence and social acceptability
by the *ideological codes*, such as those of:
individualism, patriarchy, race, class, materialism, capitalism, etc.

The point is that "reality" is already encoded, or rather the only way we can perceive and make sense of reality is by the codes of our culture. There may be an objective, empiricist reality out there. But there is no universal, objective way of perceiving and making sense of it. What passes for reality in any culture is the product of that culture's codes, so "reality" is always already encoded, it is never "raw." If this piece of encoded reality is televised, the technical codes and representational conventions of the medium are brought to bear upon it so as to make it (a) transmittable technologically and (b) an appropriate cultural text for its audiences.

Some of the social codes which constitute our reality are relatively precisely definable in terms of the medium through which they are expressed – skin color, dress, hair, facial expression, and so on.

Others, such as those that make up a landscape, for example, may be less easy to specify systematically, but they are still present and working hard. Different sorts of trees have different connotative meanings encoded into them, so do rocks and birds. So a tree reflected in a lake, for example, is fully encoded even before it is photographed and turned into the setting for a romantic narrative. . . .

For instance, the conventions that govern the representation of speech as "realistic dialogue" in scene 1 result in the heroine asking questions while the hero

provides the answers. The representational convention by which women are shown to lack knowledge which men possess and give to them is an example of the ideological code of patriarchy. Similarly the conventional representation of crime as theft of personal property is an encoding of the ideology of capitalism. The "naturalness" with which the two fit together in the scene is evidence of how these ideological codes work to organize the other codes into producing a congruent and coherent set of meanings that constitute the common sense of a society.

The process of making sense involves a constant movement up and down through the levels of the diagram, for sense can only be produced when "reality," representations, and ideology merge into a coherent, seemingly natural unity. Semiotic or cultural criticism deconstructs this unity and exposes its "naturalness" as a highly ideological construct.

A semiotic analysis attempts to reveal how these layers of encoded meanings are structured into television programs, even in as small a segment as the one we are working with. The small size of the segment encourages us to perform a detailed analytical reading of it, but prevents us talking about larger-scale codes, such as those of the narrative. But it does provide a good starting point for our work.

Camera Work

The camera is used through angle and deep focus to give us a perfect view of the scene, and thus a complete understanding of it. Much of the pleasure of television realism comes from this sense of omniscience that it gives us. . . . Camera distance is used to swing our sympathies away from the villain and villainess, and towards the hero and heroine. The normal camera distance in television is mid-shot to close-up, which brings the viewer into an intimate, comfortable relationship with the characters on the screen. But the villain and villainess are also shown in extreme close-up (ECU). Throughout this whole episode of *Hart to Hart* there are only three scenes in which ECUs are used: they are used only to represent hero/ine and villain/ess, and of the twenty-one ECUs, eighteen are of the villain/ess and only three of the hero/ine. Extreme close-ups become a codified way for representing villainy.

This encoding convention is not confined to fictional television, where we might think that its work upon the alignment of our sympathies, and thus on our moral judgment, is justified. It is also used in news and current affairs programs which present themselves as bringing reality to us "objectively." The court action resulting from General Westmoreland's libel suit against the CBS in 1985 revealed these codes more questionably at work in television reporting. Alex Jones recounts their use in his report of the trial for the *New York Times*.

> Among the more controversial techniques is placing an interviewee in partial shadow in order to lend drama to what is being said. Also debated is the use of extreme close-ups that tend to emphasize the tension felt by a person being interviewed. Viewers may associate the appearance of tension with lying or guilt.
>
> The extreme close-up can be especially damaging when an interview is carefully scripted and a cameraman is instructed to focus tightly on the person's face at the point when the toughest question is to be asked. Some documentary makers will not use such close-ups at all in interviews because they can be so misleading.
>
> The CBS documentary contained both a shadowed interview of a friendly witness and "tight shots" of General Westmoreland. Such techniques have been used in documentaries by other networks as well. . . .

There are two possible sources of the conventions that govern the meanings generated by this code of camera distance. One is the social code of interpersonal distance: in western cultures the space within about 24 inches (60 cm) of us is encoded as private. Anyone entering it is being either hostile, when the entry is unwelcome, or intimate, when it is invited. ECUs replicate this, and are used for moments of televisual intimacy or hostility, and which meanings they convey depends on the other social and technical codes by which they are contextualized, and by the ideological codes brought to bear upon them. Here, they are used to convey hostility. The other source lies in the technical codes which imply that seeing closely means seeing better – the viewer can see *into* the villain, see *through* his words, and thus gains power over him, the power and the pleasure of "dominant specularity." These technical and social codes manifest the ideological encoding of villainy. . . .

Editing

The heroes are given more time (72 secs) than the villains (49), and more shots (10 as against 7), though both have an average shot length of 7 seconds. It is remarkable how consistent this is across different modes of television: it has become a conventional rhythm of television common to news, drama, and sport.

Music

The music linking the two scenes started in a major key, and changed to minor as the scene changed to the villains.

Casting

This technical code requires a little more discussion. The actors and actresses who are cast to play hero/ines, villain/esses and supporting roles are real people whose appearance is already encoded by our social codes. But they are equally media people, who exist for the viewer intertextually, and whose meanings are also intertextual. They bring with them not only residues of the meanings of other roles that they have played, but also their meanings from other texts such as fan magazines, showbiz gossip columns, and television criticism. . . .

Characters on television are not just representations of individual people but are

encodings of ideology, "embodiments of ideological values." Gerbner's work showed that viewers were clear about the different characteristics of television heroes and villains on two dimensions only: heroes were more attractive and more successful than villains. Their attractiveness, or lack of it, is partly the result of the way they are encoded in the technical and social codes – camera work, lighting, setting, casting, etc., but the ideological codes are also important, for it is these that make sense out of the relationship between the technical code of casting and the social code of appearance, and that also relate their televisual use to their broader use in the culture at large. In his analysis of violence on television, Gerbner found that heroes and villains are equally likely to use violence and to initiate it, but that heroes were successful in their violence, whereas villains finally were not. Gerbner worked out a killers-to-killed ratio according to different categories of age, sex, class, and race. The killers category included heroes and villains, but the killed category included villains only. He found that a character who was white, male, middle class (or classless) and in the prime of life was very likely, if not certain, to be alive at the end of the program. Conversely characters who deviated from these norms were likely to be killed during the program in proportion to the extent of their deviance. We may use Gerbner's findings to theorize that heroes are socially central persons who embody the dominant ideology, whereas villains and victims are members of deviant or subordinate subcultures who thus embody the dominant ideology less completely, and may, in the case of villains, embody ideologies that oppose it. The textual opposition between hero/ine and villain/ess, and the violence by which this opposition is commonly dramatized, become metaphors for power relationships in society and thus a material practice through which the dominant ideology works. . . . The villain in this segment has hints of non-Americanness; some viewers have classed his accent, manner, and speech as British, for others his appearance has seemed Hispanic. But the hero and heroine are both clearly middle class, white Americans, at home among the WASPs (White Anglo-Saxon Protestants). The villainess is Aryan, blonde, pretty, and younger than the villain. Gerbner's work would lead us to predict that his chances of surviving the episode are slim, whereas hers are much better. The prediction is correct. She finally changes sides and helps the hero/ine, whereas he is killed; hints of this are contained in her condemnation of the villain's greed, which positions her more centrally in the ideological discourse of economics. . . .

Setting and Costume

The hero/ine's cabin is larger than that of the villain/ess: it is humanized, made more attractive by drapes and flowers, whereas the other is all sharp angles and hard lines. The villain wears a uniform that places him as a servant or employee and the villainess's dress is less tasteful, less expensive than the heroine's. These physical differences in the social codes of setting and dress are also bearers of the ideological codes of class, of heroism and villainy, of morality, and of attractiveness. These abstract ideological codes are condensed into a set of material social ones, and the

materiality of the differences of the social codes is used to guarantee the truth and naturalness of the ideological. We must note, too, how some ideological codes are more explicit than others: the codes of heroism, villainy, and attractiveness are working fairly openly and acceptably. But under them the codes of class, race, and morality are working less openly and more questionably: their ideological work is to naturalize the correlation of lower-class, non-American with the less attractive, less moral, and therefore villainous. Conversely, the middle-class and the white American is correlated with the more attractive, the more moral and the heroic. This displacement of morality onto class is a common feature of our popular culture: Dorfman and Mattelart have shown how Walt Disney cartoons consistently express villainy through characteristics of working-class appearance and manner; indeed, they argue that the only time the working class appear in the middle-class world of Ducksville it is as villains. . . .

Make-Up

The same merging of the ideological codes of morality, attractiveness, and heroism/villainy, and their condensation into a material social code, can be seen in something as apparently insignificant as lipstick. The villainess has a number of signs that contradict her villainy (she is blonde, white American, pretty, and more moral than the villain). These predict her eventual conversion to the side of the hero and heroine, but she cannot look too like them at this early stage of the narrative, so her lips are made up to be thinner and less sexually attractive than the fuller lips of the heroine. The ideology of lipstick may seem a stretched concept, but it is in the aggregate of apparently insignificant encodings that ideology works most effectively.

Action

There are a number of significant similarities and differences between the actions of the hero/ine and the villain/ess. In both cabins the women are prettying themselves, the men are planning. This naturalizes the man's executive role of instigating action and the woman's role as object of the male gaze – notice the mirror in each cabin which enables her to see herself as "bearer of her own image"; the fact that this is common to both hero/ine and villain/ess puts it beyond the realm of conflict in the narrative and into the realm of everyday common sense within which the narrative is enacted. The other action common to both is the getting and keeping of wealth as a motive for action, and as a motor for the narrative: this also is not part of the conflict-to-be-resolved, but part of the ideological framework through which that conflict is viewed and made sense of.

A difference between the two is that of cooperation and closeness. The hero and heroine cooperate and come physically closer together, the villain and villainess, on the other hand, disagree and pull apart physically. In a society that places a high value on a man and woman being a close couple this is another bearer of the dominant ideology.

Dialogue

The dialogue also is used to affect our sympathy. That of the villain and villainess is restricted to their nefarious plans and their mutual disagreement, whereas the hero and heroine are allowed a joke (window/porthole/laundromat), an extended metaphor (honey and the bees), and the narrative time to establish a warm, cooperative relationship. . . .

Ideological Codes

These codes and the televisual codes which bring them to the viewer are both deeply embedded in the ideological codes of which they are themselves the bearers. If we adopt the same ideological practice in the decoding as the encoding we are drawn into the position of a white, male, middle-class American (or westerner) of conventional morality. The reading position is the social point at which the mix of televisual, social, and ideological codes comes together to make coherent, unified sense: in making sense of the program in this way we are indulging in an ideological practice ourselves, we are maintaining and legitimating the dominant ideology, and our reward for this is the easy pleasure of the recognition of the familiar and of its adequacy. We have already become a "reading subject" constructed by the text, and, according to Althusser, the construction of subjects-in-ideology is the major ideological practice in capitalist societies.

This ideological practice is working at its hardest in three narrative devices in this segment. The first is the window/porthole/laundromat joke, which, as we have seen, is used to marshal the viewer's affective sympathy on the side of the hero/ine. But it does more than that. Freud tells us that jokes are used to relieve the anxiety caused by repressed, unwelcome, or taboo meanings. This joke revolves around the "feminine" (as defined by our dominant culture) inability to understand or use technical language, and the equally "feminine" tendency to make sense of everything through a domestic discourse. "Porthole" is technical discourse-masculine: "window-laundromat" is domestic-nurturing discourse-feminine. The anxiety that the joke relieves is that caused by the fact that the heroine is a detective, is involved in the catching of criminals – activities that are part of the technical world of men in patriarchy. The joke is used to recuperate contradictory signs back into the dominant system, and to smooth over any contradictions that might disrupt the ideological homogeneity of the narrative. The attractiveness of the heroine must not be put at risk by allowing her challenge to patriarchy to be too stark – for attractiveness is always ideological, never merely physical or natural.

The metaphor that expresses the sexual attractiveness of women for men in terms of the attraction of honey and flowers for the bees works in a similar way. It naturalizes this attraction, masking its ideological dimension, and then extends this naturalness to its explanation of the attractiveness of other people's jewelry for lower-class non-American villains! The metaphor is working to naturalize cultural constructions of gender, class, and race.

The third device is that of jewelry itself. As we have seen, the getting and keeping of wealth is the major motor of the narrative, and jewelry is its material signifier. Three ideological codes intersect in the use of jewelry in this narrative: they are the codes of economics, gender, and class.

In the code of economics, the villain and villainess stress the jewelry's investment/exchange function: it is "worth at least fifty thousand wholesale," it forms "a retirement fund." For the hero and heroine and for the class they represent this function is left unstated: jewelry, if it is an investment, is one to hold, not cash in. It is used rather as a sign of class, of wealth, and of aesthetic taste.

The aesthetic sense, or good taste, is typically used as a bearer and naturalizer of class differences. The heroine deliberately overdoes the jewelry, making it vulgar and tasteless in order to attract the lower-class villain and villainess. They, in their turn, show their debased taste, their aesthetic insensitivity, by likening it to the icing on a cupcake. As Bourdieu has shown us, the function of aesthetics in our society is to make class-based and culture-specific differences of taste appear universal and therefore natural. The taste of the dominant classes is universalized by aesthetic theory out of its class origin; the metaphor of "taste" works in a similar way by displacing class differences onto the physical, and therefore natural, senses of the body.

The meaning of jewelry in the code of gender is clear. Jewels are the coins by which the female-as-patriarchal-commodity is bought, and wearing them is the sign both of her possession by a man, and of his economic and social status. Interestingly, in the code of gender, there is no class difference between hero/ine and villain/ess: the economics of patriarchy are the same for all classes, thus making it appear universal and natural that man provides for his woman.

This analysis has not only revealed the complexity of meanings encoded in what is frequently taken to be shallow and superficial, but it also implies that this complexity and subtlety has a powerful effect upon the audience. It implies that the wide variety of codes all cohere to present a unified set of meanings that work to maintain, legitimate, and naturalize the dominant ideology of patriarchal capitalism. . . .

Analysis [also] has to pay less attention to the textual strategies of preference or closure and more to the gaps and spaces that open television up to meanings not preferred by the textual structure, but that result from the social experience of the reader. . . .

This means that reading is not a garnering of meanings from the text but is a dialogue between text and the socially situated reader. As Morley says:

> Thus the meaning of the text must be thought in terms of which set of discourses it encounters in any particular set of circumstances, and how this encounter may restructure both the meaning of the text and the discourses which it meets. The meaning of the text will be constructed differently according to the discourses (knowledges, prejudices, resistances, etc.) brought to bear on the text by the reader and the crucial factor in the encounter of audience/subject and text will be the range of discourses at the disposal of the audience.[2]

. . . Both the text and the subjectivity are discursive constructs and both contain similar competing or contradictory discourses. It is out of these contradictions that the polysemy of the text and the multiplicity of readings arise.

Hodge and Tripp[3] provide good examples of multiple or contradictory readings made by viewers. They . . . assume that children are engaged in a constant active struggle to make sense out of their social experience, and that television plays an important role in that struggle.

Market research had found that one of the most popular programs with Australian school children was *Prisoner,* a soap opera set in a women's prison, and screened in the USA under the title *Prisoner: Cell Block H.* This appeared, on the face of it, to be a surprising choice for junior high school students.

Hodge and Tripp discovered that many of the children found, at varying levels of consciousness, and were able to articulate with varying degrees of explicitness, usefully significant parallels between the prison and the school. They perceived the following main similarities between prisoners and school students:

1 pupils are shut in;
2 pupils are separated from their friends;
3 pupils would not be there if they were not made to be;
4 pupils only work because they are punished if they do not, and it is less boring than doing nothing at all;
5 pupils have no rights: they can do nothing about an unfair teacher;
6 some teachers victimize their pupils;
7 there are gangs and leaders amongst the pupils;
8 there are silly rules which everyone tries to break.[4]

In their discussions the children showed that they made meanings out of *Prisoner* that connected the program to their own social experience. A textual study revealed many parallels between prison and school. In both there were recognizable role types amongst staff and prisoners that formed recognizable and usable categories with which students could "think" their school experience – the hard-bitten old warden/teacher, the soft new one, the one you can take advantage of, the one you can't, and so on. Similarly there were prisoners who resisted the institution and fought it in all ways, those who played along with it and were the goody goodies, those who played along with it on the surface, but opposed it underneath, and so on. There were also strategies of resistance that applied to both: prisoners used a secret language, sometimes of special private words, but more often of nudges, winks, glances, and *doubles entendres* to communicate amongst themselves under the noses of and in resistance to the wardens/teachers. There was an oppositional subculture of the public areas of the prison, particularly the laundry where many of them worked, that paralleled the oppositional school subculture of the lavatories, the locker rooms, and special corners of the yard. And in both institutions there was a consistent attempt by the official culture to colonize and control these areas,

which was resisted and resented by the inmates who struggled to keep them within their own cultural control. . . .

Turnbull has found that young girl fans of the program find in it meanings that they can use to produce a sense of subcultural identity and esteem for themselves. Images of strong, active women fighting the system, gaining minor victories (although finally succumbing to it), give them pleasure (in the resistance) and a means of articulating a discourse of resistance to the dominant ideology that paralleled the discourse (often called rebelliousness) that they used to make sense of their social existence. The contradictions and struggle between authority and resistance to it existed in both the program and their subjectivities, and the meanings that were activated and the pleasures that were gained were the ones that made social sense to the subordinate and the powerless. . . .

There is some evidence that finding a discourse in a text that makes sense of one's experience of social powerlessness in a positive way is the vital first step towards being able to do something to change that powerlessness.

Hodge and Tripp's study of the ways that Australian Aboriginal children made sense of television is of significance here. They found that the children constructed a cultural category that included American blacks, American Indians, and themselves. This cultural category, a tool to think with, conceptualized the political and narrative powerlessness of non-whites in white society, and was used in making sense both of television and of social experience. A particularly popular program among these children was *Different Strokes*, whose leading character, an American black child adopted by a white family, they saw as Aboriginal. One can imagine the sort of sense they made of his small size, his eternal childishness, and the consistency with which he is "misunderstood" and set right by his white "father" and "elder sister," particularly when we remember that American Indians are part of the same cultural category.

What the Aboriginal readers were demonstrating was the ability of a subculture to make its own sense out of a text that clearly bears the dominant ideology. The discourses of powerlessness through which they lived their lives activated a set of meanings that resisted those preferred by the dominant ideology. When they supported and identified with American Indians in their fights against white cowboys, they knew both that their side was doomed to lose, and that they were being obtuse or awkward in reading a western in this way. Reading television in this way provided them with a means of articulating their experience of powerlessness in a white-dominated society and the ability to articulate one's experience is a necessary prerequisite for developing the will to change it.

Mattelart, in his studies of the Third World reception of Hollywood television, comes to a similar conclusion:

> The messages of mass culture can be neutralized by the dominated classes who can produce their own antidotes by creating the sometimes contradictory seeds of a new culture.

Notes

1 E. Berne, *Games People Play: The Psychology of Human Relationships* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1964).
2 David Morley, *The Nationwide Audience: Structure and Decoding* (London: British Film Institute, 1980).
3 R. Hodge and D. Tripp, *Children and Television* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1986).
4 Ibid., p. 49.

CHAPTER 10

"'Material Girl': The Effacements of Postmodern Culture"

Susan Bordo

Plasticity as Postmodern Paradigm

In a culture in which organ transplants, life-extension machinery, microsurgery and artificial organs have entered everyday medicine, we seem on the verge of practical realization of the seventeenth-century imagination of the body as machine. But if we seem to have technically and technologically realized that conception, it can also be argued that metaphysically we have deconstructed it. In the early modern era, machine imagery helped to articulate a totally determined human body whose basic functionings the human being was helpless to alter. The then dominant metaphors for this body – clocks, watches, collections of springs – imagined a system that is set, wound up, whether by nature or God the watchmaker, ticking away in predictable, orderly manner, regulated by laws over which the human being has no control. Understanding the system, we can help it to perform efficiently, and intervene when it malfunctions. But we cannot radically alter the configuration of things.

Pursuing this modern, determinist fantasy to its limits, fed by the currents of consumer capitalism, modern ideologies of the self, and their crystallization in the dominance of "American" mass culture, Western science and technology have now arrived, paradoxically but predictably (for it was a submerged, illicit element in the mechanist conception all along) at a new, "postmodern" imagination of human freedom from bodily determination. Gradually and surely, a technology that was first aimed at the replacement of malfunctioning parts has generated an industry and an ideology fueled by fantasies of re-arranging, transforming, and correcting, an ideology of limitless improvement and change, defying the historicity, the mortality, and indeed the very materiality of the body. In place of that materiality, we now have what I will call "cultural plastic." In place of God the watchmaker, we now have ourselves, the master sculptors of that plastic. This disdain for material limits, and intoxication with freedom, change, and self-determination, is enacted

SEMIOLOGY AND THE URBAN

The subject of this discussion[1] involves a certain number of problems in urban semiology.

But I should add that whoever would outline a semiotics of the city needs to be at the same time semiologist (specialist in signs), geographer, historian, planner, architect and probably psychoanalyst. Since this is clearly not my case – in fact I am none of these things except perhaps a semiologist, and barely that – the reflections that I am going to present to you are the reflections of an amateur in the etymological sense of this word: amateur of signs, he who loves signs; amateur of cities, he who loves the city. For I love both the city and signs. And this double love (which probably is only one) leads me to believe, maybe with a certain presumption, in the possibility of a semiotics of the city. Under what conditions or rather with what precautions and what preliminaries would an urban semiotics be possible?

This is the theme of the reflections that I am going to present. I would like first of all to recall something very obvious which will serve as our starting point: human space in general (and not only urban space) has always been a satisfying space. Scientific geography and in particular modern cartography can be considered as a kind of obliteration, of censorship that objectivity has imposed on signification (objectivity which is a form like any other of the 'imaginary'). And before I speak of the city, I would like to recall certain facts about the cultural history of the West, more precisely of Greek antiquity. The human habitat, the *oecumenè*[2] such as we glimpse it through the first maps of the Greek geographers – Anaximander, Hecataeus – or through the mental cartography of someone like Herodotus, constitutes a veritable discourse with its symmetries, its oppositions of places, with its syntax and its paradigms. A map of the world of Herodotus in graphic form is constructed like a language, like a phrase, like a poem, on oppositions: hot lands and cold lands, known and unknown lands; then on the opposition between men on the one hand and monsters and chimaeras on the other, etc.

If from geographic space we pass now to urban space proper, I will recall that the notion of *Isonomia* forged for the Athens of the sixth century by a man like Clisthenes is a truly structural conception by which only the centre is privileged, since the relations of all citizens to it are at the same time both symmetrical and reversible.[3] At that time the conception of the city was exclusively a signifying one, since the utilitarian conception of an urban distribution based on functions and uses, which is incontestably predominant in our time, will appear later.

I wanted to remind you of this historical relativism in the conception of signifying spaces. Finally, it is in the recent past that a structuralist like Lévi-Strauss in his book *Tristes Tropiques* introduced urban semiology, although on a reduced scale, on the subject of a Bororo village whose space he studied using an essentially semantic approach.

It is odd that parallel to these strongly signifying conceptions of inhabited space, the theoretical elaborations of urban planners have up to now given, if I am not mistaken, only a very reduced place to the problems of signification.[4] To be sure, exceptions exist, many writers have spoken of the city in terms of

signification. One of the authors who best expressed this essentially signifying nature of urban space is in my opinion Victor Hugo. In *Notre-Dame de Paris*, Hugo has written a very beautiful chapter, very subtle and perceptive, 'This will kill that'; 'this' meaning the book, 'that' meaning the monument. By expressing himself in such a way, Hugo gives proof of a rather modern way of conceiving the monument and the city, as a true text, as an inscription of man in space. This chapter by Victor Hugo is consecrated to the rivalry between two modes of writing, writing in stone and writing on paper. Indeed, this theme is very much current today in the remarks on writing of a philosopher like Jacques Derrida. Among the urban planners proper there is no talk of signification; only one name emerges, rightly so, that of the American Kevin Lynch, who seems to be closest to these problems of urban semantics in so far as he has been concerned with thinking about the city in the same terms as the consciousness perceiving it, which means discovering the image of the city among the readers of this city. But in reality the studies of Lynch, from the semantic point of view, remain rather ambiguous; on the one hand there is in his work a whole vocabulary of signification (for example, he lays great stress on the legibility of the city and this is a notion of great importance for us) and as a good semanticist he has the sense of *discrete units*; he has attempted to identify in urban space the discontinuous units which, *mutatis mutandis*, would bear some resemblance to phonemes and semantemes. These units he calls paths, edges, districts, nodes, landmarks. These are categories of units that would easily become semantic categories. But on the other hand, in spite of this vocabulary, Lynch has a conception of the city that remains more *Gestalt* than structural.

Beyond these authors who explicitly approach semantics of the city, we can observe a growing awareness of the functions of symbols in urban space. In many urban planning studies based on quantitative estimates and on opinion questionnaires, we nonetheless find mention, even if only as a note, of the purely qualitative issue of symbolization which even today is often used to explain facts of another nature. We find, for example, a technique fairly current in urban planning: simulation. Now, the technique of simulation, even if used in a fairly narrow and empirical manner, leads us to develop further the concept of model, which is a structural or at least pre-structural concept.

In another stage of these urban planning studies, the demand for meaning appears. We gradually discover that a kind of contradiction exists between signification and another order of phenomena and that consequently signification possesses irreducible specificity. For example, some planners or some of the scientists who study urban planning have had to notice that in certain cases a conflict exists between the functionalism of a part of a city, let us say of a neighbourhood, and what I will call its semantic contents (its semantic force). It is thus that they have remarked with a certain ingenuity (but maybe we must start from ingenuity) that Rome involves a permanent conflict between the functional necessities of modern life and the semantic charge given to the city by its history. And this conflict between signification and function is the despair of planners. There exists, furthermore, a conflict between signification and reason or, at least, between signification and the calculating reason which would have all the elements of a city uniformly assimilated by planning, while it is growing daily more evident that a city is a tissue formed not of equal elements whose functions we can enumerate, but of strong and neutral elements, or

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rather, as the linguists say, of marked and unmarked elements (we know that the opposition between the sign and the absence of sign, between the full degree and the zero degree, constitutes one of the major processes of the elaboration of signification). Apparently every city possesses this kind of rhythm. Kevin Lynch has remarked that there exists in every city, from the moment that the city is truly inhabited by man and made by him, this fundamental rhythm of signification which is the opposition, the alternation and the juxtaposition of marked and of unmarked elements. Finally, there is a last conflict between signification and reality itself, at least between signification and that reality of objective geography, the reality of maps. Surveys directed by psycho-sociologists have shown, for example, that two neighbourhoods are adjoining, if we rely on the map, which means on the 'real', on objectivity, while, from the moment when they receive two different significations, they are radically separated in the image of the city. Signification, therefore, is experienced as in complete opposition to objective data.

The city is a discourse and this discourse is truly a language: the city speaks to its inhabitants, we speak our city, the city where we are, simply by living in it, by wandering through it, by looking at it. Still the problem is to bring an expression like 'the language of the city' out of the purely metaphorical stage. It is very easy metaphorically to speak of the language of the city as we speak of the language of the cinema or the language of flowers. The real scientific leap will be realized when we speak of a language of the city without metaphor. And we may say that this is exactly what happened to Freud when he for the first time spoke of the language of dreams, emptying this expression of its metaphorical meaning in order to give it real meaning. We also must face this problem: how to pass from metaphor to analysis when we speak of the language of the city. Once more I am referring to the specialists on the urban phenomenon, for even if they are quite far from these problems of urban semantics, they have nevertheless already noted (I quote the report of a survey) that: 'The data available in the social sciences presents a form poorly adapted to its integration in the models.' Well, if we have difficulty inserting in a model the data on the subject of the city provided us by psychology, sociology, geography, demography, it is precisely because we lack a last technique, that of symbols. Consequently, we need a new scientific energy in order to transform these data, to pass from metaphor to the description of signification, and it is in this that semiology (in the widest meaning of the term) could perhaps, by a development yet unforseeable, come to our aid. I do not intend to discuss here the discovery procedures of urban semiology. It is probable that these procedures would consist in decomposing the urban text into units, then distributing these units in formal classes and, thirdly, finding the rules of combination and transformation of these units and models. I will confine myself to three remarks which do not have a direct relation with the city but which could usefully point the way to an urban semiology in so far as they draw a summary balance sheet of current semiology and they take into consideration the fact that for the last few years the semiological 'landscape' is no longer the same.

My first remark is that 'symbolism' (which must be understood as a general discourse concerning signification) is no longer conceived today, at least as a general rule, as a regular correspondence between signifiers and signifieds. In other words, a notion of semantics which was fundamental some years ago has

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become defunct; this is the notion of the lexicon as a set of lists of signifieds and their corresponding signifiers. This kind of crisis, of attrition of the notion of lexicon, can be found in numerous sectors of research. First of all, there is the distributive semantics of the disciples of Chomsky such as Katz and Fodor who have launched a strong attack against the lexicon. If we leave the domain of linguistics for that of literary criticism we find thematic criticism, which has been dominant for fifteen or twenty years, at least in France, and which has formed the essence of the studies in what we call the *Nouvelle Critique*, and which is today being limited and remodelled to the detriment of the signifieds it proposed to decipher.

In the domain of psychoanalysis, finally, we can no longer speak of a one-to-one symbolism; this is clearly the dead part of Freud's work: a psychoanalytical lexicon is no longer conceivable. All this has discredited the word 'symbol', for this term has always allowed us to suppose till now that the relation of signification depended on the signified, on the presence of the signified. Personally, I use the word 'symbol' to refer to an organization of meaning, syntagmatic and/or paradigmatic but no longer semantic: we must make a very clear distinction between the semantic dimension of the symbol and the syntagmatic or paradigmatic nature of the same symbol.

In the same way, it would be an absurd enterprise to want to elaborate a lexicon of the significations of the city, putting on one side places, neighbourhoods, functions, and on the other significations; or, rather, putting on one side places uttered like signifiers and on the other functions uttered like signifieds. The list of the functions that the neighbourhoods of a city can assume has been known for a long time. We find approximately some thirty or so functions for a neighbourhood of a city (at least for a neighbourhood of the city centre: a zone that has been rather well studied from the sociological point of view). This list can of course be completed, enriched, refined but it will constitute only an extremely elementary level for semiological analysis, a level which will probably have to be reviewed later: not only because of the weight and the pressure exercised by history but because, precisely, the signifieds are like mythical creatures, extremely imprecise, and at a certain point they always become the signifiers of *something else*; the signifieds are transient, the signifiers remain. The hunt for the signified can thus constitute only a provisional approach. The role of the signified when we succeed in discerning it is only to be a kind of witness to a specific state of the distribution of signification. Besides we must note that we attribute an ever-growing importance to the empty signified, to the empty space of the signified. In other words, elements are understood as signifying rather by their own correlative position than by their contents. Thus, Tokyo, which is one of the most tangled urban complexes that we can imagine from the semantic point of view, nonetheless has a kind of centre. But this centre, occupied by the imperial palace, surrounded by a deep moat and hidden by greenery, is felt as an empty centre. As a more general rule, the studies of the urban nucleus of different cities has shown that the central point of the city centre (every city has a centre) which we call 'solid nucleus', does not constitute the peak point of any particular activity but a kind of empty 'focal point' for the image that the community develops of the centre. We have here again a somehow empty place which is necessary for the organization of the rest of the city.

My second remark is that symbolism must be defined essentially as the world of signifiers, of correlations, and, especially, correlations that we can never enclose in a full signification, in a final signification. Henceforth, from the point of view of descriptive technique, the distribution of elements, meaning the signifiers, exhausts in a certain sense the semantic discovery. This is true for the Chomskian semantics of Katz and Fodor and even for the analyses of Lévi-Strauss, which are founded on the clarification of a relation which is no longer analogical but homological (a point demonstrated in his book on totemism which is rarely cited). Thus, we discover that when we wish to do the semiology of the city, we shall probably have to develop the division of signification further and in more detail. For this I appeal to my experience as amateur. We know that in certain cities, there exist spaces which offer a very elaborate specialization of functions: this is the case for example with the oriental souk, where a street is reserved for the tanners and another one for the goldsmiths; in Tokyo certain parts of the same neighbourhood are very homogeneous from the functional point of view: practically, we find there only bars or snackbars or places of entertainment. Well, we must go beyond this first aspect and not limit the semantic description of the city to this unit. We must try to decompose microstructures in the same way that we can isolate little fragments of phrases in a long period; we must then get in the habit of making a quite elaborate analysis which will lead us to these micro-structures and, inversely, we must get used to a broader analysis really arriving at the macro-structures. We all know that Tokyo is a polynuclear city; it has several cores around five or six centres. We must learn to differentiate semantically among these centres, which, in fact, are indicated by railroad stations. In other terms, even in this sector, the best model for the semantic study of the city will be provided, I believe, at least at the beginning, by the phrase of discourse. And here we rediscover Victor Hugo's old intuition: the city is a writing. He who moves about the city, e.g. the user of the city (what we all are), is a kind of reader who, following his obligations and his movements, appropriates fragments of the utterance in order to actualize them in secret. When we move about a city, we all are in the situation of the reader of the 100,000 million poems of Queneau, where one can find a different poem by changing a single line; unawares, we are somewhat like this avant-garde reader when we are in a city.

My third remark, finally, is that today semiology never supposes the existence of a definitive signified. This means that the signifieds are always signifiers for other signifieds and vice versa. In reality, in any cultural or even psychological complex, we are faced with infinite chains of metaphors whose signified is always retreating or becomes itself a signifier. This structure is currently being explored, as you know, in psychoanalysis by Jacques Lacan, and also in the study of writing, where it is postulated if not really explored. If we apply these ideas to the city we would doubtless be led to reveal a dimension which I must say I have never seen cited, at least explicitly, in the studies and surveys of urban planning. I will call it the *erotic* dimension. The eroticism of the city is the lesson we can draw from the infinitely metaphorical nature of urban discourse. I use the word eroticism in its widest meaning: it would be pointless to suppose that the eroticism of the city referred only to the area reserved for this kind of pleasure, for the concept of the place of pleasure is one

of the most tenacious mystifications of urban functionalism. It is a functional concept and not a semantic concept; I use eroticism or *sociality* interchangeably. The city, essentially and semantically, is the place of our meeting with the *other*, and it is for this reason that the centre is the gathering place in every city; the city centre is instituted above all by the young people, the adolescents.

When they express their image of the city, they always have a tendency to limit, to concentrate, to condense the centre; the city centre is felt as the place of exchange of social activities and I would almost say erotic activities in the broad sense of the word. Better still, the city centre is always felt as the space where subversive forces, forces of rupture, ludic forces act and meet. Play is a subject very often emphasized in the surveys on the centre; there is in France a series of surveys concerning the appeal of Paris for the suburbs, and it has been observed through these surveys that Paris as a centre was always experienced semantically by the periphery as the privileged place where the other is and where we ourselves are other, as the place where we play the other. In contrast, all that is not the centre is precisely that which is not ludic space, everything which is not otherness: family, residence, identity. Naturally, especially for the city, we would have to discover the metaphorical chain, the chain substituted for Eros. We must search more particularly in the direction of the large categories, of the major habits of man, for example nourishment, purchases, which are really erotic activities in this consumer society. I am thinking once again of the example of Tokyo: the huge railway stations which are the landmarks of the principal neighbourhoods are also big shopping centres. And it is certain that the Japanese railway station, the shop-station, has at bottom a unique signification and that this signification is erotic: purchase or meeting. We should then explore these deep images of the urban elements. For example, numerous surveys have emphasized the imaginary function of the water course, which in every city is experienced as a river, a channel, a body of water. There is a relation between road and water and we are well aware that the cities which are most resistant to signification and which incidentally often present difficulties of adaptation for the inhabitants are precisely the cities without water, the cities without seashore, without a surface of water, without a lake, without a river, without a stream: all these cities present difficulties of life, of legibility.

In conclusion, I would like to say only this: in the comments I have made here I have not touched on the problem of methodology. Why? Because if we want to undertake a semiology of the city, the best approach, in my opinion, as indeed for every semantic venture, will be a certain ingenuity on the part of the reader. Many of us should try to decipher the city we are in, starting if necessary with a personal rapport. Dominating all these readings by different categories of readers (for we have a complete scale of readers, from the native to the stranger) we would thus work out the language of the city. This is why I would say that it is not so important to multiply the surveys or the functional studies of the city, but to multiply the readings of the city, of which unfortunately only the writers have so far given us some examples.

Starting from these readings, from this reconstruction of a language or a code of the city, we could then turn to means of a more scientific nature: definition of units, syntax, etc., but always keeping in mind that we must never seek to fix and rigidify the signified of the units discovered, because,

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historically, these signifieds are always extremely vague, dubious and unmanageable.

We construct, we make every city a little in the image of the ship *Argo*, whose every piece was no longer the original piece but which still remained the ship *Argo*, that is, a set of significations easily readable and recognizable. In this attempt at a semantic approach to the city we should try to understand the play of signs, to understand that any city is a structure, but that we must never try and we must never want to fill in this structure.

For the city is a poem, as has often been said and as Hugo said better than anyone else, but it is not a classical poem, a poem tidily centred on a subject. It is a poem which unfolds the signifier and it is this unfolding that ultimately the semiology of the city should try to grasp and make sing.

NOTES

1 Lecture given on 16 May 1967, under the sponsorship of the *Institut Français*, the Institute of the History of Architecture at the University of Naples, published in *Op. Cit.*, 10 (1967).
2 *Oecumenè*: the word used by certain geographers to designate the inhabited world or an inhabited region. The Greek word means all the inhabited world.
3 Cf. P. Lévèque and P. Vidal-Naquet, *Clisthème l'Athénien*, Paris: Macula, 1983.
4 Cf. F. Choay, *L'Urbanisme: Utopie et Réalités*, Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1965.

THE EIFFEL TOWER

Maupassant often lunched at the restaurant in the tower, though he didn't care much for the food: 'It's the only place in Paris', he used to say, 'where I don't have to see it.' And it's true that you must take endless precautions, in Paris, not to see the Eiffel Tower; whatever the season, through mist and cloud, on overcast days or in sunshine, in rain – wherever you are, whatever the landscape of roofs, domes, or branches separating you from it, *the Tower is there*; incorporated into daily life until you can no longer grant it any specific attribute, determined merely to persist, like a rock or the river, it is as literal as a phenomenon of nature whose meaning can be questioned to infinity but whose existence is incontestable. There is virtually no Parisian glance it fails to *touch* at some time of day; at the moment I begin writing these lines about it, the Tower is there, in front of me, framed by my window; and at the very moment the January night blurs it, apparently trying to make it invisible, to deny its presence, two little lights come on, winking gently as they revolve at its very tip: all this night, too, it will be there, connecting me above Paris to each of my friends that I know are seeing it: with it we all comprise a shifting figure of which it is the steady centre: the Tower is friendly.

The Tower is also present to the entire world. First of all as a universal symbol of Paris, it is everywhere on the globe where Paris is to be stated as an image; from the Midwest to Australia, there is no journey to France which isn't made, somehow, in the Tower's name, no schoolbook, poster, or film about France which fails to propose it as the major sign of a people and of a place: it belongs to the universal language of travel. Further: beyond its strictly Parisian statement, it touches the most general human image-repertoire: its simple,

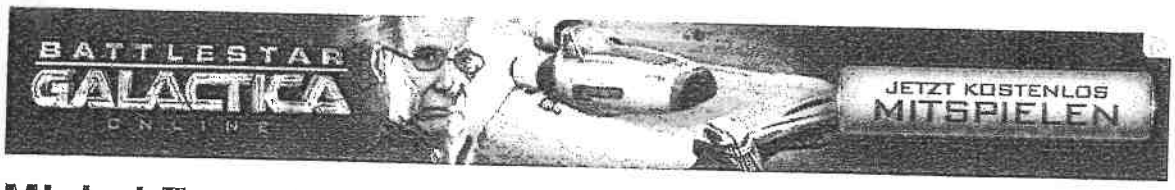
Barthes

primary shape confers upon it the vocation of an infinite cipher: in turn and according to the appeals of our imagination, the symbol of Paris, of modernity, of communication, of science or of the nineteenth century, rocket, stem, derrick, phallus, lightning rod or insect, confronting the great itineraries of our dreams, it is the inevitable sign; just as there is no Parisian glance which is not compelled to encounter it, there is no fantasy which fails, sooner or later, to acknowledge its form and to be nourished by it; pick up a pencil and let your hand, in other words your thoughts, wander, and it is often the Tower which will appear, reduced to that simple line whose sole mythic function is to join, as the poet says, *base and summit*, or again, *earth and heaven*.

This pure – virtually empty – sign – is ineluctible, *because it means everything*. In order to negate the Eiffel Tower (though the temptation to do so is rare, for this symbol offends nothing in us), you must, like Maupassant, get up on it and, so to speak, identify yourself with it. Like man himself, who is the only one not to know his own glance, the Tower is the only blind point of the total optical system of which it is the centre and Paris the circumference. But in this movement which seems to limit it, the Tower acquires a new power: an object when we look at it, it becomes a lookout in its turn when we visit it, and now constitutes as an object, simultaneously extended and collected beneath it, that Paris which just now was looking at it. The Tower is an object which sees, a glance which is seen; it is a complete verb, both active and passive, in which no function, no *voice* (as we say in grammar, with a piquant ambiguity) is defective. This dialectic is not in the least banal, it makes the Tower a singular monument; for the world ordinarily produces either purely functional organisms (camera or eye) intended to see things but which then afford nothing to sight, what *sees* being mythically linked to what remains *hidden* (this is the theme of the voyeur), or else spectacles which themselves are blind and are left in the pure passivity of the visible. The Tower (and this is one of its mythic powers) transgresses this separation, this habitual divorce of *seeing* and *being seen*, it achieves a sovereign circulation between the two functions; it is a complete object which has, if one may say so, both sexes of sight. This radiant position in the order of perception gives it a prodigious propensity to meaning: the Tower attracts meaning the way a lightning rod attracts thunderbolts; for all lovers of signification, it plays a glamorous part, that of a pure signifier, i.e. of a form in which men unceasingly put *meaning* (which they extract at will from their knowledge, their dreams, their history), without this meaning thereby ever being finite and fixed: who can say what the Tower will be for humanity tomorrow? But there can be no doubt it will always be something, and something of humanity itself. Glance, object, symbol, such is the infinite circuit of functions which permits it always to be something other and something much more than the Eiffel Tower.

In order to satisfy this great oneiric function, which makes it into a kind of total monument, the Tower must escape reason. The first condition of this victorious flight is that the Tower be an utterly *useless* monument. The Tower's inutility has always been obscurely felt to be a scandal, i.e. a truth, one that is precious and inadmissible. Even before it was built, it was blamed for being useless, which, it was believed at the time, was sufficent to condemn it; it was not in the spirit of a period commonly dedicated to rationality and to the empiricism of great bourgeois enterprises to endure the notion of a useless

FOUCAULT.INFO



Michel Foucault. Of Other Spaces (1967), Heterotopias.

This text, entitled "Des Espace Autres," and published by the French journal Architecture /Mouvement/ Continuité in October, 1984, was the basis of a lecture given by Michel Foucault in March 1967. Although not reviewed for publication by the author and thus not part of the official corpus of his work, the manuscript was released into the public domain for an exhibition in Berlin shortly before Michel Foucault's death. Translated from the French by Jay Miskowiec.

The great obsession of the nineteenth century was, as we know, history: with its themes of development and of suspension, of crisis, and cycle, themes of the ever-accumulating past, with its great preponderance of dead men and the menacing glaciation of the world. The nineteenth century found its essential mythological resources in the second principle of thermaldynamics- The present epoch will perhaps be above all the epoch of space. We are in the epoch of simultaneity: we are in the epoch of juxtaposition, the epoch of the near and far, of the side-by-side, of the dispersed. We are at a moment. I believe, when our experience of the world is less that of a long life developing through time than that of a network that connects points and intersects with its own skein. One could perhaps say that certain ideological conflicts animating present-day polemics oppose the pious descendents of time and the determined inhabitants of space. Structuralism, or at least which is grouped under this slightly too general name, is the effort to establish, between elements that could have been connected on a temporal axis, an ensemble of relations that makes them appear as juxtaposed, set off against one another, implicated by each other-that makes them appear, in short, as a sort of configuration. Actually, structuralism does not entail denial of time; it does involve a certain manner of dealing with what we call time and what we call history.

Yet it is necessary to notice that the space which today appears to form the horizon of our concerns, our theory, our systems, is not an innovation; space itself has a history in Western experience, and it is not possible to disregard the fatal intersection of time with space. One could say, by way of retracing this history of space very roughly, that in the Middle Ages there was a hierarchic ensemble of places: sacred places and profane plates: protected places and open, exposed places: urban places and rural places (all these concern the real life of men). In cosmological theory, there were the supercelestial places as opposed to the celestial, and the celestial place was in its turn opposed to the terrestrial place. There were places where things had been put because they had been violently displaced, and then on the contrary places where things found their natural ground and stability. It was this complete hierarchy, this opposition, this intersection of places that constituted what could very roughly be called medieval space: the space of emplacement.

This space of emplacement was opened up by Galileo. For the real scandal of Galileo's work lay not so much in his discovery, or rediscovery, that the earth revolved around the sun, but in his constitution of an infinite, and infinitely open space. In such a space the place of the Middle Ages turned out to be dissolved. as it were; a thing's place was no longer anything but a point in its movement, just as the stability of a thing was only its movement indefinitely slowed down. In other words, starting with Galileo and the seventeenth century, extension was substituted for localization.

Today the site has been substituted for extension which itself had replaced emplacement. The site is defined by relations of proximity between points or elements; formally, we can describe these relations as series, trees, or grids. Moreover, the importance of the site as a problem in contemporary technical work is

well known: the storage of data or of the intermediate results of a calculation in the memory of a machine, the circulation of discrete elements with a random output (automobile traffic is a simple case, or indeed the sounds on a telephone line); the identification of marked or coded elements inside a set that may be randomly distributed, or may be arranged according to single or to multiple classifications.

In a still more concrete manner, the problem of siting or placement arises for mankind in terms of demography. This problem of the human site or living space is not simply that of knowing whether there will be enough space for men in the world -a problem that is certainly quite important - but also that of knowing what relations of propinquity, what type of storage, circulation, marking, and classification of human elements should be adopted in a given situation in order to achieve a given end. Our epoch is one in which space takes for us the form of relations among sites.

In any case I believe that the anxiety of our era has to do fundamentally with space, no doubt a great deal more than with time. Time probably appears to us only as one of the various distributive operations that are possible for the elements that are spread out in space,

Now, despite all the techniques for appropriating space, despite the whole network of knowledge that enables us to delimit or to formalize it, contemporary space is perhaps still not entirely desanctified (apparently unlike time, it would seem, which was detached from the sacred in the nineteenth century). To be sure a certain theoretical desanctification of space (the one signaled by Galileo's work) has occurred, but we may still not have reached the point of a practical desanctification of space. And perhaps our life is still governed by a certain number of oppositions that remain inviolable, that our institutions and practices have not yet dared to break down. These are oppositions that we regard as simple givens: for example between private space and public space, between family space and social space, between cultural space and useful space, between the space of leisure and that of work. All these are still nurtured by the hidden presence of the sacred.

Bachelard's monumental work and the descriptions of phenomenologists have taught us that we do not live in a homogeneous and empty space, but on the contrary in a space thoroughly imbued with quantities and perhaps thoroughly fantasmatic as well. The space of our primary perception, the space of our dreams and that of our passions hold within themselves qualities that seem intrinsic: there is a light, ethereal, transparent space, or again a dark, rough, encumbered space; a space from above, of summits, or on the contrary a space from below of mud; or again a space that can be flowing like sparkling water, or space that is fixed, congealed, like stone or crystal. Yet these analyses, while fundamental for reflection in our time, primarily concern internal space. I should like to speak now of external space.

The space in which we live, which draws us out of ourselves, in which the erosion of our lives. our time and our history occurs, the space that claws and gnaws at us, is also, in itself, a heterogeneous space. In other words, we do not live in a kind of void, inside of which we could place individuals and things. We do not live inside a void that could be colored with diverse shades of light, we live inside a set of relations that delineates sites which are irreducible to one another and absolutely not superimposable on one another.

Of course one might attempt to describe these different sites by looking for the set of relations by which a given site can be defined. For example, describing the set of relations that define the sites of transportation, streets, trains (a train is an extraordinary bundle of relations because it is something through which one goes, it is also something by means of which one can go from one point to another, and then it is also something that goes by). One could describe, via the cluster of relations that allows them to be defined, the sites of temporary relaxation -cafes, cinemas, beaches. Likewise one could describe, via its network of relations, the closed or semi-closed sites of rest - the house, the bedroom, the bed, el cetera. But among all these sites, I am interested in certain ones that have the curious property of being in relation with all the other sites, but in such a way as to suspect, neutralize, or invert the set of relations that they happen to designate, mirror, or reflect. These spaces, as it were, which are linked with all the others, which however contradict all the other sites, are of two main types.

HETEROTOPIAS

First there are the utopias. Utopias are sites with no real place. They are sites that have a general relation of direct or inverted analogy with the real space of Society. They present society itself in a perfected form,

or else society turned upside down, but in any case these utopias are fundamentally unreal spaces.

There are also, probably in every culture, in every civilization, real places - places that do exist and that are formed in the very founding of society - which are something like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted. Places of this kind are outside of all places, even though it may be possible to indicate their location in reality. Because these places are absolutely different from all the sites that they reflect and speak about, I shall call them, by way of contrast to utopias, heterotopias. I believe that between utopias and these quite other sites, these heterotopias, there might be a sort of mixed, joint experience, which would be the mirror. The mirror is, after all, a utopia, since it is a placeless place. In the mirror, I see myself there where I am not, in an unreal, virtual space that opens up behind the surface; I am over there, there where I am not, a sort of shadow that gives my own visibility to myself, that enables me to see myself there where I am absent: such is the utopia of the mirror. But it is also a heterotopia in so far as the mirror does exist in reality, where it exerts a sort of counteraction on the position that I occupy. From the standpoint of the mirror I discover my absence from the place where I am since I see myself over there. Starting from this gaze that is, as it were, directed toward me, from the ground of this virtual space that is on the other side of the glass, I come back toward myself; I begin again to direct my eyes toward myself and to reconstitute myself there where I am. The mirror functions as a heterotopia in this respect: it makes this place that I occupy at the moment when I look at myself in the glass at once absolutely real, connected with all the space that surrounds it, and absolutely unreal, since in order to be perceived it has to pass through this virtual point which is over there.

As for the heterotopias as such, how can they be described? What meaning do they have? We might imagine a sort of systematic description - I do not say a science because the term is too galvanized now -that would, in a given society, take as its object the study, analysis, description, and 'reading' (as some like to say nowadays) of these different spaces, of these other places. As a sort of simultaneously mythic and real contestation of the space in which we live, this description could be called heterotopology.

Its first principle is that there is probably not a single culture in the world that fails to constitute heterotopias. That is a constant of every human group. But the heterotopias obviously take quite varied forms, and perhaps no one absolutely universal form of heterotopia would be found. We can however class them in two main categories.

In the so-called primitive societies, there is a certain form of heterotopia that I would call crisis heterotopias, i.e., there are privileged or sacred or forbidden places, reserved for individuals who are, in relation to society and to the human environment in which they live, in a state of crisis: adolescents, menstruating women, pregnant women. the elderly, etc. In out society, these crisis heterotopias are persistently disappearing, though a few remnants can still be found. For example, the boarding school, in its nineteenth-century form, or military service for young men, have certainly played such a role, as the first manifestations of sexual virility were in fact supposed to take place "elsewhere" than at home. For girls, there was, until the middle of the twentieth century, a tradition called the "honeymoon trip" which was an ancestral theme. The young woman's deflowering could take place "nowhere" and, at the moment of its occurrence the train or honeymoon hotel was indeed the place of this nowhere, this heterotopia without geographical markers.

But these heterotopias of crisis are disappearing today and are being replaced, I believe, by what we might call heterotopias of deviation: those in which individuals whose behavior is deviant in relation to the required mean or norm are placed. Cases of this are rest homes and psychiatric hospitals, and of course prisons, and one should perhaps add retirement homes that are, as it were, on the borderline between the heterotopia of crisis and the heterotopia of deviation since, after all, old age is a crisis, but is also a deviation since in our society where leisure is the rule, idleness is a sort of deviation.

The second principle of this description of heterotopias is that a society, as its history unfolds, can make an existing heterotopia function in a very different fashion; for each heterotopia has a precise and determined function within a society and the same heterotopia can, according to the synchrony of the culture in which it occurs, have one function or another.

As an example I shall take the strange heterotopia of the cemetery. The cemetery is certainly a place unlike

ordinary cultural spaces. It is a space that is however connected with all the sites of the city, state or society or village, etc., since each individual, each family has relatives in the cemetery. In western culture the cemetery has practically always existed. But it has undergone important changes. Until the end of the eighteenth century, the cemetery was placed at the heart of the city, next to the church. In it there was a hierarchy of possible tombs. There was the charnel house in which bodies lost the last traces of individuality, there were a few individual tombs and then there were the tombs inside the church. These latter tombs were themselves of two types, either simply tombstones with an inscription, or mausoleums with statues. This cemetery housed inside the sacred space of the church has taken on a quite different cast in modern civilizations, and curiously, it is in a time when civilization has become 'atheistic,' as one says very crudely, that western culture has established what is termed the cult of the dead.

Basically it was quite natural that, in a time of real belief in the resurrection of bodies and the immortality of the soul, overriding importance was not accorded to the body's remains. On the contrary, from the moment when people are no longer sure that they have a soul or that the body will regain life, it is perhaps necessary to give much more attention to the dead body, which is ultimately the only trace of our existence in the world and in language. In any case, it is from the beginning of the nineteenth century that everyone has a right to her or his own little box for her or his own little personal decay, but on the other hand, it is only from that start of the nineteenth century that cemeteries began to be located at the outside border of cities. In correlation with the individualization of death and the bourgeois appropriation of the cemetery, there arises an obsession with death as an 'illness.' The dead, it is supposed, bring illnesses to the living, and it is the presence and proximity of the dead right beside the houses, next to the church, almost in the middle of the street, it is this proximity that propagates death itself. This major theme of illness spread by the contagion in the cemeteries persisted until the end of the eighteenth century, until, during the nineteenth century, the shift of cemeteries toward the suburbs was initiated. The cemeteries then came to constitute, no longer the sacred and immortal heart of the city, but the other city, where each family possesses its dark resting place.

Third principle. The heterotopia is capable of juxtaposing in a single real place several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible. Thus it is that the theater brings onto the rectangle of the stage, one after the other, a whole series of places that are foreign to one another; thus it is that the cinema is a very odd rectangular room, at the end of which, on a two-dimensional screen, one sees the projection of a three-dimensional space, but perhaps the oldest example of these heterotopias that take the form of contradictory sites is the garden. We must not forget that in the Orient the garden, an astonishing creation that is now a thousand years old, had very deep and seemingly superimposed meanings. The traditional garden of the Persians was a sacred space that was supposed to bring together inside its rectangle four parts representing the four parts of the world, with a space still more sacred than the others that were like an umbilicus, the navel of the world at its center (the basin and water fountain were there); and all the vegetation of the garden was supposed to come together in this space, in this sort of microcosm. As for carpets, they were originally reproductions of gardens (the garden is a rug onto which the whole world comes to enact its symbolic perfection, and the rug is a sort of garden that can move across space). The garden is the smallest parcel of the world and then it is the totality of the world. The garden has been a sort of happy, universalizing heterotopia since the beginnings of antiquity (our modern zoological gardens spring from that source).

Fourth principle. Heterotopias are most often linked to slices in time - which is to say that they open onto what might be termed, for the sake of symmetry, heterochronies. The heterotopia begins to function at full capacity when men arrive at a sort of absolute break with their traditional time. This situation shows us that the cemetery is indeed a highly heterotopic place since, for the individual, the cemetery begins with this strange heterochrony, the loss of life, and with this quasi-eternity in which her permanent lot is dissolution and disappearance.

From a general standpoint, in a society like ours heterotopias and heterochronies are structured and distributed in a relatively complex fashion. First of all, there are heterotopias of indefinitely accumulating time, for example museums and libraries, Museums and libraries have become heterotopias in which time never stops building up and topping its own summit, whereas in the seventeenth century, even at the end of the century, museums and libraries were the expression of an individual choice. By contrast, the idea of accumulating everything, of establishing a sort of general archive, the will to enclose in one place all times,

all epochs, all forms, all tastes, the idea of constituting a place of all times that is itself outside of time and inaccessible to its ravages, the project of organizing in this way a sort of perpetual and indefinite accumulation of time in an immobile place, this whole idea belongs to our modernity. The museum and the library are heterotopias that are proper to western culture of the nineteenth century.

Opposite these heterotopias that are linked to the accumulation of time, there are those linked, on the contrary, to time in its most flowing, transitory, precarious aspect, to time in the mode of the festival. These heterotopias are not oriented toward the eternal, they are rather absolutely temporal [chroniques]. Such, for example, are the fairgrounds, these' marvelous empty sites on the outskirts of cities that teem once or twice a year with stands, displays, heteroclite objects, wrestlers, snakewomen, fortune-tellers, and so forth. Quite recently, a new kind of temporal heterotopia has been invented: vacation villages, such as those Polynesian villages that offer a compact three weeks of primitive and eternal nudity to the inhabitants of the cities. You see, moreover, that through the two forms of heterotopias that come together here, the heterotopia of the festival and that of the eternity of accumulating time, the huts of Djerba are in a sense relatives of libraries and museums. for the rediscovery of Polynesian life abolishes time; yet the experience is just as much the,, rediscovery of time, it is as if the entire history of humanity reaching back to its origin were accessible in a sort of immediate knowledge,

Fifth principle. Heterotopias always presuppose a system of opening and closing that both isolates them and makes them penetrable. In general, the heterotopic site is not freely accessible like a public place. Either the entry is compulsory, as in the case of entering a barracks or a prison, or else the individual has to submit to rites and purifications. To get in one must have a certain permission and make certain gestures. Moreover, there are even heterotopias that are entirely consecrated to these activities of purification -purification that is partly religious and partly hygienic, such as the hammin of the Moslems, or else purification that appears to be purely hygienic, as in Scandinavian saunas.

There are others, on the contrary, that seem to be pure and simple openings, but that generally hide curious exclusions. Everyone can enter into thew heterotopic sites, but in fact that is only an illusion- we think we enter where we are, by the very fact that we enter, excluded. I am thinking for example, of the famous bedrooms that existed on the great farms of Brazil and elsewhere in South America. The entry door did not lead into the central room where the family lived, and every individual or traveler who came by had the right to ope this door, to enter into the bedroom and to sleep there for a night. Now these bedrooms were such that the individual who went into them never had access to the family's quarter the visitor was absolutely the guest in transit, was not really the invited guest. This type of heterotopia, which has practically disappeared from our civilizations, could perhaps be found in the famous American motel rooms where a man goes with his car and his mistress and where illicit sex is both absolutely sheltered and absolutely hidden, kept isolated without however being allowed out in the open.

Sixth principle. The last trait of heterotopias is that they have a function in relation to all the space that remains. This function unfolds between two extreme poles. Either their role is to create a space of illusion that exposes every real space, all the sites inside of which human life is partitioned, as still more illusory (perhaps that is the role that was played by those famous brothels of which we are now deprived). Or else, on the contrary, their role is to create a space that is other, another real space, as perfect, as meticulous, as well arranged as ours is messy, ill constructed, and jumbled. This latter type would be the heterotopia, not of illusion, but of compensation, and I wonder if certain colonies have not functioned somewhat in this manner. In certain cases, they have played, on the level of the general organization of terrestrial space, the role of heterotopias. I am thinking, for example, of the first wave of colonization in the seventeenth century, of the Puritan societies that the English had founded in America and that were absolutely perfect other places. I am also thinking of those extraordinary Jesuit colonies that were founded in South America: marvelous, absolutely regulated colonies in which human perfection was effectively achieved. The Jesuits of Paraguay established colonies in which existence was regulated at every turn. The village was laid out according to a rigorous plan around a rectangular place at the foot of which was the church; on one side, there was the school; on the other, the cemetery-, and then, in front of the church, an avenue set out that another crossed at fight angles; each family had its little cabin along these two axes and thus the sign of Christ was exactly reproduced. Christianity marked the space and geography of the American world with its fundamental sign.

The daily life of individuals was regulated, not by the whistle, but by the bell. Everyone was awakened at the same time, everyone began work at the same time; meals were at noon and five o'clock-, then came bedtime, and at midnight came what was called the marital wake-up, that is, at the chime of the churchbell, each person carried out her/his duty.

Brothels and colonies are two extreme types of heterotopia, and if we think, after all, that the boat is a floating piece of space, a place without a place, that exists by itself, that is closed in on itself and at the same time is given over to the infinity of the sea and that, from port to port, from tack to tack, from brothel to brothel, it goes as far as the colonies in search of the most precious treasures they conceal in their gardens, you will understand why the boat has not only been for our civilization, from the sixteenth century until the present, the great instrument of economic development (I have not been speaking of that today), but has been simultaneously the greatest reserve of the imagination. The ship is the heterotopia par excellence. In civilizations without boats, dreams dry up, espionage takes the place of adventure, and the police take the place of pirates.

+ French original version and audio extract
+ See also selection of books by Michel Foucault

Chapter 7

Desert spectacular

Zygmunt Bauman

> Flâner: Errer sans bout, en s'arrêtant pour regarder.
>
> (Larousse)
>
> We get to where we are going, and then there is still the distance to cover.
>
> (Edmond Jabès)

The essential existence of the modern man, said Ernst Bloch, 'tiptoes along the narrow ridge between the disappearing "now" and the never nearly appearing "not yet" '.[1] Modern man cannot stand still. Not that he is particularly restless by nature, not that his teachers brought him up to resent stillness and love movement and change, not that his is the spirit of risk, curiosity and adventure; he cannot stand still because there is no place to stand still on. Every 'now' melts away and disappears, no 'now' can be expected to last. Each moment has its unique identity in the sense of Ricoeur's '*l'ipséité*' (it is different from other moments), but it lacks demonstrably all identity in the sense of '*la mêmete*' (it remains identical with itself but for a fleeting, elusive moment). Now's identity is flawed: incomplete, shaky, dying the moment it has been born. As if every 'now' appeared in the world solely in order to call the bluff of other 'nows', of any past and future 'now', of 'now' as such. '*Impuls der Erwartung*' which, as Bloch insists, guides modern existence, is a fate, not choice. No 'now' can be contemplated in peace, examined at leisure, savoured. It can only be watched vanishing, changing colour and shape so that it turns, abruptly or imperceptibly, into another 'now', like itself a container full of yet-unborn future, like itself full of doubt and hope, waiting, anticipation.

Not that the 'now' feels solid and reliable while it lasts – be its 'lasting' as brief as it is. It crumbles once you touch it; it blurs the closer you look; you cannot be sure of its form, content, meaning. Nor is there enough time to experiment, to look back, to make sure. The 'now' comes indistinct, shoots by vague and fades away dimmed before you say 'this is it'. As Stein and Vidich found out 30 years ago, we 'hold to our sanity by learning to appreciate "multiple realities". . . . Ironic awareness of the manifold contexts, interpretations, and motives that qualify human character and action has become an indispensable item in our equipment for living'.[2]

It is the modern world which is the original *flâneur*, the Baudelaire/Benjamin *human flâneur* is but its mirror image, its imitation, the product of stock-taking, of forced adjustment and mimicry. Like the world which is his home, the *flâneur* wanders without aim, his stroll punctuated every once in a while by looking around. Without aim? That aimless stroll *is* the aim; there could not be, there should not be other aims. Neither the world nor the solitary wanderer knows to where they move or what is to be found round the corner; the aim of the present move is yet to come, and the aim of the aimless move is to prompt it or lure it or force it to come. The *flâneur* wanders in search of the aim of his wandering. The strolling is the *Impuls der Erwartung* the *Incipit Vita Nova* incarnate; an obscure existence with a yet-undiscovered-essence, looking around in hope to find the predication that has-not-yet-arrived;[3] the hope on a hunting expedition in which aim is the game.

The better to absorb the predicate still to come, the *flâneur* must purify himself of the predicates that have come already. Like his hope, the *flâneur* wants to be wide open and unprejudiced: he hopes to re-open the options that have been closed, to tear off the labels of class, status, or trade, to be once more innocent and innocently receptive. 'The *flâneur* is someone abandoned in the crowd'; but the *flâneur* is not 'the man of the crowd'; the *flâneur* seeks the crowd, but he also needs the 'elbow room', which the man of the crowd does not have and does not want to have.[4] If the aim comes – when it comes – the *flâneur* wants to be there, free to take it in his arms. Unlike the man of the crowd, he wants the crowd as a shelter, not the cure, for his loneliness; as a wall protecting his solitude. The *flâneur* lives his life as a succession of absolute beginnings. From the past, there is an easy exit; the present is just a gateway; the future is not yet, and what is not yet cannot bind. A series

of starts but no ends. Hope never despaired of but never fulfilled; never despaired of *because* never fulfilled. A string of episodes without history and without consequence.

THE CITY AND THE DESERT

'In a desert – wrote Edmond Jabès – there are no avenues, no boulevards, no blind alleys and no streets. Only – here and there – fragmentary imprints of steps, quickly effaced and denied'.[5] A most prominent feature of the big city, wrote Walter Benjamin, is 'the obliteration of the individual's traces in the big-city crowd'. It is 'not only possible' but 'far more than probable' – wrote Edgar Allan Poe of one of his characters, Marie Roget – 'that Marie might have proceeded, at any given period, by any one of her many routes . . . without meeting a single individual whom she knew, or by whom she was known'.[6] For all she knew, the people she did meet could be sand dunes; now here, now no more; coming from nowhere a moment ago, a moment later effaced into nothingness, having offered nothing for the memory to take in and retain.

'For the uprooted' – writes Jabès – 'a tree is an element in landscape of no interest to him'. What he seeks is the company of 'anonymous stones, buildings rising in the glory of their anonymity' among which he strolls, since neither the stones nor the cement which links them into buildings are 'from here'. 'For a stranger, only a strange world can be his'.[7] What attracts the stranger to the city is what makes the city and the desert alike: in both, there is just the present, untied by the past, the present that may be lived as the beginning, and a secure beginning, a beginning that does not threaten to solidify into a consequence, a beginning which can be only followed by other beginnings, and thus may be lived with the benign feeling of impunity. There is no more to the routes than the imprint of steps, and the imprints will not last. 'I no longer know where I am. I know I am nowhere. Here.'[8] In the city, as in the desert, the stranger, the wanderer, the nomad, the *flâneur* finds *reprieve from time*.

In the space of daily life, time is fixed. No escape from time there, no reprieve. Freedom from time is the lot of the refugee from space. In the desert, and in the anonymous city of the *flâneur*, time has been frittered away because these are no-spaces, spaces out of space. They have not been reached by, or they won their exclusion

from, or they play the game of independence of, that civilization of which Balzac wrote in 1850 that it

> registers the departure and the arrival of coaches in public places, counts letters and stamps them when they are posted and again when they are delivered, which provides houses with numbers and will soon have the whole country down to the smallest plot of land on its registers.

In such places the exile becomes a seclusion and the freedom that only seclusion can offer unreservedly. Here, the loneliness of the stranger can be played to his advantage; at least, it can be lived as an advantage. The stranger is in control. It is his footprints alone which cross the void with routes. It is he and he alone who may 'fill the hollow space'[9] with fiction, with the sequences of time spun by his imagination, and spun at will. He is out on vacation – from reality. In reality, he is overdetermined; he wears his determination as the beast of burden wears its yoke. Out there, in the desert or in the city, he plays the game of underdetermination. This is a pleasureable game: for those who know they may if they wish return to the reality they like; for those who may for a moment deem themselves free from the reality they detest.

To be in control, Foucault told us, is to see without being seen. This is precisely what the *flâneur* does. In the city as much as in the desert – even if it may seem that in the desert one is more exposed to the unwelcome gaze than in the city, where one can always hide in a crowd (there is nowhere to hide in the desert). But the aimless, diffuse street crowd in which the *flâneur* hides is a tacit agreement to treat each other as if everyone was alone in a desert; that crowd is a play in which everybody thrown in rehearses the conduct of the desert nomads. That crowd can survive only as long as it pretends to be a desert. So that everyone can go on playing the game of I-see-you-you-see-me-not. Being an actor in the play of crowd is to pretend that there are no spectators and that one is not a spectator oneself. The art the *flâneur* masters is that of seeing without being caught looking.

But the *flâneur*'s control is imagined. Its beauty, unclouded beauty, beauty unspoiled by guilty conscience or fear of shame, is its inconsequentiality. This control will not intrude into the realities of the controlled. It will not limit *their* options. This control, unlike that other, gruesome and sinister one which it playfully emulates, reproduces contingency of life instead of confining it or stifling.

I see that man there meeting that woman. They stop, they talk. I do not know from where they came; I do not know what they are talking about; I do not know where they will go when they finish talking. Because I do not know all that and much more, I may make them into whatever I wish, all the more so that whatever I make them into will have no effect on what they are or will become. I am in charge; I invest their encounter with meaning; I may make him into a philanderer, her into a wife seeking escape from the grinding monotony of marriage; I may send them to bed right from where they stand at the moment, or to their respective rooms where they will sulk the missed chance. The power of my fantasy is the only limit the reality I imagine has, and the only it needs.To *flâner*, is to rehearse contingency of meaning; life as bagful of episodes none of which is definite, unequivocal, irreversible; life as a play.

FLÂNEUR, THE TRAVELLING PLAYER

The joy of strolling is the joy of playing. 'Wandering without aim, stopping once in a while to look around' is, one may say, the ultimate play.

The great Dutch thinker, Johan Huizinga, preferred the name *homo ludens* – he who plays – to other more popular but in his view less distinctive names given to Man in order to set him apart from the rest of living creatures, like *homo sapiens* or *homo faber*.[10] Play, wrote Huizinga, is older than culture; indeed, it is the very stuff of which culture, that human mode of being-in-the-world, has been and goes on being moulded. Being which is a play is a being that goes beyond reproducing itself; that has not got the perpetuation of itself as its only goal.

Man does not play 'in order to'; play has no other aim but itself. Play is, one may say, the ultimate *autotelic* phenomenon. Perhaps even more so than morality – the other insouciantly non-instrumental proclivity – of which P.F. Strawson said that no attempt to 'step outside ourselves' so as to 'support' it from 'an external, objective point of view' 'has yet suceeded, and with good reason':

> If external justification requires us imaginatively to strip ourselves of our moral sentiments so that we may view them 'objectively', what resources will we be able to call on to conduct this examination. . . . Moral philosophy must be an 'inside job', however much one may wish otherwise.[11]

The answer to the question 'Why should one be moral?' cannot be functional or logical, but only moral. There is no 'neutral ground', the 'outside' of morality from which morality can be scanned, explained and justified; the effort to justify it, in as far as it makes any sense at all, as it comes to grips with what morality truly is – is itself a moral action. The same may be said of play. Our efforts to 'account for' the ludic capacity of the humans, to weave fine mental canvasses into which play may be woven, to place the play in the 'order of things', to portray the play as a product or a factor of something other than play – is also a play. We would not as much as try to do it in the first place were we not belonging to the species *homo ludens*.

From the point of view of all solemn, 'serious', no-joke pastimes with which life aimed at survival is punctuated, play is gratuitous. It serves no 'sensible' purpose. It may bring riches, but this is not why we do it. It may make us more healthy, but more often than not its impact is the very opposite of what medical men would describe as health. Play does not serve survival nor any of the many tasks into which the society in which we live has short-changed the supreme purpose of self-preservation. If anything, play is a break in the performance of those tasks. Play is not about survival (if anything, it is what makes the survival worth dreaming about and pursuing). When called to justify itself in terms of the function it serves, play reveals its utter and irremediable redundancy.

Play is free. It vanishes together with freedom. There is no such thing as obligatory play, play on command. One can be coerced to obey the rules of the game, but not to play (one can bring the horse to water, but one cannot make him drink . . .). This is perhaps why play remains so stubbornly non-functional. Were it to serve a purpose, were I to do it 'in order to' bring about or protect certain things I like or others like and want me to like, there would be little freedom left in my act of playing. The act is truly and fully free only when truly and fully gratuitous.

Being gratuitous and being free is what sets the play apart from the 'normal', 'ordinary', 'proper', 'real' life. Play may be serious, and often it is, and it is at its best when it is; but even then it is 'not for real', it is enacted 'as if' it was real, this 'as-ifness' quality being precisely what sets its apart from 'real reality'. One plays when

knowing that the assumptions are what they are: assumptions, which have been freely accepted and may be freely dropped. We speak of reality when we do not have such knowledge, or do not dare to believe it, or know it to be untrue. There is nothing gratuitous and not much that is free about reality.

