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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

Postmodernism, Representations, and the Subaltern Woman

BY

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial
fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education

International/Intercultural Education

Department of Educational Foundations

Edmonton, Alberta

Fall, 1994

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We return to those empty spaces that have been masked by omission or concealed in a false and misleading plenitude...this return, which is a part of the discursive mechanism, constantly introduces modifications...the return to a text is not a historical supplement that would come to fix itself upon the primary discursivity and redouble it in the form of an ornament which after all is not essential. Rather, it is an effective and necessary means of transforming discursive practice. Michel Foucault
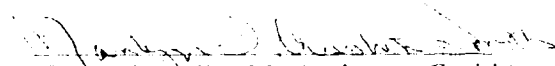
The future can only be anticipated in the form of an absolute danger. It is that which breaks absolutely with constituted normality and can only be proclaimed, presented, as a sort of monstrosity. For that future world and for that within it which will have put into question the values of sign, word, and writing, for that which guides our future anterior, there is as yet no exergue. Jacques Derrida

To disrupt the existing systems of dominant values and to challenge the very foundation of a social and cultural order is not merely to destroy a few prejudices or to reverse power relations within the terms of an economy of the same. Rather, it is to see through the revolving door of all rationalizations and to meet head on the truth of that struggle between fictions. Trinh T. Minh Ha
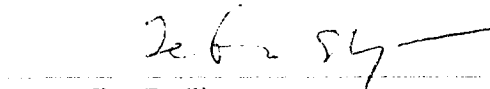
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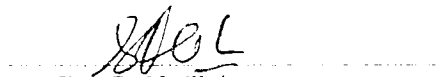
FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled *Postmodernism, Representations and The Subaltern Woman* submitted by Yoke Sum, Wong in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Education in International/Intercultural Education.

(Supervisor: Dr. M. Assheton-Smith)

(Dr. D. Sayer)

(Dr. D. Shogan)

(Dr. S. H. Toh)

May 26, 1994

To my father,
the late Dr. Timothy Wong

my father moved through dooms of love
through sames of am through haves of gives,
singing each morning out of each night
my father moved through depths of height

because my father lived his soul
love is the whole and more than all

                                    E. E. Cummings

ABSTRACT

Although current intellectual debates over Postmodernism or Postmodernity rarely address the Third World and its subaltern peoples, the Postmodern paradigm does offer an alternative approach to re/contextualizing Third World studies, and in the context of this thesis, Third World subaltern women. Despite substantive distinctions between Poststructuralism and Postmodernism, both paradigms overlap each other. The focus on language and discourse, the displacement of grand narratives, the suspicion towards history, the decentered subject, and the fragmentation of categories have all marked the Postmodern condition. As well, the Poststructuralism of Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida have figured prominently in much Postmodern discussion, especially pertaining to feminism and Post-Colonial theorizing. All these positions have led to the displacement of existing notions of Third World development – especially the inadequate center-periphery division of the world, and Western based emancipatory politics towards marginal groups, namely, Third World subaltern women. The Postmodern debate has also produced a crisis of representation – challenging and undermining definitions of representation as proxy and representation as image construction. The destabilization of categories and boundaries, as well as the notion of the multiple shifting subject have posed difficulties in capturing the figure of the Third World subaltern woman, and the "representation" of her "oppressed" state. As such, current Women and Development theorizing and practices appear to be fraught with problems since notions of development are usually rooted in the representation of Third World subaltern women as passive, suffering victims oppressed by economic, political and cultural constraints – representations that are often flawed and bound to certain discursive practices. Thus, representations can only be understood as momentary contextual events, containing the possibility of multiple gaps and spaces. Ultimately, there are no correct or precise representations of Third World subaltern women for they are "trickster" figures who will always slip past representational projects.

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Chapter 4
READING THE SUBALTERN WOMAN IN WOMEN AND DEVELOPMENT: TEXTUAL GAPS

> It is a result of not knowing, in so uncertain an undertaking, quite where to
> begin, or having anyhow begun, which way to move. Argument grows
> oblique, and language with it, because the more orderly and straightforward
> a particular course looks the more it seems ill-advised.
>
> <div align="right">Clifford Geertz</div>

As a theoretical critique, this thesis does not found itself upon a traditional grand theory such as Marxism, or other master discourses. In the eclectic spirit of what is now recognized as Postmodernism, I draw from a salmagundi of theories and ideas located in all disciplines. From philosophy to anthropology, he writings of (to name a few) Derrida, Foucault, Spivak, Said, Bhabha, Chow and Clifford have all left their imprints in this thesis. The terrain that encompasses the Third World, and the peoples who inhabit this terrain, I feel can never be contained within a single, grand theory. The grand theory never quite satisfies for rather than understanding why the parts do not fit, there is always the possibility of excluding and denying the parts which do not fit, or "trimming the excesses". In this way, I echo Gayatri Spivak's statement "I am a *bricoleur*, I use what comes to hand" (quoted in Young, 1993: 157). Spivak's use of the term bricoleur, or "a jack-of-all-trades," is plucked directly from Derrida's book *Of Grammatology* (1976) which she translated (a remarkable feat, as far as I am concerned), and Derrida's reference to Levi-Strauss's explorations of "bricolage": "the passage from desire to discourse always loses itself in *bricolage*, it builds its castles with debris" (Derrida, 1976: 139). A bricoleur differs from an engineer in the sense that an engineer's instrument is adapted to a specific need, while a bricoleur tinkers and makes do with whatever available instruments: "engineering is an impossible dream of plenitude...the reason for bricolage is that there can be nothing else" (Spivak, 1976: xix). I might then be accused of ambiguity and uncertainty, grasping or even playing at whatever appears convenient and appropriate, but better to confront the taxonomies of this world with a montage of ideas that blur genres than to perpetuate the constrictions of diversity through the language of a master narrative, and produce closure.

Thus, this work is interdisciplinary, and "to do something interdisciplinary is not enough to choose a *subject* (a theme) and gather around it two or three sciences. Interdisciplinary consists in creating a new object that belongs to no one" (Barthes, quoted in Clifford and Marcus, 1986: 1). With the above in mind, I approach this thesis with a homespun method which I personally refer to as *Patchwork Theorizing*, with the hopeful bricoleur's ambition that the bits and pieces of theory will weave itself into a(n) (in)coherant project; a(n) (in)coherent project that is not a finalizing whole but assumes the position of the Derridean *Supplement* (Derrida, 1976).

Writing, as Derrida warns us is "dangerous from the moment that representation there claims to be presence and the sign of the thing itself" (144). Writing for Derrida is only a supplement, – a concept which is regarded as an inessential addition to a work that has stood by itself but which simultaneously, and paradoxically, also proclaims the

inadequacy of the previous work. "A plenitude enriching another plenitude," supplements are also excesses to a work which are discarded for the sake of totality and wholeness. Supplements (in coexistence with which it supplements) are destabilizing, upsetting deterministic dialectical structures, evoking endless openings, revealing the ephemeral and provisional nature of structures and systems, and constantly shaping and shifting thoughts and ideas. Supplements replace only to displace – they are displacement projects and displacement "involves the invention of new forms of subjectivities, of pleasures, of intensities, of relationships, which also implies the continuous renewal of a critical work that looks carefully and intensively at the very system of values to which one refers in fabricating the tool of resistance" (Trinh, 1991: 19).

Reality is slippery, as Jean Baudrillard observes, and no theory can truly comprehend or stabilize the skidding forms of life. I am convinced that such ambitions of finding resolution and stability are illusory, for no sooner does a resolution to a conflict appear, there will always be something that destabilizes it, and engenders more disruptions. There is no Parrhesiastic truth in this thesis: the quest for some truth always contains some distortions, and while truth and its distortion is sometimes misappropriated, I also hope that we never settle for an ultimate truth.

I am called towards the painful realities of others and their despair. How can postmodernism consider differences, when we have always known that we who reside in worlds across, have been different from those less privileged? Many times, from the vantage point of those committed to an emancipatory goal, postmodernism appears to be a selfish manner of dealing with the world's ills; rather like an abdication of responsibility by those who have survived (and are still surviving) modernity's "schizophrenic" character. Thus, one wonders as to where postmodernism is most comfortably located. How is postmodernism conceived? How does it operate, and sustain itself? Is it the painful realization that the West must now absolve its guilt? More importantly, what and how does postmodernism serve my purpose?

The ideas and principles that postmodernism promote are not really earth shattering, since they seem to resemble scatterings of Eastern (Buddhism, Taoism etc.), aboriginal thought (American native Indian, Australian etc.), and English Romanticsm. Cultural diversity has always existed, and in many locations, has been accepted as a natural and acceptable phenomenon, while yet in many others, has bred racial conflict and violence. There is nothing new about diaspora, or miscegenated ethnicities – I am myself a subject and effect of diaspora. My family tree is a colourful mixture of Macau-Portuguese (Paternal) and Southern Chinese (Maternal) ancestry who migrated to British Malaya in the late 19th century; the Lord's Prayer and the Eucharist are as familiar to me as the act of obeisance at the Chinese ancestral altar. As for the popular notion of the fragmented, decentred subject, the Chinese woman has never been an autonomous subject, at least not "autonomous" as defined by the West. Our bodies have always been a profusion of selves, imprinted with heterogenous experiences and memories that are not solely ours – but are

the stories of our mothers, fathers, grandparents, and the greater family circle woven into the unbounded quiltwork of the self[ves]. Difference does not merely pertain to other people, difference has always been found within ourselves.

Yet postmodernism offers an interesting kaleidescope of the world. Its virtues lie in its admittence of fragmented subjects, difference, and diversity. It speaks of unravelling knowledges and lives; and questions, subverts, undoes, reveals, re/claims, retrieves, re/presents and re/conceptualizes. But it does not tackle the issue of handling the differences or the diversity. Why do we not accept others if their lives and values are so different from us? Yet to prescribe solutions for the chaos of diversity is tantamount to the modernist obsession to design, manipulate, manage and engineer (Bauman, 1991: 7). We can imagine a world where we have multiple pockets of different beliefs and values, but to what extend can we prevent one pocket of value from overcoming another? To take a stand, to claim a belief is often accompanied by the desire to proselytize others to one's politics. Can we stand by, and allow one value to obliterate another, moving in, and colonizing the other, as colonialism has done, in all its righteous glory? We then ask about postmodern ethics and morality. Do they exist in the postmodern world? Does postmodernism contain an ethical response or many ethical responses? Perhaps that is the challenge of postmodernism, that it presents to us a world that is elusive, and not really what it is; that it provokes questions, and more questions without ever yielding the "right" answers. Yet, sometimes I question my own insistance upon différance, wondering constantly perhaps if my orientation towards postmodernism harbours some subconscious agenda of maintaining my own privileged position, and thus blinding me to gender oppression and violence (in the name of différance) the world over. To all the questions I put forward, and to my own ambivalence, my honest answer is I don't know. These tensions, I suspect, will always remain in my work, and my life, and the contradictions along with them.

This study, which includes in the last chapter, a theoretical critique of Women and Development theory, suffers from a lack of direct field data. My substantiating examples are from locations I know well, and in my case, the region of South–East Asia, Malaysia and Singapore are familiar territories. The final outcome of the chapter is rather fragmented as I have focused on the assumptions and ethnocentric gaps which I have personally found to be problematic instead of a structured form of criticism of Women and Development (WAD) in its entirety. I doubt that the study will escape my biases but I hope that it will at least, generate greater critical reflection on the subject.

My inadequate language skills do not do justice to the majority of Third World women's lives. I quite dislike words or phrases such as "survival", "strategy", and "coping mechanisms". Why is it that in the First World, psychiatric therapy or counselling sessions

for women are not seen as "strategies[1]" or "coping mechanisms"? Also, the numerous counteractions of women in the Third World against oppressive policies are often translated as a group defensive reaction to negotiate their survival (usually in a spontaneous manner, as an unplanned, uncoordinated rebellion or as a last resort) rather than part of the daily operations of power. Nevertheless, I continue to employ such words as they are the most appropriate to serve the aims of my thesis. The term "Third World" has lately become a point of contention, but I choose to use the term as a positive one, not as a hierarchical conception, but as my articulatory space. Furthermore, "Third World" also reminds us of colonial imprints that are not so easily expurgated by the supplanting of names. Although I see "marginality" and "Other" as significant starting points for my work, I do not confine myself exclusively to those locations. The term "informal knowledge and local knowledge" will sometimes assume the form of "intergenerational knowledge[2]". Furthermore, I have chosen to refer to the impoverished Third World woman as the "subaltern". The direct Latin translation is the "other" (*alter*) who is "under" (*sub*) since the West does construct the Other as occupying an inferior status. However, the word subaltern also encompasses multiple implications such as the hidden, and the suppressed, whose narratives are never revealed nor allowed to emerge; the difference beyond the Derridean "metaphysics of presence[3]." The subaltern also implies resistance, where its presence is always already there, immutable and yet mutable. Also, as an admirer of the The Subaltern Studies Collective (SSC), whose deconstruction historiography have challenged dominant representations (by the colonial or educated elite) of the subaltern, I have appropriated their notion of the subaltern. According to the SSC, the subaltern is often devoid of any historical counter-hegemonic agency, and is shown to be present as gaps, fissures, structural dichotomies, instabilities in the forms of hierachy and hegemony, and yet are at the same time, moulders and shapers active in the constitution of law and government, and evidently, the nation-state.

It is apparent from the plethora of postmodern literature that psychoanalysis is an indispensible instrument of postmodern scholarship. However, in this thesis, I have opted not to apply any psychoanalytic analysis although smatterings of the language will pepper the text, for example, *politics of desire, suturing,* and *intertextuality*. This is why I have

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[1]Nyambura Maina qualified "strategy" for me as "planned action", without a distinction that "planned" here means institution or group. However, the word "strategy" has been so misused and distorted in Women and Development that "strategy" only connotes action that is planned in conjunction with or solely by development experts and practitioners.

[2]A word connoting the movement of time and space, and familial interconnections. I thank Prof. Barbara Spronk for suggesting the word.

[3]An elaboration of this term is found in chapter 2.

chosen to omit discussion of the French Feminists i.e. Julia Kristeva, Heléné Cixous and Luce Irigaray whose scholarship are all deeply embedded in psychoanalysis. Despite my skepticism of psychoanalysis, I felt compelled at one time to include some psychoanalytic references because I was tackling complex notions of subject, subjectivity and agency. However, I also personally believe that it is impossible to pin down the amorphous nature and operations of the human mind and the subjectivity. Psychoanalysis attempts to narrow down and understand what will always escape our neat constructions and categorizations of human knowledge. It never fails to amaze me how Western epistemology attempts to strip and dissect the human being (let alone the entire earth) down to its very atom, exploring from the biological to the mysteries of the mind. "There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in our philosophy[4]", but Western mind never gives up that search to define and manage, or quantify and qualify, as if each "successful" attempt of understanding will produce a permanent result that is outside and beyond flux; the dream, perhaps of absolute certainty. This neccesity to understand and explain appears (to me, at least) some desperate attempt to control our lives and our future choices, the refusal and denial of chaos. Admittedly, psychoanalysis does contain its merits, and its inclusion for analysis of the Third World has been argued on the basis that the Western impact on the Third World produces characteristics to which psychoanalysis is relevant. Many Post-Colonial and Diaspora scholars such as Homi Bhabha, Gayatri Spivak and Rey Chow have re/appropriated psychoanalysis successfully in their work with regards to the Third World. Yet, on the other hand, I think how ludicrous it would be if I told a Thai Woman who participates in a beauty contest that she was suffering some pre-Oedipal, mirror-stage situation based on genitalia. And while I am sure I can apply psychoanalytic theory to the Thai woman, I am also speaking in a privileged academic discourse, and therefore, speaking *for* and *about* her, and in the process, I fear, defining as well as constructing her. While I cannot escape references to the psychoanalytic, my ommission of psychoanalysis is not due to my skepticism, but rather to the complexities of applying psychoanalysis to Third World women of which I do not have sufficient knowledge; and the fear that psychoanalysis might become some prism which distorts the narratives of the subaltern Third World woman. Psychoanalysis is situated primarily in the domains of the academia, and unless one is versed in its language and application, it remains the epistemological privilege of a very select audience.

Despite my own political commitment to the feminist movement, I use the term *feminism* with great suspicion for the label itself is burdened with the impositions of First World ideas. While I realize that language is a dynamic process, and words and meanings are contested sites, subject to struggles over definition, words such as "empowerment," "sisterhood," or "patriarchy" have also become *doxa*, with taken-for-granted meanings

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[4]Shakespeare, W. *Hamlet* (i.v.174–5)

remaining unscrutinized and outside critique. Feminism contains within itself too many contradictions, and too many prescribed rules and regulations that usually imply that such directions would lead to positive outcomes and resolution. These rules, I fear actually shatter the unity of the movement rather than provide ways to understanding the nature of women's oppression in all socio-cultural contexts. Instead, the rules have been hegemonically appropriated, systematized and normalized, wherein any opposition is synonymous with heresy. Having reviewed the literature, I feel more certain now that the problem of gender can never be analysed in isolation from race or class/status. Furthermore, and perhaps unfortunately, I have become certain that ethnicity has assumed a greater priority over gender, particularly in the way ethnic and regional divisions manifest themselves in the feminist movements as well as the unequal power relations in determining the standards of "female emancipation". The more I read, the more I see the complexities of gender systems the world over, and the contemptuous, if not arrogant and racist assumptions about subaltern women and their lives. Even I myself, do not have a privileged access to the representation of their lives. I can only be wary of myself, deconstructing my position whenever possible, but I doubt I can escape totalizing or generalizing tendencies, especially with references toward the West. Subalternity is a complex position, one that is the outcome of a knowledge construction, and accumulated overlapping historical, economic, cultural and political circumstances. In the over-representation of the subaltern woman, one forgets to defer some authority to the subaltern woman herself.

But this is not to say that I have abandoned feminism entirely. If chunks of this thesis appear to be diatribes at feminism, I'm afraid they are. The diatribes are aimed primarily at how feminism itself has become an oppressive movement. But I cannot agree with Baudrillard when he writes that everything that can be emancipated is already emancipated, nor do I understand precisely what Post-Feminism is. Incidents such as the recent violent attack by Islamic fundamentalists on a male schoolteacher who conducted literacy classes for women in Bangladesh always jolts me back to anger, helplessness and a sense of feminist purpose. I do not call myself a Postmodern Feminist either, and while I do support and write within a postmodern context, I refuse the label because labelling would only defeat the purpose of postmodernism. Postmodernism is helpful because it opens up spaces for creativity and innovation. There is a certain careless freedom and ambiguity in postmodernism that I exude in: a sort of Barthesian jouissance that I enjoy tremendously, and perhaps too much. Yet I must be wary of it for the play should never overwhelm the political.

I contextualize my feminism; my feminism demands a necessary openness, the ability to cross borders, shift my subjectivity when necessary, fluid to the diverse lives of women, and men, open to the possibilities of various conceptions of gender relations that do not fit the feminist mould of patriarchy. I usually deconstruct at multiple levels, and from all locations including placing myself in the positions of others (an impossible task,

I know) for such a practice questions any claim to ultimate truth. This is not an easy practise, and I find myself confused and self-questioning most of the time. This is what I personally describe as *Sojourning Feminism*, for it travels, and maps territories, regions, and spaces, in an evanescent manner. It is not value free – it embraces a plurality of values. I believe it is not for everyone.

And now, the question of employing Western theorizing despite my decolonizing criticisms of the West. As much as I have been inspired by the post-colonial theorists, the presence of French post-structuralism, and its conception of language, power and the subject is prominent in this thesis. Yet, to avoid these theories would be to claim essentialism; and avoidence is both limiting, and class-interested, encouraging the idea that abstractions should be dealt by the First World, while the Third World critic should settle for "positive realities". To scorn Western theorizing is basically to widen the gulf of binarism which inscribes the uneveness of the First and Third Worlds. Furthermore, as Rev Chow correctly observes, "the use of Western Theory, [with its] richness and availability, is part and parcel of the uneven distribution of material between the First and Third Worlds" (1990). The unevenness perpetuates today in the control of printing and publishing, and in the intellectual hierachies of the universities which continue to place First World scholarship at the top. Ironically, in order to articulate my position, in order to speak, I must engage in and come to terms with Western theorizing, but always with the intention to re/appropriate, and re/invent in order to reverse, undermine and challenge.

Finally, a note of guilt. I must reconcile myself to the fact that despite my focus on the Third World subaltern woman, this thesis will never be accessible to her for it is laden with the very same academic language which abstracts and marginalizes her.

The aim of this thesis is not to identify the origins or the roots of oppression. Nor is it to ask why the subaltern woman is located in the position of subalternity, and to identify and to extirpate the forces which bind her to her subalternity. Rather, I am interested in how forces work to situate the Third World woman in the subaltern position, and how agency and identities of resistance are formed. I am interested in representations, and how they perpetuate the portrait of the subaltern. It is variations I seek; discursive ruptures which form modes of seeing, understanding and doing – the refusal of reducing everything to a totality, and a singularity of thought and representation. By positioning myself within the Postmodern, my intent is to disrupt, displace, and subvert the dominant ideas and representations which inscribe the figure of the subaltern woman in dichotomous positions of object and subject; and hopefully to open up multiple vantage points from which one can challenge the monolithic conception of the subaltern woman.

Chapter 1
Modernity, Postmodernity and the Third World

Introduction

No discussion of Postmodernism I feel, can be adequately served without a study of modernism or their temporal relation to each other. Indeed, current academic debates center very much on the virtues and evils of modernism and postmodernism[1], and whether the world's cultural condition may be described as either. The link between modernity and postmodernity occupies a very ambiguous zone, and there are no clear timeline or substantive delineations. In many ways, postmodernism is a reaction to and effect of modernist ideas and practices. To claim that we are in the age of postmodernity is premature and encourages the modernist teleological argument as well as reinforcing the "backwardness" of some Third World nations who have hardly reached the "modern stage" of "development", let alone the "postmodern stage". I choose to regard postmodernity as existing alongside and sometimes intertwining with modernity, their ideas sometimes clashing, complementary or converging.

Modernity, its spirit and cultural condition is complex in its genesis and its manifestation[2]. Having inspired the imagination and creativity, as well as the revolutionary

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[1] It has been suggested that our age should not be understood as "modernity" but rather in terms of "modernism". This is because modernity is considered to have been inaugurated in the 16th and 17th century, and modernism is taken "as a paradigm change in the arts" at the end of the 19th Century. Modernism then, should be extended to encompass contemporary social and cultural practices. Similarly, in the literary arena, modernism is seen as a cultural revolution or a cultural *mentalité*. Federico de Onis sees an indissoluble connection between the ideas of modernism and modernity, and "modernism is conceptualized as the search for modernity" (Smart, 1992: 150-162)

In this thesis, the terms Postmodernism and Modernism will be used interchangeably with Postmodernity and Modernity. They convey a sharp sense of historical relativism and a *zeitgeist* but they are by no means similar in definitions. The "ism" in Postmodernism and Modernism may refer more to a paradigm; cultural styles, attitudes, norms and values, i.e. in literature (Baudelaire/Thomas, Pynchon), art (Picasso/E.Munsch), architecture (the Empire State Building/The Vietnam Memorial) As Featherstone suggests, modernism is the culture of modernity, and postmodernism is the emergent culture of postmodernity (1991: 8). Modernity/Postmodernity is more sweeping in definition encompassing social and cultural conditions and practices, or at least constitutes a historical epoch Thus, i may describe a work of art as modernist or modernism in style, but a manifestation of modernity. There is no clear demarcation between the terms, and I have noticed a preference for the terms Modernity/Postmodernism whenever they are discussed in texts. This perhaps stems from the current manifestation of postmodern cultural styles and values in what may remains a world of modernity. Although they are interdependant, there is a need to qualify modernism/postmodernism in terms of cultural condition, norms and values or sensibility, and theorizing. For further reference to the various forms of modernity, see Matei Calinescu's *Five Faces of Modernity* (1987).

[2] One of the most lucid texts on modernity belongs to Marshall Berman's *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air* (1982). Berman finds the expression and substance of modernity in the works of

spirit of individuals, modernity remains Janus-faced; hopeful in its discourse of progress, and devastating in its more tragic manifestations. Coupled with the Rights of Man and libertarianism are also the destructive and dehumanizing characteristics of Utilitarianism and Capitalism. In terms of the Third World, the "Colonized Other" became overwhelmed by the forces of industrialization and its need for raw human energy and materials to work the production lines. The dominant symbol of industrialization, the factory[3], looms over and signifies the colonies of the "Great Western Powers", as human energy and raw materials are harnessed into the factory assembly belt to satisfy the consumer needs of the imperialist countries and their allies, simultaneously dragging their reluctant (although sometimes willing) non-Occidental subjects towards the modern enlightened condition.