If reality is oozy, ubiquitous, straggly, all over the place – play is securely protected behind its temporal and spatial walls. Play has its beginning and its end, both well marked – with a bell, a whistle, a starter shot, a finishing line, the rise and the fall of the curtain. It does not begin before it begins and it does not go on after it has ended. Play has its place – race course, tennis court, dance hall, sports stadium, discotheque, church, chessboard – also well marked – by stage frame, fence, guarded entries. Play does not spill over, contaminate, reach the parts one would wish or one has to keep clean; it can be isolated, confined in the limits so that it does not affect or disturb what it should not. It can even be kept secret. And thanks to the clarity (and conventionality) of borders, one may enter and leave the play, a feat which cannot be accomplished in 'reality'. Now I play, not I do not. I can detach myself if I wish from the play, its assumptions, its 'as-ifness'. It is precisely my ability to detach myself, to opt out, that makes the play an 'as-if' action.

Play may be restarted and repeated; even its end is 'as if', not really real. No defeat (no victory either) is final and irrevocable. The chance of revenge sweetens the most bitter of failures. One can always try again, and the roles may still be reversed. Because it can be repeated, played again, because its end just clears the site for another beginning, makes new beginning possible, playing is to rehearse eternity: in play, time runs to its appointed end only to start running again. Time has a 'direction' only inside the play, but the repeatability of plays cancels that direction, cancels indeed the flow of time itself. Playing is not cummulative. Nothing accrues (except the skills of the player, or his fatigue, or his enthusiasm, or his boredom), nothing 'builds up'. Each new play is an absolute beginning – the result of the last one does not affect its result – as wide open as the last play was when it started. One may say that play, unlike 'real reality', is a Markov process, not Markov chain: probability of reaching some future state depends solely on the present state, not on the past events that led to it. In a single play, as in reality, past moves confine the freedom of choice of the player; but in the infinitely extendable series of plays freedom

recovers its fullness with the start of each new play and is once more unlimited, whatever the player has done in the past. Play has no lasting effects, it does not 'stick', it does not spawn obligations, does not leave behind bounds and duties.

Each play sets its rules. Play *is* the rules: play has no other existence but a number of players observing rules. Rules have the advantage of being spelled out, so that it is clear, or can be made clear in each instance, what belongs and what does not belong to the game. The clarity of the rules precludes rebellion: 'one cannot be sceptical regarding the rules of the game,' says Huizinga; 'It makes no sense to "transgress" a game's rules,' says Baudrillard; 'Within a cycle's recurrence, there is no line one can jump (instead, one simply leaves the game).'[12] As it relies on the serious treatment of the rules for its existence, exposing the rule as 'just a convention', amounts to dismissing the game as 'just a game' – and this, as we have seen before, is the one occassion no play can survive. The threat which the play fortifies itself against is the spoilsport, not a law-breaker.

Out of the yarn of rules play weaves up its own order; a homely order, a cosy order, an order which never hangs above the heads of the players as the laws of society or nature do, but one which is born ever anew, together with the players' willingness to obey it, and evaporates without sediment once that willingness peters out. This is what all order ought to be like; this is what few, if any, 'real' orders are, or seem to be. However meticulously the rule-made order might be observed, the discipline is never lived as oppression. It does not humiliate nor enslave. A dream order, of a kind all orders promise to be but few keep their promise: an order that enables, empowers, comes complete with that 'knowledge how to go on' which Wittgenstein saw as the substance of all understanding. Indeed, the order conjured up by the play is so attractive that no order is amiss to steal some of its seductive power: all orders like to speak of obligations as role-playing, of enforced moves as acting, even of its coercive laws as rules . . .

We are all players. The *flâneur* is the *travelling player*. He carries his playing with him, wherever he goes. His game is a *solitaire*; so he can squeeze all the allurements of the game to the last drop, unrestricted by the selfish or jealous team-mates and the watchful, cavilling umpire. His play is to make others play, to see others as players, to make the world a play. And in this play which he makes the world to be, he is in full control. He may disregard other

players' moves, that potential limit to his own choice. In the dramas he imagines as he wanders, he is the sole mover, script-writer, director, discerning spectator and critic. To *flâner*, means to play the game of playing; a meta-play of sorts. This play is conscious of itself as play. Its enjoyment is mature and pure. Or one may say: the job of the *flâneur* is to rehearse the world as a theatre, life as a play.

There have been around, from the start, the custom-made stages on which to play. The Arcades were the foremost among them. Spaces designed to offer the visitors the pleasure of looking; to attract the seekers of pleasure; there was money to be made out of the *flâneur*'s affliction. These spaces sold pleasurable views to look at. In order to attract the customers, though, the designers and the owners of those spaces had to buy them first. The right to look gratuitously was to be the *flâneur*'s, tomorrow the customer's, reward. Pleasurable display, fascinating view, the enticing game of shapes and colours. Customers bought through the seduction of the *flâneur*; the *flâneur*, through seduction, transformed into the consumer. In the process, the miraculous avatar of the commodity into the shopper is accomplished. At the end of the day, the dividing line has been blurred. It is no more clear what (who) is the object of consumption, who (what) is the consumer.

In her recent eye-opening study[13] Griselda Pollock pointed out that such a 'merging' of commodity and the consumer, of shopping and being the object of shopping, was first the plight and experience of women – long before the pattern practised upon them has been abstracted from its original context and elaborated upon to draw in the rest of us. In the case of the middle-class women shoppers, looking and being looked at intermingled from the start, while shopping was self-consciously the part of the process of self-selling. 'Women shopped better to make themselves perform their spectacular role in the modern city . . . displaying someone else's wealth' – the function noticed first and so sharply portrayed already by Thorstein Veblen. We may add that the custom-made (shopping) spaces for the play of *flâneurisme* offered the would-be female *flâneuses* the safe haven not to be found elsewhere. The *flâneur* could pick and choose where to play his game – to the *flâneuse*, most of *flâneur*'s favourite haunts were out of bounds. The historic link between the playfulness of the *flâneur* and modern/post-modern consumerism, between looking and making the looker into an object of looking, between buying and being

bought, had been, one may say, originally forged through the social construction of women as consumer and object of consumption. The rest of *flâneurisme*'s modern/post-modern history may be, with but a little stretching, told as one of the feminization of the *flâneur*'s ways.

FLÂNEUR, OLD AND NEW

To weave his tissue of fantasies, to carry unbroken the crucible of fervid imagination, the *flâneur* needs to preserve the elbow room of the 'man of leisure' while sunk in the crowd; he must see without being seen; it is the untiring curiosity of the spectator that conjures up both – the crowd as a theatre and the freedom of the stroller as the script-writer. In the *flâneur*, 'the joy of watching is triumphant'; the *flâneur* does not 'stagnate in the *gaper*' (*badaud*): he is 'an amateur detective'.[14] The labour of the *flâneur* is pleasurable, but it is not easy. And it cannot be performed just anywhere. The society that set off the *flâneur* on his perpetual voyage of discovery, which made him into the player expecting the world to be a play, had to supply him with the world fit for the play of discovery. Such a world was, originally, the street of the modern metropolis. The rhythm of the *flâneur*'s life is resonant, as Benjamin observed, with the pace of the big city, the *flâneur* 'catches things in flight'. In the crowded streets of metropolis, things *are* in flight.

Not all streets are, however, the proper grazing ground for the *flâneur*'s imagination. First, the pavements must be wide enough so that 'hanging around', 'stopping once in a while to look around', be physically possible. Second, there must be enough interest in the street and houses that flank it to allure those who have time and urge to hang around. Like Baudelaire who served him as a time capsule filled with sights captured and stilled on the film of poetic sensibility, Benjamin found the arcades of Paris (those 'glass-covered, marble-panelled passageways', 'lined with most elegant shops, so that such an arcade is a city, even a world, in miniature') the archetype of the type of big city street fit to become 'a dwelling for the *flâneur*'.[15] To the arcades, people came to linger and mill around. Arcades were spaces to be in, not just pass through. In the arcades, the *flâneur* was *chez soi*, at home: *flâneur* among *flâneurs*, joined by tacit agreement to keep the secret secure, sworn not to frown at, and still less to interfere, with each other's work, collectively determined to do their jobs as they should be done – singly, in

crowded solitude. And there was enough to do for each one: arcades were spaces 'where the action was' – or at least this was the expectation, rarely frustrated, which they inspired. And the right kind of action, too: an action certain never to become a burden, never to spoil the game for the would-be 'gentleman of leisure'. Action that required nothing more than being watched and fantasized about, mulled over in the heated imagination of the cool stroller. Action with all the charms of the possibility yet free from the tedium of fulfilment, with all the excitement of a chance yet-uncaught but free from the triteness of the caught one. Sandcastles of the chance, washed out before completed. Action offered together with the guarantee against frustration, as the chance missed, unlike the chance grasped, never ages and wrinkles. 'Lightning . . . then darkness!' remembered Baudelaire, the beautiful passer-by, all the more beautiful for the beautifying work that free-roaming fantasy could perform uncurbed on the ephemeric, lightning-brief testimony of the eyes: 'Lovely fugitive / whose glance has brought me back to life! . . . Of me you know nothing, I nothing of you – you / whom I might have loved and who knew that too!'[16]

The arcades are no more. Well, perhaps they remain, preserved by the heritage industry in their pristine, yet now functionless splendour – a tourist attraction, perhaps a nostalgic retreat for those few still remembering something they can be nostalgic about; tucked away from the beaten track (now a synonym for thoroughfares, freeways and expressways), where today's action is. Today's action is, after all, different: it is, mostly, about *passing* from here to there, as fast as one can manage, preferably without stopping, better still without looking around. Beautiful passers-by hide inside cars with tinted windows. Those still on the pavement are waiters and sellers at best, but more often dangerous people pure and simple: layabouts, beggars, homeless conscience-soilers, drug pushers, pickpockets, muggers, child molesters and rapists waiting for the prey. To the innocent who had to leave for a moment the wheeled security of cars, or those others, still thinking of themselves as innocent, who cannot afford that security at all, street is more a jungle than the theatre. One goes there because one must. A site fraught with risks, not chances; not meant for the gentlemen of leisure, and certainly not for the faint-hearted among them. The street is the 'out there' from which one hides, at home or inside the car, behind security locks and burgular alarms.

'The street level is dead space. . . . It is only a means of passage

to the interior' – summed up Richard Sennett, two decades ago, his analysis of the most impressive and spectacular urban developments of his time, ushering in the new era of the post-modern metropolis.[17] 'Here there are a few shops and vast areas of empty space. Here is an area to pass through, not to use.' The public space of the 'new and improved' kind has been well marked as definitely not 'just the street' – and shielded from the latter, that frightening, uncontrolled space, that favourite location of updated Gothic stories, by immense ramps and fences. Everything around oozes the message: 'the public space is an arena to move through, not be in'; the ground, in the urban planner's patois, is 'the traffic-flow-support-nexus for the vertical whole'.

Places that want the visitors to stay in, to stop and look around, bar themselves with steel and with gun-carrying or electronic guards from the public space of the street, thus as their visitors do in their homes (at long last, the Englishman's home has turned truly into his castle – with moats, turrets, rifles and all). Buildings have turned their backs to the street; the gates and gateways, once ostentatiously inviting, a proud advertisement of inside's promises, have now shrunk and hid in least conspicuous corners, as if dreaming to cancel themselves altogether and thus allow the inside to sail away once for all from the treacherous mire of the outside. As if locked up in a perverse conspiracy, tightly entwined in Bateson's 'schismogenetic chain', the shopping-mall affluence and street squalor join efforts in keeping up the seductiveness of one and repulsiveness of the other. Definitely, the street is no more the *flâneur*'s hunting ground. The 'outside' is but a traffic-flow-support-nexus. But what about the inside, if you finally get there?

The inside is, indeed, fabulous. And spectacular. And pleasurable. Just a place to 'wander aimlessly while stopping once in a while to look around' – a *flâneur*'s paradise, if ever there was one. Or rather, so it may seem. Because for that inside, aimlessness is mortal sin and capital crime, something it has sworn to burn out, or better still strangle at birth.

THE *FLÂNEUR* EXPROPRIATED

One may say that the shoping-mall world, the world of theme parks, holiday packages – those many small-size and medium-size insides struggling to match the big-size ideal of the Disneyland, that ultimate inside that puts paid, for a pre-paid time, to all outsides –

are designed with the sole purpose of rendering the aimlessness obsolete. Their tremendous attractive power they owe to the catering to the needs of *flâneurs* with the lavish profusion of which the old *flâneur* could hardly dream. They are, one may say, the world made to the *flâneur*'s measure: the world of the *flâneur* expanded into the entire world, a complete world, a world without residue or alternative. In these insides the 'real reality' needs no more to be elbowed out, with heroic efforts, by exercising all the *flâneur*'s power of fantasizing and forgetting: the 'real reality' has been already squeezed out, thoroughly and completely, before the *flâneur* embarked on his next escapade – so that there, inside, all is clear for the play called life; for life as play. This they have achieved, however, through expropriating the *flâneur*'s own right and capacity to invent the rules of the game he would play and to supervise their execution. An expropriation conducted on the pattern once practised, with astounding success, by the modern factory upon the craftman's right and capacity to set the purpose and the meaning of his productive labours. In the factory, the craftsman of yesterday was called, like before, to exercise his workmanship; only the designs he was to materialize and the values he was to incarnate were no more of his making. In the world of big and smaller Disneylands, yesterday's free-floating *flâneur* is called, like before, to wander aimlessly; only there is an aim in his aimlessness now, a function, a utility, a design – none of which is of his making. There was a goldmine somewhere in the modern urge to 'wander aimlessly'; the market found it and set to exploit. Disneylands are the mineshafts.

Still visibly shaken after a visit to the West Edmonton Hall (the fenced-out, roofed-in, air-conditioned, artificial mini-world of perpetually benign climate set in the midst of Albertan blizzards and gales, offering holiday weeks or fortnights inclusive of all the joys of global tourism without the gruelling tedium of airports and sardine-packed airplanes), Dave Hill noted

> The pursuit of aimless leisure here approaches the surreal . . . When you visit West Edmonton Hall and its avalanche of attractions, there is only one thing to do – hand in your coat at the cloakroom and submit. . . . West Edmonton Hall is not so much a shopping city as a fully integrated consumer fantasy that succeeds in being mindlessly mellifluous, utterly rediculous and absolutely out of this world. . . . Mall-building is a precise science and this indoor panorama is nothing if not state-of-the-art. . . . The pleasure is in being part of a quietly lunatic alternative universe where the thin line that divides shopping from entertainment in the late twentieth century becomes almost totally erased.

Dave Hill is not an ordinary *flâneur*-turned-shopper, the kind which the Mall has been built to dazzle, dupe and seduce, but a seasoned traveller of highly developed critical sense, knowing all too well the all-too-earthly concerns that made the paradise and keep it ticking. And yet Hill cannot but admit:

> My girlfriend and I, and our two young children, meandered among the fountains and plastic mouldings in a condition of ever-increasing gormlessness, simultaneously stunned and seduced by the diabolically manufactured mechanism for parting you from your critical faculties and your cash.

Hill knows what the crowd of *flâneurs* may sense, but does not care about and wishes to forget. After all, to 'get out of here and away from it all' was always the *flâneur*'s dearest wish. And as means to do just that, 'West Edmonton Mall is as gratifyingly mind-rotting an experience as you could wish'.[18]

Disneyland and its earnest imitations are instances of the degenerate utopia[19] of life as *flâneurisme* – much as that utopia could be, in the 'classic' era, diffuse and inarticulate, before it has been seized by the merchants, reprocessed, and liquidized into the lubricant of the profit-churning contraptions. Blatantly and unashamedly, it presents the dream as reality, the world – this world here and now, in this enclosure – as play and nothing but the play. Or, rather, it offers a reality that from the start has been meticulously disguised as a play: reality and fantasy, living and playing have changed places. In the words of Umberto Eco, 'Disneyland's Main Street seems the first scene of the fiction whereas it is an extremely shrewd commercial reality. . . . The Main Street façades are presented to us as toy houses and invite us to enter them, but their interior is always a disguised supermarket, where you buy obsessively, believing that you are still playing'. Real stuff, the stuff really at stake in the ongoing game, is taken for the token of something else, for the 'as if' of the 'for real', which has the imagination as its last hide-out. The designed reality has the advantage over the messy one outside in being custom-made to suit the *flâneur*'s whims: no risks here of

slipping inadvertently out of the game, of going on playing while the game is over. Here, the game never ends. The game is the only reality there is, and the visitor is told to stay calm as this is exactly the case. 'Disneyland makes it clear that within its magic enclosure it is fantasy that is absolutely reproduced.' But fantasy absolutely reproduced is also more absolute than any outside reality – elusive, contingent and ambiguous as it notoriously is – can ever be. Fantasy absolutely reproduced feels more real than reality – 'you risk feeling homesick for Disneyland, where the wild animals don't have to be coaxed. Disneyland tells us that technology can give us more reality than nature can.' In the world of Disneylands, 'imitation has reached its apex and afterwards reality will always be inferior to it'.[20]

Play, the *flâneur* mode of life, has become now the standard by which all reality is to be measured. None can truly match the standard. Neither can the laws of society match the attractions of the rules of the game. Disneylands are the *critique of daily life*, critique of culture. Critique which posits itself to be 'the real thing' – the cultural ideal implemented.

Disneylands are the footholds where the avant-garde of post-modern culture tests and probes the form all life is to take up and practice. They are laboratories of culture that prise the sign from representation, representation from reality, reality from play; culture of pure signs, where only the signs matter. In a world in which such culture rules, what matters is, in Philippe Genestier's words, 'les délices de l'arbitraire et de la confusion'. The delights of the arbitrary are carefree and unclouded: 'le fait "glorieux" de la pensée postmoderne n'est-il pas d'avoir déconnecté les registres de l'éthique et de l'esthétique?' (or, rather, did it not subsume the ethical in the aesthetic?). The arts have been finally liberated of the last vestiges of social commitment, of the external pressure or inner urge to legitimize their creations. These arts include the new architecture. Its most flaunted monuments 'sont dénuées de messages, d'intentions autres qu'esthético-ludiques'. They exist in a different order than older buildings: this is the touristic order, meant to accommodate *flâneurs* on the move, *flâneurs en masse*, those 'conformist idlers who aspire to nothing else but to surrender to the incessant call of the sign consumption'. In the cities which are with ever more zeal adjusting to the needs of *flâneurs*, 'the space is thought of as an open expanse filled with scintillating curiosities duly itemized by the guides and mundane gossip'.[21] 'Capitals of

fiction become reality' – summed up Jean Baudrillard in his impression of America. To put it the other way round: fiction dissolves reality, makes it disappear as it is rendered no more visible. Post-modern culture (if there is such a thing) is guided by the *aesthetics of disappearance*. And what is the most radical, absolute embodiment of that kind of aesthetic, if not desert? 'The desert is simply that: an ecstatic critique of culture, an ecstatic form of disappearance.'[22]

What is real about reality is its toughness, resistance, obstinacy, limits. 'Reality is real' means that *not everything* is possible. No such restrictions in the game. Here one can try, and try, and try again. Here each whistle heralds an absolutely new beginning. Game has no end. It sets its own space and its own time. It makes 'forever' feasible, as it translates it as 'as long as we play'. Why should we ever stop?

> How far can we go in the non-referential desert form without cracking up and, of course, still keep alive the esoteric charm of disappearance? A theoretical question here materialized in the objective conditions of a journey and therefore carries with it a fundamental rule: aim for the point of no return. This is the key. And the crucial moment is that brutal instant which reveals that the journey has no end, that there is no longer any reason for it to come to an end. . . . The centrifugal, eccentric point is reached where movement produces the vacuum that sucks you in.[23]

It is difficult to resist the temptation of paraphrasing Weber:[24]

> The *flâneur* wanted to play his game at leisure; we are forced to do so. For when *flâneurism* was carried out of the Parisian arcades into everyday life, and began to dominate wordly aesthetics, it did its part in building the tremendous cosmos of the post-modern consumerist order. This order is now bound to the technical and economic conditions of machine production which today determine the lives of all individuals who are born into this mechanism, not only those directly concerned with living their life as play, with irresistible force. Perhaps it will so determine them until the last bit of information is turned out by the computer. In Baudelaire's or Benjamin's view the dedication to mobile fantasy should lie on the shoulders of the *flâneur* like a light cloak, which can be thrown aside at any moment. But fate decreed that the cloak should become an iron cage.

Als Roland Barthes 1976 auf Vorschlag Michel Foucaults an das Collège de France berufen wird, ist dies der Höhepunkt seiner ungewöhnlichen akademischen Karriere. In den Mittelpunkt seiner ersten Vorlesung (1976/77) stellt Barthes die »Idiorrhythmie«. Der Begriff bezeichnet jede Gemeinschaft, in welcher der persönliche Lebensrhythmus jedes einzelnen seinen Platz findet – »einen utopischen Sozialismus der Distanz«. Diesem spürt Barthes in verschiedenen Szenarien nach, unter anderem in den Klöstern auf dem Berg Athos, in Thomas Manns *Zauberberg* und Defoes *Robinson Crusoe*. Inhaltlich knüpft Barthes dabei an sein überaus erfolgreiches Buch *Fragmente einer Sprache der Liebe* an.

Dieser Band dokumentiert die Vorlesungsnotizen, die »Partitur des Professors«. Sie geben dem Leser die Möglichkeit, »aus unmittelbarer Nähe ein lebendiges, aktives Denken zu verfolgen, eine Schreibdynamik, ein lehrreiches Spiel mit dem Wissen und mit den Zuhörern«. (Éric Marty)

Roland Barthes (1915-1980) ist einer der großen französischen Intellektuellen des 20. Jahrhunderts. Sein Werk ist im Suhrkamp Verlag erschienen, darunter auch Barthes' Vorlesung von 1977/78, *Das Neutrum* (edition suhrkamp 2377).

Roland Barthes
Wie zusammen leben

Simulationen einiger alltäglicher Räume im Roman

Vorlesung am Collège de France 1976-1977

Herausgegeben von Éric Marty

Texterstellung, Anmerkungen und Vorwort von Claude Coste

Aus dem Französischen von Horst Brühmann

Suhrkamp
Frankfurt am Main (2007)

Sitzung vom 12. Januar 1977

Einen Diskurs führen[466]

»Also, wie ich schon sagte …«

Mit diesen Worten beginnt jemand, den ich kenne, regelmäßig seine psychoanalytischen Sitzungen.

Aus dieser Geschichte (ich möchte sagen: aus dieser Epiphanie) springt (mir) ein signifikanter Zug ins Auge. Ich möchte diesen Gedanken sogleich verallgemeinern. Wir führen den immergleichen Diskurs (fort) – und den Personen unserer Umgebung wird ziemlich viel Geduld abverlangt, um diesen immer wieder einsetzenden, diesen unerschütterlichen Diskurs zu ertragen, der uns unser ganzes Leben begleitet. Solange wir leben, sprechen wir ein und denselben Diskurs, und der Tod ist die einzige Macht, die unseren Diskurs abbrechen, beenden kann. Der Diskurs ist das, was niemals abreißt. Er ist das, was immer wieder einsetzt, immer aufs neue entsteht. Und es ist diese Zähigkeit des Diskurses, die jener Freund dreimal wöchentlich auszusprechen wagt, wenngleich mit der Hilfe eines etwas seltsamen Auditoriums, der des Analytikers.

Anders gesagt: Das Wort ergreifen heißt stets, auf irgendeiner Ebene des Themas [*sujet*], anschließen. Anschließen woran? An das, was ich zuletzt gesagt habe. Ich schließe an das Gesagte an. Wo? An der École pratique des hautes études. Wann? Im letzten Jahr, anläßlich eines Seminars mit beschränktem Teilnehmerkreis, welches das Thema gestellt, wenn nicht gar behandelt hatte: »Die Einschüchterungen der Sprache«. »Also, wie ich schon sagte …«: Indem ich dieses Wort hier wieder ergreife, möchte ich deutlich machen, daß es für mich keine Diskontinuität zwischen École und Collège, »Schule« und »Kolleg«, gibt (kuriose Abkürzungen!).

466 Die Manuskriptseiten dieses Seminarvortrags werden von einem gefalteten Blatt gebündelt, auf dem – grob strukturiert – der Seminarablauf verzeichnet ist. Nach »Einen Diskurs führen« folgt die Ergänzung: »Auftreten des Kraftbegriffs im Feld der Methode«.

Frage: Gibt es in einem Leben disruptive Elemente, die einen Bruch des Diskurses herbeiführen? Und wenn ja, welche wären es? Bekehrungen, Konversionen? Objekte mögen austauschbar sein, aber Diskurse sind nicht konvertierbar.

Einschüchterung durch Sprache

Vgl. Antrittsvorlesung: bereit sein, eine Untersuchung von einem Phantasma ausgehen zu lassen.[467] Ich gehe dem Phantasma einer Erregung nach: der Sprache des anderen (der anderen: wäre zu prüfen), insofern sie eine Reizung hervorruft, eine Unterwerfung bewirkt, vermöge bestimmter (noch zu bestimmender) Operatoren in ein Kräfteverhältnis eingeht, von dem ich mich bedroht fühle. Also etwas von dem, was Platon Misologie nannte (*Phaidon* 89 d).[468] Bei ihm pejorativ: Haß auf Argumente, auf logisches Denken. Bei uns weitergefaßt: Widerstand dagegen, vom Diskurs des anderen genötigt zu werden (und ein solches Zwangsmittel ist natürlich das Argumentieren).

Methode: sehr freie Exkurse (um so freier, als ich den Gastreferenten nicht vorgreifen kann), die einen Ausgangs- und Endpunkt umkreisen: die Sprache als Kraft. Immer zum Phantasma zurückkehren (es nicht aus den Augen verlieren). Das Phantasma = ein Szenario, ein abgegrenztes Bild, das mir den Diskurs des anderen (gewisse Diskurse gewisser anderer) als mit Attributen (Operatoren) der Macht versehen zeigt; einer Macht, die ich nicht will oder – denn man darf keinem Subjekt vorgreifen – die ich im Gegenteil will, weil ich es genieße, ihr unterworfen zu sein.

Nun ist es mir noch nie wirklich gelungen, diese existentielle (oder phantasmatische) Situation, die Einschüchterung durch Sprache, in eine semiotische Situation zu transformieren. Ist das möglich/unmöglich? Das in Erfahrung zu bringen wäre ungefähr die Aufgabe dieses Seminars. Ich wiederhole das Phantasma, ohne es zu transformieren (das wäre beinahe die Definition des Phantasmas).

467 Vgl. oben, S. 39.

468 [»Daß wir ja nicht Redefeinde *(misologoi)* werden, sprach er, wie andere wohl Menschenfeinde. Denn unmöglich, sagte er, kann einem etwas ärgeres begegnen, als wenn er Reden haßt. Und die Redefeindschaft entsteht ganz auf dieselbe Weise wie die Menschenfeindschaft.« Platon, *Phaidon*, übersetzt von Friedrich Schleiermacher, in: *Sämtliche Werke*, a.a.O., Bd. 4, S. 275.]

Diese Wiederholung verläuft über Signifikanten (verliefe sie über Begriffe, wäre sie keine Wiederholung mehr): sprachliche Einschüchterung → verbunden mit »Diskursführen«, »Schwadronieren« [*le discourir*].

Man beachte: Es ist ein Mangel des Französischen, daß es Verben nicht zu substantivieren erlaubt, wie es das Griechische [oder das Deutsche] vermag, das sie im Neutrum dekliniert: *to diexerchesthai*[469] – es sei denn als rein intellektuelles Verfahren. Im Französischen kann ich mit Handlungen sprachlich nur so verfahren, daß ich sie an ein präexistentes Subjekt binde, dessen Attribut, dessen Prädikat sie zwangsläufig werden. Ich kann die Handlung nicht darstellen und ihr ihren Handlungscharakter belassen, dabei aber vom handelnden Subjekt absehen oder es verallgemeinern: das wäre »das Schwadronieren«. Aber wir [Franzosen] haben den Diskurs nur als Objekt, als Sache, mit der jemand hantiert – erst recht, wenn man in altertümelnder Redeweise die Beredsamkeit, »die Gabe, sich über etwas zu ergehen« [*talent de discourir*], als Handlungsdisposition, als reines Attribut eines Subjekts behandelt. Diderot: »Augustus verfügte über eine flinke und gewandte Rede [*discours*], wie es einem Herrscher geziemt.«[470]

Bei diesem intuitiven Herumtasten zwischen Wörtern, mit denen ich mein Phantasma auszudrücken versuche, hat sich mir der Ausdruck »einen Diskurs führen« [*tenir un discours*] aufgedrängt. (= Ich bin eingeschüchtert, wenn man auf mich einredet [*si l'on me tient un discours*] – und darüber hinaus bin ich, kleine Paranoia, sehr empfindlich gegen das »Redenschwingen« [*au »tenir un discours«*]. Ich habe sehr rasch das Gefühl, daß man mich zur Rede stellt [*qu'on me tient un discours*]. Und es macht mir auch angst, selbst »eine Unterredung zu führen« [*»tenir un discours«*].)

469 Griech. *to diexerchesthai*, die Tatsache, etwas zu durchlaufen, (insbesondere in der Rede) durchzugehen, durchzunehmen, im einzelnen auseinanderzusetzen. [Lat. *discurrere*, hin und her laufen, sich in Worten ergehen.]

470 Dieses Zitat blieb unauffindbar.

»Einen Diskurs führen« = das Untersuchungsfeld. Es handelt sich um einen Idiotismus (= ein Gallizismus? Ich kenne mich in anderen Sprachen nicht aus[471]). Ein locker gefügter, schwach markierter idiomatischer Ausdruck; das heißt, daß seine Bestandteile eine gewisse semantische Unabhängigkeit bewahren – die wir uns gleich zunutze machen werden (≠ *pomme de terre*, Erd-Apfel / Kartoffel). Trotzdem handelt es sich um eine feststehende Wendung. Beweis: Der Ausdruck kommt im Littré vor, hat also lexikalische Weihen erhalten und Eingang ins Sprachsystem (die *langue* im Saussureschen Sinne) gefunden: »einen Diskurs führen«. Häufiger jedoch: »Diskurse führen«.[472] Man beachte, daß das nicht dasselbe ist. Der Plural verharmlost, entwertet, objektiviert, theatralisiert. Der Singular verweist auf eine geballte, emphatische Wirkung: das ist eher *unsere* Bedeutung.

Wir müssen uns für einen Moment bei dem Umstand aufhalten, daß es ein idiomatischer Ausdruck ist, der dem Seminar sein Sujet, seinen Titel gibt, den Titel seiner *quaestio*, der strittigen Frage. Ich fände es schön, wenn eines Tages einmal jemand eine Arbeit über die Titel von Vorlesungen, Vorträgen, Abhandlungen, Schulaufsätzen, Doktorarbeiten oder Habilitationen schriebe – das heißt über die Titel von »Diskursen« (das Wort hat, wie wir sehen werden, im Rahmen der Schule eine besondere Bedeutung). Ich würde gern folgende Hierarchie aufstellen:

1. Von einem (zu kommentierenden) Satz aus denken: wie im Schulaufsatz. Folterqual, einen Satz zu »kommentieren«, da die ästhetische Funktion des Satzes darin besteht, dem »Endgültigen«, nicht mehr Kommentierbaren eine syntaktische Form zu geben. Man kann das, was ein guter Satz sagt, niemals besser sagen oder noch einmal sagen oder anders sagen; daher sind Schulaufsätze ihrem tiefsten Wesen nach steril. Der Schüler leidet daran, zu einer Aufgabe gezwungen zu werden, die nichts Neues hervorbringen und nicht einmal

471 [Frz. *idiotisme*, dt. »Idiotismus«: kennzeichnender, eigentümlicher, idiomatischer Ausdruck; Spracheigenheit; von griech. *idiotes*, Eigentümlichkeit, Eigenart.]

472 [Frz. *tenir des discours*, »Reden schwingen«].

etwas verändern kann. (Ich weiß nicht, ob man in den Gymnasien heute immer noch Sätze kommentieren läßt. Zu meiner Zeit war das beinahe die Regel.)

2. Von einem Wort aus denken. Das ist besser. Denn das Wort ist reiner Signifikant. Er bläht sich nicht zu »Kommentaren« auf, sondern »zündet« andere Signifikanten. Dafür gibt es zwei Wege, nach meinem Verständnis Königswege:

a) Die Etymologie, die vermeintliche Herkunft, das Trugbild des Ursprungs, das Werden, das diachronische Erzittern der Vokabel, ihre Kehrtwendungen und Paradoxien. Beispiel: »Diskurs« selbst; hin und her laufen und dabei Sprachepisoden unterscheiden und trennen: »Sprache der Liebe« [*discours amoureux*] → homogene Schicht einschläfernder, konstruierter Rede (aus undifferenzierten Bestandteilen).

b) Die Konnotation, das konnotative Feld, das heißt der Niederschlag gebräuchlicher Verwendungen, das soziale Erzittern des Wortes. All das bewirkt, daß ein gut gewähltes Wort (auszuschließen: Stadt, Nahrung, Kleidung usw.) als Titel einer *quaestio* eine Arbeit des Signifikanten erlaubt: weit entfernt vom Schulaufsatz. Vgl. die Zeitschrift *Première Livraison* (Mathieu Bénezet und Lacoue-Labarthe. Unfall. Trauer. Nachahmung.[473])

3. Von einem Idiotismus aus denken. *Idios:* was einer Sprache [*langue*] eigentümlich zugehört. Nicht als abstrakte, universelle Struktur, sondern als Idiom: Die *langue* ist gerade der historische, gesellschaftliche Körper einer Nation; bereitwillige Rückkehr von der *langue* zur Metapher, das heißt zum Körper. Das Assoziationsfeld (das Feld der Signifikanten) öffnet sich in seiner ganzen Breite, weil die *langue* selbst es vorbereitet hat.

Unser Idiotismus: »einen Diskurs führen«. Ich habe gesagt: ein locker gefügter idiomatischer Ausdruck, das heißt relativ leicht zerlegbar. Das heißt nicht, daß der Sinneffekt nicht auf der Ebene des Gesamtsyntagmas läge. Wir werden ihn daher vorläufig, künstlich zerlegen → Das entscheidende Wort ist

473 Die Zeitschrift *Première Livraison* wurde im Herbst 1975 von dem Linguisten Mathieu Bénezet und dem Philosophen Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe gegründet. Sie erschien drei Jahre lang zwölfmal im Jahr mit vier Seiten Umfang. Die Autoren wurden aufgefordert, ihre Beiträge ausgehend von zwei oder drei Schlüsselwörtern zu verfassen.

meiner Ansicht nach (wie Antaios komme ich hier wieder mit meinem Phantasma in Berührung[474]) = »führen« [*tenir*] und nicht »Diskurs«. Ich werde mit »Diskurs« beginnen, um zu prüfen, ob darin ein Sem zu finden ist, das zu unserem Phantasma passen könnte.

»Diskurs«

Ich habe schon angedeutet: die französische Bedeutung, seit der Entstehung des modernen Französisch (im sechzehnten Jahrhundert), ist die einer Sprachschicht. »Diskurs«: 1503 (im Mittelalter selten). Genau umgekehrt zur Wortherkunft: *discurro* = hierhin und dorthin laufen (*dis* = Trennung, Entfernung in entgegengesetzte Richtungen). Nur in der Spätzeit bildlicher Sinn *(dielthein*[475]*)*. Man müßte die mittelalterliche Bedeutung von *discursus*, insbesondere in der Scholastik, nachschlagen: eine interessante Karteikarte, die ich verloren habe, doch ich erinnere mich an die Bedeutung von Abstand, Bruch.

Lat. *discursus*: das Umherlaufen, abgebrochene Streifzüge. Dieses Wort zeigt den Übergang zur modernen Bedeutung an. »Diskurs«: eine Art Exkursion, Ausflug, Abschweifung [*divagation*]. Mallarmé: *Divagations*, 1897 (Sammlung: »Richard Wagner«, »Im Theater gekritzelt«, »Vers-Krise«, »Das Buch betreffend«). In seinen Vorbemerkungen zu diesem Band hält Mallarmé – hellsichtig, wie gewöhnlich – die beiden widersprüchlichen Bedeutungsstränge des Wortes »Abschweifung« (für uns die Projektionsfläche, das Deckwort für »Diskurs«) in Händen: »Ein Buch von der Art, wie ich sie nicht liebe, hingestreut und bar jeder Architektur…«[476] (das wäre der *dis-cursus*, die Zerstückelung). Jedoch »behandeln die offensichtlichen Divagationen einen einzigen Gedanken-Gegenstand – wenn ich sie als Fremder wiedersehe, wie ein wiewohl

Mallarmé, S. 131

474 [Der Riese Antaios pflegte Fremde zum Ringkampf aufzufordern. Wann immer er in Kontakt mit dem Boden – das heißt seiner Mutter Erde (Gaia) – kam, gewann er neue Kräfte. Herkules besiegte ihn, indem er ihn in die Luft hob.]

475 Griech. *dielthein*, durchqueren, durchlaufen.

476 Stéphane Mallarmé, *Divagations*, in: ders., *Gesammelte Werke*, Bd. 2: *Kritische Schriften*, französisch und deutsch, übersetzt von Gerhard Goebel, Gerlingen: Lambert Schneider 1998.

brüchiger Kreuzgang dem ihn Durchwandernden seine Lehre zuhauchen würde«. (Der Singular »geführt« erscheint.)

Der vermittelnde Sinn, zwischen der etymologischen und der modernen Grenze: »Exkursion«, Ausflug = ein Stück Sprache, das außerhalb ist (von etwas, doch außerhalb wessen? Wessen »Außerhalb« ist der Diskurs?) und das dennoch eine gewisse Dauer, Konsistenz, Physiognomie besitzt. Eine »Exkursion« bleibt im Gedächtnis. Swanns Welt, die Welt der Guermantes: das sind im Grunde Ziele von »Exkursionen«.

Das allgemeine Sem gibt Littré an: »Bezeichnet alles, was in irgendeiner Weise methodisch und ausführlich dargelegt wird.« Demnach also:

1. Ein Stück »draußen«. Ich habe schon gesagt: »Anflug«, so wie man von einem Anflug von Fieber oder von Wahnsinn spricht; etwas, das bald eine Schwelle von »Normalität« überschreiten wird. Oder auch: was im Verhältnis zu etwas »Unmarkiertem« (Merkmallosem) »markiert« ist.

2. Intern konstruiert: Der »Exzentrizität« des »Diskurses« – im Verhältnis zu seiner Umgebung – entspricht, in umgekehrter Gestalt, ein innerer »Zusammenschluß […] durch eine gemeinsame Kraft«. Er »haucht« uns »seine Lehre zu«, etwas, im Verhältnis zu dem er sich bestimmt, das er methodisch in Anspruch nimmt.

3. Hat eine beträchtliche Länge; das heißt: ein Stück Sprache, von dem man nicht sagen würde, es sei »kurz« (all dies ist in strukturalen, paradigmatischen Termini zu verstehen).

Unter den verschiedenen Bedeutungsvarianten von *Discours* im Littré – es sind wenige und miteinander verwandte – gibt es eine, die mich mehr interessiert = eine besondere, historisch und technisch zur Welt der Schulen gehörige Bedeutung: »Als Schulaufgabe gestellte Abhandlung, die darin besteht, ein vom Lehrer vorgegebenes Thema auszuarbeiten, das sich auf den Diskurs einer Person in einer bestimmten Situation bezieht« (Littré). Dieser lateinische (Jesuitenkollegien, Preisaufgaben), später französische Diskurs: Vorläufer der Hausarbeit und des Besinnungsaufsatzes. Parodistisches Beispiel: Proust (*Im Schatten junger Mädchenblüte*[477]): »Sophokles schreibt aus der Unterwelt an Racine, um ihn über

477 Proust, *Auf der Suche nach der verlorenen Zeit*, a.a.O., S. 1197-1201 *(Im Schatten junger Mädchenblüte)*.

den Mißerfolg von ›Athalie‹ zu trösten.« Gisèle: schreibt alles, was sie weiß, in einem Zug herunter. ≠ Überlegene und ironische Korrektur Andrées: »Erst einmal hätte ich [...] mir in aller Ruhe auf einem Blatt Papier eine Gliederung gemacht« (Prinzip der »Konstruktion«). Für mich dabei interessant: Der Diskurs ist Kopie, »Simulation«, Theater: eine historische Vorführung der Nachzeichnung einer Vorzeichnung des Lehrers (und vielleicht auch: ein Stück Leistungswettbewerb, Leistungsnachweis).

»Führen«

Aktiv / Passiv

Ich komme zu »führen« – und implizit natürlich zu »geführt werden« (von einem Diskurs). »Einen Diskurs führen« heißt in der Tat (wir werden zweifellos darauf zurückkommen), einen schon tausendmal gesagten und gehörten (abgedroschenen) Diskurs mit der größten Inbrunst so zu vertreten, als hätte man ihn eben erfunden: die Callas mit Leidenschaft: »Ich bin eine Frau ... Wenn man uns die Weiblichkeit nimmt, was bleibt uns dann noch« usw. Anders gesagt: Sie »führt«, weil sie geführt, zu sagen genötigt wird [*est tenue*] (von dem, was schon gesagt worden ist).

»Führen«: das starke Wort der Redewendung; braucht dennoch nicht viele Worte zur Erläuterung.

Littré. 72 Bedeutungsvarianten von *tenir* [»halten«, »führen«], darunter (ich überfliege sie): In der Hand haben – Jemanden zurückhalten – Besitzen – Einen Raum besetzen (militärische Bedeutung) – Im Warensortiment führen – Machtbefugnis über bestimmte Dinge innehaben – Dafür sorgen, daß jemand oder etwas in einem bestimmten Zustand bleibt – Zügeln, an etwas hindern – Eine Spur, einen Kurs verfolgen – Etwas Versprochenes ausführen – Festhalten an.

Durch all diese Bedeutungen ziehen sich offenkundig zwei grundlegende Seme:
– Macht, Kraft, Unterwerfung, Einfluß.
– Dauer, Beharrlichkeit.
Deutlich erkennbar wird das an den idiomatischen Ausdrükken (darunter: »einen Diskurs führen«): *tenir maison* (»hofhalten«: Macht des Prestiges, der Prahlerei), *tenir tête* (»die

Stirn bieten«), *tenir pied* (»standhalten«), *tenir l'œil* (»ein Auge haben auf«: durch Permanenz erzwingen, Permanenz erzwingen), *s'en tenir à* (»sich beschränken auf«), *en tenir* (»es dabei bewenden lassen«: etwas »einstecken«, einen Akt der Gewalt hinnehmen müssen und vergelten können), *tenir sous le charme* (»jemanden im Bann halten«: unterjochen und so lange unterm Joch halten, bis der Widerstand erlahmt ist).

Doch das ist noch nicht alles: am proto-etymologischen Horizont ein anderes Sem. Tatsächlich hat *teneo* dieselbe Wurzel wie *tendo*: *tendre* = eine Kraft ausüben und in höchster Anspannung aufrechterhalten. Das zugrundeliegende Sem hat also zweifellos mit der Idee einer Spannung zu tun: sich am Leben halten [*se tenir, se tendre vivant*] (im emphatischen Sinne *sein*: auf gut sichtbare, spektakulär angespannte Weise lebendig sein). Um es kurz zu machen: »Sind Sie Marxist, Lacanianer?« = »Führen Sie einen marxistischen, lacanianischen Diskurs?«

»Diskurs führen«

All diese Seme finden sich also in »einen Diskurs führen«. Der Ausdruck deutet also in der Tat an:

1. Ein Streben nach Kraft, Zwang, Unterwerfung;
– eine Dauer, eine Beharrlichkeit;
– eine Spannung, eine gespannte, systematische Festigkeit.
Anders gesagt: ein Streben nach Totalität, Ewigkeit, Sein.

2. Eine theatralische Wirkung: durch den »Diskurs« als ostentative Vor-Führung eines Sprechens + »halten«, einen Ort besetzen, der nicht der eigene ist. Eine Rolle spielen → einen Diskurs führen = eine sprachliche Maske tragen.

Semiologische Bemerkung:

»(Einen) Diskurs führen« = Redewendung, Idiotismus, erstarrtes Syntagma. Erinnern wir uns nun an die Zeit, als man Saussure las und praktizierte. Das erstarrte Syntagma[478]: ein Störfall für Saussures erhellende Dichotomie *langue / parole*,

478 Ein erstarrtes Syntagma ist ein lexikalisch gewordener Ausdruck, der also zugleich der *langue* (als Sprachcode) und der *parole* (als Sprachverwendung) angehört. Beispiel: *le qu'en-dira-t-on*, das Gerede [eigentlich »das Was-man-darüber-sagen-wird«].

Sprache / Sprechen. Gehören solche Syntagmen zur Sprache oder zum Sprechen? Man rührt hier an die Grenze des Saussurismus (die ihm übrigens bewußt ist). Grenze, von der aus die aktuelle Sprachwissenschaft einige theoretische Vorstöße unternommen hat (in das Gebiet des Performativen, Delokutionären[479]). »Diskurs führen«: zweideutige Figur, da Sprach-»Akt« [*»acte« de langue*], Sprach-Äußerung [*parole de langue*].

Es sieht ganz so aus, als geriete mit dem »Diskurs führen« die rhetorische, Saussuresche (und selbst die Chomskysche) Taxonomie durcheinander, aus dem Gleis. Rhetorik:

1. *Heuresis / inventio*[480], *taxis / dispositio*[481], *lexis / elocutio*[482]: der Diskurs als Sprache [*langue*]: kombinatorische strukturale Elemente (Sprache, Kompetenz, Aristotelische »Geometrie«[483]).

Baldwin, I, S. 23

2. *Pronuntiatio*[484], *hypokrisis / delivery / actio*[485]: Sprechen [*parole*], Performanz: nebenbei gesagt, ein Bühnenbegriff. *Actio*: das ist das Theater; Redner = rhetorische Schauspieler. Cicero hat übrigens den Charakter diese Nähe des Redners zum schlechten Schauspieler gesehen. Er forderte, daß der Redner nicht den Komödianten oder Possenreißer nachahmen sollte, sondern das Benehmen der Kriegsleute[486] (Virilität!). Das hieße, das Theater zu verlassen und sich der bloßen Kraft zuzuwenden. Beim »Führen eines Diskurses« agiert, schauspielert jedoch die Sprache selbst. Das »Führen«,

479 Siehe unten, Anm. 488.

480 Griech. *heuresis*, lat. *inventio*, Entdeckung, Auffindung.

481 Griech. *taxis*, lat. *dispositio*, Anordnung, Stellung.

482 Griech. *lexis*, lat. *elocutio*, Redeweise, Ausdrucksweise.

483 Die räumliche Metaphorik verweist auf die »Gemeinplätze« der Rhetorik. Siehe Roland Barthes, »Die alte Rhetorik«, in: ders., *Das semiologische Abenteuer*, übersetzt von Dieter Hornig, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp 1988, S. 15-101, hier S. 66 f. (B.1.18, »Der Ort, *topos*, *locus*«).

484 Lat. *pronuntiatio*, Vortrag, Deklamation.

485 Griech. *hypokrisis*, engl. *delivery*, lat. *actio*: Schauspielerei, Aktion (Gebärdensprache) des Redners oder Schauspielers, rednerischer Vortrag. Charles Sears Baldwin, *Ancient Rhetoric and Poetic: Interpreted from Representative Words*, Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press 1971.

486 Vermutlich von Barthes selbst übersetzt. [Vgl. Marcus Tullius Cicero, *Orator / Der Redner*, lateinisch und deutsch, hg. und übersetzt von Harald Merklin, Stuttgart: Reclam 2004, S. 59 (18, 59): »Auch wird er es bezüglich der Bewegung so halten, daß nichts übertrieben wirkt [...] eine männlich wirkende Art der Bewegung.«]

»Vorführen«, die Ordnung der Performanz ist codiert (und es ist nicht zuletzt dieser Code, den wir wiederfinden müssen). Man könnte sich übrigens fragen, ob es nicht das »Theater« als allgemeine Kategorie des Subjekts ist, das die große Saussuresche Dichotomie unterläuft. In der Tat wird diese Dichotomie von dem Augenblick an ausgehöhlt, wie die klassische soziologische Opposition der Epoche Saussures theoretisch an Eindeutigkeit verliert (vergessen wir nicht die Beziehung Saussures zur Soziologie seiner Zeit: Tarde und vor allem Durkheim) = Individuum / Gesellschaft. Diese Komplikation verdankt sich nun aber einer neuen Kategorie, die heute im Vordergrund steht: die Äußerung [*l'énonciation*]. In gewissem Sinne gibt es nichts außer der Äußerung. Die Sprache [*langue*] ist eine Art Artefakt, das seinen operativen, taxonomischen Wert verliert: Die Spur dieser Entwicklung findet sich in Lacans »lalangue«[487] wieder sowie in den Forschungen über die performativen, delokutionären Akte (Flahaut, Milner[488]).

487 »Lalangue dient ganz anderen Dingen als der Kommunikation. Es ist das, was die Erfahrung des Unbewußten uns gezeigt hat, insofern es gemacht ist aus lalangue, jener lalangue, die ich, wie Sie wissen, in einem einzigen Wort schreibe, um zu bezeichnen, was unser jeder Affäre ist, sogenannte lalangue maternelle, und nicht für nichts so genannt.« Jacques Lacan, »Die Ratte im Labyrinth«, in: ders., *Encore* (Seminar, Buch XX, 1972-1973), übersetzt von Norbert Haas, Vreni Haas und Hans-Joachim Metzger, Weinheim/Berlin: Quadriga 1986, S. 150.

488 François Flahaut und Jean-Claude Milner sind Linguisten. In seiner »Présentation« [von Heft 30 der Zeitschrift *Communications*, 1979] definiert Barthes den Begriff des »Delokutionären« folgendermaßen: »Denn wenn die zeitgenössischen Linguisten sich zunächst mit der *Lokution* (oder dem ›Lokutionären‹) beschäftigt haben (und zwar mit Recht; es war nötig, die Fragen der Reihe nach zu stellen), sind sie jetzt dazu gekommen, die *Interlokution* (zu einem anderen, mit einem anderen sprechen), das Gespräch, zu problematisieren. Bleibt noch ein letzter Komplex: Was geschieht, wenn zwei oder mehrere *über* jemanden oder etwas sprechen? Das Problem besteht nicht mehr darin (und das ist neu), diesen Jemand oder dieses Etwas formal zu behandeln (das hatte die Rhetorik bereits getan), sondern zu jener Dialektik zu gelangen, die gemäß einem komplexen Spiel von Bildern die Partner und die Einsätze des Sprechens vereint, oder auch: die Lokution, die Interlokution und die Delokution.« (OC_1 III, 1001; OC_2 V, 664)

Dieses Sem der Theatralisierung, das ich aus »einen Diskurs führen« heraushöre (gepaart mit dem Sem der Kraft), hat mich veranlaßt, den Titel dieses Seminars mit dem Begriff des »besetzten Sprechens« oder der »Besetzung des Sprechens« zu erläutern.

»Besetzung« [*investissement*]: ein Freudscher Terminus. »Ökonomischer Begriff: Tatsache, daß eine bestimmte psychische Energie an eine Vorstellung oder Vorstellungsgruppe, einen Teil des Körpers, ein Objekt etc. gebunden ist.«[489] Man bemerkt, daß der deutsche und der französische Begriff sich nicht genau decken. Im Deutschen: einnehmen, okkupieren, Besetzung (im militärischen Sinn). Im Französischen: wie bei Laplanche und Pontalis, aber darüber hinaus eine Bedeutung im Finanzwesen: investieren: Kapital in einem Unternehmen anlegen, plazieren. Wir werden gleich sehen, daß diese französische Ergänzung nicht ausreicht und daß es eine dritte Bedeutung gibt, die uns interessieren wird.

Wie auch immer, erinnern wir uns, daß der Begriff bei Freud physiologischen Ursprungs ist (Versuchung, die dynamische Psychologie an die Neurophysiologie anzubinden): »Erregungssumme« → Unterscheidung zwischen den »Vorstellungen« und dem »Affektbetrag«, mit dem sie besetzt sind. In der zweiten Theorie des psychischen Apparats: das Es → Besetzung von Vorstellungen oder Objekten → die Vorstellungen und die Objekte (des Subjekts) erhalten Werte, werden mit Werten besetzt. Der Wert ist prägend: eine Ladung kann negativ sein, ohne daß die Besetzung entzogen würde. Das phobische Objekt = als etwas zu Meidendes besetzt. Daher könnte man den Begriff der Besetzung unter dem Gesichtspunkt der Intentionalität und der Wertschätzung von Objekten, kurz: im Sinne der Phänomenologie verstehen: affektive Ziele. (All dies bei Laplanche und Pontalis.[490])

Kehren wir noch einmal zur Sprache [*langue*] zurück (denn letztlich hat diese Einführung den Sinn, die Sprache abzusuchen – was nur eine Art und Weise ist, den folgenden Referaten nicht vorzugreifen). Dem Littré ist die finanzielle

489 Laplanche und Pontalis, *Das Vokabular der Psychoanalyse*, a. a. O., S. 92.
490 Ebd., S. 95 f.

Bedeutung von *investir* noch unbekannt. Er kennt die militärische Bedeutung. Vor allem beschäftigt er sich ausgiebig mit dem etymologischen (lateinischen[491]) Sinn, der im Deutschen fehlt. *Investir* = mit einer Bekleidung versehen, einkleiden: »jemandem im Rahmen bestimmter Zeremonien, zu denen das Anlegen eines Kleidungsstücks zählt, eine Vollmacht, eine Würde verleihen«. Das ideale Lehrbeispiel dafür wäre die Investiturszene aus Brechts *Leben des Galilei*[492], in der Kardinal Barberini, der Galilei zunächst wohlgesinnt war, mit jedem Kleidungsstück, das man ihm anlegt, gegen den Astronomen immer feindseliger wird. Mit jedem Kleidungsstück wachsen die Vorbehalte des Kardinals und werden zur Zensur, als er im vollen päpstlichen Ornat steht: Der Kardinal »bekleidet« das Amt des Papstes = der Papst hat den Kardinal »besetzt« [*investi*].

Dieser Gedanke der Einkleidung lenkt die Idee der Besetzung in eine andere Richtung als die Freudsche (ohne dieser zu widersprechen). Sie macht die Besetzung zur Rollenübernahme: gibt ihr theatralische Energie. Ein besetztes Sprechen, ein besetzter Diskurs = ein (im Freudschen Sinne) besetztes Objekt, eine (im militärischen Sinne) besetzte, ausweglos geschlossene Sprache, die (im polizeilichen Sinne, wie ein Stadtviertel) »abgeriegelt« ist und die darauf zielt, daß der andere sie »abriegelt« – sowie eine theatralisch und rituell eingekleidete, mit den Insignien von Autorität besetzte, bevollmächtigte Sprache.

Und sich immer wieder an das Karussell Aktiv / Passiv erinnern. Einen Diskurs besetzen = von einem Diskurs besetzt werden. »Diskurs führen« = die Anweisungen einer Phraseologie befolgen, mit Überzeugung ein schon geschriebenes Buch noch einmal schaffen: *Werther* und Ossian; *Bouvard und Pécuchet*[493] und das Defilee der Diskurse, die sie nacheinander besetzen. Der Flaubertsche Roman: eine Entfremdung in eine Besetzung verwandeln: durch Kopieren.

491 [Lat. *vestire* oder *investire*, bekleiden; *vestis*, Kleidung.]
492 Bertolt Brecht, *Leben des Galilei*, in: ders., *Gesammelte Werke in zwanzig Bänden*, a. a. O., Bd. 3, S. 1321-1325 (12. Bild). Das Stück wurde 1938 geschrieben und 1943 in Zürich uraufgeführt.
493 Barthes hatte diesem Roman von Flaubert 1975 ein Seminar an der École pratique des hautes études gewidmet.

Diese Einführung, so viel wird klargeworden sein, zielt auf nichts anderes, als die Titelwörter zu entfalten. Diese Entfaltung – diese Ex-plikation – ist notgedrungen eine intuitive, subjektive. Ich habe zu sagen versucht, was ich aus diesen Wörtern heraushöre. Jedenfalls gibt es keine Maschinen, welche die Bedeutungen lesbar, vernehmbar machen könnten. Mein Gehör hat sich nur entlang bestimmter Bahnen gebildet – als Wege des Codes: die etymologische, die lexikographische Bahn: Bahnung des Signifikanten.

In diesem Sinne will ich zum Schluß einige Impressionen des »Diskursführens« wiedergeben, die ich bei bestimmten Lektüren, bestimmten Gelegenheiten gewonnen habe. Abermals sind es Epiphanien – ungeordnet (wie es sich für Epiphanien gehört).

Drei Beispiele für verbales »Diskursführen«:

1. Die Ermahnung. Beginn von *Robinson Crusoe*: der Vater hält Robinson eine Mahnrede, er »stellt ihn zur Rede«.[494] Problem der Koinzidenz des »Diskursführens« mit einer Gattung.

2. Der plötzliche Einbruch des »Diskursführens«. Abendgesellschaft: Männer und ihre Frauen. Die Männer plaudern, diskutieren: über Portugal, über China, über das Fernsehen. Die Frauen sind stumm. Plötzlich hält eine – ihr Hündchen war eben erwacht – eine große Rede über Hunde: welcher Zuneigung sie fähig sind, welche Intelligenz sie besitzen. Wir werden auf das Problem der affektiv besetzten Sache zurückkommen; ich werde sie einfach »das Ding« nennen.[495]

3. Ich nehme ein Taxi. Augenblicklich beginnt der Fahrer zu reden, schwadroniert [*tient discours*] über das Thema »Die Franzosen leben über ihre Verhältnisse«. Am Ziel angelangt, kommt der Diskurs abrupt zum Stillstand, ohne daß man den Eindruck hätte, an der Art des »Diskursführens« habe sich etwas geändert (er ist also nicht konstruiert, ohne Peroration als Zeichen des Schlusses?). Diskurs meterweise – taxameterweise: Einen Diskurs bitte von Saint-Germain bis zur Rue Dutot.

494 Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*, a. a. O., S. 6 ff.
495 Siehe oben, Anm. 168.

Drei Beispiele eines komplexen »Diskursführens«. In der Tat bekomme ich das – unabweisbare – Gefühl des »Diskursführens«, wenn von überall her Zeichen aller Art auf mich einströmen: Sprach-, Gebärden-, Verhaltenszeichen. Also überall, wo der Körper auftrumpft, wo es einen Hochmut des Körpers gibt:

1. Organisierte Ausbreitung eines Lebenwollens: Ich sehe X auf Reisen in einem nordischen Land, vor einem behaglichen Frühstück sitzend, ruhig und konzentriert essend, vor aller Augen mit der Stillung seines Hungers, der Inszenierung seines Vergnügens beschäftigt. Ich habe den lebhaften Eindruck, daß eine solche Frühstücksveranstaltung ein Diskurs ist, den X führt: Kraft, Besetzung eines Raumes, Dauer, Anspannung, eine gewisse Theatralik. Investitur: Das Frühstück bekleidet ihn.

2. Noch eine (persönliche) Epiphanie. Während die erste eher mit Sympathie grundiert war (jemandem, den man liebt, gut essen sehen), ist diese eher entnervend, ätzend. Im Zug eine »junge, fertig ausgebildete Krankenschwester« (reist mit einem jungen Realschullehrer, der sie sichtlich anhimmelt und den sie im Griff hat): eine Serie, ein Zusammentreffen von Zeichen des Auftrumpfens: *a)* großer Ghettoblaster im Abteil, *b)* laute, volltönende Stimme, *c)* Äußerungen ohne jede Diskretionsschwelle, *d)* breitet sich über zwei Sitze aus, *e)* zieht die Schuhe aus, *f)* ißt eine Orange, *g)* mischt sich in mein Gespräch mit meinem Reisebegleiter ein. Kurz, sie »führt einen Diskurs«. Der Sinn dieses Diskurses = ich tue mir keinen Zwang an = ich existiere = ich bin offen, kontaktfreudig, temperamentvoll. Kurz, das »Diskursführen« verweist auf eine codierte Figur. Der Beweis dafür ist, daß diese Figur im Vokabular der orientalischen Mönche einen Namen hatte: *parresia* (Ungezwungenheit, Zudringlichkeit, Freimut ≠ *xeniteia*: eine Haltung ohne Vertraulichkeit).

3. Schließlich: kurze Epiphanie des »Diskursführens«. In Urt[496]: junger Motorradfahrer mit Helm, paradierend, knattert auf dem verlassenen Platz am Hafen herum. Wahrlich, er führt Diskurs. Denn Diskursführen – letztes Sem –, heißt das nicht: »den anderen auf den Geist gehen«?

Diesen Beispielen (Epiphanien) wäre die Gegenkategorie

496 Dorf im französischen Baskenland, wo Barthes ein Haus besaß.

des »Diskursführens« gegenüberzustellen. Jemand, der statusgemäß keinen Diskurs führt, sprachlos ist, dem die Sprache versagt, der also nichts führen kann: der Ratlose. Beim Ratlosen: weder Kraft noch Anspannung, noch Theater.

Schluß

Die Funktion dieser Einleitung = das Seminar mit einem Phantasma zu verknüpfen, das Phantasma mittels einiger sprachlicher Signifikanten zu erforschen. Systematische Exploration des Phantasmas; ein Präzendenzfall: Rat der schönen Gräfin von Donis an Juliette.[497] Wir werden das Phantasma jetzt verlassen, zumindest als Rechtfertigung, und die Semantik des Ausdrucks »Diskurs führen« anhand unterschiedlicher Ansätze verschiedener Subjekte auffächern.

Es wird also eine Reihe freier Wortmeldungen geben, wobei die Redner keine Verpflichtung eingegangen sind außer der, nach eigenem Belieben den vorgegebenen Ausdruck zum Ausgangspunkt zu nehmen. Unser Programm sieht folgendermaßen aus[498]:

19. Januar	Flahaut	Diskurs und Insignie
26. Januar	Lucette Mouline	Der Proustsche Satz: Stanzen und Insistenzen
2. Februar	F. Récanati	Gehaltener, haltbarer, unhaltbarer Diskurs
9. Februar	Cosette Martel	Die gesprochene Frau
16. Februar	J.-A. Miller	Der Diskurs des einen und des anderen
23. Februar	Ferien	
2. März	A. Compagnon	Der Enthusiasmus

In den letzten Seminaren (vor Ostern) werde ich noch einmal das Wort ergreifen, sehr wahrscheinlich (Genaueres weiß ich noch nicht: es hängt von dem ab, was ich aus den Referaten der anderen gelernt habe: das ist das Prinzip des Seminars), um einige Analysen zum »Diskursführen« vorzulegen.

9. März	L. Marin	16. März	Flahaut?

497 »[...] Sie wären die unglücklichste aller Frauen, würden Sie nur ein einziges Verbrechen begehen; fangen Sie damit nicht an oder stürzen Sie sich ganz in den Abgrund, sobald Sie am Rande stehen« (Donatien-Alphonse-François de Sade, *Histoire de Juliette*, in: ders., *Œuvres*, Bd. III, Paris: Gallimard 1998, S. 749).

498 Die Referenten waren: François Flahaut (Linguist), Lucette Mouline (Literaturwissenschaftlerin), François Récanati (Linguist), Cosette Martel (Literaturwissenschaftlerin), Jacques-Alain Miller (Psychoanalytiker), Antoine Compagnon (Literaturwissenschaftler), Louis Marin (1931-1992, Essayist).

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Naturontologie und Anthropologie als Grundlage einer Ästhetik | Worin ich einführen möchte, ist Teil eines Vorhabens, das sich zweierlei zum Ziel gesetzt hat: 1. die ontologische Rehabilitierung der Begriffe ›Widerspiegelung‹ und ›Mimesis‹ als Grundbegriffe dialektischer Theorie und 2. die Ausarbeitung einer dialektischen Ästhetik am Leitfaden dieser Begriffe. Die Begründung für den Rückgriff auf beide Begriffe liegt in der Einsicht beschlossen, dass das Widerspiegelungstheorem wie das ihm zugeordnete Mimesis-Konzept[1] trotz großer theoriegeschichtlicher und politischer Belastung eine noch unausgelotete Leistungsfähigkeit besitzt.

Hat der Mimesis-Begriff im zeitgenössischen Denken, vorbereitet durch Theodor W. Adorno (1903–1969), eine gewisse Aufwertung erfahren, so lässt sich dies vom Widerspiegelungsbegriff nicht behaupten. Auch innerhalb der marxistischen Theoriebildung war sein Status zuletzt nicht unbestritten. Sofern er überhaupt Verwendung findet, lassen sich drei Gebrauchsformen von Widerspiegelung unterscheiden: 1. die restriktive Verwendung des Begriffs im Rahmen einer sozialfunktional-kommunikativen ästhetischen Theorie, wie sie am luzidesten von Dieter Schlenstedt vorgetragen wird, 2. der traditionell dominante erkenntnistheoretische Gebrauch des Begriffs und 3. sein ontologischer Gebrauch. Dieser wird heute am überzeugendsten von Hans Heinz Holz vertreten.[2]

Meine eigenen Überlegungen ordnen sich der Position von Holz zu, wobei ein Weg über eigenständige Begründungen und Argumentationen gesucht wird. ›Widerspiegelung‹ und ›Mimesis‹ gelten mir als Begriffe von ontologisch-anthropologischem Status, sodass von einem einander zugeordneten Begriffspaar gesprochen werden kann. Mimesis hat nach diesem Verständnis ihren genetischen Ort in Seinsverhältnissen. Sie ist Modus materieller Reflexivität (= Widerspiegelung), damit letztinstanzlich Qualität der Materie (= Natur) selbst. *Materie – Widerspiegelung – Mimesis* bilden einen materiellen Zusammenhang, der im ontologischen Sinn als eine kategoriale Reihe begriffen werden muss. Das bedeutet aber, dass die Begriffe ›Widerspiegelung‹ und ›Mimesis‹ adäquat nur im Rahmen einer differenzierten ontologisch-anthropologischen Ausarbeitung verstanden werden können, die hier nur angedeutet wird. Aus diesem Grund kann die intendierte ästhetische Theorie ohne das Fundament einer Ontologie und Anthropologie nicht auskommen. Die Ausarbeitung einer *Ontologie des gesellschaftlichen Seins* (= *Anthropologie*) kann materialistisch nur als *Teildisziplin einer Ontologie des Seins* (= *Naturontologie*) verstanden werden. Darum grenzt Anthropologie an eine Naturontologie und baut auf ihr auf. Von der Sache her ist es deshalb unumgänglich, den Überlegungen zur Ästhetik die Skizze einer Ontologie und Anthropologie vorauszuschicken, was auch zur Aufgabe des Gesamtprojekts gehört.

Mimesis und Ontologie | ›Widerspiegelung‹ fungiert im Rahmen des anvisierten Projekts als fundamentalster und umfassendster Begriff, als Kategorie von grundlegend ontologischem, anthropologischem und erkenntnistheoretischem Status, als Grundbegriff des dialektischen Materialismus selbst. Des Weiteren hat ›Widerspiegelung‹ eine kultur- und ästhetiktheoretische Bedeutung. In diesem modifizierten Sinn ist ›Widerspiegelung‹ Grundbegriff eines Teilbereichs materialistischer Theorie. Die fundamentale Bedeutung der Widerspiegelungskategorie gründet in der Reflexivität als *Struktureigenschaft dialektisch aufgefasster Materie*, in der objektiven Verfasstheit des materiellen Seins selbst. Diese Struktur von Reflexivität tritt im kognitiven Akt – in menschlicher Erkenntnistätigkeit wie in psychischen Prozessen überhaupt – prägnant hervor, ist aber nicht auf Erkenntnistätigkeit und das Verhältnis *Sein – Psyche – Bewusstsein* beschränkt. Vielmehr erscheinen aus dialektisch-materialistischer Sicht Psyche und Bewusstsein als organisch verbundene Qualitäten des Seins selbst: Sie partizipieren an der reflexiven Verfasstheit von Materie. Reflexivität und Widerspiegelung werden von mir in der Sache synonym verwendet – mit der einen Differenz: Ausdrücklich artikuliert der Widerspiegelungsbegriff die materialistische Wendung der ursprünglich idealistisch gefassten Reflexivitätskategorie.[3]

Mimesis ist so ein Modus dieses grundlegenden materiellen Reflexionsverhältnisses bzw. *Modus von Widerspiegelung*, bezo-

1 | Das Verhältnis beider ist bis *dato* wenig geklärt. Seine Aufklärung gehört mit zu den Zielen dieses Unternehmens.

2 | Vgl. dazu Hans Heinz Holz, Widerspiegelung, in: Bibliothek dialektischer Grundbegriffe, Band 6, Bielefeld 2003

3 | Zum Reflexionsbegriff siehe Jörg Zimmer, Reflexion, in: Bibliothek dialektischer Grundbegriffe, Band 11, Bielefeld ²2003.

gen auf höhere Formen materiellen Seins, nämlich als Qualität entwickelten organischen Lebens, das sich im biotischen Verhalten natürlicher Organismen universal äußert und im »mimetischen Vermögen«[4] des Menschen seine entwickeltste und komplexeste Gestalt erhält. Empirische Begriffe wie ›Mimikry‹, ›Anpassung‹, ›Assimilation‹, ›Identifikation‹ usw. haben ihren Ort in diesem ontologisch-biologisch-anthropologischen Zusammenhang. ›Imitation/Nachahmung‹ und ›Darstellung/Ausdruck‹ sind Zuordnungen oder Modi des Mimesis-Begriffs.

Mimesis und Anthropologie | Mimetisches Verhalten – sagen wir zunächst Nachahmung, Assimilation – ist ein Grundcharakteristikum menschlicher Lebenstätigkeit, ja, des organischen Lebens überhaupt: Angleichung an eine Umwelt zum Zweck der Lebenssicherung. Organismen assimilieren sich. Sie machen sich ähnlich, um sich ihrer Umwelt anzugleichen. Wir begegnen ihm gleichfalls in bio-chemischen Prozessen (z.B. in der Umwandlung von Nährstoffen in Assimilate). Auch als sprachliches Phänomen ist Assimilation bekannt: die Angleichung eines Mitlauts an den anderen.[5] Psychologisch meint Assimilation die Verschmelzung einer neuen Vorstellung mit einer bereits vorhandenen. Allen Beispielen ist gemeinsam, dass ein in einem Umweltbereich neu Hinzukommendes sich diesem Umweltbereich gleich macht, mit ihm verschmilzt oder durch Angleichung einem Muster sich einfügt. Ein solches Sich-Einfügen ist in einem fundamentalen ontologischen Sinn Bedingung des Überlebens, Voraussetzung von Reproduktion, organischer Bestandteil der Selbstreproduktion des Lebensprozesses. Es gehorcht den Zwängen der Selbsterhaltung. So scheint es berechtigt, hier verallgemeinernd – bezogen auf organisches, insbesondere animalisches und menschliches Leben – von einem mimetischen Verhalten zu sprechen, dem ein Vermögen, eine ursprüngliche biotische Kraft zugrunde liegt.

Für den Menschen ist dieses Verhalten das Grundcharakteristikum seiner Lebenstätigkeit, *ontologicum par excellence*, ist es die Form der Adaption an gegebene Seinsverhältnisse, die allererst das Überleben sichert, ist es Bedingung menschlicher Reproduktion auf allen Stufen gesellschaftlicher Entwicklung, ist es als biotisches Vermögen auch die elementare Bedingung kultureller Bildung, nämlich der Kraftentfaltung des menschlichen Subjekts.

4 | Walter Benjamin, Über das mimetische Vermögen, in: Gesammelte Schriften, Band 1, Frankfurt/Main 1980, S. 507 ff.

5 | So wird ›Lamm‹ aus mittelhochdeutsch ›lamb‹.

Zur Geschichte des Mimesis-Begriffs | Die besondere Rolle der Mimesis ist sehr früh in der Philosophie erkannt worden. Aristoteles (384–322 v.u.Z.) sah das mimetische Vermögen als Fundament der Künste. Er betrachtete es als in der menschlichen Natur verankert; wie er »die Freude, die jedermann an Nachahmungen hat«, als das zweite Fundament der Künste verstand.[6] Dem mimetischen Vermögen kommt nach Aristoteles nicht allein die zentrale Rolle bei der Genesis der Künste zu, es besitzt darüber hinaus eine grundlegende Rolle im Bau der menschlichen Kultur. So verstehen wir die Stelle in der *Physik*, an der es heißt, dass »menschliches Herstellen [...] die Gebilde der Natur teils zum Abschluß [bringt], nämlich dort, wo sie die Natur selbst nicht zum Abschluß zu bringen vermag; teils [...] die Gebilde der Natur nach[bildet]«.[7] Aristoteles hat also alles menschliche Herstellen, das gesamte Werk der Zivilisation im Blick, sofern es Produktion des Menschen ist. Alles zivilisatorische Tun ist ein Herstellen, das auf zwei Weisen erfolgen kann: auf der eines Zu-Ende-Bringens von etwas, das die Natur selbst nicht zum Abschluss gebracht hat, und auf der eines mimetischen Handelns, das nach Maßgabe des in der Natur vorhandenen, doch verborgenen τέλος (*telos*, Ziel) schafft, ein Handeln also, das mentale Koinzidenz mit Erscheinungen und Strukturgesetzen der Natur einschließt und damit die in der Natur enthaltenen Potenzen, ihre entelechischen[8] Formen, erst entbindet.[9] An diese, modern gesprochen, zugleich anthropologische und kulturtheoretische Auffassung von Mimesis haben im Denken des 20. Jahrhunderts eine Reihe von Theoretikern angeknüpft.