Postmodernity represents a *fin de siècle:* the nail which shatters the stability of modern illusions, and continues to create large gaping holes in the ambitions of the preachers of liberty and progress. It attempts to upset the foundations which Modernity built and continues to build today, a constant undermining process and strategy of displacement (not replacement or opposition) that questions and doubts the legitimacy of grand narratives and knowledge claims. Nonetheless a concept and a label that is predominantly Western in genesis, postmodernism acknowledges the abreaction of the crisis within modernity.

The Third World in its colourful diversity, remains, I feel, uncertain of or disinterested in categorizing its own condition, let alone the condition of the world. The political and/or socio-economic imbroglio that most Third World countries suffer today are in some manner, the consequences of modernity's more progressive projects. The alien imprint of modernity, like a Derridean *always already,* (Chow, 1993: 56) is there in the Third World whether one likes it or not, suffusing and transforming lives. The concept of Postmodernity, I suspect, is a foreign element that might very well be limited to discussion on Western shores, or at least within the gilded halls of the academia. The drive to name, categorize and affix concepts to our present reality or un/reality remains predominantly, a Euro-American intellectual predilection. Modernity and Postmodernity are conceptual labels which most Westerners employ to grasp and react to a world in flux, and which ultimately, as *nomen dubium*, escape the straitjacket of definitions.

Goethe, Baudelaire, Marx, and in the cities of St. Petersburg and New York

[3] This metaphor is inspired by Zygmunt Bauman's *Modernity and The Holocaust* (1989) wherein the Nazi death camps are the symbols of the modern factory. Bauman argues in his book that the Holocaust was not merely an aberrant or atavistic eruption of human babarianism, rather the Holocaust was very much part of modernity and the modern (in)sensibility.

Chapter 1
Modernity, Postmodernity and the Third World

The Modern Condition: Taming the Chaos

> Look, the Jones have moved into Paradise!
> They've built a house there,
> laid down a road or two,
> built several yachts for the garden,
> two garages, one church with its plastic vicar.
> I asked hopefully when the lease would expire
> 'We paid in cash,' they smiled.
>
> <div align="right">Brian Patten, 'Mr Jones Takes Over'</div>

The concept of Modernity may be regarded as a cultural template for a total configuration of ideas stemming primarily from the West, and which manifests itself in specific intellectual disciplines, knowledge construction and expressions, such as the arts, philosophy, the industrialized society and its social relations and organizations, i.e. individual, the family, the workplace, the State (Calinescu, 1988; Rochberg–Halton, 1986; Rundell, 1987). Inaugurated by the Enlightenment thinkers such as Descartes, Bacon and Kant, the Modern age heralded the retreat of metaphysical authority, and ushered in the birth of secular Man[4] and science. The collapse of the metaphysical given saw the modern age seeking its foundational knowledge through objectivist empirical science, and rational thought and reason: "the new, modern order took off as a desperate search for structure in a world denuded of structure." (Bauman, 1992: xv). Central to modern thought was contingency and the necessity of taming the chaos through the "practice of ordering" (Bauman, 1992; Smart, 1993;). The drive to rationalize, order, regulate, and make efficient the tumultuous was necessary for modern man to achieve "enhanced levels of social understanding, moral progress and social happiness" (Smart, 1993:91). Even if the ongoing renewal of the world and ourselves required destruction of "traditions" and *other* human lives, it was part of the greater sacrifice for the progressive development of human society. Beyond the development of the Capitalist economy, and technological know–how, ideas of human advancement were also explored. No longer situated within the static identity of his social position and enshrined within the *Great Chain of Being* and human finitude, Man could liberate his own capacity, and transcend his condition. However, within the sweeping changes and the excitement of possibilities, modernity's destructive and nihilistic character also prevailed. Engendered within modernity's developmental logic was also the crises and tensions of modern society. In a paradoxical twist:

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[4] I use the masculine Man deliberately. Modernity, since the 17th century, I feel is predominantly, androcentric. After all, Francis Bacon did herald the age of the enlightenment as a truly "masculine birth of time" (quoted in Bordo, 1986: 450).

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> Modernity prides itself on the *fragmentation* of the world as its foremost achievement. Fragmentation is the prime source of its strength. The world that falls apart into a plethora of problems is a manageable world. (Bauman, 1991: 12)

There are two bitterly conflicting, yet complementing distinctions of modernity which arose during the first half of the 19th century (Calinescu, 1988: 41–46). The first one, *bourgeois modernity*, is tied to the notion that modernity is a stage in the history of Western civilization, a product of scientific and technological progress, the industrial revolution and the sweeping socio-economic changes wrought by capitalism. The doctrine of progress and the supremacy of reason in bourgeois modernity are also accompanied by a new development of time: time as commodified, measurable, exchanged and purchased for the calculative equivalent of money and necessary to the capitalist economy. The second form of modernity is *aesthetic modernity*[5] (circa 19th Century), which embodies a quality of life or a sensibility, and expressed in such writers as Baudelaire and Chateaubriand who espoused bohemian anti-bourgeois, anti-middle class attitudes, the blasé perception of everyday life, and anarchic tendencies. Aesthetic modernity marks an important aporia in the bourgeois modernist project, and its existence as a counterpart of bourgeoise modernity is also very much a disillusioned response to bourgeois modernity and its vulgar obsession with money. As Calinescu argues, "the relations between the two modernities have been irreducibly hostile, but not without allowing and even stimulating a variety of mutual influences in their rage for each other's destruction" (1988: 41).

In terms of temporal awareness, modernity represented the severance from the traditions of the past, justifying the present, and the future through its rejection of knowledge forms of the past:

> What we have to deal with here is a major cultural shift from
> a time-honored aesthetics of permanence, based on a belief
> in an unchanging and transcendent ideal of beauty, to an
> aesthetics of transitoriness and immanence, whose central
> values are change and novelty (Calinescu, 1988: 1).

The main constitutive element in the concept of Modernity was not so much secularism, but the sense of *unrepeatable time*; a feeling of presentness to distinguish what had gone on before and was irretrivable. The etymological origins of "modernus" was traced to the

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[5]Zygmunt Bauman refers to aesthetic modernity as *modernism*, an intellectual (philosophical, literary, artistic) trend. Bauman identitifies modernism as a "prodromal stage of the postmodern condition". In modernism, "modernity turned its gaze upon itself and attempted to attain the clear-sightedness and self awareness which would eventually disclose its impossibility, thus paving the way to the postmodern reassessment"(Bauman, 1991: 4). Rather, modernism is modernity confronting its own worst nightmares.

Christian Middle Ages (5th–6th Century) and the Latin `modo' (recently, just now) and `hodie' (today) to distinguish the new from antiquity, and later on, the Christian from the pagan past. The early distinction, however, was not oppositional or a disjuncture, but rather to mark a relational continuity between the new and antiquity[6]. It was not until the Italian Renaissance (the *quattrocento* period) that references to the modern were indicative of the separation from the ecclesiastical authority of the past. The anti–antiquity polemics that emerged during the Italian Renaissance displayed a powerful tendency towards dichotomous distinctions. The sharp consciousness of the ancient/modern distinctions was expressed in the metaphors of light and darkness where Renaissance thought was bathed in resplendant li_ht and marked a new cycle of history, while the middle ages was characterized by darkness and ignorance. The historical continuum was therefore, broken and reconceptualized as a succession of sharp distinct breaks. The debate between the ancients and the moderns culminated with the *Querelles des Anciens et des Modernes* during the late 17th Century. Rooted in philosophical and scientific discussions, the *Querelles* resulted in the liberation of reason from medieval scholarship and renaissance idolatry, and presented a new world of infinite possibilities of knowledge (The Enlightenment), and the eventual separation of modernity from Christianity[7].

The death of God, and the emergence of modern man are almost automatically associated with modernity. By the 19th Century, modern thought is seen as freed from its

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[6] The famous maxim "standing on the shoulders of giants" is traced back to the 12th Century, where the moderns are representative of the dwarfs (read: the new and intellectually weak) who are borne aloft on the gigantic stature of antiquity (Calinescu, 1988: 15). The new thinkers were more advanced but only thanks to the tremendous contribution of antiquity's thinkers. The analogy remained as the essential idea of "succeeding generations symbolized by human bodies sitting on the shoulders of each other was kept and developed" (Calinescu, 1988: 16).

[7] "Although determined by the growing prestige of reason as a critical faculty and by the revolutionary discoveries of science, the self–consciousness of modernity as a distinct and superior period in the history of mankind was not free from all association with religion. On the contrary, such associations...were numerous and close, and it is only by bringing them into focus that we can become fully aware of of one of the structural ambiguities of modernity's ideas....[where] the romantic irrationalists...while rejecting the progressivism and philosophical optimism of the Enlightenment, [were still] committed to a broadly conceived modern ideal" (Calinescu, 1988: 33)

While spurred on by capitalist profits, colonial expansion was also accompanied by a deep seated commitment to Christianize the pagan natives, thus the idea of conquest by the sword and the bible. Missionary activity was rampant during the colonial period in all the colonies, a contradictory and ambiguous picture of saving the souls of the savages, while reducing them to the level of inferior beings and annihilating them when necessary in genocidal fashion.

historical past, and stood in opposition to traditional values and ideas. No longer regarded as intellectually weak or vulgar upstarts, modern thinkers became the emblems of reason and progress freed from the stultifying religious constraints of the past. It is the schism between the past and the present or the religious and the secular which informs the framework and logic of modernity, creating crises and tension, growing out particularly from the powerful dichotomous discourse within modernism. The dualisms are manifested in such Manichean oppositions as nature/culture; mind/body; man/woman. However, according to Susan Bordo, it was not until the Cartesian era that the bicameral notions of the self and the world; the inner and the outer, and culture and nature were placed in rigorous oppositions.

Descartes's series of dreams in 1619 springboarded the rationalist project of the enlightenment, and marked the efflorescence of a new age of confidence in the ability of the scientific reason to decipher and conquer the mysterious workings of nature, and liberate intellectual life from ecclesiatical institutions. The medieval perception of the self and the world was one of an unbroken continuum; the self, or the inner being was immersed in the world and universe. Descartes's, in his contemplations, however felt a strong sense of the fragility of the natural world, which together with the human body was an entrapment for the chaotic, the excessive, and confusion[8]. Since humanity was incoherant and nature was chaotic, the path to certainty and unity was only apprehended through the cogitations of the mind (the eye of the mind as distinct from the eye of the body) and the taming of nature, and hence, the body's unbridled desires. Descartes's answer to such negative passions was the disembodied cogito; mainly, the separation of the mind from the body (the consciousness and what is not consciousness) where the intellect, (the inner eye) "inspect[ed] entities modeled on retinal images" (Rorty, 1980:45). More significantly, in the Cartesian reflection upon the mind/body split, the Cartesian self and the world was rend asunder, thereby, producing the subject/object split that has constituted scientific epistemology. The detachment rendered the natural world or the earth inert, a *res extensa*, passive and receptive, to be comprehended and controlled through the dictates of science. The severance or discontinuity was crucial for it, more or less, paved the way towards an objectivist, logico-empirical or scientific apprehension of the world; "no previously

[8]The severance of the mind and body was also very much the denial of the female. Since Cartesian knowledge constructed the body and nature as feminine, the "Cartesian reconstruction of the world [was] a defiant gesture of independance from the female cosmos" (Bordo, 1986: 451) or the mother earth. The female body/nature presented itself as mysterious and incomprehensible, and thus required subjugation and control. Psychoanalytically, it was also a revoking of childhood emotions and the dependance upon the mother figure in favour of the "male rational adult".

The flight from the feminine amounted to the renascent concept of knowledge as masculine and the suppression of the parts which are considered female, and inferior.

reached conclusion, no past insights, no remembered information can be trusted. Unless the object is present and immediately in sight, it ceases to be available to the knower" (Bordo, 1986: 445).

The autonomous Cartesian Subject, in *his* withdrawal from the world, comprehends knowledge that has undergone the scutiny of empirical science, and rigorous examination for truth and clarity (Benhabib, 1984: 106). Reconciliation with the natural and fragmented world, is therefore, mediated by observation and empirical reasoning which produces stability and comprehension of the discordant natural world. Through logic and reason, one could deduce the natural laws which governed nature and the universe. It is this self-assertion of reason as the logic of science that has become essential to modernity, and grants epistemic warrant to scientific discourse as the dominant and legitimate form of knowledge. It is a knowledge which desires certainty, "a desire for foundations to which one might cling, frameworks beyond which one must not stray, objects which impose themselves, representations which cannot be gainsaid" (Rorty, 1980: 315). In *disenchanting* the indeterminate world (Weber, 1958:129-156), the world becomes the object of scientific rationalization and calculation, conditions so crucial to the fomentation of Capitalism".

While it is certainly not derivative of Capitalism, and neither is capitalism the product of modernity, *bourgeois modernity* is *capitalism*, and this is greatly expounded by Karl Marx's[10] dialectical vision, and a pessimistic and *disenchanted* Max Weber. Capitalism as an occidental pheonomenon[11] (Weber, 1983: 109), sweeps across and

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[9] Enlightenment thinkers such as David Hume and Antoine Nicolas Condorcet regarded capitalism as an inevitable natural manifestation of the social order. Laissez-faire activity embodied principles of individualism, enterprise, means-end rationality. Condorcet, particularly, had tremendous optimistic faith for the perfectibility of the human race and Enlightenment epistemology. To Condorcet, the Enlightenment's thesis of nature, reason and utility was reflected in the twin principles of progress and infinite perfectiblity of human beings. Capitalism, was regarded as the "rational socioeconomic order because it was based upon the natural laws of society and the nature of individual human beings" (Saiedi, 1993: 43). Capitalist development and the free rule of the market "implied increasing efficiency of the economy and the prosperity of the people" (Saiedi, 1993: 43) and would eventually lead to a controlled population and irreversible development and global prosperity and efficiency.

[10] Marx's modern pessimism was temporal as it was part of the dialectical drive towards Communist society.

[11] "While capitalism of various forms can be found in all periods of history, the provision for the everyday by capitalistic methods is characteristic of the Occident alone and even here has been the predominant method only since the middle of the 19th Century" (Weber, 1983: 109) Max Weber's claim above reveals the ethnocentric bias towards establishing standards, while

transforms the global landscape; the *duende* which spawns the urbanization process and the growth of machinery or technology, and inevitably, permeates every facet of society and social relations. The Capitalist mode of production, or the "general exchange of activities and products" (Marx, 1989: 62), according to Marx is "the condition of life for every single individual," which transforms "personal capacity into a capacity of things" or rather, where personal relations becomes governed by the social attitudes of things. Under a reified environment, voluntary exchange relations in the modern world abstract and universalize the lives of human beings, and subsume them under the productive drive for profit. Despite the freedom of individuals to conduct voluntary exchange, it is a freedom contingent upon the assimilation of the individual subject into the mode of production; a "personal independance based upon dependence mediated by things" (Marx, 1989: 62), and one which Weber argues, is subjected to bureaucratic quantitative regulation. The severance of personal relations produces the alienated individual who is estranged from his/her social reality, and whose individual identity is no longer dependant upon social relationships; a schizophrenic consequence where "individuals are perpetually riven between 'personal' experiences and public identifications, differences which cannot be represented and representations which deny differences" (Sayer, 1991: 89). For Max Weber, the chasm between the individual subject and his social reality, and the severance of the individual from his mode of production are the essential characteristics of the *rationalizing* drive, and integral to a well-oiled modern bureaucracy where the means usurp the ends. Max Weber's focus is not only on the macro- but the micro- organizations of life around capitalism, more precisely, discipline, capitalist acquisition, calculable rules, calculative rationality, which all constructed the iron cage of modern life (Weber, 1958). Prefiguring Michel Foucault's explications on discipline and power, Weber saw discipline (for only the disciplined body can overcome the excesses of passion) as necessary to the functioning of modern institutions, and creating the necessary conditions for efficiency and expertise, manifesting itself in all facets of the modern society, from the army barracks to schoolroom examinations.

It is within the locus of metropolitan society that the anonymity of modern life is embodied, with its commodity-fetish culture and "blind faith in machinery" (Arnold, 1993: 84); where personal relationships and human interaction are "disassociated", and the individual subject is plunged into an alienating, and anomic state. This is the aesthetic modernity which Baudelaire immersed himself in; the euphoria of "the transitory, the fugitive, the contingent" (Frisby, 1985: 14–17; Calinescu, 1987: 46–50; Berman, 1982: 131–171) in which the sense of vital (but ever fleeting) transformation arises out of the

diverse trade or exchange activities exist outside the Occident (and continue today), they are certainly not *capitalism of various forms*.

presentness of things along with the sense of time and space being, figuratively speaking, "out of joint". For Georg Simmel whose work has been regarded as the "highest expression of modernity" (Frisby, 1992), the disjunctured, the ephemeral, and the contingent are all characteristices of modernity, where subjective life is displaced and transported into the world of objective culture, and the "sophisticated culture of things" are simultaneously central and alien:

> The real cultural malaise of modern man is the result of this discrepency
> between the objective substance of culture, both concrete and abstract, on
> the one hand, and, on the other...the subjective culture of individuals who
> feel this objective culture to be something alien, which does violence to
> them, and with which they cannot keep pace (Simmel in Lawrence, 1976:
> 251)

Georg Simmel perceived modernity as a particular mode of lived experience, in which the internal human world is externalized:

> The essence of modernity as such is psychologism, the experiencing and
> interpretation of the world in terms of the reactions of our inner life and
> indeed as an inner world, the dissolution of fixed contents in the fluid
> element of the soul, from which all that is substantive is filtered and whose
> forms are merely forms of motion (quoted in Frisby, 1985: 38 & 46).

Money as the *demiurge* of Simmel's modern world, is also the incarnation of the dynamic character of the world. The modern individual subjectivity is cent ed around the nexus of a social life dominated by the money economy; the subjectivity is "rootless" and "arbitrary" (Simmel in Lawrence, 1976: 250), and internalizes the external world of economic value. Social life is to be grasped aesthetically, for the dizzying experiences of the metropolis and the money economy which permeate the modern age (and which constitute modernity) are "aesthetically sublime" (Frisby, 1992a: 178 and 1992b: 57–60, 155–174), a dynamic montage of images or social vignettes, and sensorial impressions that are to be viewed in totality. The fragment of each modern social life is not only a jigsaw piece of some wider totality, but "a social snapshot" which contained within itself "the possibility of revealing the total meaning of the world as a whole" (Frisby, 1985: 58). But the metropolis, and money culture also produced disturbing psychological consequences; a *neuresthenia*, as short term material gratifications which characterized the capitalist society produced the emotional dissolution of human values and security.

In a world where metaphysical value is replaced by economic value and the naked pursuit of material gain[12], it seems contradictory to promulgate the liberal rally for

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[12] "The disharmony of modern life, in particular the intensification of technology in every sphere combined with deep dissatisfaction with it, arises largely from the fact that things become more and more cultivated but people are capable only to a lesser degree of deriving from the

individual democratic rights, and human justice. With utilitarianism playing out its Faustian contradictions; maximum utility also supported maximum profits at maximum human costs.. It is upon the foundations of bourgeois modernity that colonialism, and later on, "progressive" economic development theories are abstracted, and imparted to the "less de :loped" nations of the Third World under the cloak of democratic egalitarianism and progress. Dispensing modernity to the far reaches of the earth meant that

> the part of the world that adopted modern civilization as its structural
> principle and constitutional value was bent on dominating the rest of the
> world by dissolving its alterity and assimilating the product of dissolution
> (Bauman, 1991: 232).

Rooted in Darwinian evolutionary science, and natural laws, and later expounded upon and compressed into sociological ideal types i.e. Töennis's *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*, Durkheim's dualistic mechanical and organic solidarity, and historical adaptation sequences i.e. Parson's pattern variables and evolutionary universals (Hamilton, 1983: 83), and Barrington Moore's commercialization stages, the road to modernity as dictated by modernization theories is blatantly ethnocentric[13] with its bipolar

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improvement of objects an improvement of their subjective lives..." (Simmel, quoted in Lawrence, 1976: 249)

[13] Modernity should not be confused with modernization, although modernization may be considered one of the roads to modernity. Development theories of the 20th Century were dominated by Modernization theorists such as W.W. Rostow and B. Warren who argued that economic growth and development were achieved through an abstracted development "formula" based on Western models. i.e. the spread of growth impulses, capital infusion, technology, aid programs, MNCs and trade, and well-organized economies (Larrain, 1989). Politically motivated, Rostow's modernization theory was a counter reaction to the "red scourge" of Communism which in Rostow's mind was a "disease of transition" (Larrain, 1989: 97). Despite the powerful criticisms spearheaded by the Dependency and the World System theorists, most UN and IMF development aid programmes today are still structured along the liberal, modernization paradigm of development, and sanctioned by most Third World nations. For example, in the CEPAL (Economic Comission for Latin America) 1985 report, modernization was also to be encouraged by cultivating "mechanisms of empathy that incorporate values, models of behaviour and aspirations originating from the most dynamic centers of civilization and that can shape demands" (quoted in Brunner, 1993: 36), and which were to be internalized into specific cultural and historical contex*

The counter criticisms of the Dependency and World Accumulation/System schools do not escape the modernist discourse either. In their dualistic (centre and the periphery) and hierachical conception of the global economic system, they perpetuate the language of 19th century liberal philosophy, treating the individual nation state in the Third World as the sovereign subject of development, and ultimately accepting Western standards of development and growth as the most appropriate models to emulate (Manzo, 1990).

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traditional/modern unit construction of society wherein Third World societies all fall into the inferior undifferentiated, ascriptive, and traditional category[14]. It was Hegel who after all declared that Africa and India possessed no history[15], and Marx's criticisms of British colonialism went only as far as the invective against the capitalist mode of production[16].

Marshall Berman notes that the process of modernization takes on a different character elsewhere; it is "exaggerated," and "illuminated" in other forms and idealized images and in "backward" countries, the process of modernization "nourishes itself not on social reality but on fantasies, mirages and dreams" (1982: 232).

Despite some Third World governments attempts to excise the pernicious influences of modernism (read: Western values, attitudes, norms), they are by no means abandoning the Modernization project (economic and political development and growth) even if these modernization projects assume very unique cultural forms, and gravitate along different development paths i.e. the Confucian capitalism (based on Neo-Confucian ethics, a parallel to Weber's Protestant Ethic) in the NICs of East and South East Asian regions. However, these countries' development projects are not merely "nourishing" themselves on "fantasies, mirages and dreams" or "idealized images".

[14] Far from being unique historical cultural structures, modernization theory asserts that so called "traditional values and institutions" are the main obstacles towards progressive social, economical and political transformation [read: Western nations].

[15] Reading Hegel's conception of history requires some tolerance, and if possible, a sense of levity. Hegel's philosophy of history is one of a universal history which sees its general aim in the realization of a transcendental World–Spirit that has as its essence, freedom (which also embodies reason, the true, and is eternal). The World–Spirit in its attained completeness, is self-consciousness of the freedom from whence truth and knowledge are attained. For Hegel, history actually assumes a geographical trajectory, moving from the east to the west (with China/Asia as the infant stage of the spirit/history) by–passing Africa which did not possess any Spirit/history, "Africa...is no historical part of the World...the unhistorical, undeveloped Spirit" (Hegel, 1956: 99) toward Europe and the culmination of spirit, "absolutely, the end of history" (ibid: 103). It is the necessary fate of the Asiatic empires to be subjected to European will.

Enrique Dussel (1993), in his study of the Hegelian contribution to the ethnocentric and dualistic conception of the world, argues that modernity, as a European phenomenon is grounded in a dialectical relationship with a non–European alterity; thus, affirming the view of Europe as the centre of world history. Hegel divided up the world in terms of the *New World* and the *Old World*, justifying the supremacy of the European World–Spirit in contrast to the other end of the historical continuum, the immature, infantile Spirit of Asia.