Aristoteles

So versteht Walter Benjamin (1892–1940) das mimetische Vermögen als *Produktivkraft*, die ihren genetischen Ort in der Ähnlichkeiten erzeugenden Natur hat. Ja, die Struktur »natürlicher Korrespondenzen« durchwaltet die gesamte Natur in einem

Walter Benjamin

6 | Vgl. Aristoteles, Poetik, Kap. 4

7 | Aristoteles, Physik, II,8,199a

8 | ἐντελέχεια, *entelecheia*, Zur-Wirklichkeit-Kommen, Wirksamkeit

9 | Vgl. Ernst Bloch, Das Materialismusproblem, seine Geschichte und Substanz, in: ders. Gesamtausgabe, Band 7, Frankfurt/Main 1972, S. 479 ff.

Maß, dass hier von einem naturontologischen Prinzip geredet werden kann. Im Menschen erreicht die natürliche Fähigkeit, Ähnlichkeiten zu erzeugen, ihre komplexeste Form: Mimesis ist für Benjamin, wie außer ihm vielleicht nur noch für Lukács, so zentral in der Geschichte menschlicher Kultur, dass diese geradezu als ›Geschichte des mimetischen Vermögens‹ gelesen werden kann. Alle Kultur, vor allem Schrift und Sprache, ist ein Archiv historischer Erfahrung. Benjamin gewinnt diesen äußerst folgenreichen Gedanken kraft des Begriffs der unsinnlichen Ähnlichkeit. Unsinnliche Ähnlichkeit verweist auf die, der sinnlichen Erscheinungsform nicht ablesbaren strukturellen Korrespondenzen (Homologien und Isomorphien), die Dingen und Zeichen eingeschrieben sind (die Reflexionsstruktur solcher Dinge und Zeichen). Sprache und Schrift nun sind ein Archiv geschichtlicher Erfahrung, weil sie »ein Archiv unsinnlicher Ähnlichkeiten, unsinnlicher Korrespondenzen« sind. In der Sprache sind ganze Geschichtsstufen sedimentiert – sie ist das »vollkommenste Archiv der unsinnlichen Ähnlichkeit«.[10]

Theodor W. Adorno

Adorno, dem Ansatz Benjamins folgend, fügt der mimesistheoretischen Argumentation eine neue Komponente hinzu: den Gedanken einer antizipatorischen Kraft, die aus der mimetischen Praxis hervorgeht. Sie muss als Teil des mimetischen Vermögens gedacht werden. Sie korrespondiert mit einem materialistischen Utopiebegriff, wie er für das Denken Ernst Blochs (1885–1977) zentral ist, in einer Weise, die es gestattet, von einer auf mimetischen Vermögen fußenden utopischen *Rationalität* zu sprechen.

Georg Lukács

Auch im Denken des späten Georg Lukács (1885–1971)[11] erhält Mimesis den Charakter eines ontologischen und anthropologischen Grundbegriffs. Mimesis ist eine allgemeine Fähigkeit menschlichen Seins. Motor der zivilisatorischen Entwicklung und der Herausbildung der Formen der Mimesis ist die im Prozess materieller Reproduktion verankerte, auf dem Fundament menschlicher Arbeit fußende Entwicklung der Sinne, in deren arbeitsteiligen Vollzug sich die Grundformen menschlicher Zivilisation herausbilden und mit ihnen die Formen der Mimesis. Bereits im Arbeitsprozess ist Mimesis als Elementartatsache menschlichen Lebens gegeben, und zwar im Sinne eines ontologischen Verhältnisses, in dem Bewusstsein als Seinsverhältnis aufgefasst wird. Vom Prozess materieller Reproduktion ausgehend, konzipiert Lukács die Entwicklung der menschlichen Sinne als Arbeit der ganzen bisherigen Weltgeschichte. In diesem Zusammenhang kommt der Mimesis als allgemeiner Fähigkeit des menschlichen Bewusstseins eine Schlüsselrolle zu: als *elementare Mimesis* in Alltag und Arbeit, als *theoretische Mimesis* in der Wissenschaft und als *ästhetische Mimesis* in der Kunst. Magie, Mythos und Religion bilden Zwischenstufen in der Herausbildung dieser fundamentalen Mimesisformen.

Ästhetische Mimesis ist für Lukács *weltschaffende Mimesis*: Produktion von Wirklichkeitsmodellen in der ästhetischen Form je individueller Werkwelten; Form, in der historische Welt, d.i. menschliches Leben, seiner selbst ansichtig wird, der Mensch sich als »Mensch ganz« erfährt, erfühlt und erkennt. Gegenstand der Kunst ist das gesellschaftliche Subjekt im Verhältnis zu sich selbst, zur Geschichte, zur Natur und zur Kunst selbst. Es ist das Medium, in dem sich in einem paradigmatischen Sinn das Selbstbewusstsein der menschlichen Gattung ausbildet. Die in sich selbstständige, durch sich selbst wirkende Totalität der Kunst steht in einem Korrespondenzverhältnis zur »gattungsgeschichtlichen Wirklichkeitserfahrung«, und zwar in einem je »gegebenen historischen Entwicklungsstadium der Menschheit«.[12] Kunst bezieht sich auf den realen Geschichtsprozess, der außerhalb der Kunst seine materielle Existenz hat, der ohne Kunst freilich um die Dimension des humanen Selbstbewusstseins verkürzt wäre.

Ausdrücklich spricht Lukács vom »universalistischen Humanismus« der Kunst, dem »die schärfste klassenmäßige Entscheidung zugrunde liegen kann«. Kunst ist *vox humana*. Sie »spricht die Wahrheit des historischen Moments für das Leben der Menschen aus«.[13] In der »Universalität des Ästhetischen«, dem weltgeschichtlichen »Pluralismus der Künste und Werke« bildet sich das Selbstbewusstsein der Menschheit allererst heraus.

Hans Heinz Holz

In der ontologisch fundierten ästhetischen Theorie von Hans Heinz Holz ist ›Mimesis‹, in einer dem Denken Lukács analogen

10 | Alle Zitate dieses Absatzes: Walter Benjamin, Über das mimetische Vermögen, a.a.O., S. 509 f.

11 | Hier ist an seine Schriften *Die Eigenart des Ästhetischen* und *Ontologie des gesellschaftlichen Seins* zu denken.

12 | Gerhard Pasternack, Georg Lukács. Späte Ästhetik und Literaturtheorie, Königstein 1985, S. 120

13 | Georg Lukács, Die Eigenart des Ästhetischen, Neuwied, Berlin 1963, 1. Halbband, S. 849

Weise, eine anthropologisch verzahnte Grundkategorie.[14] Mimesis als Nachahmung von Wirklichkeit heißt Produktion einer, gegebenenfalls auch unsinnlichen Ähnlichkeit. Die Subjektvermitteltheit des Objektiven wird im ästhetischen Gegenstand erfassbar. Ihm kommt, die subjektive Auffassung inhärierend, Objektivität und Allgemeinheit zu. Das Einzelne erweist sich in der Kunst als Allgemeines. So schafft die Kunst mit Hilfe der Mimesis ein objektives Gegenbild zur wirklichen Welt, das sich selbst zu einer Welt abrundet. In ihm werden *Universalien von Situationsstrukturen* erfahrbar, die selbst zum tradierbaren Bestand von Kulturwissen gehören, in denen Grundmuster allgemeinster Daseinsformen manifest werden.

Paul Ricœur

Im Grenzbereich von Anthropologie und ästhetischer Theorie, hier speziell der Texttheorie, ist auch die Mimesis-Theorie von Paul Ricœur angesiedelt.[15] Kern von Ricœurs anthropologischer Grundauffassuung ist die Einsicht, dass der Mensch nur über den deutenden Umweg durch Symbol, Mythos, Traum, Sprache und Kunst sich selbst verstehen kann. Diese sind Medien im Kontext menschlicher Handlungsvollzüge, durch die der Mensch einen Zugang zur Welt und zu sich selbst gewinnt.

In diesem Zusammenhang rückt die Kategorie ›Mimesis‹ in eine zentrale Position. Sie erscheint dreifach: Mimesis als sprachlich vermittelte Lebenswelt menschlichen Handelns, Mimesis als Text, d.h. als Welt einer Erzählung, und Mimesis als Instanz des Lesers, durch den die geschlossene Welt des Textes auf die Welt jenseits des Textes hin, d.i. die Lebenswelt menschlichen Handelns, überschritten wird. In dieser Kreisbewegung vollzieht sich der Gewinn einer Konsonanz aus der Dissonanz der Zeiterfahrung, »ein Hervortreten des Intelligiblen aus dem Akzidentiellen, des Universellen aus dem Vereinzelten. [Mimesis] läßt das Allgemeine hervortreten«.[16]

14 | Vgl. Hans Heinz Holz, Philosophische Theorie der bildenden Künste, 3 Bände, Bielefeld 1996/1997; siehe dazu auch: Thomas Metscher, Heewon Lee, Marxistische Philosophie und ontologische Ästhetik, in: Z. Zeitschrift für marxistische Erneuerung 1 (2001)

15 | Vgl. Paul Ricœur, Zeit und Erfahrung, 3 Bände, München 1988–1991; dazu auch: Jörg Villwock, Zerstreute Einheit, Eine humanistische Konzeption des Mimesis-Begriffs, in: Philosophische Rundschau 1/2 (1992), S. 111–125

16 | Paul Ricœur, Zeit und Erfahrung, a.a.O., Band I, S. 71

Den anthropologisch-genetischen Zugriff auf den Mimesis-Begriff teilt René Girard mit Benjamin, Adorno und Lukács. An die Stelle komplexer kultureller Vermittlungen, in die eine Vielzahl psychisch-kultureller und historisch-sozialer Komponenten eingehen, tritt in die Mitte der girardschen Mimesis-Theorie, wie im Poststrukturalismus foucaultscher Prägung insgesamt, ein einziges Phänomen: Gewalt. In höchst gewalttätiger Reduktion wird das komplexe historische Menschenbild materialistischen Denkens in ein unhistorisch-essenzialistisches eingeschmolzen, das den Menschen, alle seine kulturellen Handlungen und Formen, auf die einfache Konstellation von ›désire‹ und ›appropriation‹ reduziert. In dieser erhält die mimetische Rivalität den Status eines Motors sozialer Organisation. Die Vielfalt mimetischer Formen wird durch eine Form antagonistischer Mimesis ersetzt. Eine solche Theorie verdeckt nur mühsam ihre Herkunft aus einer Gesellschaft, in der der Kampf aller gegen alle (Thomas Hobbes' [1588–1679] *bellum omnium contra omnes*) das Grundprinzip gesellschaftlichen Handelns ist: der bürgerlich-kapitalistischen. Deren historisches Weltprinzip wird im girardschen Denken *ontologisiert*, d.h. als zeitlos geltendes genommen, und *anthropologisiert*, d.h., das Weltprinzip wird zum Prinzip der *conditio humana* gemacht. Dies ist eine ideologische Gestalt von Ontologie und Anthropologie, die der materialistischen Denkens oppositionell entgegensteht. Doch liegt in der Sensibilisierung der Erkenntnis gegenüber dem Verhältnis von *Mimesis* und *Macht* ein Verdienst des girardschen Ansatzes wie des foucaultschen Denkens insgesamt, auf dem das girardsche beruht. In eine historische Kategorialität transformiert und als ein Moment innerhalb eines Ensembles von Momenten begriffen, ist die Dimension der Macht in den dialektischen Begriff von Mimesis einzuarbeiten.

René Girard

Resümee | Diesen skizzierten Ansätzen ist bei allen Unterschieden in der anthropologisch-kulturtheoretischen wie geschichtsphilosophischen Grundauffassung gemein, dass sie Mimesis – mimetisches Verhalten, mimetische Praxis – als anthropologischen Begriff verwenden: Mimesis gehört wesensmäßig dem ἄνθρωπος (*anthropos*, Mensch) als Bedingung seines Überlebens, als Faktor sozialer Organisation und als Motor kultureller Bildung zu.

1. Mimesis ist *grundlegende Bedingung* menschlichen Da- Ontologie

seins, der Reproduktion und der Produktion menschlichen Lebens. In diesem Sinn hat Mimesis den Charakter eines Existenzials. Ontologisch ist sie an die Reflexivitätsstruktur materiellen Seins (= Widerspiegelung) im eingangs angezeigten Sinn zu binden. Mimesis ist ein Modus von Reflexivität (als der Struktur von Analogien, Ähnlichkeiten, Korrespondenzen). Auf der Ebene menschlichen Seins ist Mimesis zugleich die Bedingung von Bewusstsein, genauer, Bedingung bewusster Reflexivität (Selbstreflexivität), die menschliches Sein auszeichnet. Sie ist Bedingung für die Bildung von Selbstbewusstsein im phylogenetischen wie im ontogenetischen Sinn – des Individuums wie der Gattung. Mimesis bezieht sich ontologisch also auf sekundäre Bildungen, die auf der Grundlage primärer Reflexionsbildungen aufbauen. Die *ontologische* Bestimmung der Mimesis ist somit auf die ontologische Bestimmung von Reflexivität bezogen, insofern der *anthropos* einer umfassenden materiellen Seinsordnung (= ›Natur‹) zugehört, in der er eine ›zweite Seinsordnung‹, die menschliche Welt, herausbildet. Mimesis ist einer der Motoren im Prozess der Herausbildung dieser zweiten Wirklichkeit innerhalb der ersten, grundlegenden. In diesem Sinn ist Mimesis primäre Kraft kultureller Bildung, sie ist menschliche Produktivkraft *par excellence*.

Anthropologie

2. Mimesis ist Produktivkraft in Konjunktion mit ποιησις (*poiesis*), dem Vermögen des Herstellens, Machens und Erfindens. Diese Konjunktion spielt in jede kulturelle Bildung hinein. Sie ist in unmittelbarer Weise im Prozess materieller Arbeit präsent. Sie konstituiert alle Ebenen menschlichen Seins: die körperliche, die psychische, die kognitive und die ökonomische. Ohne die Fähigkeit des Ein- und Nachbildens sind psychische Prozesse so wenig denkbar wie körperliche Bildung (Körperkultur, Sport), wie die Fähigkeit des Neubildens und der Konstruktion überhaupt. In den Begriffen ›Abbild‹ und ›Konstruktion‹ kehrt diese Konjunktion auf erkenntnistheoretischer Ebene wieder. Im Ästhetischen tritt diese allgemeine Struktur kultureller Bildung prägnant hervor. Sie kommt zu sich selbst. Ja, Poiesis und Mimesis spielen im ästhetischen Bereich eine solch entscheidende Rolle, dass hier von ersten ästhetischen Prinzipien gesprochen werden muss.

Bewusstseinstheorie

3. Mimesis ist Vermögen der Psyche, und sie ist eine dem λόγος (*logos*, Vernunft) eignende Kraft – hier wie anderenorts erweist es sich als sinnvoll, mit Aristoteles Psyche und *logos* als

Einheit (als Einheit in der Differenz) zu denken.[17] Mimesis kommt dem imaginativen wie dem theoretischen *logos* zu. Wenn dem nicht so wäre, könnte von einer antizipatorischen Mimesis – der Bindung der Mimesis an utopische Phantasie und utopische Vernunft – gar nicht gesprochen werden.

Komplexität

4. Das mimetische Vermögen gewinnt seine Komplexität im Prozess menschheitsgeschichtlicher Entwicklungen. Es bildet sich zu einer Vielschichtigkeit und Differenz von Formen heraus, und zwar auf allen historischen Stufen und in allen kulturellen Bereichen: im Alltag, in Wissenschaft und Kunst, in der Magie, im Mythos und in der Religion. Die von Lukács vorgeschlagenen Unterscheidungen von elementarer, wissenschaftlicher und ästhetischer Mimesis sind für jede weitere Ausarbeitung der Mimesis-Theorie grundlegend.

Anwesend-Machen von Abwesendem

5. Auf der Ebene ästhetischer Praxis besitzt Mimesis die Kernbedeutung sinnlicher Vergegenwärtigung, d.i. ein Anwesend-Machen von Abwesendem oder Verborgenem, das sich der Alltagserfahrung entzieht. In diesem Sinn gilt Hegels (1770–1831) Definition der Kunst auch für Mimesis: Kunst ist *das sinnliche Scheinen der Idee*. Der sinnliche Schein, d.i. die fiktive Welt der Kunst, macht gegenwärtig, bringt zur gegenwärtigen Anschauung, was sich der gewöhnlichen Anschauung entzieht, was die sinnliche Erscheinung verbirgt und in dieser aber verborgen anwesend ist: ihr verborgenes Wesen, ihr ›Begriff‹, ihre ›Idee‹. ›Sinnlicher Schein‹ meint gerade die gestalthafte (= ästhetische) Vergegenwärtigung dessen, was als Kern (εἶδος [*eidos*], *forma*, Idee) der unmittelbaren Erfahrung unzugänglich ist, was abwesend in den Dingen haust; aristotelisch gesprochen: die entelechische Form in der bewegten Materie.

Tradition

6. Ein Grundmotiv kultureller Bildung ist Mimesis als *imitatio* von Überliefertem, nicht nur als intertextuelles Verhältnis, sondern auch als Verhältnis zu Überliefertem überhaupt: bereits auf der Ebene der materiellen Reproduktion (Arbeit) als Verhältnis zu tradierten Fertigkeiten (Wissen, Können), auf der sozialen und kulturellen Ebene als Verhältnis zu Konvention, Sitte, Brauchtum, auf der literarischen und ästhetischen Ebene als Verhältnis zu tradierten Texten, Werken, Verfahren – als Verhältnis zum ästhetischen Material insgesamt. Mimesis kann in die-

17 | Vgl. Aristoteles, Psychologie, in: ders., Hauptwerke, hg. von Wilhelm Nestle, Stuttgart ^{4}1953, S. 150–208

sem Sinn als kulturinterne Relation angemessen in der Kategorialität mimetischer Aneignung beschrieben werden, auf deren Grundlage sich jede kulturelle Bildung vollzieht.[18] In diesem Sinn ist die Mimesis von Überliefertem Bedingung kultureller Entwicklung und des historischen Progresses überhaupt: Nur auf der Grundlage mimetischer Aneignung eines gegebenen Niveaus des Könnens und Wissens kann kulturelle Weiterbildung, d.i. Transformation und Neuformung, vor sich gehen.

Herrschaftsfunktion

7. An dieser Stelle zeigt sich in scharfen Konturen, was die *Doppelnatur der Mimesis* genannt werden kann. Ihr eignet immer, als Erbe genetischer Mimikry, die Anpassung an ein Gegebenes. Diese ist Bedingung der Reproduktion und des Überlebens, doch zugleich ist sie auch Bedingung der Unterwerfung unter eine herrschende Macht, sei sie natürlich oder sozial, der Unterwerfung auch unter Konvention, Überlieferung und Sitte. In diesen Zusammenhang gehören Akzeptanz von Herrschaft, Eingliederung in existente Machtformationen, gehören Phänomene wie Gleichmacherei, Herdenmentalität, Opportunismus. Ich spreche hier, bezogen auf soziale Herrschaft, von der *ideologischen Funktion der Mimesis*. Teil dieser Funktion ist ihr Einsatz in Formen sozialer und politischer Repräsentation. Die *Dialektik der Mimesis* besteht nun präzise darin, dass in dem Gleichen, was Bedingung des Überlebens, der Bildung und Selbstwerdung, Bedingung schließlich der Befreiung ist, auch das Potenzial der Unterwerfung und Selbstentfremdung steckt – Mimesis ist Bedingung der Freiheit wie der Unfreiheit. Nur eine Theorie, die sich dieses Doppelcharakters der Mimesis bewusst ist, kann ihre historische Komplexität und Funktion angemessen begreifen.

Anforderung an eine dialektische Mimesis-Theorie

8. Diese Dialektik nicht begriffen zu haben, ist Mangel eines großen Teils der bis heute entwickelten Theorien. Haben humanistisch inspirierte Konzeptionen (bis in den Marxismus hinein) den Aspekt produktiver Bildung im mimetischen Vorgang einseitig hervorgehoben, so haben im Zuge der antihumanistischen Wende der Kulturtheorie poststrukturalistisch orientierte Theorien einseitig den Zusammenhang von Mimesis und Macht in den Mittelpunkt gestellt. Mimesis erscheint hier ausschließlich als Ausdruck oder Medium im Konstitutionsprozess von Herrschaft und Autorität oder auch als Form und Agens von Gewalt im Kampf der Individuen und Geschlechter. So unstrittig es ist, dass

18 | Siehe dazu meine Überlegungen weiter unten auf S. 19 ff.

Mimesis historisch soziale Macht konstituiert hat und konstituieren kann, dass sie als Mittel ihrer Inszenierung dienlich war und ist – also als ideologische Form fungiert –, so einseitig bleibt eine Theorie, die das Phänomen auf diesen einen Aspekt beschränkt. Es zeigt sich, dass allein eine dialektische Theorie die Wirklichkeit als ein Widerspruchsfeld – hier die Mimesis in ihrer Zwienatur – beschreiben und in der Beschreibung auf den Begriff zu bringen vermag.

Die kategoriale Grundlegung der Mimesis in den Künsten | Organisierende Thesen, terminologische Klärungen

Die folgenden sieben Thesen formulieren einige für die Mimesis-Theorie grundlegende Gesichtspunkte. Sie haben den Zweck der Überleitung und Orientierung. Sie greifen auf den begriffsgeschichtlichen Teil zurück und wollen zugleich einen Rahmen für die folgenden Ausführungen abstecken. Sie schließen eine Reihe terminologischer Klärungen ein.

1. Der kunstästhetische Begriff der Mimesis bezieht sich in allgemeinster Bestimmung auf die konkrete Welthaftigkeit der Künste im Sinne eines fundamentalen Verhältnisses zur Praxis und lebensweltlichen Erfahrung von Menschen.

2. Die Grundstruktur ästhetischer Mimesis besteht aus den Komponenten mimetische Form, mimetischer Gegenstand und mimetische Funktion. *Mimetische Form* meint das besondere ästhetische Werk, *mimetischer Gegenstand* das Praxissegment, auf das sich das besondere Werk reflektierend bezieht, *mimetische Funktion* die Wirkung des Werks im Hinblick auf Rezipienten.

3. Mimesis gilt mir, im Verbund mit Poiesis, als Erstes ästhetisches Prinzip. Denn Mimesis betrifft alle überlieferten künstlerischen Arten, Gattungen und Formen. Sie liegt allen Symbolsystemen menschlicher Kommunikation zugrunde – den sprachlich-diskursiven, bildlich-ikonischen, musikalisch-akustischen und gestisch-mimischen –, wenn auch in hochgradig diverser Quantität, Qualität, Gestalt und Funktion. Auf phänomenaler Ebene ist Mimesis in Dichtung, Malerei, Musik und Theater sehr Verschiedenes.

4. Nur als mimetische Form vermag Kunst den Charakter eines Weltbilds zu besitzen. Mimesis ist die Voraussetzung für die Konstitution ästhetischer Weltbilder und Weltanschauungsformen – und nur als Weltbild und als Weltanschauungsform kann von *ästhetischer Episteme* – ›Erkennen‹, ›Wissen‹ und ›Wahrheit‹ in den Künsten – gesprochen werden.

5. Ästhetische Mimesis meint, wie der Blick auf älteste Gebrauchsformen lehrt, die *Vergegenwärtigung eines Abwesenden*. Im ursprünglichen Sinn als Wiedervergegenwärtigung eines abwesenden Gottes[19] der rituellen Mimesis entstammend, tritt das Moment der Vergegenwärtigung in unterschiedlichen Formen und mit unterschiedlichem Gegenstandsbezug in die ästhetische Mimesis ein. Auf der Ebene der aristotelischen Poetik bezieht sich die im mimetischen Akt vollzogene Vergegenwärtigung auf Möglichkeiten menschlichen Handelns in einem vorrangig ethischen Sinn.

6. Vergegenwärtigung von Abwesendem bedeutet: Dieses wird als Akt der αἴσθησις (*aisthesis*, Wahrnehmen) durch das ästhetische Werk in die sinnliche Erfahrung gehoben.[20] Es wird zur *ästhetischen Anschauung* gebracht. Nichtgesehenes wird sichtbar, Nichtgehörtes hörbar, Sprachloses sprechbar – ein Unbekanntes uns bekannt gemacht, Mögliches als Wirkliches vorgestellt, ein verborgenes Wesen ansichtig und in diesem Ansichtigwerden begriffen. Denn auch der ästhetische *logos* ist Begriff, und zwar ein Begriff, der in der Geschichte der Weltkulturen mit dem (später entstehenden) theoretischen Begriff zusammentritt.

7. Ästhetische Mimesis also meint welthafte (weltartige und weltgestaltende) Kunst: Kunst als *Weltentdeckung* und *Weltentwurf*. Zugleich repräsentiert solche Kunst den Akt eines Sinnverstehens. Dieses Sinnverstehen geht aus der existenziellen Verbindung, dem Zusammenstoß zwischen rezipiertem Werk und der lebensweltlichen Praxis von Rezipienten hervor. Kunst ist Sinnkonstitution, doch in doppelter Weise, in der Affirmation wie der Negation von Sinn. Am Ende dieser Erfahrung, als Resultat des Zusammenstoßes von Werk und Ich, steht die Sinnstiftung, die Sinnskepsis oder auch die Sinnverneinung.

Grundbedeutung der Mimesis: Darstellung, Ausdruck, Nachahmung

Der kunstästhetische Begriff der Mimesis bezeichnet ein im ontologischen Sinn fundamentales Wirklichkeitsverhältnis, das den Künsten strukturell inhäriert und auf dem sie aufbauen. Die Grundbedeutungen der Mimesis, *Darstellung*, *Ausdruck* und *Nachahmung*, verweisen auf ihre primären Modi und bringen solche Unterschiede auf den Begriff. Es sind Unterschiede der

19 | Vgl. Arthur C. Danto, Die Verklärung des Gewöhnlichen, Frankfurt/Main ²1993

20 | Siehe zum Wahrnehmens-Begriff Michael Weingarten, Wahrnehmen, in: Bibliothek dialektischer Grundbegriffe, Band 9, Bielefeld ²2003

strukturellen Beziehungen von mimetischem Gegenstand, mimetischer Form und mimetischer Funktion. So ist die Wirklichkeit des mimetischen Ausdrucks eine andere als die der Darstellung und der Nachahmung. *Ausdruck* meint Hervorbringen der ›inneren Welt‹ eines individuellen oder kollektiven Subjekts, die sich in den Künsten artikulierende und mitteilende Psyche. *Nachahmung* (*imitatio*) kann zweierlei bedeuten: zum einen, im Sinne des Prinzips *ontischer* Mimesis, die Reproduktion externer Realität in Spielarten, die von Leonardo da Vinci (1452–1519) bis zum Naturalismus reichen, zum anderen aber auch, im Sinne des Prinzips *ontologischer* Mimesis, die Nachgestaltung des inneren Formgesetzes, der entelechischen Gestalt von Natur oder Kosmos, Nachvollzug also eines im Externen (der *physis*) wirkenden Prinzips. Umschließt Nachahmung mit ihrer ontisch-ontologischen Bedeutung die größten Polaritäten unter den Grundbegriffen ästhetischer Mimesis, so hat *Darstellung* den umfassendsten Sinn. ›Darstellung‹ meint die fiktive Vergegenwärtigung (ästhetische Modellierung) historisch-gesellschaftlicher Welt; wobei ›Welt‹ handelnde Individuen ebenso umfasst wie vorhandene Gegenstände. Der Weltbegriff zielt auf den strukturierten Zusammenhang sinnlich realer, agierender, reagierender und interagierender Individuen in einem gegenständlichen Raum-Zeit-Gefüge. Darstellung ist Grundprinzip des künstlerischen Realismus im Sinne eines kunsttypologischen Begriffs. Zu unterscheiden ist dabei zwischen *extensiver* und *intensiver* Darstellung.[21] Die extensive Darstellung leistet vor allem die Literatur[22], die intensive die bildende Kunst und im bestimmten Umfang auch die Musik.

Dabei ist festzuhalten, dass die Unterschiede in den Gegenstandsbestimmungen des mimetischen Verhältnisses nach unterschiedlichen formalen Ausprägungen drängen. Ausdruck eines Inneren, d.i. affektive Modellierung, verlangt eine andere Form, ja, ein anderes Medium der Artikulation und Gestaltung als es Nachahmung und Darstellung tun. So sind Musik, Tanz, Lyrik primär Modi des mimetischen Ausdrucks, die bildenden Künste,

21 | Für Beispiele siehe Thomas Metscher, Ästhetik und Mimesis, in: ders. et al., Mimesis und Ausdruck, Köln 1999, S. 9–109; hier S. 68 f.

22 | Hier in erster Linie die Epik. Man denke allein an die *Odyssee*, die *Göttliche Komödie*, an *Tom Jones*, die *Comédie Humaine*, an *Krieg und Frieden*, an *Ulysses*, den *Doktor Faustus* und an die *Ästhetik des Widerstands*.

Theater und Epik primär Modi mimetischer Darstellung. In der Musik ist die externe *imitatio* nur begrenzt möglich, während sie in bildender Kunst und Literatur eine zentrale, freilich historisch begrenzte Funktion besitzt. Die interne *imitatio* ist, jedenfalls in begriffsgeschichtlicher Hinsicht, im Prinzip in allen Künsten möglich.

Mimetische Aneignung

Darstellung, Ausdruck und Nachahmung sind also mimetische Modi vergegenwärtigenden Gestaltens in den Künsten: Darstellung eines Weltganzen, Ausdruck eines psychisch Inneren, Nachahmung, sei es eines extern Gegebenen oder eines im Externen wirkenden Prinzips. Ein weiterer Begriff bietet sich an, mit dessen Hilfe ein den drei Grundmodi des Mimetischen noch vorausliegendes, in ihnen wirkendes Prinzip beschrieben werden kann: *Aneignung*. Der Begriff orientiert sich an Marx' Unterscheidung zwischen *begrifflicher* (»Verarbeitung von Anschauung und Vorstellung in Begriffe«), *künstlerischer*, *religiöser* und *praktisch-geistiger* Aneignung der Welt. »Das Ganze, wie es im Kopf als Gedankenganzes erscheint«, heißt es in seinen *Grundrissen zur Kritik der politischen Ökonomie*, »ist ein Produkt des denkenden Kopfes, der sich die Welt in der ihm einzig möglichen Weise aneignet, einer Weise, die verschieden ist von der künstlerischen, religiösen, praktisch-geistigen Aneignung der Welt.«[23] Marx' Aneignungsbegriff geht auf Hegels Begriff der Assimilation zurück, wie er im zweiten Teil der *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse* entwickelt wird.[24] Unter ›Assimilation‹ versteht Hegel alle Prozesse, in denen ein Organismus das ihm Äußerliche, Unorganische (nicht Anorganische) »als subjektiv setzt«, es »sich zu eigen macht«, »mit sich identifiziert«[25], wobei drei Formen der Assimilation unterschieden werden: »erstens der theoretische Prozeß; zweitens der reale praktische Prozeß; drittens die Einheit beider, der ideell-reelle

23 | Karl Marx, Grundrisse zur Kritik der politischen Ökonomie, in: Marx-Engels-Werke, Band 42, S. 35 f.

24 | Siehe Peter Keiler, Stichwort ›Aneignung‹, in: Hans Jörg Sandkühler (Hg.), Europäische Enzyklopädie zu Philosophie und Wissenschaften, Band 1, Hamburg 1990, S. 118–128

25 | Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse (1830) II, in: ders., Werke, hg. von Eva Moldenhauer und Karl Markus Michel, Frankfurt/Main 1970, Band 9, § 357, 1. Zusatz

Prozeß, die Umbildung des Unorganischen zum Zweck des Lebendigen«.[26]

Der marxsche Aneignungsbegriff bezieht sich nach Keiler auf alle drei Formen der Assimilation. Aneignung meint dann, dass ein Äußeres in die Verfügungskraft eines Subjekts tritt, von diesem als sein Eigenes theoretisch erfasst und praktisch besessen wird, wodurch es als ›Eigentum‹ diesem Subjekt zugehört. Aneignung, so verstanden, ist ein Vorgang von zentraler anthropologischer Bedeutung, und zwar in dem Sinn, dass erst im Prozess der Aneignung der ›äußeren Welt‹ menschliche Subjektivität zu sich selbst kommt, dass sich der Mensch phylo- wie ontogenetisch in seinem Selbstsein als Gattung und als Individualität konstituiert. *Aneignung äußerer Welt* und *Bildung einer menschlichen Welt* sind zwei Seiten des gleichen Prozesses. *Kulturelle Bildung*, so lässt sich nun sagen, vollzieht sich in keiner anderen Weise als in einer fundamentalen Aneignung äußerer Welt. Kulturelle Bildung ist die in Form dieser Aneignungen sich vollziehende Konstitution menschlicher Welt im Sinn einer Formierung von Subjekt und Objekt. Aneignung wird so als vielgliedriger, vermittelter, intern strukturierter Prozess aufgefasst. Zu diesem gehört, dass der sich kraft der Aneignung vollziehende Bildungsprozess stets Subjekt und Objekt in gleichem Maß betrifft: Der Bildung des Subjekts entspricht die des Objekts (des Ich die seiner Welt) und umgekehrt, dergestalt, dass die Bildung des Einen Bedingung des Anderen ist. Was auf der einen Seite als ›Humanisierung der Natur‹ erscheint, erscheint auf der anderen als die ›Naturalisierung des Menschen‹. Ergo: Es gibt keine Bildung des Ich ohne Bildung von Welt, und es gibt keine Bildung von Welt ohne Bildung des Ich. Der Mensch *ist* die konkrete Einheit von Ich und Welt – nie das Ich allein. Nur in der Form menschlicher Weltaneignung vollzieht sich das Werden menschlicher Subjektivität.[27]

Dieser Aneignungsvorgang von der materiellen Praxis zum theoretischen Weltbegreifen umfasst alle Seiten des kulturellen Bildungsprozesses. Er unterliegt damit auch von tierischer Mimikry bis zur ästhetischen Mimesis allen mimetischen Ebenen und

26 | Peter Keiler, Stichwort ›Aneignung‹, a.a.O., S. 119

27 | Zum Verhältnis von Individuum und Gesellschaft siehe Michael Weingarten, Leben (bio-ethisch), in: Bibliothek dialektischer Grundbegriffe, Band 4, Bielefeld 2003.

Formen. Ästhetische Mimesis steht mit allen ihren Modi in den Zusammenhängen der Prozesse kultureller Aneignung. Auch und gerade in den Künsten – dies ist ihre fundamentale ontologische Funktion – wird ›Welt‹, äußeres und inneres Sein, dem *Subjekt* zu eigen gemacht, tritt diese in seine geistige Verfügung und macht sich der Mensch Wirklichkeit zu seinem Eigentum.

Dieser Aneignungsprozess im Bereich der Künste hat psychische und epistemische Dimensionen. Auf die Seite des Psychischen, auf Identifikation und Erlebbarkeit nämlich, verweist bereits der aristotelische Begriff der κάθαρσις (*katharsis*, Reinigung). Er bezeichnet den Punkt, an dem das vergegenwärtigende Nacherleben von Jammer und Schrecken (Mitleid und Furcht) in das Moment psychischer Bildung umschlägt. Die Seele konstituiert sich zum Selbst – das *Es* wird *Ich* im Prozess des kathartischen Erlebens. Das ist der Sinn der psychotherapeutischen Bedeutung des Begriffs. Auf der Seite des Epistemischen ist ein *Entdecken* gemeint. Aneignen und Entdecken rücken hier eng aneinander. Was heißt das?

Entdeckung wirklicher Welt meint, dass ein Wirklichkeitsbereich durchdrungen, erklärt und verstehbar gemacht wird. Bekannte Welt tritt in ein neues Licht, unbekannte Welt wird erkannt. Aneignung heißt hier: Im Prozess künstlerischer Weltentdeckung wird Wirklichkeit als *menschliche* Welt begriffen, als Ort individueller Schicksale, Handlungen und Taten, als Stätte von Leiden, von Widerstand und von Glück. Wirklichkeit wird zum Eigentum des Menschen, sie wird *für uns* als unsere Welt über Jahrtausende hinweg.

In der Kunst ist Phantasie mit der Mimesis im Bunde. *Welt* – Subjekt und Objekt, innere und äußere Welt – bricht sich in der Kunst im Fokus der Phantasie. Diese kann als *Kraft ästhetischer Einbildung* nicht unbegrenzt genug gedacht werden. Als Opus-Phantasie ist sie Vermögen der Poiesis und konstituiert die ästhetische Welt als autochthone Sphäre des Kunstwerks. In dieser Dialektik hat ästhetische Phantasie ihr Dasein.

Mimesis und Phantasie

Das *Phantastische* verstehen wir als Verselbstständigung der Phantasie, ihre Loslösung von den Strukturen objektiv gegebener Gegenständlichkeit, die sich die Phantasie gleichwohl in deren Abwesenheit vorstellt. Das Phantastische ist legitimes Mittel der Künste, nicht zuletzt auch im Rahmen *explizit* mimetischer (= ›realistischer‹) Kunstformen, wie ein Blick auf die Komödie, den *Faust* oder die moderne Epik lehren kann.

Die Phantasie in den Künsten ist somit eine genuin und ursprünglich *mimetische* Kraft. Sie bezieht sich mimetisch auf die innere Welt der Psyche, insofern gerade die Phantasie es ist, die das sprach- und bilderlose Unbewusste artikuliert und ins Bewusstsein rückt. In diesem Sinn fungiert die Phantasie mimetisch als Ausdruck des Vor- und Unbewussten, Vorsprachlichen und Sprachlosen, der *vorlogischen* Dimensionen der Psyche. Phantasie fungiert aber auch bezogen auf ›äußere Welt‹: Kraft der Phantasie wird Wirklichkeit entdeckt, Möglichkeiten menschlicher Handlung werden durchgespielt, Wirklichkeitsmodelle bis hin zur Konstruktion utopischer Welten erkundet. Phantasie hat die Schlüsselfunktion in der Erschließung der Möglichkeitsdimension historisch gegebener Wirklichkeit (im Sinne der Dialektik des Wirklichkeitsbegriffs). So spreche ich von der Erkundung von Wirklichkeit im Medium der ästhetischen Phantasie. Ja wenn Mimesis sich primär auf die Möglichkeitsformen des Wirklichen bezieht und erst sekundär auf ihre Faktizitätsformen, dann ist Phantasie die Kraft, die ästhetische Welterkundung ermöglicht.

Totalität der mimetisch angeeigneten Welt

Als mimetische Formen sind die Künste auf sinnlich-gegenständliche Praxis bezogen, d.i. menschliche Erfahrung und Tätigkeit: soziales Handeln *in* einer gegenständlichen Welt. Menschliches In-der-Welt-Sein, das *geschichtlich-gesellschaftliche Dasein von Individuen*, bildet die Grundlage der Künste. Wirklichkeit ›an sich‹ kann nie Gegenstand der Kunst sein. Gegenstand der Kunst ist stets eine Wirklichkeit, *die durch Erfahrung gegangen ist*. Ich spreche deshalb vom *experientiellen* Gegenstand der Künste. Weiter spreche ich mit Blick auf das, was in den Künsten *existenziell* (›erlebensförmig‹) geschieht, von *Erfahrungsmodellierung*.

Modellierung umfasst Nachbildung und Konstitution, d.i. Konturierung, Umprägung und Neuschaffung (= Konstruktion), als einen einheitlichen Vorgang. Der Erfahrungsbegriff bezieht sich dabei auf die *Totalität* menschlicher Erfahrung – kein Aspekt menschlicher Praxis und Lebenswelt bleibt in der Geschichte der Künste ausgespart. Es ist *die ganze menschliche Welt* und der *Mensch ganz*, die bzw. der im Prisma eines besonderen historischen Moments durch letzteren gebrochen und perspektiviert in den Künsten in die Form der Anschauung tritt – in den Akten künstlerischer Kommunikation vermittelt, in der Überlieferung der Künste tradiert wird: »Wirklichkeit *in Bezug auf den Menschen*«, mit Goethe gesprochen, Wirklichkeit also historisch gedacht. Der Begriff der *Totalität* menschlicher Welt und Erfahrung

besitzt in diesem Zusammenhang eine Schlüsselfunktion. Ohne ihn bliebe die ästhetische Theorie Stückwerk und würde ihren Gegenstand nur in Teilen, einseitig und fragmentarisch, erfassen. So wäre es unzulässig, die Kunst auf die Vermittlung von Gefühlen (affektive Kommunikation) zu reduzieren. Genauso ist es unzulässig, allein ihre bildhaft darstellende und kognitiv epistemische Seite hervorzuheben. Die Grundbedeutungen der Mimesis-Theorie, Darstellung, Nachahmung und Ausdruck, beziehen sich auf das ganze Spektrum ästhetischer Totalität, auf das Ganze der Kunst-Welten, die uns in der Geschichte der Künste entgegentreten. Kunst ist Nachbildung, d.i. vergegenwärtigende Darstellung lebenspraktischer Handlung und Erfahrung[28], sowie Ausdruck, d.i. Artikulation und Kommunikation von Psyche, also von *affektiver Modellierung*, wie auch gesagt werden kann.

Der Begriff der Totalität menschlicher Erfahrung hat allerdings nur dann einen Sinn, wenn wir ihn auf das *System der Künste*, auf die symbolischen Welten der Künste insgesamt und nicht auf einzelne Kunstgattungen, -formen und -werke beziehen. Sicher mag es einzelnen Werken gelingen, sich einer solchen Totalität kraft einer Synthesis ästhetischer Modi anzunähern.[29] In ausgeführter, *extensiver* Form ist der Begriff ästhetischer Totalität nur auf die Künste im Ganzen – systematisch und historisch – applizierbar. Das synthetische Werk, das als Einzelnes ästhetische Totalität erstrebt, kann diese nur *intensiv*, punktuell und partiell verwirklichen.

Sinnlichkeit der Künste

Die Künste arbeiten mit dem Material menschlicher Sinne. In ihrem System ist eine Arbeitsteilung der Sinne ausgebildet. So bleibt es nicht aus, dass sich die einzelnen Kunstgattungen und -arten auf *besondere* menschliche Sinne spezialisieren. Die visuelle Welt wird primär in den bildenden Künsten ausgearbeitet, die akustische in der Musik, die sprachliche[30] in der Literatur.

28 | Der Praxis-Begriff, wie er hier verstanden wird, umschließt die Einheit von Handlung und Erfahrung.

29 | Dem Musiktheater Richard Wagners liegt mit dem Konzept des Gesamtkunstwerks ein solches totalisierendes Programm zugrunde; im Begriff progressiver Universalpoesie, wie ihn der junge Friedrich Schlegel entwarf, ist es vorgebildet.

30 | Sprache ist eine Synthesis von Sinnlichkeit und Bewusstsein (*logos*). Im ästhetischen Sinn gehört sie zum Material menschlicher Sinnlichkeit und fungiert als ein solches.

Desgleichen spezialisieren sich die Künste auf bestimmte ›Seiten‹, das sind Vermögen, Fähigkeiten, Anlagen, des ›Menschen ganz‹: Die Musik hat ihr Zentrum im Bereich von Gefühl und Affekt, die bildenden Künste in der ›äußeren‹, optisch und haptisch wahrgenommenen Welt. Der Literatur kommt kraft des synthetischen Vermögens der Sprache im bestimmten Sinn eine ›Sonderrolle‹ zu: Als bildhaftes Sprechen evoziert sie die visuelle Welt, als begriffliches Sprechen integriert sie die logische Welt (Wissenschaft und Philosophie)[31], als musikalisches Sprechen die Welt der Töne. Zumindest von Angrenzungen und Grenzüberschreitungen kann hier gesprochen werden. So ist die Literatur in exzeptioneller Weise geeignet, die Extreme von Affekt und Begriff zu synthetisieren. Das Drama ist die synthetische Kunstform *par excellence*, da in ihm sprachlich-begriffliche, optisch-haptische und in der Gestalt des Musiktheaters musikalische Formen nicht nur konnotativ, sondern in direkter sinnlicher Wahrnehmung vereinigt sind – ein Tatbestand, dem bereits die aristotelische *Poetik* Rechnung trägt und Theoretiker höchsten Rangs, so auch Hegel, veranlasst hat, die Vorrangstellung der Dichtung vor den anderen Künsten zu behaupten.

Ontologische Transformation und ästhetisches Bewusstsein

Zur Besonderheit der Künste gehört es freilich, dass in ihnen keine dieser sinnlichen Qualitäten, auf denen sie aufbauen, in unmittelbarer Form reproduziert und kommuniziert werden. Sinnliche Unmittelbarkeit wird in den Künsten im Medium der kompositorischen Gestaltung gebrochen. Diese Gestaltung bewirkt eine *ontologische* Transformation – eine Veränderung von Quantität und Qualität – sämtlicher einem Kunstwerk zugrunde liegender Eigenschaften und Vermögen. Diese Transformation betrifft Form und Inhalt des Werks. Affekte und Begriffe *in der Kunst* sind nie dasselbe, was sie außerhalb der Kunst sind. Sie werden durch die Kunst modelliert, verändert und damit auch *gedeutet*, ist doch der mimetische Akt als interpretativer Akt zu begreifen. Gefühle im Vorgang ästhetischer Mimesis sind nie Gefühle ›pur‹. Die ästhetische Mimesis modelliert sie in einem Zusammenhang von semantischen Bezügen, durch die sie gewertet, gedeutet, d.h. intensiviert oder relativiert, auch persifliert werden können. In den Künsten gibt es keine Unmittelbarkeit

31 | Siehe zu bildhaftem und begrifflichem Sprechen auch Jörg Zimmer, Metapher, in: Bibliothek dialektischer Grundbegriffe, Band 5, Bielefeld ²2003.

(höchstens den Schein einer solchen in trivialen Kunstformen). Auch Gefühle treten als ästhetisch modellierte in Vermittlungszusammenhänge ein, die mit der Struktur der Selbstreflexivität zusammenhängen. Der Zustand der ›Unschuld‹ ist in den Künsten unbekannt.

Auch Gefühle also treten, sobald sie in den Kreis der Künste eingehen, in die Form der Reflexivität und werden zum Teil dessen, was ästhetisches Bewusstsein heißen soll. Der Affekt ist als ›reiner‹ Affekt seines Daseins nicht bewusst. Er wird seiner selbst aber im Medium der Künste bewusst. Zum ästhetischen Bewusstsein gehört das sich selbst wissende Gefühl, das gleichwohl nicht, wie in der Wissenschaft, abstraktiv in ein System theoretischer Sätze aufgelöst wird, sondern den Charakter der Erfahrungsform, der sinnlichen Unmittelbarkeit und des sinnlichen Erlebens, bewahrt. Es ist dies ein Prinzip der Steigerung. Affektive Form und epistemische Form bilden in den Künsten eine Einheit – und nur in den Künsten ist diese Einheit möglich. Dies gehört zur Einzigartigkeit ihrer Leistung.

Mimetische Einstellungen

Kraft der Mimesis ist für die Kunst ein fundamentaler Wirklichkeitsbezug konstitutiv: das binäre Verhältnis einer Referenz. Darstellung, Ausdruck und Nachahmung bezeichnen die grundlegenden Weisen, in denen dieses Verhältnis in der Geschichte der Künste auftritt. Damit aber ist noch nichts über die *Einstellungen* oder *Haltungen* gesagt, die ein Kunstwerk gegenüber der gestalteten Wirklichkeit einnimmt bzw. einnehmen kann. Ich unterscheide zwischen folgenden solcher Einstellungen:[32] *mimetische Affirmation, Negation, Antizipation, Didaktik/Propaganda/ Agitation* und *Elegik*. Wird im Modus mimetischer *Affirmation* eine gestaltete Wirklichkeit als sinnhafter Lebenszusammenhang bejaht, so wird in der *Negation* diese Wirklichkeit der Kritik unterzogen oder insgesamt als falsch verworfen. *Antizipation* bedeutet den Vorgriff auf eine andere, in der Regel alternative Welt (positiv in der Utopie, negativ in der Dystopie), auch auf eine Weltkatastrophe. Mit *Elegik* ist die Haltung von Klage und Trauer gemeint, die wir in der Kunst aller Epochen und Kulturen finden. Elegische Kunst ist Ausdruck des Verlusts einer geliebten oder verehrten Person, eines ideell oder affektiv besetzten Gegenstands, einer als sinnhaft empfundenen Welt. Mit *Didaktik/Propaganda/Agitation* bezeichne ich zweckbestimmte Einstellungen in der Produktion und im Umgang mit Künsten, das sind solche Einstellungen, die Kunst in den Dienst von Weltanschauung, Ideologie und Politik stellen, die mit Kunst einen Eingriff in lebenspraktische Zusammenhänge intendieren (von der Illustration religiöser Ideologie bis zum kulturrevolutionären Konzept der ›Kunst als Waffe‹). Auch von ›angewandter Kunst‹ ließe sich für diesen Zusammenhang reden.[33] Der Begriff der zweckbestimmten Einstellung entspricht der oben erläuterten pragmatischen Grundmodalität des Kunstästhetischen. Entgegen gegenwärtigen theoretischen Tendenzen ist auf die Legitimität solcher Kunst zu bestehen. Ästhetischer Wert ist von dem spezifischen Modus künstlerischer Einstellungen unabhängig – auch innerhalb eines pragmatischen Modus gibt es gute und schlechte, authentische und nichtauthentische Kunst und viel Mittelmaß.

Mit den vorgeschlagenen Begriffen ist die Liste grundlegender Einstellungen, die in der Geschichte der Künste zu finden sind, sicher nicht erschöpft. So wäre zu prüfen, ob man auch bei Begriffen wie ›Widerstand‹[34], ›Angst und Erschrecken‹, ›Prophetie und Verheißung‹ von grundlegenden Einstellungen sprechen kann, die Kunst gegenüber Wirklichkeit einnimmt bzw. im Umgang mit ihr als Haltung vermittelt.

Einheit von Welt-Wertung und Welt-Deutung

Kunst ist welthaft und Welt erschließend nie in der Weise, dass ›Welt‹, in der Gestalt eines direkten Abdrucks, unvermittelt in ihr Eingang fände, nie auch in der objektiven Form, wie sie den Wissenschaften zumindest als Ideal voransteht[35], sondern immer in der Brechung durch ein individuelles oder kollektives menschliches Subjekt. Kunst ist also mit Notwendigkeit auf Menschen bezogen, die sich Stellung nehmend in der Welt und zu der Welt verhalten, und diese Stellungnahme schließt notwendig Akte der Wertung und Deutung ein. Kunst ist welthaft und Welt erschließend in der Einheit von *Welt-Wertung und Welt-Deutung*. Das meint, dass Welt in der Kunst stets in perspektivischer Bre-

32 | Vgl. Thomas Metscher, Kunst, Kultur, Humanität, Fischerhude 1982, S. 209–214

33 | Vgl. zuletzt Jost Hermand, Angewendete Literatur. Politische Strategien in den Massenmedien, Berlin 1996

34 | Ich denke an Peter Weiss' *Ästhetik des Widerstands*.

35 | Lukács spricht von der ›anthropomorphisierenden‹ Widerspiegelung der Kunst, die er der ›desanthropomorphisierenden‹ Widerspiegelung der Wissenschaft entgegenstellt; vgl. Georg Lukács, Die Eigenart des Ästhetischen, Neuwied, Berlin 1963, 1. Halbband, 2. Kapitel.

Perspektivische Brechung als *ontologicum*

chung Eingang findet, in einer *perspektivischen Sicht*, die Welt-Wertungen und Welt-Deutungen impliziert, d.h. Akte der Affirmation und Negation der gestalteten Welt – in letzter Instanz ihrer Sinnbestätigung und Sinnverneinung beinhaltet. So verstanden, besitzt alle Kunst normative Implikate, grenzt häufig an explizite (begrifflich formulierte) Normensysteme an, ja vermag, zumindest in der Literatur, die zugrunde liegenden Normensysteme auch begrifflich zu reflektieren. In der Regel freilich sind die Normen der Wertung und Deutung in den Künsten implizierte Normen, Implikate der ästhetischen Gestaltung. Imitative Kunstformen geben sich oft den Anschein, Wirklichkeit wertfrei zu reproduzieren (Dokumentaristik, Photorealismus, *pop art*, Sachlichkeit), doch können auch solche Formen sich dem Erfordernis perspektivischer Gestaltung und der damit verbundenen impliziten Wertakten nicht völlig entziehen. Allein die nicht zu umgehende Anforderung, aus der schieren Unendlichkeit der Sachverhalte auswählen zu müssen, verweist darauf. Die Perspektivität ästhetischer Formierung gilt mir daher als *ontologicum* der welthaften Künste.

Sinnliche und unsinnliche Ähnlichkeit

Ästhetische Mimesis bildet das ihr immanente Weltverhältnis in höchst unterschiedlichen Modi ab. Diese liegen zwischen den Extremen rein struktureller Isomorphie und naturalistischer *imitatio*, mit anderen Worten, zwischen den Polen unsinnlicher und sinnlicher Ähnlichkeit. Unsinnliche Ähnlichkeit bezieht sich auf strukturelle Analogien und Isomorphien, sinnliche Ähnlichkeit darauf, dass die ästhetische Anschauungsform unserer alltäglich-empirischen Wahrnehmung entspricht.

Mimesis und Realismus

In diesem Zusammenhang ist zwischen welthafter Kunst im Allgemeinen und Realismus im Besonderen zu unterscheiden, zwischen nicht-realistischer und realistischer Mimesis – und zwar in dem Sinn, dass Realismus als *Modus* welthafter Kunst verstanden wird.[36] Grundlage des künstlerischen Realismus ist die Anschauungsform alltäglicher raum-zeitlicher Wahrnehmung, die empirische Anschauung der Welt – unser aller sinnliche Wahrnehmung. Auf der Basis nun der Empirizität ästhetischer Wahrnehmung vermag realistische Kunst eine Vielzahl abstraktiver Kompositionsformen zu integrieren, die Verfremdung und Verzerrung, Phantastik und Groteske, Abstraktion und formale Dekomposition einschließen. Realismus ist also nicht mit Naturalismus zu verwechseln, der innerhalb der Formen empirischer Anschauung verbleibt. Realismus bedeutet auch keineswegs die organisch geschlossene Werkgestalt, die vielmehr nur eine seiner historischen Erscheinungsformen ist. Realismus kann sich durchaus in offenen, auch fragmentarischen Formen äußern. Kriterium für Realismus ist also keine besondere Werkgestalt, sondern das Merkmal *sinnlicher Ähnlichkeit* – die Empirizität der sinnlichen Anschauungsform als Basis, die eine Kunstform trägt.

36 | Vgl. Thomas Metscher, Kunst, Kultur, Humanität, a.a.O., S. 177–214

Dialektik von Inhalt und Form

Bedeutungskonstitution: Der Weltbildcharakter der Künste | Das Zusammentreten von Poiesis und Mimesis manifestiert sich in der Dialektik von Inhalt und Form. Diese Dialektik ist ein Kernstück materialistischer Kunsttheorie. Sie bedeutet nicht, dass ein theoretisch vorformulierter oder lebensweltlich bekannter Bewusstseinsinhalt, gar eine bestimmte Ideologie, im Medium der ästhetischen Form ausgedrückt oder veranschaulicht wird; wie überhaupt der Begriff des ästhetischen Inhalts nicht auf Bewusstseinsinhalte einzuschränken ist.

Die philosophisch fundierteste und differenzierteste Ausarbeitung der Form-Inhalt-Dialektik hat Hegel in seiner *Ästhetik* vorgetragen.[37] Ein Blick auf diese ist notwendig, wollen wir uns der Grundzüge auch einer materialistischen Problemlösung vergewissern.[38]

Bereits die grundlegende Bestimmung des Schönen, die Hegel gibt, »das Schöne bestimmt sich [...] als das sinnliche Scheinen der Idee«[39], konstituiert das Form-Inhalt-Verhältnis für den Seinscharakter der Kunst. Kunst ist die Idee im Modus der »konkreten Anschauung«[40], also in der Erscheinungsweise sinnlicher Fiktion. Sie ist, wie sich auch formulieren lässt, *sinnliche Form als eidetische Realität*: Wirklichkeit der Form und der in ihr sich artikulierenden Idee.

37 | Vgl. Georg Lukács, Hegels Ästhetik, in: Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Ästhetik, hg. von Friedrich Bassenge, Berlin 1955, S. 21 f.

38 | Dazu des Näheren Thomas Metscher, Kunst und sozialer Prozeß. Studien zu einer Theorie der ästhetischen Erkenntnis, Köln 1977, S. 49–125

39 | Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik I, in: Werke, a.a.O., Band 13, S. 151

40 | Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse (1830) III, in: Werke, a.a.O., Band 10, § 556; ders., Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik I, a.a.O., S. 140 und 243

66

Idee nun meint die Inhaltlichkeit der Kunst. Was aber heißt bei Hegel Idee? Der Begriff umfasst die materielle menschliche Welt wie auch das Bewusstsein, das Menschen über diese Welt besitzen. Idee nennt Hegel die Einheit von Wirklichkeit und Begriff.[41] Die Idee ist »objektiver oder realer Begriff«[42], »die absolute Einheit des Begriffs und der Objektivität«[43]: »der Begriff, die Realität des Begriffs und die Einheit beider. [...] nur der in seiner Realität gegenwärtige und mit derselben in Einheit gesetzte Begriff ist Idee«.[44] Daraus folgt: Die in der Kunst sich artikulierende Idee repräsentiert die Identität des subjektiven und objektiven Geistes. Diese Identität nennt Hegel den »absoluten Geist«. Zu ihm gehört neben Religion und Philosophie die Kunst. Als Gestalt des absoluten Geistes schließt Kunst den objektiven Geist ein, dessen Anschauung sie ist. Und objektiver Geist umfasst die Gesamtheit der ökonomischen, sozialen, juristischen, politischen und kulturellen Formen einer gegebenen geschichtlichen Welt, umgreift, marxistisch betrachtet, Basis und Überbau, Lebensweise und Lebenswelt. Eine solche Welt, zu der die Stellung der Individuen in ihr organisch gehört, kann hier basaler Inhalt der Kunst genannt werden. In der ›lebendigen Individualität‹ der künstlerischen Form wird somit zur sinnlichen Erfahrung, was als ›Inneres‹ gesellschaftliche Erfahrung und geschichtliche Prozesse konstituiert.

Umschlagen von Form und Inhalt ineinander

Die Idee als konkreter Gehalt des Kunstwerks umschließt also die drei Momente ›Begriff‹, ›Realität‹ und ›Erkenntnisakt/Wissen‹. ›Erkenntnis/Wissen‹ ist das Wesen des absoluten Geistes. Die Kunst in der Gestalt des absoluten Geistes ist Erkenntnis/Wissen im Medium des sinnlichen Scheins. Kunst ist *ästhetischer logos* und als Gestalt erkannter Wirklichkeit von dem theoretischen *logos* zugleich unterschieden und mit ihm verwandt. Der Kern unter der bunten Schale der Tatsachen, die Praxis von Subjekt und Objekt als konkrete Geschichtsdialektik, wird im

41 | Vgl. auch Helmut Kuhn, Die Vollendung der klassischen deutschen Ästhetik durch Hegel, Berlin 1931, S. 12 ff.

42 | Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Wissenschaft der Logik II, in: Werke, a.a.O., Band 6, S. 463

43 | Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse (1830) I, a.a.O., § 213

44 | Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik I, a.a.O., S. 145

Medium[45] der künstlerischen Form ästhetische Anschauung. Die Form ist das Medium, das den Inhalt zur Anschauung bringt. Sie ist als »Schein« »dem Wesen wesentlich«.[46] Kraft ihrer erst wird der Inhalt für uns. Sie erst macht den Inhalt ästhetisch erfahrbar, macht Kunst als Kommunikation und Erkenntnismodus möglich. Aus diesem Grund kann Hegel sagen, so sehr er auf der genetischen Priorität des Inhalts besteht, dass in der Kunst *Form und Inhalt identisch* sind. In der *Enzyklopädie* von 1830 polemisiert er ausdrücklich gegen die Auffassung des »reflektierenden Verstandes«, »dass der Inhalt als das Wesentliche und Selbständige, die Form dagegen als das Unwesentliche und Unselbständige« zu betrachten sei.[47] In Wahrheit sei »der Inhalt nichts [...] als das Umschlagen der Form in Inhalt, und die Form nichts als Umschlagen des Inhalts in Form«.[48] Im Bereich der Kunst konkretisiert sich diese Einheit im »ästhetischen Ideal« der Werkgestalt, also im Kunstwerk. Dieses ist die im Modus der Anschauung ins Bewusstsein tretende sinnliche Synthesis der Form als das Medium ästhetisch-geistiger Weltaneignung mit dem Inhalt als substanzielles Wesen der objektiven Welt: dargestellte und in der Weise der Darstellung erfahrbar gemachte, ins Bewusstsein gehobene, geistig angeeignete Wirklichkeit. Es ist kein Widerspruch zum Gedanken der Form-Inhalt-Identität der Werkgestalt, wenn Hegel zugleich von der Priorität des Inhalts vor der Form spricht. Gemeint ist die Priorität in genetischer Hinsicht. Die Identität von Inhalt und Form erschließt sich der strukturanalytischen Betrachtung des fertigen Produkts. Die genetische Reflexion geht jedoch auf den Prozess seiner Erzeugung zurück. Ihr erschließt sich die Herkunft der Form aus dem Inhalt, der Inhalt als bestimmender Grund der Form. »Im Kunstwerk ist nichts vorhanden, als was wesentliche Beziehung auf den Inhalt hat und ihn ausdrückt.«[49] Die Darstellungsweise der Kunst leitet sich aus dem Inhalt her, denn »der Gehalt ist es, der,

45 | Zum Begriff ›Medium‹ siehe auch bei Christoph Hubig, Mittel, in: Bibliothek dialektischer Grundbegriffe, Band 1, Bielefeld 2002.

46 | Ebd., S. 21

47 | Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse (1830) I, a.a.O., § 133

48 | Ebd.

49 | Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik I, a.a.O., S. 132

wie in allem Menschenwerk, so auch in der Kunst entscheidet«.[50] Die Unterschiede ästhetischer Formen werden damit aus dem Unterschied der Inhalte der Kunst – damit letztlich aus den strukturellen Differenzen gesellschaftlicher Wirklichkeit – erklärt.

Ein weiterführender Gedanke findet sich in der *Enzyklopädie* von 1830, in der zwischen der Form als Moment des Inhalts und der Form als Äußerlichkeit unterschieden wird. »Bei dem Gegensatz von Form und Inhalt ist wesentlich festzuhalten, daß der Inhalt nicht formlos ist, sondern ebensowohl die Form in ihm selbst hat, als sie ihm ein Äußerliches ist.«[51] Hier wird die Form als dem Inhalt immanent gedacht. Sie ist entelechischer Grund des Inhalts, ästhetische Entelechie, die im Werk hervortritt, sich in der äußeren Werkform der konkreten Werkindividualität realisiert. Zur näheren Charakterisierung dieses Vorgangs führt Hegel den Begriff des Themas ein. »Was wir den Inhalt, die Bedeutung nannten, ist das in sich Einfache, die Sache selbst auf ihre einfachsten, wenn auch umfassenden Bestimmungen zurückgebracht, im Unterschiede der Ausführung. [...] Dies Einfache, dies Thema gleichsam, das die Grundlage für die Ausführung bildet, ist das Abstrakte, die Ausführung dagegen erst das Konkrete.«[52] Mit dieser Auffassung vindiziert Hegel die formale Individualität des Werks, ohne sie formalistisch zu hypostasieren. Die Individualität der Form ist durch die besondere innere Verfasstheit ihres jeweiligen Inhalts bestimmt, der vor seiner formalen Ausarbeitung nur einen abstrakten, ›thematischen‹ Charakter hat. Zwar ist der Inhalt die genetische Bedingung der Form, zugleich jedoch ist erst die Form die Konkretion des Inhalts, sofern sich dieser allein in seiner formalen Ausarbeitung ästhetisch konkretisiert.

Kunstbegriff

Kunst hat für Hegel die fiktive Darstellung des Konflikts gesellschaftlicher Mächte, repräsentiert durch agierende und reagierende Individuen, zu ihrem Kern. Die ästhetische Handlung ist gesellschaftliche Handlung in formaler Autonomie. Damit löst Hegel die Frage nach Autonomie oder Heteronomie der Kunst:

50 | Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik II, in: Werke, a.a.O., Band 14, S. 242

51 | Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse (1830) I, a.a.O., § 133

52 | Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik I, a.a.O., S. 132

Sie ist beides. Als sinnlicher Schein besitzt Kunst formale Autonomie. Die Fiktion selbstzweckhafter Selbstständigkeit gehört notwendig zum Charakter des ästhetischen Konstrukts. Zugleich organisiert die Formenwelt der Kunst gesellschaftliche Erfahrung und Handlung. Indem sie diese zur Anschauung aufarbeitet, macht sich die Form zur Funktion des Inhalts. Der sinnliche Schein der Kunst hat seinen Sinn nicht in sich selbst, sondern nur in Bezug auf Anderes. Kunst ist inhaltlich heteronom. So ist Form Funktion des Inhalts innerhalb der Fiktion, dass der Inhalt Funktion der Form sei. In diesem scheinbaren Paradox formuliert sich die dialektische Struktur des Kunstschönen.

Was in den Künsten auf diese Weise ins Bild tritt, ist auf keine besondere Sphäre menschlicher Lebenswirklichkeit beschränkt, es ist »der totale Inhalt unseres Daseins«: »Zunächst das weite System der physischen Bedürfnisse, für welche die großen Kreise der Gewerbe in ihrem breiten Betrieb und Zusammenhang, Handel, Schiffahrt und die technischen Künste arbeiten; höher hinauf die Welt des Rechts, der Gesetze, das Leben in der Familie, die Sonderung der Stände, das ganze umfassende Gebiet des Staats; sodann das Bedürfnis der Religion, das [...] in dem kirchlichen Leben sein Genügen erhält; endlich die [...] Tätigkeit in der Wissenschaft, die Gesamtheit der Kenntnis und Erkenntnis«[53] – die Welt der Künste selbst wäre dieser Aufzählung noch hinzuzufügen. Was Hegel mit dem Begriff des ›totalen Inhalts‹ meint, ist der *strukturierte Zusammenhang einer ganzen Gesellschaft*, die Totalität, marxistisch gesprochen, der Zusammenhang von Basis, Überbau, Zivilgesellschaft und Lebensweise. Nicht, dass diese Totalität in einem einzelnen Werk *extensiv* Darstellung fände, dem einzelnen Werk ist die Darstellung von Totalität nur in intensiver Form möglich. Aber dies ist nicht der Gesichtspunkt, auf den es hier ankommt. Der ›totale Inhalt‹ ist das Reservoir, aus dem die Künste ihre besonderen Inhalte schöpfen. Er ist die reale Basis, das *materielle Substrat* der Künste, dem ihre spezifischen Inhalte und Formen entstammen. Dieses materielle Substrat nun ist kein amorphes Etwas, sondern es existiert jeweils in einer bestimmten gesellschaftlichen Form[54], es ist an sich selbst formbestimmt und besitzt ästhetisch formbestimmende Qualitäten. Es ist, mit Bloch gesprochen, »aktive Materie [...],

53 | Ebd., S. 131

54 | Vgl. die Kategorie ›Weltzustand‹ in Hegels Theorie der Handlung.

die [...] ihre eigene Potenz-Potentialität im Künstler [...] aktualisiert«.[55] Es enthält entelechische Formen, die sich in der Formenwelt der Künste herausarbeiten.

Bertolt Brecht zu Inhalt und Form

Die materialistische Kunsttheorie hat mit ihren besten Vertretern an die hegelsche Erörterung angeknüpft. So konstatiert Bertolt Brecht (1898–1956) die genetische Priorität des Inhalts vor der Form, wenn er schreibt: »Die Form eines Kunstwerks ist nichts als die vollkommene Organisierung seines Inhalts, ihr Wert daher völlig abhängig von diesem.«[56] Zugleich spricht er der Form, verstanden als Synthesis der ästhetischen Produktivkräfte, die entscheidende Rolle in der Konturierung und Kommunikation des Inhalts zu. Was ›Inhalt der Kunst‹ bei Brecht meint, erschließt sich seiner Aufgabenbeschreibung realistischer Schreibweise: »den gesellschaftlichen Kausalkomplex aufdeckend / die herrschenden Gesichtspunkte als die Gesichtspunkte der Herrschenden entlarvend / vom Standpunkt der Klasse aus schreibend, welche für die dringendsten Schwierigkeiten, in denen die menschliche Gesellschaft steckt, die breitesten Lösungen bereithält / das Moment der Entwicklung betonend / konkret und das Abstrahieren ermöglichend«.[57]

Georg Lukács

In der Bestimmung der inhaltlichen Seite des Kunstprozesses ist Lukács der Position Brechts näher, als es eine gängige Meinung über beide wahrgenommen hat. Denn mit dem Begriff ›gesellschaftlicher Kausalkomplex‹ meint Brecht im Prinzip das Gleiche wie Lukács mit dem Begriff ›künstlerischer Realismus‹: die Erfassung des »objektiven Wesens der Wirklichkeit, des Gesamtprozesses«[58], die »*künstlerische Einheit* von Wesen und Erscheinung«.[59] Auch Lukács postuliert im genetischen wie produktionsästhetischen Sinn eine Priorität des Inhalts vor der

55 | Ernst Bloch, Das Materialismusproblem, seine Geschichte und Substanz, a.a.O., S. 522

56 | Bertolt Brecht, Über Formalismus und neue Formen, in: ders., Gesammelte Werke, hg. vom Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt/Main 1967, Band 19, S. 526–527, hier: S. 527

57 | Bertolt Brecht, Volkstümlichkeit und Realismus, in: ders., Gesammelte Werke, a.a..O., Band 19, S. 322–331; hier: S. 326

58 | Georg Lukács, Essays über Realismus, in: ders., Werke, hg. von Frank Benseler, Neuwied, Berlin 1971, Band 4, S. 325

59 | Ebd., S. 324; vgl. Thomas Metscher, Kunst und sozialer Prozeß, a.a.O., S. 192–199

Form. Zugleich besteht er nachdrücklich auf dem von Hegel herausgearbeiteten Prinzip der Identität von Inhalt und Form für den Kunstprozess im Ganzen, was die Historisierung gerade auch der Formkategorie notwendig zur Folge hat. Wenn Lukács den Begriff der *Besonderheit* zur Bezeichnung des Spezifischen des Kunstästhetischen als »sinnlich unmittelbare Einheit des Einzelnen und des Allgemeinen« einführt[60], durch die der ästhetisch notwendige »Schein des Lebens« allererst erzeugt wird, so findet der Begriff sein Konkretum in der künstlerischen Form. Diese ist »die höchste Abstraktion, die höchste Art der Kondensierung des Inhalts«.[61] D.h., die Kunst hat ihre Spezifik in der Form und wäre nicht ohne diese. Zugleich aber ist die Form nichts anderes als ästhetisch ›geronnener‹, ›kristallisierter‹, konzentrierter Inhalt.

Moissej Kagan

Auch Moissej Kagan folgt dem Postulat der Priorität des Inhalts in produktionsästhetischer Hinsicht. »Die Ausprägung des Inhalts wird zum Ziel des schöpferischen Akts.«[62] Zugleich arbeitet er die Notwendigkeit der Form als *conditio sine qua non* des künstlerischen Prozesses durch Einführung des Begriffs der künstlerischen Idee heraus. In der Form erst artikuliert diese sich konkret, wie auch die Form erst Kunst als kommunikativen Vorgang ermöglicht. Wenn der Inhalt »ohne die Mithilfe der Form existieren und anderen Menschen übermittelt werden könnte, dann bräuchte die Kunst überhaupt keine Form. Die Einheit von Form und Inhalt in der Kunst ist deshalb notwendig, weil außerhalb oder neben der Form die Idee lebensunfähig, verschwommen, unbestimmt wäre und selbst dem Künstler in ihrer sozusagen absoluten Amorphie nicht faßbar bliebe.«[63] Vom Begriff der Idee her begründet Kagan die »dienende Rolle der Form« und die »dominierende Rolle des Inhalts«: »dass die Form dem Inhalt unterworfen ist und nicht der Inhalt der Form«.[64] Die Idee bestimmt er als »geistiges Gebilde«, das »in der Vorstellung des Künstlers entsteht und lebt«, die »Vorstellung vom künftigen Werk« im Bewusstsein des Schöpfers.[65]

60 | Georg Lukács, Essays über Realismus, a.a.O., S. 620

61 | Ebd., S. 632

62 | Moissej Kagan, Vorlesungen zur marxistisch-leninistischen Ästhetik, München 1974, S. 450

63 | Ebd.