[16] "Now, sickening as it must be to human feeling to witness those myriads of industrious patriarchal and inoffensive social organizations disorganized and dissolved into their units, thrown into a sea of woes, and their individual members losing at the same time their ancient form of

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Otherwise, Marx believed that colonialism was for the ultimate good for it sowed the seeds for future class struggles in the East. To an extent, one even detects Marx's unabashed admiration for the power of bourgeois imperialism:

> The bourgeoisie, by the rapid improvement of all instruments of production,
> by the immensely facilitated means of communication, draws all, even the
> most barbarian, nations into civilization. The cheap price of its commodities
> are the heavy artillery with which it batters down all Chinese walls, with
> which it forces the barbarians' obstinate hatred of foreigners to capitulate.
> (Marx, 1989: 107)

While the search for economic profits spurred colonialism, colonizing the East was also based upon ideas generated by Herbert Spencer's evolutionary laws of society which proposed a biological deterministic development of individuals and societies, and placed Western societies at the most advanced developmental stage. Where once the human being was prescribed his/her social status according to divine knowledge, the scientific rationality of the modern world constructed hierachies of human development and achievement based upon the authority of biological science. Eventually, all societies (at least the strongest surviving ones) would converge upon a unilinear development path, and be absorbed into a universal historical narrative. Anything else was conceived as atavistic and aberrant. These ideas helped construct or invent the inferior `Other', and justified the colonial projects of the Europeans and the Americans. In terms of the various stages of human and societal growth, the European mind and society were never more exalted, far surpassing those of its Oriental others, and naturally, it was the moral task of the "Enlightened Modern Man" to teach and rescue the "primitive" inhabitants of the savage East from the darkness of superstition and savage ignorance:

> When it is considered, that the intellectual condition of our Indian
> population is far lower than that of our ancestors at the period of conquest;
> that there is not a single school or book in India by which the mind can be
> enlightened; that all the countries around Hindoost'han are enveloped in the
> same darkness......But let Hindoost'han receive that higher civilization she
> needs, that cultivation of which she is so capable; let European literature be
> transfused into all her languages, and then the ocean, from the ports of
> Britain to India, will be covered with our merchant vessels; and from the
> centre of India moral culture and science will be extended all over Asia, to

civilization, and their hereditary means of subsistence, we must not forget that these idyllic village communities, inoffensive as they may appear, had always been the solid foundation of oriental despotism, that they restrained the human mind within the smallest possible compass, making it the unresisting tool of superstition, enslaving it beneath traditional rules, depriving it of all grandeur and historical energies" (Marx, 1989: 173).

the Burman empire and Siam, to China, with all her millions, to Persia, and
even to Arabia (Ward, 1985: preface, lii–liii).
In the moral and spiritual department, it was the monumental duty of the Christian mission
of salvation to save the souls of the heathens and elevate them from penury and despair:

The splendid work of the Christian Church for the last seventy years in
raising up hundreds of thousands of the poor untouchable outcastes [of
India]....from the lowest depths of oppression and degradation and setting
them on the upward path towards a higher and happier life is a bright spot
of sunshine in what is otherwise a picture of darkness and despair (Mayo,
1929: 14)[17].

Even when modernization theories eventually embraced the multiple outcomes perspective,
the discourse remained horribly entrapped in sequential prescriptions (eg. Lucien Pye,
Barrington Moore), and dualisms i.e. either a nation progressed and adapted Western
Democratic institutions or remained backwards, and in the absence of democratic legal
systems or tools, reverted to a totalitarian regime (Janos, 1986: 58). Not surprisingly, any
crisis of transition (from tradition to modernity) in the Third World was often interpreted
as disequilibrium arising from the strains of incompatible cultures (the local and Western).
However, implicit in the argument was also the concept of a self–correcting or fragile
system where the strains of transition would either work itself out or be aggravated to such
a manner that despotic regimes and rampant structural poverty were the natural outcomes.
Implicit in the modernization paradigm was also the view that social transition in the West
was smooth and graceful while the Third World stumbled and fell all the way to modernity
(thus necessitating Western guidance). Swept away by the tides of modernization,
numerous parts of the region that we consider as the Third World resist or have yet to
achieve the condition of modernity and its optimistic theology of progress and liberty.
Instead, an asymmetrical global picture of progress emerges in which Third World nations
as the supplier of cheap labour, and natural resources for the mega–industries of the First
World are constantly playing catch–up to the advanced countries, either economically,
politically, culturally, or morally. The march towards the development of modern "Western

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[17]This extract is taken from a letter written June 2, 1928 by Bishop Henry Whitehead, 23
years Lord Bishop of the "great Indian diocese of Madras" (Mayo, 1929: 12) to Katherine Mayo
in response to her book *Mother India* (1927). In her response to the letter, Katherine Mayo
redeclares a point made in her book *Mother India* and that is: "The large majority of the inhabitants
of British India is Hindu. The large majority of that majority adheres to the orthodox Hindu creed
To the influence or the dictates of the current orthodox Hindu creed are directly traceable the most
devastating evils to-day [which] prey upon the Hindu World" (Mayo, 1929: 15). Mayo then,
proceeds to list the number of "degenerate crimes" of the Hindu world.

clones" are accompanied by the hallmarks of the modernization paradigm: facets of death, human exploitation, structural violence, political oppression, and environmental degradation.

The modern age produced much more than enlightened instrumental reason and hopeful progress. Underlying the most noble and egalitarian projects and ideas were also disturbing proselytizing tendencies which justified the cultural dominance and superiority of certain ethnic groups over others, and the crystallization of ethnocentric and patriarchal practices. Modernity, as Baudrillard wrote, "[imposed] itself throughout the world as a homogeneous unity, irradiating from the Occident" (1987: 63). The metonymic Rights of Man stands precisely and literally for itself, an androcentric and eurocentric declaration (that excluded the voices and historical narratives of women, indigenous people, Third World peoples, and other groups deemed as minority in stature (Renteln, 1990)[18]. To Michel Foucault and Deleuze and Guatteri, modernity was presented as a process of increasing rationalization, normalization, repressed personalities and desires, and constrictive social structures. The rationalization process, and its practices of ordering i.e. to classify, quantify, manage and engineer also inspired devastating scientific pursuits such as eugenics where some human beings were relegated to animal status due to biological factors such as skin colour, brain size, etc.. The institutionalized power of scientific discourse helped maintain hierachical order and was bestowed with the epistemic privilege to shape society by marginalizing, excluding, and silencing the authority of rival discourses. Cultural differences were tolerated as long as they remained within the discourse of modern cultural and political ideals. Solidaristic coexistence, built upon the meta-narratives of liberal democratic progress, also ensured free-flowing profit and unhindered economic competition. Universalism, *enlightenment-style*, could after all, ill afford the chaos or the threat of diversity.

In his desire to order and stabilize all those unruly elements, the Modern Western Man encounters a chaos far beyond his comprehension, and ordering the chaos becomes a Sisyphean labour. It is the uncontrollable chaos that postmodernism attempts to resurrect: it is the demolishing of the modern artifice of order (Bauman, 1992), modern anxiety, and the retrieval of silenced voices and histories that postmodernity represents. But more significantly, postmodernism should be considered, not so much as a historical epoch, but for its dismantling of the fortress of universal reason and meta-knowledge that "Western

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[18] Alison Dundes Renteln (1990) argues comprehensively that Human Rights, but more specifically, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is infused with ethnocentric assumptions rooted in Western enlightenment discourse where primitive savages of the Oriental must be infused with the moral consciousness of the Christian West. Arguing against philosophers like Immanuel Kant and John Rawls, she provides a cross cu'tural study of *Lex Talionis* (The Law of Retaliation), elucidating how laws of retaliation differ from society to society.

Man" built. Modernity, in short, has not lived up to its promises; in its search for clarity, confusion ensues, and the onward march of progress only leaves behind the gruesome rubble of human-wrought destruction.

Postmodernism[19]: The Method/s in the Madness

> The system was breaking down. The one who had wandered alone past so many happenings and events began to feel, backing up along the primal vein that led to his center, the beginning of a hiccup that would, if left to gather, explode the center to the extremeties of life, the suburbs through which one make's one way to where the country is.
>
> John Ashbery, 'The System'

Postmodernism, according to Andreas Huyssen is not merely a fad but marks a noticeable cultural transformation in sensibility, practice and discourse formation (Huyssen, 1984: 8). The modernity/postmodernity debate has become one of the most contested terrains in the intellectual life of Western society, erupting particularly in the arts and humanities, and from architecture to the social sciences. Postmodernism and its epistemological grounding, like the very term itself is an arena of confusing configurations and arguments encompassing numerous independant and inter- disciplinary formations. Rooted in structuralist and poststructuralist theories, and inspired by Saussurian linguistics and Nietzsche's nihilistic contemplations, intellects who have contributed to postmodern discourses in the contemporary world, and may be regarded as central figures of postmodern theorizing[20] write from numerous disciplinary vantage points. Such figures include a range of French thinkers i.e. Michel Foucault, Jean Baudriilaud, Jean-François Lyotard, Jacques Derrida, Roland Barthes, Julia Kristeva, Hélène Cixoux, Jacques Lacan,

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[19] In distinguishing *Postmodernity*, *Postmodernism* and the *Postmodern Sensibility*, Bryan S. Turner writes, "a sociology of postmodernity would seek to understand postmodernity(as a stage in the development of a modern system), postmodernism (as a particular form of culture) and postmodern sensibility (as an aesthetic paradigm for contemporary experiential fragmentation) via an analysis of the development of modernization" (Turner, 1992: 12).

[20]Many of the intellectuals whose work may be considered the driving force of postmodernism reject identifying themselves as *Postmodernists/Poststructuralists*. Julia Kristeva and Helene Cixous, for example, regard the fixation of labels, naming and categories as exclusionary practices and the violence of "male" language. Labelling, with its inherent power constructions, would perpetuate the phallogocentric drive to stabilize and order the world according to masculine rationality.

and Luce Irigaray; *Post-Marxists,* i.e. Ernesto Laclau, Chantal Mouffe, and Frederic Jameson; Postmodern Feminists such as Judith Butler, Joan Scott, Jane Flax, Donna Haraway and Teresa De Lauretis; the Postcolonial theorists such as members of The Subaltern Studies Collective[21], i.e. Gayatri C. Spivak, Ranajit Guha, Homi Bhabha, and Asian-American diaspora scholars, i.e. Trinh T. Minh Ha and Rey Chow. Amorphous and confusing, the difficulty of pinning down exactly what constitutes postmodernity leaves us with multifarious characteristics that include the playful and the political.

The postmodern world is one that is characterized by the skepticism toward what Zygmunt Bauman calls the triple alliance of values – liberty, equality and brotherhood (Bauman, 1991: 272)[22], and the dissolution of the social bond and organic unity of society. Postmodernity and its fractured spirit challenges the authority of reason, and the self-certain unitary subject, embracing instead the fluid decentered self. Also considered a *state of mind* (Bauman, 1992), postmodernism questions and rejects the grand narrative's global philosophy of the universal subject and agent, and the teleological vision of historical progress. Rejecting the dominant discourse of grand narratives, postmodernism celebrates spontaneity, the endless play of polysemous language, parody, and multiple shifting cultural realities. Hyper-communication, the explosion of information, accelerated technological changes, the exaltation of the visual, market diversification, and capital and worker mobility characterize the postmodern socio-economic realm. From the macro positions of large scale change and action, one looks rather to the local and everyday life of popular culture and the sense that emergent forms of discursive knowledge are expediting a dynamic reconstitution of subjectivity and identity. Postmodern reality is distorted and slippery, and is akin to a carnival funhouse of mirrors; rather, the technological advancement of media and image construction has carved a hyper-real world *of simulacra*[23] that blurs subject-object distinctions. With the rejection of hierachies,

[21]The Subaltern Studies Collective originated in Delhi, India and has since inspired the formation of another Subaltern Studies Collective in Latin America.

[22]"However hard political designers tried, they found themselves constantly in a trade-off situation, vainly struggling to reach all three at the same time. They found liberty militating against equality, equality giving short shrift to the dream of liberty, and brotherhood of doubtful virtue as long as the other two values failed to find a *modus coexistendi*....given the huge untapped energy of human energy, the objectives of equality and brotherhood sold human potential too cheaply. Equality could not be easily distanced from the prospect of uniformity. Brotherhood smacked all too often of enforced unity and a demand that the ostensible siblings should sacrifice individuality in the name of a putative common cause" (Bauman, 1991: 272)

[23] This is Jean Baudrillard's term to embody the shift towards a post-industrial world where hyper-consumption encouraged a reproductive social order in which simulations and models

dialectics and binary distinctions, there are no standard referents or values upon which one can form or distinguish knowledge systems and a universal truth:

> Postmodernity...does not seek to substitute one truth for another, one life
> ideal for another. Instead it splits the truth, the standards and the ideal into
> already deconstructed and about to be deconstructed. It denies in advance
> the right of all and any revelation to slip into the place vacated by the
> deconstructed/discredited rules. It braces itself for a life without truths,
> standards and ideals. (Bauman, 1992: ix)

The human subject thus, finds herself in a world of "dissipated objectivity" where there are indefinite interpretive choices rather than absolute values, and every encounter is reduced to the subjective. The world is an arena of imbricating discourses; with discourse itself being contextual, specific and temporal, and dependant on an infinite number of networks of power relations. Life as we know it, is entropic, destabilized and marked by a plurality of value spheres. While the modernists attempted to order the world, the postmodernists' tendency is towards *disorder*:

> The Postmodern mind seems to condemn everything, propose nothing.
> Demolition is the only job the postmodern mind seems to be good at.
> Destruction is the only construction it recognizes. Demolition of coercive
> constraints and mental blocks is for it the ultimate purpose and the end of
> emancipatory effort. (ibid: ix)

With postmodernity, one departs from any position within the frame of binary oppositions or standards of reference to totality. Rejecting the grand narratives of scientific legitimation, Jean-Francois Lyotard promulgates his now famous "Let us wage a war on totality"(Lyotard, 1989: 82) and encourages us "to stay where we are..to grab without noise all opportunities...to function as bodies and good conductors of intensities. No need of declarations, manifestos, organizations; not even for exemplary action" (quoted in Eagleton, 1985: 69). All is dissolved into randomness, chronic indeterminacy, uncoordinate activities, plurality and transitoriness. Not surprisingly, postmodernism and its theories of language, subjectivity, history and power has upset the challenge of emancipatory politics by refusing the possibilities of a progressive unitary transformation, prompting anti-postmodernist critics like Jurgen Habermas to defend the more emancipatory, if not utopic, and universalizing goals of modernity (Habermas, 1984; Poster, 1989).

Postmodernism gained popular acceptance among the literary circles and was initially used by Federico de Onis in 1934 to describe a conservative reaction from within modernism. The concept of postmodernism was later expanded to an encompassing category to describe the distinguishing characteristics of the new historical cycle circa 1875

constitute a world that has lost the ability to distinguish between the real and appearances.

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(the industrial capitalism phase) by Arnold Toynbee, and to mark the end of modernity and the advent of a new historical epoch by C. Wright Mills (Smart, 1992; 1993). Toynbee employed the term to describe the end of Western dominance, the rise of non-western powers and the decline of individualism, capitalism and Christianity (Jencks, 1986; Calinescu, 1988; Smart, 1992, 1993) but the appeal of the postmodern label remained limited to the literary and artistic circles. The bold aesthetic explorations during the post World War 2 era, as represented in architecture, literature, avant-garde music and theatre, and more powerfully, film[24] (movies by Wim Wenders, David Lynch and Peter Greenaway) were labelled postmodern, distinguished by the synthesis of old and traditional forms, visual experimentation, the mixing of genres and different stylistic methods, fragmented narratives or storylines, aesthetic consciousness and self-reflexivity, and quirky abstract characters. While aesthetic postmodern features signalled the rebellion within the artistic circles, a form of resistant or subversive postmodernism (Huyssen, 1984:) emerged during the turbulent 60s which saw the dispersal of "new social movements" i.e. the feminist movement, gay and lesbian liberation, anti-war movements, and post-colonial movements. However, the central components which constitute the contemporary postmodern debate were expounded by Daniel Bell in *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society* (1973). Bell's concept of "post-industrialism" anticipated the advent of information technology, and the impact it would have upon the nature of knowledge and the implications for culture and society. The rise of the middle class and the decline of the working class, fordism, and hedonistic consumerism became important cultural indicators of a significant shift in modernity. The work of Gianni Vattimo (1988) and Jean Baudrillard (1990, 1993) echo this hyper-consumption activity and extends their argument to a circular or orbital process of progress[25] where life is governed by exchange-value and the economy of signs. Bell's

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[24]For a concise and comprehensive discussion on postmodern aesthetics, one should turn to Frederic Jameson's *Postmodernism and The Cultural Logics of Late Capitalism* (1992).

[25]This circularity posits a reconceptualization of the word progress where progress does not mean a step forward for the better, but embraces a simulacric reproductive meaning, where conditions of progress assume a new guise (Vattimo, 1988: 7-8):

> In a consumer society, continual renewal...is always required physiologically for
> the system to survive. What is new is not in the least 'revolutionary' or subversive;
> it is what allows things to stay the same. There is a kind of profound 'immobility'
> in the technological world....(ibid: 7)

In a world where experience is reduced to exchange-value, hyper-consumerism also accompanies hyper-signification, where the *seduction* of *signs* (Baudrillard, 1990) yields the idea of newness (eg. Diet coke, crystal coke/ diet pepsi, pepsi max) and blurs the distinctions between the true and the false, or between illusion and appearance.

argument has also contributed to shaping Jean–Francois Lyotard's *The Postmodern Condition* (1989), one of the most influential texts on postmodernity. The instance of the cultural shift, or the disruption, and its character however, cannot be neatly drawn and consequently, the concept of postmodernity entails several perspectives.

There is no clear temporal demarcation that distinguishes Postmodernity/ism, from Modernity/ism, although much debate rages on concerning the situation of the postmodern epoch as either another face of modernity (Calinescu, 1987: 265) or situated along a continuum and thereby, indicating a cultural and temporal caesura i.e. postmodernism as *after modern*[26] or the end of modernity (Vattimo, 1988; Huyssen, 1984). Although characterized by a certain nostalgia for the past, and the quest for usable and recycled traditions, postmodernism is also marked by a sense of exploration of new frontiers, playful adventurism, and also resistance and critique of dominant discourses, for example, universal progress. However, the concept of postmodernism and/or postmodernity may encompass several possible connotations. To begin with, postmodernism can arrive from a basic anti–modernist standpoint, a position from which Jurgen Habermas launches his anti–postmodern criticism, and defence of modernity and universal reason. The oppositional language of such a position implies a zero–sum argument where only one paradigm or condition, modern or postmodern is acceptable, and excludes the possibility of commensurability or synthesis. Secondly, postmodernity may imply differences, "but through a relationship of continuity with (capitalist) modernity" (Smart, 1993: 23). Jean–Francois Lyotard for instance, perceives postmodernism as a cyclical moment in which there is a vital reinvigoration of new cultural and formal innovations (Jameson, 1989: xvi and 1990: 59–60, Lyotard, 1989: 79) before the emergence of other new faces of modernity. In this conception, postmodernity may also constitute a break from a specific modality of modernity, for example, modernization. Thirdly, postmodernity may be a way of relating to modernity, being a modernity that [acknowledges] its effects throughout history, and "conscious of its true nature" (Bauman, 1992: 187)[27]. It is also a modernity which confronts its own paradoxical character: "Postmodernity is modernity coming of age...,is modernity coming to terms with its own impossibility;" (Bauman, 1991: 272). Finally, the prefix "Post" is less likely an "after" than it is a disruption, or a rupture in

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[26] Modernity, viewed by Simmel, Baudelaire and Benjamin, as discontinuous and fragmented, marks an important turn in modern discourse, and sows the seeds of postmodernism (late 19th–early 20th Century). To view modern life, not as a totality, but in transitory fragments and images is indicative of the heteroglossic and dynamic postmodern position.

[27]"The postmodern condition can be therefore described,...as modernity emancipated from false consciousness" (Bauman, 1992: 188).

modernism or modernity. But the rupture does not necessarily break from the past[28], rather it continues alongside the modernist path except that the routes are now multi-directional, fragmented and not unilinear, and presupposes a sense that we must develop new modes of thought for dealing with the situation. Postmodernity's emergence remains ambiguous, yet it is one that clearly announces a self-sustaining social condition with a host of distinctive features of its own. However, one can also imagine a rupture[29] in the once stable Western historical continuum where different historical narratives suddenly explode outwards in a centrifugal direction, criss-crossing one another in a desultory and dynamic fashion. The rupture not only leaves noticeable cracks in the Western firmaments of history, but tears out its very foundations.

It is not so much that history has come to a screeching stop and human existence has passed into the hyperreal and the simulacra where things and events are "orbital", repeating themselves in signifying practices (Baudrillard) but rather that history is revealed as the monolithic fabrication of a dominant group, and the illusion of a linear convergence and continuity of events where the future is always an improvement of the present. History is no longer a unitary organic process, a materialist conception nor a dialectical drive towards the emancipation of a transcendental human spirit. Instead, history is broken down into the dissemination of *poly-histories* that do not converge in a single narrative with a single thematic destination for example, a classless society. The historical aporia directs us away from the history of successive events into the history of everyday lives and experiences where there exist different and complex notions of reconstructing time and experiences (Vattimo, 1988; Scott, 1993). History, as current trends in anthropology argue, has become a matter of the cultural, where "the shape of events, the pace of time, the notion of change and duration, the very question of what an event is..[are all] not simply objective realities, but are themselves the products of cultural assumptions" (Dirks, Eley and Ortner, 1994: 6). Moving away from a meta-historical perspective, Foucault's genealogical and archeological projects (Foucault, 1979: 85, 117, 133; 1984: 76-100) work at the level of discursive activity, foregrounding events which emerge from discontinuities, gaps and ruptures; thus emancipating "a profusion of lost events," revealing beneath a stable teleological history, an "unstable assemblage of faults, fissures and heterogeneous layers" (Foucault, 1984: 81). Genealogy and archealogy liberate the narratives of the *Others*, those whose vantage points are either absorbed and diluted or suppressed, therefore, transforming history from a judgement on the past to justify a present truth, to

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[28] Unless, one agrees with Frederic Jameson; "Postmodernism is what you have when the modernization process is complete and nature is gone for good"(Jameson, 1992: ix).

[29] The neoconservatives such as Daniel Bell and Francis Fukuyama, and even French thinker Jean Baudrillard see history as having come to a total stop.

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a "counter memory" of "subjugated knowledges" which constantly challenge current and acceptable modes of truth and justice, and enabling alternative ways of apprehending the present. The "abrupt" demise of history in contrast to the teleological terminus to history has provoked critical responses from academia but has been significantly attractive to those embracing the post-structuralist paradigm; mainly the *ex-centrics*, – those excluded and marginalized by the enlightenment discourse and considered occupying the position of the peripheral *Other*: women, gays and lesbians, ethnic minorities, and Third World peoples. Previously suppressed, the narratives of these ex-centrics have been resurgent, or retrieved and reclaimed, rendering the singularity of Western history guilty of elision in the courtrooms of the postmodern world. Not surprisingly, Robert Young argues that if the post-structuralist movement was the product of a single historical moment, the moment was not May 1968, but rather the anti-colonialist Algerian War of Independance which left powerful impressions on Sartre, Althusser, Derrida, Cixous and Lyotard (who all either lived in Algeria or were involved in the independance movement)[30].

While there is no clear conception as to what constitutes poststructuralism, certain concepts such as the death of the universal self-certain subject, the challenge to Westerncentric discourse, suspicion of enlightenment reason, the end of history, and the intersections of language, power, and the subject have become associated with the poststructuralist approach. As argued by Butler and Scott, poststructuralism is not "a position, but rather a critical interrogation of the exclusionary operations by which *positions* are established"(1993: xiv). Often, ideas cultivated in poststructuralism[31] and

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[30]Hélène Cixous writes from her experience as an Algerian French Jewish girl:
I learned everything from this first spectacle: I saw how the white (French), superior, plutocratic, civilized world founded its power on the repression of populations who had suddenly become 'invisible', like proletarians, immigrant workers, minorities who are not the right colour. Women. Invisible as humans. But, of course, perceived as tools – dirty, stupid, lazy, underhanded, etc. Thanks to some annihilating dialectical magic. I saw that the great, noble, 'advanced' countries establish themselves by expelling what was 'strange', excluding it but not dismissing it; enslaving it. A commonplace gesture of History: there have to be two races – the masters and the slaves (Cixous in Young, 1993: 1).

[31]Michel Foucault considered by most in the academic circle as a poststructuralist, in fact, problematizes postmodernism and poststructuralism: "none of the protagonists in the structural movement.....were dubbed structuralists.....knew very clearly what it was all about. Certainly, those who were applying structural methods in very precise disciplines such as linguistics and comparative mythology knew what was structuralism, but as soon as one strayed from these very precise disciplines, nobody knew exactly what it was....(Foucault, 1988: 17), and responding to a question on postmodernism, "While I see clearly that behind what was known as structuralism,

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postmodernism overlap, and both terms have been used interchangeably without any clear distinctions[32]. Taking their cue from language as a model for all of reality[33], and particularly, reacting against the formalism of Saussure's structuralist linguistics, thinkers who fall under the umbrella of poststructuralism include Althusser's work on ideology, and the psychoanalysis of Freud, Lacan and Irigaray, Barthes, Foucault, Derrida, Baudrillard, Deleuze, Lyotard, Kristeva and Cixous. Inspired by Nietzche, "poststructuralists" like Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida regard truth as multifaceted, subject to the play of diverse meanings and to the perpetual process of reinterpretation in the face of oppositional knowledge claims. Since truth is multiple, and subjected to the incessant activity of discourse, and interpretation, the theoretical subject is repositioned as theory cannot be the point of origin for progressive movements i.e. Liberalism, Marxism:

there was a certain problem...that of the subject and the recasting of the subject – I do not understand what kind of problem is common to the people we call post-modern or post-structuralist" (Foucault, 1988: 34).