64 | Ebd.

65 | Ebd.

Eine dialektische Fassung des Verhältnisses von Inhalt und Form schließt ein, dass in der Geschichte der Künste beide in ein Spannungsverhältnis treten können, sei es, dass ein neuer Inhalt mit überlieferten Formen kollidiert, sei es, dass neue Formen auftreten, die dem behandelten Inhalt nicht kongruent sind. Für die Geschichte des modernen Dramas hat dies Peter Szondi (1929–1971) unter dem Stichwort des ›Problematisch-Werdens‹ überlieferter dramatischer Form in einer Modellanalyse herausgearbeitet.[66] Kagan behandelt das gleiche Problem, wenn er von »ungleichen Entwicklungsmöglichkeiten« der Idee spricht sowie der Möglichkeit, dass »die Form hinter dem Inhalt ›zurückbleiben‹« kann.[67]

Hanns Eisler

Hanns Eisler (1898–1962) hat sich dieser Frage im Zusammenhang mit seinem am Materialbegriff orientierten kunstästhetischen Erörterungen angenommen. So beschreibt er den Übergang von der polyphonen zur homophonen Musizierweise als einen Akt, bei dem sich »Fortschritt und Zurücknahme in der Musik *in Einem* vollzieht«, und zwar in der Gestalt der »Zurücknahme« komplizierter Strukturen durch vergleichsweise simple Gebilde, in denen sich jedoch das historisch neue Selbstbewusstsein des bürgerlichen Individuums ausdrückt.[68] Den umgekehrten Vorgang inhaltlicher Zurücknahme bei großem technischen Fortschritt erläutert Eisler am Beispiel spätbürgerlicher Musik und Malerei.[69] In der Form sei ein »enormer Fortschritt« zu verzeichnen, während im Inhalt der Rückschritt »ungeheuerlich« sei.[70] Hier zeigt sich die analytische Bedeutung der Form-Inhalt-Kategorie, ihre Fähigkeit, kunstgeschichtliche Prozesse analytisch zu durchdringen. Zugleich gelingt Eisler auf dieser Grundlage eine weiterführende Fassung des Begriffs ›künstlerischer Fortschritt‹.

Das materielle Substrat

In systematischer Hinsicht hat ein materialistisches Durchdenken der Dialektik von Form und Inhalt in den Künsten an Hegels Begriff des ›totalen Inhalts‹ als des *materiellen Substrats*

66 | Vgl. Peter Szondi, Theorie des modernen Dramas, Frankfurt/Main 1956

67 | Moissej Kagan, Vorlesungen zur marxistisch-leninistischen Ästhetik, a.a.O., S. 451

68 | Vgl. ebd.

69 | Ebd., S. 623

70 | Hanns Eisler, Materialien zu einer Dialektik der Musik, hg. von Manfred Grabs, Leipzig 1973, S. 315

künstlerischer Gestaltung anzuknüpfen – und zwar im Sinne entelechischen, d.h. hier formfähigen, auf ästhetische Gestaltung hin angelegten Materials. Als solches ist das materielle Substrat eines bestimmten historischen Zeitpunkts der allgemeine Gegenstand der Künste, aus dem heraus die einzelnen Künste und Kunstproduzenten ihre besonderen Gegenstände, Stoffe und Themen auswählen. Diese dann bilden die konkrete Basis der künstlerischen Werkform; eine Basis, die sich im Verlauf der künstlerischen Produktion in das Werk hinein transformiert – in einer Weise, die mit dem oben eingeführten Begriff der ontologischen Transformation[71] zu bezeichnen ist, eine Transformation der Seinsweise, die eine Transformation von Bedeutungen einschließt.

Die gegenständliche Werkschöpfung

In diesem Vorgang lässt sich in einem ersten theoretischen Zugriff folgende kategoriale Reihe festmachen: *materielles Substrat – allgemeiner Gegenstand/besonderer Gegenstand – Stoff – Thema – ästhetische Idee*. Meine These lautet, dass in dieser kategorialen Reihe der Vorgang der Kunstproduktion in seiner objektiven Seite, als Vorgang gegenständlicher Werkschöpfung, ausgedrückt werden kann; wobei an dieser Stelle die formende Rolle des Künstlers (imaginativer *logos* und Opus-Phantasie) aus methodischen Gründen ausgeblendet ist. Dieser Vorgang ist mit Bloch zugleich als Herausarbeiten der entelechischen Gestalt des Inhalts zu begreifen. Im Folgenden soll diesem Vorgang der Werkproduktion in einigen Schritten nachgegangen werden.

Ausgangspunkt ist die Einsicht, dass ›Inhalt‹ sich zunächst auf den allgemeinen Gegenstand der Künste bzw. eines Kunstwerks bezieht. Aus dem ›totalen Inhalt‹ eines bestimmten historischen Moments sondert der Künstler einen besonderen Gegenstand heraus, aus dem sich eine besondere Inhaltlichkeit herausbildet. Einzelne Kunstwerke beziehen sich also stets auf bestimmte Aspekte der ganzen Gesellschaft eines historischen Moments. Die konkreten Gegenstände der individuellen Kunstproduktion besitzen dabei den Charakter gesellschaftlicher Materialien, die im Kunstproduzieren bearbeitet werden. Damit bildet der Inhalt als konkreter Gegenstand das *gesellschaftliche Substrat* der individuellen Werkproduktion. Dieses Gegenstands- und Stoffsubstrat enthält eine Werk-Potenzialität, die die künstlerische Bearbeitung erst ermöglicht. Es ist also eine Form prägende

71 | Siehe S. 25

Kraft, die als Konstitutivum in das gestaltete Werk eingeht. Formprägung hat eine objektive Seite, wie sie auch eine subjektive Seite, d.i. der imaginative *logos* und die Opus-Phantasie, hat. Im ontologischen Sinn sind die Werk-Potenzialität von Gegenstand/Inhalt/Stoff und die ästhetische Produktivkraft des imaginativen *logos primäre formbestimmende Faktoren*. Damit ist nicht gesagt, dass in der Kunst sich die Inhalte quasi selbsttätig die angemessenen Formen schaffen. Als weitere formbestimmende Faktoren treten hinzu: Autorenstandpunkt, Autorenintention und Zweckbestimmung des Werks, soziokulturelle Struktur des intendierten Publikums, die dem Autor zur Verfügung stehenden überlieferten Techniken (der Entwicklungsstand der ästhetischen Produktionsmittel), der allgemeine Bewusstseinshorizont der Zeit (der Stand des Wissens, der Weltanschauung und Ideologie). Alle diese Faktoren sind als formprägende Momente der Kunstproduktion einzubeziehen.

Im Hinblick auf das elementare Modell künstlerischer Produktion und Kommunikation *Künstler/Wirklichkeit – Werk – Rezipient/Wirklichkeit*[72] ist der Inhalt auf die Seite ›Künstler/Wirklichkeit – Werk‹ zu beziehen. Ein Künstler bearbeitet einen bestimmten Inhalt bzw. einen Komplex von Inhalten in einem Werk. Dieser Bearbeitungsprozess ist der Produktionsprozess der ästhetischen Gestalt. Zusätzlich zur Unterscheidung zwischen allgemeinem und besonderem Inhalt ist als weiterer Begriff das *Thema* hinzuzuziehen. ›Thema‹ bezeichnet ein kategoriales Zwischenglied im Vorgang der Werkproduktion. Es bildet »die Grundlage für die Ausführung [...], ist das Abstrakte, die Ausführung dagegen erst das Konkrete«.[73] Das Thema konzentriert die spezifische Inhaltlichkeit, fasst diese damit unter einem besonderen Aspekt. Der Begriff impliziert die konzeptive Behandlung des Inhalts durch den Künstler.[74]

Am Vorgang des Transformationsprozesses gesellschaftlicher Wirklichkeit, wie wir Kunstproduktion hier begreifen, sind folgende Stufen zu unterscheiden: 1. der allgemeine Gegenstand

72 | Vgl. Thomas Metscher, Kunst, Kultur, Humanität, a.a.O., S. 135–143

73 | Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik I, a.a.O., S. 132

74 | Vgl. dazu Peter Szondi, Theorie des modernen Dramas, Frankfurt/Main 1956

als Teil einer gegebenen soziokulturellen Lebenswelt; 2. die Aussonderung des besonderen Gegenstands/Inhalts aus dem Fluss der Erfahrung; 3. die konzeptive Bearbeitung dieses Gegenstands: Stoffwahl, Entwicklung einer ideellen Grundkonzeption, Konzentration des Inhalts in Grundthema und zugeordnete Themenkomplexe nach Maßgabe bestimmter Kriterien (Standpunkt, Interesse, Zweck, Perspektive), wobei weltanschaulich-ideologische Momente, nicht zuletzt die private Weltanschauung des Kunstproduzenten, eine nicht zu unterschätzende Rolle spielen[75]; 4. die imaginative Entfaltung und Ausgestaltung von Hauptthema und Themenkomplexen nach Maßgabe der Zweckbestimmung (Intention), der gewählten Kunstart und der zur Verfügung stehenden künstlerischen Mittel; zentrale Rolle des imaginativen *logos*; 5. im Verlauf dieser Ausgestaltung konstituiert sich das, was ich die ›ästhetische‹ Idee nenne. Das Kunstwerk bildet sich zum Weltbild heraus, es konstituiert sich als Weltanschauungsform.

Der Gehalt dieses Weltbilds – die konkrete Bedeutung, die das fertige Werk besitzt – ist zwar stets auf dessen gegenständlichen Inhalt bezogen, nie jedoch identisch mit ihm; geschweige denn identisch mit einem der bestimmenden Faktoren, die im Verlauf der Werkformation ins Spiel treten. Was oben *ontologische Transformation* genannt wurde, ist ein Prinzip des Kunstästhetischen, eine *conditio sine qua non* seines Daseins. Die ontologische Transformation fungiert hier in einem genauen semantischen Sinn: Sie prägt die Bedeutungskonfiguration des Werks, die mit seiner ästhetischen Konfiguration identisch ist. Ihren Kern hat diese Bedeutungskonfiguration in der *ästhetischen Idee* bzw. in einem Komplex ästhetischer Ideen.[76] Dieser Gedanke bedarf einer genaueren Erläuterung.

Für die weiteren Überlegungen möchte ich festhalten: Die Künste entstehen, auf ihren gegenständlichen Inhalt hin betrachtet, im Rahmen menschlicher Erfahrung und Tätigkeit. *Lebensweltliche Erfahrung* ist ihre Grundlage, die geschichtlich-ge-

75 | Ich verwende für diesen Zusammenhang den Begriff des *ideologischen Materials* als Teil des gesellschaftlichen Substrats der Kunstproduktion.

76 | Die schwierigsten Werke der Weltliteratur – ich erinnere allein an die *Göttliche Komödie*, *Hamlet* und *Faust* – sind aus einem Komplex ästhetischer Ideen organisiert.

sellschaftliche Erfahrung von Individuen als Teil der menschlichen Lebenstätigkeit. Aus dieser Wirklichkeit wachsen die Werke heraus. In ihr haben sie ihren Ort, in sie wirken sie hinein. Nie aber kann Wirklichkeit ›an sich‹ Gegenstand der Kunst sein. Gegenstand der Kunst ist allein die durch menschliche Erfahrung gegangene Wirklichkeit – Wirklichkeit in der Form von Erfahrung. Ich spreche deshalb von experientieller Wirklichkeit und vom experientiellen Gegenstand der Kunst.

Semantische Transformation

›Ästhetische Idee‹ bezeichnet den Bedeutungskern, aus dem heraus ein individuelles Werk – ich sage jetzt: als ästhetisches Weltbild – konstruiert wird. Ästhetische Idee und ästhetisches Weltbild sind Resultat eines Vorgangs, der mit dem Begriff der semantischen Transformation bezeichnet wird.

Im Prozess werkhaften Vergegenständlichens vollzieht sich eine qualitative Veränderung von Bedeutungen des der Kunstproduktion voraus und zugrunde liegenden materiellen Substrats, unter Einschluss der psychischen Tatbestände, Bewusstseinstatsachen, Weltanschauungen und Ideologien, in deren Kraftfeld sich ein bestimmtes Werk bewegt und aus dem es hervorgeht, sowie der normativen Einstellungen, Vorurteile, Wertungen eines Kunstproduzentens. In jeder künstlerischen Produktion vollzieht sich also eine Transformation von Bedeutungen zwischen dem dem Werk zugrunde liegenden Substrat und der *Bedeutung des fertigen Kunstprodukts* (dessen *semantischen Profils*), und zwar im Ganzen wie im Detail. D.h. aber, dass zwischen diesen beiden Polen eine Differenz besteht: Die *ontologische* Differenz zwischen Wirklichkeit und Werk ist semantisch. Diese Bedeutungsveränderung geschieht kraft der ästhetischen Form. Sie verdankt sich der Poiesis und ist die Bedingung dafür, dass überhaupt von einer eigenständigen ästhetischen Welt und von autochthonen ästhetischen Bedeutungen gesprochen werden kann. Sie ist der Grund, warum der Gehalt eines Kunstwerks nie auf das ihm zugrunde liegende Material – auch nicht die Intention des Kunstproduzenten – reduziert werden kann.

Semantische Transformation ist Bedingung dafür, dass etwas Kunst ist. Nur wo sie vorliegt, kann von Kunst geredet werden. Die Verdoppelung bzw. Wiederholung von Bedeutungen macht nie eine Sache zu einem Kunstwerk. Semantische Transformation ist *apriorische Bedingung* ästhetischer Weltkonstitution.

Was sich nun als Resultat des Akts ästhetischer Vergegenständlichung und im Vollzug semantischer Transformation in der

Kunstproduktion herstellt, ist das *ästhetische Weltbild*. Es konstituiert sich im Zusammentreten der werkschaffenden Poiesis mit der Welthaltigkeit der Mimesis, in der Synthesis von Form und Inhalt, und es konstituiert sich kraft der durch diese Synthesis bewirkten Transformation und Neukonstitution von Bedeutungen.

Weltbildcharakte der Künste

Kein Kunstwerk, kein authentisches Werk, ist dem anderen gleich. Diese Singularität der Werke ist keine der formalen Gestaltung allein, sondern zugleich eine der *ästhetischen Bedeutung*, eine des *ästhetischen Weltbilds*. Sie beruht im Kern auf der *Differenz der Wirklichkeitsansichten*, die verschiedene Werke vermitteln.

Als Grund für die Differenz zwischen den singulären Werken ist auf den komplexen Bedingungsrahmen zu verweisen. Folgende Faktoren sind die entscheidenden: Biographie und psychische Disposition des Kunstproduzenten; die Besonderheit der Situation und Erfahrung, aus der ein bestimmtes Werk hervorgeht; sein spezifischer Gegenstand und Stoff; die gewählte Gattung, die Form und der historische Stand ästhetischer Produktivkräfte; die mit der Kunstproduktion verbundene Intention des Kunstproduzenten; die psychosoziale wie kulturelle Verfasstheit der Adressaten; die gegebenen Institutionen der künstlerischen Produktion, Distribution und Konsumtion; der allgemeine Entwicklungsstand gesellschaftlichen Bewusstseins und Wissens; die gesellschaftliche Gefühlskultur als Teil der vorliegenden kulturellen Verhältnisse; nicht zuletzt der besondere soziale Ort, die Motive und Interessen, von denen her ein Künstler ein Stück Wirklichkeit der Bearbeitung unterwirft und ein Kunstwerk schafft.

Das in einem Werk entworfene Weltbild existiert in diesem immer in der *Form eines Potenzials* von Bedeutungen, die in Akten rezeptiver Aneignung realisiert werden und einen (variablen) Spielraum von Interpretationen zulassen. Weiter können in einem einzelnen Werk oder einer Gruppe von Werken verschiedene soziale Standpunkte und historische Perspektiven zusammentreten, was stets eine hochgradige Komplexität, oft Ambiguität des ideellen Profils solcher Werke zur Folge hat.

Die Weltbilder der Kunst sind damit auch in einem hermeneutischen Sinn variabel. Eine Pluralität des Verstehens, der konsumtiven Aneignung wie der wissenschaftlichen Deutung, gehört konstitutiv zum Kunstästhetischen.

Den Kern der assimilierten Bedeutungen, die in einem Kunst-

Ästhetische Idee

werk als Resultat der semantischen Transformation präsent sind und dem von ihm kommunizierten Weltbild inhärieren, nenne ich *ästhetische Idee*. Die ästhetische Idee also ist eine *Synthesis* von Bedeutungen. Rückgreifend auf den dialektischen Begriff von Inhalt und Form kann auch gesagt werden: Die ästhetische Idee ist der Punkt in einem Werk, an dem Inhalt und Form zusammenstoßen und ›verschmelzen‹ – scharfsinnig hat Thomas S. Eliot (1888–1965) den Vorgang einer solchen Werkformation mit einer Metapher aus der Chemie beschrieben.[77] Die Synthesis von Inhalt und Form schlägt sich in der ästhetischen Idee nieder.

Jedes ästhetische Weltbild ist von einer ästhetischen Idee oder einem Komplex (einem Ensemble) ästhetischer Ideen her organisiert. Die Komplexität, Polysemie oder gar Ambiguität von Bedeutungen, die ein Kunstwerk aufweist, ist hochgradig von der Komplexität der in ihm organisierten ästhetischen Ideen abhängig – und auf einer zweiten Ebene erst von den »Leerstellen«[78], die es besitzt. Polysemien und Ambiguitäten sind Resultat einer Nicht-Homogenität der in einem Werk assimilierten ästhetischen Ideen.[79]

Ein weiterer, wesentlicher Gesichtspunkt ist die *Geschichtlichkeit* der ästhetischen Idee. Sie erst konstituiert das, was die *interne Historizität* der Kunst genannt werden kann. Dies verwundert nicht, wenn bedacht wird, dass die Geschichtlichkeit der Künste sich kraft der Dialektik von Inhalt und Form konstituiert. Die Geschichtlichkeit des ästhetischen Inhalts prägt die Historizität der Formen – wie diese selbst, als tradierte, sedimentierter geschichtlicher Inhalt sind –, sodass die Form *kristallisierte Geschichtserfahrung* ist.

Interne Historizität der Künste

Die Geschichte ist also kein den Künsten Äußeres, das allein als externes Datum in ihre Betrachtung eingebracht werden kann, sondern ein ihnen *Inneres*: Geschichte ist das Innere der ästhetischen Form, die innere Welt des Werks. Dieses Geschichtlich-Innere der ästhetischen Form ist identisch mit der ästhetischen Idee. Geschichte als innere Welt der Form artikuliert sich in dieser immer nur als *begriffene*, als *Begriff* geschichtlicher Welt und Erfahrung. Ist, mit Ernst Cassirer (1874–1945) gesagt,

77 | Vgl. Thomas S. Eliot, Selected Prose, Harmondsworth 1953, S. 26 f.

78 | Das Konzept solcher ›Leerstellen‹ geht auf Wolfgang Iser zurück; vgl. von ihm insbesondere *Der Akt des Lesens*, München 1976.

79 | Shakespeares *Hamlet* ist ein klassisches Beispiel.

bereits der Mythos eine Gestalt des *logos*[80], so können es die Künste nicht minder sein. ›Idee‹ verweist auf den im mimetischen Akt formulierten *Begriff von Welt* als dem ideellen Gehalt des ästhetischen Vorgangs. Die Idee erst konstituiert diesen als Gestalt des *logos*, als Form menschlichen Bewusstseins. Zum ideellen Gehalt des ästhetischen Vorgangs gehören die *Wertung* von Welt ebenso wie ihre *Deutung*. ›Begriff von Welt‹ schließt Weltdeutung und Weltwertung ein. Begriffen ist eine Welt nur als interpretierte, und jede Interpretation involviert Wertakte. Kunst ist ein hermeneutisches Phänomen *sui generis*.

Ideen gehören zur lebensweltlichen Praxis von Menschen. Sie werden im Zusammenhang von Äußerungen, Wertungen und Entscheidungen artikuliert, und zwar implizit wie explizit. Ideen sind als Regulativa lebensweltlicher Orientierungen, Wertungen und Entscheidungen dem unmittelbaren Lebensprozess immanent. In ihnen artikuliert sich das Selbstbewusstsein dieses Prozesses. Sie sind Regulativa menschlichen Wissens und Bewusstseins (reflexive Regulativa), und zwar nicht erst als elaborierte Regulativa existenzieller Orientierung, Sinngebung und Weltdeutung (als politische, soziale, ontologische und metaphysische Ideen: Freiheit, Menschenrecht, Frieden, Glück, Unendlichkeit, Gott, Unsterblichkeit usf.), sondern bereits auf der elementaren Ebene alltäglicher Lebenspraxis: als Regulativa unmittelbarer Lebensgestaltung.

Als ästhetische hat die Idee eine doppelte Existenzweise. Ideen existieren in den Künsten, vor allem natürlich in der Literatur, als epistemische Entitäten in einer Form, die auch außerhalb eines ästhetischen Werks Dasein haben kann bzw. begrifflich artikulierbar ist.[81] In diesem Sinne sind Ideen ein Moment der kompositorischen Werkgestalt neben anderen Momenten, die zwar aufeinander und zusammen wirken, jedoch zugleich auch unterscheidbar sind. So nennt die *Poetik* des Aristoteles διάνοια (*dianoia*, Denkkraft) neben μῦθος (*mythos*, Fabel), ἔθος (*ethos*, Charakter), λῆξις (*lexis*, Sprache), μέλωποιΐα (*melopoiia*, Melodik) und ὄψις (*opsis*, Inszenierung) als Bestandteile des kompositorischen Aufbaus der dramatischen Form. Zwar werden auch

80 | Vgl. Ernst Cassirer, Philosophie der symbolischen Formen, Darmstadt ^{9}1994, Band II

81 | Dies gilt für die große Literatur in allen Gattungen von Homer bis in die Gegenwart.

Ideen dieses Typs intertextuell konturiert[82], in ihrem semantischen Kernbestand sind sie jedoch durchaus ›übersetzbar‹, wirken auch außerhalb des Texts und sind außerhalb desselben als volle Äquivalente philosophischer und wissenschaftlicher Ideen diskutierbar. So verdanken die Ideen von Frieden und Arbeit, Liebe und Glück ihre universale Artikulation der Dichtung mindestens ebenso wie der Philosophie.[83] Die Artikulation solcher Ideen erfolgt in der Literatur häufig dialogisch, im Drama auch monologisch, oft metaphorisch, seltener begrifflich[84], häufig auch in Relation von metaphorischem und begrifflichem Sprechen.

Nach Lionel Trilling (1905–1975) hat gerade die Literatur die Funktion, Ideen von universaler Bedeutung – also solche, die auch außerhalb der Literatur existieren, ›Ideen im transzendentalen Verstand‹ – *zum Selbstbewusstsein* zu bringen, sie *explizit* zu machen.[85] Trilling erläutert dies mit Blick auf Aischylos' *Orestie* und argumentiert, dass alles bedeutende Drama aus der Opposition artikulierbarer Ideen besteht, die im Verlauf des Dramas exponiert und debattiert werden. Ideen können freilich auch durch das Zusammentreffen gegensätzlicher Emotionen ausgelöst werden, die weitere Ideen hervorrufen; hier sind die Ideen selbst in ihrem Gehalt und ihrer Überzeugungsstärke von der Kraft der Emotionen abhängig. Ideen gehören, wenn auch mit anderen verbunden, als distinkter Teil der Werkgestalt nicht nur zu ihrem kompositorischen Bestand, sondern werden durch den formalen Akt des Werkgestaltens selbst erst hervorgebracht, also

82 | Sie haben ihre Existenzweise als ästhetische Singularia und stehen als solche immer auch in *Differenz* zu ihrer Artikulation außerhalb des je gegebenen Textes. Eine allgemeine Idee wird in einem konkreten Kunstwerk immer neu moduliert und verändert; vgl. Thomas Metscher, Shakespeare und die Tradition des Friedensgedankens, in: Shakespeares Spiegel, Band 1, Hamburg 1995

83 | Erinnert sei an Vergils »Amor vincit omnia,« Hamlets »To be or not to be«, Lears »That each man hath enough«, Fausts »So bleibe denn die Sonne mir im Rücken«, Thomas Manns »In Endes Zeichen steht die Welt«, Thomas S. Eliots »Time present and time past« und William B. Yeats' »Chestnuttree, great-rooted blossomer«.

84 | Obwohl auch die begriffliche Form ideeller Artikulation in der Literatur zu finden ist und keineswegs so selten ist wie oft behauptet wird.

85 | Vgl. Lionel Trilling, The Liberal Imagination, London 1961, S. 282

ästhetisch produziert – ein Vorgang, der in aller großen Kunst zu finden ist. Dann besitzen also auch solche Werke eine Idee oder Ideen, in denen, was häufig genug der Fall ist, Ideen im transzendentalen Verstand gar nicht explizit vorkommen. Idee in diesem Sinn ist der Kern des semantischen Konstitutions- und Artikulationsprozesses eines ästhetischen Vorgangs. Die *Form des Kunstwerks selbst* hat den *Charakter einer Idee*, in den emotionale und rationale Elemente zusammenschießen.

Diese dem ästhetischen Vorgang selbst entspringende Idee, die Idee als Resultat formaler Gestaltung – ich spreche von Idee^2 – steht in korrelativer Beziehung zu den expliziten oder transzendentalen Ideen – das ist Idee^1 –, die im Text selbst formuliert werden. Die Einsicht in diese Wechselbeziehung hebt Trilling als große Leistung der aristotelischen *Poetik* hervor. »Aristotle understood [...] that the form of drama was of itself an idea which controlled and brought to a particular issue the subordinate ideas it contained. The form of drama is its idea and its idea is its form«.[86] In diesem Sinn gibt es in den Künsten keine Form ohne Idee. Ja, ›Form‹ in den Künsten ist der *übergreifende* Begriff, der alle Momente des ästhetischen Werks – mit Aristoteles gesprochen, alle sechs Bestandteile des Dramas – umschließt und als ein geistiges Ganzes begreifbar macht.

Die Kunst, sagt Aristoteles in der *Poetik*, sei »philosophischer« als die Geschichtsschreibung, da diese das Individuelle und Partikulare, jene aber »das Allgemeine« mitteile: nicht das, was »geschehen ist«, sondern »was geschehen könnte«, »das nach den Regeln der Wahrscheinlichkeit oder Notwendigkeit Mögliche« – *Wirklichkeit im Modus der Möglichkeit*.[87] Die in der Kunst artikulierten und kommunizierten Bedeutungen sind also im angezeigten Sinn universal: Ein Allgemeines und Geltendes wird in den Künsten in erlebnishafter Form vermittelt, ein Allgemeines freilich, wie Lukács schreibt, im »Modus der Besonderheit«[88] (oder des Typischen) als die Weise, in der Individuelles und Allgemeines zusammentreten. Ich spreche daher von der *Konkretion* und *Universalität* (= der ›Singularität‹ des Allgemeinen) der ästhetischen Bedeutungen. Weitere Merkmale der äs-

86 | Ebd., S. 284

87 | Aristoteles, Poetik, C.9

88 | Georg Lukács, Über die Besonderheit als Kategorie der Ästhetik, Neuwied 1967

thetischen Bedeutung sind *Luzidität* (Klarheit der ästhetischen Werkgestalt), *Plastizität* und *Prägnanz* (der geformten Schärfe des ästhetisch Gestalteten), *Komplexität* (Multi-Dimensionalität, das Kaleidoskopartige der ästhetischen Bedeutung), *Polysemie* und *Ambiguität*. Komplexität, ›Polysemie‹ und ›Ambiguität‹ bezeichnen Stufen semantischer Vielschichtigkeit. ›Ambiguität‹ meint einen Zustand, der *widersprüchliche* Bedeutungen (und damit auch sich widersprechende ästhetische Ideen) in einem Werk organisiert.[89]

Ein Gegenbegriff zur Ambiguität heißt *Homogenität* oder *Konsonanz* der Bedeutung – neben dem ambigen Werk steht mit gleichem Recht das semantisch homogene. Um es entgegen herrschenden Tendenzen in aller Deutlichkeit zu sagen: Neben Werken hochgradiger Ambiguität bis hin zum Extrem einer Absenz von homogenen Bedeutungen, d.h. eines strukturbildenden Bedeutungskerns, stehen solche, deren Bedeutungen relativ homogen, weil von einem festen Kern her organisiert sind – ohne dass hier Fragen des ästhetischen Werts involviert wären. Das vieldeutige ist nicht notwendig das ästhetisch ›bessere‹, das eindeutige nicht ohne Weiteres das schlechtere Werk. Alles, was sich hier sagen lässt, ist, dass die bedeutendsten Werke die zu sein scheinen, in denen sich Ambiguität und Konsonanz der Bedeutungen in einem extrem ausbalancierten Verhältnis befinden.[90] Es ist dies die Idee des klassischen Werks.

Die genannten Begriffe sind solche der Werkkonstitution. Sie betreffen den semantischen Aufbau, die objektive Verfasstheit oder die interne Struktur der Werke selbst, der Artefakte. Die Gründe dafür wurden unter den Stichworten ›semantische Transformation‹ und ›ästhetische Idee‹ angesprochen.[91] Ich rede von der *Universalität*, *Singularität*, *Prägnanz* und *Komplexität* der Werkbedeutung und damit auch des ästhetischen Weltbilds. Die *Pluralität des Kunstverstehens* freilich (wie die unabschließbare Pluralität der Kunstinterpretationen), die als Tatbestand zu konstatieren und als Programm zu verteidigen ist, gründet nicht in der Komplexität der Werkbedeutung allein, sondern hat als Hermeneutikum eine weitere Ursache in der Instanz des Rezi-

89 | Richtung gebend dafür ist William Empson, Seven Types of Ambiguity, Harmondsworth 1961

90 | Man denke an Shakespeare, Mozart, Goethe und Thomas Mann.

91 | Siehe S. 37 und 42

pienten, in der Rolle nämlich, die der *rezeptive Akt* bei der Konstitution ästhetischer Bedeutungen spielt.

Die Pluralität des Kunstverstehens hat ihren Grund in der Struktur ästhetischer Bedeutungskonstitution selbst. Diese Struktur ist binär. Auf der einen Seite steht das Werk mit seinem inhärenten, weil kompositorisch gestalteten Bedeutungspotenzial, auf der anderen der Rezipient (Leser, Betrachter, Hörer, Interpret), der die Bedeutungen des Werks selbst von seiner Sichtweise her selektiert und zusätzlich Bedeutungen dem Werk einfügt, wobei die »Leerstellen«, über die Werke in unterschiedlichem Maß verfügen, eine besondere Rolle spielen. Der Rezipient, seine Urteile, Vorurteile und Interessen – die *rezeptive Perspektive* also – ist der variable Faktor im Ensemble ästhetischer Bedeutungen, die in der semantischen Werkkonstitution wie in jedem Verstehensprozess zusammentreten. Aus diesem ontologisch fundierten kunstästhetischen Tatbestand begründet sich die Möglichkeit, ja Notwendigkeit einer Hermeneutik auch im Rahmen materialistisch-dialektischer Theoriebildung. Diesem Gesichtspunkt sei noch einige, kurze Schritte nachzugehen.

Pluralität des Kunstverstehens und Unabschließbarkeit der Interpretation

Der mimetische Weltbezug besitzt zwei Relationen: 1. als Bezug von Kunst zur Lebenswirklichkeit der Zeit ihrer Entstehung – zu dem ihr zugrunde liegenden Erfahrungssubstrat – und 2. als Weltbezug des rezeptiven Akts. Ist der erstgenannte Weltbezug ein einmaliger Akt, dem Werk gleichwohl in allen seinen Gliedern eingeschrieben, so ist der Weltbezug des rezeptiven Akts ein unabgeschlossener (›unendlicher‹) Vorgang in der Zeit. Er verändert sich in jedem gegebenen Fall einer Rezeption. Die Wirklichkeit dieses zweiten Weltbezugs ist unendlich variabel und nicht festgelegt.

Kunst als Mimesis soll als Vorgang gedacht werden, der aus drei Gliedern besteht: 1. aus dem Akt der Produktion, 2. aus dem Werk als dem vergegenständlichten Resultat seiner Herstellung, 3. aus dem Akt der Rezeption dieses Werks.

Der im Werk gespeicherte Erfahrungsgehalt, seine Werkbedeutung, resultierend aus dem mimetischen Bezug zu einer besonderen erfahrenen Lebenswelt, ist ein Allgemeines, das im rezeptiven Akt spezifiziert, individualisiert, konkretisiert wird. Im rezeptiven Akt erst bildet sich die Besonderheit der ästhetischen Bedeutung heraus, konstituiert sich ein ästhetisches Weltbild in

seiner Singularität.[92] Das, für sich selbst genommen, *abstrakte* Werk-Potenzial wird also erst im rezeptiven Akt konkret. Dieser ist für ästhetische Bedeutung und damit auch für den Gehalt von Kunstwerken konstitutiv.

Aus dem *Angebot* eines Kunstwerks wird durch Bedeutungszuordnung im rezeptiven Akt ein bestimmter Teil aktualisiert. Das Bedeutungspotenzial eines Werks ist immer mehr als das, was im einzelnen rezeptiven Akt realisiert werden kann – wie es auch mehr ist als die Summe vorliegender Rezeptionen. In diesem Sinne spreche ich von einer grundsätzlichen Pluralität und Unabschließbarkeit der Interpretationen.

Pluralität und Unabschließbarkeit der Interpretationen meint keine Beliebigkeit, doch aber eine Relativität im Hinblick auf sich stets verändernde Rezeptionssituationen – das *hermeneutische Relativitätsprinzip*. Qua kompositorisches Modell ist das semantische Werk-Potenzial ein Fixum, das sich jeder Beliebigkeit entzieht. Qua Wechsel der Rezeptionssituation ist die Konkretion dieses Potenzials relativ, variabel und offen.

Ein solches Modell von Hermeneutik[93] vermag die Antinomien aufzulösen, die die Kunstwissenschaften gegenwärtig heimsuchen. Es vermeidet den Interpretationsdogmatismus ebenso wie postmoderne Beliebigkeit. Der vorgeschlagene Begriff ›hermeneutische Relativität‹, das hermeneutische Relativitätsprinzip, begründet die Pluralität von Interpretationen, ohne den Begriff der Interpretation subjektivistisch aufzulösen. Er verteidigt den Wahrheitsanspruch von Interpretationen und wendet sich zugleich gegen jeden Interpretationsdogmatismus.

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Uncertain Partitions

'Undecidability' and the Urdu Short Story

Alex Padamsee

Although South Asian literature on Partition has only just begun to receive nuanced critical attention, significant areas of congruence are already becoming apparent. Recent analyses of narrative strategies in Partition stories from other major Indian literary traditions (such as Hindi, Punjabi and Bengali) suggest that the concept of uncertainty – or, as I will define it here, 'undecidability' – could serve as a common, and multivalent, point of reference for the further critical reunification of this dispersed cross-cultural body of work (see Kamra; Mookerjea-Leonard). This article will argue for the productive role of uncertainty in the construction of the 'story' or narrative of the partition of India and its aftermath. I will focus initially on the failure of nationalist and other historical discourses to meet the demand by the participants of Partition for such a 'story' – that is, for a cogent narrative of their experiences – and then move on to consider how short fiction in particular has attempted to redress that failure. I will be primarily concerned with Urdu short stories from the first quarter century following Partition, since Urdu writers and readers were drawn at this time from a constituency that cut across religion, region and political affiliation — and for this reason they tended to see themselves as a microcosm of the larger Indian society in 1947. Moreover, they came from those north Indian states most involved in the disturbances of Partition and were themselves all directly affected by it (see Ahmad 103–25 for more on the social and geographical composition of the Urdu literary community during and in the aftermath of Partition).

It is only in the last decade and a half that some historians have begun to turn to the question of narrative as central to studying the events and consequences of partition in India. The growing consensus among them is that there is (to borrow Rushdie's metaphor) a Partition-shaped hole in the historical narrative of modern South Asia. It would seem that where these narratives do not attempt to escape the actual event of Partition for a longer perspective of liberation and continuity, the complexity of experiences involved in that event and its aftermath invariably escapes their narrow attempts at narrativisation.[1] The notion of an escape from the scene of Partition requires the longer perspective of the role of communalism in Indian nationalist discourse. By the early twentieth century the British perception of endemic communalism in India had displaced their early nineteenth-century narrative of colonial rule as one of tutelage and progress. By the time of the first partition of Bengal in 1905 the British had come to see India exclusively in terms of heterogeneity and conflict — which only they, as outsiders, could arbitrate (Pandey, *Construction*). The Indian nationalist response to the British narrative of communalism was to oppose it with the idea of 'unity in diversity', which insisted that the heterogeneity of Indian society was its real strength, signifying a deeper underlying socio-cultural cohesion (Pandey, *Remembering* 48). This was, in effect, to turn manifestations of communalism into the dark 'Other' of nationalism, that which was 'beyond the pale' of representation. The events of 1947 became then an exclusive narrative of Independence, marking the culmination of the liberation struggle and a new beginning for the story of the nation. In this narrative, the violence of Partition and migration were no more than a brief interruption, however horrific (Tan and Kudaisya 15). Effectively, nationalist historical narratives fled the scene for the onward progress of the newborn state. The 'Others' they left behind were precisely those who had been most directly touched by the experience of Partition.

This flight from what is often seen as 'a moment of madness' is replayed by most of the subsequent historiography. Partition becomes here a non-narratable 'limit-case', for which two main strategies emerge. Either the excess of Partition marks the point at which rational enquiry ceases and enumeration takes over; or there is an attempt to locate and 'discipline' those events through a narrative of origins and causes at an elite political level (Pandey, *Remembering* 45–46). What escapes these historical narratives – as it does the nationalist story of Independence – is of course the founding experience of

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Partition itself: its violence, its dislocation and, structuring both of these, its uncertainty.

In his recent study of a wide range of accounts of Partition, Gyanendra Pandey identifies uncertainty as the most common and formative experience of those directly involved with the events and aftermath of 1947 (*Remembering* 39). This uncertainty took place first of all at the practical level of events, involving three distinct and conflicting 'moments' of Partition. The first can be located in the Muslim League demand for Pakistan in 1940, which envisioned the formation of a state without population movements, a nominal homeland for the safeguarding of Muslim interests in Muslim-majority provinces.[2] The second 'moment' of Partition came with the sudden announcement of the splitting up of Punjab and Bengal by the Congress leaders in March 1947 — something that went beyond even the bargaining positions of the Muslim League. The third 'moment' of Partition arrived with the steep escalation of violence and the unforeseen migrations that followed within days of the official partitioning in August 1947. None of these three events of Partition had been predictable or even expected, particularly that of the migrations — which were thought of by many as temporary until at least late into 1948, and arguably into the early 1950s. In other words, the meaning of these events had to be worked out step by step by their immediate participants (Pandey, *Remembering* 21–44).

In the face of such radical uncertainty, then, the teleological discourse of the official narrative of Independence was, for the participants of Partition, itself a form of dislocation, a forced migration from the national story. For at least the next quarter century, their common experience of what Alok Bhalla has called 'utter bewilderment' was given expression only through literature — and primarily through short fiction which, in the aftermath of 1947, became the main literary vehicle for the narration of Partition (Bhalla xxxiii; Tan and Kudaisya 20; Kamra 124).[3] One of the reasons for the choice of this particular form by South Asian writers is that the short story – as opposed to the novel – is necessarily a fragment and therefore favours the narration of uncertainty. This is to refine Kamra's suggestion (drawing on Tejwant Singh Gill) that it is the 'traumatic aspect' of the short story that may partially account for its adoption by these writers (Kamra 124). Rather, what needs to be emphasised here is that the short story is more easily adapted to the refusal of narrative that these texts enact. For these stories, in their most concentrated forms, are intensely aporetic; they dissent from the teleology of the national narrative. Instead, they open themselves up to what Derrida has called 'undecidability'.

For Derrida, the condition of undecidability exposes the unstable ground from which decisions are made (*Dissemination* 187–283). As David Bates has recently demonstrated, Derrida drew his concept from a key debate that took place across the disciplinary spectrum in the interwar years. This debate centred on the nature of unprecedented decisions in situations characterised by crisis and the failure of norms and formal systems defining order and organisation — a situation that bears remarkable comparison, not only with interwar Europe, but with the experience of the uncertain moments of partition in South Asia and the changing status of its refugees in 1947 and beyond. In Pakistan, for instance, as late as 1950 new laws were being drafted to forcibly return some of those Muslim refugees to India; and from the other side at the same time Indian government agencies were still trying forcibly to return abducted Hindu and Sikh women to their families. Since the children born subsequent to their abduction (commonly through rape) were not allowed to return with their mothers, it can quickly be seen how, without looking to wider geo-political issues such as the disputed status of Kashmir, this kind of intimate uncertainty was already perpetuating itself beyond the initial generation of participants (the narratives and experiences of abducted women during and after 1947–1948 are explored in Urvashi Butalia; and Menon and Bhasin). The question of what 'decisions' can be made in the face of this uncertainty – how new structures of narrative might be brought into being – was therefore crucial to both the form and content of the short fiction of Partition. Undecidability here offers itself both as a mirror of the experience of Partition and as the grounds for holding open a space for resistance against the apparently closed formal systems of the narratives of Independence.

For the participants faced with these closed narratives, it is the story of Independence, and not Partition, which constitutes the ongoing 'moment of madness'. Perhaps the best-known of modern Urdu fiction writers, Saadat Hasan Manto, made precisely this point when he set his story 'Toba Tek Singh' (1950) in a lunatic asylum two years after Partition. The story revolves around the insanity of national narratives which issue in the aporetic government decision to forcibly resettle all asylum inmates according to their religious identity. But it also dramatises the way in which the stability, not only of the idea of home, but of the very ground itself, is now under question when, as the inmates perceive it, places can 'slide' into one another at any moment, or 'entirely vanish from the map of the world' (Manto 5). At one point an inmate scales a tree and declares it his home; another embraces the idea of change with the cry of 'Long live Pakistan' and promptly loses his balance in his bath and is 'later found lying on the floor unconscious' (Manto 3, 5). But it is in the story's eponymous protagonist that the failure of systems of location and belonging is most evident, since the natal village after which he is named by the other inmates literally cannot now be located on the shifting map. Toba Tek Singh's repeated question, 'Where is Toba Tek Singh?', equates place and identity and makes both equally uncertain; as a question that is never answered, it becomes a refrain for the spatial uncertainty that organises the story,

further embodied in the unexplained fact that Toba Tek Singh has been standing for the last fifteen years — ever since, that is, he was first exiled from his home. When at last he comes to earth (and dies), it is in the no-man's land between the Indian and Pakistan borders. The story – like so many Partition short narratives – closes on this almost parodic image of liminality, insisting on the lack of possible closure to the ongoing undecidability of Partition.[4]

Manto's stories in particular revolve around this question of the collapse of formal systems (such as the discourse of origins and location) through which decisions are made possible. This extends most immediately to the dissolution of criteria for, and distinctions between, agency and victimhood. In 'Toba Tek Singh', the inmates assume the identity and mimic the actions of the very politicians whose official narratives are about to arbitrarily divide up their community. As a result, they find themselves shut up in separate cells: in claiming the supreme agency of government they merely hasten their own victimhood (Manto 3). In Manto's story 'Open It' (1948), set within the liminal space of a refugee camp, a father searching for his daughter enlists the help of armed youths involved in re-capturing abducted women. His action precipitates the very thing he had feared — it is the youths who now find, abduct and rape his daughter. The father's failure to perceive the condition of undecidability is matched by the way in which the daughter's body is now equated with the unstable space of the camp, a place of refuge become the arena of violation.[5] The doctor's instruction to 'open it' (meaning the window) in the camp hospital becomes, in the young girl's barely conscious mind, the rapists' demand for her to loosen her clothing. In the image of her opening up her 'shalwar', the collapse of bounded space in body and camp echoes the confusion of agency set in train by the father's tragic demand for the restitution of order. This radical uncertainty is then pressed home in the final lines in which the father rejoices at these signs of life and agency in his daughter.

It is important to understand this ending as more than savage irony, since that would require a viable ethical position from which it might be judged. What the late 1940s South Asian reader, steeped in the pre-Partition formal systems of patriarchal honour, is confronted with here is a radical form of ethical 'uncertainty': the ambivalent 'celebration' of dishonourable survival through conventional honourable actions.[6] As I have suggested, these stories expose the instability of the grounds for making a 'decision'; that is, the norms on which previous models for decisions about conduct are based are revealed as uncertain, non-determinate and even deadly. Because these models of conduct – for instance, the preservation of patriarchal honour and agency in 'Open It' – are often those on which the larger official narratives, such as masculinist defence or liberation of the nation, are based, the stories pose the question of what kind of formal systems are now possible. The challenge to their readers is therefore to discover new grounds for making what Derrida called a 'true decision', one made without precedence or reliance on the old systems of reason (see Derrida 'Afterword'; and Bates). In a sense, they offer up the uncertainty of Partition and its aftermath as the agonising condition of a real 'new beginning', in contradiction to what the Urdu poet Faiz Ahmad Faiz famously saw as the false dawn of Independence (122–23). This is done not just at the level of content, but at the formal level of a self-conscious questioning of the very possibility of narrative.

Intizar Husain's story, 'An Unwritten Epic', begins in mid-paragraph. He writes: 'In Qadirpur too, such a fierce battle broke out that people put their hands over their ears in denial when they heard it' (Memon 153). While apparently dramatising the confusion of the moment, he in fact situates the narrative within an ongoing conventional system of representation, the epic battle for the defence of the community. He thus draws attention to the ways in which the idiom of chaos has already been incorporated into the official story of Partition — itself drawing on the language of mythological narrative. The story that follows, however, gradually becomes distracted from its official trajectory. The epic battle for Qadirpur in which the narrative would be expected to climax gives way instead to the piecemeal events of the migrations that supersede it. Indeed the story of the battle and its outcome is ultimately given in a single sentence uttered as an aside. The eschatology of Partition and its epic battles dissolves in the uncertain vista of migration and counter-migration. The dissolution of the official mode is underscored by a shift to the present tense of the narrator and his own indecision on how to continue writing his epic now that its hero has migrated out of the past tense of Qadirpur and turned up as a refugee in 1950s Pakistan. The narrative signals the supersession of mythic time and becomes a series of dated journal entries, in which the narrator comes to actively wish his hero absent so that he might complete his 'story'. In this, narrator and nation are revealed as complicit, since the narrative now unfolds against the backdrop of legislation to forcibly repatriate refugees. When the narrator moves to actively wishing for the death of his subject – an event that then takes place through repatriation – he exposes the murderous project of the official epic narrative, entombing the very participants it extols.

Husain's story ends as the narrator abandons 'literature' to become, as he puts it, a 'dutiful member of a rising nation' (Memon 178). Since the narrative itself has undone both the moral basis for the story *and* the nation, it holds open the moment of 'undecidability' even as it appears to narrate its supersession. The reader is being required to make an impossible 'decision' on how the story can now continue — once, that is, all categories for the narrative of the subject of Partition have been dissolved. Derrida has described this kind of 'impossible decision', cut free from the pre-programmed rule of principle, as the only valid circumstance for 'moral or political responsibility' (Bates 6).

It is a demand made time and again by these stories as they cut away the ground for decision-making, and at the same time draw attention to their own limits as narratives.

In 'Lajwanti', Rajinder Singh Bedi takes up the theme of the return of abducted Indian women through the unofficial story of reconciliation. At one such scene of reunion he describes how each of the observers and participants looks to the other for guidance in a sliding chain of gazes that crosses the line of those for and against the propriety of the action. As the narrator puts it, the final witness to the scene 'looks in utter helplessness at the sky — which has no reality, which is merely an optical illusion, the limit beyond which our eyes do not function' (Memon 118). The metaphor of blindness then becomes proleptic of the idea of silence which envelops the relationship of the main protagonists, Sunder Lal and his wife, Lajwanti. Just as Husain's narrator sought out a mythological plane to enact his story, Sunder Lal elevates his wife to the figure of a *devi*, a goddess, whom he wraps in silent devotion — and whose official moral status thus enforces her own silence. The actual story of her abduction, or her life with her husband in Pakistan before her return, cannot be narrated. Sunder Lal helplessly perceives that the uncertainty and violence of Partition remains, only, as he says, 'in a different form': that of forgetting (24). The motif of the 'touch-me-not' flower after which Lajwanti is named thus extends to the silence exposed at the heart of the story. Indeed, the plot is composed largely through a metonymic net of images of silence, blindness and intangibility that undo the very claim to the recuperation of memory and the continuity of the family narrative that its documentary realism and tale of reconciliation appear to endorse. For to touch the Lajwanti plant is, as the epigraph to the story tells us, to see it 'curl and wither away'.

David Bates has pointed out that the interwar debate on the idea of what Derrida later called 'impossible decisions' was far from conclusive. It is a problem that perhaps carries over into Derrida's own refusal to see how such decisions could actually be successfully made — how the new system could come into being without drawing on the reason contained in the old. Some of the Urdu stories of the last quarter century appear to bear out the logic of this refusal. They often narrate similar forms of 'undecidability' to those of the earlier generation of stories. In the face of the resurgence of triumphalist univocal narratives of the nation during this period – in the drive towards Islamisation in Zia-ul-Haq's Pakistan and the rise of Hindu Nationalist movements in India in the 1980s and 1990s – such a space of resistance would seem necessary.[7] There is a comparison here to be made between Partition short stories and Pierre Nora's 'realms of memory' (*lieux de memoire*). These 'realms' oppose the archival spaces of officially recorded history which, he argues, is itself a form of 'forgetting', a disciplinary 'representation of the past' (Nora 3).[8] In contradistinction, the fundamental purpose of *lieux de memoire* is 'to stop time, to inhibit forgetting, to fix a state of things, to immortalize death, and to materialize the immaterial' (15). They are a form of 'embodied memory', collective and individual at once, 'a perpetually active phenomenon, a bond tying us to the eternal present' (3, 14). From the uncertain perspective of South Asia today, I would suggest, the genre of Partition short stories – confronting epistemological and ethical, as much as physical, violence – similarly belongs to this province of collective memory, and serves to hold open a space in the present in order to disrupt the formal narratives of the past.

I want therefore to end here with Hasan Manzar's more recent story 'Kanha Devi and Her Family' (1981) and its instructive comment on this relationship between big and small narratives of history. Manzar tells the story of a family of Hindus still living in Pakistan, adopting many of its customs and blending almost imperceptibly with their Muslim neighbours. But there are schizophrenic signs at work among them, and uncertainty in the face of communal riots in India — as if the synchronous moment of Partition is ever-ready to irrupt into the post-Partition world. At the end of the story the matriarch's eccentric brother Persumal is questioned, as he feeds his beloved pigeons, by the new daughter-in-law from India about their minority status. 'Doesn't it scare you?', she asks. His reply is, predictably, aporetic. He says that the pigeons he is feeding on the roof of the family home 'roost in the minaret [of the nearby mosque] at night'. 'More than this', he tells the daughter-in-law, 'I shall not say; in fact, I'm not permitted to say' (Memon 219). Just who is censoring his pre-Partition conception of communal amity – God, his Muslim neighbours, his family or the government – is never made clear. One possibility, though, is the genre itself, unwilling, indeed unable, simply to retrieve the formulae of older systems of ethical thought. Pointing to 'the limit beyond which our eyes do not function', it would seem, is still one way to avoid giving in to the narrative commands of history.

A version of this paper was presented at a symposium on '1947/8/9' at Queen Mary, University of London on 10 June 2006. I am grateful to all those who offered their comments that day and to Professor Lyn Innes for reading through a draft of this article.

Notes

1 Gyanendra Pandey has made the most sustained analysis so far of the failure of historical narratives in *Remembering Partition* (2002). But see also Tan and Kudaisya, chapter 1; Tharu; Mayaram, chapter 6; and Gilmartin.

2 Ayesha Jalal's *The Sole Spokesman* remains the key reference work on the political calculations at work behind this demand.

3 It should also be noted that this period marked a burgeoning of the short story form in many Indian languages, particularly Urdu and Hindi.

4 An extended discussion of the importance of the motif of spatial liminality in Partition stories can be found in Kamra.

5 Women's bodies frequently came to be seen during Partition as 'territory' to be 'occupied' by men of the other faiths (Tan and Kudaisya 22).

6 The ending of the story brought down a banning order on the Pakistani journal that published it. Another Partition story by Manto, 'Cold Meat' (1949), presented its readers with a similar radical ethical uncertainty — and earned its writer a lengthy spell in the dock on a charge of 'obscenity' (Gopal, 104, 112).

7 In her 1994 article on Partition narratives Susie Tharu makes a persuasive case for the parallels between the nationalist account of Partition and these later Hindu Nationalist narratives.

8 In *Remembering Partition* Pandey draws on this opposition between history and memory in reference to 'non-disciplinary' accounts of Partition violence.

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Preface
In the Cave of Making
Thoughts on Third Space

Homi K. Bhabha

The cave of making can be a dark and desperate place. From time to time, the darkness is dispelled by flashes that dazzle the obscurity. These sudden impulses are too bright to illuminate an idea or light up a thought; they make the night more impenetrable, the cave more unbearable. And yet, the memory of light lingers on, and leads you further into a darkness that slowly reveals its own geography of insight and ignorance. Then voices begin calling to you from beyond the cave—voices of instruction and encouragement, half inscripted and half intuited, half heard and half imagined. It is these voices, freighted with unresolved conversations and interrupted arguments, that finally help you to "hold" the thought: and in the midst of that movement of ideas and intuitions you discover a momentary stillness. This moment of reflection is never simply the mirror of *your* making, *your* frame of thinking, but a stillness sometimes heard in choral music when several voices hold the same note for a moment—*omnes et singulatum*—as it soars beyond any semblance of sameness. The precarious tension involved in holding the thought—or the note—in common, vibrating beyond the control of any one voice, is the timbre of translation working its way into our thinking. In this act of "holding"—a thought, a note, a tone—the grain of the idea or the concept comes to be revealed through the side-by-side synchrony of different voices. Suddenly, the ungraspable thought is *yours*, but only in the dispossessive spirit of that doubly articulated pronoun. To say that a concept or a thought *becomes yours* is to say that it becomes my thought, my concept; but it is never in my possession, it was never my property, because the thought is also *yours—it belongs to you, too.*

To hold, in common, a concept like third space is to begin to see that thinking and writing are acts of translation. Third space, for me, is unthinkable outside of the locality of cultural translation. It was local knowledge that first led me to the third space by way of some mis-translations in the context of early 19th century Evangelical discourses dedicated to the conversion of Hindus in Northern India. I remember the case of the Biblical mistranslation of the Holy Ghost as *bhoot* (or "spook") by a missionary who was at once affronted and perplexed that his purple proselytizing had not persuaded the affrighted natives to embrace the

Holy Trinity. And then, of course, there were those canny peasants outside Agra who politely turned down the offer of conversion by fulsomely praising the divine language of Christian catechism while expressing their utter disbelief in a religious system in which the word of God could come from the mouths of meat-eaters. Related more closely to the 1990s, there were groups like the Southall Black Sisters (consisting largely of second-generation migrant and minority women from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds) whose post-colonial, feminist politics opened up a third space of cultural critique and political confrontation founded on a double consciousness: they were as critical of the pluralist prejudices of secular liberals and their reductive stereotypes of faith-based communities, as they were resistant to the patriarchal policing of gender relations and sexual choice within their own traditionalist, status-centered families. Across the threshold of terror and genocide that joins the 20th century to the twenty-first, Truth Commissions provide dialogical third spaces committed to democratic processes of political transition and ethical transformation in societies made wretched by violence and retribution. The traditional grass mat, the *gacaca,* that has provided a name and a place for local practices of post-genocide adjudication in Rwanda—the Gacaca Courts—could also qualify as a third space. The *gacaca* is not simply a neutral area of confession, nor is it principally a space of confrontation and guilt. It is a place and a time that exists in-between the violent and the violated, the accused and the accuser, allegation and admission. And that site of in-betweenness becomes the ground of discussion, dispute, confession, apology and negotiation through which Tutsis and Hutus together confront the inequities and asymmetries of societal trauma not as a "common people," but as a people with a common cause.

The priest who mistook the Holy Ghost for a spook was perhaps a bad translator; the peasants who demanded a vegetarian Bible were, perhaps, shrewd, subaltern strategists. It was, however, neither the question of the accuracy of translation, nor the political uses and abuses of cultural (mis) communication that initially caught my eye. What struck me with some force was the emergence of a dialogical site—a moment of enunciation, identification, negotiation—that was suddenly divested of its mastery or sovereignty in the midst of a markedly asymmetrical and unequal engagement of forces. In an intercultural site of enunciation, at the intersection of different languages jousting for authority, a translational space of negotiation opens up through the process of dialogue. Adapting an idea from Walter Benjamin's essay *The Task of the Translator,* I would suggest that the contingency and indeterminacy of discourse results from a distinction *within* linguistic intention that is made more easily visible by the practice of translation. The living flux of meaning is difficult to pin down (recall Lacan's *points de capiton!),* because the linguistic sign continually shifts from being an "object" of intention—a Hindi "sign," *bhoot,* equivalent (or not) to the English "ghost"—to becoming a "mode" of intention—the

cultural and discursive specificity of the "sign" as a repertoire (and reservoir) of meaning that has no equivalence in another language. The specificity of signification cannot be reproduced in an imitative sense; it can only be re-presented as an iterative, re-initiation of meaning that awakens the sign (as mode of intention) to another, analogical linguistic life. Is this not the reason why Benjamin suggests that 'translation, ironically, transplants the original into a more definitive linguistic realm since it can no longer be displaced by a secondary rendering. The original can only be *raised anew* and at other points of time.'[1]

Ironically, it is the 'element that does not lend itself to translation'[2] that makes it possible for discursive authority to be re-negotiated despite the asymmetrical relations of power. Raising the problem of meat eating as a foil to conversion seems to make good political sense, but at the same time may well be theological nonsense. Perhaps the oral transmission of scriptures by Hindu priests might have been mentally transposed, by the North Indian peasants, onto the inscriptive instruction proffered by meat-eating Christian priests, resulting in an imagined pollution of sacred texts. Who knows what exactly happened, or what was precisely meant, at that local point in time? However, what appears from the archive as the strategic advantage of the disadvantaged peasantry over the commanding clerisy is achieved by a strange divergence or displacement of the path of power through an act of signification that emphasizes what semioticians call the arbitrariness of the sign. It is the openness or "emptiness" of the signifier—the untranslatable movement between the intended object and its mode of intention—that enables a speech-act to become the bearer of motivated meanings and deliberative intentions, *in situ,* at the moment of its enunciation. The cipher of meaning—the virtuality and arbitrariness of the sign—is itself a value-system capable of being used, not perhaps to speak truth to power, but to pit an alternative ethical and political authority against the dogmatism of prevailing power. For, at this moment, the openness (rather than emptiness?) of the signifier suddenly drains the charge of power rather than exerting a counter-pressure that would spark it back to life.

How do you attribute value and agency to a voiding, or a draining, of power at the hands of the openness of the arbitrary signifier? In what sense does the "sign" open onto the question of agency and provide an alternative, even antagonistic, form of authority? Consider an incident from Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness.* Conrad's Marlow, the ethical and narrative protagonist of the novel, knows only too well what it means to live in conditions of moral opacity shrouded in a forest of signs that render the conditions of speech and action barely intelligible: 'We were cut off from the comprehension of our surroundings; we glided past like phantoms, wondering and secretly appalled, as sane men would be before an enthusiastic outbreak in a madhouse.'[3] In the midst of this bedlam he sees a French man-of-war shelling the bush, 'firing into a continent' in pursuit of a 'camp of natives—[they] called them enemies!—hidden out of sight somewhere.'[4]

Conrad's theatre of asymmetric warfare is accompanied by a narrative insistence that the knowledge of identity and difference is as much a question of epistemology and history as it is a perceptual and phenomenological problem that relates to *how we see* and *from where we look*. Are natives taken to be enemies because they are hidden, 'out of sight somewhere'? Is this an existential anxiety in the face of what seems alien, or does such alienation mask the annihilatory strategy of the Imperialist? Is it self-protection or self-projection? Where should the ethical line be drawn?

To draw a line that distinguishes friend from enemy, Marlow approaches the "other," shrinks the distance, and enters into a form of ethical proximity. When the 'natives' are observed 'within six inches,' Marlow is convinced of the injustice of naming them enemies or criminals: 'these men could by no stretch of imagination be called enemies. They were called criminals and the outraged law like the bursting shells had come to them, an insoluble mystery from the sea.'[5] As Conrad's narrative destroys the naming frameworks of war ("enemy") and legality ("criminal"), it moves us closer towards identifying with the native's historic situation and his human condition, rather than accepting those projected "identities" and self-serving vocabularies that are shaped for the purposes of war and the laws of conquest: 'half-effaced within the dim light, in all the attitudes of pain, abandonment and despair [. . .] They were not enemies, they were not criminals, they were nothing earthly now—nothing but black shadows of disease and starvation [. . .] Then glancing down, I saw a face near my hand [. . .] and the sunken eyes looked up at me, enormous and vacant [. . .] I found nothing else to do but to offer him one of my good Swede's ship's biscuits I had in my pocket [. . .] *He had tied a bit of white worsted round his neck—Why? Where did he get it? Was it a badge—an ornament—a charm—a propitiatory act?* Was there any idea at all connected with it. It looked startling around his black neck this bit of white thread from beyond the seas.'[6]

Not enemy. Not criminal. Not even native. Having glimpsed the Levinasian face of the other, Marlow can now focus closely on the tiny bit of white worsted whose social origins and cultural significance are ambiguous and enigmatic—open to question. As the arbitrary sign shifts across the open frame of signification, it marks the distance—and the cultural difference—that lies in-between the relative familiarity of a badge and the relative unknowability of a Congolese propitiatory act. Somewhere between the two, Marlow enters a third space. He is now engaged in a translational temporality in which the "sign" of the white worsted from beyond the seas, is an object of intention that has lost its mode of intention in the colonial space, or vice versa. The familiar origin of the worsted as a commodity of colonial trade passes through an estranging realm of untranslatability in the heart of darkness, and emerges ready to be '*raised anew* and at other points of time.' The arbitrary signifier is no longer a linguistic rule or a semiotic process. The openness of the sign to translation—that living flux

that marks the "difference" between intention as object and as modality—shifts the balance of discourse from the language of enmity to the language of proximity: 'I saw a face near my hand [. . .] and the sunken eyes looked up at me, enormous and vacant.' But that is not all.

If Marlow's gaze had stopped there, it could have been read as merely an act of pity and philanthropy. But beyond the duality of the silent face-to-face encounter, lies the white worsted, a mediating, material element from the object-world that talks back to Marlow as he probes its origin and function. It is the thread as a mediating third space that designates the dialogical relation between the narrator and the native as contending and contradictory positions within a conflictual discourse. The white thread is a text of signs and symbols that reintroduces, to the reader and the narrator, the silent, dying native as an agent caught in the living flux of language and action: 'He had tied a bit of white worsted round his neck—Why? Where did he get it?' This goes beyond any notion of respect for the other's identity or humanity as a universal subject that has an *a priori* right to representation. It is an identification, in third space, with the thought and action of the other as having an opacity of its own that cannot be simply "read off" the face of things; the thread signifies a "thickness" of culture that is as enigmatic as the obliquity of the signifier through which it is enunciated. Even in his prone state, 'the moribund shape as free as air—and nearly as thin' induces an infectious introjection that comes from outside, from an intuition of the intended act of the other—*Why? Where did he get it?*—in order to drive, as if from the inside, the narrator's decision to make up his own mind against the received wisdom of his wretched times. After all, it is only moments before this incident, in the process of making his deliberate decision to undertake his Dantesque descent into 'the gloomy circle of some Inferno,' that Marlow has this to say of himself and his life: 'You know I am not particularly tender; I've had to strike and to fend off. I've had to resist and to attack sometimes—that's only one way of resisting—without counting the exact cost—according to the demands of such sort of life as I had blundered into. I've seen the devil of violence, and the devil of greed, and the devil of hot desire. . . .'[7] In reaching out to the specific thought of the other and grappling with what is not entirely intelligible within it—rather than acknowledging an "identity"—there lies the possibility of identifying also with the unconscious of the other, and extending oneself in the direction of the neighbor's legible will and his unreadable desire. *Where did he get it? Was it a badge—an ornament—a charm—a propitiatory act?*

The third space is a challenge to the limits of the self in the act of reaching out to what is liminal in the historic experience, and in the cultural representation, of other peoples, times, languages, texts. And it is quite fitting that we should end with a series of questions and interpretations that attempt to decipher the acts of agency. If the white worsted tells a political story of unfair trade and slavery, it is also a figural narrative suggestive of ornamentation, charms and cultural magic. As a shibboleth of the third

space, this little piece of thread raises profound questions and awakens important voices. As I hear Marlow's voice probe this symbolic fragment of a third space, I am moved and excited by the various voices in this volume, *Communicating in the Third Space,* that are involved in their own acts of making and mapping: voices that light the way to another darkness, a new cave of making.

NOTES

1. Benjamin, Walter. "The Task of the Translator: An Introduction to the Translation of Baudelaire's *Tableaux Parisiens*," trans. Harry Zohn. *The Translation Studies Reader.* Ed. Lawrence Venuti, 2nd ed. New York: Routledge, 2004 (1923). 74–85. 79 (my emphasis).
2. Ibid. 79.
3. Conrad, Joseph. *Heart of Darkness: An Authoritative Text, Backgrounds and Sources, Criticism.* Ed. Robert Kimbrough, 3rd ed. New York: Norton, 1988. 37.
4. Ibid. 17.
5. Ibid. 19.
6. Ibid. 21 (my emphasis).
7. Ibid. 19.

COLONIAL DISCOURSE AND POST-COLONIAL THEORY

A Reader

edited and introduced by

PATRICK WILLIAMS
AND
LAURA CHRISMAN

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4 □ *Can the Subaltern Speak?*

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak

[. . .]

I

Some of the most radical criticism coming out of the West today is the result of an interested desire to conserve the subject of the West, or the West as Subject. The theory of pluralized 'subject-effects' gives an illusion of undermining subjective sovereignty while often providing a cover for this subject of knowledge. Although the history of Europe as Subject is narrativized by the law, political economy and ideology of the West, this concealed Subject pretends it has 'no geo-political determinations'. The much-publicized critique of the sovereign subject thus actually inaugurates a Subject. I will argue for this conclusion by considering a text by two great practitioners of the critique: 'Intellectuals and power: a conversation between Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze'.[1]

I have chosen this friendly exchange between two activist philosophers of history because it undoes the opposition between authoritative theoretical production and the unguarded practice of conversation, enabling one to glimpse the track of ideology. The participants in this conversation emphasize the most important contributions of French poststructuralist theory: first, that the networks of power/desire/interest are so heterogeneous, that their reduction to a coherent narrative is counterproductive – a persistent critique is needed; and second, that intellectuals must attempt to disclose and know the discourse of society's Other. Yet the two systematically ignore the question of ideology and their own implication in intellectual and economic history.

Although one of its chief presuppositions is the critique of the sovereign subject, the conversation between Foucault and Deleuze is framed by two monolithic and

From C. Nelson and L. Grossberg (eds.), *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, Macmillan Education: Basingstoke, 1988, pp. 271–313.

anonymous subjects-in-revolution: 'A Maoist' (*FD*, p. 205) and 'the workers' struggle' (*FD*, p. 217). Intellectuals, however, are named and differentiated; moreover, a Chinese Maoism is nowhere operative. Maoism here simply creates an aura of narrative specificity, which would be a harmless rhetorical banality were it not that the innocent appropriation of the proper name 'Maoism' for the eccentric phenomenon of French intellectual 'Maoism' and subsequent 'New Philosophy' symptomatically renders 'Asia' transparent.[2]

Deleuze's reference to the workers' struggle is equally problematic; it is obviously a genuflection: 'We are unable to touch [power] in any point of its application without finding ourselves confronted by this diffuse mass, so that we are necessarily led . . . to the desire to blow it up completely. Every partial revolutionary attack or defense is linked in this way to the workers' struggle' (*FD*, p. 217). The apparent banality signals a disavowal. The statement ignores the international division of labor, a gesture that often marks poststructuralist political theory.[3] The invocation of *the* workers' struggle is baleful in its very innocence; it is incapable of dealing with global capitalism: the subject-production of worker and unemployed within nation-state ideologies in its Center; the increasing subtraction of the working class in the Periphery from the realization of surplus value and thus from 'humanistic' training in consumerism; and the large-scale presence of paracapitalist labor as well as the heterogeneous structural status of agriculture in the Periphery. Ignoring the international division of labor; rendering 'Asia' (and on occasion 'Africa') transparent (unless the subject is ostensibly the 'Third World'); reestablishing the legal subject of socialized capital – these are problems as common to much poststructuralist as to structuralist theory. Why should such occlusions be sanctioned in precisely those intellectuals who are our best prophets of heterogeneity and the Other?

The link to the workers' struggle is located in the desire to blow up power at any point of its application. This site is apparently based on a simple valorization of *any* desire destructive of *any* power. Walter Benjamin comments on Baudelaire's comparable politics by way of quotations from Marx:

> Marx continues in his description of the *conspirateurs de profession* as follows: '. . . They have no other aim but the immediate one of overthrowing the existing government, and they profoundly despise the more theoretical enlightenment of the workers as to their class interests. Thus their anger – not proletarian but plebian – at the *habits noirs* (black coats), the more or less educated people who represent [*vertreten*] that side of the movement and of whom they can never become entirely independent, as they cannot of the official representatives [*Repräsentanten*] of the party.' Baudelaire's political insights do not go fundamentally beyond the insights of these professional conspirators. . . . He could perhaps have made Flaubert's statement, 'Of all of politics I understand only one thing: the revolt', his own.[4]

The link to the workers' struggle is located, simply, in desire. Elsewhere, Deleuze and Guattari have attempted an alternative definition of desire, revising the one

offered by psychoanalysis: 'Desire does not lack anything; it does not lack its object. It is, rather, the subject that is lacking desire, or desire that lacks a fixed subject; there is no fixed subject except by repression. Desire and its object are a unity: it is the machine, as a machine of a machine. Desire is machine, the object of desire also a connected machine, so that the product is lifted from the process of producing and something detaches itself from producing to product and gives a leftover to the vagabond, nomad subject.'[5]

This definition does not alter the specificity of the desiring subject (or leftover subject-effect) that attaches to specific instances of desire or to production of the desiring machine. Moreover, when the connection between desire and the subject is taken as irrelevant or merely reversed, the subject-effect that surreptitiously emerges is much like the generalized ideological subject of the theorist. This may be the legal subject of socialized capital, neither labor nor management, holding a 'strong' passport, using a 'strong' or 'hard' currency, with supposedly unquestioned access to due process. It is certainly not the desiring subject as Other.

The failure of Deleuze and Guattari to consider the relations between desire, power and subjectivity renders them incapable of articulating a theory of interests. In this context, their indifference to ideology (a theory of which is necessary for an understanding of interests) is striking but consistent. Foucault's commitment to 'genealogical' speculation prevents him from locating, in 'great names' like Marx and Freud, watersheds in some continuous stream of intellectual history.[6] This commitment has created an unfortunate resistance in Foucault's work to 'mere' ideological critique. Western speculations on the ideological reproduction of social relations belong to that mainstream, and it is within this tradition that Althusser writes: 'The reproduction of labour power requires not only a reproduction of its skills, but also at the same time, a reproduction of its submission to the ruling ideology for the workers, and a reproduction of the ability to manipulate the ruling ideology correctly for the agents of exploitation and repression, so that they, too, will provide for the domination of the ruling class "in and by words" [*par la parole*].'[7]

When Foucault considers the pervasive heterogeneity of power, he does not ignore the immense institutional heterogeneity that Althusser here attempts to schematize. Similarly, in speaking of alliances and systems of signs, the state and war-machines (*mille plateaux*), Deleuze and Guattari are opening up that very field. Foucault cannot, however, admit that a developed theory of ideology recognizes its own material production in institutionality, as well as in the 'effective instruments for the formation and accumulation of knowledge' (*PK*, p. 102). Because these philosophers seem obliged to reject all arguments naming the concept of ideology as *only* schematic rather than textual, they are equally obliged to produce a mechanically schematic opposition between interest and desire. Thus they align themselves with bourgeois sociologists who fill the place of ideology with a continuistic 'unconscious' or a parasubjective 'culture'. The mechanical relation between desire and interest is clear in such sentences as: 'We never desire against our interests, because interest always follows and finds itself where desire has placed it' (*FD*, p. 215). An

undifferentiated desire is the agent, and power slips in to create the effects of desire: 'power . . . produces positive effects at the level of desire – and also at the level of knowledge' (*PK*, p. 59).

This parasubjective matrix, cross-hatched with heterogeneity, ushers in the unnamed Subject, at least for those intellectual workers influenced by the new hegemony of desire. The race for 'the last instance' is now between economics and power. Because desire is tacitly defined on an orthodox model, it is unitarily opposed to 'being deceived'. Ideology as 'false consciousness' (being deceived) has been called into question by Althusser. Even Reich implied notions of collective will rather than a dichotomy of deception and undeceived desire: 'We must accept the scream of Reich: no, the masses were not deceived; at a particular moment, they actually desired a fascist regime' (*FD*, p. 215).

These philosophers will not entertain the thought of constitutive contradiction – that is where they admittedly part company from the Left. In the name of desire, they reintroduce the undivided subject into the discourse of power. Foucault often seems to conflate 'individual' and 'subject';[8] and the impact on his own metaphors is perhaps intensified in his followers. Because of the power of the word 'power', Foucault admits to using the 'metaphor of the point which progressively irradiates its surroundings'. Such slips become the rule rather than the exception in less careful hands. And that radiating point, animating an effectively heliocentric discourse, fills the empty place of the agent with the historical sun of theory, the Subject of Europe.[9]

Foucault articulates another corollary of the disavowal of the role of ideology in reproducing the social relations of production: an unquestioned valorization of the oppressed as subject, the 'object being', as Deleuze admiringly remarks, 'to establish conditions where the prisoners themselves would be able to speak'. Foucault adds that 'the masses *know* perfectly well, clearly' – once again the thematic of being undeceived – 'they know far better than [the intellectual] and they certainly say it very well' (*FD*, pp. 206, 207).

What happens to the critique of the sovereign subject in these pronouncements? The limits of this representationalist realism are reached with Deleuze: 'Reality is what actually happens in a factory, in a school, in barracks, in a prison, in a police station' (*FD*, p. 212). This foreclosing of the necessity of the difficult task of counterhegemonic ideological production has not been salutary. It has helped positivist empiricism – the justifying foundation of advanced capitalist neocolonialism – to define its own arena as 'concrete experience', 'what actually happens'. Indeed, the concrete experience that is the guarantor of the political appeal of prisoners, soldiers and schoolchildren is disclosed through the concrete experience of the intellectual, the one who diagnoses the episteme.[10] Neither Deleuze nor Foucault seems aware that the intellectual within socialized capital, brandishing concrete experience, can help consolidate the international division of labor.

The unrecognized contradiction within a position that valorizes the concrete experience of the oppressed, while being so uncritical about the historical role of the intellectual, is maintained by a verbal slippage. Thus Deleuze makes this remarkable

pronouncement: 'A theory is like a box of tools. Nothing to do with the signifier' (*FD*, p. 208). Considering that the verbalism of the theoretical world and its access to any world defined against it as 'practical' is irreducible, such a declaration helps only the intellectual anxious to prove that intellectual labor is just like manual labor. It is when signifiers are left to look after themselves that verbal slippages happen. The signifier 'representation' is a case in point. In the same dismissive tone that severs theory's link to the signifier, Deleuze declares, 'There is no more representation; there's nothing but action' – 'action of theory and action of practice which relate to each other as relays and form networks' (*FD*, pp. 206–7). Yet an important point is being made here: the production of theory is also a practice; the opposition between abstract 'pure' theory and concrete 'applied' practice is too quick and easy.[11]

If this is, indeed, Deleuze's argument, his articulation of it is problematic. Two senses of representation are being run together: representation as 'speaking for', as in politics, and representation as 're-presentation', as in art or philosophy. Since theory is also only 'action', the theoretician does not represent (speak for) the oppressed group. Indeed, the subject is not seen as a representative consciousness (one re-presenting reality adequately). These two senses of representation – within state formation and the law, on the one hand, and in subject-predication, on the other – are related but irreducibly discontinuous. To cover over the discontinuity with an analogy that is presented as a proof reflects again a paradoxical subject-privileging.[12] *Because* 'the person who speaks and acts ... is always a multiplicity', no 'theorizing intellectual ... [or] party or ... union' can represent 'those who act and struggle' (*FD*, p. 206). Are those who act and *struggle* mute, as opposed to those who act and *speak* (*FD*, p. 206)? These immense problems are buried in the differences between the 'same' words: consciousness and conscience (both *conscience* in French), representation and re-presentation. The critique of ideological subject-constitution within state formations and systems of political economy can now be effaced, as can the active theoretical practice of the 'transformation of consciousness'. The banality of leftist intellectuals' lists of self-knowing, politically canny subalterns stands revealed; representing them, the intellectuals represent themselves as transparent.

If such a critique and such a project are not to be given up, the shifting distinctions between representation within the state and political economy, on the one hand, and within the theory of the Subject, on the other, must not be obliterated. Let us consider the play of *vertreten* ('represent' in the first sense) and *darstellen* ('re-present' in the second sense) in a famous passage in *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, where Marx touches on 'class' as a descriptive and transformative concept in a manner somewhat more complex than Althusser's distinction between class instinct and class position would allow.

Marx's contention here is that the descriptive definition of a class can be a differential one – its cutting off and difference from all other classes: 'in so far as millions of families live under economic conditions of existence that cut off their mode of life, their interest, and their formation from those of the other classes and

place them in inimical confrontation [*feindlich gegenüberstellen*], they form a class'.[13] There is no such thing as a 'class instinct' at work here. In fact, the collectivity of familial existence, which might be considered the arena of 'instinct', is discontinuous with, though operated by, the differential isolation of classes. In this context, one far more pertinent to the France of the 1970s than it can be to the international periphery, the formation of a class is *artificial* and economic, and the economic agency or *interest* is impersonal because it is systematic and heterogeneous. This agency or interest is tied to the Hegelian critique of the individual subject, for it marks the subject's empty place in that process without a subject which is history and political economy. Here the capitalist is defined as 'the conscious bearer [*Träger*] of the limitless movement of capital'.[14] My point is that Marx is not working to create an undivided subject where desire and interest coincide. Class consciousness does not operate toward that goal. Both in the economic area (capitalist) and in the political (world-historical agent), Marx is obliged to construct models of a divided and dislocated subject whose parts are not continuous or coherent with each other. A celebrated passage like the description of capital as the Faustian monster brings this home vividly.[15]

The following passage, continuing the quotation from *The Eighteenth Brumaire*, is also working on the structural principle of a dispersed and dislocated class subject: the (absent collective) consciousness of the small peasant proprietor class finds its 'bearer' in a 'representative' who appears to work in another's interest. The word 'representative' here is not '*darstellen*'; this sharpens the contrast Foucault and Deleuze slide over, the contrast, say, between a proxy and a portrait. There is, of course, a relationship between them, one that has received political and ideological exacerbation in the European tradition at least since the poet and the sophist, the actor and the orator, have both been seen as harmful. In the guise of a post-Marxist description of the scene of power, we thus encounter a much older debate: between representation or rhetoric as tropology and as persuasion. *Darstellen* belongs to the first constellation, *vertreten* – with stronger suggestions of substitution – to the second. Again, they are related, but running them together, especially in order to say that beyond both is where oppressed subjects speak, act and know *for themselves*, leads to an essentialist, utopian politics.

Here is Marx's passage, using '*vertreten*' where the English use 'represent', discussing a social 'subject' whose consciousness and *Vertretung* (as much a substitution as a representation) are dislocated and incoherent: The small peasant proprietors 'cannot represent themselves; they must be represented. Their representative must appear simultaneously as their master, as an authority over them, as unrestricted governmental power that protects them from the other classes and sends them rain and sunshine from above. The political influence [in the place of the class interest, since there is no unified class subject] of the small peasant proprietors therefore finds its last expression [the implication of a chain of substitutions – *Vertretungen* – is strong here] in the executive force [*Exekutivgewalt* – less personal in German] subordinating society to itself.'

Not only does such a model of social indirection – necessary gaps between the source of 'influence' (in this case the small peasant proprietors), the 'representative' (Louis Napoleon), and the historical-political phenomenon (executive control) – imply a critique of the subject as *individual* agent but a critique even of the subjectivity of a *collective* agency. The necessarily dislocated machine of history moves because 'the identity of the *interests*' of these proprietors 'fails to produce a feeling of community, national links, or a political organization'. The event of representation as *Vertretung* (in the constellation of rhetoric-as-persuasion) behaves like a *Darstellung* (or rhetoric-as-trope), taking its place in the gap between the formation of a (descriptive) class and the nonformation of a (transformative) class: 'In so far as millions of families live under economic conditions of existence that separate their mode of life . . . *they form a class*. In so far as . . . the identity of their interests fails to produce a feeling of community . . . *they do not form a class*.' The complicity of *Vertreten* and *Darstellen*, their identity-in-difference as the place of practice – since this complicity is precisely what Marxists must expose, as Marx does in *The Eighteenth Brumaire* – can only be appreciated if they are not conflated by a sleight of word.

It would be merely tendentious to argue that this texualizes Marx too much, making him inaccessible to the common 'man', who, a victim of common sense, is so deeply placed in a heritage of positivism that Marx's irreducible emphasis on the work of the negative, on the necessity for de-fetishizing the concrete, is persistently wrested from him by the strongest adversary, 'the historical tradition' in the air.[16] I have been trying to point out that the uncommon 'man', the contemporary philosopher of practice, sometimes exhibits the same positivism.

The gravity of the problem is apparent if one agrees that the development of a transformative class 'consciousness' from a descriptive class 'position' is not in Marx a task engaging the ground level of consciousness. Class consciousness remains with the feeling of community that belongs to national links and political organizations, not to that other feeling of community whose structural model is the family. Although *not* identified with nature, the family here is constellated with what Marx calls 'natural exchange', which is, philosophically speaking, a 'placeholder' for use value.[17] 'Natural exchange' is contrasted to 'intercourse with society', where the word 'intercourse' (*Verkehr*) is Marx's usual word for 'commerce'. This 'intercourse' thus holds the place of the exchange leading to the production of surplus value, and it is in the area of this intercourse that the feeling of community leading to class agency must be developed. Full class agency (if there were such a thing) is not an ideological transformation of consciousness on the ground level, a desiring identity of the agents and their interest – the identity whose absence troubles Foucault and Deleuze. It is a contestatory *replacement* as well as an *appropriation* (a *supplementation*) of something that is 'artificial' to begin with – 'economic conditions of existence that separate their mode of life'. Marx's formulations show a cautious respect for the nascent critique of individual and collective subjective agency. The projects of class consciousness and of the transformation of consciousness are discontinuous issues for him. Conversely, contemporary

invocations of 'libidinal economy' and desire as the determining interest, combined with the practical politics of the oppressed (under socialized capital) 'speaking for themselves', restore the category of the sovereign subject within the theory that seems most to question it.

No doubt the exclusion of the family, albeit a family belonging to a specific class formation, is part of the masculine frame within which Marxism marks its birth.[18] Historically as well as in today's global political economy, the family's role in patriarchal social relations is so heterogeneous and contested that merely replacing the family in this problematic is not going to break the frame. Nor does the solution lie in the positivist inclusion of a monolithic collectivity of 'women' in the list of the oppressed whose unfractured subjectivity allows them to speak for themselves against an equally monolithic 'same system'.

In the context of type development of a strategic, artificial and second-level 'consciousness', Marx uses the concept of the patronymic, always within the broader concept of representation as *Vertretung*: the small peasant proprietors are therefore incapable of making their class interest valid in their proper name [*im eigenen Namen*], whether through a parliament or through a convention'. The absence of the nonfamiliar artificial collective proper name is supplied by the only proper name 'historical tradition' can offer – the patronymic itself – the Name of the Father: 'Historical tradition produced the French peasants' belief that a miracle would occur, that a man *named* Napoleon would restore all their glory. And an individual turned up' – the untranslatable '*es fand sich*' (there found itself an individual?) demolishes all questions of agency or the agent's connection with his interest – 'who gave himself out to be that man' (this pretense is by contrast, his only proper agency) 'because he carried [*trägt* – the word used for the capitalist's relationship to capital] the Napoleonic Code, which commands' that 'inquiry into paternity is forbidden'. While Marx here seems to be working within a patriarchal metaphorics, one should note the textual subtlety of the passage. It is the Law of the Father (the Napoleonic Code) that paradoxically prohibits the search for the natural father. Thus, it is according to a strict observance of the historical Law of the Father that the formed yet unformed class's faith in the natural father is gainsaid.

I have dwelt so long on this passage in Marx because it spells out the inner dynamics of *Vertretung*, or representation in the political context. Representation in the economic context is *Darstellung*, the philosophical concept of representation as staging or, indeed, signification, which relates to the divided subject in an indirect way. The most obvious passage is well known: 'In the exchange relationship [*Austauschverhältnis*] of commodities their exchange-value appeared to us totally independent of their use-value. But if we subtract their use-value from the product of labour, we obtain their value, as it was just determined [*bestimmt*]. The common element which represents itself [*sich darstellt*] in the exchange relation, or the exchange value of the commodity, is thus its value.'[19]

According to Marx, under capitalism, value, as produced in necessary and surplus labor, is computed as the representation/sign of objectified labor (which is rigorously distinguished from human activity). Conversely, in the absence of a

theory of exploitation as the extraction (production), appropriation and realization of (surplus) value *as representation of labor power*, capitalist exploitation must be seen as a variety of domination (the mechanics of power as such). 'The thrust of Marxism', Deleuze suggests, 'was to determine the problem [that power is more diffuse than the structure of exploitation and state formation] essentially in terms of interests (power is held by a ruling class defined by its interests)' (*FD*, p. 214).

One cannot object to this minimalist summary of Marx's project, just as one cannot ignore that, in parts of the *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze and Guattari build their case on a brilliant if 'poetic' grasp of Marx's *theory* of the money form. Yet we might consolidate our critique in the following way: the relationship between global capitalism (exploitation in economics) and nation-state alliances (domination in geopolitics) is so macrological that it cannot account for the micrological texture of power. To move toward such an accounting one must move toward theories of ideology – of subject formations that micrologically and often erratically operate the interests that congeal the macrologies. Such theories cannot afford to overlook the category of representation in its two senses. They must note how the staging of the world in representation – its scene of writing, its *Darstellung* – dissimulates the choice of and need for 'heroes', paternal proxies, agents of power – *Vertretung*.

My view is that radical practice should attend to this double session of representations rather than reintroduce the individual subject through totalizing concepts of power and desire. It is also my view that, in keeping the area of class practice on a second level of abstraction, Marx was in effect keeping open the (Kantian and) Hegelian critique of the individual subject as agent.[20] This view does not oblige me to ignore that, by implicitly defining the family and the mother tongue as the ground level where culture and convention seem nature's own way of organizing 'her' own subversion, Marx himself rehearses an ancient subterfuge.[21] In the context of poststructuralist claims to critical practice, this seems more recuperable than the clandestine restoration of subjective essentialism.

The reduction of Marx to a benevolent but dated figure most often serves the interest of launching a new theory of interpretation. In the Foucault–Deleuze conversation, the issue seems to be that there is no representation, no signifier (Is it to be presumed that the signifier has already been dispatched? There is, then, no sign-structure operating experience, and thus might one lay semiotics to rest?); theory is a relay of practice (thus laying problems of theoretical practice to rest) and the oppressed can know and speak for themselves. This reintroduces the constitutive subject on at least two levels: the Subject of desire and power as an irreducible methodological presupposition; and the self-proximate, if not self-identical, subject of the oppressed. Further, the intellectuals, who are neither of these S/subjects, become transparent in the relay race, for they merely report on the nonrepresented subject and analyze (without analyzing) the workings of (the unnamed Subject irreducibly presupposed by) power and desire. The produced 'transparency' marks

the place of 'interest'; it is maintained by vehement denegation: 'Now this role of referee, judge, and universal witness is one which I *absolutely refuse* to adopt.' One responsibility of the critic might be to read and write so that the impossibility of such interested individualistic refusals of the institutional privileges of power bestowed on the subject is taken seriously. The refusal of the sign-system blocks the way to a developed theory of ideology. Here, too, the peculiar tone of denegation is heard. To Jacques-Alain Miller's suggestion that 'the institution is itself discursive', Foucault responds, 'Yes, if you like, but it doesn't much matter for my notion of the apparatus to be able to say that this is discursive and that isn't ... given that my problem isn't a linguistic one' (*PK*, p. 198). Why this conflation of language and discourse from the master of discourse analysis?

Edward W. Said's critique of power in Foucault as a captivating and mystifying category that allows him 'to obliterate the role of classes, the role of economics, the role of insurgency and rebellion', is most pertinent here.[22] I add to Said's analysis the notion of the surreptitious subject of power and desire marked by the transparency of the intellectual. Curiously enough, Paul Bové faults Said for emphasizing the importance of the intellectual, whereas 'Foucault's project essentially is a challenge to the leading role of both hegemonic and oppositional intellectuals'.[23] I have suggested that this 'challenge' is deceptive precisely because it ignores what Said emphasizes – the critic's institutional responsibility.

This S/subject, curiously sewn together into a transparency by denegations, belongs to the exploiters' side of the international division of labor. It is impossible for contemporary French intellectuals to imagine the kind of Power and Desire that would inhabit the unnamed subject of the Other of Europe. It is not only that everything they read, critical or uncritical, is caught within the debate of the production of that Other, supporting or critiquing the constitution of the Subject as Europe. It is also that, in the constitution of that Other of Europe, great care was taken to obliterate the textual ingredients with which such a subject could cathect, could occupy (invest?) its itinerary – not only by ideological and scientific production, but also by the institution of the law. However reductionistic an economic analysis might seem, the French intellectuals forget at their peril that this entire overdetermined enterprise was in the interest of a dynamic economic situation requiring that interests, motives (desires) and power (of knowledge) be ruthlessly dislocated. To invoke that dislocation now as a radical discovery that should make us diagnose the economic (conditions of existence that separate out 'classes' descriptively) as a piece of dated analytic machinery may well be to continue the work of that dislocation and unwittingly to help in securing 'a new balance of hegemonic relations'.[24] I shall return to this argument shortly. In the face of the possibility that the intellectual is complicit in the persistent constitution of Other as the Self's shadow, a possibility of political practice for the intellectual would be to put the economic 'under erasure', to see the economic factor as irreducibly as it reinscribes the social text, even as it is erased, however imperfectly, when it claims to be the final determinant or the transcendental signified.[25]

II

The clearest available example of such epistemic violence is the remotely orchestrated, far-flung, and heterogeneous project to constitute the colonial subject as Other. This project is also the asymmetrical obliteration of the trace of that Other in its precarious Subject-ivity. It is well known that Foucault locates epistemic violence, a complete overhaul of the episteme, in the redefinition of sanity at the end of the European eighteenth century.[26] But what if that particular redefinition was only a part of the narrative of history in Europe as well as in the colonies? What if the two projects of epistemic overhaul worked as dislocated and unacknowledged parts of a vast two-handed engine? Perhaps it is no more than to ask that the subtext of the palimpsestic narrative of imperialism be recognized as 'subjugated knowledge', 'a whole set of knowledges that have been disqualified as inadequate to their task or insufficiently elaborated: naive knowledges, located low down on the hierarchy, beneath the required level of cognition or scientificity' (*PK*, p. 82).

This is not to describe 'the way things really were' or to privilege the narrative of history as imperialism as the best version of history.[26] It is, rather, to offer an account of how an explanation and narrative of reality was established as the normative one. To elaborate on this, let us consider briefly the underpinnings of the British codification of Hindu Law.

First, a few disclaimers: in the United States the third-worldism currently afloat in humanistic disciplines is often openly ethnic. I was born in India and received my primary, secondary and university education there, including two years of graduate work. My Indian example could thus be seen as a nostalgic investigation of the lost roots of my own identity. Yet even as I know that one cannot freely enter the thickets of 'motivations', I would maintain that my chief project is to point out the positivist-idealist variety of such nostalgia. I turn to Indian material because, in the absence of advanced disciplinary training, that accident of birth and education has provided me with a *sense* of the historical canvas, a hold on some of the pertinent languages that are useful tools for a *bricoleur*, especially when armed with the Marxist skepticism of concrete experience as the final arbiter and a critique of disciplinary formations. Yet the Indian case cannot be taken as representative of all countries, nations, cultures and the like that may be invoked as the Other of Europe as Self.

Here, then, is a schematic summary of the epistemic violence of the codification of Hindu Law. If it clarifies the notion of epistemic violence, my final discussion of widow-sacrifice may gain added significance.

At the end of the eighteenth century, Hindu law, insofar as it can be described as a unitary system, operated in terms of four texts that 'staged' a four-part episteme defined by the subject's use of memory: *sruti* (the heard), *smriti* (the remembered), *sastra* (the learned-from-another) and *vyavahara* (the performed-in-exchange). The origins of what had been heard and what was remembered were not necessarily continuous or identical. Every invocation of *sruti* technically recited (or reopened) the event of originary 'hearing' or revelation. The second two texts – the learned

and the performed – were seen as dialectically continuous. Legal theorists and practitioners were not in any given case certain if this structure described the body of law or four ways of settling a dispute. The legitimation of the polymorphous structure of legal performance, 'internally' noncoherent and open at both ends, through a binary vision, is the narrative of codification I offer as an example of epistemic violence.

The narrative of the stabilization and codification of Hindu law is less well known than the story of Indian education, so it might be well to start there.[28] Consider the often-quoted programmatic lines from Macaulay's infamous 'Minute on Indian education' (1835): 'We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect. To that class we may leave it to refine the vernacular dialects of the country, to enrich those dialects with terms of science borrowed from the Western nomenclature, and to render them by degrees fit vehicles for conveying knowledge to the great mass of the population.'[29] The education of colonial subjects complements their production in law. One effect of establishing a version of the British system was the development of an uneasy separation between disciplinary formation in Sanskrit studies and the native, now alternative, tradition of Sanskrit 'high culture'. Within the former, the cultural explanations generated by authoritative scholars matched the epistemic violence of the legal project.

I locate here the founding of the Asiatic Society of Bengal in 1784, the Indian Institute at Oxford in 1883, and the analytic and taxonomic work of scholars like Arthur Macdonnell and Arthur Berriedale Keith, who were both colonial administrators and organizers of the matter of Sanskrit. From their confident utilitarian-hegemonic plans for students and scholars of Sanskrit, it is impossible to guess at either the aggressive repression of Sanskrit in the general educational framework or the increasing 'feudalization' of the performative use of Sanskrit in the everyday life of Brahmanic-hegemonic India.[30] A version of history was gradually established in which the Brahmans were shown to have the same intentions as (thus providing the legitimation for) the codifying British: 'In order to preserve Hindu society intact [the] successors [of the original Brahmans] had to reduce everything to writing and make them more and more rigid. And that is what has preserved Hindu society in spite of a succession of political upheavals and foreign invasions.'[31] This is the 1925 verdict of Mahamahopadhyaya Haraprasad Shastri, learned Indian Sanskritist, a brilliant representative of the indigenous elite within colonial production, who was asked to write several chapters of a 'History of Bengal' projected by the private secretary to the governor general of Bengal in 1916.[32] To signal the asymmetry in the relationship between authority and explanation (depending on the race-class of the authority), compare this 1928 remark by Edward Thompson, English intellectual: 'Hinduism was what it seemed to be ... It was a higher civilization that won [against it], both with Akbar and the English.'[33] And add this, from a letter by an English soldier-scholar in the 1890s: 'The study of Sanskrit, "the language of the gods", has afforded me intense enjoyment during the

last 25 years of my life in India, but it has not, I am thankful to say, led me, *as it has some*, to give up a hearty belief in our own grand religion.'[34]

These authorities are *the very best* of the sources for the nonspecialist French intellectual's entry into the civilization of the Other.[35] I am, however, not referring to intellectuals and scholars of postcolonial production, like Shastri, when I say that the Other as Subject is inaccessible to Foucault and Deleuze. I am thinking of the general nonspecialist, nonacademic population across the class spectrum, for whom the episteme operates its silent programming function. Without considering the map of exploitation, on what grid of 'oppression' would they place this motley crew?

Let us now move to consider the margins (one can just as well say the silent, silenced center) of the circuit marked out by this epistemic violence, men and women among the illiterate peasantry, the tribals, the lowest strata of the urban subproletariat. According to Foucault and Deleuze (in the First World, under the standardization and regimentation of socialized capital, though they do not seem to recognize this) the oppressed, if given the chance (the problem of representation cannot be bypassed here), and on the way to solidarity through alliance politics (a Marxist thematic is at work here), *can speak and know their conditions*. We must now confront the following question: on the other side of the international division of labor from socialized capital, inside *and* outside the circuit of the epistemic violence of imperialist law and education supplementing an earlier economic text, *can the subaltern speak?*

Antonio Gramsci's work on the 'subaltern classes' extends the class-position/class-consciousness argument isolated in *The Eighteenth Brumaire*. Perhaps because Gramsci criticizes the vanguardistic position of the Leninist intellectual, he is concerned with the intellectual's role in the subaltern's cultural and political movement into the hegemony. This movement must be made to determine the production of history as narrative (of truth). In texts such as 'The Southern question', Gramsci considers the movement of historical-political economy in Italy within what can be seen as an allegory of reading taken from or prefiguring an international division of labor.[36] Yet an account of the phased development of the subaltern is thrown out of joint when his cultural macrology is operated, however remotely, by the epistemic interference with legal and disciplinary definitions accompanying the imperialist project. When I move, at the end of this essay, to the question of woman as subaltern, I will suggest that the possibility of collectivity itself is persistently foreclosed through the manipulation of female agency.

The first part of my proposition – that the phased development of the subaltern is complicated by the imperialist project – is confronted by a collective of intellectuals who may be called the 'Subaltern Studies' group.[37] They *must* ask, Can the subaltern speak? Here we are within Foucault's own discipline of history and with people who acknowledge his influence. Their project is to rethink Indian colonial historiography from the perspective of the discontinuous chain of peasant

insurgencies during the colonial occupation. This is indeed the problem of 'the permission to narrate' discussed by Said.[38] As Ranajit Guha argues,

> The historiography of Indian nationalism has for a long time been dominated by elitism – colonialist elitism and bourgeois-nationalist elitism ... shar[ing] the prejudice that the making of the Indian nation and the development of the consciousness – nationalism – which confirmed this process were exclusively or predominantly elite achievements. In the colonialist and neo-colonialist historiographies these achievements are credited to British colonial rulers, administrators, policies, institutions and culture; in the nationalist and neo-nationalist writings – to Indian elite personalities, institutions, activities and ideas.[39]

Certain varieties of the Indian elite are at best native informants for first-world intellectuals interested in the voice of the Other. But one must nevertheless insist that the colonized subaltern *subject* is irretrievably heterogeneous.

Against the indigenous elite we may set what Guha calls 'the *politics* of the people', both outside ('This was an *autonomous* domain, for it neither originated from elite politics nor did its existence depend on the latter') and inside ('it continued to operate vigorously in spite of [colonialism], adjusting itself to the conditions prevailing under the Raj and in many respects developing entirely new strains in both form and content') the circuit of colonial production.[40] I cannot entirely endorse this insistence on determinate vigor and full autonomy, for practical historiographic exigencies will not allow such endorsements to privilege subaltern consciousness. Against the possible charge that his approach is essentialist, Guha constructs a definition of the people (the place of that essence) that can be only an identity-in-differential. He proposes a dynamic stratification grid describing colonial social production at large. Even the third group on the list, the buffer group, as it were, between the people and the great macrostructural dominant groups, is itself defined as a place of in-betweenness, what Derrida has described as an '*antre*':[41]

elite {
1. Dominant foreign groups.
2. Dominant indigenous groups on the all-India level.
3. Dominant indigenous groups at the regional and local levels.
4. The terms "people" and "subaltern classes" have been used as synonymous throughout this note. The social groups and elements included in this category represent *the demographic difference between the total Indian population and all those whom we have described as the "elite."*

Consider the third item on this list – the *antre* of situational indeterminacy these careful historians presuppose as they grapple with the question, Can the subaltern speak? '*Taken as a whole and in the abstract* this ... category ... was *heterogeneous* in its composition and, thanks to the uneven character of regional economic and social developments, *differed from area to area*. The same class or element which was dominant in one area ... could be among the dominated in another. This could

and did create many ambiguities and contradictions in attitudes and alliances, especially among the lowest strata of the rural gentry, impoverished landlords, rich peasants and upper-middle peasants all of whom belonged, *ideally speaking*, to the category of "people" or "subaltern classes."'[42]

'The task of research' projected here is 'to investigate, identify and measure the *specific* nature and degree of the *deviation* of [the] elements [constituting item 3] from the ideal and situate it historically'. 'Investigate, identify, and measure the specific': a program could hardly be more essentialist and taxonomic. Yet a curious methodological imperative is at work. I have argued that, in the Foucault–Deleuze conversation, a postrepresentationalist vocabulary hides an essentialist agenda. In subaltern studies, because of the violence of imperialist epistemic, social and disciplinary inscription, a project understood in essentialist terms must traffic in a radical textual practice of differences. The object of the group's investigation, in the case not even of the people as such but of the floating buffer zone of the regional elite-subaltern is a *deviation* from an *ideal* – the people or subaltern – which is itself defined as a difference from the elite. It is toward this structure that the research is oriented, a predicament rather different from the self-diagnosed transparency of the first-world radical intellectual. What taxonomy can fix such a space? Whether or not they themselves perceive it – in fact Guha sees his definition of 'the people' within the master–slave dialectic – their text articulates the difficult task of rewriting its own conditions of impossibility as the conditions of its possibility.

'At the *regional and local levels* [the dominant indigenous groups] . . . if belonging to social strata hierarchically inferior to those of the dominant all-India groups still *acted in the interests of the latter and not in conformity to interests corresponding truly to their own social being*'. When these writers speak, in their essentializing language, of a gap between interest and action in the intermediate group, their conclusions are closer to Marx than to the self-conscious naiveté of Deleuze's pronouncement on the issue. Guha, like Marx, speaks of interest in terms of the social rather than the libidinal being. The Name-of-the-Father imagery in *The Eighteenth Brumaire* can help to emphasize that, on the level of class or group action, 'true correspondence to own being' is as artificial or social as the patronymic.

So much for the intermediate group marked in item 3. For the 'true' subaltern group, whose identity is its difference, there is no unrepresentable subaltern subject that can know and speak itself; the intellectual's solution is not to abstain from representation. The problem is that the subject's itinerary has not been traced so as to offer an object of seduction to the representing intellectual. In the slightly dated language of the Indian group, the question becomes, How can we touch the consciousness of the people, even as we investigate their politics? With what voice-consciousness can the subaltern speak? Their project, after all, is to rewrite the development of the consciousness of the Indian nation. The planned discontinuity of imperialism rigorously distinguishes this project, however old-fashioned its articulation, from 'rendering visible the medical and juridical mechanisms that surrounded the story [of Pierre Rivière]'. Foucault is correct in suggesting that 'to make visible the unseen can also mean a change of level, addressing oneself to a layer

of material which had hitherto had no pertinence for history and which had not been recognized as having any moral, aesthetic or historical value'. It is the slippage from rendering visible the mechanism to rendering vocal the individual, both avoiding 'any kind of analysis of [the subject] whether psychological, psychoanalytical or linguistic', that is consistently troublesome (*PK*, pp. 49–50).

The critique by Ajit K. Chaudhury, a West Bengali Marxist, of Guha's search for the subaltern consciousness can be seen as a moment of the production process that includes the subaltern. Chaudhury's perception that the Marxist view of the transformation of consciousness involves the *knowledge* of social relations seems to me, in principle, astute. Yet the heritage of the positivist ideology that has appropriated orthodox Marxism obliges him to add this rider: 'This is not to belittle the importance of understanding peasants' consciousness or workers' consciousness *in its pure form*. This enriches our knowledge of the peasant and the worker and, possibly, throws light on how a particular mode takes on different forms in different regions, *which is considered a problem of second-order importance in classical Marxism*.'[43]

This variety of 'internationalist' Marxism, which believes in a pure, retrievable form of consciousness only to dismiss it, thus closing off what in Marx remain moments of productive bafflement, can at once be the object of Foucault's and Deleuze's rejection of Marxism *and* the source of the critical motivation of the Subaltern Studies group. All three are united in the assumption that there *is* a pure form of consciousness. On the French scene, there is a shuffling of signifiers: 'the unconscious', or 'the subject-in-oppression' clandestinely fills the space of 'the pure form of consciousness'. In orthodox 'internationalist' intellectual Marxism, whether in the First World or the Third, the pure form of consciousness remains an idealistic bedrock which, dismissed as a second-order problem, often earns it the reputation of racism and sexism. In the Subaltern Studies group it needs development according to the unacknowledged terms of its own articulation.

For such an articulation, a developed theory of ideology can again be most useful. In a critique such as Chaudhury's, the association of 'consciousness' with 'knowledge' omits the crucial middle term of 'ideological production': 'Consciousness, according to Lenin, is associated with a *knowledge* of the interrelationships between different classes and groups; i.e., a knowledge of the materials that constitute society. . . . These definitions acquire a meaning only within the problematic within a definite knowledge object – to *understand* change in history, or specifically, change from one mode to another, *keeping the question of the specificity of a particular mode out of the focus*.'[44]

Pierre Macherey provides the following formula for the interpretation of ideology: 'What is important in a work is what it does not say. This is not the same as the careless notation "what it refuses to say", although that would in itself be interesting: a method might be built on it, with the task of *measuring silences*, whether acknowledged or unacknowledged. But rather this, what the work *cannot* say is important, because there the elaboration of the utterance is carried out, in a

sort of journey to silence.'[45] Macherey's ideas can be developed in directions he would be unlikely to follow. Even as he writes, ostensibly, of the literariness of the literature of European provenance, he articulates a method applicable to the social text of imperialism, somewhat against the grain of his own argument. Although the notion 'what it refuses to say' might be careless for a literary work, something like a collective ideological *refusal* can be diagnosed for the codifying legal practice of imperialism. This would open the field for a political-economic and multidisciplinary ideological reinscription of the terrain. Because this is a 'worlding of the world' on a second level of abstraction, a concept of refusal becomes plausible here. The archival, historiographic, disciplinary-critical and, inevitably, interventionist work involved here is indeed a task of 'measuring silences'. This can be a description of 'investigating, identifying, and measuring ... the *deviation*' from an ideal that is irreducibly differential.

When we come to the concomitant question of the consciousness of the subaltern, the notion of what the work *cannot* say becomes important. In the semioses of the social text, elaborations of insurgency stand in the place of 'the utterance'. The sender – 'the peasant' – is marked only as a pointer to an irretrievable consciousness. As for the receiver, we must ask who is 'the real receiver' of an 'insurgency'? The historian, transforming 'insurgency' into 'text for knowledge', is only one 'receiver' of any collectively intended social act. With no possibility of nostalgia for that lost origin, the historian must suspend (as far as possible) the clamor of his or her own consciousness (or consciousness-effect, as operated by disciplinary training), so that the elaboration of the insurgency, packaged with an insurgent-consciousness, does not freeze into an 'object of investigation', or, worse yet, a model for imitation. 'The subject' implied by the texts of insurgency can only serve as a counterpossibility for the narrative sanctions granted to the colonial subject in the dominant groups. The postcolonial intellectuals learn that their privilege is their loss. In this they are a paradigm of the intellectuals.

It is well known that the notion of the feminine (rather than the subaltern of imperialism) has been used in a similar way within deconstructive criticism and within certain varieties of feminist criticism.[46] In the former case, a figure of 'woman' is at issue, one whose minimal predication as indeterminate is already available to the phallocentric tradition. Subaltern historiography raises questions of method that would prevent it from using such a ruse. For the 'figure' of woman, the relationship between woman and silence can be plotted by women themselves; race and class differences are subsumed under that charge. Subaltern historiography must confront the impossibility of such gestures. The narrow epistemic violence of imperialism gives us an imperfect allegory of the general violence that is the possibility of an episteme.[47]

Within the effaced itinerary of the subaltern subject, the track of sexual difference is doubly effaced. The question is not of female participation in insurgency, or the ground rules of the sexual division of labor, for both of which there is 'evidence'. It is, rather, that, both as object of colonialist historiography and as subject of insurgency, the ideological construction of gender keeps the male dominant. If, in the context of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak. The subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow.

The contemporary international division of labor is a displacement of the divided field of nineteenth-century territorial imperialism. Put simply, a group of countries, generally first-world, are in the position of investing capital; another group, generally third-world, provide the field for investment, both through the comprador indigenous capitalists and through their ill-protected and shifting labor force. In the interest of maintaining the circulation and growth of industrial capital (and of the concomitant task of administration within nineteenth-century territorial imperialism), transportation, law and standarized education systems were developed – even as local industries were destroyed, land distribution was rearranged, and raw material was transferred to the colonizing country. With so-called decolonization, the growth of multinational capital, and the relief of the administrative charge, 'development' does not now involve wholesale legislation and establishing educational *systems* in a comparable way. This impedes the growth of consumerism in the comprador countries. With modern telecommunications and the emergence of advanced capitalist economies at the two edges of Asia, maintaining the international division of labor serves to keep the supply of cheap labor in the comprador countries.

Human labor is not, of course, intrinsically 'cheap' or 'expensive'. An absence of labor laws (or a discriminatory enforcement of them), a totalitarian state (often entailed by development and modernization in the periphery), and minimal subsistence requirements on the part of the worker will ensure it. To keep this crucial item intact, the urban proletariat in comprador countries must not be systematically trained in the ideology of consumerism (parading as the philosophy of a classless society) that, against all odds, prepares the ground for resistance through the coalition politics Foucault mentions (*FD*, p. 216). This separation from the ideology of consumerism is increasingly exacerbated by the proliferating phenomena of international subcontracting. 'Under this strategy, manufacturers based in developed countries subcontract the most labor intensive stages of production, for example, sewing or assembly, to the Third World nations where labor is cheap. Once assembled, the multinational re-imports the goods – under generous tariff exemptions – to the developed country *instead of selling them to the local market*.' Here the link to training in consumerism is almost snapped. 'While global recession has markedly slowed trade and investment worldwide since 1979, international subcontracting has boomed. ... In these cases, multinationals are freer to resist militant workers, revolutionary upheavals, and even economic downturns.'[48]

Class mobility is increasingly lethargic in the comprador theaters. Not surprisingly, some members of *indigenous dominant* groups in comprador countries, members of the local bourgeoisie, find the language of alliance politics attractive. Identifying with forms of resistance plausible in advanced capitalist countries is often of a piece with that elitist bent of bourgeois historiography described by Ranajit Guha.

Belief in the plausibility of global alliance politics is prevalent among women of dominant social groups interested in 'international feminism' in the comprador countries. At the other end of the scale, those most separated from any possibility of an alliance among 'women, prisoners, conscripted soldiers, hospital patients, and homosexuals' (*FD*, p. 216) are the females of the urban subproletariat. In their case, the denial and withholding of consumerism and the structure of exploitation is compounded by patriarchal social relations. On the other side of the international division of labor, the subject of exploitation cannot know and speak the text of female exploitation even if the absurdity of the nonrepresenting intellectual making space for her to speak is achieved. The woman is doubly in shadow.

Yet even this does not encompass the heterogeneous Other. Outside (though not completely so) the circuit of the *international* division of labor, there are people whose consciousness we cannot grasp if we close off our benevolence by constructing a homogeneous Other referring only to our own place in the seat of the Same or the Self. Here are subsistence farmers, unorganized peasant labor, the tribals and the communities of zero workers on the street or in the countryside. To confront them is not to represent (*vertreten*) them but to learn to represent (*darstellen*) ourselves. This argument would take us into a critique of a disciplinary anthropology and the relationship between elementary pedagogy and disciplinary formation. It would also question the implicit demand, made by intellectuals who choose a 'naturally articulate' subject of oppression, that such a subject come through history as a foreshortened mode-of-production narrative.

That Deleuze and Foucault ignore both the epistemic violence of imperialism and the international division of labor would matter less if they did not, in closing, touch on third-world issues. But in France it is impossible to ignore the problem of the *tiers monde*, the inhabitants of the erstwhile French African colonies. Deleuze limits his consideration of the Third World to these old local and regional indigenous elite who are, ideally, subaltern. In this context, references to the maintenance of the surplus army of labor fall into reverse-ethnic sentimentality. Since he is speaking of the heritage of nineteenth-century territorial imperialism, his reference is to the nation-state rather than the globalizing center: 'French capitalism needs greatly a floating signifier of unemployment. In this perspective, we begin to see the unity of the forms of repression: restrictions on immigration, once it is acknowledged that the most difficult and thankless jobs go to immigrant workers; repression in the factories, because the French must reacquire the "taste" for increasingly harder work; the struggle against youth and the repression of the educational system' (*FD*, pp. 211–12). This is an acceptable analysis. Yet it shows again that the Third World can enter the resistance program of an alliance politics directed against a '*unified* repression' only when it is confined to the third-world groups that are directly accessible to the First World.[49] This benevolent first-world appropriation and reinscription of the Third World as an Other is the founding characteristic of much third-worldism in the US human sciences today.

Foucault continues the critique of Marxism by invoking geographical discontinuity. The real mark of 'geographical (geopolitical) discontinuity' is the international division of labor. But Foucault uses the term to distinguish between exploitation (extraction and appropriation of surplus value; read, the field of Marxist analysis) and domination ('power' studies) and to suggest the latter's greater potential for resistance based on alliance politics. He cannot acknowledge that such a monist and unified access to a conception of 'power' (methodologically presupposing a Subject-of-power) is made possible by a certain stage in exploitation, for his vision of geographical discontinuity is geopolitically specific to the First World:

> This geographical discontinuity of which you speak might mean perhaps the following: as soon as we struggle against *exploitation*, the proletariat not only leads the struggle but also defines its targets, its methods, its places and its instruments; and to ally oneself with the proletariat is to consolidate with its positions, its ideology, it is to take up again the motives for their combat. This means total immersion [in the Marxist project]. But if it is against *power* that one struggles, then all those who acknowledge it as intolerable can begin the struggle wherever they find themselves and in terms of their own activity (or passivity). In engaging in this struggle that is *their own*, whose objectives they clearly understand and whose methods they can determine, they enter into the revolutionary process. As allies of the proletariat, to be sure, because power is exercised the way it is in order to maintain capitalist exploitation. They genuinely serve the cause of the proletariat by fighting in those places where they find themselves oppressed. Women, prisoners, conscripted soldiers, hospital patients, and homosexuals have now begun a specific struggle against the particular form of power, the constraints and controls, that are exercised over them. (*FD*, p. 216)

This is an admirable program of localized resistance. Where possible, this model of resistance is not an alternative to, but can complement, macrological struggles along 'Marxist' lines. Yet if its situation is universalized, it accommodates unacknowledged privileging of the subject. Without a theory of ideology, it can lead to a dangerous utopianism.

Foucault is a brilliant thinker of power-in-spacing, but the awareness of the topographical reinscription of imperialism does not inform his presuppositions. He is taken in by the restricted version of the West produced by that reinscription and thus helps to consolidate its effects. Notice the omission of the fact, in the following passage, that the new mechanism of power in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (the extraction of surplus value without extraeconomic coercion is its Marxist description) is secured *by means of* territorial imperialism – the Earth and its products – 'elsewhere'. The representation of sovereignty is crucial in those theaters: 'In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, we have the production of an important phenomenon, the emergence, or rather the invention, of a new mechanism of power possessed of highly specific procedural techniques ... which is also, I believe, absolutely incompatible with the relations of sovereignty. This new

mechanism of power is more dependent upon bodies and what they do than the Earth and its products' (*PK*, p. 104).

Because of a blind spot regarding the first wave of 'geographical discontinuity', Foucault can remain impervious to its second wave in the middle decades of our own century, identifying it simply 'with the collapse of Fascism and the decline of Stalinism' (*PK*, p. 87). Here is Mike Davis's alternative view: 'It was rather the global logic of counter-revolutionary violence which created conditions for the peaceful economic interdependence of a chastened Atlantic imperialism under American leadership. . . . It was multi-national military integration under the slogan of collective security against the USSR which preceded and quickened the inter-penetration of the major capitalist economies, making possible the new era of commercial liberalism which flowered between 1958 and 1973.'[50]

It is within the emergence of this 'new mechanism of power' that we must read the fixation on national scenes, the resistance to economics, and the emphasis on concepts like power and desire that privilege micrology. Davis continues: 'This quasi-absolutist centralization of strategic military power by the United States was to allow an enlightened and flexible subordinancy for its principal satraps. In particular, it proved highly accommodating to the residual imperialist pretensions of the French and British . . . with each keeping up a strident ideological mobilization against communism all the while.' While taking precautions against such unitary notions as 'France', it must be said that such unitary notions as '*the* workers' struggle', or such unitary pronouncements as 'like power, resistance is multiple and can be integrated in global strategies' (*PK*, p. 142), seem interpretable by way of Davis's narrative. I am not suggesting, as does Paul Bové, that 'for a displaced and homeless people [the Palestinians] assaulted militarily and culturally . . . a question [such as Foucault's 'to engage in politics . . . is to try to know with the greatest possible honesty whether the revolution is desirable'] is a foolish luxury of Western wealth'.[51] I am suggesting, rather, that to buy a self-contained version of the West is to ignore its production by the imperialist project.

Sometimes it seems as if the very brilliance of Foucault's analysis of the centuries of European imperialism produces a miniature version of that heterogeneous phenomenon: management of space – but by doctors; development of administrations – but in asylums; considerations of the periphery – but in terms of the insane, prisoners and children. The clinic, the asylum, the prison, the university – all seem to be screen-allegories that foreclose a reading of the broader narratives of imperialism. (One could open a similar discussion of the ferocious motif of 'deterritorialization' in Deleuze and Guattari.) 'One can perfectly well not talk about something because one doesn't know about it,' Foucault might murmur (*PK*, p. 66). Yet we have already spoken of the sanctioned ignorance that every critic of imperialism must chart.

III

On the general level on which US academics and students take 'influence' from

France, one encounters the following understanding: Foucault deals with real history, real politics and real social problems; Derrida is inaccessible, esoteric and textualistic. The reader is probably well acquainted with this received idea. 'That [Derrida's] own work', Terry Eagleton writes, 'has been grossly unhistorical, politically evasive and in practice oblivious to language as "discourse" [language in function] is not to be denied.'[52] Eagleton goes on to recommend Foucault's study of 'discursive practices'. Perry Anderson constructs a related history: 'With Derrida, the self-cancellation of structuralism latent in the recourse to music or madness in Lévi-Strauss or Foucault is consummated. With no commitment to exploration of social realities at all, Derrida had little compunction in undoing the constructions of these two, convicting them both of a "nostalgia of origins" – Rousseauesque or pre-Socratic, respectively – and asking what right either had to assume, on their own premises, the validity of their discourses.'[53]

This paper is committed to the notion that, whether in defense of Derrida or not, a nostalgia for lost origins can be detrimental to the exploration of social realities within the critique of imperialism. Indeed, the brilliance of Anderson's misreading does not prevent him from seeing precisely the problem I emphasize in Foucault: 'Foucault struck the characteristically prophetic note when he declared in 1966: "Man is in the process of perishing as the being of language continues to shine ever more brightly upon our horizon." But who is the "we" to perceive or possess such a horizon?' Anderson does not see the encroachment of the unacknowledged Subject of the West in the later Foucault, a Subject that presides by disavowal. He sees Foucault's attitude in the usual way, as the disappearance of the knowing Subject as such; and he further sees in Derrida the final development of that tendency: 'In the hollow of the pronoun [we] lies the aporia of the programme.'[54] Consider, finally, Said's plangent aphorism, which betrays a profound misapprehension of the notion of 'textuality': 'Derrida's criticism moves us *into* the text, Foucault's *in* and *out*.'[55]

I have tried to argue that the substantive concern for the politics of the oppressed which often accounts for Foucault's appeal can hide a privileging of the intellectual and of the 'concrete' subject of oppression that, in fact, compounds the appeal. Conversely, though it is not my intention here to counter the specific view of Derrida promoted by these influential writers, I will discuss a few aspects of Derrida's work that retain a long-term usefulness for people outside the First World. This is not an apology. Derrida is hard to read; his real object of investigation is classical philosophy. Yet he is less dangerous when understood than the first-world intellectual masquerading as the absent nonrepresenter who lets the oppressed speak for themselves.

I will consider a chapter that Derrida composed twenty years ago: 'Of grammatology as a positive science' (*OG*, pp. 74–93). In this chapter Derrida confronts the issue of whether 'deconstruction' can lead to an adequate practice, whether critical or political. The question is how to keep the ethnocentric Subject from establishing itself by selectively defining an Other. This is not a program for the Subject as such; rather, it is a program for the benevolent *Western* intellectual.

For those of us who feel that the 'subject' has a history and that the task of the first-world subject of knowledge in our historical moment is to resist and critique 'recognition' of the Third World through 'assimilation', this specificity is crucial. In order to advance a factual rather than a pathetic critique of the European intellectual's ethnocentric impulse, Derrida admits that he cannot ask the 'first' questions that must be answered to establish the grounds of his argument. He does not declare that grammatology can 'rise above' (Frank Lentricchia's phrase) mere empiricism; for, like empiricism, it cannot ask first questions. Derrida thus aligns 'grammatological' knowledge *with the same problems* as empirical investigation. 'Deconstruction' is not, therefore a new word for 'ideological demystification'. Like 'empirical investigation ... tak[ing] shelter in the field of grammatological knowledge' obliges 'operat[ing] through "examples"' (*OG*, p. 75).

The examples Derrida lays out – to show the limits of grammatology as a positive science – come from the appropriate ideological self-justification of an imperialist project. In the European seventeenth century, he writes, there were three kinds of 'prejudices' operating in histories of writing which constituted a 'symptom of the crisis of European consciousness' (*OG*, p. 75): the 'theological prejudice', the 'Chinese prejudice' and the 'hieroglyphist prejudice'. The first can be indexed as: God wrote a primitive or natural script: Hebrew or Greek. The second: Chinese is a perfect *blueprint* for philosophical writing, but it is only a blueprint. True philosophical writing is 'independent[t] with regard to history' (*OG*, p. 79) and will sublate Chinese into an easy-to-learn script that will supersede actual Chinese. The third: that Egyptian script is too sublime to be deciphered. The first prejudice preserves the 'actuality' of Hebrew or Greek, the last two ('rational' and 'mystical', respectively) collude to support the first, where the center of the logos is seen as the Judaeo-Christian God (the appropriation of the Hellenic Other through assimilation is an earlier story – a 'prejudice' still sustained in efforts to give the cartography of the Judaeo-Christian myth the status of geopolitical history:

> The concept of Chinese writing thus functioned as a sort of *European hallucination*. ... This functioning obeyed a rigorous necessity. ... It was not disturbed by the knowledge of Chinese script... which was then available. ... A "*hieroglyphist prejudice*" had produced the same effect of *interested blindness*. Far from proceeding ... from ethnocentric scorn, the occultation takes the form of an hyperbolical admiration. We have not finished demonstrating the necessity of this pattern. Our century is not free from it; each time that ethnocentrism is precipitately and ostentatiously reversed, some effort silently hides behind all the spectacular effects to *consolidate an inside* and to draw from it some domestic benefit. (*OG*, p. 80; Derrida italicizes only 'hieroglyphist prejudice')

Derrida proceeds to offer two characteristic possibilities for solutions to the problem of the European Subject, which seeks to produce an Other that would consolidate an inside, its own subject status. What follows is an account of the complicity between writing, the opening of domestic and civil society, and the

structures of desire, power and capitalization. Derrida then discloses the vulnerability of his own desire to conserve something that is, paradoxically, both ineffable and nontranscendental. In critiquing the production of the colonial subject, this ineffable, nontranscendental ('historical') place is cathected by the subaltern subject.

Derrida closes the chapter by showing again that the project of grammatology is obliged to develop *within* the discourse of presence. It is not just a critique of presence but an awareness of the itinerary of the discourse of presence in one's *own* critique, a vigilance precisely against too great a claim for transparency. The word 'writing' as the name of the object and model of grammatology is a practice 'only within the *historical* closure, that is to say within the limits of science and philosophy' (*OG*, p. 93).

Derrida here makes Nietzschean, philosophical and psychoanalytic, rather than specifically political, choices to suggest a critique of European ethnocentrism in the constitution of the Other. As a postcolonial intellectual, I am not troubled that he does not *lead* me (as Europeans inevitably seem to do) to the specific path that such a critique makes necessary. It is more important to me that, as a European philosopher, he articulates the *European* Subject's tendency to constitute the Other as marginal to ethnocentrism and locates *that* as the problem with all logocentric and therefore also all grammatological endeavours (since the main thesis of the chapter is the complicity between the two). *Not* a general problem, but a *European* problem. It is within the context of this ethnocentricism that he tries so desperately to demote the Subject of thinking or knowledge as to say that '*thought* is ... the blank part of the text' (*OG*, p. 93); that which is thought is, if blank, still *in the text* and must be consigned to the Other of history. That inaccessible blankness circumscribed by an interpretable text is what a postcolonial critic of imperialism would like to see developed within the European enclosure as *the* place of the production of theory. The postcolonial critics and intellectuals can attempt to displace their own production only by presupposing that *text-inscribed* blankness. To render thought or the thinking subject transparent or invisible seems, by contrast, to hide the relentless recognition of the Other by assimilation. It is in the interest of such cautions that Derrida does not invoke 'letting the other(s) speak for himself' but rather invokes an 'appeal' to or 'call' to the 'quite-other' (*tout-autre* as opposed to a self-consolidating other), of 'rendering *delirious* that interior voice that is the voice of the other in us'.[56]

Derrida calls the ethnocentrism of the European science of writing in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries a symptom of the general crisis of European consciousness. It is, of course, part of a greater symptom, or perhaps the crisis itself, the slow turn from feudalism to capitalism via the first waves of capitalist imperialism. The itinerary of recognition through assimilation of the Other can be more interestingly traced, it seems to me, in the imperialist constitution of the colonial subject than in repeated incursions into psychoanalysis or the 'figure' of woman, though the importance of these two interventions *within* deconstruction should not be minimized. Derrida has not moved (or perhaps cannot move) into that arena.

Whatever the reasons for this specific absence, what I find useful is the sustained and developing work on the *mechanics* of the constitution of the Other; we can use it to much greater analytic and interventionist advantage than invocations of the *authenticity* of the Other. On this level, what remains useful in Foucault is the mechanics of disciplinarization and institutionalization, the constitution, as it were, of the colonizer. Foucault does not relate it to any version, early or late, proto- or post-, of imperialism. They are of great usefulness to intellectuals concerned with the decay of the West. Their seduction for them, and fearfulness for us, is that they might allow the complicity of the investigating subject (male or female professional) to disguise itself in transparency.

IV

Can the subaltern speak? What must the elite do to watch out for the continuing construction of the subaltern? The question of 'woman' seems most problematic in this context. Clearly, if you are poor, black and female you get it in three ways. If, however, this formulation is moved from the first-world context into the postcolonial (which is not identical with the third-world) context, the description 'black' or 'of color' loses persuasive significance. The necessary stratification of colonial subject-constitution in the first phase of capitalist imperialism makes 'color' useless as an emancipatory signifier. Confronted by the ferocious standardizing benevolence of most US and Western European human-scientific radicalism (recognition by assimilation), the progressive though heterogeneous withdrawal of consumerism in the comprador periphery, and the exclusion of the margins of even the center periphery articulation (the 'true and differential subaltern'), the analogue of class-consciousness rather than race-consciousness in this area seems historically, disciplinarily and practically forbidden by Right and Left alike. It is not just a question of a *double* displacement, as it is not simply the problem of finding a psychoanalytic allegory that can accommodate the third-world woman with the first.[1]

The cautions I have just expressed are valid only if we are speaking of the subaltern woman's consciousness – or, more acceptably, subject. Reporting on, or better still, participating in, antisexist work among women of color or women in class oppression in the First World or the Third World is undeniably on the agenda. We should also welcome all the information retrieval in these silenced areas that is taking place in anthropology, political science, history and sociology. Yet the assumption and construction of a consciousness or subject sustains such work and will, in the long run, cohere with the work of imperialist subject-constitution, mingling epistemic violence with the advancement of learning and civilization. And the subaltern woman will be as mute as ever.[57]

In so fraught a field, it is not easy to ask the question of the consciousness of the subaltern woman; it is thus all the more necessary to remind pragmatic radicals that such a question is not an idealist red herring. Though all feminist or antisexist

projects cannot be reduced to this one, to ignore it is an unacknowledged political gesture that has a long history and collaborates with a masculine radicalism that renders the place of the investigator transparent. In seeking to learn to speak to (rather than listen to or speak for) the historically muted subject of the subaltern woman, the postcolonial intellectual *systematically* 'unlearns' female privilege. This systematic unlearning involves learning to critique postcolonial discourse with the best tools it can provide and not simply substituting the lost figure of the colonized. Thus, to question the unquestioned muting of the subaltern woman even within the anti-imperialist project of subaltern studies is not, as Jonathan Culler suggests, to 'produce difference by differing' or to 'appeal ... to a sexual identity defined as essential and privilege experiences associated with that identity'.[58]

Culler's version of the feminist project is possible within what Elizabeth Fox-Genovese has called 'the contribution of the bourgeois-democratic revolutions to the social and political individualism of women'.[59] Many of us were obliged to understand the feminist project as Culler now describes it when we were still agitating as US academics.[60] It was certainly a necessary stage in my own education in 'unlearning' and has consolidated the belief that the mainstream project of Western feminism both continues and displaces the battle over the right to individualism between women and men in situations of upward class mobility. One suspects that the debate between US feminism and European 'theory' (as theory is generally represented by women from the United States or Britain) occupies a significant corner of that very terrain. I am generally sympathetic with the call to make US feminism more 'theoretical'. It seems, however, that the problem of the muted subject of the subaltern woman, though not solved by an 'essentialist' search for lost origins, cannot be served by the call for more theory in Anglo-America either.

That call is often given in the name of a critique of 'positivism', which is seen here as identical with 'essentialism'. Yet Hegel, the modern inaugurator of 'the work of the negative', was not a stranger to the notion of essences. For Marx, the curious persistence of essentialism within the dialectic was a profound and productive problem. Thus, the stringent binary opposition between positivism/essentialism (read, US) and 'theory' (read, French or Franco-German via Anglo-American) may be spurious. Apart from repressing the ambiguous complicity between essentialism and critiques of positivism (acknowledged by Derrida in 'Of grammatology as a positive science'), it also errs by implying that positivism is not a theory. This move allows the emergence of a proper name, a positive essence, Theory. Once again, the position of the investigator remains unquestioned. And, if this territorial debate turns toward the Third World, no change in the question of method is to be discerned. This debate cannot take into account that, in the case of the woman as subaltern, no ingredients for the constitution of the itinerary of the trace of a sexed subject can be gathered to locate the possibility of dissemination.

Yet I remain generally sympathetic in aligning feminism with the critique of positivism and the defetishization of the concrete. I am also far from averse to learning from the work of Western theorists, though I have learned to insist on

marking their positionality as investigating subjects. Given these conditions, and as a literary critic, I tactically confronted the immense problem of the consciousness of the woman as subaltern. I reinvented the problem in a sentence and transformed it into the object of a simple semiosis. What does this sentence mean? The analogy here is between the ideological victimization of a Freud and the positionality of the postcolonial intellectual as investigating subject.

As Sarah Kofman has shown, the deep ambiguity of Freud's use of women as a scapegoat is a reaction-formation to an initial and continuing desire to give the hysteric a voice, to transform her into the *subject* of hysteria.[61] The masculine-imperialist ideological formation that shaped that desire into the 'daughter's seduction' is part of the same formation that constructs the monolithic 'third-world woman'. As a postcolonial intellectual, I am influenced by that formation as well. Part of our 'unlearning' project is to articulate that ideological formation – by *measuring* silences, if necessary – into the *object* of investigation. Thus, when confronted with the questions, Can the subaltern speak? and Can the subaltern (as woman) speak?, our efforts to give the subaltern a voice in history will be doubly open to the dangers run by Freud's discourse. As a product of these considerations, I have put together the sentence 'White men are saving brown women from brown men' in a spirit not unlike the one to be encountered in Freud's investigations of the sentence 'A child is being beaten'.[62]

The use of Freud here does not imply an isomorphic analogy between subject-formation and the behaviour of social collectives, a frequent practice, often accompanied by a reference to Reich, in the conversation between Deleuze and Foucault. So I am not suggesting that 'White men are saving brown women from brown men' is a sentence indicating a *collective* fantasy symptomatic of a *collective* itinerary of sadomasochistic repression in a *collective* imperialist enterprise. There is a satisfying symmetry in such an allegory, but I would rather invite the reader to consider it a problem in 'wild psychoanalysis' than a clinching solution.[63] Just as Freud's insistence on making the woman the scapegoat in 'A child is being beaten' and elsewhere discloses his political interests, however imperfectly, so my insistence on imperialist subject-production as the occasion for this sentence discloses my politics.

Further, I am attempting to borrow the general methodological aura of Freud's strategy toward the sentence he construed *as a sentence* out of the many similar substantive accounts his patients gave him. This does not mean I will offer a case of transference-in-analysis as an isomorphic model for the transaction between reader and text (my sentence). The analogy between transference and literary criticism or historiography is no more than a productive catachresis. To say that the subject is a text does not authorize the converse pronouncement: the verbal text is a subject.

I am fascinated, rather, by how Freud predicates a *history* of repression that produces the final sentence. It is a history with double origin, one hidden in the amnesia of the infant, the other lodged in our archaic past, assuming by implication a preoriginary space where human and animal were not yet differentiated.[64] We are

driven to impose a homologue of this Freudian strategy on the Marxist narrative to explain the ideological dissimulation of imperialist political economy and outline a history of repression that produces a sentence like the one I have sketched. This history also has a double origin, one hidden in the manoeuverings behind the British abolition of widow sacrifice in 1829,[65] the other lodged in the classical and Vedic past of Hindu India, the *Rg-Veda* and the *Dharmasāstra*. No doubt there is also an undifferentiated preoriginary space that supports this history.

The sentence I have constructed is one among many displacements describing the relationship between brown and white men (sometimes brown and white women worked in). It takes its place among some sentences of 'hyperbolic admiration' or of pious guilt that Derrida speaks of in connection with the 'hieroglyphist prejudice'. The relationship between the imperialist subject and the subject of imperialism is at least ambiguous.

The Hindu widow ascends the pyre of the dead husband and immolates herself upon it. This is widow sacrifice. (The conventional transcription of the Sanskrit word for the widow would be *sati*. The early colonial British transcribed it *suttee*.) The rite was not practiced universally and was not caste- or class-fixed. The abolition of this rite by the British has been generally understood as a case of 'White men saving brown women from brown men'. White women – from the nineteenth-century British Missionary Registers to Mary Daly – have not produced an alternative understanding. Against this is the Indian nativist argument, a parody of the nostalgia for lost origins: 'The women actually wanted to die.'

The two sentences go a long way to legitimize each other. One never encounters the testimony of the women's voice-consciousness. Such a testimony would not be ideology-transcendent or 'fully' subjective, of course, but it would have constituted the ingredients for producing a countersentence. As one goes down the grotesquely mistranscribed names of these women, the sacrificed widows, in the police reports included in the records of the East India Company, one cannot put together a 'voice'. The most one can sense is the immense heterogeneity breaking through even such a skeletal and ignorant account (castes, for example, are regularly described as tribes). Faced with the dialectically interlocking sentences that are constructible as 'White men are saving brown women from brown men' and 'The women wanted to die', the postcolonial woman intellectual asks the question of simple semiosis – What does this mean? – and begins to plot a history.

To mark the moment when not only a civil but a good society is born out of domestic confusion, singular events that break the letter of the law to instill its spirit are often invoked. The protection of women by men often provides such an event. If we remember that the British boasted of their absolute equity toward and noninterference with native custom/law, an invocation of this sanctioned transgression of the letter for the sake of the spirit may be read in J.D.M. Derrett's remark: 'The very first legislation upon Hindu Law was carried through without the assent of a single Hindu.' The legislation is not named here. The next sentence, where the measure is named, is equally interesting if one considers the implications of the survival of a colonially established 'good' society after decolonization: 'The

recurrence of *sati* in independent India is probably an obscurantist revival which cannot long survive even in a very backward part of the country.'[66]

Whether this observation is correct or not, what interests me is that the protection of woman (today the 'third-world woman') becomes a signifier for the establishment of a *good* society which must, at such inaugurative moments, transgress mere legality, or equity of legal policy. In this particular case, the process also allowed the redefinition as a crime of what had been tolerated, known, or adulated as ritual. In other words, this one item in Hindu law jumped the frontier between the private and the public domain.

Although Foucault's *historical narrative*, focusing solely on Western Europe, sees merely a tolerance for the criminal antedating the development of criminology in the late eighteenth century (*PK*, p. 41), his *theoretical description* of the 'episteme' is pertinent here: 'The *episteme* is the "apparatus" which makes possible the separation not of the true from the false, but of what may not be characterized as scientific' (*PK*, p. 197) – ritual as opposed to crime, the one fixed by superstition, the other by legal science.

The leap of *suttee* from private to public has a clear and complex relationship with the changeover from a mercantile and commercial to a territorial and administrative British presence; it can be followed in correspondence among the police stations, the lower and higher courts, the courts of directors, the prince regent's court, and the like. (It is interesting to note that, from the point of view of the native 'colonial subject', also emergent from the feudalism–capitalism transition, *sati* is a signifier with the reverse social charge: 'Groups rendered psychologically marginal by their exposure to Western impact ... had come under pressure to demonstrate, to others as well as to themselves, their ritual purity and allegiance to traditional high culture. To many of them *sati* became an important proof of their conformity to older norms at a time when these norms had become shaky within.'[67]

If this is the first historical origin of my sentence, it is evidently lost in the history of humankind as work, the story of capitalist expansion, the slow freeing of labor power as commodity, that narrative of the modes of production, the transition from feudalism via mercantilism to capitalism. Yet the precarious normativity of this narrative is sustained by the putatively changeless stopgap of the 'Asiatic' mode of production, which steps in to sustain it whenever it might become apparent that the story of capital logic is the story of the West, that imperialism establishes the universality of the mode of production narrative, that to ignore the subaltern today is, willy-nilly, to continue the imperialist project. The origin of my sentence is thus lost in the shuffle between other, more powerful discourses. Given that the abolition of *sati* was in itself admirable, is it still possible to wonder if a perception of the origin of my sentence might contain interventionist possibilities?

Imperialism's image as the establisher of the good society is marked by the espousal of the woman as *object* of protection from her own kind. How should one examine the dissimulation of patriarchal strategy, which apparently grants the

woman free choice as *subject*? In other words, how does one make the move from 'Britain' to 'Hinduism'? Even the attempt shows that imperialism is not identical with chromatism, or mere prejudice against people of colour. To approach this question, I will touch briefly on the *Dharmasāstra* (the sustaining scriptures) and the *Rg-Veda* (Praise Knowledge). They represent the archaic origin in my homology of Freud. Of course, my treatment is not exhaustive. My readings are, rather, an interested and inexpert examination, by a postcolonial woman, of the fabrication of repression, a constructed counternarrative of woman's consciousness, thus woman's being, thus woman's being good, thus the good woman's desire, thus woman's desire. Paradoxically, at the same time we witness the unfixed place of woman as a signifier in the inscription of the social individual.

The two moments in the *Dharmasāstra* that I am interested in are the discourse on sanctioned suicides and the nature of the rites for the dead.[68] Framed in these two discourses, the self-immolation of widows seems an exception to the rule. The general scriptural doctrine is that suicide is reprehensible. Room is made, however, for certain forms of suicide which, as formulaic performance, lose the phenomenal identity of being suicide. The first category of sanctioned suicides arises out of *tatvajnāna*, or the knowledge of truth. Here the knowing subject comprehends the insubstantiality or mere phenomenality (which may be the same thing as nonphenomenality) of its identity. At a certain point in time, *tat tva* was interpreted as 'that you', but even without that, *tatva* is thatness or quiddity. Thus, this enlightened self truly knows the 'that'-ness of its identity. Its demolition of that identity is not *ātmaghāta* (a killing of the self). The paradox of knowing of the limits of knowledge is that the strongest assertion of agency, to negate the possibility of agency, cannot be an example of itself. Curiously enough, the self-*sacrifice* of gods is sanctioned by natural ecology, useful for the working of the economy of Nature and the Universe, rather than by self-knowledge. In this *logically* anterior stage, inhabited by gods rather than human beings, of this particular chain of displacements, suicide and sacrifice (*ātmaghāta* and *ātmadāna*) seem as little distinct as an 'interior' (self-knowledge) and an 'exterior' (ecology) sanction.

This philosophical space, however, does not accommodate the self-immolating woman. For her we look where room is made to sanction suicides that cannot claim truth-knowledge as a state that is, at any rate, easily verifiable and belongs in the area of *sruti* (what was heard) rather than *smirti* (what is remembered). This exception to the general rule about suicide annuls the phenomenal identity of self-immolation if performed in certain places rather than in a certain state of enlightenment. Thus, we move from an interior sanction (truth-knowledge) to an exterior one (place of pilgrimage). It is possible for a woman to perform *this* type of (non)suicide.[69]

Yet even this is not the *proper* place for the woman to annul the proper name of suicide through the destruction of her proper self. For her alone is sanctioned self-immolation on a dead spouse's pyre. (The few male examples cited in Hindu antiquity of self-immolation on another's pyre, being proofs of enthusiasm and devotion to a master or superior, reveal the structure of domination within the rite.)

This suicide that is not suicide may be read as a simulacrum of both truth-knowledge and piety of place. If the former, it is as if the knowledge *in a subject* of its own insubstantiality and mere phenomenality is dramatized so that the dead husband becomes the exteriorized example and place of the extinguished subject and the widow becomes the (non)agent who 'acts it out'. If the latter, it is as if the metonym for all sacred places is now that burning bed of wood, constructed by elaborate ritual, where the woman's subject, legally displaced from herself, is being consumed. It is in terms of this profound ideology of the displaced place of the female subject that the paradox of free choice comes into play. For the male subject, it is the felicity of the suicide, a felicity that will annul rather than establish its status as such, that is noted. For the female subject, a sanctioned self-immolation, even as it takes away the effect of 'fall' (*pātaka*) attached to an unsanctioned suicide, brings praise for the act of choice on another register. By the inexorable ideological production of the sexed subject, such a death can be understood by the female subject as an *exceptional* signifier of her own desire, exceeding the general rule for a widow's conduct.

In certain periods and areas this exceptional rule became the general rule in a class-specific way. Ashis Nandy relates its marked prevalence in eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Bengal to factors ranging from population control to communal misogyny.[70] Certainly its prevalence there in the previous centuries was because in Bengal, unlike elsewhere in India, widows could inherit property. Thus, what the British see as poor victimized women going to the slaughter is in fact an ideological battle-ground. As P. V. Kane, the great historian of the *Dharmasāstra*, has correctly observed: 'In Bengal, [the fact that] the widow of a sonless member even in a joint Hindu family is entitled to practically the same rights over joint family property which her deceased husband would have had ... must have frequently induced the surviving members to get rid of the widow by appealing at a most distressing hour to her devotion to and love for her husband' (*HD* II.2, p. 635).

Yet benevolent and enlightened males were and are sympathetic with the 'courage' of the woman's free choice in the matter. They thus accept the production of the sexed subaltern subject: 'Modern India does not justify the practice of *sati*, but it is a warped mentality that rebukes modern Indians for expressing admiration and reverence for the cool and unfaltering courage of Indian women in becoming *satis* or performing the *jauhar* for cherishing their ideals of womanly conduct' (*HD* II.2, p. 636). What Jean-François Lyotard has termed the '*différend*', the inaccessibility of, or untranslatability from, one mode of discourse in a dispute to another, is vividly illustrated here.[71] As the discourse of what the British perceive as heathen ritual is sublated (but not, Lyotard would argue, translated) into what the British perceive as crime, one diagnosis of female free will is substituted for another.