Mark Poster credits the emergence of the term *Poststructuralism* to the intellectual circles in the United States which drew a "line of affinity" around several French theorists [who would themselves reject that designation of poststructuralism]. Poster argues that the intellectual climate in Paris with its ferocious competition was not conducive to the formation of a common project although at one point in the late 70s, Baudrillard, Deleuze, Foucault, Derrida and Lyotard appeared to share some similar ideas. The United States became the locus of intellectual debates around the French thinkers, and the term poststructuralism was most likely decided by the American theorists.

Huyssen argues that poststructuralism (PS) is primarily a discourse of and about modernism "at the stage of its exhaustion", and opens up the problematic in modernism "a retrospective reading...fully aware of modernism's limitations and failed political ambitions" (Huyssen, 1984: 40). Like Poster, he maintains that PS is domesticated by the US, and is characterized by the focus on textual autonomy: "[PS is] a modernism of playful transgression, of unlimited weaving of textuality, a modernism all confident in its rejection of the subject, history and of the subject of history; a modernism quite dogmatic in its absences, deferrals and traces which produce presumably not anxiety, but in Roland Barthes's word, jouissance, bliss" (Ibid).

[34]In this study, Poststructuralism may be regarded as the theoretical components of postmodernism, and may also be an independant *paradigm* while being complementary to postmodernism as well.

[35]The focus on reconceptualizing language is evident in the work of most of the poststructuralists, for eg. Foucault in discourse/practice; Baudrillard's semiurgy; Derrida's *écriture*, Lyotard's language games, Cixoux's phallogocentrism, and Kristeva's intertextuality.

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Above all, the poststructuralists want to avoid forms of political oppression
that are legitimized by resorts to reason, as this kind of legitimation has
been, in their view, one of the paradoxical and lamentable developments of
recent history. (Poster, 1991: 16)

The rational Cartesian subject is thus, displaced, and negated of its stable structures
and solid certainties. Arguing that ideology is an overarching concept and a rigid end-point
that ignores the dynamic workings of the subjectivity, the poststructuralist prefers framing
their arguments from the position of language and discourse[34]. Analysed at the level of
discourse, the subject's position is constitutive of material practices and institutitonal
arrangements that arise out of the matrix of power and discourse. The subject is never
whole, and always in process, producing meaning through the play of language and all its
aspects, i.e. literal, metaphorical, etc. As truth is open to a multiplicity of claims, the
subject too has no claim to a transcendent unitary position of truth from which she can
establish and comprehend her reality. The "death of the author/subject" (Barthes, Foucault)
posits more than just the removal of an authoritative position, but directs us into the subject
as an intertextual[35] realm with its interweaving multiple strands of thought, vantage points
and plurality of meanings, in which agency and action arise out of these levels of
complexities. The interweaving strands of thought that constitute the subject never intend
on a finalized meaning nor a totalization of knowledge. In positing linguistic concepts
which emphasize the signifier over the signified, and the endless deferral and differing of
signifieds [which were also signifiers themselves], poststructuralism signals the "dynamic
productivity of language, the instability of meaning, and the break with conventional

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[34] Michel Foucault argues that the notion of ideology are effects of discourse which are
neither true or false. Power when exercised through its subtle mechanisms – methods of observation,
techniques of registration, procedures of investigation and research, apparati of control, cannot but
evolve, organize and put into circulation a knowledge or rather, apparatus of knowledge which are
not ideological constructs (1980: 102).

In *The Archeology of Knowledge* (1972), Foucault argues that the relation between the
epistemological structure of political economy and its ideological function must take into account
"the analysis of the discursive formation that gave rise to it and the group of objects, concepts,
and theoretical choices that it had to develop and systematize, and one must then show how the
discursive practice that gave rise to such a positivity functioned among other practices that might
have been of a discursive but also of a political or economic, order" (Foucault, 1972: 186)

[35] The concept of intertextuality belongs to Julia Kristeva. The whole text must be studied
in terms of "intertextuality" which is defined as the transposition of one or more *systems* signs into
another, accompanied by a new articulation of the enunciative and denotative position. Any
signifying practice is a field (in the sense of space traversed by lines of force) in which various
systems undergo such a transposition. (Kristeva, 1980: 19)

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representational schemes of meaning" (Best and Kellner, 1991: 21). The poststructuralist subject, who is constituted by linguistic play, is then, neither unified nor fixed:

> The plurality of language and the impossibility of fixing meaning once and for all are basic principles of poststructuralism......Poststructuralism also necessarily questions the sovereignity of subjectivity as the guarantee of meaning. Meaning can have no external guarantee and subjectivity itself is an effect of discourse. If language is the site where meaningful experience is constituted then language also determines how we perceive possibilities of change. Language in this sense consists of a range of discourses which offer different versions of the meaning of social relations and their effect on the individual. (Weedon 1987: 85–86)

In the postmodern world, the paradigmic shift is the poststructuralist one where language has replaced the rationalizing consciousness of the subject. Embodying notions such as the endless overlapping intertextuality of the world, any design for a universally communicable global society is crippled. As Seyla Benhabib observes, the focus is no longer on the epistemic subject or on the private workings of the consciousness but on linguistic games, the "public, signifying activities of subjects" (Benhabib, 1992: 208), an argument which forms the core of Lyotard's *The Postmodern Condition*.

Jean-Francois Lyotard's *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* has become one of the major texts on postmodern scholarship having elicited a wide range of responses from varied academic circles. Lyotard's entropic postmodern world celebrates the "pleasures of paralogism" and searches not for consensus but for instability "in which he point is not to reach agreement but to undermine from within the very framework in which the previous *normal science* has been conducted" (Jameson, 1989: xix). Shattering llusions of the unitary or organic society, any recourse to a meta-langue is only met with ncommensurability, the contextual, and polytheistic values. Focusing on the condition of nowledge in the "most highly developed societies" (Lyotard, 1989: 1), Lyotard regards the ostmodern epistemological shift [from the modern enlightenment metanarrative] as one nat is inextricably bound with the technological and informational advances of the post-Vorld War 2 era. He considers the term *modern*

> to designate any science that legitimates itself with reference to a metadiscourse of this kind making an explicit appeal to some grand narrative, such as the dialectics of Spirit, the hermeneutics of meaning, the emancipation of the rational or working subject, or the creation of wealth. (Lyotard, 1989:xxiii)

ostmodernism is the "incredulity toward metanarratives"(ibid:xxiv) in which

contemporary society with its technological explosion, and circulation of information networks opens up new channels of operations and computerized data banks of information. Instead, of being the owner of a single all encompassing knowledge, individuals are informational posts in which multiple discursive currents bypass and intersect each other. In contrast to the grand narratives which are formed out of the exclusion of small narratives, the postmodern society retrieves and unveils the *petit recits* of "women, children; fools and primitives" where "legitimation [of knowledge] spring[s] from their own linguistic practices and communicational interaction" (ibid, 41). Postmodernism heralds the collapse of older forms of scientific legitimation; from the dialectics of the Spirit, and knowledge for unveiling the emancipatory potential of individuals, to performative knowledge where knowledge, no longer an end itself, becomes an optimizing principle in ensuring the efficiency of the system, and is itself a kind of informational commodity. Using the notion of *language games*[17] as his methodological approach, Lyotard's postmodern knowledge is subjected to agonistic language games, where each language "move" is regarded as a strategic "trumping" act, in which one move [consisting of shifting words, phrases and meanings] counters, disrupts, complements or overlaps another, thus

[16]Metanarratives here are understood as transcendental categories which modernity invented to ascertain and interpret reality, i.e. advancement of reason, emancipation of being, progress, freedom.

[17]The concept of the language game belongs to Ludwig Wittgenstein who demonstrated the importance of taking into account the context when trying to understand or explain the meaning of linguistic expressions. Basically, language games are the various categories of utterance which can be defined in terms of rules specifying their properties and the uses to which they can be put in. Wittgenstein further argues that the term language game/s is meant to emphasize that the speaking of a language is part of an activity or a *form of life*. A form of life also refers to the entirety of the practices of a linguistic community (Schulte, 1992: 97-128): "our idea of what belongs to the realm of reality is given for us in the language that we use" (Winch, 1958: 15) and the experience of the realm of reality is specific and contextual. For example, the word *family* varies depending upon ethnicity, geography, religion, etc.

In his *Idea of a Social Science* (1958), Peter Winch argued against a universal standard of rationality in the social sciences wherein sociologists/social scientists often treat extensions of terms in other contexts within a universal linguistic system. Due to the looseness of the linguistic exchanges where speakers might have slightly different connotation and denotations in mind with reference to a term or phrase, especially in cross-cultural exchanges, Winch argued that it was irrevocable that there existed a plurality of standards of rationality, and that any analysis of such lingusitic exchanges had to be grasped in terms of the "point or meaning of what is being done or said," thereby taking the analysis into the "realm of discourse and to the internal relations that link the parts of a realm of discourse" (Ibid, 115).

reducing the social milieu to the paralogic activity of incommensurable *small* narratives[38].

Consider postmodernity then as a "chaosmic" [and chiasmic] culture of multiplicities, in which life is doomed to "remain disorderly" (Bauman, 1992) and uncontrollable. This is the *rhizomatic* world which Deleuze and Guatteri propose to us, a non-hierarchical rootless, foundationless, "flat" terra of plural dimensions. The rhizome is "a subterranean stem...assumes diverse forms[39], from ramified surface extension in all directions to concretion into bulbs and tubers" (Deleuze in Boundas, 1993: 29). Reading a rhizomatic world is to read a world without a privileged direction, where live(s) and culture(s) expand and criss-cross in every way, and sometimes exist alongside each other. A rhizomatic postmodernity is a condition which extirpates roots, denies origins, thwarts unities, shatters dichotomies, differentiates and makes new connections. A rhizome method decenters and disseminates information into divergent systems of language and multiple semiotic dimensions (Best and Kellner, 1991). A rhizomatic world speaks of ruptures and heterogeneities of thought and practice, without any ultimate dream of fulfillling the politics of plenitude.

Two distinct and yet, complementary forms of postmodernism emerge: one that embodies an aesthetic playfulness with parody and mimicry in texts, and a subversive, resistant kind which seeks the unravelling of multiple hidden narratives, and exposes a politically fragmented world of "imagined communities"[40], "new social movements" or in Laclau's and Mouffe's term "new antagonisms[41]"(1985). The fragmented play at narratives, the juxtapositioning of aesthetic styles from all genres and timeframes, and other

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[38]Lyotard does not seem to distinguish between *petit recits* and language games or even discourse, although one might argue that a narrative constitutes a certain discourse, and contains specific linguistic "rules".

[39]Bulbs and tubers are rhizomes, and so are burrowing rats.

[40]The shift toward "imagined communities" imply the dissolution of society. Imagined communities are grounded in common activities and affective allegiance (as opposed to hierachical governing powers). Even then, the word "community" is problematic. In her deconstructive study on the notion of community, Iris Marion Young (1990), argues that community is an ideal which privileges unity over difference, immediacy over mediation, sympathy over recognition of the limits of one's understanding of others from their point of view. Although community is an understandable desire for mutual identification, social comfort, understanding, the desirous communal unity and wholeness also generates dichotomies, hidden antagonisms and exclusions.

[41]For Laclau and Mouffe, antagonisms arise out of situations where a collective subject or group is negated by other discourses and practices; the negation *can be* the basis for the emergence of antagonisms.

postmodern aesthetic practices are also paralleled in the politics of everyday life where society is dissolved into a proliferation of resurgent cultural identities and conflictual positions, once suppressed under ideas of the organic or class-segmented society.

> These 'new antagonisms' are the expression of forms of resistance to the commodification, bureaucratization and increasing homogenization of social life itself explains why they should frequently manifest themselves through a proliferation of particularisms, and crystellize into a demand for autonomy itself. It is also for this reason that there is an identifiable tendency towards the valorization of 'differences' and the creation of new identities which tend to privilege 'cultural' criteria (clothes, music, language, regional traditions, and so on). (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985: 164)

Very much in the spirit of Lyotard's *petit recits*, these new antagonisms are the ramifications of the social conditions of bureaucratization, homogeneity, and hyper-consumerism. With such "antagonisms," it is no wonder that postmodernists claim that the concept of the universal is problematic. Given that political practices are heterogeneous, occurring within a context of multiple interpetations, the political milieu often appears ambiguous and unstable. Any action organized on a global scale, for eg. ending world hunger, or global sisterhood, would therefore, likely be indeterminate and unpredictable, and ultimately, unmasterable. Instead, the entropic conditions generate interstitial subcultures of resistance and new political subjects, for example, the wide range of indegenous activism, environmental movements, AIDS activists (eg. ACT-UP), Black and Chicano ghetto groups, and the now acknowledged multiple streams of the women's movement.

While the formation of the feminist struggle and the claim to a woman's *way of knowing* have constituted a powerful counter-discourse to the universal metanarrative of Western, male reason, even feminism is booby-trapped with its own metanarrative ambitions. When splinters do appear within feminism, they have been ideological, for example, liberal, Marxist/socialist, cultural, and not racial or geographical (First World/ Third World). Feminists who have aligned themselves to postmodern tenets have been less attentive (but more critical) towards ideological positions, and have instead concentrated more on the cracks and fissures in the once perceived unified movement. The emergence of Lesbian/ Third World/ Asian/ Black/ Latino/ Chicano/ Diaspora[42], feminists/

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[42]It is also important to note here that I do not want to claim that all Western women are homogenous either. They too are separated by class/status, religious, regional and personal experiences. To posit a homogenous white woman is to commit the same fallacious act that homogenizes Third World women or Black women etc. But when the intersections of race, class/status/nationality and gender are considered in the analysis of women, there often arises a clear division or marginalization pattern which places the Third World woman/ or Black feminist

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Womanists[43] have demonstrated the impossibility of a singular goal, and the heterogeneous feminist values and practices based upon differentially located personal experiences.

> ..the practice of feminist politics in the 1980s has generated a new set of pressures which have worked against metanarratives. In recent years, poor and working-class women, women of colour and lesbians have finally won a wider hearing for their objections to feminist theories which fail to illuminate their lives and address their problems. They have exposed the earlier quasi-metanarratives, with their assumptions of universal female dependance and confinement to the domestic sphere, as false extrapolations form the experience of the white, middle-class, heterosexual women....as the class, sexual, racial and ethnic awareness of the movement has altered, so has the the preferred conception of theory. It has become clear that quasi-metanarratives hamper rather than promote sisterhood, since they elide differences among women among the forms of sexism to which different women are differentially subject. (Fraser and Nicholson, 1990: 33)

With the emergence of anti-feminism feminists, for example, Camille Paglia, and *Post-Feminists*, feminism has now assume the plural *feminisms*, perhaps fulfilling more than ever, depending upon interpretation, the promises or nightmares of postmodernity. Such powerful challenge to universal metanarratives have also emerged in the Third World where the elaboration, restoration and recontextualization of former cultural identities are now encouraging a rewriting of Third World narratives.

When the colonial cookie crumbled in the East, the landscapes left behind by the retreating Western empires had greatly altered[44]. Regional boundaries, once non-existent territorial demarcations, renegotiated land claims, forced and voluntary migration, urbanization patterns, public institutions and educational systems have produced

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at the lower ends of epistemic authority.

[43]Alice Walker coined this term to replace feminist, defining (although she treads on essentialism) as follows: "from *womanish* (opp. of girlish, i.e. frivolous, irresponsible...usually referring to outrageous, audacious behaviour, courage or willful behaviour. Wanting to know more and in greater depth than is considered good...a woman who loves other women, sexually and/or nonsexually. Appreciates and prefers a woman's culture, women's emotional flexibility (values tears as a natural counterbalence of laughter) and women's strength...." (Walker, 1990: 370)

[44]Consider the truly astonishing scale of the Western powers' accumulated territories and subjects: "by 1914, the annual rate (of accumulation) had risen to an astonishing 240,000 square miles, and Europe held a grand total of roughly 85% of the earth as colonies, protectorates, dependencies, dominions and commonwealths...scarcely a corner of life was untouched by the facts of empire" (Said, 1993:7-8).

heteromorphous societies, cultural pluralisms, and resurgent sub/-ethnic activism. Nationalist movements are only evanescent displays of solidarity loosely tied to the symbol of the nation-state, and not ethnic, gender or religious identities[45]. Thus, the post-colonial world is also a breeding ground for infinite cultural fissions, where some cultural or ethnic groups have suffered marginalization due to economic and political interventions, and legislated assimilation into the dominant group's culture. Such voices of dissent and rebellion have emerged not only in political movements and violent confrontations, but have also become the focus of Third World scholarship, among which, the Subaltern Studies Collective (SSC) have figured most prominently. Established in Delhi, India, the SSC, comprised of such scholars as Ranajit Guha, Homi Bhabha, and Gayatri Spivak, has contributed its own powerful counter-historiography, unveiling and articulating the suppressed narratives of numerous subaltern groups, women, minorities, refugees, indigenous peoples, disadvantaged and dispossed groups, and providing counter resistant accounts in a wide range of settings, namely, traditions and customs that had been previously distorted or stifled by colonial discourse, and even presently, Western scholarship in the name of a smooth and stable historical process. The SSC's remarkable range of studies, which employs poststructuralist tools such as psychoanalysis, genealogy, semiology, and Derridean deconstruction, locates the subaltern contestation of the symbols

[45]Nationalist movements across the Third World assume diverse shapes and responses from the forceful, if not violent confrontations with the Colonial masters, to the moderate and calm transition and transfer of government. Nationalist movements did reflect the peoples' emergence and reclaiming of cultural identities and rights, and were the main form of resistance against colonial exploitation. While some post-colonial governments have practically hijacked the hopes of many nations and their peoples, many too have achieved some sort of self-determination However, nationalist movements also perpetuated the values and ideals of their former colonial rulers.

In *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial Discourse* (1986), Partha Chaterjee argues that the transformation of nationalism into a regional/state ideology resulted in a form of neo-colonial practice of rationalization based on external [read: Western] norms i.e. modernization process "This type of nationalism shares the same material and intellectual premises with European enlightenment, with industry and the idea of progress, and with modern democracy" (Chatterjee, 1986: 3). Thus, the nationalist movement in India was dominated by the very structure of power it sought to repudiate. Despite invoking the call for cultural identity to challenge the shackles of modernist discourse, the nationalist discourse in India was one in which even as it challenged the colonial political domination, it also accepted the premise of modernity (the sovereign state, emancipation, self-determination, economic development etc.): asserting that a "backward" nation could modernize while sustaining a cultural identity. In a way, nationalism fulfills the Western ideas of progress, liberty and reason, thus amalgamating them still to European will.

of authority not only at the event of counter–insurgencies or outright protests but also at the moment of speech, writing, and signifying practices in which contradictions and disjunctures occur. In a sense, poststructuralism and postmodernism have provided the tools in which these counter–memory explorations are now initiated. As Robert Young claims,

> Contrary, then, to some of its more overreaching definitions, postmodernism itself could be said to mark not just the cultural effects of a new stage of 'late' capitalism, but the sense of the loss of European history and culture as *History* and *Culture*, the loss of their unquestioned place at the centre of the world. (1993: 20)

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> The modernism of underdevelopment is forced to build on fantasies and dreams of modernity, to nourish itself on an intimacy and a struggle with mirages and ghosts. In order to be true to the life from which it springs, it is forced to be shrill, uncouth and inchoate. It turns in on itself and tortures itself for its inability to singlehandedly make history – or else throws itself into extravagant attempts to take on itself the whole burden of history. It whips itself into frenzies of self–loathing, and preserves itself only through vast reserves of self–irony. But the bizzare reality from which this modernism grows, and the unbearable pressures under which it moves and lives – social and political pressures as well as spiritual ones – infuse it with a desparate incandescence that Western modernism, so much more at home in its world, can rarely hope to match.
>
> Marshall Berman, 'All That is Solid Melts into Air'

In a manner, modernity failed for it did not produce Western clones in the Third World, nor could it completely annihilate indigenous cultural practices and values. In terms of geographical space, postmodernity, like modernity is a Western product, and is also a response to the inability of modernity's drive to absorb the non–Western world into the universal metanarratives of economic progress and emancipation. The result of the Western modern projects is often chimeric entities, composed of miscegenated social structures and normative values that appear to most Western eyes, as a confusion between the traditional and the modern [read: Western] and not a dynamic process of cultural displacements,

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"suturing[46]", interaction and transformation. The Euro-American genesis and justification of the label postmodern (let alone, modern) condition are the postcolonial emergence of other voices and other worlds, or in Toynbee's opinion, the threatening of Western supremacy. Where once the narratives of the non-West had flowed like rivulets and tributaries into the mighty river of Western history, the end of colonialism spawned the emergence, through the cracks and interstices, of fresh new knowledge claims that counterpose dominant narratives, and force the rewriting of history. Postmodernism appears to be merely a long awaited acknowledgement of the West as just an *other* among others. From the views of the non-west, the West is no longer placed on the pedestal of superior culture, and historical studies are left vulnerable to suspicion and criticism. No longer advocating the assimilation of the non-west into the discourse of development and liberation, the postmodern rupture encourages the flourishing and retrieval of local knowledges, cultural identities and symbols. As Mike Featherstone argues:

[46]The concept of suturing is taken from psychoanalysis. (See Jacques-Alain Miller, "Suture Elements of the Logic of the Signifier," *Screen*, Winter 1977/78, 18, 4: 24–34).
"Suture names the relation of the subject to the chain of its discourse; we shall see that it figures there as the element which is lacking, in the form of a stand-in. For while there lacking, it is not purely and simply absent. Suture, by extension – the general relation of lack to the structure of which it is an element, inasmuch as it implies the position of taking-the-place of" (Miller, 1977/78: 25–26). Depending on how one perceives it, suture is a double movement, in the sense that it is not merely a lack, but also filling-in, providing the possibility of coherance, and sometimes closure.
       Also, see Laclau and Mouffe's, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (1985), where the concept of suture is extended to hegemonic practices (particularly in Chapter 3).
       My argument for suture here is oriented more towards the possibility of the double movement of "standing-in," and coherance. In terms of the cultural heterogeneity that appears in some Third World nations (especially those in South-East Asia), the trend towards Western lifesyles or objects are not merely "filling in" an inadequate, cultural lack but also perhaps a step towards making sense of the cultural changes via *filling-in*. For example, the Straits-Born Chinese in the 19th Century (those who were born in the original settlements of the British in Malaya, and usually of inter-racial ancestry: Chinese and Malay), being displaced and separated from China, were proud to have taken on British citizenship. I read this as a form of suturing where British Citizenships were "stand-ins" for the lack of nationality, since these Chinese (who called themselves *Babas*) did occupy a unique cultural position (neither belonging to China nor Malaya) due to the mixture of Malay-Chinese customs and habits.

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> Postmodernism is both a symptom and a powerful cultural image of the
> swing away from the conceptualization of global culture less in terms of
> alleged homogenizing processes (eg. theories which present cultural
> imperialism, Americanization and mass consumer culture as a proto-
> universal culture riding on the back of Western economic and political
> domination) and more in terms of the diversity, variety and richness of
> popular and local discourses, codes and practices which resist and play-
> back systemicity and order. (1990: 2)

The universals of truth, reason and progress are jettisoned for a world of shifting
boundaries, fractured political loyalties, resurgent regional, ethnic and sub-ethnic
identities, eruptions of gender affirmations, global disintegration, the endless circulation
and transformation (into what Baudrillard refers to as virtual money or capital, i.e. stocks,
bonds or Harvey's *Voodoo Economics*) of capital, and mobile capitalist enterprises (the
Transnational Companies) which transcend [or even transgress] national boundaries.

Despite their pontifications on heterogeneity and polytheism, those writing or
creating from a postmodern or poststructural perspective rarely make any referance to the
global political and economic context, nor attempt to address the Third World within the
context of Postmodernism. One tends to read, however, as if the Third World enters the
realm of postmodernism naturally or is assumed at least, to be exclusive to advanced
societies with high technological dependency. Although writers such as Jean Baudrillard,
David Harvey, Frederic Jameson and Mike Featherstone call attention to the characteristics
and dynamics of late capitalism, their analysis is global and barely addresses the
interrelated condition of the Third World, especially where modernity failed to take flight,
or is merely a response or/and an essential feature of naming the postmodern. In the
aesthetic areas, what is generally regarded as postmodern literature music, film or fine art
is confined to the Euro-American arena i.e. Thomas Pynchon, Milan Kundera, Umberto
Eco, John Cage, Andy Warhol, Wim Wenders etc. Post-Colonial literature and aesthetic
expressions are isolated phenomena, distanced and detached from the esoteric community
of the London-Paris-New York axis. Morever, the postmodern decree of unveiling the
narratives of the margins and peripheries, i.e. usually women and Third World cultures, are
also problematized by the practices of who is speaking for whom:

> But women and the Third World are categories more *spoken for* by
> postmodernity, without obliging the cultural institution [of the West] to
> loosen its discursive monopoly over the right to speak, without ceding to
> them the much greater right to become autonomous subjects of enunciation,
> to assume a critical *positionality* itself capable of intervening
> (disorganizing) in the rules of discourse that determine property and
> pertinence. (Richard, 1993: 160)

Although the scholarship of Derrida, Kristeva and Cixous emerge out of the

acknowledgement of an ethnocentric Western-conceived Third World. Lyotard and Bell focus primarily on the condition of society and knowledge in the advanced developed nations while Baudrillard's writings on signs, simulation and hyperreality are inspired by his trips to America[47], more precisely, Hollywood, California (Baudrillard, 1990). What remains is the need to critically frame the Third World and its very modern conditions within the postmodern world, and question the Third World's place and role in and its relationship to postmodernity.

What then of modernity, which as Rey Chow argues, appears as a permanent fixture, and is for the "Other" Third World cultures

> a displaced phenomenon, the sign of an alien imprint on indigenous
> traditions..it is not a set of beliefs but rather a foreign body whose
> physicality must be described as a Derridean "always already"....Modernism
> is still around as a colonial legacy, as habit and as familiar, even coherent,
> way of seeing (Chow, 1993: 56–57).

Less of a stage that a nation must attain, and more so a temporal event or condition, modernity is a foreign entity which has been imposed upon the lives of billions of people, and a shape that some aspire to assume. However, the shape that modernity assumes in the Third World is also heterogeneous and specific for instead of shedding off some skin of traditionalism, a hybrid sometimes occurs depending on the plurality of development logics. How does one apply postmodernism to nations and peoples who regard Western modernity as emulative, or have either rejected or hardly experienced modernity. As Chow questions, how does one "displace the displaced?" (1993). Modernity has hardly reared its head in most of the Third World since, in most areas, one has only *felt* the effects of, and not lived modernity[48].

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[47]America, for Baudrillard, was a prototype of the Postmodern future, and was the symbol of the a future where "barbarism could coexist with civilization" (Mestrovic, 1993: 1).

[48] In *All That is Solid Melts into Air*, Berman's modernity is a Faustian paradox, where humankind find themselves "in an environment that promises adventure, power, joy, growth, transformations of ourselves and the world – and at the same time, threatens to destroy everything we have, everything we know, everything we are.....a perpetual disintegration and renewal" (Berman, 1982: 15). Living modernity, for myself, is to experience all the above, including Capitalist activity, technological development, the struggle for liberation and equality whilst poverty, violence and oppression rage on. Because the modern world was initially the Western hemisphere, the dissemination of Modern [read Western] ideas to the rest of the world is not easily embraced with open arms.

For myself, Mary Douglas's Hotel Kwilu in Zaire (although she uses the metaphor of the hotel for functionalist theory, and for theory in general)is a wonderful metaphor of the "modern conditions" in some parts of the Third World. The Hotel Kwilu is a shining Sheraton-like edifice

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In terms of cultural diversity in attitudes and practices, the world is very much postmodern. In terms of the temporal condition, is the world postmodern? From the standpoint of the West, the world appears postmodern in terms of the pervasiveness of intrusive media technology, and the international political scene (which has moved away from the bilateral to the multilateral). The idealistic global village is now being exposed as an unstable shifting and fragmented mass, vulnerable to the eruptions of ethnic and identity claims which are also accompanied by the dissolution and rewriting of regional identities and boundaries, and the retrieval of cultural histories. The Third World may be emblematic of the postmodern condition: the sweeping diversity, structural violence, technological ambiguity, and cultural disruption and miscegenations but its contents are also distinctly modern. To enable the flexibility and mobility of the transnationals, one requires the human resources recruited into low wage mass assembly jobs. In order for concepts of cybernatics, simulacra and hyperreality to predominate, one requires performative science and industrial capitalism (to produce the television sets, and computers). Also, eclectic tastes in lifestyles i.e. consuming Brazilian coffee, buying a Moroccan hand knitted rug, accessorizing oneself with jewellery from the Philippines, is highly dependent upon those who have to pick the beans, knit the rug and craft the jewellery for a pittance to be sold in trendy First World boutiques. Postmodernism, in an ironic sense, also requires nourishment from the modern bourgeois ethos. Both conditions are inextricably intertwined: interactionary, complementary and also, oppositional. However one construes it, postmodernism or postmodern culture is also one characterised by a sense of extreme contingency. The post-colonial world did not entirely serve up the promises of national independance and sovereignity, and new networks of interdependant ties appeared as the wealth of the nations became more and more asymmetrical. While recognising the failures of modernity, postmodernism does not address the problems that modernity has germinated in the Third

situated in a region with scarce electricity or clean water supply, oblivious to the languishing villagers around the region who have been affected by the penetration of the Capitalist economy. Despite the gleaming gold faucets and the air-conditioners in the room, the water is carted up by humans from nearby villages, and the electricity comes from the hotel generator (guests must pay up front in order to purchase petroleum for the generator). Thus, for some places, modernity is only an effect of the modern conditions found elsewhere, particularly, the First World.

The symbols of modernity pervade in the Third World: gleaming skyscrapers equipped with the comforts of air-conditioning, glass elevators, piped music, etc. stand awkwardly among narrow roads, shantytowns, crumbling and poorly-maintained infrastructures, etc. Symbols such as the skyscraper in some parts of the Third World deflect the everyday life of poverty, labour exploitation, constant electricity shutdowns and water rationing.

However, this is not to say that I am reducing my argument to a cause-effect explanation. Modern life manifests itself very uniquely and culturally specifically in many areas of the world. Perhaps, this would be more a postmodern condition than a modern condition.

World or explain how one copes with the destruction left behind by the modernization drive. In this light, postmodernity appears to be nothing more than the West's way of begging reprieve from the mistakes it has made. In her rejoinder to Lyotard, Seyla Benhabib (1984) criticizes Lyotard's utopic plea for the agonistics of language games in which all information is emancipated. Such a plea, Benhabib argues, for a heteromorphous social system may generate moral and political indifference and the call for innovation, experimentation, and play may

> be completely disassociated from social reform and institutional practices,
> and the activiation of differences may not amount to a democratic respect
> of the right of the 'other' to be, but a conservative plea to place the other,
> because of her otherness outside the pale of our common humanity and
> mutual responsibility (1984: 122)

Zygmunt Bauman claims that postmodernity's "acceptance of plurality of sovereignties means first and foremost the surrender of the (diachronically and synchronically) dominant position of the West" (1992: 35). However, such a claim is deceptive. As in modernity, postmodernity is also the nomenclatural privilege of the West wherein Third World peoples have very little input despite their integral roles in constituting such a condition. To declare the world postmodern is basically to re-invent and re-conceptualize the world; merely another act of naming or labelling, and constructing new systemic codes to perceiving the world. The Western practices to define the *other-world* as a "pliable and malleable substance" to be shaped; the superior right to "proselytize, to design the suitable form of life for the others, and to refuse to grant authority" (ibid: 96) to other non-legitimated lives appear to persist. Only this time, postmodernity pronounces that the "pliable and malleable substance" is supposed to shape itself, and that the notion of differences/pluralisms is now the "suitable form of life". This is particularly frustrating to minority and subaltern groups especially women and Third World peoples, who after years of struggling against or for the enlightenment project and modern sensibilities, are now presently informed that they possess decentred selves, and that their identity politics are foundationless, and temporal in a world vulnerable to entropic forces. In one fell swoop, modernity is abandoned, and the West, with its concentration of intellectuals and printing houses, once again takes the lead in comprehending the state of the world. The surrender of the West's dominant position is nothing more than a sacrificial necessity to enhance further Western superiority and certainty, even if the certainty means acknowledging a fragmented world. Also, the claim that postmodernity is the demise of Western rationality could also be argued in terms that we have merely passed on to another form of Western rationality. Instead, we confront a non-evolutionary polyvalent form of rationality where the "irrational" is exposed to be another manifestation of being rational; rationality is now contextual, fragmented and specific. Furthermore, the ideas of the unreal, the multiple, unstable discursive self seems absurd, and are reduced to another

universalizing discourse when applied to the Third World and its subaltern subjects. What appears to be a Western motion towards reclaiming cultural and intellectual authority, the pundits of postmodernism then focus attention on information technology, heteroglossia and the unreal, claiming that the subject is a consequence of certain rule-governed discourses that govern the "intelligible invocation of identity"(Butler, 1990: 145).

The notion of the subject and her subjectivity remains a contested terrain in terms of the Third World subaltern whose subjective negotiations are often lacking or non-existent. When we address the subaltern woman in the Third World, one wonders, *does the subaltern woman merely stumble into a discourse of economic exploitation and cultural discrimination?* From the notions of "false consciousness"[49] and the "blank individuality", the Third World subaltern woman vacillates from the objectified other, whose mindset is imposed upon by hegemonic imperialist values to the dynamic unstable subject who becomes the "post" of interweaving discursive formations, constructing truths according to the multiplicity of narratives. The subaltern woman then swings pendulously between these two conflicting either-or positions: the subaltern woman is either suffering from *false consciousness* due to the oppressive ideologies of patriarchy and capitalism or, her oppressive location is one made out of subjective contemplation and choice given the enabling discursive conditions. Either argument, I feel gravitates towards closure for there are clearly complex processes of subjectivation at work which place an individual in a subaltern position, and out of this subalternity, arises forms of resistance and agency that might not be so overt, and might not lead to a desired (feminist) emancipated conclusion. While it is difficult to ignore the painful scars of colonialism, it is also important to indicate that beyond the shackles of a reified world economy and ideological manipulation, lies a subject who thinks for herself, constructing the best possible subjective positions for herself within the limits of socio-economic and political structures. But a huge gulf exists between the subaltern woman who picks tea for 50 cents a day while the First World Feminist/academic sits comfortably in her office sipping darjeeling tea and contemplating the notions of subaltern subjectivity. While it is very plausible that some subaltern women may experience the crisis of the unitary subject or discontinuous identities, the self of many a Third World woman is already a given multiplicity, as wife, mother, kinfolk,

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[49] Marx never used the term *false consciousness*, and it was Engels who first proposed the notion in a letter to Franz Mehring:"The real motives impelling [the agent] remain unknown to him, otherwise it would not be an ideological process at all. Hence, the imagined false or apparent motives." (Eagleton, 1991: 89–90) The claim to false consciousness then implies that there is an unequivocally correct way of viewing the world. The notion of false consciousness in many ways, appears an arrogant assumption and a perpetuation of power relations as just a minority of people have access to the knowledge of how really things work while the rest of us blunder about in a thick fog.

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breadwinner, and community member. Ideas and theories of unitary or fragmented subjects
might possibly not be a priority of meditation or reflection for many diverse cultures where
the subjective self is already regarded as multiple, and a reflection of the immediate
community, and the individual notion of the self is an alien or unacceptable concept.

Therein lies my dilemma of situating the Third World within postmodernity. On the
one hand, the postmodern offers the unbounded possibilities of multiple narratives,
diversity, the dynamic subject, and *unclosure*, while on the other, in recalling the uneven
relationship between the First and Third Worlds, postmodernity, because of its very Euro
American roots seems to be another universalizing discourse in which the Third World is
a tokenistic inclusion into a First World global philosophy. But the emergence of post
colonial scholarship and the re/appropriation of postmodern ideas, i.e. deconstruction,
psycholanalysis in documenting subaltern power and resistance, and challenging Western
subaltern representations in the Third World, is indicative perhaps, of the "natives'" turn
to *take* from the West, and reconstruct Western discourse. Yet, this is not a matter of
simple power inversions as Foucault would contest; there are no simple binary distinctions
of power that identify one group as the oppressors, and the other as the oppressed with
yardsticks of ideological or economic control or cultural imperialism. Oppression does not
necessarily equate to powerlessness and non-agency on the subaltern's part. It is here that
postmodernity and its various theoretical currents admits, at least, to not offering the
ultimate answers, or utopic ends; it cannot, by virtue of its own polytheist substance.
Beyond the language of modernization and dependency theories, or the reified world
economy, everyday life is being lived in multitudinous forms the world over, and cultural
meanings and practices, economic resources and political rights are constantly being
contested at the intersections of the macro (global), meso (national) and the micro
(individual, family). One notices the restoration and maintainance of former cultural
identities and separate political spheres, and the re/appropriation of keywords such as
"democracy,"(what is democracy in South Korea or Taiwan?) for example, the resurgence
of neo-Confucian "democracies" in South/East Asia. The shift in the global terminology
from sovereign nationhood and independance, dictatorship, nationalism, centre—periphery,
and development to transnational, pluralism, intertextuality, power shift, and shifting and
overlapping boundaries requires not simply passive acceptance nor outright denial but a
necessity to trace the mutations, not so much to its origins but its instances and its
operations. Whether one defines the world as postmodern is very much a subjective
position, but what is relevant here, is not so much the naming of the global condition, but
the significance of the postmodern paradigm for the Third World. Postmodernity cannot
be embraced nor dismissed so easily; rather, one needs to deconstruct the notion of
postmodernity itself, be wary of its more marginalizing tendencies, and recognize its
possibilities for a politics of difference, and inter-cultural sensitivity.

What the postmodern condition exacts is uncertain, and confusing. Differences are

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made up of "overlapping territories", "commingling of nations" "interdependant experiences" and "intertwined histories" (Said, 1993); and erupting within the shifting cultural spheres, which are amorphous and intangible phenomena. The limpid East-West binary distinction is a poor framework to comprehend the cultural predicament of the Third World. To understand the unstable relationship between the East and the West requires one to seek the imprints of the West in the East, language being an interesting example; and how the West affects and impinges on lives. So much of the West is embedded in Third World lives, and ineluctably, Third World cultures – and taken for granted as natural occurances. But the West does not enter into the cultural spaces of the Third World with ease, nor does it overwhelm local identities. The processes are more complex and subtle, ones which involve ongoing resistance, contestation and negotiation of meaning within the social spaces, and the reconstitution of the self and identity. The postmodern selling of cultural differences does not necessarily equate to distinct cultural lives, they are also very much, the dynamic instances of transcultural interaction and contestation.

Whether one accepts it or not, the globalization of markets in this late capitalist era has also spawned the transnationalization of cultures[50]. The new global cultural economy has "to be understood as a complex, overlapping, disjunctive order, which cannot any longer be understood in terms of existing centre-periphery models, push-pull migration models, surplus and deficits, and consumer-producer relationships" (Appadurai, 1990: 296)[51]. In the Third World, the transnationalization of cultures is usually synonymous with the process of Westernization in which the invasion of Western symbols and values is usually believed to have contributed to *manufactured desires*, internal cultural decay, deterioration of parochial ties, and social and moral debauchery. From Chile to Singapore, Third World cultural landscapes are littered with Western referents, particularly American referents: Images of Coca-Cola soft-drinks scattered everywhere from local restaurants

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[50] Jonathan Friedman argues that the cultural hodgepodge that postmodernism speaks of is rooted in "colonially induced ethnic differentiation maintained by exclusionary politics, so that European-imposed identities become local social realities" (Friedman, 1988: 458). In fact the pluralist conception of the world, the confusion of space and identitiy, is Western: "Cultural pluralism is the Western experience of the real postmodernization of the world, the ethnicization and cultural pluralization of a dehegemonizing, dehomogenizing world incapable of a formerly enforced politics of assimilation or cultural hierachy" (Ibid: 459).

[51] Appadurai (1988) locates the disjunctures in the global system in terms of "scapes", i.e. ethnoscapes (landscape of peoples who constitute the shifting world, eg. migrants, refugees, guestworkers), mediascapes(image centred, narrative based "strips of reality"), technoscapes (global configuration of technology), finanscapes (the disposition and trajectory of global capital) and ideoscapes (concatenation of images, ideas, ideologies, eg. freedom, welfare, rights, sovereignty, democracy). It is these blocks of scapes that build "imagined worlds".

to billboards ads, the presence of MacDonalds and Burger King restaurants at every corner,
The Gap, Esprit and Benetton shops in the shopping centres, are all diffused into the daily
lives of Third World peoples. But, the mode of re/appropriating these objects and their
place in the local milieu are so different from the West. The presence of the West cannot
be simply accounted for by the *cultural imperialism* thesis wherein the Western Capitalist,
bent upon global profiteering, instead of subjugating physically (as in the colonial era), now
turns to psychological conquest. Cultural imperialism is usually assumed to have two major
goals: the economic, that is to capture the markets, and the political, where the aim is to
establish a cultural hegemony by manipulating and shaping popular consumerism.
However, there is more to this assumption of Third World peoples as economic victims,
or cultural dupes who are succumbing to Western powers everytime they buy a Big Mac.
The hyper–transmission of information worldwide has also rattled the socio–cultural cages
in many Third World nations, opening new spaces for contesting discursive activity. The
global condition of "cultural contamination" that is Westernization must not, as Vattimo
reminds us, be viewed as some loss of archaic authenticity or posit a complete
disappearance of the other. There is really no pure traditional or transcendental essence to
be retrieved and liberated, and what we have are contested sites of cultural traces and
residues, and lingering hybrid forms (Vattimo, 1988: 159–160)[52]. Brunner refers to this
fluid "cultural ambiguity" as cultural heterogenity:

> Cultural heterogeneity thus means something very different than diverse
> cultures (subcultures) of ethnicities, classes, groups, or regions, or than the
> mere superimposition of cultures, whether or not these cultures have found
> a way of synthesizing themselves. It means, specifically, a segmented and
> differential participation in an international market of messages that
> "penetrates" the local framework of culture on all sides and in unexpected
> ways, leading to an implosion of the consumed/produced/reproduced
> meanings and subsequent deficiencies of identity, yearnings for
> identitification, confusion of temporal horizons, paralysis of the creative
> imagination, loss of utopias, atomization of local memory, and obselescence
> of traditions. (Brunner, 1993: 41)

Cultural heterogenity, or cultural pluralization and the cultural hybrid (Bhabha, 1985) are
not merely instances of cultural transfer, they presuppose infinite intercultural exchanges
at the level of daily lives in which a mass of customs, values, images and beliefs are
interacting; blending and creating rather than struggling against a cultural loss. These are
"border crossings", wherein cultural formation of ethnicity is no longer an isolated or

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[52]. The Foucauldian idea of "returning to" the silent spaces does not imply an origin either,
but rather the instance, disruption or discontinuity of discourse formation or continuity, nor does
Derrida locate some transcendent essence in his deconstructive analysis.

exclusive local phenomena but a process of intercultural borrowings and lendings. The production and reproduction of cultures are very much dependant on the "changing constitution of identity spaces and their concomitant strategies" (Friedman, 1988: 459) which are part of the historical dynamics of the global system.

Postmodernism should not be rejected as irrelevant to the Third World, for it emerges out of acknowledging the toppling of the West from its politically and economically hegemonic position, and has contributed to dismantling universal power structures, deconstructing the fixity of dominant Western knowledges, and the stimulation of new cultural articulatory spaces. The recognition of ahistoricity has resulted in the need to reclaim and retrieve one's counter-history and memory, and the right to name and represent:

> It is one of the salutary features of postmodern theory to suggest that it is
> the disjunctured, fragmented displaced agency of those who have suffered
> the sentence of history – subjugation, domination, diaspora, displacement –
> from the affective experience of social marginality that we must conceive
> of a political strategy of empowerment and articulation, strategy outside the
> libertory rhetoric of idealism and beyond the sovereign subject. (Bhabha,
> 1992: 57).

Poststructuralist or postmodernist tools such as deconstruction, and genealogy are not to be viewed with hegemonic suspicion but should be reappropriated and reinvented according to the context of Third World analysis, and the subjects of analysis. The postmodern abandon of the politics of universals, and unitary or solidaristic movements do not mean the denial of political challenges to dominant narratives. Rather, one perceives political challenges as polyvocal, consisting of individualized or specific agencies. The death of the sovereign subject does not usually mean the end of the self and agency. Never before, have so many subaltern voices, once suppressed in the sea of grand narratives, emerged to articulate their own subject positions and strategies of transformations and empowerment. For the subaltern woman, postmodernism and the poststructuralist concentration on language, discourse and power shatter the victimhood dogma, and create the spaces for the articulation of antagonisms and resistance, for her narratives to be heard – and for her meaningful self-reconstruction of identity amidst the swirling global changes in which she is neither merely an *outsider* nor a *victim*, but an active *agent* and *participant*.

Chapter 2
Theoretical Speculations: Derrida and Foucault

Introduction

Language, in all its communicable expressions: speech, writing, gesture; shapes our world, moulds our form of life, and is "the locus of total mediation of every experience of the world and every occurance of the being" (Vattimo, 1988: 132). So much occurs within the everyday life of our linguistic interaction that a taken-for-grantedness prevents us from recognizing that social changes at the societal and individual level are expressed in language. Within language, is contained the expressive power to communicate, to encourage, to empower, to enforce, to sanction, to denounce, to exclude, to legislate, and to represent. In *Keywords* (1985), Raymond Williams saw particular words as active and conflicting forces which shaped social reality, and even played a powerful role in constructing political objectives[1]. Certain terms, which Williams refers to as keywords, carry unspoken assumptions and connotations, and influence the discourse they permeate.

Rooted in the poststructuralist focus on language, the postmodern world is conceived and interpreted as a text, composed of never-ending webs of textuality, where the multitudes of discourses traverse the social space always creating, and transforming, – where cultures and individuals are always-already writing themselves in the play of infinite signification. Texts, as Edward Said reminds us are –

> protean things..tied to circumstances and to politics large and small, and they require attention and criticism..reading and writing are never neutral activity, there are interests, power, passion, pleasures entailed, no matter how entertaining [or informative] the work, global dimensions, regions...spatial/geographical and rhetorical practices – inflections, limits, constrains, intrusions, inclusions, prohibitions – all of them tending to elucidate a complex and uneven topography. (Said, 1993: 318)

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[1] "We find a history and complexity of meanings; conscious changes, or consciously different uses; innovation, obsolescence, specialization, extension, overlap, transfer; or changes which are masked by a nominal continuity so that words which seem to have been there for centuries, with continuous general meanings, have come in fact to express radicallly different or radically variable, yet sometimes hardly noticed, meanings and implications of meanings. *Industry, family, nature* may jump at us from such sources; *class, rational, subjective* may after years of reading remain doubtful" (Williams, 1985: 17).

Williams's writing is significant to Foucault and Derrida, whose works are aimed towards the unmasking of multiple meanings within a unitary and stable, taken-for-granted language, and in Foucault's case, discourse. Although analysing at the level of statements and discourse formation, Foucault seeks the discontinuities and disruptions of the flow of statements and charts their discursive changes in a manner that echoes William's study into the evolving and subtle transformation of words. Derrida, on the other hand seeks the *imprints* or the *trace* of other meanings, or interpretations that are inscribed into linguistic space, making present what is absent and unspoken.

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Knowledge is therefore, linguistically expressed, or in Foucault's case, constituted by discursive activity, and to be understood in relation to language and not the intention or consciousness of the individual or collective subject. With their general focus on "untying" and disrupting the authority of any one textual position, the poststructuralists argue for the unravelling of the text though genealogical and archeological methods (Foucault), psychoanalysis (Lacan, Delueze and Guatteri, Kristeva, Irigaray, Cixoux), multiple semiotic readings i.e. intertextuality (Barthes, Baudrillard, Kristeva, Cixoux) and deconstructive practices (Derrida, De Man, Spivak, Culler).

However, the aim here is not to provide a detailed textual analysis, nor provide a deconstructive critique or identify linguistic or discursive disruptions. Neither is this an expert reading of Derrida and Foucault, and a comprehensive analysis or critique of their *oeuvre*. My aim in this chapter is to delineate the significance of some of the poststructuralist conceptions of language, discourse, the subject and power as deployed by Derrida and Foucault. By doing so, I hope to lay out a general introduction to some of the more prominent theoretical positions that I will be traversing in the rest of the thesis.

Reading Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida: Textual Positions

It is difficult to read the textual positions of Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida together for they present two different forms of textual analysis. Nevertheless, this reading is only a general introduction to the focus of their textual analysis which at times appear complementary while yet contradictory[2]. The below is a general introduction to two very complicated, and often incommensurable positions; but these I believe, are what postmodern textual tensions are about – that the (world or reality as) text cannot be read in any one position.