Of course, the self-immolation of widows was not *invariable* ritual prescription. If, however, the widow does decide thus to exceed the letter of ritual, to turn back is a transgression for which a particular type of penance is prescribed.[72] With the local British police officer supervising the immolation, to be dissuaded after a decision was, by contrast, a mark of real free choice, a choice of freedom. The

ambiguity of the position of the indigenous colonial elite is disclosed in the nationalistic romanticization of the purity, strength and love of these self-sacrificing women. The two set pieces are Rabindranath Tagore's paean to the 'self-renouncing paternal grandmothers of Bengal' and Ananda Coomaraswamy's eulogy of *suttee* as 'this last proof of the perfect unity of body and soul'.[73]

Obviously I am not advocating the killing of widows. I am suggesting that, within the two contending versions of freedom, the constitution of the female subject *in life* is the place of the *différend*. In the case of widow self-immolation, ritual is not being redefined as superstition but as *crime*. The gravity of *sati* was that it was ideologically cathected as 'reward', just as the gravity of imperialism was that it was ideologically cathected as 'social mission'. Thompson's understanding of *sati* as 'punishment' is thus far off the mark:

> It may seem unjust and illogical that the Moguls, who freely impaled and flayed alive, or nationals of Europe, whose countries had such ferocious penal codes and had known, scarcely a century before suttee began to shock the English conscience, orgies of witch-burning and religious persecution, should have felt as they did about suttee. But the differences seemed to them this – the victims of their cruelties were tortured by a law which considered them offenders, whereas the victims of suttee were punished for no offence but the physical weakness which had placed them at man's mercy. The rite seemed to prove a depravity and arrogance such as no other human offense had brought to light.[74]

All through the mid and late-eighteenth century, in the spirit of the codification of the law, the British in India collaborated and consulted with learned Brahmans to judge whether *suttee* was legal by their homogenized version of Hindu law. The collaboration was often idiosyncratic, as in the case of the significance of being dissuaded. Sometimes, as in the general Sāstric prohibition against the immolation of widows with small children, the British collaboration seems confused.[75] In the beginning of the nineteenth century, the British authorities, and especially the British in England, repeatedly suggested that collaboration made it appear as if the British condoned this practice. When the law was finally written, the history of the long period of collaboration was effaced, and the language celebrated the noble Hindu who was against the bad Hindu, the latter given to savage atrocities:

> The practice of Suttee ... is revolting to the feeling of human nature. ... In many instances, acts of atrocity have been perpetrated, which have been shocking to the Hindoos themselves. ... Actuated by these considerations the Governor-General in Council, without intending to depart from one of the first and most important principles of the system of British Government in India that all classes of the people be secure in the observance of their religious usages, so long as that system can be adhered to without violation of the paramount dictates of justice and humanity, has deemed it right to establish the following rules. (*HD* II.2, pp. 624–5)

That this was an alternative ideology of the graded sanctioning of suicide as exception, rather than its inscription as sin, was of course not understood. Perhaps *sati* should have been read with martyrdom, with the defunct husband standing in for the transcendental One; or with war, with the husband standing in for sovereign or state, for whose sake an intoxicating ideology of self-sacrifice can be mobilized. In actuality, it was categorized with murder, infanticide and the lethal exposure of the very old. The dubious place of the free will of the constituted sexed subject as female was successfully effaced. There is no itinerary we can retrace here. Since the other sanctioned suicides did not involve the scene of this constitution, they entered neither the ideological battleground at the archaic origin – the tradition of the *Dharmasāstra* – nor the scene of the reinscription of ritual as crime – the British abolition. The only related transformation was Mahatma Gandhi's reinscription of the notion of *satyāgraha*, or hunger strike, as resistance. But this is not the place to discuss the details of that sea-change. I would merely invite the reader to compare the auras of widow sacrifice and Gandhian resistance. The root in the first part of *satyāgraha* and *sati* are the same.

Since the beginning of the Puranic era (*c.* AD 400), learned Brahmans debated the doctrinal appropriateness of *sati* as of sanctioned suicides in sacred places in general. (This debate still continues in an academic way.) Sometimes the caste provenance of the practice was in question. The general law for widows, that they should observe *brahmacarya*, was, however, hardly ever debated. It is not enough to translate *brahmacarya* as 'celibacy'. It should be recognized that, of the four ages of being in Hindu (or Brahmanical) *regulative* psychobiography, *brahmacarya* is the social practice anterior to the kinship inscription of marriage. The man – widower or husband – graduates through *vānaprastha* (forest life) into the mature celibacy and renunciation of *samnyāsa* (laying aside).[76] The woman as wife is indispensable for *gārhasthya*, or householdership, and may accompany her husband into forest life. She has no access (according to Brahmanical sanction) to the final celibacy of asceticism, or *samnyāsa*. The woman as widow, by the general law of sacred doctrine, must regress to an anteriority transformed into stasis. The institutional evils attendant upon this law are well known; I am considering its asymmetrical effect on the ideological formation of the sexed subject. It is thus of much greater significance that there was no debate on this nonexceptional fate of widows – either among Hindus or between Hindus and British – than that the *exceptional* prescription of self-immolation was actively contended.[77] Here the possibility of recovering a (sexually) subaltern subject is once again lost and overdetermined.

This legally programmed asymmetry in the status of the subject which effectively defines the woman as object of *one* husband, obviously operates in the interest of the legally symmetrical subject-status of the male. The self-immolation of the widow thereby becomes the extreme case of the general law rather than an exception to it. It is not surprising, then, to read of heavenly rewards for the *sati*, where the quality of being the object of unique possessor is emphasized by way of rivalry with other females, those ecstatic heavenly dancers, paragons of female beauty and male pleasure who sing her praise: 'In heaven she, being solely devoted to her husband,

and praised by groups of *apsarās* [heavenly dancers], sports with her husband as long as fourteen Indras rule' (*HD* II.2, p. 631).

The profound irony in locating the woman's free will in self-immolation is once again revealed in a verse accompanying the earlier passage: 'As long as the woman [as wife: *stri*] does not burn herself in fire on the death of her husband, she is never released [*mucyate*] from her female body [*strisarīr* – i.e., in the cycle of births].' Even as it operates the most subtle general release from individual agency, the sanctioned suicide peculiar to woman draws its ideological strength by *identifying* individual agency with the supraindividual: kill yourself on your husband's pyre now, and you may kill your female body in the entire cycle of birth.

In a further twist of the paradox, this emphasis on free will establishes the peculiar misfortune of holding a female body. The word for the self that is actually burned is the standard word for spirit in the noblest sense (*ātman*), while the verb 'release', through the root for salvation in the noblest sense (*muc → moska*) is in the passive (*mocyate*), and the word for that which is annulled in the cycle of birth is the everyday word for the body. The ideological message writes itself in the benevolent twentieth-century male historian's admiration: 'The Jauhar [group self-immolation of aristocratic Rajput war-widows or imminent war-widows] practiced by the Rajput ladies of Chitor and other places for saving themselves from unspeakable atrocities at the hands of the victorious Moslems are too well known to need any lengthy notice' (*HD* II.2, p. 629).

Although *jauhar* is not, strictly speaking, an act of *sati*, and although I do not wish to speak for the sanctioned sexual violence of conquering male armies, 'Moslem' or otherwise, female self-immolation in the face of it is a legitimation of rape as 'natural' and works, in the long run, in the interest of unique genital possession of the female. The group rape perpetrated by the conquerors is a metonymic celebration of territorial acquisition. Just as the general law for widows was unquestioned, so this act of female heroism persists among the patriotic tales told to children, thus operating on the crudest level of ideological reproduction. It has also played a tremendous role, precisely as an overdetermined signifier, in acting out Hindu communalism. Simultaneously, the broader question of the consitution of the sexed subject is hidden by foregrounding the visible violence of *sati*. The task of recovering a (sexually) subaltern subject is lost in an institutional textuality at the archaic origin.

As I mentioned above, when the status of the legal subject as property-holder could be temporarily bestowed on the *female* relict, the self-immolation of widows was stringently enforced. Raghunandana, the late fifteenth-/sixteenth-century legalist whose interpretations are supposed to lend the greatest authority to such enforcement, takes as his text a curious passage from the *Rg-Veda*, the most ancient of the Hindu sacred texts, the first of the *Srutis*. In doing so, he is following a centuries-old tradition, commemorating a peculiar and transparent misreading at the very place of sanction. Here is the verse outlining certain steps within the rites for the dead. Even at a simple reading it is clear that it is 'not addressed to widows at all, but to ladies of the deceased man's household whose husbands were living'.

Why then was it taken as authoritative? This, the unemphatic transposition of the dead for the living husband, is a different order of mystery at the archaic origin from the ones we have been discussing: 'Let these whose husbands are worthy and are living enter the house with clarified butter in their eyes. Let these wives first step into the house, tearless, healthy, and well adorned' (*HD* II.2, p. 634). But this crucial transposition is not the only mistake here. The authority is lodged in a disputed passage and an alternate reading. In the second line, here translated 'Let these wives first step into the house', the word for first is *agré*. Some have read it as *agné*, 'O fire'. As Kane makes clear, however, 'even without this change Apararka and others rely for the practice of *Sati* on this verse' (*HD* IV.2, p. 199). Here is another screen around one origin of the history of the subaltern female subject. Is it a historical oneirocritique that one should perform on a statement such as: 'Therefore it must be admitted that either the MSS are corrupt or Raghunandana committed an innocent slip' (*HD* II.2 p. 634)? It should be mentioned that the rest of the poem is either about that general law of *brahmacarya*-in-stasis for widows, to which *sati* is an exception, or about *niyoga* – 'appointing a brother or any near kinsman to raise up issue to a deceased husband by marrying his widow'.[78]

If P.V. Kane is the authority on the history of the *Dharmasāstra*, Mulla's *Principles of Hindu Law* is the practical guide. It is part of the historical text of what Freud calls 'kettle logic' that we are unraveling here, that Mulla's textbook adduces, just as definitively, that the *Rg-Vedic* verse under consideration was proof that 'remarriage of widows and divorce are recognized in some of the old texts'.[79]

One cannot help but wonder about the role of the word *yonī*. In context, with the localizing adverb *agré* (in front), the word means 'dwelling-place'. But that does not efface its primary sense of 'genital' (not yet perhaps specifically *female* genital). How can we take as the authority for the choice of a widow's self-immolation a passage celebrating the entry of adorned wives into a dwelling place invoked on this occasion by its *yonī*-name, so that the extracontextual icon is almost one of entry into civic production or birth? Paradoxically, the imagic relationship of vagina and fire lends a kind of strength to the authority-claim.[80] This paradox is strengthened by Raghunandana's modification of the verse so as to read, 'Let them first ascend the *fluid* abode [or origin, with, of course, the *yonī*-name – *a rōhantu jalayōnimagné*], O fire [or of fire].' Why should one accept that this 'probably mean[s] "may fire be to them as cool as water" (*HD* II.2, p. 634)? The fluid genital of fire, a corrupt phrasing, might figure a sexual indeterminacy providing a simulacrum for the intellectual indeterminacy of *tattvajnāna* (truth-knowledge).

I have written above of a constructed counternarrative of woman's consciousness, thus woman's being, thus woman's being good, thus the good woman's desire, thus woman's desire. This slippage can be seen in the fracture inscribed in the very word *sati*, the feminine form of *sat*. *Sat* transcends any gender-specific notion of masculinity and moves up not only into human but spiritual universality. It is the present participle of the verb 'to be' and as such means not only being but the True, the Good, the Right. In the sacred texts it is essence, universal spirit. Even as a prefix it indicates appropriate, felicitous, fit. It is noble enough to have entered the most

privileged discourse of modern Western philosophy: Heidegger's meditation on Being.[81] *Sati*, the feminine of this word, simply means 'good wife.'

It is now time to disclose that *sati* or *suttee* as the proper name of the rite of widow self-immolation commemorates a grammatical error on the part of the British, quite as the nomenclature 'American Indian' commemorates a factual error on the part of Columbus. The word in the various Indian languages is 'the burning of the *sati*' or the good wife, who thus escapes the regressive stasis of the widow in *brahmacrya*. This exemplifies the race-class-gender overdeterminations of the situation. It can perhaps be caught even when it is flattened out: white men, seeking to save brown women from brown men, impose upon those women a greater ideological constriction by absolutely identifying, *within discursive practice*, good-wifehood with self-immolation on the husband's pyre. On the other side of thus constituting the *object*, the abolition (or removal) of which will provide the occasion for establishing a good, as distinguished from merely civil, society, is the Hindu manipulation of female *subject*-constitution which I have tried to discuss.

(I have already mentioned Edward Thompson's *Suttee*, published in 1928. I cannot do justice here to this perfect specimen of true justification of imperialism as a civilizing mission. Nowhere in his book, written by someone who avowedly 'loves India', is there any questioning of the 'beneficial ruthlessness' of the British in India as motivated by territorial expansionism or management of industrial capital.[82] The problem with his book is, indeed, a problem of representation, the construction of a continuous and homogeneous 'India' in terms of heads of state and British administrators, from the perspective of 'a man of good sense' who would be the transparent voice of reasonable humanity. 'India' can then be represented, in the other sense, by its imperial masters. The reason for referring to *suttee* here is Thompson's finessing of the word *sati* as 'faithful' in the very first sentence of his book, an inaccurate translation which is nonetheless an English permit for the insertion of the female subject into twentieth-century discourse.[83])

Consider Thompson's praise for General Charles Hervey's appreciation of the problem of *sati*: 'Hervey has a passage which brings out the pity of a system which looked only for prettiness and constancy in woman. He obtained the names of satis who had died on the pyres of Bikanir Rajas; they were such names as: "Ray Queen, Sun-ray, Love's Delight, Garland, Virtue Found, Echo, Soft Eye, Comfort, Moonbeam, Love-lorn, Dear Heart, Eye-play, Arbour-born, Smile, Love-bud, Glad Omen, Mist-clad, or Cloud-sprung – the last a favourite name."' Once again, imposing the upper-class Victorian's typical demands upon 'his woman' (his preferred phrase), Thompson appropriates the Hindu woman as his to save against the 'system'. Bikaner is in Rajasthan; and any discussion of widow-burnings of Rajasthan, especially within the ruling class, was intimately linked to the positive or negative construction of Hindu (or Aryan) communalism.

A look at the pathetically misspelled names of the *satis* of the artisanal, peasant, village-priestly, moneylender, clerical and comparable social groups in Bengal, where *satis* were most common, would not have yielded such a harvest (Thompson's preferred adjective for Bengalis is 'imbecilic'). Or perhaps it would. There is no more

dangerous pastime than transposing proper names into common nouns, translating them, and using them as sociological evidence. I attempted to reconstruct the names on that list and began to feel Hervey-Thompson's arrogance. What, for instance, might 'Comfort' have been? Was it 'Shanti'? Readers are reminded of the last line of T. S. Eliot's *Waste Land*. There the word bears the mark of one kind of stereotyping of India – the grandeur of the ecumenical Upanishads. Or was it 'Swasti'? Readers are reminded of the *swastika*, the Brahmanic ritual mark of domestic comfort (as in 'God Bless Our Home') stereotyped into a criminal parody of Aryan hegemony. Between these two appropriations, where is our pretty and constant burnt widow? The aura of the names owes more to writers like Edward FitzGerald, the 'translator' of the *Rubayyat of Omar Khayyam* who helped to construct a certain picture of the Oriental woman through the supposed 'objectivity' of translation, than to sociological exactitude. (Said's *Orientalism*, 1978, remains the authoritative text here.) By this sort of reckoning, the translated proper names of a random collection of contemporary French philosophers or boards of directors of prestigious southern US corporations would give evidence of a ferocious investment in an archangelic and hagiocentric theocracy. Such sleights of pen can be perpetuated on 'common nouns' as well, but the proper name is most susceptible to the trick. And it is the British trick with *sati* that we are discussing. After such a taming of the subject, Thompson can write, under the heading 'The psychology of the "*Sati*"', 'I had intended to try to examine this; but the truth is, it has ceased to seem a puzzle to me.'[84]

Between patriarchy and imperialism, subject-constitution and object-formation, the figure of the woman disappears, not into a pristine nothingness, but into a violent shuttling which is the displaced figuration of the 'third-world woman' caught between tradition and modernization. These considerations would revise every detail of judgments that seem valid for a history of sexuality in the West: 'Such would be the property of repression, that which distinguishes it from the prohibitions maintained by simple penal law: repression functions well as a sentence to disappear, but also as an injunction to silence, affirmation of non-existence; and consequently states that of all this there is nothing to say, to see, to know.'[85] The case of *suttee* as exemplum of the woman-in-imperialism would challenge and reconstruct this opposition between subject (law) and object-of-knowledge (repression) and mark the place of 'disappearance' with something other than silence and nonexistence, a violent aporia between subject and object status.

Sati as a woman's proper name is in fairly widespread use in India today. Naming a female infant 'a good wife' has its own proleptic irony, and the irony is all the greater because this sense of the common noun is not the primary operator in the proper name.[86] Behind the naming of the infant is *the* Sati of Hindu mythology, Durga in her manifestation as a good wife.[87] In part of the story, Sati – she is already called that – arrives at her father's court uninvited, in the absence, even, of an invitation for her divine husband Siva. Her father starts to abuse Siva and Sati dies in pain. Siva arrives in a fury and dances over the universe with Sati's corpse on his shoulder. Vishnu dismembers her body and bits are strewn over the earth. Around each such relic bit is a great place of pilgrimage.

Figures like the goddess Athena – 'father's daughters self-professedly uncontaminated by the womb' – are useful for establishing women's ideological self-debasement, which is to be distinguished from a deconstructive attitude toward the essentialist subject. The story of the mythic Sati, reversing every narrateme of the rite, performs a similar function: the living husband avenges the wife's death, a transaction between great male gods fulfills the destruction of the female body and thus inscribes the earth as sacred geography. To see this as proof of the feminism of classical Hinduism or of Indian culture as goddess-centered and therefore feminist is as ideologically contaminated by nativism or reverse ethnocentrism as it was imperialist to erase the image of the luminous fighting Mother Durga and invest the proper noun Sati with no significance other than the ritual burning of the helpless widow as sacrificial offering who can then be saved. There is no space from which the sexed subaltern subject can speak.

If the oppressed under socialized capital have no necessarily unmediated access to 'correct' resistance, can the ideology of *sati*, coming from the history of the periphery, be sublated into any model of interventionist practice? Since this essay operates on the notion that all such clear-cut nostalgias for lost origins are suspect, especially as grounds for counterhegemonic ideological production, I must proceed by way of an example.[89]

(The example I offer here is not a plea for some violent Hindu sisterhood of self-destruction. The definition of the British Indian as Hindu in Hindu law is one of the marks of the ideological war of the British against the Islamic Mughal rulers of India; a significant skirmish in that as yet unfinished war was the division of the subcontinent. Moreover, in my view, individual examples of this sort are tragic failures as *models* of interventionist practice, since I question the production of models as such. On the other hand, as objects of discourse analysis for the non-self-abdicating intellectual, they can illuminate a section of the social text, in however haphazard a way.)

A young woman of sixteen or seventeen, Bhuvaneswari Bhaduri, hanged herself in her father's modest apartment in North Calcutta in 1926. The suicide was a puzzle since, as Bhuvaneswari was menstruating at the time, it was clearly not a case of illicit pregnancy. Nearly a decade later, it was discovered that she was a member of one of the many groups involved in the armed struggle for Indian independence. She had finally been entrusted with a political assassination. Unable to confront the task and yet aware of the practical need for trust, she killed herself.

Bhuvaneswari had known that her death would be diagnosed as the outcome of illegitimate passion. She had therefore waited for the onset of menstruation. While waiting, Bhuvaneswari, the *brahmacārini* who was no doubt looking forward to good wifehood, perhaps rewrote the social text of *sati*-suicide in an interventionist way. (One tentative explanation of her inexplicable act had been a possible melancholia brought on by her brother-in-law's repeated taunts that she was too old to be not-yet-a-wife.) She generalized the sanctioned motive for female suicide by

taking immense trouble to displace (not merely deny) in the physiological inscription of her body, its imprisonment within legitimate passion by a single male. In the immediate context, her act became absurd, a case of delirium rather than sanity. The displacing gesture – waiting for menstruation – is at first a reversal of the interdict against a menstruating widow's right to immolate herself; the unclean widow must wait, publicly, until the cleansing bath of the fourth day, when she is no longer menstruating, in order to claim her dubious privilege.

In this reading, Bhuvaneswari Bhaduri's suicide is an unemphatic, ad hoc, subaltern rewriting of the social text of *sati*-suicide as much as the hegemonic account of the blazing, fighting, familial Durga. The emergent dissenting possibilities of that hegemonic account of the fighting mother are well documented and popularly well remembered through the discourse of the male leaders and participants in the independence movement. The subaltern as female cannot be heard or read.

I know of Bhuvaneswari's life and death through family connections. Before investigating them more thoroughly, I asked a Bengali woman, a philosopher and Sanskritist whose early intellectual production is almost identical to mine, to start the process. Two responses: (a) Why, when her two sisters, Saileswari and Rāseswari, led such full and wonderful lives, are you interested in the hapless Bhuvaneswari? (b) I asked her nieces. It appears that it was a case of illicit love.

I have attempted to use and go beyond Derridean deconstruction, which I do not celebrate as feminism as such. However, in the context of the problematic I have addressed, I find his morphology much more painstaking and useful than Foucault's and Deleuze's immediate, substantive involvement with more 'political' issues – the latter's invitation to 'become woman' – which can make their influence more dangerous for the US academic as enthusiastic radical. Derrida marks radical critique with the danger of appropriating the other by assimilation. He reads catachresis at the origin. He calls for a rewriting of the utopian structural impulse as 'rendering delirious that interior voice that is the voice of the other in us'. I must here acknowledge a long-term usefulness in Jacques Derrida which I seem no longer to find in the authors of *The History of Sexuality* and *Mille Plateaux*.[89]

The subaltern cannot speak. There is no virtue in global laundry lists with 'woman' as a pious item. Representation has not withered away. The female intellectual as intellectual has a circumscribed task which she must not disown with a flourish.

Notes

1. Michel Foucault, *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected essays and interviews*, trans. Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon, Cornell University Press: Ithaca, NY, 1977, pp. 205–17 (hereafter cited as *FD*). I have modified the English version of this, as of other English translations, where faithfulness to the original seemed to demand it.

It is important to note that the greatest 'influence' of Western European intellectuals upon US professors and students happens through collections of essays rather than long books in translation. And, in those collections, it is understandably the more topical pieces that gain a greater currency. (Derrida's 'Structure, sign and play' is a case in point.) From the perspective of theoretical production and ideological reproduction, therefore, the conversation under consideration has not necessarily been superseded.

2. There is an implicit reference here to the post-1968 wave of Maoism in France. See Michel Foucault, 'On Popular Justice: a discussion with Maoists', in *Power/Knowledge: Selected interviews and other writings 1972–77*, trans. Colin Gordon *et al.*, Pantheon: New York, p. 134 (hereafter cited as *PK*). Explication of the reference strengthens my point by laying bare the mechanics of appropriation. The status of China in this discussion is exemplary. If Foucault persistently clears himself by saying 'I know nothing about China', his interlocutors show toward China what Derrida calls the 'Chinese prejudice'.
3. This is part of a much broader symptom, as Eric Wolf discusses in *Europe and the People without History*, University of California Press: Berkeley, 1982.
4. Walter Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire: A lyric poet in the era of high capitalism*, trans. Harry Zohn, Verso: London, 1983, p. 12.
5. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and schizophrenia*, trans. Richard Hurley *et al.*, Viking Press: New York, 1977, p. 26.
6. The exchange with Jacques-Alain Miller in *PK* ('The Confession of the Flesh') is revealing in this respect.
7. Louis Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster, Monthly Reivew Press: New York, 1971, pp. 132–3.
8. For one example among many see *PK*, p. 98.
9. It is not surprising, then, that Foucault's work, early and late, is supported by too simple a notion of repression. Here the antagonist is Freud, not Marx. 'I have the impression that [the notion of repression] is wholly inadequate to the analysis of the mechanisms and effects of power that is so pervasively used to characterize today' (*PK*, p. 92). The delicacy and subtelty of Freud's suggestion – that under repression the phenomenal identity of affects is indeterminate because something unpleasant can be desired as pleasure, thus radically reinscribing the relationship between desire and 'interest' – seems quite deflated here. For an elaboration of this notion of repression, see Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Johns Hopkins University Press: Baltimore, MD, 1976), pp. 88f. (hereafter cited as *OG*); and Derrida, *Limited inc.: abc*, trans. Samuel Weber, *Glyph*, 2, 1977, p. 215.
10. Althusser's version of this particular situation may be too schematic, but it nevertheless seems more careful in its program than the argument under study. 'Class *instinct*,' Althusser writes, 'is subjective and spontaneous. Class *position* is objective and rational. To arrive at proletarian class positions, the class instinct of proletarians only needs to be *educated*; the class instinct of the petty bourgeoisie, *and hence of intellectuals*, has, on the contrary, to be *revolutionized*' (*op. cit.*, p. 13).
11. Foucault's subsequent explanation (*PK*, p. 145) of this Deleuzian statement comes closer to Derrida's notion that theory cannot be an exhaustive taxonomy and is always formed by practice.
12. Cf. the surprisingly uncritical notions of representation entertained in *PK*, pp. 141, 188. My remarks concluding this paragraph, criticizing intellectuals' representations of subaltern groups, should be rigorously distinguished from a coalition politics that takes into account its framing within socialized capital and unites people not because they are

oppressed but because they are exploited. This model works best within a parliamentary democracy, where representation is not only not banished but elaborately staged.

13. Karl Marx, *Surveys from Exile*, trans. David Fernbach, Vintage Books: New York, 1974, p. 239.
14. *idem*, *Capital: A critique of political economy*, vol. 1, trans. Ben Fowkes, Vintage Books: New York, 1977, p. 254.
15. *ibid.*, p. 302.
16. See the excellent short definition and discussion of common sense in Errol Lawrence, 'Just plain common sense: the "roots" of racism', in Hazel V. Carby, *The Empire Strikes Back: Race and racism in 70s Britain*, Hutchinson: London, 1982, p. 48.
17. 'Use value' in Marx can be shown to be a 'theoretical fiction' – as much of a potential oxymoron as 'natural exchange'. I have attempted to develop this in 'Scattered speculations on the question of value', a manuscript under consideration by *Diacritics*.
18. Derrida's 'Linguistic circle of Geneva', especially pp. 143f., can provide a method for assessing the irreducible place of the family in Marx's morphology of class formation. In *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass, University of Chicago Press: Chicago, IL, 1982.
19. Marx, *Capital*, 1, p. 128.
20. I am aware that the relationship between Marxism and neo-Kantianism is a politically fraught one. I do not myself see how a continuous line can be established between Marx's own texts and the Kantian ethical moment. It does seem to me, however, that Marx's questioning of the individual as agent of history should be read in the context of the breaking up of the individual subject inaugurated by Kant's critique of Descartes.
21. Karl Marx, *Grundrisse: Foundations of the critique of political economy*, trans. Martin Nicolaus, Viking Press: New York, 1973, pp. 162–3.
22. Edward W. Said, *The World, The Text, The Critic*, Harvard University Press: Cambridge, MA, 1983, p. 243.
23. Paul Bové, 'Intellectuals at war: Michel Foucault and the analysis of power', *Sub-Stance*, 36/37, 1983, p. 44.
24. Carby *et al.*, *op. cit.*, p. 34.
25. This argument is developed further in Spivak, 'Scattered speculations'. Once again, the *Anti-Oedipus* did not ignore the economic text, although the treatment was perhaps too allegorical. In this respect, the move from schizo- to rhyzo-analysis in *Mille plateaux*, Seuil: Paris, 1980, has not been salutary.
26. See Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: A history of insanity in the age of reason*, trans. Richard Howard, Pantheon Books: New York, 1965, pp. 251, 262, 269.
27. Although I consider Fredric Jameson's *Political Unconscious: Narrative as a socially symbolic act*, Cornell University Press: New York, 1981, to be a text of great critical weight, or perhaps *because* I do so, I would like my program here to be distinguished from one of restoring the relics of a privileged narrative: 'It is in detecting the traces of that uninterrupted narrative, in restoring to the surface of the text the repressed and buried reality of this fundamental history, that the doctrine of a political unconscious finds its function and its necessity' (p. 20).
28. Among many available books, I cite Bruse Tiebout McCully, *English Education and the Origins of Indian Nationalism*, Columbia University Press: New York, 1940.
29. Thomas Babington Macaulay, *Speeches by Lord Macaulay: With his minute on Indian education*, ed. G.M. Young, Oxford University Press, AMS Edition: Oxford, 1979, p. 359.

30. Keith, one of the compilers of the *Vedic Index*, author of *Sanskrit Drama in Its Origin, Development, Theory, and Practice*, and the learned editor of the *Krsnayajurveda* for Harvard University Press, was also the editor of four volumes of *Selected Speeches and Documents of British Colonial Policy* (1763 to 1937), of *International Affairs* (1918 to 1937), and of the *British Dominions* (1918 to 1931). He wrote books on the sovereignty of British dominions and on the theory of state succession, with special reference to English and colonial law.
31. Mahamahopadhyaya Haraprasad Shastri, *A Descriptive Catalogue of Sanskrit Manuscripts in the Government Collection under the Care of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Society of Bengal: Calcutta, 1925, vol. 3, p. viii.
32. Dinesachandra Sena, *Brhat Banga*, Calcutta University Press: Calcutta, 1925, vol. 1. p. 6.
33. Edward Thompson, *Suttee: A historical and philosophical enquiry into the Hindu rite of widow burning*, George Allen & Unwin: London, 1928, pp. 130, 47.
34. Holograph letter (from G. A. Jacob to an unnamed correspondent) attached to inside cover of the Sterling Memorial Library (Yale University) copy of Colonel G. A. Jacob (ed.) *Mahanarayana-Upanishad of the Atharva-Veda with the Dipika of Narayana*, The Government Central Books Department: Bombay, 1888, italics mine. The dark invocation of the dangers of this learning by way of anonymous aberrants consolidates the asymmetry.
35. I have discussed this issue in greater detail with reference to Julia Kristeva's *About Chinese Women*, trans. Anita Barrows, Marion Boyars: London, 1977, in 'French feminism in an international frame', *Yale French Studies*, 62, 1981.
36. Antonio Gramsci, 'Some aspects of the Southern question', *Selections from Political Writing: 1921–1926*, trans. Quintin Hoare, International Publishers : New York, 1978. I am using 'allegory of reading' in the sense developed by Paul de Man, *Allegories of Reading: Figural language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke, and Proust*, Yale University Press: New Haven, CT, 1979.
37. Their publications are: Ranajit Guha (ed.), *Subaltern Studies I: Writing on South Asian history and society*, Oxford University Press: New Delhi, 1982. Ranajit Guha (ed.) *Subaltern Studies II: Writings on South Asian History and Society*, Oxford University Press: New Delhi, 1983; and Ranajit Guha, *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India*, Oxford University Press: New Delhi, 1983.
38. Edward W. Said, 'Permission to narrate', *London Review of Books*, 16 February 1984.
39. Guha, *Studies*, I, p. 1.
40. *ibid.*, p. 4.
41. Jacques Derrida, 'The double session', in *Dissemination*, trans. Barbara Johnson, University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 1981.
42. Guha, *Studies*, I, p. 8 (all but the first set of italics are the author's).
43. Ajit K. Chaudhury, 'New wave social science', *Frontier*, 16–24, 28 January, 1984, p. 10 (italics are mine).
44. *ibid.*
45. Pierre Macherey, *A Theory of Literary Production*, trans. Geoffrey Wall, Routledge: London, 1978, p. 87.
46. I have discussed this issue in 'Displacement and the discourse of woman', in Mark Krupnick (ed.) *Displacement: Derrida and after*, Indiana University Press: Bloomington, IN, 1983, and in 'Love me, love my ombre, elle: Derrida's 'La carte postale', *Diacritics*, 14, 4, 1984, pp. 19–36.

47. This violence in the general sense that is the possibility of an episteme is what Derrida calls 'writing' in the general sense. The relationship between writing in the general sense and writing in the narrow sense (marks upon a surface) cannot be cleanly articulated. The task of grammatology (deconstruction) is to provide a notation upon this shifting relationship. In a certain way, then, the critique of imperialism is deconstruction as such.
48. 'Contracting poverty', *Multinational Monitor*, 4, 8, August 1983, p. 8. This report was contributed by John Cavanagh and Joy Hackel, who work on the International Corporations Project at the Institute for Policy Studies (italics are mine).
49. The mechanics of the invention of the Third World as signifier are susceptible to the type of analysis directed at the constitution of race as a signifier in Carby *et al.*, *op. cit.*
50. Mike Davis, 'The political economy of late-imperial America', *New Left Review*, 143, January–February 1984, p. 9.
51. Bové *op. cit.*, p. 51.
52. Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An introduction*, University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis, 1983, p. 205.
53. Perry Anderson, *In the Tracks of Historical Materialism*, Verso: London, 1983, p. 53.
54. *ibid.*, p. 52.
55. Said, *The World*, p. 183.
56. Jacques Derrida, 'Of an apocalyptic tone recently adapted in philosophy', trans. John P. Leavy, Jr., *Semia*, p. 71.
57. Even in such excellent texts of reportage and analysis as Gail Omvedt's *We Will Smash This Prison! Indian women in struggle*, Zed Press: London, 1980, the assumption that a group of Maharashtrian women in an urban proletarian situation, reacting to a radical white woman who had 'thrown in her lot with the Indian destiny,' is representative of 'Indian women' or touches the question of 'female consciousness in India' is not harmless when taken up within a first-world social formation where the proliferation of communication in an internationally hegemonic language makes alternative accounts and testimonies instantly accessible even to undergraduates.

    Norma Chincilla's observation, made at a panel on 'Third World feminisms: differences in form and content' (UCLA, 8 March, 1983), that antisexist work in the Indian context is not genuinely antisexist but antifeudal, is another case in point. This permits definitions of sexism to emerge only after a society has entered the capitalist mode of production, thus making capitalism and patriarchy conveniently continuous. It also invokes the vexed questions of the role of the '"Asiatic" mode of production' in sustaining the explanatory power of the normative narrativization of history through the account of modes of production, in however sophisticated a manner history is construed.

    The curious role of the proper name 'Asia' in this matter does not remain confined to proof or disproof of the empirical existence of the actual mode (a problem that became the object of intense maneuvering within international communism) but remains crucial even in the work of such theoretical subtlety and importance as Barry Hindess and Paul Hirst's *Pre-Capitalist Modes of Production*, (Routledge: London, 1975) and Fredric Jameson's *Political Unconscious*. Especially in Jameson, where the morphology of modes of production is rescued from all suspicion of historical determinism and anchored to a poststructuralist theory of the subject, the 'Asiatic' mode of production, in its guise of 'oriental despotism' as the concomitant state formation, still serves. It also plays a significant role in the transmogrified mode of production narrative in Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus*, in the Soviet debate, at a far remove, indeed, from these contemporary theoretical projects, the doctrinal sufficiency of the 'Asiatic' mode of production was most often doubted by producing for it various versions and nomenclatures of feudal, slave and communal modes of production. (The debate is presented in detail in Stephen F. Dunn, *The Fall and Rise of the Asiatic Mode of Production*, Routledge: London 1982.) It would be interesting to relate this to the repression of the imperialist 'moment' in most debates over the transition from feudalism to capitalism that have long exercised the Western Left. What is more important here is that an observation such as Chinchilla's represents a widespread hierarchization within third-world *feminism* (rather than Western Marxism), which situates it within the long-standing traffic with the imperialist concept-metaphor 'Asia'.

    I should add that I have not yet read Madhu Kishwar and Ruth Vanita (eds.), *In Search of Answers: Indian women's voices from Manushi*, Zed Press: London, 1984.
58. Jonathan Culler, *On Deconstruction: Theory and criticism after structuralism*, Cornell University Press: Ithaca, NY, 1982, p. 48.
59. Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, 'Placing women's history in history', *New Left Review*, 133, May–June 1982, p. 21.
60. I have attempted to develop this idea in a somewhat autobiographical way in 'Finding feminist readings: Dante–Yeats', in Ira Konigsberg (ed.), *American Criticism in the Postructuralist Age*, University of Michigan Press: Ann Arbor, MI, 1981.
61. Sarah Kofman, *L'Énigme de la femme: La Femme dans les textes de Freud*, Galilée: Paris, 1980.
62. Sigmund Freud. '"A child is being beaten": a contribution to the study of the origin of sexual perversions', *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. James Strachey *et al.*, Hogarth Press: London, vol. 17, 1955.
63. *idem*, '"Wild" psycho-analysis', *Standard Edition*, vol. 11.
64. *idem*, '"A child is being beaten"', p. 188.
65. For a brilliant account of how the 'reality' of widow-sacrifice was constituted or 'textualized' during the colonial period, see Lata Mani, 'The production of colonial discourse: sati in early nineteenth-century Bengal' (master's thesis, University of California at Santa Cruz, 1983). I profited from discussion with Ms Mani at the inception of this project.
66. J. D. M. Derrett, *Hindu Law Past and Present: Being an account of the controversy which preceded the enactment of the Hindu code, and text of the code as enacted, and some comments thereon*, A. Mukherjee & Co: Calcutta, 1957, p. 46.
67. Ashis Nandy, 'Sati: a nineteenth-century tale of women, violence and protest', in V. C. Joshi (ed.), *Rammohun Roy and the Process of Modernization in India*, Vikas Publishing House: New Delhi, 1975, p. 68.
68. The following account leans heavily on Pandurang Varman Kane, *History of Dharmasastra*, Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute: Poona, 1963 (hereafter cited as *HD*, with volume, part and page numbers).
69. Upendra Thakur, *The History of Suicide in India: An introduction*, Munshi Ram Manohan Lal: New Delhi, 1963, p. 9, has a useful list of Sanskrit primary sources on sacred places. This laboriously decent book betrays all the signs of the schizophrenia of the colonial subject, such as bourgeois nationalism, patriarchal communalism and an 'enlightened reasonableness'.
70. Nandy, *op. cit.*
71. Jean-François Lyotard, *Le Différend*, Minuit: Paris, 1984.
72. *HD*, II.2, p. 633. There are suggestions that this 'prescribed penance' was far exceeded by social practice. In this passage below, published in 1938, notice the Hindu patristic

assumptions about the freedom of female will at work in phrases like 'courage' and 'strength of character'. The unexamined presuppositions of the passage might be that the complete objectification of the widow-concubine was just punishment for abdication of the right to courage, signifying subject status. 'Some widows, however, had not the courage to go through the fiery ordeal; nor had they sufficient strength of mind and character to live up to the high ascetic ideal prescribed for them [*brahmacarya*]. It is sad to record that they were driven to lead the life of a concubine or *avarudda stri* [incarcerated wife].' A. S. Altekar, *The Position of Women in Hindu Civilization: From prehistoric times to the present day*, Motilal Banarsidass: New Delhi, 1938, p. 156.

73. Quoted in Sena. *op. cit.*, 2, pp. 913–14.
74. Thompson, *op. cit.*, p. 132.
75. Here, as well as for the Brahman debate over *sati*, see Mani, *op. cit.*, pp. 71f.
76. We are speaking here of the regulative norms of Brahmanism, rather than 'things as they were'. See Robert Lingat, *The Classical Law of India*, trans. J. D. M. Derrett, University of California Press: Berkeley, 1973, p. 46.
77. Both the vestigial possibility of widow remarriage in ancient India and the legal institution of widow remarriage in 1856 are transactions among men. Widow remarriage is very much an exception, perhaps because it left the program of subject-formation untouched. In all the 'lore' of widow remarriage, it is the father and the husband who are applauded for their reformist courage and selflessness.
78. Sir Monier Monier-Williams, *Sanskrit–English Dictionary*, Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1899, p. 552. Historians are often impatient if modernists seem to be attempting to import 'feministic' judgments into ancient patriarchies. The real question is, of course, why structures of patriarchal domination should be unquestioningly recorded. Historical sanctions for collective action toward social justice can only be developed if people outside of the discipline question standards of 'objectivity' preserved as such by the hegemonic tradition. It does not seem inappropriate to notice that so 'objective' an instrument as a dictionary can use the deeply sexist-partisan explanatory expression: 'raise up issue to a deceased husband'!
79. Sunderlal T. Desai, *Mulla: Principles of Hindu law*, N. M. Tripathi: Bombay, 1982, p. 184.
80. I am grateful to Professor Alison Finley of Trinity College (Hartford, CT) for discussing the passage with me. Professor Finley is an expert on the *Rg-Veda*. I hasten to add that she would find my readings as irresponsibly 'literary-critical' as the ancient historian would find it 'modernist' (see note 79).
81. Martin Heidegger. *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, trans. Ralph Manheim, Doubleday Anchor: New York, 1961, p. 58.
82. Thompson, *op. cit.*, p. 37.
83. *ibid.*, p. 15. For the status of the proper name as 'mark', see Derrida, 'Taking chances'.
84. Thomspon, *op. cit.*, p. 137.
85. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 1, trans. Robert Hurley, Vintage Books: New York, 1980, p. 4.
86. The fact that the word was also used as a form of address for a well-born woman ('lady') complicates matters.
87. It should be remembered that this account does not exhaust her many manifestations within the pantheon.
88. A position against nostalgia as a basis of counterhegemonic ideological production does not endorse its negative use. Within the complexity of contemporary political economy, it would, for example, be highly questionable to urge that the current Indian working-class crime of burning brides who bring insufficient dowries and of subsequently disguising the murder as suicide is either a *use* or *abuse* of the tradition of *sati*-suicide. The most that can be claimed is that it is a displacement on a chain of semiosis with the female subject as signifier, which would lead us back into the narrative we have been unraveling. Clearly, one must work to stop the crime of bride-burning *in every way*. If, however, that work is accomplished by unexamined nostalgia or its opposite, it will assist actively in the substitution of race/ethnos or sheer genitalism as a signifer in the place of the female subject.

89. I had not read Peter Dews. 'Power and subjectivity in Foucault', *New Left Review*, 144, 1984, until I finished this essay. I look forward to his book on the same topic [Peter Dews, *The Logics of Disintegration: Post-structuralist thought and the claims of critical theory*, Verso: London, 1987]. There are many points in common between his critique and mine. However, as far as I can tell from the brief essay, he writes from a perspective uncritical of critical theory and the intersubjective norm that can all too easily exchange 'individual' or 'subject' in its situating of the 'epistemic subject'. Dews's reading of the connection between 'Marxist tradition' and the 'autonomous subject' is not mine. Further, his account of 'the *impasse* of the second phase of poststructuralism as a whole' is vitiated by his nonconsideration of Derrida, who has been against the privileging of language from his earliest work, the 'Introduction' in Edmund Husserl, *The Origin of Geometry*, trans. John Leavy, Nicholas Hays: Stony Brook, NY, 1978. What sets his excellent analysis quite apart from my concerns is, of course, that the Subject within whose History he places Foucault's work is the Subject of the European tradition (pp. 87–94).

in: Guha, Ranajit / Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. Selected Subaltern Studies. Oxford et al.: Oxford University Press, 1988.

Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography

GAYATRI CHAKRAVORTY SPIVAK

Change and Crisis

The work of the Subaltern Studies group offers a theory of change. The insertion of India into colonialism is generally defined as a change from semi-feudalism into capitalist subjection. Such a definition theorizes the change within the great narrative of the modes of production and, by uneasy implication, within the narrative of the transition from feudalism to capitalism. Concurrently, this change is seen as the inauguration of politicization for the colonized. The colonial subject is seen as emerging from those parts of the indigenous élite which come to be loosely described as 'bourgeois nationalist'. The Subaltern Studies group seems to me to be revising this general definition and its theorization by proposing at least two things: first, that the moment(s) of change be pluralized and plotted as confrontations rather than transition (they would thus be seen in relation to histories of domination and exploitation rather than within the great modes-of-production narrative) and, secondly, that such changes are signalled or marked by a functional change in sign-systems. The most important functional change is from the religious to the militant. There are, however, many other functional changes in sign-systems indicated in these collections: from crime to insurgency, from bondsman to worker, and so on.

The most significant outcome of this revision or shift in perspective is that the agency of change is located in the insurgent or the 'subaltern'.

A functional change in a sign system is a violent event. Even when it is perceived as 'gradual', or 'failed', or yet 'reversing itself', the change itself can only be operated by the force of a crisis. Yet, if the space for a change (necessarily also an addition) had not been there in the prior function of the sign-system, the crisis could not have made the change happen. The change in signification-function supplements the previous function.[1] The Subaltern Studies collective scrupulously annotates this double movement.

They generally perceive their task as making a theory of consciousness or culture rather than specifically a theory of change. It is because of this, I think, that the force of crisis, *although never far from their argument*, is not systematically emphasized in their work, and sometimes disarmingly alluded to as 'impingement', 'combination', 'getting caught up in a general wave', 'circumstances for unification', 'reasons for change', 'ambiguity', 'unease', 'transit', 'bringing into focus'; even as it is also described as 'switch', 'catching fire and, pervasively, as 'turning upside down'—all critical concept-metaphors that would indicate force.[2] Indeed, a general sobriety of tone will not allow them to emphasize sufficiently that they are themselves bringing hegemonic historiography to crisis. This leads them to describe the clandestine operation of supplementarity as the inexorable speculative logic of the dialectic. In this they seem to me to do themselves a disservice, for, as self-professed dialecticians, they open themselves to older debates between spontaneity and consciousness or structure and history. Their actual practice, which, I will argue, is closer to deconstruction, would put these oppositions into question. A theory of change as the site of the displacement of function between sign-systems—which is what they oblige me to read in them—is a theory of reading in the strongest possible general sense. The site of displacement of

[1] For crisis, see Paul de Man, *Blindness and Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism* (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1983), p. 8. For supplement, see Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, tr. Alan Bass (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1982), p. 289. All translations modified when necessary.

[2] Ranajit Guha, ed., *Subaltern Studies I: Writings on South Asian History and Society* (Delhi: Oxford Univ. Press, 1981), p. 83, 86, 186. The three volumes of *Subaltern Studies* are hereafter cited in my text as 1, 2, and 3 with page references following. 2.65, 115; 3.21, 71. Also Ranajit Guha, *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India* (Delhi: Oxford Univ. Press, 1983), pp. 88, 226, 30, 318; hereafter cited in my text as *EAP*, with page references following.

the function of signs is the name of reading as active transaction between past and future. This transactional reading as (the possibility of) action, even at its most dynamic, is perhaps what Antonio Gramsci meant by 'elaboration', *e-laborare*, working out.[3] If seen in this way, the work of the Subaltern Studies group repeatedly makes it possible for us to grasp that the concept-metaphor of the 'social text' is not the reduction of real life to the page of a book. My theoretical intervention is a modest attempt to remind us of this.

It can be advanced that their work presupposes that the entire socius, at least in so far as it is the object of their study, is what Nietzsche would call a *fortgesetzte Zeichenkette*—a 'continuous sign-chain'. The possibility of action lies in the dynamics of the disruption of this object, the breaking and relinking of the chain. This line of argument does not set consciousness over against the socius, but sees it as itself also constituted as and on a semiotic chain. It is thus an instrument of study which participates in the nature of the object of study. To see consciousness thus is to place the historian in a position of irreducible compromise. I believe it is because of this double bind that it is possible to unpack the aphoristic remark of Nietzsche's that follows the image of the sign-chain with reference to this double bind: 'All concepts in which an entire process is comprehended [*sich zusammenfasst*] withdraws itself from [*sich entzieht*] definition; only that which has no history is definable.'[4] At any rate these presuppositions are not, strictly speaking, consonant with a desire to find a consciousness (here of the subaltern) in a positive and pure state. My essay will also try to develop this discrepancy.

Cognitive Failure is Irreducible

All of the accounts of attempted discursive displacements provided by the group are accounts of failures. For the subaltern displacements, the reason for failure most often given is the much greater scope, organization, and strength of the colonial authorities. In the case of the nationalist movement for independence it is clearly pointed out that the bourgeoisie's 'interested' refusal to recognize the importance of, and to ally themselves with, a politicized peasan-

[3] See Edward W. Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1983), pp. 170-2 for a discussion of "elaboration" in Gramsci.

[4] Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo*, tr. Walter J. Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1969), pp. 77, 80.

try accounted for the failure of the discursive displacement that operated the peasants' politicization. Yet there is also an incipient evolutionism here which, trying perhaps to avoid a vulgar Marxist glorification of the peasant, lays the blame on 'the existing level of peasant consciousness' for the fact 'that peasant solidarity and peasant power were seldom sufficient or sustained enough' (3.52, 3.115). This contradicts the general politics of the group—which sees the élite's hegemonic access to 'consciousness' as an interpretable construct.

To examine this contradiction we must first note that discursive displacements wittingly or unwittingly operated from above are also failures. Chakrabarty, Das, and Chandra chart the failures of trade union socialism, functionalist entrepreneurialism and agrarian communism to displace a semi-feudal into a 'modern' discourse. Chatterjee shows how Gandhi's initial dynamic transaction with the discursive field of the Hindu religious Imaginary had to be travestied in order that his ethics of resistance could be displaced into the sign system of bourgeois politics.[5] My point is, simply, that failures or partial successes in discursive-field displacement do not necessarily relate, following a progressivist scale, to the 'level of consciousness' of a class.

Elite historiography itself, on the right or the left, nationalist or colonialist, is by the analysis of this group, shown to be constituted by cognitive failures. Indeed, if the theory of change as the site of the displacement of a discursive field is their most pervasive argument, this comes a close second. Here too no distinction is made, quite properly in my estimation, between witting and unwitting lapses. It is correctly suggested that the sophisticated vocabulary of much contemporary historiography *successfully* shields this cognitive *failure* and that this success-in-failure, this sanctioned ignorance, is inseparable from colonial domination.

Within this tracking of successful cognitive failure, the most interesting manoeuvre is to examine the production of 'evidence', the

[5] Chakrabarty, "Conditions for Knowledge," (in this volume), Arvind N. Das, "Agrarian Change from Above and Below: Bihar 1947-78," 2; N.K. Chandra, "Agricultural Workers in Burdwan," 2. I am using the word "Imaginary" loosely in the sense given to it by Jacques Lacan. For a short definition, see Jean Laplanche and J.B. Pontalis, *The Language of Psycho-Analysis*, tr. David Nicholson-Smith (New York: Norton, 1973), p. 210.

cornerstone of the edifice of historical truth (3.231–70), and to anatomize the mechanics of the construction of the self-consolidating Other—the insurgent and insurgency. In this part of the project, Guha seems to radicalize the historiography of colonial India through a combination of Soviet and Barthesian semiotic analysis. The discursivity (cognitive failure) of disinterested (successful and therefore true) historiography is revealed. The Muse of History and counter-insurgency are shown to be complicit (2.1–42 & *EAP*).

I am suggesting, of course, that an implicitly evolutionist or progressivist set of presuppositions measuring failure or success in terms of level of consciousness is too simple for the practice of the collective. If we look at the varieties of activity treated by them, subaltern, insurgent, nationalist, colonialist, historiographic, it is a general field of failures that we see. In fact the work of the collective is making the distinction between success and failure indeterminate—for the most successful historical record is disclosed by them to be crosshatched by cognitive failure. Since in the case of the subaltern they are considering consciousness (however 'negative') and culture (however determining); and in the case of the élite, culture and manipulation—the subaltern is also operating in the theatre of 'cognition'. At any rate, where does cognition begin and end? I will consider later the possible problems with such compartmentalized views of consciousness. Here suffice it to say that by the ordinary standards of coherence, and in terms of their own methodology, the possibility of failure cannot be derived from any criterion of success unless the latter is a theoretical fiction.[6]

A word on 'alienation', as used by members of this group, to mean 'a failure of *self*-cognition', is in order here.

> To overestimate . . . [the] lucidity or depth [of the subaltern consciousness] will be . . . ill-advised . . . This characteristic expression of a negative consciousness on the insurgent's part matched its other symptom, that is, his self-alienation. He was still committed to envisaging the coming war on the Raj as the project of a will independent of himself and his own role in it as no more than instrumental . . . [In their own] parwana

[6] As always my preferred example of a theoretical fiction remains the primary process in Freud. *The Complete Psychological Works*, tr. James Strachey et al. (London: Hogarth Press, 1961), vol. 5, p. 598f.

> [proclamation] . . . the authors did not recognize even their own voice, but heard only that of God (*EAP* 28).

To be sure, within his progressivist narrative taxonomy Hegel describes the march of history in terms of a diminution in the self-alienation of the so-called world historical agent. Kojève and his followers in France distinguished between this Hegel, the narrator of (a) history, and the speculative Hegel who outlined a system of logic.[7] Within the latter, alienation is irreducible in any act of consciousness. Unless the subject separates from itself to grasp the object there is no cognition, indeed no thinking, no judgment. Being and Absolute Idea, the first and last sections of *The Science of Logic*, two accounts of simple unalienability, are not accessible to individual or personal consciousness. From the strictly philosophical point of view, then, (a) élite historiography (b) the bourgeois nationalist account, as well as (c) re-inscription by the Subaltern Studies group, are operated by alienation—*Verfremdung* as well as *Entäußerung*. Derrida's reading of Hegel as in *Glas* would question the argument for the inalienability even of Absolute Necessity and Absolute Knowledge, but here we need not move that far. We must ask the opposite question. How shall we deal with Marx's suggestion that man must strive toward self-determination and unalienated practice and Gramsci's that 'the lower classes' must 'achieve self-awareness via a series of negations?'[8]

Formulating an answer to this question might lead to far-reaching practical effects if the risks of the irreducibility of cognitive 'failure' and of 'alienation' are accepted. The group's own practice can then be graphed on this grid of 'failures', with the concept of failure generalized and re-inscribed as I have suggested above. This subverts the inevitable vanguardism of a theory that otherwise criticizes the vanguardism of theory. This is why I hope to align them with deconstruction: 'Operating necessarily from the inside, borrowing all the strategic and economic resources of subversion from the old structure, borrowing them structurally, that is to say without being

[7] For an excellent discussion of this, see Judith Butler, "Geist ist Zeit: French Interpretations of Hegel's Absolute", *Berkshire Review* 20 (Summer, 1985), p. 66-80.
[8] Antonio Gramsci, cited in *EAP* 28.

able to isolate their elements and atoms, the enterprise of deconstruction always in a certain way falls prey to its own work.'[9]

This is the greatest gift of deconstruction: to question the authority of the investigating subject without paralysing him, persistently transforming conditions of impossibility into possibility.[10] Let us pursue the implications of this in our particular case.

The group, as we have seen, tracks failures in attempts to displace discursive fields. A deconstructive approach would bring into focus the fact that they are themselves engaged in an attempt at displacing discursive fields, that they themselves 'fail' (in the general sense) for reasons as 'historical' as those they adduce for the heterogeneous agents they study; and would attempt to forge a practice that would take this into account. Otherwise, refusing to acknowledge the implications of their own line of work because that would be politically incorrect, they would, willy-nilly, 'insidiously objectify' the subaltern (2.262), control him through knowledge even as they restore versions of causality and self-determination to him (2.30), become complicit, in their desire for totality (and therefore totalization) (3.317), with a 'law [that] assign[s] a[n] undifferentiated [proper] name' (*EAP* 159) to 'the subaltern as such'.

Subaltern Studies and the European Critique of Humanism

A 'religious idiom gave the hillmen [of the Eastern Ghats] a framework, within which to conceptualize their predicament and to seek solutions to it' (1.140–1). The idiom of recent European theories of interpretation seem to offer this collective a similar framework. As they work their displacement, they are, as I suggest above, expanding the semantic range of 'reading' and 'text', words that are, incidentally, not prominent in their vocabularly. It is appropriately marked by attempts to find local parallels, as in the concept of *atideśa* in Guha's work, and to insert the local into the general, as in the pervasive invocation of English, French, German, and occasionally Italian insurgency in *EAP*, and in the invocation of the

[9] Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, tr. Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1976), p. 24.
[10] Since the historian is gender-specific in the work of the collective (see pp. 33-43), I have consistently used "he".

anthropology of Africa in Partha Chatterjee's work on modes of power.

It is the force of a crisis that operates functional displacements in discursive fields. In my reading of the volumes of *Subaltern Studies*, this critical force or bringing-to-crisis can be located in the energy of the questioning of humanism in the post-Nietzschean sector of Western European structuralism, for our group Michel Foucault, Roland Barthes, and a certain Lévi-Strauss. These structuralists question humanism by exposing its hero—the sovereign subject as author, the subject of authority, legitimacy, and power. There is an affinity between the imperialist subject and the subject of humanism. Yet the crisis of anti-humanism—*like all crises*—does not move our collective 'fully'. The rupture shows itself to be also a repetition. They fall back upon notions of consciousness-as-agent, totality, and upon a culturalism, that are discontinuous with the critique of humanism. They seem unaware of the historico-political provenance of their various Western 'collaborators'. Vygotsky and Lotman, Victor Turner and Lévi-Strauss, Evans-Pritchard and Hindess and Hirst can, for them, fuel the same fire as Foucault and Barthes. Since one cannot accuse this group of the eclecticism of the supermarket consumer, one must see in their practice a repetition of as well as a rupture from the colonial predicament: the transactional quality of inter-conflicting metropolitan sources often eludes the (post)colonial intellectual.

The Problem of Subaltern Consciousness

To investigate, discover, and establish a subaltern or peasant consciousness seems at first to be a positivistic project—a project which assumes that, if properly prosecuted, it will lead to firm ground, to some *thing* that can be disclosed. This is all the more significant in the case of recovering a consciousness because, within the post-Enlightenment tradition that the collective participates in as interventionist historians, consciousness is *the* ground that makes all disclosures possible.

And, indeed, the group is susceptible to this interpretation. There *is* a certain univocal reflection or signification-theory presupposed here by which 'peasant action in famine as in rebellion' is taken to 'reflect . . a single underlying consciousness' (3.112); and 'solidarity' is seen as a 'signifier of consciousness', where signification is

representation, figuration, propriation (stringent de-limitation within a unique and self-adequate outline), and imprinting (*EAP* 169).

Yet even as 'consciousness' is thus entertained as an indivisible self-proximate signified or ground, there is a force at work here which would contradict such a metaphysics. For consciousness here is not consciousness-in-general, but a historicized political species thereof, subaltern consciousness. In a passage where 'transcendental' is used as 'transcending, because informing a hegemonic narrative' rather than in a strictly philosophical sense, Guha puts this admirably: 'Once a peasant rebellion has been assimilated to the career of the Raj, the Nation or the people [the hegemonic narratives], it becomes easy for the historian to abdicate the responsibility he has of exploring and describing the consciousness specific to that rebellion and be content to ascribe to it a transcendental consciousness . . . representing them merely as instruments of some other will' (2.38).

Because of this bestowal of a historical specificity to consciousness in the narrow sense, even as it implicitly operates as a metaphysical methodological presupposition in the general sense, there is always a counterpointing suggestion in the work of the group that subaltern consciousness is subject to the cathexis of the élite, that it is never fully recoverable, that it is always askew from its received signifiers, indeed that it is effaced even as it is disclosed, that it is irreducibly discursive. It is, for example, chiefly a matter of 'negative consciousness' in the more theoretical of these essays. Although 'negative consciousness' is conceived of here as an historical stage peculiar to the subaltern, there is no logical reason why, given that the argument is inevitably historicized, this 'negative', rather than the grounding positive view of consciousness, should not be generalized as the group's methodological presupposition. One view of 'negative consciousness', for instance, sees it as the consciousness not of the being of the subaltern, but of that of the oppressors (*EAP* chap. 2, 3.183). Here, in vague Hegelian limnings, is the anti-humanist and anti-positivist position that it is always the desire for/of (the power of the Other) that produces an image of the self. If this is generalized, as in my reading of the 'cognitive failure' argument, it is the subaltern who provides the model for a general theory of consciousness. And yet, since the 'subaltern' cannot

appear without the thought of the 'élite', the generalization is by definition incomplete—in philosophical language 'non-originary'.

Another note in the counterpoint deconstructing the metaphysics of consciousness in these texts is provided by the reiterated fact that it is only the texts of counter-insurgency or élite documentation that give us the news of the consciousness of the subaltern. 'The peasants' view of the struggle will probably never be recovered, and whatever we say about it at this stage must be very tentative' (1.50); 'Given the problems of documenting the consciousness of the jute mill workers, their will to resist and question the authority of their employers can be read only in terms of the sense of crisis it produced among the people in authority' (3.121); 'It should be possible to read the presence of a rebel consciousness as a necessary and pervasive element within that body of evidence' (*EAP* 15). To be sure, it is the vocabulary of 'this stage', 'will to resist', and 'presence'. Yet the language seems also to be straining to acknowledge that the subaltern's view, will, presence, can be no more than a theoretical fiction to entitle the project of reading. It cannot be recovered, 'it will probably never be recovered'. If I shifted to the slightly esoteric register of the language of French post-structuralism, I could put it thus: 'Thought [here the thought of subaltern consciousness] is here for me a perfectly neutral name, the blank part of the text, the necessarily indeterminate index of a future epoch of difference.'[11]

Once again, in the work of this group, what had seemed the historical predicament of the colonial subaltern can be made to become the allegory of the predicament of *all* thought, *all* deliberative consciousness, though the élite profess otherwise. This might seem preposterous at first glance. A double take is in order. I will propose it in closing this section of my paper.

I am progressively inclined, then, to read the retrieval of subaltern consciousness as the charting of what in post-structuralist language would be called the subaltern subject-effect.[12] A subject-effect can be briefly plotted as follows: that which seems to operate as a sub-

[11] Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, p. 93. Since my intention here is simply to offer a moment of transcoding, I have not undertaken to "explain" the Derridean passage.

[12] The most, perhaps too, spectacular deployment of the argument is in Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, tr. Robert Hurley et al. (New York: Viking Press, 1977).

ject may be part of an immense discontinuous network ('text' in the general sense) of strands that may be termed politics, ideology, economics, history, sexuality, language, and so on. (Each of these strands, if they are isolated, can also be seen as woven of many strands.) Different knottings and configurations of these strands, determined by heterogeneous determinations which are themselves dependent upon myriad circumstances, produce the effect of an operating subject. Yet the continuist and homogenist deliberative consciousness symptomatically requires a continuous and homogeneous cause for this effect and thus posits a sovereign and determining subject. This latter is, then, the effect of an effect, and its positing a metalepsis, or the substitution of an effect for a cause. Thus do the texts of counter-insurgency locate, in the following description, a 'will' as the sovereign cause when it is no more than an effect of the subaltern subject-effect, itself produced by the particular conjunctures called forth by the crises meticulously described in the various *Subaltern Studies*:

> It is of course true that the reports, despatches, minutes, judgements, laws, letters, etc. in which policemen, soldiers, bureaucrats, landlords, usurers and others hostile to insurgency register their sentiments, amount to a representation of their will. But these documents do not get their content from that will alone, for the latter is predicated on another will—that of the insurgent. It should be possible therefore to read the presence of a rebel consciousness as a necessary and pervasive element within that body of evidence (*EAP* 15).

From within but against the grain, elements in their text would warrant a reading of the project to retrieve the subaltern consciousness as the attempt to undo a massive historiographic metalepsis and 'situate' the effect of the subject as subaltern. I would read it, then as a *strategic* use of positivist essentialism in a scrupulously visible political interest. This would put them in line with the Marx who locates fetishization, the ideological determination of the 'concrete', and spins the narrative of the development of the money-form; with the Nietzsche who offers us genealogy in place of historiography, and the Derrida of 'affirmative deconstruction'. This would allow them to use the critical force of anti-humanism, in other words, even as they share its constitutive paradox: that the essentializing moment, the object of their criticism, is irreducible.

The strategy becomes most useful when 'consciousness' is being

used in the narrow sense, as *self*-consciousness. When 'consciousness' is being used in that way, Marx's notion of un-alienated practice or Gramsci's notion of an 'ideologically *coherent*', 'spontaneous philosophy of the multitude' are plausible and powerful.[13] For class-consciousness does not engage the ground-level of consciousness—consciousness in general. 'Class' is not, after all, an inalienable description of a human reality. Class-consciousness on the *descriptive* level is itself a strategic and artificial rallying awareness which, on the *transformative* level, seeks to destroy the mechanics which come to construct the outlines of the very class of which a collective consciousness has been situationally developed. 'Any member of the insurgent community'—Guha spends an entire chapter showing how that collective consciousness of community develops—'who chooses to continue in such subalternity is regarded as hostile towards the inversive process initiated by the struggle and hence as being on the enemy's side' (*EAP* 202). The task of the 'consciousness' of class or collectivity within a social field of exploitation and domination is thus necessarily self-alienating.[14]

It is within the framework of a strategic interest in the self-alienating displacing move of and by a consciousness of collectivity, then, that self-determination and an unalienated self-consciousness can be broached. In the definitions of 'consciousness' offered by the Subaltern Studies group there are plenty of indications that they are in fact concerned with consciousness not in the general, but in this crucial narrow sense.

Subaltern consciousness as emergent *collective* consciousness is one of the main themes of these books. The group places this theory of the emergent collective subaltern consciousness squarely in the context of that tendency within Western Marxism which would refuse class-consciousness to the pre-capitalist subaltern, especially in the theatres of Imperialism. Chakrabarty's analysis of how historically

[13] Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*, tr. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Noel-Smith (New York: International Publishers, 1971), p. 421.

[14] The tradition of the English translations of Marx often obliterates this. Consider, for example, the fate of *Aufhebung* in Karl Marx and Friedrick Engels, "The Manifesto of the Communist Party," *Selected Works* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1951), p. 51 in the light of Hegel's explanation of the term in *The Science of Logic*, tr. A.V. Miller (New York: Humanities Press, 1976), p. 107.

unsound it is simply to reverse the gesture and try to impose a Marxian *working*-class consciousness upon the urban proletariat in a colonial context and, by implication, as Guha shows, upon the rural subaltern, takes its place within this confrontation.

For readers who notice the points of contact between the Subaltern Studies group and critics of humanism such as Barthes and Foucault, the confusion arises because of the use of the word 'consciousness', unavoidably a post-phenomenological and post-psychoanalytic issue with such writers. I am not trying to clear the confusion by revealing through analysis that the Subaltern Studies group is not entertaining 'consciousness' within that configuration at all, but is rather working exclusively with the second-level collective consciousness to be encountered in Marx and the classical Marxist tradition. I am suggesting, rather, that although the group does not wittingly engage with the post-structuralist understanding of 'consciousness', our own transactional reading of them is enhanced if we see them as *strategically* adhering to the essentialist notion of consciousness, that would fall prey to an anti-humanist critique, within a historiographic practice that draws many of its strengths from that very critique.

Historiography as Strategy

Can a strategy be unwitting? Of course not fully so. Consider, however, statements such as the following: '[a] discrepancy . . . is necessarily there at certain stages of the class struggle between the level of its objective articulation and that of the consciousness of its subjects'; or, 'with all their practical involvement in a rebellion the masses could still be tricked by a false consciousness into trusting the magical faculties of warrior heroes . . .'; or yet, 'the peasant rebel of colonial India could do so [learn his very first lesson in power] only by translating it backwards into the semi-feudal language of politics to which he was born' (*EAP* 173, 270, 76). A theory which allows a partial lack of fit in the fabrication of any strategy cannot consider itself immune from its own system. It must remain caught within the possibility of that predicament in its own case. If in translating bits and pieces of discourse theory and the critique of humanism back into an essentialist historiography the historian of subalternity aligns himself to the pattern of conduct of the subaltern himself, it is only a progressivist view, that diagnoses

the subaltern as necessarily inferior, that will see such an alignment to be without interventionist value. Indeed it is in their very insistence upon the subaltern as the subject of history that the group acts out such a translating back, an interventionist strategy that is only partially unwitting.

If it were embraced as a strategy, then the emphasis upon the 'sovereignty, . . . consistency and . . . logic' of 'rebel consciousness' (*EAP* 13) can be seen as 'affirmative deconstruction': knowing that such an emphasis is theoretically non-viable, the historian then breaks his theory in a scrupulously delineated 'political interest'.[15] If, on the other hand, the restoration of the subaltern's subject-position in history is seen by the historian as the establishment of an inalienable and final truth of things, then any emphasis on sovereignty, consistency, and logic will, as I have suggested above, inevitably objectify the subaltern and be caught in the game of knowledge as power. Even if the discursivity of history is seen as a *fortgesetzte Zeichenkette*, a restorative genealogy cannot be undertaken without the strategic blindness that will entangle the genealogist in the chain. It is in this spirit that I read *Subaltern Studies* against its grain and suggest that its own subalternity in claiming a *positive* subject-position for the subaltern might be reinscribed as a strategy for our times.

What good does such a re-inscription do? It acknowledges that the arena of the subaltern's persistent emergence into hegemony must always and by definition remain heterogenous to the efforts of the disciplinary historian. The historian must persist in *his* efforts in this awareness, that the subaltern is necessarily the absolute limit of the place where history is narrativized into logic. It is a hard lesson to learn, but not to learn it is merely to nominate elegant solutions to be correct theoretical practice. When has history ever contradicted that practice norms theory, as subaltern practice norms official historiography in this case? If that assumption, rather than the dissonant thesis of the subaltern's infantility were to inhabit *Subaltern Studies*, then their project would be proper to itself in recognizing that it can never be proper to 'subaltern consciousness'; that

[15] This concept-metaphor of "interest" is orchestrated by Derrida in *Spurs*, tr. Barbara Harlow (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1978) with notions of "affirmative deconstruction", which would acknowledge that no example of deconstruction can match its discourse.

it can never be continuous with the subaltern's situational and uneven entry into political (not merely disciplinary, as in the case of the collective) hegemony as the content of an after-the-fact description. This is the always asymmetrical relationship between the interpretation and transformation of the world which Marx marks in the eleventh thesis on Feuerbach. There the contrast is between the words *haben interpretiert* (present participle—a completed action—of *interpretieren*—the Romance verb which emphasizes the establishment of a meaning that is commensurate with a phenomenon through the metaphor of the fair exchange of prices) and *zu verändern* (infinitive—always open to the future—of the German verb which 'means' strictly speaking, 'to make other'). The latter expression matches *haben interpretiert* neither in its Latinate philosophical weight nor in its signification of propriety and completion, as *transformieren* would have done. Although not an unusual word, it is not the most common word for 'change' in German—*verwandeln*. In the open-ended 'making-other'—*ver-änderung*—of the properly self-identical—adequately *interpretiert*—lies an allegory of the theorist's relationship to his subject-matter. (There is no room here to comment on the richness of 'es kommt darauf an', the syntactical phrase that joins the two parts of the Eleventh Thesis.) It is not only '*bad*' theory but *all* theory that is susceptible to this open-endedness.

Theoretical descriptions cannot produce universals. They can only ever produce provisional generalizations, even as the theorist realizes the crucial importance of their persistent production. Otherwise, because they desire perhaps to claim some unspecified direct hand in subaltern practice, the conclusions to the essays become abrupt, inconclusive, sometimes a series of postponements in some empirical project. One striking example of this foreclosed desire is where Das, in an otherwise brilliant essay, repudiates *formalization* as thwarting for practice, even as he deplores the lack of sufficient *generalization* that might have allowed subaltern practice to flourish (2.227).

The radical intellectual in the West is either caught in a deliberate choice of subalternity, granting to the oppressed either that very expressive subjectivity which s/he criticizes or, instead, a total unrepresentability. The logical negation of this position is produced by the discourse of post-modernism, where the 'mass is only the mass

because its social energy has already frozen. It is a cold reservoir, capable of absorbing and neutralizing any hot energy. It resembles those half-dead systems into which more energy is injected than is withdrawn, those paid-out deposits exorbitantly maintained in a state of artificial exploitation.' This negation leads to an emptying of the subject-position: "Not to arrive at the point where one no longer says I, but at the point where it's no longer of any importance whether one says I or not.'[16] Although some of these Western intellectuals express genuine concern about the ravages of contemporary neo-colonialism is their own nation-states, they are not knowledgeable in the history of imperialism, in the epistemic violence that constituted/effaced a subject that was obliged to cathect (occupy in response to a desire) the space of the Imperialists' self-consolidating other. It is almost as if the force generated by their crisis is separated from its appropriate field by a sanctioned ignorance of that history.

It is my contention that, if the Subaltern Studies group saw their own work of subject-restoration as crucially strategic, they would not miss this symptomatic blank in contemporary Western anti-humanism. In his innovative essay on modes of power, Partha Chatterjee quotes Foucault on the eighteenth century and writes:

> Foucault has sought to demonstrate the complexities of this novel regime of power in his studies of the history of mental illness, of clinical practice, of the prison, of sexuality and of the rise of the human sciences. When one looks at regimes of power in the so-called backward countries of the world today, not only does the dominance of the characteristically 'modern' modes of exercise of power seem limited and qualified by the persistence of older modes, but by the fact of their combination in a particular state and formation, it seems to open up at the same time an entirely new range of possibilities for the ruling classes to exercise their domination (3.348–9).