Despite Foucault's and Derrida's attempts to unravel what is absent in the text – to make visible what is not immediately present – namely, the movements, rules, play of textuality, both scholars stand opposed to each other's work. While Foucault discusses textuality in terms of discourse, power and knowledge, Derrida speaks of the infinite differences of texts. Yet, both seek to counter the dominance of scientific knowledge or the hegemony of reason (which Derrida refers to as the metaphysics of presence) by rupturing the "tyranny of fiction," the theme of convergence, the unity of texts and the creation of totalities. Derrida shifts and displaces in terms of the written logos, namely *"différance"*, and in deconstructing, anticipates further what is not there. Foucault, on the other hand,

[2]To date, there are two good critiques of Foucault and Derrida. One being Edward Said's "The Problem of Textuality: Two Exemplary Positions." *Critical Inquiry*, (Summer 1978) 673–714; and the other, Gayatri Spivak's "More on Power/Knowledge." in Spivak's *Outside in the Teaching Machine*. In this section, I draw mostly from Said's reading but do not elaborate on his criticisms of Derrida and Foucault.

unveils and states what has been masked, through archeological and genealogical methods, revealing the hidden "languages" or "subjugated knowledges[3]," and positing a "return to" the elisions and constructive omissions which occurs in discourse formation (Foucault, 1971). Foucault uncovers the text, mainly because he sees the text as part of a network of power coursed through with discursive knowledge which obscures other forms of knowledge[4], while Derrida releases and *disseminates*[5] the text – revelling in its endless

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[3]Subjugated knowledges refer to the blocs of historical knowledge which are present but disguised within the body of functionalist and systemising theory and which criticism has been able to reveal, thus "allowing us to rediscover the ruptural effects of conflict and struggle that the order imposed by functionalist or systemizing thought is designed to mask" (Foucault, 1980: 81).

Subjugated knowledges are "a set of knowledges that have been disqualified as inadequate to their task or insufficiently elaborated..[they are] naive knowledges located low down on the hierachy beneath the required level of cognition or scientificity [or confined to the margins of knowledge]" (81–82). The reemergence of such subjugated knowledges take the form of popular, local and regional knowledges, and owes its force to being opposed by everything, and the incapability of unanimity.

Foucault's genealogical method is the rediscovery of these subjugated knowledges, "[entertaining] claims to attention of local, discontinuous, disqualified, illigitimate knowledges against the claims of a unitary body of theory which filter, hierarchise and order in the name of true knowledge" (83). Genealogy, as anti–science "is concerned with the insurrection of knowledges that are opposed primarily to the effects and centrality of power which are linked to the institution and functioning of an organized scientific discourse" (ibid).

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[4]In "The Orders of Discourse," (1971) Foucault writes that "in every society the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organised and redistributed according to a certain number of procedures, whose role is to avert its powers and its dangers to cope with chance events, to evade its ponderous, awesome materiality" (8).

Foucault maps out three systems of mastering (or mastery over) discourse: prohibition, as in the words; rarefaction (sense of depletion, dwindling away) as in the exercise of limitations or control over discription, commentary, and disciplines; and, determining conditions as in exclusive membership to a certain discourse, for example, none may enter discourse on a specific subject unless s/he has fulfilled certain conditions, a certain "fellowship of discourse" or restriction of access as in education. To challenge the above, one needs to embrace "three decisions which our current thinking tends to resist," that is, to question the will to truth; restore discourse to the character of an event; and to abolish the sovereignty of the signifier.

Foucault proposes four methods. 1) reversal – seeking the role of the author, the will to truth, the process of cutting out or rarefaction, 2) discontinuity – "discourse must be treated as a discontinuous activity, its different manifestations sometimes coming together, but just as easily unaware of, or excluding each other" (1971: 22); 3) specificity – a particular discourse cannot be resolved by a prior system of signification, "we must conceive discourse as a violence that we do

multiplicities. Not surprisingly, Foucault accuses Derrida of reducing discursive practices to "textual traces," and "the invention of voices behind texts" while yet ignoring the element of power which constitutes the text. Derrida counterpoints by criticizing the *History of Sexuality, 1* as a "Cartesian gesture of protection and enclosure" (Said, 1978). As Said critically observes, "Derrida's criticism therefore moves us *into* the text, Foucault's *in* and *out* of it" (674).

Foucault's work on language is not entirely removed from the écriture of Derrida. In a series of essays and interviews in *Language, Counter–Memory, Practice* (1977), he addresses the dispersal of the author/subject into language and the multiplicities within the space created by the author/subject's absence. This is the notion of écriture in which references to the author/subject (who is "recently absent") are circumvented. The conception of écriture "stands for a remarkably profound attempt to elaborate the conditions of any text, both the conditions of its spatial dispersion and its temporal deployment" (119). This echoes Derrida's écriture with the double reference to the act of writing and the primordial or metaphysical nature of writing. Derrida's écriture plays upon the activity of the sign in which writing is the interplay of presence and absence, and the provisional and ephemeral sign represents the presence in its absence. For Foucault, the subject does inhabit language but not the "whole of his language," for "he discovers the existence of another language that also speaks and that he is unable to dominate [or] manipulate the language he spoke at one time and that has now separated itself from him" (41–2). The subject's disappearance in the "grey neutrality" is the "void [that has been] hollowed out in which a multiplicity of speaking subjects are joined and severed" (42). Surely this echoes Derrida's notion of the absent/present subject who is divided from itself, but Foucault analyzes this disappearance of the author/subject at the level of discourse.

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to things, or, at all events, as a practice we impose upon them;" 4) exteriority – we cannot seek "a hidden core of discourse," an analysis of the "external conditions of existence" for a discourse, that which gives rise to its appearance and sets its limits.

⁵Dissemination is an important Derridean concept that is rooted in Lacanian psychoanalysis. Derrida's dissemination couples semantics and semen, a sowing which is infinitely repeated, a spilling of seeds in vain, and which does not inseminate nor claims an origin. It speaks of "texts whose power lies in the possibility of their infinite generality and multiplicity" (Said, 1978: 693). Dissemination implies the perpetual disruption of writing, disorganization, a proliferation of always different, always postponed meanings. "Dissemination *affirms* (I do not say produces or controls) endless substitution, it neither arrests nor controls play....and in doing so, runs all the risks, but without the metaphysical or romantic pathos of negativity. Dissemination "is" this *angle* of the play of castration which does not signify, which permits itself to be constituted neither as a signified, nor a signifier, no more presents than represents itself, no more shows than hides itself" (Derrida, 1981: 86–87).

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If Derrida perceives the structuralist "center" or the "transcendental signified" as a stabilizing function to organize, balance, and make coherent, Foucault sees the author/subject as a function (and effect) of discourse in which the author/subject is a principle of unity, characterizing the existence, circulation and operation of certain discourses within a society. As in Derrida's unstable shifting subject which is woven into the fluidity of language, Foucault's author/subject when linked to discourse, is discontinuous, and just as unstable in analysis. Foucault thus, conducts his discursive analysis to "examine the empty space left by the author's disappearance" and "observe along its gaps and fault lines, its new demarcations and the reapportionment of this void" (1977: 121). Working at the discursive level, Foucault conceives of this exterior/interior framework where the surface plane of discourse appears as an ideal, continuous, stable and homogenous layer, – and beneath it, the gaps and fissures, dissensions, contradictions, and suppressed layers of other discursive events that must be unmasked. Derrida, on the other hand promotes the interplay between the absence and presence of texts, words, and signs, where the presence is also an absence of another presence, – part of an inexhaustible movement of difference and deferance. Derrida's linguistic sign is an endless, heterogeneous one, where each sign is also made up of infinite traces of other signs. Derrida exudes in the pluralities, and deconstructs in order to seek more pluralities, his "entire procedure to show... that far from criticism being able to account for everything by a doubling or duplicating representation, there is always something that escapes" (Said, 1978: 683). Foucault, however, tracks down and identifies the pluralities and determines what has been excluded, prohibited and rarefied.

Finally, a note on pluralities. To read the following extract from the last chapter of *The Archeology of Knowledge* (1972) is to find Foucault resonating Derrida:

> [The discourse about discourses] is trying to deploy a dispersion that can never be reduced to a single system of differences, a scattering that is not related to absolute axes of reference; it is trying to operate a decentering that leaves no privilege to any center. The role of such a discourse is not to dissipate oblivion, to rediscover, in the depths of things said, at the very place in which they are silent, the moment of their birth...it is [to] continually [make] *differentiations*, it is a *diagnosis*. (Foucault, 1972: 205–206)

Differences for Derrida is displacement but also the acknowledgment of the whole play of deferred meanings – the "meaning-to-say-nothing;" it is also

> to be entangled in hundreds of pages of a writing simultaneously insistent and elliptical, imprinting, as you saw, even in its erasures, carrying off each concept into an interminable chain of differences, surrounding or confusing itself with so many precautions, references, notes, citations, collages, supplements. (Derrida, 1981: 14)

For Foucault, "the whole play of displacements and misunderstandings is perfectly coherent and necessary" (204), and the task of the archeology of discourse is *to make differences* – but this is where Foucault departs from resonating Derrida, for the next half of the line reads "to constitute them as objects, to analyse them, and to define their concept." Foucault, through his archeology and geneological explorations (excavations?) "emancipates and thus, reactivates historical knowledges, to render them capable of oppositions" against the totalizing coercion of scientific discourse (1980: 85). In this way, Foucault offers the possibilities of re/building from those texts which have been excluded and suppressed "doing and saying what those other `invisible' texts have repressed, doing and saying what no one will say and do" (Said, 1978: 676). On the other hand, Derrida collapses the subject/object distinction into the polysemic "wanderings" of the text, and deconstruction is not to define or analyze, but a subversive element which disrupts what passes off as plenitude, and a cumulating and accumulating presence which also fills a fundamental void (Derrida, 1976). Deconstruction, therefore, functions to release – to disseminate and fray the text.

Derrida, Language and Logocentrism: "Beyond the Closure of Knowledge."

A `text' is henceforth no longer a finished corpus of writing, some content enclosed in a book or its margins, but a differential network, a fabric of traces referring endlessly to something other than itself, to other differential traces. (Jacques Derrida)

It is by treating *differently* every language, by *grafting* languages onto each other, by *playing* on the multiplicity of languages...that one can fight....against the colonizing principle. (Jacques Derrida)

It is not easy to read Jacques Derrida for his neologism is sometimes puzzling and incoherent. His invention of language is reflective of the playfulness of his approach to the *logos*. His invention of new ways of writing and words like *"différance," "trace," "supplement," "spacing," "arche-trace," and "arche-writing"* jump out from his mind-boggling work, manifesting itself as an alien language, and in his own words implies "no taxanomical closure, and even less does it constitute a lexicon" (1981: 40). But Derrida writes from a risque position for he performs a textual operation which disrupts the security of our language structures, and indirectly, the way we perceive the wor[l]d" (1992)[6].

[6]It is no wonder that Eve Tavor Bannet writes that "after Derrida, it is impossible to look at a page, a writing or an argument without noticing the spaces, the silences and the gaps and without asking where the divisions have been produced" (1989: 226).

Language, Derrida declares "is neither prohibition nor transgression, it couples the two endlessly" (266). But his position is a significant destabilizing one; one which shatters the structuralist binarism of language, whether it is *logocentrism, phallogocentrism, or phonocentrism* (the terms are all situated within the binary frame of thought, for example, phallogocentrism privileges the male language over female). The significance of Derrida's work lies in his approach to the text which he claims, is subjected to the irreducible play of différance that aspires to no final destination nor the claim of some metaphysical essence. But it is a différance which gravitates instead to the imprints of the "Other", and to the future since it involves the never ending struggle to create openings (even if the challenge of praxis here is the techne of writing) without which the Other can appear to undermine and transform what we know or presume to know.

Before we can proceed on to Derrida's position on language, there is a need to elaborate the structuralist conception of language, particularly Ferdinand De Saussure's linguistic theory which presents language as a model for all reality. To Saussure, thoughts are a nebulous mass to be shaped and moulded or directed by language. Language is the link between thought and sound, the combination of which produces a form, not a substance. Not to confuse signs with words, Saussure distinguishes words as homogenous entities that refer to things in the world, while linguistic signs are made up of complex psychological relations shared by a community of speakers. The nature of Saussure's linguistic system is binary in which the linguistic sign is a "two-sided psychological entity," the combination between the signified (the concept) and the signifier (sound-image)[7].

The concept, is what Saussure refers to as *langue*, "an institution, a set of impersonal rules and conventions, a self-contained whole and a principle of classification" (Sheriff, 1989: 6). The sound-image is *parole*, the way language is spoken on various occasions. For any words or speech acts to have meaning, there must be an underlying structure that enables this meaning. To illustrate the relation between langue and parole, Saussure provides an analogy of a chess game in which the "rules exist above and beyond each individual game" (Hawkes in Sheriff: 6) but only acquire form in the relationships which develop among the pieces. In the same manner, langue does not exist on its own unless manifested in speech. Similarly, parole cannot have meaning if there is no langue "to make parole and meaning possible." For Saussure, although signs are arbitrary and

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[7]"A linguistic system is a series of differences of sound combined with a series of differences of ideas; but the pairing of a certain number of acoustical signs with as many cuts made from the mass of thoughts engenders a system of values; and this system serves as the effective link between the phonic and psychological elements within each sign" (Saussure, 1993 13). Thus, a sign and its elements can only have meaning or value in a relation with other signifieds, signifiers and sign groups.

differential they are also immutable, "the signifier, though to all appearances freely chosen with respect to the idea that it represents, is fixed, not free, with respect to the linguistic community that uses it" (Saussure, quoted in Sheriff, 1989: 8). Language changes when there are shifts in the relation between signifieds and signifiers which occur through circulation and life of the language overtime. But that underlying structure remains as a center, or the point of referent at any given time and place. Saussure, thus proposes a synchronic over a diachronic analysis of language since language is a system of "interrelated units with the value of those units determined by their places in a system at a given time and in a given state rather than by their place in history" (9)[8]. Structuralists conceive of meaning as a fixed origin or a given center with a point of reference, and then attempt to identify or evoke the underlying structure or system of codes responsible for the accepted meaning[9]. However, to the poststructuralists[10], language always exceeds a subjective center.

Derrida's project is to interrupt the dyadic sign, and deconstruct this "center" which he refers to as the "transcendental[11] signified." Rather than seeing meaning as a center which governs structure, he sees it as "coming after, a product of structurality" (Sheriff, 1989: 5). The sign, Derrida argues is not anchored in some extra-linguistic synchronic structure with a truth that governs nor is it a stable unity between signifier and signified. Unstable and heterogeneous, the sign is merely a provisional and temporal presence

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[8]This is not to say that Saussure is abandoning a diachronic analysis of language. Diachronic changes are incorporated into synchronic relations (between signifiers and signifieds), but this process is not a function of the gradual accumulation of diachronic change but of a shift in synchronic relations.

[9]Levi-Strauss (LS) expanded and generalized the binary notion of the sign to all aspects of culture. To LS, all cultural forms, especially myths were thought in terms of binary oppositions, for example, sweet and sour, raw and cooked.

[10]Other than Derrida, I find it helpful to refer to Roland Barthes and his work on textual analysis (1987) in terms of understanding the poststructuralist conception of language. To Barthes, signifying systems are not dependant on a universal matrix of the sign. Signification is not produced in a uniform way but according to the material of the signifier, and also according to the plurality which marks the enunciative subject. The signifying practice is a practice and not produced under an abstraction (langue) but through an operation, a labour in which both the debate of the subject and the Other, and the social context are invested in the same movement. In this way, Barthes restores the dynamic energy of language.

[11]It is transcendental because it is conceived as a concept exterior to the language process.

subjected to the play of différance[12], never quite becoming and always already absent.

If one must chart the instance from which Derrida formulates his critique of language, then it is in Aristotle's famous maxim: "spoken words are the symbols of mental experience and written words are the symbols of spoken words." From Aristotle to Levi-Strauss, Derrida writes of Western philosophy's repeated priviliging of speech over writing in which writing is derivative of speech. For Aristotle, speech or the voice is the producer of the *first symbols*, the sound/phone-image and therefore, the first signifier which "has a relationship of essential and immediate proximity with the mind" (1976: 11). Speech is regarded by Saussure, Rousseau and Levi-Strauss as more natural, primordial, and the mental experiences which "themselves reflect or mirror things by natural resemblance". Writing is merely a clothing of language, the "representation of speech" (37) and the "matter external to the spirit, to speech and the the logos" (35). This priviliging of speech is teleological, and ultimately ethnocentric for it claims an original essence to which writing is a secondary effect, a representation and an inferior derivation. This is *phonocentrism*, which Derrida relates to *logocentrism* – the belief that the Logos, the Word or the "self-presence of full consciousness" is the first and the last thing; a belief which Derrida sees as responsible for Western ethnocentrism. It is the *centrism* which reflects the human desire to posit a central presence and construct a self/other relationship:

> that logocentrism....is also a phonocentrism: absolute proximity of voice and
> being, of voice and the meaning of being, of voice and the ideality of
> meaning...that phonocentrism merges with the historical determination of
> the meaning of being in general as *presence*, with all the subdeterminations
> which depend on this general form..presence of the thing to the sight as
> *eidos*, presence as substance/essence/existence [*ousia*], temporal presence
> as point [*stigmé*] of the now or of the moment [*nun*], the self-presence of

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[12]There is not enough space here to explain how Derrida conceives of the principle of différance but in contrast to Saussure's element of signification which is due to the network of oppositions that distinguishes them and relates them to one another (the langue), Derrida's différance, as the condition of signification affects the totality of the sign. The signified concept or the langue in fact is never present in and of itself. Différance is not a concept but only a conceptual possibility in the systematic play of differences and deferance (see Derrida, 1993)
In *Positions* (1981), Derrida explains it this way:

> The activity connoted by the *a* of *différance* refers to the generative movement in
> the play of differences. The latter are neither fallen from the sky nor inscribed once
> and for all in a closed system, a static structure that a synchronic and taxonomic
> operation could exhaust. Differences are the effects of transformation, and from the
> vantage the theme of *différance* is incompatible with the static, synchronic,
> taxonomic ahistoric motifs in the concept of *structure*. (1981:27)

Also, see pp 57–60 of this chapter.

the cogito, consciousness, subjectivity, the co-presence of the other and of
the self, intersubjectivity as the intentional phenomenon of the ego, and so
forth. Logocentrism would thus support the determination of the being of the
entity as presence. (Derrida, 1976: 11-12)

This desire for a central presence engenders hierarchized oppositions, in which the
presence and the logos is the superior term and the inferior "serves to define its status and
mark a fall" (Spivak, 1976: lxix). Logocentrism marks the superiority of the first term and
"conceives the second in relation to it, as complication, a negation, a manifestation, or a
disruption of the first" (Culler, 1982: 93). Logocentrism is behind the logic of binary
oppositions, and also the logic of domination and subordination – A is there to enable the
presence of B, the *transcendental signified*, *Presence* and *Being*, for example, the Orient
enables the Occident; woman, enables Man; the Third World woman enables Western
feminists. Logocentrism, and the metaphysics[13] of presence express the "exigent, powerful,
systematic, and irrepressible desire for such a [transcendental] signified"(Derrida, 1976:
49)[14].

The metaphysics of presence implies the faith of absolute knowledge, a universal
center which structures the operations of claims to truth. When Derrida speaks of *presence*
in the context of metaphysics, he means the authority of presence and its power of
valorization founded by the Cartesian cogito where truth, logic, and consciousness all arise
from the act of Cartesian reflection. In logocentrism, the notion of presence figures as the
centering, grounding principle which enables the superior term, the logos to be the higher
presence, for example the Occident over the Orient – where the superior presence of the
Occident is lifted by the absence [read: inferior] of the Orient. To think without a
metaphysics of presence is to reject the primordial essence, in which Being is exterior and
not anterior to language. Presence, Derrida argues, is marked by and is an effect of
difference and differal, and is the effect of a generalized absence. Presence is thus
constituted with the intention of erasure: it is divided within itself, by an interval – a

[13]According to Gayatri Spivak, Derrida always uses the word "metaphysics" for any
science of presence (1976).

[14]This is not to say that Derrida is reversing the speech-writing binarism by favouring
writing over speech. Derrida, in fact undoes the opposition, not by reversal but by showing how
it cannot be sustained as an opposition. In fact, both speech and writing cross-infect one another.
What Derrida attempts to show in *Of Grammatology*, is the impossibility of some primordial
essence which determines language. Derrida's project is to show that the "structurality of structure"
is anterior to all signs.

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spacing [*l'espacement*][15] which Derrida explains, is a displacement that marks the irreducible movement of alterity (1981: 81) – the "articulation of space and time, the becoming-space of time and the becoming-time of space"(68).

For Derrida, the irreducible anterior essence of all language (especially in writing) – the movement of difference–itself, is defined by terms such as *"differance," "trace," "supplement," "arch-writing," "dissemination"* which all evoke the themes of the arbitrariness and heterogeneity of the sign. The terms form a chain and may be substituted for the other although no two words bear the same meaning. Recalling that the Saussurian signifier is fixed, or immutable, the Derridean signifier is subjected to constant erasure – where every signified is always already a signifier, thus forming infinite chains of signification as one signifier relays one to another, and so on. Each sign in the chain of signification carries the presence of other traces which have been suppressed, and is itself a supplement to other signs, thus forming a complex web which is inexhaustible. Derrida posits a language system where language is structured around a ceaseless interplay of linguistic deferral and differing of meaning. But it is *differance*[16], which is so crucial to Derrida's project of decentering the structuralist project.

Différance, Derrida warns is neither a word nor a concept; it has no categories, nor an end or a beginning, and anticipates its own dissolution in its evanescent manifestation.

> *Différance* is the systematic play of differences, of the traces of differences, of the *spacing*, by means of which elements are related to each other. Thus spacing is the simulataneously active and passive (the *a* of *différance* indicates this indecision as concerns activity and passivity, that which cannot be governed by or distrubuted between the terms of this opposition) production of the intervals without which the "full" terms would not signify, would not function. It is also the becoming space of the broken chain – which has been called temporal or linear; a becoming–space which makes

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[15]"That spacing is the impossibility for an identity to be closed on itself, on the inside of its proper interiority, or on its coincidence with itself. The irreducibility of spacing is the irreducibility of the other .that 'spacing' not only designates interval but a 'productive,' 'genetic,' 'practical' movement, an operation'...the irreducibility of the other is marked in spacing" (1981: 94).

[16]The "a" of différance gives trace to what cannot "be," it differs and defers without presence. Differ in this case is the French *différer*, which carries a double meaning. Differer is to "detour, delay, a relay, a reserve, a representation" (1993: 112); "to temporize, to take recourse, consciously or unconsciously," while the other meaning pertains to the non–identitical, the Other

possible both writing and every correspondence between speech and
writing, every passage from one to the other. (Derrida, 1981: 27)

In the play of différance, language is pushed into a space of infinite meanings, and
Man/Being/Presence disappears in the movements of absence and presence. Différence is
the interruption of the binary oppositions; the "impossible relation to presence" (1993: 121),
producing systematic and regulated transformations[17]. We should think of différance in
terms of *sheaf* for "the assemblage [of différance] has the complex structure of a weaving,
an interlacing which permits the different threads and different lines of meaning – or of
force – to go off again in different directions, just as it is always ready to tie itself up with
others" (1993: 109). Like the rhizomatic text of Deleuze and Guatteri, the desultory
trajectory of différance has neither beginnings nor ends, constituting linear multiplicities,
"acentered, nonhierachical, nonsignifying system without a General and without an
organizing memory or central automaton, defined solely by a circulation of states"
(Deleuze in Boundas, 1993: 36)[18]. The absence of the transcendental signified enables the
free play of signifiers that posits no final, unified meaning. Language is irreducible
polysemia – there is no origin of a structure or a transcendental signified nor a point of
closure.

Derrida's *trace* is a challenge to the metaphysics of presence, or the master–word.
Trace denotes and connotes "imprint," "track" and "footprints" and is the "simulacrum of
a presence that dislocates itself, displaces itself, refers itself" (1993: 125). Thus, the trace
is constituted by the double play of repetition and effacement. The structure of the sign is
determined by the trace, which is the imprint of the always already in the movement of
difference. Anterior to the sign, the trace is placed under constant erasure, making
redundant any claim to an origin.

> The trace affects the totality of the sign...That the signified is orginarily and
> essentially (and not only for a finite and created spirit) trace, that is *always*
> *already in the position of the signifier*, is the apparently innocent proposition
> within which the metaphysics of the logos, of presence and consciousness,
> must reflect upon writing as its death and resource. (Derrida, 1993: 73,
> italics mine)

The sign must therefore, be read under erasure, as an always already which is inhabited by
the trace of another sign that is never fully present to and of itself. The trace is only a
"simulacrum of a presence" that dislocates and displaces itself in its fleeting existence.
Thus, the trace erases itself "in presenting itself, muffles itself in resonating, like the *a* [of
différance] writing itself" (1993: 124). Always "differing and deferring, and never as it is

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[17] Transformations which Derrida argues also leaves room for a structural science (1981).

[18] Also see *Of Grammatology*, 1976: 101–102.

in the presentation of itself, the trace constantly de-signifies itself in the signifying function.