I have written earlier that the force of crisis is not systematically emphasized in the work of the group. The Foucauldian example being considered here, for instance, can be seen as marking a crisis *within* European consciousness. A few months before I had read Chatterjee's essay, I wrote a few sentences uncannily similar in

[16] Jean Baudrillard, *In the Shadow of the Silent Majorities or the End of the Social and Other Essays*, tr. Paul Foss et al. (New York; Semiotext(e), 1983), p. 26: and Deleuze and Guattari, *On the Line*, tr. John Johnston (New York: Semiotext(e), 1983), p. 1.

sentiment upon the very same passage in Foucault. I write, of course, within a workplace engaged in the ideological production of neo-colonialism even through the influence of such thinkers as Foucault. It is not therefore necessarily a mark of extraordinary acumen that what I am calling the crisis in European consciousness is much more strongly marked in my paragraph, which I take the liberty of quoting here. My contention below is that the relationship between First World anti-humanist post-Marxism and the history of imperialism is not merely a question of 'enlarging the range of possibilities', as Chatterjee soberly suggests above.

> Although Foucault is a brilliant thinker of power-in-spacing, the awareness of the topographic reinscription of imperialism does not inform his presuppositions. He is taken in by the restricted version of the West produced by that reinscription and thus helps to consolidate its effects. Notice, for example, the omission of the fact, in the following passage, that the new mechanism of power in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (the extraction of surplus-value without extra-economic coercion is its Marxist description) is secured *by means of* territorial imperialism—the Earth and its products—'elsewhere'. The representation of sovereignty is crucial in those theatres: 'In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, we have the production of an important phenomenon, the emergence, or rather the invention, of a new mechanism of power possessed of highly specific procedural techniques . . . which is also, I believe, absolutely incompatible with the relations of sovereignty . . . '. I am suggesting that to buy a self-contained version of the West is symptomatically to ignore its production by the spacing-timing of the imperialist project. Sometimes it seems as if the very brilliance of Foucault's analysis of the centuries of European imperialism produces a miniature version of that heterogeneous phenomenon: management of space—but by doctors, development of administrations—but in asylums, considerations of the periphery—but in terms of the insane, prisoners, and children. The clinic, the asylum, the prison, the university, seem screen-allegories that foreclose a reading of the broader narratives of imperialism.[17]

Thus the discourse of the unified consciousness of the subaltern *must* inhabit the strategy of these historians, even as the discourse of the micrologized or 'situated' subject must mark that of anti-humanists on the other side of the international division of labour. The two following remarks by Ranajit Guha and Louis Althusser

[17] Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?".

can then be seen as marking not a contradiction but the fracture of a discontinuity of philosophic levels, *as well as* a strategic asymmetry: 'Yet we propose', writes Guha in the eighties, 'to focus on this consciousness as our central theme, because it is not possible to make sense of the experience of insurgency merely as a history of events without a subject' (4.11). Precisely, 'it is not possible'. And Althusser, writing in 1967:

> Undeniably, for it has passed into his works, and *Capital* demonstrates it, Marx owes to Hegel the decisive philosophical category of process. He owes him yet more, that Feuerbach himself did not suspect. He owes him the concept of the process *without subject* . . . . The origin, indispensable to the teleological nature of the process . . . must be *denied* from the start, so that the process of alienation may be a process without subject . . . . Hegel's logic is of the affirmed-denied Origin: first form of a concept that Derrida has introduced into philosophical reflection, the *erasure*.[18]

As Chakrabarty has rightly stated, 'Marx thought that the logic of capital could be best deciphered only in a society where "the notion of human equality has already acquired the fixity of a popular prejudice" ' (2.263). The first lesson of ideology is that a 'popular prejudice' mistakes itself for 'human nature', the original mother-tongue of history. Marxist historiography can be caught within the mother-tongue of a history and a culture that had graduated to bourgeois individualism. As groups such as the Subaltern Studies collective attempt to open up the texts of Marx beyond his European provenance, beyond a homogeneous internationalism, to the persistent recognition of heterogeneity, the very goal of 'forget-[ting] his original [or "rooted"—*die ihm angestammte Sprache*] language while using the new one' must be reinscribed.[19] A repeated acknowledgement of the complicity of the new and the 'original' is now on the agenda. I have tried to indicate this by deconstructing the opposition between the collective and their object of investigation—the subaltern—on the one hand; and by deconstructing the seeming continuity between them and their anti-humanist models on the other.

[18] Althusser, "Sur le rapport de Marx à Hegel" in *Hegel et la pensée moderne*, ed. Jacques d'Hondt (Paris: Presses universitaires, 1970), pp. 108-9.

[19] Karl Marx, "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte", in *Surveys from Exile*, ed. David Fernbach (New York: Vintage Books, 1974), p. 147.

You can only read against the grain if misfits in the text signal the way. (These are sometimes called 'moments of transgression' or 'critical moments'.) I should like to bring the body of my argument to a close by discussing two such moments in the work of this group. First, the discussion of rumour; and, second, the place of woman in their argument.

Rumour

The most extensive discussion of rumour, to be found in *EAP*, is not, strictly speaking, part of the work of the group. I think I am correct, however, in maintaining that Guha's pages make explicit an implicit set of assumptions about the nature and role of subaltern means of communication, such as rumour, in the mobilization of insurgency, present in the work of the entire group. It also points up the contradiction inherent in their general practice, which leans toward post-structuralism, and their espousal of the early semiological Barthes, Lévi-Strauss, Greimas, and taxonomic Soviet structuralists such as Vygotsky, Lotman, and Propp.[20]

One of the enterprises made problematic by the critique of the subject of knowledge identified with post-structuralist anti-humanism is the desire to produce exhaustive taxonomies, 'to assign names by a metalinguistic operation' (2.10). I have already discussed this issue lengthily in another part of my essay. All of the figures listed above would be susceptible to this charge. Here I want to point at their common phonocentrism, the conviction that speech is a direct and immediate representation of voice-consciousness and writing an indirect transcript of speech. Or, as Guha quotes Vygotsky, ' "The speed of oral speech is unfavourable to a complicated process of formulation—it does not leave time for deliberation and choice. Dialogue implies immediate unpremeditated utterance" ' (*EAP* 261).

By this reckoning the history of writing is coincident with the inauguration and development of exploitation. Now there is no reason to question this well-documented story of what one might call writing in the 'narrow' or 'restricted' sense. However, over

[20] In Barthes's case, for example, one would have to take into account his own reputation and rejection of his early positions. See Steven Ungar, *Roland Barthes: the Professor of Desire*, (Lincoln: The Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1983).

against this restricted model of writing one must not set up a model of speech to which is assigned a total self-identity based on a psychological model so crude as to imply that the space of 'premeditation' is confined to the deliberative consciousness, and on empirical 'evidence' so impressionistic as 'the speed of oral speech'.

By contrast, post-structuralist theories of consciousness and language suggest that all possibility of expression, spoken or written, shares a common distancing from a self so that meaning can arise—not only meaning for others but also the meaning of the self to the self. I have advanced this idea in my discussion of 'alienation'. These theories suggest further that the 'self' is itself always production rather than ground, an idea I have broached in my discussion of the 'subject-effect'. If writing is seen in terms of its historical predication, the production of our sense of self as ground would seem to be structured like writing.

> The essential predicates in a minimal determination of the classical concept of writing . . . [are that] a written sign . . . is a mark that remains [*reste*], . . . [that] carries with it a force that breaks with its context, . . . [and that] this force of rupture is tied to the spacing . . . which separates it from other elements of the internal contextual chain . . . Are these three predicates, together with the entire system they entail, limited, as is often believed, strictly to 'written' communication in the narrow sense of the word? Are they not to be found in all language, in spoken language for instance, and ultimately in the totality of 'experience' insofar as it is inseparable from this field of the mark, which is to say, from the network of effacement and of difference, of units of iterability, which are separable from their internal and external context and also from themselves, inasmuch as the very iterability which constituted their identity does not permit them ever to be a unit of self-identity?[21]

For the burden of the extended consideration of how the exigencies of theory forbid an ideological manipulation of *naive* psychologism and empiricism, we should turn to Derrida's 'Signature Event Context', from where the long passage above is taken. By this line of argument it would not only appear that to 'describe speech as the immediate expression of the self' marks the site of a desire that is obliged to overlook the complexity of the production of (a) sense(s) of self. One would, by this, also have to acknowledge that no speech, no 'natural language' (an unwitting oxymoron), not even a 'language' of gesture, can signify, indicate, or express without the mediation of a pre-existing code. One would further begin to suspect that the most authoritative and potentially exploitative manifestations of writing in the narrow sense—the codes of law—operate on an implicit phonocentrism, the presupposition that speech is the immediate expression of the self.

[21] Derrida, "Signature Event Context", in *Margins of Philosophy*, tr. Alan Bass (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1981), p. 146.

I would submit that it is more appropriate to think of the power of rumour in the subaltern context as deriving from its participation in the structure of illegitimate writing rather than the authoritative writing of the law—itself sanctioned by the phonocentric model of the spirit of the law. 'Writing, the outlaw, the lost son. It must be recalled here that Plato always associates speech and law, *logos* and *nomos*. Laws speak. In the personification of *Crito*, they speak to Socrates directly'.[22]

Let us now consider *EAP* 259–64, where the analysis of rumour is performed. (These pages are cited in 3.112, n. 157.) Let us also remember that the mind-set of the peasants is as much affected by the phonocentrism of a tradition where *śruti*—that which is heard—has the greatest authority, as is the mind-set of the historian by the phonocentrism of Western linguistics. Once again, it is a question of complicity rather than the distance of knowledge.

If, then, 'rumour is spoken utterance *par excellence*' (*EAP* 256), it must be seen that its 'functional immediacy' is its non-belonging to any *one* voice-consciousness. This is supposed to be the signal characteristic of writing. Any reader can 'fill' it with her 'consciousness'. Rumour evokes comradeship because it belongs to every 'reader' or 'transmitter'. No one is its origin or source. Thus rumour is not error but primordially (originarily) errant, always in circulation with no assignable source. This illegitimacy makes it accessible to insurgency. Its 'absolute' (we would say 'indefinite', since 'fictive source[s] may be assigned to it') 'transitivity', collapsed at origin and end (a clear picture of writing) can be described as the received model of *speech* in the narrow sense ('the collaterality of word and deed issuing from a common will') only under the influence of phonocentrism. In fact the author himself comes closer to the case about fifteen pages later, when he notices the open verbality of

[22] Derrida, "Plato's Pharmacy", in *Dissemination*, tr. Barbara Johnson (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1981), p. 146.

rumour being restricted by the insurgents—who are also under the influence of phonocentrism—by an apocalyptic horizon. Subaltern, élite authority, and critic of historiography become complicit here. Yet the description of rumour in its 'distinctive features [of] . . . anonymity and transitivity' (*EAP* 260) signal a contradiction that allows us to read the text of *Subaltern Studies* against its grain.

The odd coupling of Soviet structuralism and French anti-humanism sometimes produces a misleading effect. For example, the applicability to rumour of Barthes' suggestion that ascription of an author closes up *writing*, should alert us to rumour's writing-like (*scriptible*) character rather than oblige us to displace Barthes' remark to speech via Vygotsky. Dialogue for Vygotsky is the privileged example of the so-called communication of direct verbality, of two immediately self-present sources or 'authors'. Dialogue is supposed to be 'unpremeditated' (although theories of subject-effect or the abstract determination of the concrete would find this a dubious claim). Rumour is a relay of something always assumed to be pre-existent. In fact the mistake of the colonial authorities was to take rumour for speech, to impose the requirements of speech in the narrow sense upon something that draws its strength from participation in writing in the general sense.

The Subaltern Studies group has here led us to a theme of great richness. The crosshatching of the revolutionary non-possessive possibilities in the structure of writing in general and its control by subaltern phonocentrism gives us access to the micrology or minute-scale functioning of the subaltern's philosophical world.

The matter of the role of 'the reading aloud of newspapers' in the construction of Gandhi as a signifier is perhaps too quickly put to rest as a reliance on 'spoken language', when, through such an act, 'a story acquires its authentication from its motif and the name of its place of origin rather than the authority of the correspondent' (3.48–9). I have dwelt on this point so long that it might now do to say no more than that the newspaper is exploitative writing in the narrow sense, 'spoken language' is a phonocentric concept where authority is supposed to spring directly from the voice-consciousness of the self-present speaker, and the reading out of someone else's text as 'an actor does on the stage' is a setting-in-motion of writing in the general sense. To find corroboration of this, one can see the contrast made between speaker and rhetor in the Western tradition from the Platonic Socrates through Hobbes and Rousseau to J.L. Austin.[23] When newspapers start reporting rumours (3.88), the range of speculative possibilities becomes even more seductive. The investigator seems herself beckoned by the circuit of 'absolute transitivity'.

Without yielding to that seduction, the following question can be asked: what is the use of noticing this misfit between the suggested structure of writing-in-general and the declared interest in phonocentrism? What is the use of pointing out that a common phonocentrism binds subaltern, élite authority, and disciplinary-critical historian together, and only a reading against the grain discloses the espousal of illegitimacy by the first and the third? Or, to quote Terry Eagleton:

> Marx is a metaphysician, and so is Schopenhauer, and so is Ronald Reagan. Has anything been gained by this manoeuvre? If it is true, is it informative? What is ideologically at stake in such homogenizing? What differences does it exist to suppress? Would it make Reagan feel uncomfortable or depressed? If what is in question for deconstructionism is metaphysical discourse, and if this is all-pervasive, then there is a sense in which in reading against the grain we are subverting everything and nothing.[24]

Not all ways of understanding the world and acting upon it are *equally* metaphysical or phonocentric. If, on the other hand, there *is* something shared by élite (Reagan), colonial authority, subaltern and mediator (Eagleton/Subaltern Studies) that we would rather not acknowledge, any elegant solution devised by means of such a refusal would merely mark a site of desire. It is best to attempt to forge a practice that can bear the weight of that acknowledgement. And, using the buried operation of the structure of writing as a lever, the strategic reader can reveal the asymmetry between the three groups above. Yet, since a 'reading against the grain' must forever remain strategic, it can never claim to have established the authoritative truth of a text, it must forever remain dependent upon practical

[23] Hobbes's discussion of authority in the *Leviathan* and Kant's discussion of the genius in *The Critique of Judgment* are two of the many *loci classici*. There are lengthy discussions of this thematic—as found in the Platonic Socrates, in Rousseau, and in J.L. Austin—in Derrida's "Plato's Pharmacy", *Of Grammatology*, and "Signature Event Context", respectively.

[24] Terry Eagleton, *Walter Benjamin: or Towards a Revolutionary Criticism* (London: Verso Press, 1981), p. 140.

exigencies, never legitimately lead to a theoretical orthodoxy. In the case of the Subaltern Studies group, it would get the group off the dangerous hook of claiming to establish the truth-knowledge of the subaltern and his consciousness.

Woman

The group is scrupulous in its consideration towards women. They record moments when men and women are joined in struggle (1.178, *EAP* 130), when their conditions of work or education suffer from gender or class discrimination (2.71, 2.241, 243, 257, 275). But I think they overlook how important the concept-metaphor woman is to the functioning of their discourse.[25] This consideration will bring to an end the body of my argument.

In a certain reading, the figure of woman is pervasively instrumental in the shifting of the function of discursive systems, as in insurgent mobilization. Questions of the mechanics of this instrumentality are seldom raised by our group. 'Femininity' is as important a discursive field for the predominantly male insurgents as 'religion'. When cow-protection becomes a volatile signified in the re-inscription of the social position of various kinds of subaltern, semi-subaltern, and indigenous élite groups, the cow is turned into a female figure of one kind or another. Considering that in the British nineteenth century the female access to 'possessive individualism' is one of the most important social forces, what does it mean to imply that 'femininity' has the same discursive sense and force for all the heterogeneous groups meticulously documented by Pandey? Analogous research into the figure of the 'worker' is performed by Chakrabarty. No such luck for the 'female'.

On the most 'ancient and indigenous' religious level, a level that 'perhaps gave [the rebellious hillmen] an extra potency [*sic*] in times of collective distress and outside oppression' (1.98), all the deities are man-eating goddesses. As this pre-insurgent level of collectivity begins to graduate into revolt, the sacrifices continue to be made to

[25] The work of the collective is now including more overtly feminist material. Most significant is Ranajit Guha's "Chandra's Death" in the forthcoming volume V, where he takes that particular feminist position which suggests that there is a woman's separate domain which is centered on childbirth and its vicissitudes under subaltern patriarchy. My point, about woman as the syntagm of the socius, is, of course, somewhat different.

goddesses rather than gods. And, even as this level of subaltern-led revolt is contrasted to the 'élite struggles of the earlier period' (1.124), we notice that in that earlier period the struggles began on two occasions because men would not accept female leadership (1.102).

In terms of social semiosis, what is the difference between man-eating goddesses, objects of reverence and generators of solidarity on the one hand, and secular daughters and widows, unacceptable as leaders, on the other? On the occasion of the 'culture of sugarcane' in Eastern UP, Shahid Amin speaks of the deliberate non-coincidence created between natural inscription (script as used when referring to a play) of the harvest calendar and the artificial inscription of the circuit of colonial monopoly capital. It is of course of great interest to wonder in what ways the composition of the peasantry and landownership would have developed had the two been allowed to coincide. Yet I think it should also be noticed that it is dowry that is the invariably mentioned *social* demand that allowed the demands of nature to devastate the peasant via the demands of empire. Should one trouble about the constitution of the subaltern as (sexed) subject when the exploitation of sexual difference seems to have so crucial a role on so many fronts? Should one notice that the proverb on 1.53 is sung by a young daughter who will deny her lover's demands in order to preserve her father's fields? Should one notice this metaphoric division of sexuality (in the woman's case, sex is of course identical with selfhood or consciousness) as property to be passed on or not from father to lover? Indeed, in a collective where so much attention is rightly paid to the subjectivity or subject-positioning of the subaltern, it should be surprising to encounter such indifference to the subjectivity, not to mention the indispensable presence, of the woman as crucial instrument. These four sentences should illustrate my argument:

> It was not uncommon for a 'superior' Patidar to spend his dowry money and return his wife to her father so that he could marry for a new dowry. Amongst Patidars, it was considered very shameful to have to take back a daughter [!] . . . *Gols* were formed to prevent ruinous hypergamous marriages with 'superior' Patidar lineages. . . . Here, therefore, we discover a strong form of subaltern organization within the Patidar caste which provided a check on the power of the Patidar élite. . . . Even Mahatma Gandhi was unable to break the solidarity of the Patidar *gol* of twenty-one villages.

I do not see how the crucial instrumentality of woman as symbolic object of exchange can be overlooked here. Yet the conclusion is: 'the solidarity of the *Gols* was a form of *class* solidarity' (1.202, 203, 207). As in the case of the insurgent under colonial power, the condition of the woman gets 'bettered' as a bye-product, but what's the difference? Male subaltern and historian are here united in the common assumption that the procreative sex is a species apart, scarcely if at all to be considered a part of civil society.

These are not unimportant questions in the context of contemporary India. Just as the *ulgulan* of 1899–1901 dehegemonized millennarian Christianity in the Indian context, so also did the Adivasis seem to have tapped the emergent possibilities of a goddess-centred religion in the Devi movement of 1922–3, a movement that actively contested the re-inscription of land into private property.[26] In the current Indian context, neither religion nor femininity shows emergent potential of this kind.

I have left till last the two broad areas where the instrumentality of woman seems most striking: notions of territoriality and of the communal mode of power.

Concept-metaphors of Territoriality and of Woman

The concept of territoriality is implicit in most of the essays of the three volumes of *Subaltern Studies*. Here again the explicit theoretical statement is to be found in *EAP*. Territoriality is the combined 'pull of the primordial ties of kinship, community' which is part 'of the actual mechanics of . . . autonomous mobilization' (*EAP* 118). On the simplest possible level, it is evident that notions of kinship are anchored and consolidated by the exchange of women. This consolidation, according to Guha, cuts across the religious division of Hindu and Muslim.[27] In all these examples woman is the neglected syntagm of the semiosis of subalternity or insurgency.

Throughout these pages it has been my purpose to show the complicity between subject and object of investigation—the Subaltern Studies group and subalternity. Here too, the historians' tendency, not to ignore, but to re-name the semiosis of sexual difference 'class'

[26] See Hardiman, "Adivasi Assertion in South Gujarat: The Devi Movement of 1922-3", in 3.

[27] See, for examples, *EAP* 229, 316.

or 'caste-solidarity' (*EAP* 316), bears something like a relationship with the peasants' general attempt to undo the distinction between consanguinity and co-residence. Here, as in the case of the brutal marriage customs of the Patidars, the historian mentions, but does not pause to reflect upon, the significance of the simple exclusion of the subaltern as female (sexed) subject: 'In each of these [rebel villages] nearly all the population, *barring females acquired by marriage*, claimed descent from a common patrilineage, consanguinal or mythical, and regarded themselves as members of the same clan or gotra. This belief in a shared ancestry made the village assert itself positively by acting as a solidarity unit and negatively by operating an elaborate code of discrimination against aliens' (*EAP* 314; italics mine).

Although it was unemphatically and trivially accepted by everyone that it was the woman, without proper identity, who operated this consanguinal or mythic patrilineage; and although, in the historian's estimation, 'these village-based primordial ties were the principal means of rebel mobilization, mauza by mauza, throughout northern and central India in 1857' (*EAP* 315), it seems that we may not stop to investigate the subject-deprivation of the female in the operation of this mobilization and this solidarity. It seems clear to me that, if the question of female subaltern consciousness, whose instrumentality is so often seen to be crucial, is a red herring, the question of subaltern consciousness as such must be judged a red herring as well.

If the peasant insurgent was the victim and the unsung hero of the first wave of resistance against territorial imperialism in India, it is well known that, for reasons of collusion between pre-existing structures of patriarchy and transnational capitalism, it is the urban sub-proletarian female who is the paradigmatic subject of the current configuration of the International Division of Labour. As we investigate the pattern of resistance among these 'permanent casual'-s, questions of the heterogeneous subject-constitution of the subaltern female gain a certain importance.

The Communal Mode of Power and the Concept of Woman

Although Partha Chatterjee's concept of the communal mode of power is not as pervasively implicit in all the work of the group, it is an important and sustaining argument for the enterprise of Sub-

altern Studies. Here the importance of communal power structures, based largely on kin and clan, are shown to embrace far-flung parts of the pre-capitalist world. And, once again, the crucial syntagmatic and micrologically prior defining importance of sexual difference in the deployment of such power is foreclosed so that sexuality is seen only as one element among the many that drive this 'social organization of production' (2.322). The making-visible of the figure of woman is perhaps not a task that the group should fairly be asked to perform. It seems to this reader, however, that a feminist historian of the subaltern must raise the question of woman as a structural rather than marginal issue in each of the many different types and cultures that Chatterjee invokes in 'More on Modes of Power and the Peasantry'.

If in the explanation of territoriality I notice a tension between consanguinal and spatial accounts shared by subaltern and historian alike, in the case of 'the communal mode of power' we are shown a clash between explanations from kinship and 'political' perceptions. This is a version of the same battle—the apparent gender-neutralizing of the world finally explained through reason, domestic society sublated and subsumed in the civil.

The clash between kinship and politics is one of Chatterjee's main points. What role does the figure of woman play here? In the dispersal of the field of power, the sexual division of labour is progressively defined from above as power-sharing. That story is the underside of the taxonomy of power that Chatterjee unfolds.

Chatterjee quotes Victor Turner, who suggests that the resurgence of communal modes of power often generates ways to fight feudal structures: 'resistance or revolt often takes on the form of . . . *communitas*' (2.339). This is particularly provocative in the case of the dehegemonization of monarchy. In this fast-paced fable of the progress of modes of power, it can be seen that the idea of one kind of a king may have supplemented a built-in gap in the ideology of community-as-a-whole: 'a new kind of chief whom Tacitus calls "king" (*rex*) who was elected from within a "royal clan" ' (2.323). The figure of the exchanged woman still produces the cohesive unity of a 'clan', even as what emerges is a 'king'. And thus, when the insurgent *community* invokes monarch against *feudal* authority, the explanation that they are re-cathecting or re-filling the king with the old patriarchal ideology of consanguinity, never far from the metaphor of the King as Father, seems even less surprising (3.344).

My point is, of course, that through all of these heterogeneous examples of territoriality and the communal mode of power, the figure of the woman, moving from clan to clan, and family to family as daughter/sister and wife/mother, syntaxes patriarchal continuity even as she is herself drained of proper identity. In this particular area, the continuity of community or history, for subaltern and historian alike, is produced on (I intend the copulative metaphor—philosophically and sexually) the dissimulation of her discontinuity, on the repeated emptying of her meaning as instrument.

If I seem to be intransigent here, perhaps the distance travelled between high structuralism and current anti-humanism can best be measured by two celebrated passages by two famous men. First the Olympian dismissal, ignoring the role of representation in subject-constitution:

> These results can be achieved only on one condition: considering marriage regulations and kinship systems as a kind of language. . . . That the 'message' ['*message*'] should be constituted by the *women of the group*, which are circulated between class, lineages, or families, in place of the *words of the group*, which are *circulated* between individuals, does not at all change the identity of the phenomenon considered in the two cases . . . This ambiguity [between values and signs] is clearly manifested in the critique sometimes addressed to the *Elementary Structures of Kinship* as an 'anti-feminist' book by some, because women are there treated as objects. . . . [But] words do not speak, while women do. The latter are signs and producers of signs; as such, they cannot be reduced to the status of symbols or tokens.[28]

And, second, the recognition of a limit:

> The significations or conceptual values which apparently form the stakes or means of all Nietzschean analyses on sexual difference, on the 'unceasing war between the sexes', on the 'mortal hatred of the sexes' on 'love', eroticism, etc., are all on the vector of what might be called the process of *propriation* (appropriation, expropriation, taking, taking possession, gift and exchange, mastery, servitude, etc.). Through numerous analyses, that I cannot follow here, it appears, by the law already formalized, that sometimes the woman is woman by giving, *giving herself*, while the man takes, possesses, takes possession, and sometimes by contrast the woman by giving herself, gives-herself-as, and thus simulates and assures for herself possessive mastery. . . . As a sexual operation propriation is more powerful, because undecideable, than the question *ti esti* [what is it], than the question of the veil of truth or the meaning of

[28] Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology*, tr. Claire Jacobson and Brooke Grundfest Schoepf (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books, 1967), p. 60.

> Being. All the more—and this argument is neither secondary nor supplementary—because the process of propriation organizes the totality of the process of language and symbolic exchange in general, including, therefore, all ontological statements [*enonces*].[29]

I quote these passages, by Lévi-Strauss and Derrida, and separated by twenty years, as a sign of the times. But I need not add that, in the latter case, the question of being and the ontological statement would relate to the phenomenality of subaltern consciousness itself.

[29] Derrida, *Spurs*, pp. 109-11.

I Methodology

In: Lois Tyson. Critical Theory Today. A User-Friendly Guide. London: Routledge, 2006.

Everything you wanted to know about critical theory but were afraid to ask

Why should we bother to learn about critical theories? Is it really worth the trouble? Won't all those abstract concepts (if I can even understand any of them) interfere with my natural, personal interpretations of literature? These questions, or ones like them, are probably the questions most frequently asked by new students of critical theory, regardless of their age or educational status, and such questions reveal the two-fold nature of our reluctance to study theory: (1) fear of failure and (2) fear of losing the intimate, exciting, magical connection with literature that is our reason for reading it in the first place. I think both these fears are well founded.

With notable exceptions, most theoretical writing—by the big names in the field and by those who attempt to explain their ideas to novices—is filled with technical terms and theoretical concepts that assume a level of familiarity newcomers simply don't have. And because such writing doesn't seem to connect with our love of literature, let alone with the everyday world we live in, it seems that theory's purpose must be to take us into some abstract, intellectual realm in which we try to impress one another by using the latest theoretical jargon (which we hope our peers haven't heard yet) and dropping the names of obscure theorists (whom we hope our peers haven't read yet). In other words, because knowledge of critical theory has become, over the last decade or so, a mark of status, an educational "property" for which students and professors compete, it has also become a costly commodity that is difficult to acquire and to maintain at the state of the art.

Indeed, I think the anxiety that most of us bring to our study of critical theory is due largely to our initial encounters with theoretical jargon or, more accurately, with people who use theoretical jargon to inflate their own status. To cite just one example, a student recently asked me what "*the death of the author*" means.

He'd heard the phrase bandied about, but no one explained it to him, so he felt excluded from the conversation. Because the meaning of the phrase wasn't evident in the context in which he'd heard it used, the student felt that it must be a complex concept. Because those who used the phrase acted as though they belonged to an elite club, at the same time as they pretended that everyone knew what it meant, he felt stupid for not knowing the term and, therefore, afraid to ask about it, afraid to reveal his stupidity. In fact, "the death of the author" is a simple concept, but unless someone explains it to you the phrase makes little sense. "The death of the author" merely refers to the change in attitude toward the role of the author in our interpretation of literary works. In the early decades of the twentieth century, students of literature were taught that the author was our primary concern in reading a literary work: our task was to examine the author's life in order to discover what the author meant to communicate—his or her message, theme, or moral—which is called *authorial intention*. Our focus has changed over the years to the point that, now, among many contemporary critical theorists at least, the author is no longer considered a meaningful object of analysis. We focus, instead, on the reader; on the ideological, rhetorical, or aesthetic structure of the text; or on the culture in which the text was produced, usually without reference to the author. So, for all intents and purposes, the author is "dead." It's a simple idea, really, yet, like many ideas that belong to a particular academic discipline, it can be used to exclude people rather than to communicate with them. This situation is especially objectionable because it results in the exclusion of those of us who might stand to benefit from critical theory in the most concrete ways: current and future teachers at the elementary and secondary levels; faculty and students at community colleges; and faculty and students in all departments at the thousands of liberal arts colleges responsible for the bulk of American education but whose members may not be on the "fast track" to academic stardom.

What are the concrete ways in which we can benefit from an understanding of critical theory? As I hope the following chapters will illustrate, theory can help us learn to see ourselves and our world in valuable new ways, ways that can influence how we educate our children, both as parents and teachers; how we view television, from the nightly news to situation comedies; how we behave as voters and consumers; how we react to others with whom we do not agree on social, religious, and political issues; and how we recognize and deal with our own motives, fears, and desires. And if we believe that human productions—not just literature but also, for example, film, music, art, science, technology, and architecture—are outgrowths of human experience and therefore reflect human desire, conflict, and potential, then we can learn to interpret those productions in order to learn something important about ourselves as a species. Critical theory, I think you will find, provides excellent tools for that endeavor, tools that

not only can show us our world and ourselves through new and valuable lenses but also can strengthen our ability to think logically, creatively, and with a good deal of insight.

To that end, each chapter will explain the basic principles of the theory it addresses in order to enable you to read what the theorists themselves have written. Each chapter will focus on a critical theory that has had a significant impact on the practice of literary criticism today and will attempt to show the world through the lens of that theory. Think of each theory as a new pair of eyeglasses through which certain elements of our world are brought into focus while others, of course, fade into the background. Did that last idea give you pause, I hope? Why should some ideas have to fade into the background in order to focus on others? Doesn't this suggest that each theory can offer only an incomplete picture of the world?

It seems unavoidable, and part of the paradox of seeing and learning is that in order to understand some things clearly we must restrict our focus in a way that highlights certain elements and ignores others, just as the close-up camera crystallizes whatever it frames and renders the rest a blurred background. Perhaps this is why, for example, science and religion often seem so at odds, not just because they often offer conflicting explanations of the same phenomena but because they focus our vision on different dimensions of our own experience. This is why it seems to me so important that we study a number of theories in succession, not just to remind ourselves that multiple viewpoints are important if we are to see the whole picture but to grasp the very process of understanding that underlies human experience and to thereby increase our ability to see both the value and the limitations of every method of viewing the world. In fact, one of the most important things theory can show us is that methodologies *are* ways of seeing the world, whether we're talking about physics or sociology, literature, or medicine.

Indeed, because they are ways of seeing the world, critical theories compete with one another for dominance in educational and cultural communities. Each theory offers itself as the most (or the only) accurate means of understanding human experience. Thus, competition among theories has always had a strong political dimension in at least two senses of the word *political*: (1) different theories offer very different interpretations of history and of current events, including interpretations of government policies, and (2) advocates of the most popular theories of the day usually receive the best jobs and the most funding for their projects.

Even within the ranks of any given critical theory there are countless disagreements among practitioners that result in the emergence of different schools of thought within a single theory. In fact, the history of every critical theory is, in

effect, the history of an ongoing debate among its own advocates as well as an ongoing debate with the advocates of other theories. However, before you can understand an argument, you have to understand the language or languages in which the opponents express their ideas. By familiarizing you with the language each theory speaks—that is, with the key concepts on which each theory is grounded—this book will prepare you to understand the ongoing debates both within and among critical theories. Learning to use the different languages of theory offered here will also accustom you to "thinking theoretically," that is, to seeing the assumptions, whether stated or not, that underlie every viewpoint.

For example, as you read the following chapters, I hope it will become clear to you that even our "personal," "natural" interpretations of literature and of the world we live in—interpretations "unsullied" by theory—are based on assumptions, on ways of seeing the world, that are themselves theoretical and that we don't realize we've internalized. In other words, there is no such thing as a nontheoretical interpretation. We may not be aware of the theoretical assumptions that guide our thinking, but those assumptions are there nevertheless. For example, why do we assume that the proper way to interpret a story for an English class is to show how images and metaphors convey ideas and feelings or how the story illustrates a theme or reflects some aspect of history or communicates the author's viewpoint? Why isn't the proper response, instead, to do volunteer work at a shelter for the homeless, sculpt a statue, or throw a party? In other words, the interpretations of literature we produce before we study critical theory may seem completely personal or natural, but they are based on beliefs—beliefs about literature, about education, about language, about selfhood—that permeate our culture and that we therefore take for granted.

I hope you will also find, once you've become better acquainted with critical theory, that it increases rather than decreases your appreciation of literature. Think back to your junior high or high school experiences as a reader. Can you remember a story or two, or a novel or play, that you just loved or just hated, yet when you read it again a few years later your reaction had significantly changed? The more we experience in life, the more we are capable of experiencing in literature. So as you grow in your capacity to understand theory, to think more broadly and more deeply about human experience and the world of ideas, the more you will be capable of appreciating the rich density, the varied texture and shades of meaning, available in literary works. It's possible that an old favorite might fall by the wayside, but you'll have new favorites, and you'll have the capacity to see more and therefore appreciate more in everything you read.

In order to illustrate the various ways in which different critical theories interpret literature, each chapter will include, in addition to short examples drawn from different literary texts, a fully developed reading of the same work: F. Scott

R. K. Narayan - Engine Trouble (1972)

ENGINE TROUBLE

There came down to our town some years ago (said the Talkative Man) a showman owning an institution called the Gaiety Land. Overnight our Gymkhana Grounds became resplendent with banners and streamers and coloured lamps. From all over the district crowds poured into the show. Within a week of opening, in gate money alone they collected nearly five hundred rupees a day. Gaiety Land provided us with all sorts of fun and gambling and sideshows. For a couple of annas in each booth we could watch anything from performing parrots to crack motorcyclists looping the loop in the Dome of Death. In addition to this there were lotteries and shooting galleries where for an anna you always stood a chance of winning a hundred rupees.

There was a particular corner of the show which was in great favour. Here for a ticket costing eight annas you stood a chance of acquiring a variety of articles – pincushions, sewing machines, cameras or even a road engine. On one evening they drew ticket number 1005, and I happened to own the other half of the ticket. Glancing down the list of articles, they declared that I became the owner of the road engine! Don't ask me how a road engine came to be included among the prizes. It is more than I can tell you.

I looked stunned. People gathered round and gazed at me as if I were some curious animal. 'Fancy anyone becoming the owner of a road engine!' some persons muttered, and giggled.

It was not the sort of prize one could carry home at short notice. I asked the showman if he would help me to transport it. He merely pointed at a notice which decreed that all winners should remove the prizes immediately on drawing and by their own effort. However, they had to make an exception in my case. They agreed to keep the engine on the Gymkhana Grounds till the end of their season, and then I would have to make my own arrangements to

take it out. When I asked the showman if he could find me a driver he just smiled. 'The fellow who brought it here had to be paid a hundred rupees for the job and five rupees a day. I sent him away and made up my mind that if no one was going to draw it, I would just leave it to its fate. I got it down just as a novelty for the show. God! What a bother it has proved!'

'Can't I sell it to some municipality?' I asked innocently. He burst into a laugh. 'As a showman I have enough troubles with municipal people. I would rather keep out of their way ...'

My friends and well-wishers poured in to congratulate me on my latest acquisition. No one knew precisely how much a road engine would fetch; all the same they felt that there was a lot of money in it. 'Even if you sell it as scrap iron you can make a few thousands,' some of my friends declared. Every day I made a trip to the Gymkhana Grounds to have a look at my engine. I grew very fond of it. I loved its shining brass parts. I stood near it and patted it affectionately, hovered about it and returned home every day only at the close of the show. I was a poor man. I thought that, after all, my troubles were coming to an end. How ignorant we are! How little did I guess that my troubles had just begun.

When the showman took down his booths and packed up, I received a notice from the municipality to attend to my road engine. When I went there next day it looked forlorn with no one about. The ground was littered with torn streamers and paper decorations. The showman had moved on, leaving the engine where it stood. It was perfectly safe anywhere!

I left it alone for a few days, not knowing what to do with it. I received a notice from the municipality ordering that the engine be removed at once from the grounds, as otherwise they would charge rent for the occupation of the Gymkhana Grounds. After deep thought I consented to pay the rent, and I paid ten rupees a month for the next three months. Dear sirs, I was a poor man. Even the house which I and my wife occupied cost me only four rupees a month. And fancy my paying ten rupees a month for the road engine. It cut into my slender budget, and I had to pledge a jewel or two belonging to my wife! And every day my wife was asking me what I proposed to do with this terrible property of mine and I had no answer to give her. I went up and down the town offering it for sale to all and sundry. Someone suggested that the secretary of the

local Cosmopolitan Club might be interested in it. When I approached him he laughed and asked what he could do with a road engine. 'I'll dispose of it at a concession for you. You have a tennis court to be rolled every morning,' I began, and even before I saw him smile I knew it was a stupid thing to say. Next someone suggested, 'See the Municipal Chairman. He may buy it for the municipality.' With great trepidation I went to the municipal office one day. I buttoned up my coat as I entered the chairman's room and mentioned my business. I was prepared to give away the engine at a great concession. I started a great harangue on municipal duties, the regime of this chairman and the importance of owning a road roller – but before I was done with him I knew there was greater chance of my selling it to some child on the roadside for playing with.

I was making myself a bankrupt maintaining this engine in the Gymkhana Grounds. I really hoped someday there would come my way a lump sum to make amends for all this deficit and suffering. Fresh complications arose when a cattle show came in the offing. It was to be held on the grounds. I was given twenty-four hours to get the thing out of the grounds. The show was opening in a week and the advance party was arriving and insisted upon having the engine out of the way. I became desperate; there was not a single person for fifty miles around who knew anything about a road engine. I begged every passing bus-driver to help me; but without use. I even approached the station-master to put in a word with the mail engine-driver. But the engine-driver pointed out that he had his own locomotive to mind and couldn't think of jumping off at a wayside station for anybody's sake. Meanwhile, the municipality was pressing me to clear out. I thought it over. I saw the priest of the local temple and managed to gain his sympathy. He offered me the services of his temple elephant. I also engaged fifty coolies to push the engine from behind. You may be sure this drained all my resources. The coolies wanted eight annas per head, and the temple elephant cost me seven rupees a day and I had to give it one feed. My plan was to take the engine out of the Gymkhana and then down the road to a field half a furlong off. The field was owned by a friend. He would not mind if I kept the engine there for a couple of months, when I could go to Madras and find a customer for it.

I also took into service one Joseph, a dismissed bus-driver who

said that although he knew nothing of road rollers he could nevertheless steer one if it was somehow kept in motion.

It was a fine sight: the temple elephant yoked to the engine by means of stout ropes, with fifty determined men pushing it from behind, and my friend Joseph sitting in the driving seat. A huge crowd stood around and watched in great glee. The engine began to move. It seemed to me the greatest moment in my life. When it came out of the Gymkhana and reached the road, it began to behave in a strange manner. Instead of going straight down the road it showed a tendency to wobble and move zigzag. The elephant dragged it one way, Joseph turned the wheel for all he was worth without any idea of where he was going, and fifty men behind it clung to it in every possible manner and pushed it just where they liked. As a result of all this confused dragging, the engine ran straight into the opposite compound wall and reduced a good length of it to powder. At this the crowd let out a joyous yell. The elephant, disliking the behaviour of the crowd, trumpeted loudly, strained and snapped its ropes and kicked down a further length of the wall. The fifty men fled in panic, the crowd created a pandemonium. Someone slapped me in the face – it was the owner of the compound wall. The police came on the scene and marched me off.

When I was released from the lockup I found the following consequences awaiting me: (1) several yards of compound wall to be built by me; (2) wages of fifty men who ran away (they would not explain how they were entitled to the wages when they had not done their job); (3) Joseph's fee for steering the engine over the wall; (4) cost of medicine for treating the knee of the temple elephant, which had received some injuries while kicking down the wall (here again the temple authorities would not listen when I pointed out that I didn't engage an elephant to break a wall); (5) last, but not least, the demand to move the engine out of its present station.

Sirs, I was a poor man. I really could not find any means of paying these bills. When I went home my wife asked, 'What is this I hear about you everywhere?' I took the opportunity to explain my difficulties. She took it as a hint that I was again asking for her jewels, and she lost her temper and cried that she would write to her father to come and take her away.

I was at my wits' end. People smiled at me when they met me in

the streets. I was seriously wondering why I should not run away to my village. I decided to encourage my wife to write to her father and arrange for her exit. Not a soul was going to know what my plans were. I was going to put off my creditors and disappear one fine night.

At this point came unexpected relief in the shape of a Swamiji. One fine evening under the distinguished patronage of our Municipal Chairman a show was held in our small town hall. It was a free performance and the hall was packed with people. I sat in the gallery. Spellbound we witnessed the Swamiji's yogic feats. He bit off glass tumblers and ate them with contentment; he lay on spike boards; gargled and drank all kinds of acids; licked white-hot iron rods; chewed and swallowed sharp nails; stopped his heartbeat and buried himself underground. We sat there and watched him in stupefaction. At the end of it all he got up and delivered a speech in which he declared that he was carrying on his master's message to the people in this manner. His performance was the more remarkable because he had nothing to gain by all this extraordinary meal except the satisfaction of serving humanity, and now he said he was coming to the very masterpiece and the last act. He looked at the Municipal Chairman and asked, 'Have you a road engine? I would like to have it driven over my chest.' The chairman looked abashed and felt ashamed to acknowledge that he had none. The Swamiji insisted, 'I *must* have a road engine.'

The Municipal Chairman tried to put him off by saying, 'There is no driver.' The Swamiji replied, 'Don't worry about it. My assistant has been trained to handle any kind of road engine.' At this point I stood up in the gallery and shouted, 'Don't ask him for an engine. Ask me.' In a moment I was on the stage and became as important a person as the fire-eater himself. I was pleased with the recognition I now received from all quarters. The Municipal Chairman went into the background.

In return for lending him the engine he would drive it where I wanted. Though I felt inclined to ask for a money contribution I knew it would be useless to expect it from one who was doing missionary work.

Soon the whole gathering was at the compound wall opposite the Gymkhana. Swamiji's assistant was an expert in handling engines. In a short while my engine stood steaming up proudly. It

was a gratifying sight. The Swamiji called for two pillows, placed one near his head and the other at his feet. He gave detailed instructions as to how the engine should be run over him. He made a chalk mark on his chest and said, 'It must go exactly on this; not an inch this way or that.' The engine hissed and waited. The crowd watching the show became suddenly unhappy and morose. This seemed to be a terrible thing to be doing. The Swamiji lay down on the pillows and said, 'When I say *Om*, drive it on.' He closed his eyes. The crowd watched tensely. I looked at the whole show in absolute rapture – after all, the road engine was going to get on the move.

At this point a police inspector came into the crowd with a brown envelope in his hand. He held up his hand, beckoned to the Swamiji's assistant and said, 'I am sorry, I have to tell you that you can't go on with this. The magistrate has issued an order prohibiting the engine from running over him.' The Swamiji picked himself up. There was a lot of commotion. The Swamiji became indignant. 'I have done it in hundreds of places already and nobody questioned me about it. Nobody can stop me from doing what I like – it's my master's order to demonstrate the power of the Yoga to the people of this country, and who can question me?'

'A magistrate can,' said the police inspector, and held up the order. 'What business is it of yours or his to interfere in this manner?' 'I don't know all that; this is his order. He permits you to do everything except swallow potassium cyanide and run this engine over your chest. You are free to do whatever you like outside our jurisdiction.'

'I am leaving this cursed place this very minute,' the Swamiji said in great rage, and started to go, followed by his assistant. I gripped his assistant's arm and said, 'You have steamed it up. Why not take it over to that field and then go.' He glared at me, shook off my hand and muttered, 'With my guru so unhappy, how dare you ask me to drive?' He went away. I muttered, 'You can't drive it except over his chest, I suppose?'

I made preparations to leave the town in a couple of days, leaving the engine to its fate, with all its commitments. However, nature came to my rescue in an unexpected manner. You may have heard of the earthquake of that year which destroyed whole towns in North India. There was a reverberation of it in our town, too.

We were thrown out of our beds that night, and doors and windows rattled.

Next morning I went over to take a last look at my engine before leaving the town. I could hardly believe my eyes. The engine was not there. I looked about and raised a hue and cry. Search parties went round. The engine was found in a disused well nearby, with its back up. I prayed to heaven to save me from fresh complications. But the owner of the house, when he came round and saw what had happened, laughed heartily and beamed at me. 'You have done me a service. It was the dirtiest water on earth in that well and the municipality was sending notice to close it, week after week. I was dreading the cost of closing, but your engine fits it like a cork. Just leave it there.'

'But, but . . .'

'There are no buts. I will withdraw all complaints and charges against you, and build that broken wall myself, but only leave the thing there.'

'That's hardly enough.' I mentioned a few other expenses that this engine had brought on me. He agreed to pay for all that.

When I again passed that way some months later I peeped over the wall. I found the mouth of the well neatly cemented up. I heaved a sigh of great relief

R.K. Narayan: ENGINE TROUBLE

p. 79:
resplendent: glänzend, prächtig, strahlend
annas/rupees: Währung Indiens
booth: Ausstellungsstand, Bude
pincushions: Nadelkissen
to decreed: erlassen, verordnen
Gymkhana: Parcour, Geschicklichkeitsturnier

p. 80:
a bother: Ärger, Aufregung
the municipality: Stadtgemeinde, Kommune, Verwaltung
the acquisition: Erwerb, Anschaffung
scrap iron: Eisenschrott
forlorn: einsam, verlassen
sundry: Sonstiges, Allerlei
slender budget: dürftiges Gehalt, dürftiges Budget

p. 81:
concession: Erlaubnis, Zulassung
trepidation: Angst, Beklemmung
harangue: Predigt, Rede
to make amends: wiedergutmachen
coolies: (from Hindi *Kuli,* an aboriginal tribal name, or from Tamil *kuli,* "wages"): Löhner, Arbeiter
furlong: Achtelmeile

p. 82:
stout ropes: dicke Seile
pandemonium: Chaos, Tumult
I was at my wits' end: Ich war mit meiner Kunst am Ende

p. 83:
Swamiji: Yogi oder Guru, spiritueller/religiöser Herr
spellbound: verzaubert, fasziniert
stupefaction: Verblüffung
abashed: verlegen
inclined: geneigt
gathering: Versammlung

p. 84:
pillows: Kissen
chalk mark: Kreidemarkierung
hissed: zischte
morose: missmutig, mürrisch
rapture: Begeisterung
beckoned: herbeigewinkt
commotion: Aufruhr
potassium cyanide: Kaliumzyanid
jurisdiction: Zuständigkeit
reverberation: Nachhall

p. 85:
to raise a hue and cry: lautstark protestieren
withdraw: zurückziehen
neatly: sauber, ordentlich

Deshpande, Shashi. Collected Stories, Volume I. New Delhi: Penguin Books India, 2003.

Can You Hear Silence?

WE'VE BEEN SITTING here watching the road since the morning. When I woke up, I knew, even without opening my eyes, that it was not like every day. The noises were different. Splashing sounds on the road. A car starting, sputtering and dying away. A funny lap-lap sound as if the sea had come close to us. And, above all this, a loud drumming sound. I opened my eyes and it seemed dark. And there was Papa reading the newspaper instead of rushing about getting ready. Then I knew what it was.

'Is it raining, Papa? Is the road flooded?'

'Go and have a look,' he said, his eyes still on his paper.

It was flooded. You couldn't see even the tops of the drums they put round the new trees to protect them. I rushed back in.

'Rashmi, hey Rashmi,' I shook her. 'It's flooded, no school today.'

'Good,' she said and promptly went back to sleep.

It is still raining, but not as heavily as it was in the morning. The water on the road has gone down. At the edge of the pavement, there is a crooked line of rubbish left by it. All kinds of trash, even—ugh!—a dead rat. A crow is pecking at it daintily, as if choosing the tastiest bits. Rashmi shudders when I say that and makes a vomiting sound and face.

'Lunch,' Mummy announces.

'Mummy, you're not going to work!' Chhaya says accusingly, seeing Mummy dressed to go out.

'I have to. But after you've had your lunch.'

'You promised you wouldn't,' Chhaya says, half-angry, half-crying.

'No, I didn't. I said if it kept on raining and if the roads were still flooded, I wouldn't go. I don't have any leave, Chhayu,' Mummy says coaxingly.

But Chhaya doesn't relent, she picks at her lunch. I can't eat much, either. I think of the crow and the rat.

As soon as we've finished eating, we rush back to watch the road. The door bangs. Mummy has left. She waves to us from the pavement. She looks very small from up here. In a moment, she's lost among all the umbrellas.

With Mummy out of sight, I'm suddenly bored with looking at the road. 'Come, let's go out and play,' I say to Rashmi.

'No, we can't. We have to wait until Tarabai finishes the clothes.'

Tarabai came late today and in a worse mood than usual. It was almost like the band we hear in the park sometimes, the way she clanged the pots and pans. Mummy hates it, but she doesn't say a word. She's a bit scared of Tarabai, we guess. Now Tarabai is banging away at the clothes. Thwack, thwack—the sounds come from the bathroom. In a while, she comes out muttering angrily to herself and begins pulling yesterday's clothes off the line. She throws them at us. 'Here, do something about them,' she says. They're still damp. Rashmi and I look at them helplessly. Where do we put them? Tarabai is draping the wet clothes everywhere, wherever she gets some place, shoving us rudely out of her way as she walks about.

'Tarabai, what about these?' we ask.

'Hang them round your necks,' she says rudely.

I want to retort angrily, but Rashmi stops me. And I remember Mummy's, 'Now, don't fight with her, girls. I need her.'

'Tarabai, why are you so angry?' Chhaya asks.

'What do you want me to do? Sing and dance?' she retorts, but not so angrily. She's fond of Chhaya. They have long

conversations and Chhaya knows all Tarabai's problems—her drunken husband, her son who's with the 'daru-walas' as she says, her daughter who goes sneaking out with boys . . .

'Can you really sing and dance?' Chhaya asks curiously, while Tarabai goes on mumbling, 'No sleep the whole night, the rain kept pouring in, and I have to start making the chapattis at four . . .' She goes on and on, while we chivvy her, asking her to hurry up, for we want to go out and play.

When she has gone, the room looks most peculiar. The curtain which divides the room into two has been pushed aside; instead, there is a curtain made of towels, petticoats and pyjamas. The fan flaps them into strange, exciting shapes. I would like to watch them, but Chhaya says, 'Oooh, I'm feeling cold,' and Rashmi hustles us out.

It's like a Sunday with the corridor full of playing children. Games are already in full swing. Once or twice the dustbin lid falls off with a loud clang; as one of us runs round the corner at full speed and bangs into a dustbin. If you don't put the lid back, you get a terrible stink, a mixture of stinks really—rotting vegetables, fish and all kinds of queer things. In a while, heads pop out of doors, calling children home for tea. Sometimes Panna's mother calls us in and asks us to have tea with Panna. We always refuse, but I feel left out when the others go in. Not for the food, really, though, to be honest, sometimes it's also the food. Like the days they were frying onion bhajias in Vidya's house. I almost died.

Now we go in, have our milk and biscuits—they're so soggy Chhaya refuses to eat them, the spoilt baby—and then go back to play. We're playing hide-and-seek when Mummy comes home. I'm sitting on the floor, my eyes tightly closed, my back against the wall, counting in tens, when I hear Chhaya scream 'Mummy'. I open my eyes—I'll have to start counting all over again now—and there she is looking angry and sad. But she only says, 'Why are you sitting in that filth, Megha? Come on, get up.'

'Auntie, she's the den. Megha, you're cheating, you opened your eyes. Count again.'

'No, that's enough of games. Come in now.'

As soon as she opens the door, she sees the clothes flapping. 'Oh God!' she says. And then, 'Who hung them up?'

'Tarabai . . .'

'Did she expect you to stay in this?'

'No, Mummy we went out to play as soon as she went.'

She looks at her watch, tightens her lips and says, 'Five hours?'

In a rush, she takes off her slippers, flings her bag away, washes her feet and begins rearranging the clothes. Chhaya gets excited and makes a game of it, hiding behind something and saying babyishly, 'Where am I?' Her hands are grimy and she leaves a dirty mark on Papa's pyjamas. Mummy sees it and gives Chhaya a slap. A little one really. She can't slap properly, like Papa does. Sometimes. For, of course, Papa is rarely home long enough to punish any of us. There are days when Chhaya doesn't even see him. He goes to work before she wakes up and she's asleep by the time he returns.

There was a time when he used to come home much earlier. But then he had a job. 'Now it's my own business,' he told Rashmi and me once. 'And I have to work very hard for a few years. Once I get going, I'll be able to spend more time with you children.'

'By which time,' Mummy had said with a smile that was not really a smile, 'the girls will wonder who you are when they meet you.' Strangely, soon after this, we met Papa on the road and Chhaya didn't recognize him. 'There's Papa,' Rashmi had said. 'Where?' Chhaya asked. 'On the other side of the road, you silly.' But Chhaya kept saying, 'Where?' until he came right up to us.

We laughed at her and told Mummy about it. But she didn't laugh. That night, I heard her speaking angrily to Papa and Papa saying, 'But it's for them. We've got to struggle for some time.' And I heard Mummy say, 'How long? My God, how long?'

Now Chhaya cries until Mummy babies her and soothes her. Finally they both lie in Mummy's bed, Chhaya with her thumb in her mouth. Mummy pulls it out—it comes out with a pop—but in it goes again. I look about for Mummy's plastic-netted bag, the one she carries in her handbag when she goes to work. She always brings home something in it—vegetables, of course, but also biscuits, samosas maybe, or some cakes. Today it's empty.

'Mummy, I'm hungry.' It seems hours since we drank our milk.

'Didn't you get anything for us?' Rashmi asks accusingly.

Mummy opens her eyes slowly, as if she's too tired even to do that. 'I forgot,' she says. We stare silently at her. 'I was too tired,' she adds. We stand glum. Suddenly she smiles—and when she smiles she looks like Chhaya does when she knows she's done wrong and is trying to mollify you—and says, 'Why don't you go to the corner shop and get something for yourselves? Take some money from my purse.'

Rashmi points out some cakes to the boy—she's so bossy, she never gives me a chance to choose—and a man waiting for his change smiles at me. The huge man behind the counter pushes some coins and notes across the glass top. The man pushes back a note and says, 'A bar of chocolate.' The boy brings our cakes and goes for the chocolate. I stand on tiptoe and watch the squiggly figures as the man makes our bill. The boy brings the chocolate for the man and Rashmi carefully counts out the money. 'Here, baby, for you,' the man says to me. I'm too surprised to do anything but take the chocolate from him. But Rashmi, picking up our change, turns round instantly, snatches the chocolate from my hand, plonks it on the counter and drags me out of the shop. She walks fast, without a word, until we reach the crossing. As we wait to cross, I look back. The man is going in the other direction.

'He's gone,' I say.

Rashmi relaxes her hold on me. The lights turn green. When we're across, she says angrily, 'Why did you take chocolates from him? Don't you know better than that?'

I do. Mummy has told us long back—don't talk to strangers, don't take anything from them, don't go anywhere with them.

'I didn't take it,' I say defensively. 'I was just going to give it back when you . . .'

'Taking things from a man!' Rashmi hisses at me. 'Don't you know what men do to girls?'

'Of course I do,' I say with dignity. 'I know everything.'

I know the word, anyway. And I also know it's the most dreadful thing that can happen to a girl.

Rashmi speaks in a more friendly tone now. 'Now, don't go and tell Mummy about it. You know how she fusses. She won't ever let us go anywhere alone.'

I promise. But somehow I blurt it out, after all. We've eaten our cakes and sorted out our books for tomorrow. Mummy has put the cooker on for our dinner and sits with us for our usual chat. Then I tell her about the man. She says nothing, only pats Rashmi approvingly. But I know she's going to talk it over with Papa when he comes home. She's waiting for him now; we all are. It's time for him to be home.

But he doesn't come. He's very late today. It's funny how, when you're waiting for someone, the tick-tock of the clock becomes louder than usual. That, and the sounds of other people's footsteps. Each time we hear footsteps outside the door, Mummy sits up and listens intently. But the footsteps go on and she droops again. At last she says, 'Let's talk of something.'

'Mummy, tell us about when you were a girl,' Rashmi and I coax her.

We love to hear stories of her school, her friends and her teachers. But today she talks of her home.

'I had a beautiful home,' she says and looks at us with that 'oh, you poor children' expression on her face. 'It had a tiled roof. Do you know how friendly the rain sounds when it falls

on a tiled roof? And how gently it slides off from it on to the ground? It's a steady drip that can put you to sleep. Once, I remember, a bird came in, sheltering from the rain. It sat in the rafters the whole night. Once or twice I heard it ruffling its feathers. Otherwise it was absolutely silent. And outside, when it rained, the waters ran whoosh-whoosh in the gutters. We used to wade in them. The water was never dirty—nothing in it but twigs, leaves and mud.

'Sometimes, in summer, we slept in the courtyard. We could lie in the dark and watch the stars come out. And everything was so quiet that when we spoke the words came out soft, as if we were afraid of hurting the silence. The only sounds were the sounds of birds going to bed, or those insects that go on tik-tik all night. Sometimes, after it rained, we could hear the frogs croaking. You can't imagine how—how soothing that sound is. Otherwise . . .' she pauses as a bus screeches angrily to a stop, starts with a roar and goes on, '. . . there was just silence. I wonder whether I'll ever hear silence again,' she says sadly.

'Hear silence? How can you hear silence?' Rashmi challenges.

'You'll know some day—if you ever get out of this place.'

'Sounds silly to me, hearing silence,' Rashmi says scornfully. Rashmi has to be rude to Mummy these days. And if Papa says, 'Now, Rashmi, that's not the way to talk to your mother,' she bursts out with, 'You hate me, you're all against me,' and stamps out. And Papa says with a sigh, 'Growing pains.' And Mummy says, 'It pains me too.' And Papa laughs.

But it's true. Rashmi is growing. She won't let Mummy help her wash her hair, she acts funny with Ravi next door. And she's either sulking or in a temper. Except with her friends, of course. With them she's—oh, so jolly!

'You don't even know what silence is, do you?' Mummy says pityingly to her. And I think of how our friends yell for us—RASHMI—MEGHA. And we yell back—COMING.

All this while, we've been listening to the footsteps, hoping to hear Papa's among them. There are fewer now. Chhaya is almost asleep. Mummy suddenly rouses herself and says, 'Have your dinner, girls. Chhaya, wake up.'

We finish our dinner but still no Papa. Chhaya goes to bed. Rashmi and I argue about whose turn it is to sleep on the 'camel'. That's Papa's word for the hard, slippery sofa on which we have to sleep on alternate nights. It's my turn today. Rashmi goes off to her place near Chhaya, grumbling about how much space she's taken up. I try to make myself comfortable on the 'camel', but the pillow keeps slipping away from my head. I can't sleep, anyway. Why is Papa so late? I can see Mummy is worried. She snaps at Rashmi who's still grumbling. Rashmi pulls her blanket over herself and turns her back on Mummy; even her back looks angry. But Mummy doesn't notice.

Why is Papa so late? I am now sure he has had some accident. Suppose he's dead? I imagine all of it and what we'll do and how sorry everyone will be for us. My tummy feels funny as if I have to go to the toilet. I envy Rashmi and Chhaya for being so peacefully asleep. I wish I could go to sleep too and wake up in the morning to find Papa shaving at the small mirror propped in the corner of the window.

Finally, when I've given up all hope, I hear his key in the lock. Mummy gets up instantly. I hear Mummy asking him something as he takes off his shoes and puts away his umbrella. He replies softly as if he's afraid of waking us, but when Mummy goes on, his voice gets louder. I close my eyes tight, I feel cold. Don't make him angry, Mummy, I plead. It's terrible when he is angry. He doesn't see us, he doesn't look at us, he goes about as if we're all ghosts. And Mummy does look like a ghost—an angry ghost, that is. As the angry words go on, I pray—let it be the kind of quarrel that doesn't last. Sometimes, it doesn't. I wake up in the morning after a quarrel and for a moment there's nothing; then there's me and the day, and I'm happy. Then I remember the quarrel and the happy feeling goes away.

But when I get out of bed, it's peaceful. There's Papa shaving, squinting at himself in the mirror, whistling when he finishes and going off to wash his shaving things. And Mummy's in the kitchen, looking young in her nightdress, her hair in two plaits. She's rushing about, but I can see that it's a kind of happy rushing about, not an angry, holding herself in kind of thing. But some days it goes on and on and I feel as if the house is too small. I want to run away.

Now their voices are like small, hurting stones. I put my fingers in my ears to keep out the sounds. My wrists and fingers start paining and I remove my fingers. There's silence. But the silence seems even more terrible than the angry voices. Maybe, it's better than those whispers, though. The whispers that I sometimes hear from the other side of the curtain. When I hear them, I think of what Suchitra in our class had once told me, her eyes gleaming, her face excited in a nasty sort of way. And then I had hated Suchitra and myself and my parents and everyone and I wished I had a room of my very own.

Does Rashmi feel this way too? Is that why one day she said, 'I'm going to sleep in the gallery from today.'

'Can you sleep standing up?' Papa had teased her. The gallery has room only for brooms, brushes, old tins and other junk. But Rashmi had kept on and on and Papa had said, 'Maybe one day, when we get out of here, you can have your own room . . .'

And Mummy had asked, in the funny voice I don't like, 'Will we?' And that night I had heard them arguing once again, with Mummy saying, 'No, no.'

I wake up with a start to find that my pillow has fallen down and my neck is feeling stiff. I grope for the pillow and lie down on it, wondering—is it time to wake up? Then I hear the sounds of running water and I know it's still night. We get water in the taps only at night and Mummy and Papa have to store it up then. They work in silence. Only occasionally I hear them say something in a husky, middle-of-the-night voice.

Soon the sounds cease. The lights are switched off. And there is silence.

But only inside our house. Outside I can hear the trucks rumbling past. From a distance comes the hoot of a train. Soon the milk vans will start. The tramp-tramp of factory workers going to work. People going for milk. The screech of buses. These sounds don't trouble me, though. I'm used to them. They tell me I'm at home, in my own bed. And it feels good and comfortable even if I'm on the 'camel', with a stiff neck because my pillow keeps falling down.

But just as I'm drifting back into sleep, I see a picture before my closed eyes. A house with a tiled roof. The rain falling on it with a soft patter. A bird sitting silent and still, huddled up because it's cold. And I think of Mummy's words and wonder, like Rashmi had done—can you hear silence? Will I hear it one day?

In: Kureishi, H. (1997)
"My Son the Fanatic"

My Son the Fanatic

Surreptitiously the father began going into his son's bedroom. He would sit there for hours, rousing himself only to seek clues. What bewildered him was that Ali was getting tidier. Instead of the usual tangle of clothes, books, cricket bats, video games, the room was becoming neat and ordered; spaces began appearing where before there had been only mess.

Initially Parvez had been pleased: his son was outgrowing his teenage attitudes. But one day, beside the dustbin, Parvez found a torn bag which contained not only old toys, but computer discs, video tapes, new books and fashionable clothes the boy had bought just a few months before. Also without explanation, Ali had parted from the English girlfriend who used to come often to the house. His old friends had stopped ringing.

For reasons he didn't himself understand, Parvez wasn't able to bring up the subject of Ali's unusual behaviour. He was aware that he had become slightly afraid of his son, who, alongside his silences, was developing a sharp tongue. One remark Parvez did make, 'You don't play your guitar any more,' elicited the mysterious but conclusive reply, 'There are more important things to be done.'

Yet Parvez felt his son's eccentricity as an injustice. He had always been aware of the pitfalls which other men's sons had fallen into in England. And so, for Ali, he had worked long hours and spent a lot of money paying for his education as an accountant. He had bought him good suits, all the books he required and a computer. And now the boy was throwing his possessions out!

The TV, video and sound system followed the guitar. Soon

the room was practically bare. Even the unhappy walls bore marks where Ali's pictures had been removed.

Parvez couldn't sleep; he went more to the whisky bottle, even when he was at work. He realised it was imperative to discuss the matter with someone sympathetic.

Parvez had been a taxi driver for twenty years. Half that time he'd worked for the same firm. Like him, most of the other drivers were Punjabis. They preferred to work at night, the roads were clearer and the money better. They slept during the day, avoiding their wives. Together they led almost a boy's life in the cabbies' office, playing cards and practical jokes, exchanging lewd stories, eating together and discussing politics and their problems.

But Parvez had been unable to bring this subject up with his friends. He was too ashamed. And he was afraid, too, that they would blame him for the wrong turning his boy had taken, just as he had blamed other fathers whose sons had taken to running around with bad girls, truanting from school and joining gangs.

For years Parvez had boasted to the other men about how Ali excelled at cricket, swimming and football, and how attentive a scholar he was, getting straight 'A's in most subjects. Was it asking too much for Ali to get a good job now, marry the right girl and start a family? Once this happened, Parvez would be happy. His dreams of doing well in England would have come true. Where had he gone wrong?

But one night, sitting in the taxi office on busted chairs with his two closest friends watching a Sylvester Stallone film, he broke his silence.

'I can't understand it!' he burst out. 'Everything is going from his room. And I can't talk to him any more. We were not father and son – we were brothers! Where has he gone? Why is he torturing me!'

And Parvez put his head in his hands.

Even as he poured out his account the men shook their

heads and gave one another knowing glances. From their grave looks Parvez realised they understood the situation.

'Tell me what is happening!' he demanded.

The reply was almost triumphant. They had guessed something was going wrong. Now it was clear. Ali was taking drugs and selling his possessions to pay for them. That was why his bedroom was emptying.

'What must I do then?'

Parvez's friends instructed him to watch Ali scrupulously and then be severe with him, before the boy went mad, overdosed or murdered someone.

Parvez staggered out into the early morning air, terrified they were right. His boy – the drug addict killer!

To his relief he found Bettina sitting in his car.

Usually the last customers of the night were local 'brasses' or prostitutes. The taxi drivers knew them well, often driving them to liaisons. At the end of the girls' shifts, the men would ferry them home, though sometimes the women would join them for a drinking session in the office. Occasionally the drivers would go with the girls. 'A ride in exchange for a ride,' it was called.

Bettina had known Parvez for three years. She lived outside the town and on the long drive home, where she sat not in the passenger seat but beside him, Parvez had talked to her about his life and hopes, just as she talked about hers. They saw each other most nights.

He could talk to her about things he'd never be able to discuss with his own wife. Bettina, in turn, always reported on her night's activities. He liked to know where she was and with whom. Once he had rescued her from a violent client, and since then they had come to care for one another.

Though Bettina had never met the boy, she heard about Ali continually. That late night, when he told Bettina that he suspected Ali was on drugs, she judged neither the boy nor his father, but became businesslike and told him what to watch for.

'It's all in the eyes,' she said. They might be bloodshot; the pupils might be dilated; he might look tired. He could be liable to sweats, or sudden mood changes. 'Okay?'

Parvez began his vigil gratefully. Now he knew what the problem might be, he felt better. And surely, he figured, things couldn't have gone too far? With Bettina's help he would soon sort it out.

He watched each mouthful the boy took. He sat beside him at every opportunity and looked into his eyes. When he could he took the boy's hand, checking his temperature. If the boy wasn't at home Parvez was active, looking under the carpet, in his drawers, behind the empty wardrobe, sniffing, inspecting, probing. He knew what to look for: Bettina had drawn pictures of capsules, syringes, pills, powders, rocks.

Every night she waited to hear news of what he'd witnessed.

After a few days of constant observation, Parvez was able to report that although the boy had given up sports, he seemed healthy, with clear eyes. He didn't, as his father expected, flinch guiltily from his gaze. In fact the boy's mood was alert and steady in this sense: as well as being sullen, he was very watchful. He returned his father's long looks with more than a hint of criticism, of reproach even, so much so that Parvez began to feel that it was he who was in the wrong, and not the boy!

'And there's nothing else physically different?' Bettina asked.

'No!' Parvez thought for a moment. 'But he is growing a beard.'

One night, after sitting with Bettina in an all-night coffee shop, Parvez came home particularly late. Reluctantly he and Bettina had abandoned their only explanation, the drug theory, for Parvez had found nothing resembling any drug in Ali's room. Besides, Ali wasn't selling his belongings. He threw them out, gave them away or donated them to charity shops.

Standing in the hall, Parvez heard his boy's alarm clock go off. Parvez hurried into his bedroom where his wife was still awake, sewing in bed. He ordered her to sit down and keep quiet, though she had neither stood up nor said a word. From this post, and with her watching him curiously, he observed his son through the crack in the door.

The boy went into the bathroom to wash. When he returned to his room Parvez sprang across the hall and set his ear at Ali's door. A muttering sound came from within. Parvez was puzzled but relieved.

Once this clue had been established, Parvez watched him at other times. The boy was praying. Without fail, when he was at home, he prayed five times a day.

Parvez had grown up in Lahore where all the boys had been taught the Koran. To stop him falling asleep when he studied, the Moulvi had attached a piece of string to the ceiling and tied it to Parvez's hair, so that if his head fell forward, he would instantly awake. After this indignity Parvez had avoided all religions. Not that the other taxi drivers had more respect. In fact they made jokes about the local mullahs walking around with their caps and beards, thinking they could tell people how to live, while their eyes roved over the boys and girls in their care.

Parvez described to Bettina what he had discovered. He informed the men in the taxi office. The friends, who had been so curious before, now became oddly silent. They could hardly condemn the boy for his devotions.

Parvez decided to take a night off and go out with the boy. They could talk things over. He wanted to hear how things were going at college; he wanted to tell him stories about their family in Pakistan. More than anything he yearned to understand how Ali had discovered the 'spiritual dimension', as Bettina described it.

To Parvez's surprise, the boy refused to accompany him. He claimed he had an appointment. Parvez had to insist that

no appointment could be more important than that of a son with his father.

The next day, Parvez went immediately to the street where Bettina stood in the rain wearing high heels, a short skirt and a long mac on top, which she would open hopefully at passing cars.

'Get in, get in!' he said.

They drove out across the moors and parked at the spot where on better days, with a view unimpeded for many miles by nothing but wild deer and horses, they'd lie back, with their eyes half closed, saying 'This is the life.' This time Parvez was trembling. Bettina put her arms around him.

'What's happened?'

'I've just had the worst experience of my life.'

As Bettina rubbed his head Parvez told her that the previous evening he and Ali had gone to a restaurant. As they studied the menu, the waiter, whom Parvez knew, brought him his usual whisky and water. Parvez had been so nervous he had even prepared a question. He was going to ask Ali if he was worried about his imminent exams. But first, wanting to relax, he loosened his tie, crunched a popadom and took a long drink.

Before Parvez could speak, Ali made a face.

'Don't you know it's wrong to drink alcohol?' he said.

'He spoke to me very harshly,' Parvez told Bettina. 'I was about to castigate the boy for being insolent, but managed to control myself.'

He had explained patiently to Ali that for years he had worked more than ten hours a day, that he had few enjoyments or hobbies and never went on holiday. Surely it wasn't a crime to have a drink when he wanted one?

'But it is forbidden,' the boy said.

Parvez shrugged, 'I know.'

'And so is gambling, isn't it?'

'Yes. But surely we are only human?'

Each time Parvez took a drink, the boy winced, or made a

fastidious face as an accompaniment. This made Parvez drink more quickly. The waiter, wanting to please his friend, brought another glass of whisky. Parvez knew he was getting drunk, but he couldn't stop himself. Ali had a horrible look on his face, full of disgust and censure. It was as if he hated his father.

Halfway through the meal Parvez suddenly lost his temper and threw a plate on the floor. He had felt like ripping the cloth from the table, but the waiters and other customers were staring at him. Yet he wouldn't stand for his own son telling him the difference between right and wrong. He knew he wasn't a bad man. He had a conscience. There were a few things of which he was ashamed, but on the whole he had lived a decent life.

'When have I had time to be wicked?' he asked Ali.

In a low monotonous voice the boy explained that Parvez had not, in fact, lived a good life. He had broken countless rules of the Koran.

'For instance?' Parvez demanded.

Ali hadn't needed time to think. As if he had been waiting for this moment, he asked his father if he didn't relish pork pies?

'Well . . . '

Parvez couldn't deny that he loved crispy bacon smothered with mushrooms and mustard and sandwiched between slices of fried bread. In fact he ate this for breakfast every morning.

Ali then reminded Parvez that he had ordered his own wife to cook pork sausages, saying to her, 'You're not in the village now, this is England. We have to fit in!'

Parvez was so annoyed and perplexed by this attack that he called for more drink.

'The problem is this,' the boy said. He leaned across the table. For the first time that night his eyes were alive. 'You are too implicated in Western civilisation.'

Parvez burped; he thought he was going to choke.

'Implicated!' he said. 'But we live here!'

'The Western materialists hate us,' Ali said. 'Papa, how can you love something which hates you?'

'What is the answer then?' Parvez said miserably. 'According to you.'

Ali addressed his father fluently, as if Parvez were a rowdy crowd that had to be quelled and convinced. The Law of Islam would rule the world; the skin of the infidel would burn off again and again; the Jews and Christers would be routed. The West was a sink of hypocrites, adulterers, homosexuals, drug takers and prostitutes.

As Ali talked, Parvez looked out of the window as if to check that they were still in London.

'My people have taken enough. If the persecution doesn't stop there will be *jihad*. I, and millions of others, will gladly give our lives for the cause.'

'But why, why?' Parvez said.

'For us the reward will be in paradise.'

'Paradise!'

Finally, as Parvez's eyes filled with tears, the boy urged him to mend his ways.

'How is that possible?' Parvez asked.

'Pray,' Ali said. 'Pray beside me.'

Parvez called for the bill and ushered his boy out of the restaurant as soon as he was able. He couldn't take any more. Ali sounded as if he'd swallowed someone else's voice.

On the way home the boy sat in the back of the taxi, as if he were a customer.

'What has made you like this?' Parvez asked him, afraid that somehow he was to blame for all this. 'Is there a particular event which has influenced you?'

'Living in this country.'

'But I love England,' Parvez said, watching his boy in the mirror. 'They let you do almost anything here.'

'That is the problem,' he replied.

For the first time in years Parvez couldn't see straight. He knocked the side of the car against a lorry, ripping off the wing mirror. They were lucky not to have been stopped by the police: Parvez would have lost his licence and therefore his job.

Getting out of the car back at the house, Parvez stumbled and fell in the road, scraping his hands and ripping his trousers. He managed to haul himself up. The boy didn't even offer him his hand.

Parvez told Bettina he was now willing to pray, if that was what the boy wanted, if that would dislodge the pitiless look from his eyes.

'But what I object to,' he said, 'is being told by my own son that I am going to hell!'

What finished Parvez off was that the boy had said he was giving up accountancy. When Parvez had asked why, Ali had said sarcastically that it was obvious.

'Western education cultivates an anti-religious attitude.'

And, according to Ali, in the world of accountants it was usual to meet women, drink alcohol and practise usury.

'But it's well-paid work,' Parvez argued. 'For years you've been preparing!'

Ali said he was going to begin to work in prisons, with poor Muslims who were struggling to maintain their purity in the face of corruption. Finally, at the end of the evening, as Ali was going to bed, he had asked his father why he didn't have a beard, or at least a moustache.

'I feel as if I've lost my son,' Parvez told Bettina. 'I can't bear to be looked at as if I'm a criminal. I've decided what to do.'

'What is it?'

'I'm going to tell him to pick up his prayer mat and get out of my house. It will be the hardest thing I've ever done, but tonight I'm going to do it.'

'But you mustn't give up on him,' said Bettina. 'Many young people fall into cults and superstitious groups. It

doesn't mean they'll always feel the same way.'

She said Parvez had to stick by his boy, giving him support, until he came through.

Parvez was persuaded that she was right, even though he didn't feel like giving his son more love when he had hardly been thanked for all he had already given.

Nevertheless, Parvez tried to endure his son's looks and reproaches. He attempted to make conversation about his beliefs. But if Parvez ventured any criticism, Ali always had a brusque reply. On one occasion Ali accused Parvez of 'grovelling' to the whites; in contrast, he explained, he was not 'inferior'; there was more to the world than the West, though the West always thought it was best.

'How is it you know that?' Parvez said, 'seeing as you've never left England?'

Ali replied with a look of contempt.

One night, having ensured there was no alcohol on his breath, Parvez sat down at the kitchen table with Ali. He hoped Ali would compliment him on the beard he was growing but Ali didn't appear to notice.

The previous day Parvez had been telling Bettina that he thought people in the West sometimes felt inwardly empty and that people needed a philosophy to live by.

'Yes,' said Bettina. 'That's the answer. You must tell him what your philosophy of life is. Then he will understand that there are other beliefs.'

After some fatiguing consideration, Parvez was ready to begin. The boy watched him as if he expected nothing.

Haltingly Parvez said that people had to treat one another with respect, particularly children their parents. This did seem, for a moment, to affect the boy. Heartened, Parvez continued. In his view this life was all there was and when you died you rotted in the earth. 'Grass and flowers will grow out of me, but something of me will live on –'

'How?'

'In other people. I will continue – in you.' At this the boy

appeared a little distressed. 'And your grandchildren,' Parvez added for good measure. 'But while I am here on earth I want to make the best of it. And I want you to, as well!'

'What d'you mean by "make the best of it"?' asked the boy.

'Well,' said Parvez. 'For a start . . . you should enjoy yourself. Yes. Enjoy yourself without hurting others.'

Ali said that enjoyment was a 'bottomless pit'.

'But I don't mean enjoyment like that!' said Parvez. 'I mean the beauty of living!'

'All over the world our people are oppressed,' was the boy's reply.

'I know,' Parvez replied, not entirely sure who 'our people' were, 'but still – life is for living!'

Ali said, 'Real morality has existed for hundreds of years. Around the world millions and millions of people share my beliefs. Are you saying you are right and they are all wrong?'

Ali looked at his father with such aggressive confidence that Parvez could say no more.

One evening Bettina was sitting in Parvez's car, after visiting a client, when they passed a boy on the street.

'That's my son,' Parvez said suddenly. They were on the other side of town, in a poor district, where there were two mosques.

Parvez set his face hard.

Bettina turned to watch him. 'Slow down then, slow down!' She said, 'He's good-looking. Reminds me of you. But with a more determined face. Please, can't we stop?'

'What for?'

'I'd like to talk to him.'

Parvez turned the cab round and stopped beside the boy.

'Coming home?' Parvez asked. 'It's quite a way.'

The sullen boy shrugged and got into the back seat. Bettina sat in the front. Parvez became aware of Bettina's

short skirt, gaudy rings and ice-blue eyeshadow. He became conscious that the smell of her perfume, which he loved, filled the cab. He opened the window.

While Parvez drove as fast as he could, Bettina said gently to Ali, 'Where have you been?'

'The mosque,' he said.

'And how are you getting on at college? Are you working hard?'

'Who are you to ask me these questions?' he said, looking out of the window. Then they hit bad traffic and the car came to a standstill.

By now Bettina had inadvertently laid her hand on Parvez's shoulder. She said, 'Your father, who is a good man, is very worried about you. You know he loves you more than his own life.'

'You say he loves me,' the boy said.

'Yes!' said Bettina.

'Then why is he letting a woman like you touch him like that?'

If Bettina looked at the boy in anger, he looked back at her with twice as much cold fury.

She said, 'What kind of woman am I that deserves to be spoken to like that?'

'You know,' he said. 'Now let me out.'

'Never,' Parvez replied.

'Don't worry, I'm getting out,' Bettina said.

'No, don't!' said Parvez. But even as the car moved she opened the door, threw herself out and ran away across the road. Parvez shouted after her several times, but she had gone.

Parvez took Ali back to the house, saying nothing more to him. Ali went straight to his room. Parvez was unable to read the paper, watch television or even sit down. He kept pouring himself drinks.

At last he went upstairs and paced up and down outside Ali's room. When, finally, he opened the door, Ali was

praying. The boy didn't even glance his way.

Parvez kicked him over. Then he dragged the boy up by his shirt and hit him. The boy fell back. Parvez hit him again. The boy's face was bloody. Parvez was panting. He knew that the boy was unreachable, but he struck him nonetheless. The boy neither covered himself nor retaliated; there was no fear in his eyes. He only said, through his split lip: 'So who's the fanatic now?'

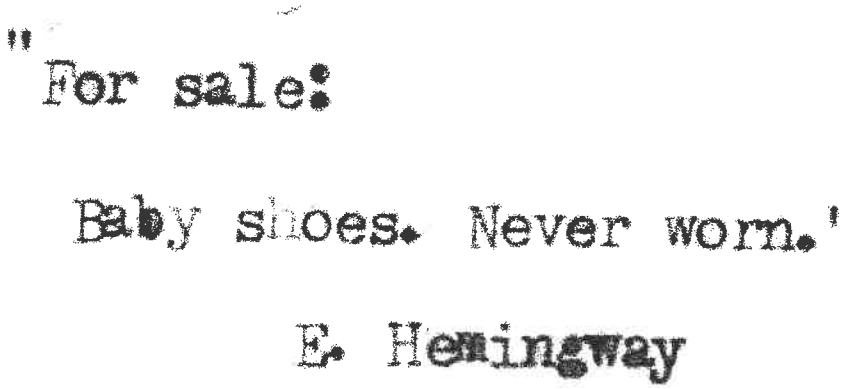
The Upsidedown Mice
Story by Roald Dahl

Once upon a time there lived an old man of 87 whose name was Labon. All his life he had been a quiet and peaceful person. He was very poor and very happy.
When Labon discovered that he had mice in his house, he did not at first bother himself greatly about it. But the mice multiplied. They kept right on multiplying and finally there came a time when he could stand it no longer. "This is too much," he said. "This really is going a bit too far." He hobbled out of the house and down the road to a shop where he bought himself some mousetraps, a piece of cheese and some glue.
When he got home, he put the glue on the underneath of the mousetraps and stuck them to the ceiling. Then he baited them carefully with pieces of cheese and set them to go off.
That night when the mice came out of their holes and saw the mousetraps on the ceiling, they thought it a tremendous joke. They walked around on the floor, nudging each other and pointing up with their front paws and roaring with laughter. After all it was pretty silly, mousetraps on the ceiling.
When Labon came down the next morning and saw that there were no mice caught in the traps, he smiled but said nothing.
He took a chair and put glue on the bottom of its' legs and stuck it upsidedown to the ceiling, near the mousetraps. He did the same with the table, the television set and the lamp. He took everything that was on the floor and stuck it upsidedown on the ceiling. He even put a little carpet up there.
The next night when the mice came out of their holes they were still joking and laughing about what they had seen the night before. But now, when they looked up at the ceiling, they stopped laughing very suddenly.
"Good gracious me!" cried one. "Look up there! There's the floor!"
"Heavens above!" shouted another. "We must be standing on the ceiling."
"I'm beginning to feel a little giddy," said another.

"All the blood's going to my head," said another.
"This is terrible!" said a very senior mouse with long whiskers. "This is really terrible! We must do something about it at once."
"I shall faint if I have to stand on my head any longer!" shouted a young mouse.
"Me too!" ---- "I can't stand it!" ---- "Save us! Do something somebody, quick!"
"I know what we'll do," said the very senior mouse. "We'll all stand on our heads, then anyway we'll be the right way up."
Obediently, they all stood on their heads, and after a long time, one by one, they fainted froma rush of blood to their brains.
When Labon came down the next morning the floor was littered with mice. Quickly he gathered them up and popped them all in a basket.
So the thing to remember is this:
Whenever the world seems to be terribly upsidedown, make sure you keep your feet firmly on the ground.

Hemingway "Six Word Short Story"

It is a famous anecdote (though unproven) that the author Ernest Hemingway was lunching at Luchow's with a number of writers and claimed that he could write a short story that was only six words long. Of course, the other writers challenged him to do so. Hemingway told each of them to put ten dollars in the middle of the table; if he was wrong, he said, he'd match it. If he was right, he would keep the entire sum. He quickly wrote six words down on a napkin and passed it around; Papa won the bet. The words were "FOR SALE, BABY SHOES, NEVER WORN." A beginning, a middle and an end!



Fables by Suniti Namjoshi

Bird Woman

Once there was a child who sprouted wings. They sprang from her shoulder blades, and at first they were vestigial. But they grew rapidly, and in no time at all she had a sizeable wing span. The neighbours were horrified. 'You must have them cut,' they said to her parents. 'Why?' said the parents. 'Well it's obvious,' said the neighbours. 'No,' said the parents, and this seemed so final that the neighbours left. But a few weeks later the neigbours were back. 'If you won't have them cut, atleast have them clipped.' 'Why?' said the parents. 'Well atleast it shows that you are doing something.' 'No,' said the parents and the neighbours left. Then for the third time, the neighbours appeared. 'On atleast two occasions you have sent us away,' they informed the parents, 'but think of that child. What are you doing to the poor little thing?' 'We are teaching her to fly,' said the parents quietly.

The Gods

In their extreme old age a childless couple was granted a daughter. This made them very happy, and they prayed to the gods every morning and evening to bless their child. They prayer was granted. As their daughter grew up it soon became obvious that she was a remarkable child. She could run further and faster than anyone in the village, her manners were good, she sang rather well, and she excelled in her studies. There was only one thing wrong, which spoilt everything. This was not a defect. The gods hadn't cheated. She was indeed blessed with great ability. But everyone in the village was critical of her. 'To be so damned good,' they said, 'is not womanly.'

Snow
Julia Alvarez

Our first year in New York we rented a small apartment with a Catholic school nearby, taught by the Sisters of Charity, hefty women in long black gowns and bonnets that made them look peculiar, like dolls in mourning. I liked them a lot, especially my grandmotherly fourth-grade teacher, Sister Zoe. I had a lovely name, she said, and she had me teach the whole class how to pronounce it. Yo-landa. As the only immigrant in my class, I was put in a special seat in the first row by the window, apart from the other children, so that Sister Zoe could tutor me without disturbing them. Slowly, she enunciated the new words I was to repeat: *laundromat, cornflakes, subway, snow.*

Soon I picked up enough English to understand holocaust was in the air. Sister Zoe explained to a wide-eyed classroom what was happening in Cuba. Russian missiles were being assembled, trained supposedly on New York City. President Kennedy, looking worried too, was on the television at home, explaining we might have to go to war against the Communists. At school, we had air-raid drills: An ominous bell would go off and we'd file into the hall, fall to the floor, cover our heads with our coats, and imagine our hair falling out, the bones in our arms going soft. At home, Mami and my sisters and I said a rosary for world peace. I heard new vocabulary: *nuclear bomb, radioactive fallout, bomb shelter.* Sister Zoe explained how it would happen. She drew a picture of a mushroom on the blackboard and dotted a flurry of chalk marks for the dusty fallout that would kill us all.

The months grew cold, November, December. It was dark when I got up in the morning, frosty when I followed my breath to school. One morning, as I sat at my desk daydreaming out the window, I saw dots in the air like the ones Sister Zoe had drawn - random at first, then lots and lots. I shrieked, "Bomb! Bomb!" Sister Zoe jerked around, her full black skirt ballooning as she hurried to my side. A few girls began to cry.

But then Sister Zoe's shocked look faded. "Why, Yolanda dear, that's snow!" She laughed. "Snow."

"Snow," I repeated. I looked out the window warily. All my life I had heard about the white crystals that fell out of American skies in the winter. From my desk I watched the fine powder dust the sidewalk and parked cars below. Each flake was different, Sister Zoe had said, like a person, irreplaceable and beautiful.

Reading Check

How would you **summarize** the **main events** in this story? Why is Yolanda irritated and what caused it.

First Thoughts

1. What **images** did you see as you read this story? Describe the image you saw most clearly.

Shaping Interpretations

2. Suppose that Sister Zoe was the **narrator** of the story instead of Yolanda. What might she be able to tell you that Yolanda can't?

3. Yolanda tells us about two new sets of English words that she learns from Sister Zoe. How do the "war words" differ from the "peacetime words"? How would the "war words" make a child feel?

4. As much as anything, this story reveals the **character** of Sister Zoe. What does the last sentence of the story tell you about the way she treats her students?

Extending the Text
5. How do you think people today would respond to a crisis like the one in the story? How do you think such situations affect young children?

Assignments:

(1) Yolanda is an immigrant child: What is new about the situation she finds herself in? (COMPREHENSION)

(2) "The white crystals that fell out of American skies in the winter." (l.24f.) – Explain the symbolic value of snow in the story. (ANALYSIS)

(3) Choose one of the following tasks:

a. Imagine you are one of Yolanda's classmates: Write a diary entry for the day the first snow fell. (RECREATION OF TEXT)

OR

b. Against the background of your own childhood: Comment on the effects it might have on children to grow up in such an atmosphere. (COMMENT)

Background information:
Cuban Missile Crisis
The **Cuban Missile Crisis** was a tense confrontation between the Soviet Union and the United States over the Soviet deployment of nuclear missiles in Cuba. The crisis began on October 14, 1962 and lasted for 38 days until November 20, 1962. It is regarded as the moment when the Cold War was closest to becoming nuclear war, and which could have turned to World War III.

Source: source: http://www.4teachers.de/?action=show&id=667842

BY ANGELA CARTER

Fiction

Shadow Dance
The Magic Toyshop
Several Perceptions
Heroes And Villains
Love
The Infernal Desire Machines Of Dr Hoffman
Fireworks
The Passion Of New Eve
The Bloody Chamber
Nights At The Circus
Black Venus
Wise Children
American Ghosts And Old World Wonders

Non-Fiction

The Sadeian Woman: An Exercise In Cultural History
Nothing Sacred: Selected Writings
The Virago Book of Fairytales (editor)
Expletives Deleted

Collected Works

Burning Your Boats:
The Complete Short Stories

Angela Carter

THE BLOODY CHAMBER

And Other Stories

V
VINTAGE
London (1979)

The Company of Wolves

One beast and only one howls in the woods by night.

The wolf is carnivore incarnate and he's as cunning as he is ferocious; once he's had a taste of flesh then nothing else will do.

At night, the eyes of wolves shine like candle flames, yellowish, reddish, but that is because the pupils of their eyes fatten on darkness and catch the light from your lantern to flash it back to you – red for danger; if a wolf's eyes reflect only moonlight, then they gleam a cold and unnatural green, a mineral, a piercing colour. If the benighted traveller spies those luminous, terrible sequins stitched suddenly on the black thickets, then he knows he must run, if fear has not struck him stock-still.

But those eyes are all you will be able to glimpse of the forest assassins as they cluster invisibly round your smell of meat as you go through the wood unwisely late. They will be like shadows, they will be like wraiths, grey members of a congregation of nightmare; hark! his long, wavering howl . . . an aria of fear made audible.

The wolfsong is the sound of the rending you will suffer, in itself a murdering.

It is winter and cold weather. In this region of mountain and forest, there is now nothing for the wolves to eat. Goats and sheep are locked up in the byre, the deer departed for the remaining pasturage on the southern slopes – wolves grow lean and famished. There is so little flesh on them that you could count the starveling ribs through their pelts, if they gave you time before they pounced. Those slavering jaws; the lolling tongue; the rime of saliva on the grizzled chops – of all

the teeming perils of the night and the forest, ghosts, hobgoblins, ogres that grill babies upon gridirons, witches that fatten their captives in cages for cannibal tables, the wolf is worst for he cannot listen to reason.

You are always in danger in the forest, where no people are. Step between the portals of the great pines where the shaggy branches tangle about you, trapping the unwary traveller in nets as if the vegetation itself were in a plot with the wolves who live there, as though the wicked trees go fishing on behalf of their friends – step between the gateposts of the forest with the greatest trepidation and infinite precautions, for if you stray from the path for one instant, the wolves will eat you. They are grey as famine, they are as unkind as plague.

The grave-eyed children of the sparse villages always carry knives with them when they go out to tend the little flocks of goats that provide the homesteads with acrid milk and rank, maggoty cheeses. Their knives are half as big as they are, the blades are sharpened daily.

But the wolves have ways of arriving at your own hearthside. We try and try but sometimes we cannot keep them out. There is no winter's night the cottager does not fear to see a lean, grey, famished snout questing under the door, and there was a woman once bitten in her own kitchen as she was straining the macaroni.

Fear and flee the wolf; for, worst of all, the wolf may be more than he seems.

There was a hunter once, near here, that trapped a wolf in a pit. This wolf had massacred the sheep and goats; eaten up a mad old man who used to live by himself in a hut halfway up the mountain and sing to Jesus all day; pounced on a girl looking after the sheep, but she made such a commotion that men came with rifles and scared him away and tried to track him into the forest but he was cunning and easily gave them the slip. So this hunter dug a pit and put a duck in it, for bait, all alive-oh; and he covered the pit with straw smeared with wolf dung. Quack, quack! went the duck and a wolf came slinking out of the forest, a big one, a heavy one, he weighed as much as a grown man and the straw gave way beneath him – into the pit he tumbled. The hunter jumped down after him, slit his throat, cut off all his paws for a trophy.

And then no wolf at all lay in front of the hunter but the bloody trunk of a man, headless, footless, dying, dead.

A witch from up the valley once turned an entire wedding party into wolves because the groom had settled on another girl. She used to order them to visit her, at night, from spite, and they would sit and howl around her cottage for her, serenading her with their misery.

Not so very long ago, a young woman in our village married a man who vanished clean away on her wedding night. The bed was made with new sheets and the bride lay down in it; the groom said, he was going out to relieve himself, insisted on it, for the sake of decency, and she drew the coverlet up to her chin and she lay there. And she waited and she waited and then she waited again – surely he's been gone a long time? Until she jumps up in bed and shrieks to hear a howling, coming on the wind from the forest.

That long-drawn, wavering howl has, for all its fearful resonance, some inherent sadness in it, as if the beasts would love to be less beastly if only they knew how and never cease to mourn their own condition. There is a vast melancholy in the canticles of the wolves, melancholy infinite as the forest, endless as these long nights of winter and yet that ghastly sadness, that mourning for their own, irremediable appetites, can never move the heart for not one phrase in it hints at the possibility of redemption; grace could not come to the wolf from its own despair, only through some external mediator, so that, sometimes, the beast will look as if he half welcomes the knife that despatches him.

The young woman's brothers searched the outhouses and the haystacks but never found any remains so the sensible girl dried her eyes and found herself another husband not too shy to piss into a pot who spent the nights indoors. She gave him a pair of bonny babies and all went right as a trivet until, one freezing night, the night of the solstice, the hinge of the year when things do not fit together as well as they should, the longest night, her first good man came home again.

A great thump on the door announced him as she was stirring the soup for the father of her children and she knew him the moment she lifted the latch to him although it was years since she'd worn black for him and now he was in rags and his hair hung down his back and never saw a comb, alive with lice.

'Here I am again, missus,' he said. 'Get me my bowl of cabbage and be quick about it.'

Then her second husband came in with wood for the fire and when the first one saw she'd slept with another man and, worse, clapped his red eyes on her little children who'd crept into the kitchen to see what all the din was about, he shouted: 'I wish I were a wolf again, to teach this whore a lesson!' So a wolf he instantly became and tore off the eldest boy's left foot before he was chopped up with the hatchet they used for chopping logs. But when the wolf lay bleeding and gasping its last, the pelt peeled off again and he was just as he had been,

years ago, when he ran away from his marriage bed, so that she wept and her second husband beat her.

They say there's an ointment the Devil gives you that turns you into a wolf the minute you rub it on. Or, that he was born feet first and had a wolf for his father and his torso is a man's but his legs and genitals are a wolf's. And he has a wolf's heart.

Seven years is a werewolf's natural span but if you burn his human clothing you condemn him to wolfishness for the rest of his life, so old wives hereabouts think it some protection to throw a hat or an apron at the werewolf, as if clothes made the man. Yet by the eyes, those phosphorescent eyes, you know him in all his shapes; the eyes alone unchanged by metamorphosis.

Before he can become a wolf, the lycanthrope strips stark naked. If you spy a naked man among the pines, you must run as if the Devil were after you.

It is midwinter and the robin, the friend of man, sits on the handle of the gardener's spade and sings. It is the worst time in all the year for wolves but this strong-minded child insists she will go off through the wood. She is quite sure the wild beasts cannot harm her although, well-warned, she lays a carving knife in the basket her mother has packed with cheeses. There is a bottle of harsh liquor distilled from brambles; a batch of flat oatcakes baked on the hearthstone; a pot or two of jam. The flaxen-haired girl will take these delicious gifts to a reclusive grandmother so old the burden of her years is crushing her to death. Granny lives two hours' trudge through the winter woods; the child wraps herself up in her thick shawl, draws it over her head. She steps into her stout wooden shoes; she is dressed and ready and it is Christmas Eve. The malign door of the solstice still swings upon its hinges but she has been too much loved ever to feel scared.

Children do not stay young for long in this savage country. There are no toys for them to play with so they work hard and grow wise but this one, so pretty and the youngest of her family, a little late-comer, had been indulged by her mother and the grandmother who'd knitted her the red shawl that, today, has the ominous if brilliant look of blood on snow. Her breasts have just begun to swell; her hair is like lint, so fair it hardly makes a shadow on her pale forehead; her cheeks are an emblematic scarlet and white and she has just started her woman's bleeding, the clock inside her that will strike, henceforward, once a month.

She stands and moves within the invisible pentacle of her own

virginity. She is an unbroken egg; she is a sealed vessel; she has inside her a magic space the entrance to which is shut tight with a plug of membrane; she is a closed system; she does not know how to shiver. She has her knife and she is afraid of nothing.

Her father might forbid her, if he were home, but he is away in the forest, gathering wood, and her mother cannot deny her.

The forest closed upon her like a pair of jaws.

There is always something to look at in the forest, even in the middle of winter – the huddled mounds of birds, succumbed to the lethargy of the season, heaped on the creaking boughs and too forlorn to sing; the bright frills of the winter fungi on the blotched trunks of the trees; the cuneiform slots of rabbits and deer, the herringbone tracks of the birds, a hare as lean as a rasher of bacon streaking across the path where the thin sunlight dapples the russet brakes of last year's bracken.

When she heard the freezing howl of a distant wolf, her practised hand sprang to the handle of her knife, but she saw no sign of a wolf at all, nor of a naked man, neither, but then she heard a clattering among the brushwood and there sprang on to the path a fully clothed one, a very handsome young one, in the green coat and wideawake hat of a hunter, laden with carcasses of game birds. She had her hand on her knife at the first rustle of twigs but he laughed with a flash of white teeth when he saw her and made her a comic yet flattering little bow; she'd never seen such a fine fellow before, not among the rustic clowns of her native village. So on they went together, through the thickening light of the afternoon.

Soon they were laughing and joking like old friends. When he offered to carry her basket, she gave it to him although her knife was in it because he told her his rifle would protect them. As the day darkened, it began to snow again; she felt the first flakes settle on her eyelashes but now there was only half a mile to go and there would be a fire, and hot tea, and a welcome, a warm one, surely, for the dashing huntsman as well as for herself.

This young man had a remarkable object in his pocket. It was a compass. She looked at the little round glass face in the palm of his hand and watched the wavering needle with a vague wonder. He assured her this compass had taken him safely through the wood on his hunting trip because the needle always told him with perfect accuracy where the north was. She did not believe it; she knew she should never leave the path on the way through the wood or else she would be lost instantly. He laughed at her again; gleaming trails of spittle clung to his teeth. He said, if he plunged off the path into the forest that surrounded

them, he could guarantee to arrive at her grandmother's house a good quarter of an hour before she did, plotting his way through the undergrowth with his compass, while she trudged the long way, along the winding path.

I don't believe you. Besides, aren't you afraid of the wolves?

He only tapped the gleaming butt of his rifle and grinned.

Is it a bet? he asked her. Shall we make a game of it? What will you give me if I get to your grandmother's house before you?

What would you like? she asked disingenuously.

A kiss.

Commonplaces of a rustic seduction; she lowered her eyes and blushed.

He went through the undergrowth and took her basket with him but she forgot to be afraid of the beasts, although now the moon was rising, for she wanted to dawdle on her way to make sure the handsome gentleman would win his wager.

Grandmother's house stood by itself a little way out of the village. The freshly falling snow blew in eddies about the kitchen garden and the young man stepped delicately up the snowy path to the door as if he were reluctant to get his feet wet, swinging his bundle of game and the girl's basket and humming a little tune to himself.

There is a faint trace of blood on his chin; he has been snacking on his catch.

He rapped upon the panels with his knuckles.

Aged and frail, granny is three-quarters succumbed to the mortality the ache in her bones promises her and almost ready to give in entirely. A boy came out from the village to build up her hearth for the night an hour ago and the kitchen crackles with busy firelight. She has her Bible for company, she is a pious old woman. She is propped up on several pillows in the bed set into the wall peasant-fashion, wrapped up in the patchwork quilt she made before she was married, more years ago than she cares to remember. Two china spaniels with liver-coloured blotches on their coats and black noses sit on either side of the fireplace. There is a bright rug of woven rags on the pantiles. The grandfather clock ticks away her eroding time.

We keep the wolves outside by living well.

He rapped upon the panels with his hairy knuckles.

It is your granddaughter, he mimicked in a high soprano.

Lift up the latch and walk in, my darling.

You can tell them by their eyes, eyes of a beast of prey, nocturnal, devastating eyes as red as a wound; you can hurl your Bible at him and

your apron after, granny, you thought that was a sure prophylactic against these infernal vermin . . . now call on Christ and his mother and all the angels in heaven to protect you but it won't do you any good.

His feral muzzle is sharp as a knife; he drops his golden burden of gnawed pheasant on the table and puts down your dear girl's basket, too. Oh, my God, what have you done with her?

Off with his disguise, that coat of forest-coloured cloth, the hat with the feather tucked into the ribbon; his matted hair streams down his white shirt and she can see the lice moving in it. The sticks in the hearth shift and hiss; night and the forest has come into the kitchen with darkness tangled in its hair.

He strips off his shirt. His skin is the colour and texture of vellum. A crisp stripe of hair runs down his belly, his nipples are ripe and dark as poison fruit but he's so thin you could count the ribs under his skin if only he gave you the time. He strips off his trousers and she can see how hairy his legs are. His genitals, huge. Ah! huge.

The last thing the old lady saw in all this world was a young man, eyes like cinders, naked as a stone, approaching her bed.

The wolf is carnivore incarnate.

When he had finished with her, he licked his chops and quickly dressed himself again, until he was just as he had been when he came through her door. He burned the inedible hair in the fireplace and wrapped the bones up in a napkin that he hid away under the bed in the wooden chest in which he found a clean pair of sheets. These he carefully put on the bed instead of the tell-tale stained ones he stowed away in the laundry basket. He plumped up the pillows and shook out the patchwork quilt, he picked up the Bible from the floor, closed it and laid it on the table. All was as it had been before except that grandmother was gone. The sticks twitched in the grate, the clock ticked and the young man sat patiently, deceitfully beside the bed in granny's nightcap.

Rat-a-tap-tap.

Who's there, he quavers in granny's antique falsetto.

Only your granddaughter.

So she came in, bringing with her a flurry of snow that melted in tears on the tiles, and perhaps she was a little disappointed to see only her grandmother sitting beside the fire. But then he flung off the blanket and sprang to the door, pressing his back against it so that she could not get out again.

The girl looked round the room and saw there was not even the indentation of a head on the smooth cheek of the pillow and how, for

the first time she'd seen it so, the Bible lay closed on the table. The tick of the clock cracked like a whip. She wanted her knife from her basket but she did not dare reach for it because his eyes were fixed upon her – huge eyes that now seemed to shine with a unique, interior light, eyes the size of saucers, saucers full of Greek fire, diabolic phosphorescence.

What big eyes you have.

All the better to see you with.

No trace at all of the old woman except for a tuft of white hair that had caught in the bark of an unburned log. When the girl saw that, she knew she was in danger of death.

Where is my grandmother?

There's nobody here but we two, my darling.

Now a great howling rose up all around them, near, very near, as close as the kitchen garden, the howling of a multitude of wolves; she knew the worst wolves are hairy on the inside and she shivered, in spite of the scarlet shawl she pulled more closely round herself as if it could protect her although it was as red as the blood she must spill.

Who has come to sing us carols, she said.

Those are the voices of my brothers, darling; I love the company of wolves. Look out of the window and you'll see them.

Snow half-caked the lattice and she opened it to look into the garden. It was a white night of moon and snow; the blizzard whirled round the gaunt, grey beasts who squatted on their haunches among the rows of winter cabbage, pointing their sharp snouts to the moon and howling as if their hearts would break. Ten wolves; twenty wolves – so many wolves she could not count them, howling in concert as if demented or deranged. Their eyes reflected the light from the kitchen and shone like a hundred candles.

It is very cold, poor things, she said; no wonder they howl so.

She closed the window on the wolves' threnody and took off her scarlet shawl, the colour of poppies, the colour of sacrifices, the colour of her menses, and, since her fear did her no good, she ceased to be afraid.

What shall I do with my shawl?

Throw it on the fire, dear one. You won't need it again.

She bundled up her shawl and threw it on the blaze, which instantly consumed it. Then she drew her blouse over her head; her small breasts gleamed as if the snow had invaded the room.

What shall I do with my blouse?

Into the fire with it, too, my pet.

The thin muslin went flaring up the chimney like a magic bird and now off came her skirt, her woollen stockings, her shoes, and on to the fire they went, too, and were gone for good. The firelight shone through the edges of her skin; now she was clothed only in her untouched integument of flesh. This dazzling, naked she combed out her hair with her fingers; her hair looked white as the snow outside. Then went directly to the man with red eyes in whose unkempt mane the lice moved; she stood up on tiptoe and unbuttoned the collar of his shirt.

What big arms you have.

All the better to hug you with.

Every wolf in the world now howled a prothalamion outside the window as she freely gave the kiss she owed him.

What big teeth you have!

She saw how his jaw began to slaver and the room was full of the clamour of the forest's Liebestod but the wise child never flinched, even when he answered:

All the better to eat you with.

The girl burst out laughing; she knew she was nobody's meat. She laughed at him full in the face, she ripped off his shirt for him and flung it into the fire, in the fiery wake of her own discarded clothing. The flames danced like dead souls on Walpurgisnacht and the old bones under the bed set up a terrible clattering but she did not pay them any heed.

Carnivore incarnate, only immaculate flesh appeases him.

She will lay his fearful head on her lap and she will pick out the lice from his pelt and perhaps she will put the lice into her mouth and eat them, as he will bid her, as she would do in a savage marriage ceremony.

The blizzard will die down.

The blizzard died down, leaving the mountains as randomly covered with snow as if a blind woman had thrown a sheet over them, the upper branches of the forest pines limed, creaking, swollen with the fall.

Snowlight, moonlight, a confusion of paw-prints.

All silent, all still.

Midnight; and the clock strikes. It is Christmas Day, the werewolves' birthday, the door of the solstice stands wide open; let them all sink through.

See! sweet and sound she sleeps in granny's bed, between the paws of the tender wolf.

We're Not Jews

Azhar's mother led him to the front of the lower deck, sat him down with his satchel, hurried back to retrieve her shopping, and took her place beside him. As the bus pulled away Azhar spotted Big Billy and his son Little Billy racing alongside, yelling and waving at the driver. Azhar closed his eyes and hoped it was moving too rapidly for them to get on. But they not only flung themselves onto the platform, they charged up the almost empty vehicle hooting and panting as if they were on a fairground ride. They settled directly across the aisle from where they could stare at Azhar and his mother.

At this his mother made to rise. So did Big Billy. Little Billy sprang up. They would follow her and Azhar. With a sigh she sank back down. The conductor came, holding the arm of his ticket machine. He knew the Billys, and had a laugh with them. He let them ride for nothing.

Mother's grey perfumed glove took some pennies from her purse. She handed them to Azhar who held them up as she had shown him.

'One and a half to the Three Kings,' he said.

'Please,' whispered Mother, making a sign of exasperation.

'Please,' he repeated.

The conductor passed over the tickets and went away.

'Hold onto them tightly,' said Mother. 'In case the inspector gets on.'

Big Billy said, 'Look, he's a big boy.'

'Big boy,' echoed Little Billy.

'So grown up he has to run to teacher,' said Big Billy.

'Cry baby!' trumpeted Little Billy.

Mother was looking straight ahead, through the window. Her voice was almost normal, but subdued. 'Pity we didn't have time to get to the library. Still, there's tomorrow. Are you still the best reader in the class?' She nudged him. 'Are you?'

'S'pose so,' he mumbled.

Every evening after school Mother took him to the tiny library nearby where he exchanged the previous day's books. Tonight, though, there hadn't been time. She didn't want Father asking why they were late. She wouldn't want him to know they had been in to complain.

Big Billy had been called to the headmistress's stuffy room and been sharply informed – so she told Mother – that she took a 'dim view'. Mother was glad. She had objected to Little Billy bullying her boy. Azhar had had Little Billy sitting behind him in class. For weeks Little Billy had called him names and clipped him round the head with his ruler. Now some of the other boys, mates of Little Billy, had also started to pick on Azhar.

'I eat nuts!'

Big Billy was hooting like an orang-utan, jumping up and down and scratching himself under the arms – one of the things Little Billy had been castigated for. But it didn't restrain his father. His face looked horrible.

Big Billy lived a few doors away from them. Mother had known him and his family since she was a child. They had shared the same air-raid shelter during the war. Big Billy had been a Ted and still wore a drape coat and his hair in a sculpted quiff. He had black bitten-down fingernails and a smear of grease across his forehead. He was known as Motorbike Bill because he repeatedly built and rebuilt his Triumph. 'Triumph of the Bill,' Father liked to murmur as they passed. Sometimes numerous lumps of metal stood on rags around the skeleton of the bike, and in the late evening Big Bill revved up the machine while his record player balanced on the windowsill repeatedly blared out a 45 called

'Rave On'. Then everyone knew Big Billy was preparing for the annual bank holiday run to the coast. Mother and the other neighbours were forced to shut their windows to exclude the noise and fumes.

Mother had begun to notice not only Azhar's dejection but also his exhausted and dishevelled appearance on his return from school. He looked as if he'd been flung into a hedge and rolled in a puddle – which he had. Unburdening with difficulty, he confessed the abuse the boys gave him, Little Billy in particular.

At first Mother appeared amused by such pranks. She was surprised that Azhar took it so hard. He should ignore the childish remarks: a lot of children were cruel. Yet he couldn't make out what it was with him that made people say such things, or why, after so many contented hours at home with his mother, such violence had entered his world.

Mother had taken Azhar's hand and instructed him to reply, 'Little Billy, you're common – common as muck!'

Azhar held onto the words and repeated them continuously to himself. Next day, in a corner with his enemy's taunts going at him, he closed his eyes and hollered them out. 'Muck, muck, muck – common as muck you!'

Little Billy was as perplexed as Azhar by the epithet. Like magic it shut his mouth. But the next day Little Billy came back with the renewed might of names new to Azhar: sambo, wog, little coon. Azhar returned to his mother for more words but they had run out.

Big Billy was saying across the bus, 'Common! Why don't you say it out loud to me face, eh? Won't say it, eh?'

'Nah,' said Little Billy. 'Won't!'

'But we ain't as common as a slut who marries a darkie.'

'Darkie, darkie,' Little Billy repeated. 'Monkey, monkey!'

Mother's look didn't deviate. But, perhaps anxious that her shaking would upset Azhar, she pulled her hand from his and pointed at a shop.

'Look.'

'What?' said Azhar, distracted by Little Billy murmuring his name.

The instant Azhar turned his head, Big Billy called, 'Hey! Why don't you look at us, little lady?'

She twisted round and waved at the conductor standing on his platform. But a passenger got on and the conductor followed him upstairs. The few other passengers, sitting like statues, were unaware or unconcerned.

Mother turned back. Azhar had never seen her like this, ashen, with wet eyes, her body stiff as a tree. Azhar sensed what an effort she was making to keep still. When she wept at home she threw herself on the bed, shook convulsively and thumped the pillow. Now all that moved was a bulb of snot shivering on the end of her nose. She sniffed determinedly, before opening her bag and extracting the scented handkerchief with which she usually wiped Azhar's face, or, screwing up a corner, dislodged any stray eyelashes around his eye. She blew her nose vigorously but he heard a sob.

Now she knew what went on and how it felt. How he wished he'd said nothing and protected her, for Big Billy was using her name: 'Yvonne, Yvonne, hey, Yvonne, didn't I give you a good time that time?'

'Evie, a good time, right?' sang Little Billy.

Big Billy smirked. 'Thing is,' he said, holding his nose, 'there's a smell on this bus.'

'Pooh!'

'How many of them are there living in that flat, all squashed together like, and stinkin' the road out, eatin' curry and rice!'

There was no doubt that their flat was jammed. Grandpop, a retired doctor, slept in one bedroom, Azhar, his sister and parents in another, and two uncles in the living room. All day big pans of Indian food simmered in the kitchen so people could eat when they wanted. The kitchen wallpaper bubbled and cracked and hung down like ancient scrolls. But Mother always denied that they were 'like that'. She

refused to allow the word 'immigrant' to be used about Father, since in her eyes it applied only to illiterate tiny men with downcast eyes and mismatched clothes.

Mother's lips were moving but her throat must have been dry: no words came, until she managed to say, 'We're not Jews.'

There was a silence. This gave Big Billy an opportunity. 'What you say?' He cupped his ear and his long dark sideburn. With his other hand he cuffed Little Billy, who had begun hissing. 'Speak up. Hey, tart, we can't hear you!'

Mother repeated the remark but could make her voice no louder.

Azhar wasn't sure what she meant. In his confusion he recalled a recent conversation about South Africa, where his best friend's family had just emigrated. Azhar had asked why, if they were to go somewhere – and there had been such talk – they too couldn't choose Cape Town. Painfully she replied that there the people with white skins were cruel to the black and brown people who were considered inferior and were forbidden to go where the whites went. The coloureds had separate entrances and were prohibited from sitting with the whites.

This peculiar fact of living history, vertiginously irrational and not taught in his school, struck his head like a hammer and echoed through his dreams night after night. How could such a thing be possible? What did it mean? How then should he act?

'Nah,' said Big Billy. 'You no Yid, Yvonne. You us. But worse. Goin' with the Paki.'

All the while Little Billy was hissing and twisting his head in imitation of a spastic.

Azhar had heard his father say that there had been 'gassing' not long ago. Neighbour had slaughtered neighbour, and such evil hadn't died. Father would poke his finger at his wife, son and baby daughter, and state, 'We're in the front line!'

These conversations were often a prelude to his announcing that they were going 'home' to Pakistan. There they wouldn't have these problems. At this point Azhar's mother would become uneasy. How could she go 'home' when she was at home already? Hot weather made her swelter; spicy food upset her stomach; being surrounded by people who didn't speak English made her feel lonely. As it was, Azhar's grandfather and uncle chattered away in Urdu, and when Uncle Asif's wife had been in the country, she had, without prompting, walked several paces behind them in the street. Not wanting to side with either camp, Mother had had to position herself, with Azhar, somewhere in the middle of this curious procession as it made its way to the shops.

Not that the idea of 'home' didn't trouble Father. He himself had never been there. His family had lived in China and India; but since he'd left, the remainder of his family had moved, along with hundreds of thousands of others, to Pakistan. How could he know if the new country would suit him, or if he could succeed there? While Mother wailed, he would smack his hand against his forehead and cry, 'Oh God, I am trying to think in all directions at the same time!'

He had taken to parading about the flat in Wellington boots with a net curtain over his head, swinging his portable typewriter and saying he expected to be called to Vietnam as a war correspondent, and was preparing for jungle combat.

It made them laugh. For two years Father had been working as a packer in a factory that manufactured shoe polish. It was hard physical labour, which drained and infuriated him. He loved books and wanted to write them. He got up at five every morning; at night he wrote for as long as he could keep his eyes open. Even as they ate he scribbled over the backs of envelopes, rejection slips and factory stationery, trying to sell articles to magazines and newspapers. At the same time he was studying for a correspondence course on 'How To Be A Published Author'. The sound of his frenetic typing drummed into their heads

like gunfire. They were forbidden to complain. Father was determined to make money from the articles on sport, politics and literature which he posted off most days, each accompanied by a letter that began, 'Dear Sir, Please find enclosed . . .'

But Father didn't have a sure grasp of the English language which was his, but not entirely, being 'Bombay variety, mish and mash'. Their neighbour, a retired schoolteacher, was kind enough to correct Father's spelling and grammar, suggesting that he sometimes used 'the right words in the wrong place, and vice versa'. His pieces were regularly returned in the self-addressed stamped envelope that the *Writers' and Artists' Yearbook* advised. Lately, when they plopped through the letter box, Father didn't open them, but tore them up, stamped on the pieces and swore in Urdu, cursing the English who, he was convinced, were barring him. Or were they? Mother once suggested he was doing something wrong and should study something more profitable. But this didn't get a good response.

In the morning now Mother sent Azhar out to intercept the postman and collect the returned manuscripts. The envelopes and parcels were concealed around the garden like an alcoholic's bottles, behind the dustbins, in the bike shed, even under buckets, where, mouldering in secret, they sustained hope and kept away disaster.

At every stop Azhar hoped someone might get on who would discourage or arrest the Billys. But no one did, and as they moved forward the bus emptied. Little Billy took to jumping up and twanging the bell, at which the conductor only laughed.

Then Azhar saw that Little Billy had taken a marble from his pocket, and, standing with his arm back, was preparing to fling it. When Big Billy noticed this even his eyes widened. He reached for Billy's wrist. But the marble was released: it cracked into the window between Azhar and his mother's head, chipping the glass.

She was screaming. 'Stop it, stop it! Won't anyone help! We'll be murdered!'

The noise she made came from hell or eternity. Little Billy blanched and shifted closer to his father; they went quiet.

Azhar got out of his seat to fight them but the conductor blocked his way.

Their familiar stop was ahead. Before the bus braked Mother was up, clutching her bags; she gave Azhar two carriers to hold, and nudged him towards the platform. As he went past he wasn't going to look at the Billys, but he did give them the eye, straight on, stare to stare, so he could see them and not be so afraid. They could hate him but he would know them. But if he couldn't fight them, what could he do with his anger?

They stumbled off and didn't need to check if the crêpe-soled Billys were behind, for they were already calling out, though not as loud as before.

As they approached the top of their street the retired teacher who assisted Father came out of his house, wearing a three-piece suit and trilby hat and leading his Scottie. He looked over his garden, picked up a scrap of paper which had blown over the fence, and sniffed the evening air. Azhar wanted to laugh: he resembled a phantom; in a deranged world the normal appeared the most bizarre. Mother immediately pulled Azhar towards his gate.

Their neighbour raised his hat and said in a friendly way, 'How's it all going?'

At first Azhar didn't understand what his mother was talking about. But it was Father she was referring to. 'They send them back, his writings, every day, and he gets so angry . . . so angry . . . Can't you help him?'

'I do help him, where I can,' he replied.

'Make him stop, then!'

She choked into her handkerchief and shook her head when he asked what the matter was.

The Billys hesitated a moment and then passed on silently.

Azhar watched them go. It was all right, for now. But tomorrow Azhar would be for it, and the next day, and the next. No mother could prevent it.

'He's a good little chap,' the teacher was saying, of Father.

'But will he get anywhere?'

'Perhaps,' he said. 'Perhaps. But he may be a touch –' Azhar stood on tiptoe to listen. 'Over hopeful. Over hopeful.'

'Yes,' she said, biting her lip.

'Tell him to read more Gibbon and Macaulay,' he said. 'That should set him straight.'

'Right.'

'Are you feeling better?'

'Yes, yes,' Mother insisted.

He said, concerned, 'Let me walk you back.'

'That's all right, thank you.'

Instead of going home, mother and son went in the opposite direction. They passed a bomb site and left the road for a narrow path. When they could no longer feel anything firm beneath their feet, they crossed a nearby rutted muddy playing field in the dark. The strong wind, buffeting them sideways, nearly had them tangled in the slimy nets of a soccer goal. He had no idea she knew this place.

At last they halted outside a dismal shed, the public toilet, rife with spiders and insects, where he and his friends often played. He looked up but couldn't see her face. She pushed the door and stepped across the wet floor. When he hesitated she tugged him into the stall with her. She wasn't going to let him go now. He dug into the wall with his penknife and practised holding his breath until she finished, and wiped herself on the scratchy paper. Then she sat there with her eyes closed, as if she were saying a prayer. His teeth were clicking; ghosts whispered in his ears; outside there were footsteps; dead fingers seemed to be clutching at him.

For a long time she examined herself in the mirror, powdering her face, replacing her lipstick and combing her hair. There were no human voices, only rain on the metal roof, which dripped through onto their heads.

'Mum,' he cried.

'Don't you whine!'

He wanted his tea. He couldn't wait to get away. Her eyes were scorching his face in the yellow light. He knew she wanted to tell him not to mention any of this. Recognising at last that it wasn't necessary, she suddenly dragged him by his arm, as if it had been his fault they were held up, and hurried him home without another word.

The flat was lighted and warm. Father, having worked the early shift, was home. Mother went into the kitchen and Azhar helped her unpack the shopping. She was trying to be normal, but the very effort betrayed her, and she didn't kiss Father as she usually did.

Now, beside Grandpop and Uncle Asif, Father was listening to the cricket commentary on the big radio, which had an illuminated panel printed with the names of cities they could never pick up, Brussels, Stockholm, Hilversum, Berlin, Budapest. Father's typewriter, with its curled paper tongue, sat on the table surrounded by empty beer bottles.

'Come, boy.'

Azhar ran to his father who poured some beer into a glass for him, mixing it with lemonade.

The men were smoking pipes, peering into the ashy bowls, tapping them on the table, poking them with pipe cleaners, and relighting them. They were talking loudly in Urdu or Punjabi, using some English words but gesticulating and slapping one another in a way English people never did. Then one of them would suddenly leap up, clapping his hands and shouting, 'Yes – out – out!'

Azhar was accustomed to being with his family while grasping only fragments of what they said. He endeavoured

to decipher the gist of it, laughing, as he always did, when the men laughed, and silently moving his lips without knowing what the words meant, whirling, all the while, in incomprehension.

SALMAN RUSHDIE
EAST, WEST



YORICK



JONATHAN CAPE
LONDON

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Thank the heavens! – or the diligence of ancient-time papersmiths – for the existence upon our earth of the material known as *strong vellum*; which, like the earth upon which I have supposed it to exist (although in point of fact its contacts with *terra firma* are most rare, its natural habitations being shelves, wooden or not wooden, some dusty, others maintained in excellent order; or letter-boxes, desk drawers, old trunks, the most secret pockets of courting lovers, shops, files, attics, cellars, museums, deed-boxes, safes, lawyers' offices, doctors' walls, your favourite great-aunt's sea-side home, theatrical property departments, fairy tales, summit conferences, tourist traps), . . . like the earth, I say again in case you have forgot my purpose, this noble stuff endures – if not for ever, then at least till men consciously destroy it, whether by crumpling or shredding, through the use of kitchen scissors or strong teeth, by actions incendiary or lavatorial, – for it's a true fact that men take an equal pleasure in annihilating both the ground upon which they stand while they live and the substance (I mean paper) upon which they may remain, immortalised, once this same ground is over their heads instead of under their feet; and that the complete inventory of such strategies of destruction would over-fill more pages than my ration, . . . so then to the devil with that list and on with my story; which,

as I had begun to say, is itself the tale of a piece of vellum, – both the tale of the vellum itself and the tale inscribed thereupon.

Yorick's saga, of course; that same ancient account which fell, near enough two hundred and thirty-five years ago, into the hands of a certain – no, a most uncertain – *Tristram*, who (although Yseult-less) was neither triste nor ram, the frothiest, most heady Shandy of a fellow; and which has now come into my possession by processes too arcane to detain the eager reader. Truly, a velluminous history! – which it's my present intent not merely to abbreviate, but, in addition, to explicate, annotate, hyphenate, palatinate & permanganate – for it's a narrative that richly rewards the scholar who is competent to apply such sensitive technologies. Here, dusty-faced and inky-fingered, lurk beautiful young wives, old fools, cuckoldry, jealousy, murder, juice of cursed hebona, executions, skulls; as well as a full exposition of why, in the *Hamlet* of William Shakespeare, the morbid prince seems unaware of his own father's real name.

Very well then: –

It appears that in the latter part of the reign of the illustrious King *Horwendillus* of Denmark, his chief

jester, one Master YORICK, took to wife a toothsome goldhair waif, by name 'Ophelia'; and thereafter began all the trouble . . . What's this? Interruptions already? Did I not tell you, have I not just this moment set down, that the bardic Hamlet, that's to say Amlethus of the Danes, is quite mistaken in believing the Ghost's name to be Hamlet too? – An error not only unusual but unfilial, not only unfilial but downright *unsaxogrammatical*, one may say, for it is contradicted by no less an authority than Saxo-Grammaticus's *History of the Danes*! – But were you to be silent and hear me out you'd learn it was no mistake whatsoever, but rather the cryptic key by which our tale's true meaning may most swiftly be unlocked.

I repeat: –

Horwendillus. Horwendillus Rex . . . – Still more questions? – Sir, of course the jester had a wife; she may not feature in the great man's play, but you'll concede that a woman's a necessary apparatus if a man would make a dynasty, and how else? – answer me that? – could the antique Fool have produced that Line, that veritable Monologue of Yoricks of whom the ill-named Tristram person's *parson* was but one single syllable? Well! You don't need ancient vellum to see the truth of THAT, I think. – Good Lord; her *name*? Sir, you must take it upon my word. But where's the puzzle? Do you

imagine that this 'Ophelia' was so blasted uncommon a name in a land where men were called such things as Amlethus, Horwend&c., yes, and Yorick, too? So, so. Let's get on.

Yorick espoused Ophelia. There was a child. Let's have no more disputes.

In the matter of this Ophelia: she'd less than half his years and more than twice his looks, so it will instantly be perceived that what follows may be ascribed to divisions and multiplications. An arithmetical tragedy, in sum. A grave tale, fit for gravesides.

How did it come about that this old wintry fool got himself such a springtime of a bride? – A noisome gale blows across the ancient vellum hereabouts. It is Ophelia's breath. The rottenest-smelling exhalation in the State of Denmark; a tepid stench of rats' livers, toads' piss, high game-birds, rotting teeth, gangrene, skewered corpses, burning witchflesh, sewers, politicians' consciences, skunk-holes, sepulchres, and all the Beelzebubbling pickle-vats of Hell! Thus every time this youthful beauty, the frail perfection of whose features brought moisture to men's eyes, made so bold as to open her mouth, – why, then there was cleared all around her an open ground some fifty feet in radius at

the least. So Yorick's path to wedlock was unobstructed, and a poor Fool must get what wife he can.

He courted her with a wooden peg on his nose. On their wedding day the king, who loved Yorick, gave the jester a thoughtful gift: a pair of silver nose-plugs. That's how it happened; first pegged, then plugged, our Fool in love assuredly looked his part.

So that's made clear.

[*Enter young Prince Amlethus, bearing a riding whip.*]

The scene's a poor bedchamber at Elsinore. Yorick and his lady lie fast asleep in their cot. In disarray upon a nearby chair: a cap, bells, motley, &c. Somewhere, a sleeping infant. Picture the boy Hamlet now, tiptoeing to the bedside; where he tenses, crouched; until at last he leaps! And now,

Yor. (awakes) O, a! What whoreson Pelion's this, that, tumbling down from Ossa, so interrupts my spine?

. . . I interrupt myself, for there occurs to me a discordant Note: would any man, awakened from deepest slumber by the arrival on his back of a seven-year-old princeling, truly retain such a command of metaphor and classical allusion as is indicated by the text? It may be that the vellum is not wholly to be relied upon in this regard; or it may be that Denmark's fools were most

uncommon learned. Some things may never be known . . .

(Back now to our Muttons.)

Ham. Yorick, the day's awake! Let's raise a chorus to the dawn.

Oph. (aside) My husband never loved this prince; a spoiled short brat, and cursed with sleeplessness, which plague he passes on to us. Here's how we wake each morning, with royal fists a-tearing at our hair, or heir-apparent buttocks jig-jogging on our necks. Were he my child . . . good morrow, sweet my prince!

Ham. Ophelia, it is. A dawn chorus, Yorick, come!

Yor. That's for the birds. I'm of too venerable feather, that's the truth. My years long since encrowed me, or made of me an owl. I sing no more, but only caw or hoot in most unseemly form.

Ham. Soft! None of this. Your prince would have a song.

Yor. Still hear me out. Age, Hamlet, is a setting sun, and in my occidental years it is not right I hymn the orient day.

Ham. No more. Up, sing. I'll ride upon your back and hear you croon.

Oph. (aside) At seven he's the Old Man of the Sea; who knows, at twenty-seven, what he'll be?

Yor. (sings) *In youth when I did love, did love,*

Methought it was very sweet, To contract, O! the time, for-a my behove, O! methought there was nothing meet. But age, with his stealing steps, Hath claw'd me in his clutch . . .

Ham. Cease, Yorick, this foul caterwaul; instanter, hold your peace.

Yor. Did I not tell you true?

Ham. Enough. Give me some jest. Yes, make it about a cat, just such a wauly mog as you just now surpassed.

Yor. (aside) Now must I do this penance for doing what he willed. (Aloud) There's life yet in this old dog you ride; so tell me, Hamlet, why cats have nine lives?

Ham. I know it not, but why they have nine tails, that I know well, and you shall find it out quick if the riddle be slow.

Oph. (aside) This prince is as sharp as his tongue; and poor Yorick blunter by the day.

Yor. Then hear the answer. All cats will look at kings; but to gaze upon a monarch is to place one's life in their hands; and lives held in such hands do often slip through fingers and are spilled. Now, Hamlet, count the spaces on your hands, I mean 'twixt finger and finger, and finger and finger, and finger and finger, and finger and thumb. On two hands, count eight chasms through which a life may fall. Only nine lives

will ensure that one at least remain; and so our cat, king-watching, must have nine.

Oph. Husband, a fine conceit.

Ham. So now a dance! Discharge your jester's office and let's have a merry jig.

Yor. You'll hang upon my back the while?

Ham. I will; there to ponder what I want.

Yor. (aside, and dancing) Hamlet, you want for nothing: yet Yorick finds you wanting.

And all this spoken with filigree'd plugs up the nose, up princely nostrils as well as Foolish ones! – The child, crying in his cradle, complains as much of his bunged proboscis as of the noise of Hamlet's whip, whishing and whooshing through the air to encourage his dancing biped steed. – What are we to think of so enraged a prince? It's sure he hated Ophelia; but for what? Her pestilential gusts? Her sovereignty over the Fool, who doted upon her very eyelashes? Or could it have been the swelling buds beneath her shift, her body that was not his to command? At seven, Prince Amlethus is disturbed by something in this girl, but cannot give it name. – So childish ardour turns to hate.

Perhaps all three: her stink; her theft of Yorick's heart, for as any fool knows the heart of a Fool is his prince's possession, for who but a Fool would surrender

his heart to a prince?; and, yes, her beauty, too. There's no need to choose. Let's be gluttonous in our understanding and swallow this trinity whole.

We shall spare Hamlet too harsh a judgment. He was a lonely child, who saw in Yorick a father as well as a servant, viz. the best, the perfect father, for every son would make his father a slave. In Yorick, singing, jesting, dancing, the pallid prince sees Horwendillus tamed. He was a mother's boy.

The vellum hereabouts, – I should say the ink upon it – or, more precisely still, the fist that held the pen – but the fist's long dead, and it won't do to speak ill of the departed – O, **********!, let me say *the text* begins to ramble, listing in gruesome detail all the crimes committed by the prince against the jester's person: each imprint of royal boot upon his buttocks, complete with itemisations of cause, effect, location, costume, contingent circumstances (rain, sun, thundery conditions, hail, and other functions of nature; or the absence of Hamlet's mother owing to the tyranny, even over queens, of natural functions), descriptions of the jester's pratfalls, of the clump of turf with which his nose collided, of subsequent searches for dislodged noseplugs; in brief, a most lamentable lack of brevity, which we shall rectify here without delay. The point's well

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made, I think. To labour it further would be to emulate the prince, who belaboured Yorick with sticks and whips and the Lord knows what – and we would be rash to treat our Reader (being ourselves no Prince) as if he were a Fool. (And being no Prince, what business have I with this newly infiltrative 'we', this purple plural my sentences have presumed to put on? Off with it! Back to the common – the *uncommon*, because *Cyclopean* – singular I.)

One story will suffice:-

While riding Yorick, Hamlet with his whip parted the fool's cheek's fleshy curtains, to reveal the bony stage behind. It seems he was a feeling prince: enshouldered as he was, his gorge rose at the bloody sight. – Reader, the Prince of Denmark, on catching his first glimpse of a skull, puked generously on Yorick's dingling cap.

I have till now endeavoured to tell a delicate tale of private character, with many fine touches of psychology and much material detail; still I can no longer keep the great World from my pages, for what ended in Tragedy began in Politics. (Which will be small surprise.)

Picture a banquet at fabulous Elsinore: boar's heads, sheep's eyes, parson's noses, goose-breasts, calves' livers, tripes, fish-roes, venison haunches, pig's trotters

(here's the anatomy of the table; were its several dishes assembled into a single edible beast, a stranger monster would lie here than any hippogriff or ichthyocentaur!). – Tonight Horwendillus and his *Gertrude* are feasting FORTINBRAS, hoping to stay his territorial greed by satisfying his belly's equal liking for expansion, the latter requiring no more than the murder of the above mythical monster, a happier & certainly a tastier Strategy than WAR.

And is it not conceivable that F., seeing upon the laden board the dismembered limbs of this fearsomely diverse and most occult of creatures, and constructing in his mind's eye the whole composite Beast, with antlers on its giant turkey's head, and hooves set weirdly down beneath its scaly belly and its hairy shanks, might lose all appetite for the fray – fearing to confront on Danish battlefields the mighty race of hunters who could slay so wild a Thing – and might therefore cease to hunger for Denmark herself?

It does not matter. I've lingered at the banquet only to explain why this Queen Gertrude, over-occupied by diplomacy, beset by several types of meat, was unable to go upstairs and wish her son goodnight.

I must show you Hamlet sleepless in his bed, – but where's the fellow who can portray an absence? – of

sleep, I mean, and of a mother's kiss upon his cheek, – for a cheek unkissed resembles in all particulars a cheek for which no osculation had been hoped, and a boy shewn horizontal in his cot, and subject to the tergiversations & other Frenzies characteristic of *insomnia*, may nevertheless be taken for a child plagued by a flea; or fevered; or surly, at being forbidden the grown-ups' table; or practising his swimming in this textile sea; or G— knows what, for I don't. But absence, as is well known, makes hearts grow fonder; so up Amlethus gets, and tip-toes down corridors thus (if each dot represent the conjunction of one toe-tip with the floor):

. . . . ./ . . . . ./ . . . . ./ . . . . ./ . . . . ./, &c. &c.

– until (to be as brisk as he) he reaches Gertrude's chamber, rushes in, and resolves to await her there, so that what's missing from his cheek may be presented; a Lethe-kiss from Mother, and then he'll sleep.

(As it turned out, this proved a lethal scheme.)

And now, in pantomime, let me display what followed (for I'm afraid my pages' mean allotment may expire before my tale, and so in compensation for my earlier garrulity these my characters may be obliged to rush through Dumb-Shows, *tableaux*, and other acceleratory devices quite unsuited to the story's tragic content. But

there is nothing for it; my present long-winded Folly must make these ancients Fools. Thus haste, enforced by our inevitable end, makes Yoricks of us all):–

Hamlet Aghast: There are voices at the door! Not only his mother's, but some fierce drunken sot's! – Quick, hide! – But where? – The arras, not a moment to be lost! – He hides. (And so it may be said of him that in later life he slew himself, his child-self's memory lurking in this place, grown hoary and Polonial in form.)

O, what he hears! The grunting, roaring man! His mother's squeals and shrieks – ah, frail maternal cries! – Who threatens the Queen? – Bravely, the prince peers round the arras' edge, and sees . . .

. . . *HIS FATHER* falling wild upon the lady. It is a porky-snuffling Horwendillo beneath whom Queen Gertrude sobs and flails, – and then falls quiet, while her breath sounds harsh in Hamlet's ears, as if her throat were stopped.

The prince hears Death upon her voice, and understands, with a seven-year-old's acuteness, that his father's bent on murder.

Now out he leaps!

'Stop! Stop, I say!'

His father's springing back! His mother's hand flies to her throat, confirming Hamlet's fears of throttling!

The scene is plain enough. 'I saved her life,' Amlethus proudly thinks. – But drunken Horwendillus takes his son, & thrashes him, & lashes, & then thrashes once again. – A curious sort of thrashing, for it beats something into the prince's hide, – whereas the nature of most punishment is to beat an evil out.

What's beaten in? Why, hatred; and dark dreams of revenge.

Hamlet Alone: But I'll leave soliloquies to richer pens. My vellum's silent on what Hamlet felt while locked & wealy in his room. You must infer his thoughts from what he did.

If you desire, you may see him haunted. A Horwendillian phantom shimmers before his eyes and seems to squeeze the life-breath from the Queen. Amlethus's eyes, made visionary by fear, observe the dreadful Spectre as it assassinates Queen Gertrude a thousand times and more, now falling upon her to choke her in the bath (soap-bubbles die upon her lip), now strangling her at her mirror, so forcing her to watch her own Demise.

Reader, see Hamlet's dreams: look through his eyes at Horwendillus's chimaera, its fingers at his mother's throat, in gardens, kitchens, ballrooms and potting-sheds; on chairs, beds, tables & floors; in public and in

private, by day and by night, before and after luncheon, while she sings and when she is silent, clothed and nude, in boats and on horseback, enthroned or upon her piss-pot . . . and you may understand why he, the prince, now sees his recent 'rescue' as no End, but only a Beginning, to his loving anguish; why he racks his brains to find some permanent conclusion to his fear. – And so a *Plot* is born, conceived by Urgency out of Hate, its generative organ the royal whip that stung his royal buttocks, delivering upon those nether cheeks just such a yoricking as he'd often given the Fool.

And the plot begins to converge on Yorick; bitter Hamlet will use the jester as his revenge's tool.

Now you may see two hatreds coalesce: in Hamlet's angry brain his fury merges (one might as well say *marries*) Ophelia and the King. He sees how his hard wrath can stone down both these birds (for it is a Medusan wrath, that can turn yoric flesh to deadly granite).

And, at last, you hear the child-prince in his room, walking round & round about, a sullen riddle dripping from his lips: –

'Nor liquid, nor solid, nor gassy air,
Nor taste, nor smell, nor substance there.
It may be turned to good or ill.
Pour it in an ear, and it may kill.'

– So, Reader, my congratulations. Your fancy, from which all these dark suppositions have issued (for I began this passage by swearing myself to silence), is proved by them more fertile & convincing than my own.

So well, so accurately have you supposed that my task's made very brief. It remains only to bring Hamlet and Yorick, the one upon the other's back as is their custom, to a Platform below the Castle at Elsinore; – where the young prince pours such a magical poison into Yorick's ear that the Fool falls into foolish Delusions.

You have understood it all. – The ghost of Hamlet's living father appears, to haunt poor Yorick; and the venom conjures up a second undead phantasm – it is Ophelia, Yorick's wife, her clothes in disarray, her body twined in translucent, ectoplasmic splendour round the King's!

– *What was the princely poison?* –

Only solve your own riddle, Reader, and you'll know . . . there, never mind, I'll solve it for you. It was SPEECH.

O deadliest venene! Being insubstantial, though very serpentine, it knows no antidote. – To be plain, Hamlet persuades his father's Fool that Horwendillus and Ophelia, that Dame Yorick and the King . . . no, I

cannot say that terrible word of doing, when in truth was nothing done! – And possibly (the vellum is smudged, at this point, by ancient tears or other salty fluid) the cruel boy brought 'proofs': – a pair of golden nose-plugs, wrapped in a forged billet-doux? Or was it a handkerchief? No matter. The damage is done, and Yorick is multiply a fool: always a Fool by trade, he has become a doubled Dolt for being the Prince's *gull*, and (in his own eyes, for, as he sees it, seeming a Fool in the lovers' eyes) an Ass as well, an Ass most Foolish in appearance, because of the cuckold's horns between his ears.

Strangest of all – and here's the dark heart of the matter – by becoming a Fool-Actual, he sacrifices the privileges of the Fool-Professional. A jester was a curious brand of Fool, permitted by his motley to speak wisdom and have men laugh at it; to tell the truth, yet keep his head, jingling as it was with silly bells. – Yes, Fools were wise, as wise as clocks, for they knew their time for what it was. – But now this clock-wise Yorick changes round; fooled by the prince, he starts to play the Fool – to play it truly, that's to say to rant, to roar, to act the jealous spouse in deadly seriousness.

Which was Hamlet's intention: to force the Fool into a fatal folly. I've said he saw the jester as a second,

clownish father: this surrogate parent is now by poisoned words unleashed against the royal sire.

For the rest: –

Horwendillus sleeps alone in his Gethsemane. Enter Yorick, with juices of cursed hebona in a phial. – The poison Hamlet poured into his ear has precipitated, or so it fancifully seems, into this bottle; – and from the bottle into the king's ear it goes. – And that's Horwendillus dead; while Ophelia, accused and spurned by Yorick, loses her senses and wanders round the palace in a flowery madness until she dies of grief; – which madness gives the clue to Claudius, who then uncovers the crime, and it's to the block with Yorick, and that's that.

– But here's a mystery, an unknown hand at work! For *someone*, whom I cannot name, retrieves the Sever'd Head; and with all necessary bribes and whispers secretly contrives to have it buried there, where after many years the prince will be confronted by his grinning bony guilt. – So a faceless joker, some lover of the jester's heady wit, makes of his discarded noodle a most 'capital' (if unforeseen) amusement.

Tumpty tum, tumpty tum, and a tumpty tumpty tum . . . Reader, time's passing, and each of us passes the time in his own sweet way, whether by drumming

of fingers, or in sleep, or courtship, or the consumption of strings of sausages, or however we please; my own habit is to hum, and so tum tum tumpty tum. (If the tune distress you, be off and pass the time in some other place; freedom's a spaniel that grows weak and flabby if it be not exercised, so exercise your dog, Sir, that's the trick.)

– But, returning after many years to our Scene, what is this we see? Not Yorick; he's dead. Then, *YORICK'S GHOST.* For he seems to haunt the living, so that we may call him Will-o'-the-Wits . . . Reader, how much has gone wrong at Elsinore!

Gertrude, murderously 'rescued' by her son from her first, un-murderous spouse, remained in mourning many years, while Claudius ruled. (In this it's true my history differs from Master CHACKPAW's, and ruins at least one great soliloquy. I offer no defence, but this: that these matters are shrouded in antiquity, and there's no certainty in them; so let the versions of the story co-exist, for there's no need to choose. – Or this: that when Queen Gertrude at last did marry Claudius, the intervening years were, in Hamlet's troubled mind, by this action concertina'ed, blurred together, compressed; so that to him the passage of his childhood, adolescence and young manhood appeared no longer than two months [nay, not so much, not two] . . . and this is

wholly comprehensible, for have they not flown by in the brief space of time it took to sing my tumpty tum? Have they not passed in the few moments it took to walk *Freedom*, your spaniel bitch? – Well, then, you have two unanswerable cases instead of one; and that's enough, I hope.)

As I was saying: Gertrude marries! And now dead Yorick's jealousy, unhoused from the jester's corpse and seeking a new home, finds one in Hamlet. 'Tis clear – so Hamlet plots – that King Claudius must be accused of his brother's murder, and Yorick's execution must be shown to be the camouflage, the *arras* behind which the Truth was hid. – So Murder's spectre is invoked a second time, and Hamlet, in his mother-loving passion, sees it walk the battlements of Elsinore.

But this Ghost bears his own name: by which the prince, the accuser, is accused. Haunted by the Phantom of his crime, he starts to lose his reason. His own *Ophelia* he treats badly, as you know; his cracking brain confuses her with the unbearable memory of the Fool's falsely maligned and foully odorous wife; until at last the prince, who once turned Speech to Poison, drinks from a poisoned cup . . . and then dead marches, and also marches of the living:– old Fortinbras, too long uninvited to a meal, gobbles Denmark up instead.

Yorick's child survives, and leaves the scene of his family's tragedy; wanders the world, sowing his seed in far-off lands, from west to east and back again; and multicoloured generations follow, ending (I'll now reveal) in this present, humble *AUTHOR*; whose ancestry may be proved by this, which he holds in common with the whole sorry line of the family, that his chief weakness is for the telling of a particular species of Tale, which learned men have termed *chanticleric*, and also *taurean*.

– And just such a COCK-AND-BULL story is by this last confession brought quite to its conclusion.