With the decentering of the structuralist point of presence, and the collapsing of the subject/object distinction, the conscious and speaking Derridean subject is thus an effect, dependant on the system of differences and the movement of différance. In considering the subject, one has to read with shifting meanings in mind because according to Derrida, conscious thought is a manifestation of a multiplicity of structures that intersect to produce the unstable constellation of the self. The shifting self and subjectivity are thus, the transitory products of the absence/presence which are produced out of the arbitrary determination of the linguistic structures in the play of différance. The subject "is constituted only in being divided from itself"(1981: 29), an "always-already" that is never fully present to itself or to anyone else for it is an effect of the signifying movement. But Derrida is not merely surrendering the free-play constitution of the subject to différance, and Spivak in her translator's preface to Derrida's *Of Grammatology* also reminds us that Derrida also speaks of deconstructing the very concept of constitution itself, thus proposing an intervention which disrupts the presence of any one subject position.

Derrida and Deconstruction

> To assign an Author to a text is to impose a brake on it, to furnish it with a final signified, to close writing....In multiple writing, in effect, everything is to be *disentangled* but nothing deciphered, structure can be followed, "threaded" in all its reprises, all its stages, but there is no end to it, no bottom; the space of writing is to be traversed, not pierced; writing constantly posits meaning,but always in order to evaporate it... A text consists of multiple writings, proceeding from several cultures and entering into dialogue, into parody, into contestation. (Roland Barthes)

Deconstructive activity has been widely used within the circles of literature and art analyses, and now is being gradually acknowledged by other disciplines as an important reconceptualizing tool which challenges, and subverts structuralist theory and intervenes in the field of dichotomous formulations. While the practice is most associated with Paul De Man and the Yale School of Deconstruction in the United States, it is again to the French poststructuralists, and most particularly Jacques Derrida with whom we must associate the ideas and practices of deconstruction:

> In a traditional philosophical opposition we have not a peaceful coexistence
> of facing terms but a violent hierachy. One of the terms dominates the other
> (axiologically, logically, etc.), occupies the commanding position. To

deconstruct the opposition is above all, at a particular moment, to reverse
the hierarchy. (Derrida, 1981: 56-57)

Deconstruction is a "double gesture," or a "double writing" in which classic oppositions[19]
i.e. man/woman, nature/culture are reversed and displaced – the undoing of logocentrism,
and phallogocentrism. It is the opening up of limitless possibilities of reading, and the
dissolution of the author into the infinite layers of the text. In Gayatri Spivak's words:

> [It is the] recognition, within deconstructive practice, of provisional and
> intractable starting points in any investigative effort; its disclosure of
> complicities where a will to knowledge would create oppositions; its
> insistence that in disclosing complicities the critic–as–subject is herself
> complicit with the object of her critique; its emphasis upon "history" and
> upon the ethico–political as the "trace" of that complicity – the proof that
> we do not inhabit a clearly defined critical space free of such traces.
> (Spivak, 1988: 180)

Deconstruction as it is applied to texts proclaims the "death of the author" for "to
give a text an author is to impose a limit on the text, to furnish it with a final
signified....[when] the space of writing is to be traversed, not pierced" (Barthes). In *What
is an Author* (1984), Foucault talks of writing as placing us in the space of infinite
reduplication, and the intangibility of meaning as the subject/author is subjected to the
polyvalent discursive activity around her. Similarly, the "significance"[20] principle of Barthes
presupposes that the subject/author is engulfed by the text and is a "loss" (1990: 38). There
is no authority of a single author, for the author is "lost" in the text, thus enabling the
identification with "jouissance" – the play of "without–endness" of the "possible operations
in a given field of language" (38). The most radical challenge of deconstruction, in Gayatri
C. Spivak's view is "that notion of thought being a blank part of the text given over to a
future that is not just a future present but always a future anterior" (1993: 22). The reader
is supreme in deconstruction while the author has dissolved, but paradoxically it is through

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[19]"Now when a Jacques Derrida deconstructs the opposition between private and public,
margin and center, he touches the texture of language and tells how the old worlds would not
resemble themselves any more if a trick of rereading were learned. The trick is to recognize that
in every textual production, in the production of every explanation, there is the itinerary of a
constantly thwarted desire to make the text explain" (Spivak, 1988: 105).

[20]This is actually Julia Kristeva's term. It refers to the work performed in language
(through the heterogeneous articulation of semiotic and symbolic dispositions) that enables a text
to signify what representative and communicative speech does not say (1980: 18).
"Significance is a process, in the course of which the 'subject' of the text, escaping the logic of
the ego–cogito and engaging other logics (that of the signifier and that of contradiction), struggles
with meaning and is deconstructed, is 'lost'" (Barthes, 1990: 38).

the author's assembling of the text, and the structures which sets up the textual presentation that deconstruction is possible:

> The movements of deconstruction do not destroy structures from the outside. They are not possible and effective, nor can they take accurate aim, except by inhabiting those structures. Inhabiting them in a *certain way*, because one always inhabits, and all the more when one does not suspect it. 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 able to isolate their elements and atoms, the enterprise of deconstruction always in a certain way falls prey to its own work. (Derrida, 1976: 24)

Deconstruction is thus, an act of critical affirmation rather than an act of closure. It denies the cause–effect scheme as acknowledgement of the cause points toward an origin, thus endowing it with metaphysical privilege. Because it does not aim to provide a final analysis, it locates the "promising marginal text, to disclose the undecidable moment, to pry it loose with the positive lever of the signifier...to dismantle in order to reconstitute what is always already inscribed" (Spivak, 1976: lxxvii).

Jonathan Culler defines deconstruction as a reversal of a classical opposition or the general displacement of the system. Deconstruction undermines the philosophy of the text, inverts and displaces the hierarchies and hierarchical relations and is interested in making the absent or suppressed, present.

> Deconstruction attempts to view systems from the outside as well as the inside, if tries to keep alive the possibility that the eccentricity of women, poets, prophets and madmen might yield truths about the esteem to which they are marginalized, truths contradicting the consensus. (Culler, 1982: 154)

Inhabited by différance, deconstruction "intervenes" and unmasks with multiple readings of the texts. Deconstruction is a reversal, where the text works against itself, and considers questioningly, its validity and principles. But the reversal is not final, for reversals imply inversion, which is contained within logocentric language. Reversals are endless here, and by offering an open-ended indefiniteness of textuality, a kind of freedom is conveyed with the reader's interpretation; one is delirious with the prospect of never hitting rock bottom. Deconstruction denies the freezing of meaning or a final knowledge; rather, success depends on the possibility of endless meanings and interpretations. It is the the non-finitude of interpretation which offers the possibility and a variety of alternatives through manifold readings. Deconstruction is reflexive enquiry, an active strategy which repudiates the complacency of pragmatism and works to produce disruptions in hegemonic knowledge and change, through the preservation of the notion that other narratives and truths will emerge from what has been pushed to the margins. In that sense, Culler argues that

deconstruction has no better theory of truth, or claims to a mastery in the fact that it demonstrates complicities between language and metalangue; rather, deconstruction is "a practice of reading and writing attuned to the aporias that arise in attempts to tell us the truth" (1982: 155). But perhaps the greatest gift of deconstruction, is the questioning of "the authority of the investigative subject without paralysing him/her, persistently transforming conditions of impossibility into possibility" (Spivak, 1988).

Michel Foucault: Power and Resistance

It is in discourse, according to Foucault (1990) that knowledge and power are joined together, and it is for this reason that discourse must be regarded as a "series of discontinuous segments whose tactical function is neither uniform nor stable" (100). Far from being divided into dichotomies (i.e. accepted/excluded discourse), discourses are polyvalent tactics operating in the field of force, and in various strategies. Foucault's aim is not to seek the strategies of discourse (for example, what strategy is the discourse on sex derived from), nor to uncover its ideological underpinnings. Rather, discourse must be tracked in terms of "tactical productivity," namely reciprocal effects of power and the knowledge they ensure, and the "strategical integration" (102).

> Discourses are not..subservient to power or raised against it, any more than
> silences are. We must make allowance for the complex and unstable process
> whereby discourse can be both an instrument and an effect of power, but
> also a hindrance, a stumbling block, a point of resistance and a starting point
> for an opposing strategy. Discourse transmits and produces power; it
> reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and
> makes it possible to thwart it. (Foucault, 1990: 101-2)

To understand the exercise of power and the possibilities of resistance therefore, requires the reading of the mul;plicities and the instability of the discontinuous segments of discourse. Since discourse involves a "heterogeneity in its practices, [traversing] a space with irreducible origins, non-universalized locales," (Garth, 1988: 35), and if power is inextricably linked to discourse, one can then see how Foucault has problematized, and, reconceptualized the entire notion of power.

Michel Foucault's explication of the varied matrices of modern power and the multiple ways in which power is deployed helps contribute to our understanding of how social organizations, realities and subjectivities are reconstituted, and the complexities of power, knowledge and the acting subject. Too often the notion of power has been compartmentalized in neat simplistic unities and binary conceptions. It is often reduced to the powerful against the powerless, domination of males versus subordination of women, first world versus Third World, and studied as a centralized top-down form, concentrating at the level of the State or government itself, as in the example below:

Chapter 2
Theoretical Speculations: Derrida and Foucault

It has taken power to keep women out of their countries' diplomatic corps
and out of the upper reaches of the World Bank. It has taken power to keep
questions of inequity between local men and women off the agenda of many
nationalist movements in industrialized as well as agrarian societies. It has
taken power to construct popular culture – films, advertisments, books,
fairs, fashion–which reinforces, not subverts, global hierachies. (Enloe,
1989: 198)

Such an assertion as the above does not consider the possibilities of power in the hands of
those whom power is acted upon, and limits the analysis of power. There is also the
implication that power has to be confronted by a solidaristic resistant movement with the
promise of a utopic elision of power. But the concept of power, and its operations is not so
easily gleaned or recognized, nor can one identify or delve into its origins, strip it to its
core, and through a certain strategy, efface it. The *what* and *how* of power offer a more
perplexing problematique, one that goes beyond power as a repressive or disciplining
juridicial apparatus and directs us to the realm of the mundane, more precisely, everyday
life and activity– mainly the micro-operations of power and the resistance networks of
power. Instead of state structures, and government apparati, one combs the workplace, the
schools, the streets, and the household and families in search of "the polymorphous
techniques of power" (Foucault, 1990: 11):

[The] main concern [is to] locate the forms of power, the channels it takes,
and the discourses it permeates in order to reach the most tenuous and
individual modes of behavior....all this entailing effects that may be those
of refusal, blockage and invalidation, but also incitement and intensification.
(Foucault, 1990: 11)

Power, according to Foucault must be analysed at the micro level, and is
everywhere because "it comes from everywhere"(93). Power, is not concentrated in
institutions such as the military or the State, rather, it courses our social spaces; a pervasive
intangible network of forces which weaves itself into our slightest gestures and most
intimate utterances, and is difficult to elude[21]. Far from being routed into a general sphere
of power of subjugation, power is exercised within the social body in its capillary form
targeting the individual, and producing shifts and displacements in the social body.
Exercised in a web-like organization, and in uninterrupted processes, power touches
individual lives, constitutes them as subjects by inserting into their actions and attitudes,

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[21]One should then "conduct an ascending analysis of power – starting from its infinitesimal
mechanisms, which each has their own history, their own trajectory, their own techniques and tactics,
and then see how these mechanisms of power have been and continue to be invested, colonized,
utilized, involuted, transformed, displaced, extended etc., by ever more general mechanisms and by
forms of global domination" (1980: 99).

their discourses, learning processes and everyday lives (1980). Power cannot be exercised ouside of a relationship, and instead forms manifold relationships of force. These relationships then form "a general line of force that traverses the local oppositions and links them together...[bringing about] redistribution, realignments, homogenizations, serial arrangements, and convergences of the force relations"(94). The exercise of power therefore, is the "total structure of actions brought to bear upon possible actions" (1982: 220).

The complex diffuseness of power imprints our personal relations, routines our activities, and constitutes subjectivities. Power thus, not only represses but produces:

> Power would be a fragile thing if its only function were to repress, if it worked only through the mode of censorship, exclusion, blockage and repression, in the manner of a great Superego, exercising itself only in a negative way. If, on the contrary, power is strong this is because, as we are beginning to realize, it produces effects at the level of desire – and also at the level of knowledge. Far from preventing knowledge, power produces it. If it has been possible to constitute a knowledge of the body, this has been by way of an ensemble of military and educational disciplines. It was on the basis of power over the body that a physiological, organic knowledge of it became possible. (Foucault, 1980: 59)

> We must cease once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms: it "excludes", it "represses", it "censors", it "abstracts", it "masks", it "conceals". In fact, power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth. The individual and the knowledge that may be gained of him belong to this production. (Foucault, 1979: 294)

Through the analysis of the microphysics of power, one recognizes how the body, as an object of knowledge, is invested through discourse, with power. Power is exercised on the body as a strategy rather than as something to be possessed. Power is not a substance or a tangible object but "is a type of relation [that has]....nothing to do with exchange, production, communication, even though they combine with them" (Foucault, 1988: 83). In the exercise of power, there is a perpetual battle where the networks of power relations are constantly in tension and struggle. The effects of power, particularly Foucault's conception of *bio-power*, and which rapidly developed during the classical period and culminated in our contemporary times, are to regulate and discipline our bodies, our sexuality, and human conduct, "bringing life and its mechanisms into the realm of explicit calculation and [making] knowledge-power an agent of the transformation of human life" (Foucault, 1990: 143).

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Theoretical Speculations: Derrida and Foucault

Initially exercised as a means of *deduction*[22], or the seizure of life, bio-power, according to Foucault eventually focused on tactical efficacy, mainly, sustaining life – the disciplining of the human body which was also the "basis of the biological process" (Foucault, 1990: 139), and the regulation of the human species, or the population. More precisely, the performative aspect of the human body became the central focus of power as the *fostering of life* supplanted the *denial of life* mechanism of power. As the installation of new mechanisms of power accompanied the birth of the human sciences, the new techniques of power were directed towards the production and reproduction aspects of the body. The *anatomo-politics* of the human body focused on the "body as a machine: its disciplining, the optimization of its capabilities, the extortion of its forces, the parallel increase of its usefulness and its docility, its integration into systems of efficient and economic controls" (ibid). Bio-power also gave rise to the statistical probabilities of human life itself, subjecting it to regular self-examinations, and continuous regulatory and corrective mechanisms all aimed at the optimal performance and the perpetuity of human existence and the strenghtening of the social body[23].

Bio-power was an indispensable element in the development of capitalism since it would have been impossible for capitalism to flourish without the subjugation of bodies to the machinery of production and adjustment of the population to economic progress and the forces of capitalism. Thus, the techniques of power were normalized at every level of the social body and institutions, eg. schools, the army barracks, medicine, administration, and enforced social stratification, and gender/racial segregation. Yet because power is productive, out of the infinite networks of power relations, new ones were formed, possibly counter-discourses of resistance and retaliation[24]. Therefore, there seem to be no universal truth or coherent historical development for Foucault, merely networks of power claiming

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[22]No longer a major form of power, deduction works to "incite, reinforce, control, monitor, optimize, and organize the forces under it: a power bent on generating forces, making them grow, and ordering them, rather than one dedicated to impending them, making them submit or destroying them" (Foucault, 1990: 136).

[23]In *Discipline and Punish* (1979), Foucault explicates in great detail, the regulatory mechanisms of power, in terms of confinement and the workspace, i.e. meticulous and calculated spatial orderings and divisions, time regulations, surveillance methods (roll calls, time clocks, etc.), and the various forms of assessment and examinations. See also the concept of the *gaze*.

[24] According to Edward Said, it this disturbing circularity of power which hobbles Foucault's theory for it does not make space for emergent counter movements, "in human history there is always something beyond the reach of dominating systems, no matter how deeply they saturate society, and this is obviously what makes change possible...." (Said, 1983: 247).

various kinds of knowledges, conflicting or converging with or existing alongside each other.

Such an analysis of power problematizes our conventional wisdom and questions existing knowledge claims. When power is reconceptualized in such a manner, the conventional dichotomous ideas of the subject/object and notions of power and resistance are interrupted. The severance between the individual subject from his/her social reality presupposes the Marxist claim of "false consciousness wherein there is an essential being or subject that requires liberation or unveiling. One could, in this view (that carries a strong faith in humanity), peel back the layers of "false subject(ivities) to search for the essence that is humanity, a transcendental being that would then see and realize the ultimate truth of social reality, and act for itself. But Foucault does not seek any hidden essence nor an author/subject – for the subject is only constitutive of the discursive currents which courses through him/her. With the dispersion of power into webs of relationships, and the disruption of an ultimate truth (which is basically the effect of knowledge and power), the supremacy of the self-conscious subject and its cogito is dissolved, and universal reason is merely revealed as fictive.

For Foucault, the human body plays a central role and is inseparable from the operation of power – it is the object of knowledge, and the target for the exercise of power.

> It is a form of power which makes individuals subject. There are two
> meanings to the word subject: subject to someone else by control and
> dependence, and tied to his own identity by a conscious or self-knowledge.
> Both meanings suggest a form of power which subjects and makes subject
> to. (1982: 212)

The body is the locus of the discursive agonistics; the site and effect for the multicontestations of discouse – resisting when possible, while negotiating the endless riverines of language games. The death of the stable sovereign subject as a result of the polymorphous techniques of power in discursive formations however does not mean the abandonment of the subject but rather the questioning and investigation of the subject's construction:

> [The subject]..should be reconsidered, not to restore the theme of an
> originating subject, but to seize its functions, its intervention in discourse,
> and its system of dependencies...we should ask: under what conditions and
> through what forms can an entity like the subject appear in the order of
> discourse; what position does it occupy; what functions does it exhibit; and
> what rules does it follow in each type of discourse? In short, the subject
> (and its substitutes) must be stripped of its creative role and analysed as a
> complex and variable function of discourse. (1977: 137-138)

Given the innumerable and complex networks of power relations, the subject is dispersed in multiple positions. The constitution of the subject and its subjectivity, thus, arises out of

the complex operations and techniques of power which deploy distinctive patterns of thinking, and which attaches the individual with an identity[25]: "The individual is not a pre-given entity which is seized on by the exercise of power. The individual, his identity and characteristics, is the product of a relation of power exercised over bodies, multiplicities, movements, desires, forces" (1980: 73-74). But power can only be exercised in terms of freedom both as a condition and an effect — and only over free subjects, since the exercise of power will invariably meet with resistance, which is itself a manifestation of freedom. Even if the "space" of freedom is miniscule, power will be exercised;[26] for in the exercise of power on individuals or collective subjects, there must be a field of possibilities in which there are several ways for the subject to respond, i.e. reaction, behaviour. But it is not a harmonious synthesis when power and freedom meet, rather, there is a complicated interplay since freedom enables resistance and contestation.

As omnipresent as the multiplicities of power are in the constitution of the subject, "there is no power without the potential of refusal or revolt" (1988: 84), and "where there is power, there is resistance. Resistance is the work of power on the body in which the body after being invested with power initiates counter-resistance. Power, as discussed before can never be possessed nor localized; it is instead exercised as networks of power relationships which are involved in the never-ending struggle to ensnare the body. Resistance is detected at the point where power relationships are exercised, and is dependant on "a multiplicity of points of resistance" which are present everywhere in the power network. The points of resistance are "mobile and transitory, producing cleavages in society that shift about, fracturing unities and effecting regroupings, furrowing across individuals themselves, cutting them up and remolding them, marking off irreducible regions in them, in their bodies and minds" (1990, 95-96). Individuals are "prime effects"

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[25]Foucault does talk about the individual as constituting itself as its own master. He refers to this as *subjectivization*, the procedure from which subjectivity is constituted as a possibility derived from self-conscious selection: "I will call subjectivization the procedures by which one obtains the constitution of a subject, or of the given possibilities of organization of a self consciousness" (1988: 253).

[26]There is an important distinction to be made here. "Slavery is not a power relationship when man is in chains" (1982: 221) because one is under constraint. Foucault's analysis of power is such that a man chained up and beaten is subject to force being exerted over him. "The characteristic feature of power is that some [wo/men] can more or less entirely determine other wo/men's conduct — but never exhaustively or coercively...if [s/he] can be induced to speak, when [his/her] ultimate recourse could have been to hold [his/her] tongue, preferring death, then s/he has been caused to behave in a certain way. [His/Her] freedom has been subjected to power" (Foucault, 1988: 83-84].

of power as well as its vehicle of it knowledge and practice, and are always involved in a constant struggle against the effects of power and knowledge. Individuals who circulate in these networks are not only subjected to the play of power, but they [are] "always in the position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising this power" and are not "its inert and consenting target" (1980: 98). Resistence does not have to be injected from the exterior nor is it "inexorably frustrated through being a compatriot of power...it exists all the more by being in the same place as power" (142). If power is dispersed and in multiple networks, resistence then must be splintered from its totality and realized through a series of localized counter responses and strategies[27].

With the dissolution of power as an exclusive right of the oppressors, rulers, and governments, Foucault's work is significant to the analysis of the subaltern peoples of the Third World. Preventing the limitations of a zero-sum conception of power, Foucault reminds us that just as power creates knowledge, it is also knowledge which induces effects of power (1980: 52). Discourse as "maker" of the world rather than its mirror presents to us the social space as a contestation of power relations, which are constantly formed, reformed and transformed. The disruptions it engender forces a reevaluation of the binary forms of power and forces the field of analysis to consider as well a form of power exercised within and by the subaltern. The unifying solidaristic politics of universal movements i.e. sisterhood, and the working class are therefore inadequate; instead we find the multiple realities that produce what Laclau and Mouffe (1985) refer to as "new antagonisms," the polyphany of voices formed by a plurality of subjects whose "forms of constitution and diversity it is only possible to think if we relinquish the category of 'subject' as a unified and unifying essence"(181)[28]. Discursive shifts, discontinuities, and displacements are indicative of the unstable social and global spaces we occupy, and in which subjective positions and meaning-making [read: truth] are often contested. Within such instabilities, it is almost impossible to construct any representation of the subaltern woman, who is herself immersed in the multiplicities of discursive contestation.

I do not wish to synthesize the works of Foucault and Derrida but it appears to me that as far as one should be concerned about power and discourse in the reading of the text, there is also a need to acknowledge the text's [read: subject, world] pluralities. As important

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[27]"But if the fight is directed against power, then all those for whom power is exercised to their detriment, all who find it intolerable, can begin the struggle on their own terrain and on the basis of their proper activity (or passivity). In engaging in a struggle that concerns their own interests, whose objectives they clearly understand and whose methods only they can determine, they enter into a revolutionary process" (Foucault, 1977: 216).

[28]The emergence of new type of political struggles are linked to the birth of new subjectivtities. (See Foucault, 1988)

Chapter 2
Theoretical Speculations: Derrida and Foucault

as freeing up meaning from a fixed point of referent, I find Derrida's position of surrendering to the free-play of the text produces a sort of involuntarism – at the level of the subject. In this matter, I agree with Foucault when he accuses Derrida of ignoring the effects of power for even in the free-play of différance, the element of power plays a determining role in the presence or absence of something. At the same time, I am dissatisfied with the fact that Foucault seems to place himself within the binary, in terms of the interiors/exteriors of discourse formation. I propose then a grafting of Foucault's conception of dicourse and power onto Derrida's work on the pluralities of the text, as endless, slippery, and heterogeneous. This enables, at least, in terms of the shifting subject, a certain "voluntarism" that recognises the effects of power and its relations, and the discursive contestation which occurs in the dynamic process of subjectivization and the fluidity of subject positions under "erasure". In looking at the problems of representation and the subaltern woman in the Third World, as I will in the next chapter, the subject and its dynamism becomes an important focus.

Chapter 3
Representation, Feminism and the Third World Subaltern Woman

Introduction

In *Culture and Imperialism* (1993) Edward Said writes that "we live in a world not only of commodities but also of representations, and representations – their production, circulation, history, and interpretation are the very element of culture"(56). Reduced to portraits of exoticism, dioramas of curiosity and victimhood status, the Western representation of the non-Western Other is irrevocably linked to the political, socio-economic and cultural situation of the Third World. It is the act of representation with its inherent power relations and distinctive concerns with order, truth and the subject which contributes to the lopsided structure of the global condition, where the Other, the not-I or the *non-West*[1], is the languishing Third World and its peoples. In this manner, the West frames its development policies, intrudes upon the lives of thousands of cultures, constructs them as inferior dependants, and justifies its own superiority and legitimates its methods of administering to the lives of Third World peoples. Even when compelled to shed guilty tears of compassion and perform conscientious acts of kindness, the West conducts its role with a messianic vocation and a certain moral and intellectual superiority. Under the name of empowerment, and self-determination, "the West" as a technologically advanced and morally conscientious region must save the Third World subaltern from the ravages of capitalism and industrialization, while still securing its own hierarchical position. One can teach the natives to a certain extent but anything more would be too sophisticated and unintelligible.

Foucault has shown us how representations are linked to the will to power and truth, and how discourses, instituted over time, are directly linked to regimes of truth. The activity of discourse, which institutes and authorizes types of knowledge and power, is fed into ideology[2], and globalized, creating representations which legitimate over time, in Edward Said's term "radical falsifications" that promote separation and "cultural distinctiveness." And yet, like Derrida's logocentrism, Foucault also warns against imagining a binary conception of discourse – recognizing instead, a multiplicity of discursive elements that come into play in various strategies (1990). The landscapes of the world clearly contradict the notion of cultural distinctiveness, and the experience of imperialism has instead produce overlapping cultural experiences which Homi Babha

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[1] My usage of the term non-West is a point of emphasis, and to highlight the West/non-Western binary distinction. Throughout the thesis, the terms non-West and the Third World is used interchangeably.

[2] If one perceives the problem of the subject or representation as social practices arising out of discursive activity, then the notion of ideology becomes problematic (see Foucault, 1980). Also, the argument against ideology is that ideology is opposed to truth; if there is no truth – no quasi transparent, error-free form of knowledge, where does ideology stand?

describes as the *Cultural Hybrid*.

Representations are tenuous, unstable projects, for human beings are always enmeshed in global movements – hardly anything in the world can be captured in timeless portraits. Representations are, to appropriate Donna Haraway's term, "god-tricks" which totalize what is only partial, myriad and always in flux. With post-structuralist or postmodern feminism, there lies the possibilities of decolonizing the subaltern woman², and subverting the mis/representations which circumscribes her victimhood. The shifting montage world of poststructuralism decenters the subject by inserting the subject into language and discourse. In the heteroglossic world of language games or *petit récits*, the polysemous voices of the Others, – women, minorities, indigenous peoples, and their "situated knowledges" displace the epistemological authority of the West, and the unitary, stable subject. Subaltern women are not frozen empty beings who are static in time and space – they are also the unrepresentable. By calling attention to the innumerable operations of language and discourse, the dispersal of power (beyond the binary conception of those who have power and those who don't), the non-static subjectivity, and the agentic social-self, the subaltern woman now occupies the dynamic space's of *différance* and difference – the trickster figure who eludes the violence of any one representation and subject position.

Representation and The Oriental

> Father, Mother, and Me,
> Sister and Auntie say
> All the people like us are We,
> And everyone else is They.
> And They live over the sea
> While We live over the way,
> But – would you believe it?–They look upon We
> As only a sort of They!
> > Rudyard Kipling 'We and They'

For the Cartesian "knowing" subject, internal thoughts are mental representations of the res extensa. The cogito of the Cartesian experience provides an origin and the foundation for the representation of the world, and knowledge "[arrives] through the examination of representations about reality'" (Rabinow, 1986: 235). Cartesian representation is thus, a gesture towards securing certainty and truth, where the cogito's

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²Whenever I refer to the subaltern woman, I mean specifically the **Third World Subaltern Woman**

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engagement with the external world produces knowledge, particularly, the knowledge of the *Other*. But the Cartesian mental representation is purged of all power rela*ions and hidden assumptions. Representation involves a way of seeing or pictuing the "not-you", or "the Other". It involves not merely, observation, but the action of demarcation and the ontological delineation of the Other. Representation involves the act of construction, classification, denotation, and connotation – taxonomic justifications as a quest for understanding and certainty, and to fulfil a specific condition and pre-formed notions of the "not-I". It is a form of magic in which through tools such as writing, and photography, evokes a presence of that which was once absent. So magical is the act of representation that one can create and manipulate illusions with which to have power over others as if they were things (Tyler, 1986). The reasoning behind mastering the Other is also an attempt to erase the presence of the Other, and enfold her into an alien historical discourse. The process of representation, and the selected means of representation are always interlaced with power, whether in the manner of "reproducing an image" or a "stand-in/speaking for, with the authority to act."

In her influential essay, *Can the Subaltern Speak* (1988a) Gayatri C. Spivak calls attention to the "double session of representation" in which she discusses Marx's *Vertretung* (representation in the political context) and *Darstellung* (the philosophical concept of representation in terms of "signification" and "staging or enactment"), and how both concepts must be considered in terms of constructing the subjectivity of the subaltern woman. Spivak's criticism is aimed at the intellectual exchange between Michel Foucault and Giles Deleuze (1977) wherein Deleuze's claim that "it is always a multiplicity even within the person who speaks and acts...representation no longer exists; there's only action – theoretical action and practical action which serve as relays and form networks" (206-7) reduces oppressed subjects to speak, know and act for themselves outside the situation of representation, and beyond economic and historical determinants. Spivak argues that if we are to comprehend the "micrological texture" of the geopolitical and economic constitution of the world, representation in terms of Vertretung and Darstellung cannot be ignored: "[in staging] of the world in representation–its scene of writing, its Darstellung–dissimulates the choice of and needs for 'heroes,' paternal proxies, agents of power–Vertretung" (279). Employing Derridean deconstruction. Spivak warns against the usage of a representation by proxy (speaking for) and representation in terms of image construction (speaking as), and the erasure of the heterogeneous qualities of the female subaltern. In fact the whole question of speaking is rooted in the epistemic violence of the West, and is redundant. After all, the subaltern woman, when speaking will be relegated to the position of the "native informant for first-world intellectuals interested in the voice of the Other" (284). This is the practice of *Orientalism* in which the Occidental carries out both the roles of speaking for and speaking of the Orient.

In Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1979), the world is presented to us cleaved in binary

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oppositions, where the fictive discrete Orient is not only the inferior counterpart of and the nourisher of the Occident's superior position, but is also derivative of it. The West[4] is glorified and exalted in its heliocentric position, articulating the Orient as a "genuine creator, whose life-giving power represents, animates, constitutes the otherwise silent and dangerous space beyond familiar boundaries" (Ibid: 57). In the displacement of the native subjects of the Third World, their histories appear merely as an irritating excess to Western history (Young, 1993), that must be suppressed, absorbed or at least researched, and rewritten within the context of the West. It is worth recalling here, Derrida's critique of logocentric binarism whereupon one term is original, primary and complete, and exercising its mastery over the second term. The second term is derivative (as writing is from speech, a position which Derrida disrupts and displaces in *Of Grammatology*), inferior, and dependant on the first for its being. The second term being also a poor imitation and reflection of the first, also threatens to contaminate the first. In the context of Orientalism, the first term is the colonizing Occidental West – ruler; the second is obvious – the colonized Oriental East – subject. In logocentrism, the Oriental Other is already inscribed in the discourse of Orientalism as the precondition of Occidental *presence*[5]. Without the reenactment of that violent opposition, the West does not achieve its prominence. The Oriental East is reinvented as the subalterity of the Occidental West, etched timelessly as the natural inferior and appendage to the West. Thus, imperialism or colonialism is not only a simple act of accumulation and acquisition but is supported and impelled by discursive formations which include the notion of a hierarchy of races which in turn made necessary the domination of the "subject races" and territories (Said, 1993), and the "asymmetrical obliteration of the trace of the Other" (Spivak, 1988: 281). In the shaping, definition and the construction of the Oriental East; in the securing of the colonies and ethnocentric

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[4]Said's West in Orientalism is primarily a European project, but is easily extended to all colonizing nations, and anyone who works within the discourse of *orientalizing the Orient* However, Said's main geographical or spatial focus on the dichotomous East/Orient–West/Occidental relationship is Europe and the Arab Middle East. In my analysis of the female orientalist, Katherine Mayo is American, and her focus is India.

[5]The Derridean notion of *Presence* refers to what is the Master-Word, that which is "discursive transparency" or what is immediately present. Presence claims the position of truth and authority In logocentrism, that which is "lifted up" is presence. Because presence suppresses the play of differance, presence may also be regarded as the "false appearance of the present."

In his critique of colonial literature, Homi Bhabha writes "When the ocular metaphors of presence refer to the process by which content is fixed as an 'effect of the present," we encounter not plenitude but the structured gaze of power whose objective is authority, whose "subjects" historical." (1985: 151)

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perspectives, the interconnections of knowledge and power are indispensable.

Orientalism[a] as Said defines it, is a "style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between the "the Orient" and (most of the time) "the Occident", and is the starting point "for elaborate theories, epics, novels, social descriptions, and political accounts concerning the Orient, its people, customs, 'mind', destiny and so on" (Said, 1978: 2-3). But Orientalism, as Said cautions encompasses more than the above, it is 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 as two unequal halves] 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 (alternative and novel) world. (Said, 1978:: 12)

The Orient is the invention of the European imagination, the "collective day-dream" of Europe, having "helped define Europe (or the West)" and "is an integral part of European *material* civilization and culture." The Orient is the vast encyclopedic production of the West; composed of details that are anatomized and classified into manageable parts. The representation of the Oriental is how the West perceives the peoples of the East – the cultural projection of the West onto the Other. Through the array of texts and practices, the peoples of the Orient are denied their own voices, reinscribed instead, as the subaltern of the West. Contained and established within the manichean form, the West is reason and logic personified, while the East is the emotional or the sensual. When captured in history, the East is once again subordinate and prior to the West. While India, Arabia and China, according to the Orientalist, are the great empires of the East with long, complex histories, they are prior to or are the predecessors of present Western civilizations, the natural outcome of a historical evolutionary process. But in this evolutionary conception of history, Western empires thrive and progress while the histories of the Indian, Arabian and Chinese empires are long over, subjected to the inevitable ruin of despotic regimes and cultural excesses, having either regressed, or remained static. In the Orientalist discourse, the East is always subaltern to the West.

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[a]Orientalism is regarded as a discourse by Said. Discourse here is understood within Foucault's elucidation of the term. By the Orientalist discourse, I mean the body of texts, the modes of representation, the strategies of power, law etc. which constitutes the Orient and the Oriental of Orientalism. In discourse there is no single author of reference, but the material and weight of texts and practices emerging from the iterability of themes.

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Because the written language is one of the instruments through which the act of representation is conducted, Orientalist scholarship is conducted via a whole corpus of texts – books, manuscripts, parchments that underwent the Orientalist's taxonomic scrutiny. Orientalism, after all, is the work of innumerable scholars who "edited texts and translated them," and in the process, "reconstructed dead epochs," convinced that language, race and truth are all inextricably intertwined. Through philology, lexicography, etymology and other linguistic disciplines, the Orientalist scholars devoted their enterprise to "rescuing" the languages and histories of the Orient from oblivion. But the literary production of the Orientalist is rooted in selecting extracts (since the literature of the East fails to be of high quality except for certain portions), and the Orient is instead presented to us in a "series of representative fragments...[that are] republished, explicated, annotated and surrounded with still more fragments" (128). The so called accumulated knowledge of the Orient and her peoples – the known corpus of Oriental knowledge are thus produced out of linguistic disciplines which sought to classify, categorize, codify, and the selected fragments of writings that underwent the process of translation.

Language cannot escape the inequities and hierarchies of power, and in terms of colonialism, and the dissemination of the language and educational models of the empire, the effects of the European languages linger, manifesting themselves as privileged languages. The languages of the Third World, being "weaker" in relation to Western languages are most likely to submit to transformation [or manipulation] in the translation process than the other way around; and thus the West produces and deploys desired knowledge more readily than the Third World (Asad, 1986). The Westerner who translates, also imposes her privileged position on and "judges" the languages of the Third World. Translation is not simply, a direct process of transposing the exteriorities of one language to another. Translation is a multiple act; it involves the translation of interiorities – meaning, gestures, voice, self, agency[7]. Translation, in short, is also an act of

[7]Translation is a crucial point because development work cannot be conducted without the ethnographic contribution. In today's "developing" Third World societies, the "inscribed records have a greater power to shape, to reform selves, and institutionalize than folk memories do " (Asad, 1986: 162). Take for instance, the interviews, questionnaires, written reports that are involved in the initial stages of data collection. Somewhere between the space of the initial research and the final results are ambiguities that are often band-aided; the mark of an unskilful or insensitive translator who may simplify in the other direction of the language. The inscriptions of power relations are rarely taken into account, nor the possibilities of ideological bias or ethnocentrism. Most of the time, the development practitioner/theorist/fieldworker relies on the translator to inaugurate and mediate dialogues or conversations with the people concerned. By the time, the final results are tabulated, linguistic and contextual gaps are most likely ignored. The translated results are often taken for granted as truth, and presented as facts that cannot be

representation. As Gayatri C. Spivak (1993), Tejaswini Niranjana (1992) and Talal Asad (1988) point out, translation becomes a significant site for raising questions concerning representation, power and historicity. Translation as Niranjana writes, not only ignores the power relations informing translation but "also the historicity or effective history of translated texts." (Niranjana, 1992: 59). The dense intricacies of words undergoing translation often suffer the slippages of language, and intertextual meanings are more often than likely speculated (when comprehension seems futile), and reinvented. Meaning "hops into the spacy emptiness between two named historical languages" (Spivak, 1993: 180); tropes (metaphors, metonyms, similes) and poetic embellishments often attach themselves between the transitional spaces of meaning in translation. Not only does translation remove the nuances and characteristics of the language, it also undergoes exposure to power relations, where the process of translation is subjected to an ideological or ethnocentric "refinement" process[5] so that the final outcome is almost always the predetermined text of the translator. Translation, is therefore not merely an act of linguistic teleportation, but may as well involve the violence of representation in which subaltern characters are created and distorted.

Katherine Mayo: The Female Orientalist in India

If there are nagging exclusions in Said's *Orientalism* (1978) and his "sequel" *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), one of them being Said's lack of any reference to female orientalists, or the wives and female members of Colonial families, missionaries, explorers who all in some way contributed to and perpetuated the subjugation of the "natives"[6]. Such

normally contested by those whom it is attributed to.

As authoritative texts on a subaltern population meant for a selected English speaking audience of experts, and academics, there is a tendency to read the implicit (Asad, 1986) in the Other. Rather than understand the specifics of that mode of life, the text is manipulated and comprehended within the established rules.

[5] Because translation, as Derrida claims, practices the difference between signifier and signified, and that difference/differance is never a pure transfer of signifieds, translation may best be read as a regulated *transformation* of one language by another. The task of deconstruction is to uncover the intertextual trace/s of the language transformation.

[6] Admittedly, colonial women were invisible in the history of colonialism. Bored European and American women in the colonies were often considered victims of colonial patriarchy; suffering silently far from their homelands, while their husbands administered to the needs of the empire. This is the image often conveyed to us in literature, and in the movies, for example, *Cloud Nine*,

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an example of the female contribution to orientalism is found in American author/traveller Katherine Mayo whose *Mother India* (1927) and *Slaves of the Gods* (1929) evoked sensationalistic portrayals of India. Mayo's "noble intentions" for travelling to India are outlined early in *Mother India*:

> Leaving untouched the realm of religion, of politics, and of the arts, I would confine my inquiry to such workaday ground as public health and its contributing factors. I would determine...what situation would confront a public health officer charged with the duty of stopping an epidemic of cholera or of plague...what forces would help or hinder a governmental effort to lower infant mortality, to better living conditions, or to raise educational levels. (1927: 12)

Her book, however tells a different tale. Purported to be a journalistic exposé of Indian health practices, sexual morality and the predicament of Indian women, *Mother India* is instead an overexergerrated piece of writing with tales of sexual depravity, the "primitive" Hindu religion, savage men and maimed girls and women, with accompanying photographs of her objects of inquiry[10]. Inscribed in the language of timeless barbarism, Indian culture is relegated to the depraved and the savage, chaining the Indian people to an ontological

A Passage to India, Wide Sargasso Sea, White Mischief; colonial women who could be excused of their disdain towards the natives as they were themselves victims of strict social codes and sexual mores. However, colonial women were not innocents either; there were missionaries among them whose Christian morality supported the colonial system and provided it with moral justification to rule the colonies. There were also travellers such as Isabella Bird who wrote travel books on the Orient, and women explorers/adventurers authors like Delia Akeley and Mary Jobe Akeley (both married the same man – the famed scientist/ taxidermist/ adventurer Carl Akeley) who shot their way through Africa in the name of biological preservation and hereditary of stock. (See Haraway, 1994).

[10]The photographs are themselves wonderful examples of ethnocentric acts of representation with qualifying captions. They are "timeless eternals", inscribed with the ideological intentions of the photographer, portraying objects of scorn, victims to be pitied or barbaric practices such as suttee.

For example, inserted between pages 66 and 67 are two pictures. Picture 1 depicts a solemn Hindu mother carrying an emaciated child, while picture 2, is a photograph of (according to Mayo and there is no way of substantiating this) a fierce looking Indian man and his fearful looking childbride. However, the picture inserted between pages 162 and 163 are two smiling, laughing Indian women with their children which Mayo captions as "Waiting for the English Sister". Between pages 130 and 131, there is a picture of the interior of a Hindu house (as Mayo claims) but depicting a doorway, some clay pots and a cow standing at the doorway, perhaps a reference toward the unsanitary living conditions in Hindu households.

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backwardness. Typifying an orientalist bent, Mayo writes metaphors of contagion and racial inferiority into Indian culture and history, with its mass of "diseased" people condemned to the foul pits of moral and physical degradation (1927):

> The whole pyramid of the Indian woes, material and spiritual-poverty, sickness, ignorance, political minority, melancholy, ineffectiveness, not forgetting that subconscious conviction of inferiority which he forever bares and advertises by his gnawing and imaginative alertness for social affronts— rests upon a rock bottom physical base. (Mayo, 1927: 22)

Slaves of the Gods (1929) continues where *Mother India* leaves off, but this time the author makes references toward a long-ago ancient spiritual past that has over time, grown stale and profitless, no fault of the colonial administration of course (1929). In 12 dramatic narratives which she claims to be based on real lives and episodes of oppressed women and despotic Indian men, garnished with quotations from eminent Indian statespersons, and scholars on the subjection of women, Mayo perpetuates the distorted representations of gender relations within Indian culture while offering salvation from the West. Mayo's accounts are justifications for imperialist rule where the West's moral compassion, progressive politics, and its supreme knowledge of the Orient and its peoples support the necessity for "powerful" and "up-to date" empires to "rehabilitate" the wretched subject races.

> The British administration of India, be it good, bad, or indifferent, has nothing whatever to do with the conditions...Inertia, helplessness, lack of initiative and originality, lack of staying power and of sustained loyalties, sterility of enthusiasm, weakness of life-vigor itself—all are traits that truly characterize the Indian not only of today but of *long-past history*. (Mayo, 1927: 16; italics mine)

Mayo's writing is reflective of her arrogant position as a well-travelled, "socially conscious," respected American author; textured with irritating moral righteousness, authoritative questioning, and extravagant embellishments of individual narratives, supported by highly Western-educated Indian men and women to legitimate (so that it would seem that the Indian people themselves were desiring Western intervention and salvation) her claims. It is the all-knowledgeable West with its superior culture and morality which governs and decides upon the fate of India:

> Your culture, it is true, is under no necessity to satisfy our Western judgement. But until it satisfies that judgement in what we consider essential points of common humanity, it must do so with our respect. Until you change the facts, therefore, the verdict cannot be different. (Mayo, 1929: 212)

Since independence advocates like "Mr. Gandhi" cannot understand his own peoples, the verdict is such that the colonial administration would know what is good for India. After

all, the Indian peoples do not possess the capacity of rational thought, and the ability to distinguish right from wrong (1927: 407).

As she travels across India with her "acute tendency to ask questions," she gains moral certitude, convinced that all India is nothing but wretched sin and carnal sex, and that Hinduism is equated to sexual excesses and deviancy, venereal diseases, the threat of global infection, cultural irrationality, and oppression of women and children; for "to the influence or the dictates of the current orthodox Hindu are traceable the most devastating evils that to-day prey upon the Hindu World" (1929: 15). Instead of the concern for the child-brides, and illiteracy[11], Mayo displays an over-obsession with sanitation, hygiene, and most particularly, the sexual practices of the people (especially men) which she associates (through obvious misreadings and generalizations) with Hinduism, "the phallic cult" (24):

> And, even though the sex-symbols themselves were not present, there are the sculptures and paintings on temple walls and temple chariots, on palace doors an street-wall frescoes, realistically demonstrating every conceivable aspect and humor of sex-contact; there are the eternal songs on the lips of the women of the household; there is, in brief, the occupation and pre-occupation of the whole human world within the child's vision, to predispose thought. (1927: 24)

According to Mayo, Indian children cannot but be oriented toward moral debauchery from an early age since the entire practices and lifestyles of the Hindus are centred around sex. This perception leads to Mayo's misinterpretation of various cultural practices, such as the mother's practice of massaging the baby as some form of manual sexual stimulation:

> In many parts of the country...the little boy, his mind so prepared, is likely, if physically attractive, to be drafted for the satisfaction of grown men, or to be regularly attached to a temple, in the capacity of prostitution. Neither parent as a rule see any harm in this, but, is rather, flattered that the son has been found pleasing...
>
> This, also, is a matter neither of rank nor of special ignorance. In fact, so far are they from seeing good and evil as *we see good and evil*, that the mother high caste or low caste, will practice upon her children-the girl "to make her sleep well," the boy "to make him manly," an abuse which the boy, at least is apt to continue daily for the rest of his life. (Mayo, 1927: 25-26; italics mine)

[11] It is important to note here that Mayo does not provide a definition of what she means by iteracy or illiteracy. However, there is a strong sense that literacy here pertains to some minimal orm of English-based curriculum education administered by colonial authorities

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Such observations are rampant throughout both books, and as she travels across India, Mayo often returns to the subject of an amoral and debilitating Indian culture, convinced that progress under an independent government will be futility without the assistance and leadership of the West. Gayatri Spivak (1988) writes that the image of imperialism as the "establisher of good society" is also marked by the "the espousal of the woman as *object* of protection from her own kind" (299). For Mayo, colonial administration played a necessary moral responsibility toward the *advancement* of Indian women.

In a series of interrogations (Mayo, 1927: 208) with women teachers–to–be, Mayo concludes that the women "apparently felt neither duty nor impulse urging then to go out among their people [for] such sentiment...would have no history in their *mental inheritance*" (Ibid). Yet, a different opinion arises in *Slaves of the Gods*, where she implores the women of India to look to centuries past, and rediscover the "natural intelligence, sagacity and devotion [of Indian women which] have been acclaimed [and the] instances of [their] personal courage [which] have at times amazed the world" (Mayo, 1929: 217). But "natural intelligence" and "sagacity" does not translate to agency and resistance. The road to rediscovering the mettle of Indian womanhood is fraught with dangers; dangers that emanate wholly from within India and Indian culture, particularly from Hinduism and the deceptive masks of Indian independence advocates and politicians who claim to speak on the Indian woman's behalf, and which Indian women are not capable of confronting due to their illiterate state. With quotations by grateful Indian men and women for articulating their misery to the world, Mayo advances the moral position of the West to lift the Indian population from their darkness. Help, according to Mayo, must come from the West, for the West *knows* the Indian woman's needs, and are her friends "with frankness and honesty" (Ibid: 220).

Mother India and its colonial propaganda was welcomed and reviewed with great gusto in America and Europe, remaining in the bestsellers list in America from 1928–1929, and reprinted 20 times. Praised by the major newspapers for unveiling the conspiracy of silence and the licentious threat of the Indian people to the world, newspapers such as *The New Statesman* called it a "tremendous frontal attack upon the social system of India," (Mayo, 1929: appendix) praising it for its honesty and authenticity in documenting the appalling conditions of India's diseased state and the woeful situation of baby girls. Except for a few newspapers in America and *The Manchester Guardian* in Britain, there were few attempts by the book critics to challenge her claims and her exaggerated figures (Whitehead, 1992). As expected, the book incited a furore across India and drew powerful reactions from political leaders and scholars all over India (Ibid). Yet, the book basically reflected the Orientalist outlook of the times, and considering the history of sanitation reforms and laws on obscenity, the concern with hygiene and morals which unsettled the Brahminical and familial traditions and practices in India was very real.

In 1864, the Contagious Diseases Act was passed in Britain, and subsequently

applied to the far reaches of the empire. Amended several times, the act focused on examinations of women, particularly prostitutes for venereal diseases so that those who were "clean" would be selected to provide sexual services to the British soldiers (Chatterjee, 1992: 51–55). In India, the administration of the act developed into a whole series of medical controls which were inserted into the moral regulation of social mores over women's bodies. Thus, women's bodies became a battle site of combating moral positions, more significantly among the salvationist position of female missionaries, journalists/explorers like Mayo, and Hinduism and its "superstitions". The medical discourse of the period denounced such practices as midwifery (the *dhai*), the purdah, child marriages, citing hygienic concerns that aggravated the unclean environment of tropical nations. With its almost illiterate population, "sexual deviancy" and unhealthy lifestyles, Mayo painted an alarmist picture of India as the health menace and contagion of the world, which if without prophylactic action[12] would threaten the public health of the West:

> In estimating the safety of the Unites States from infection, the element of "carriers" must be considered. Each epidemic produces a crop of "carriers" whose power to spread the disease lasts from one hundred and one days to permanency. Moreover, the existence of healthy carriers is conclusively proved. And India *is scarcely a month removed from New York and San Francisco*. (Mayo, 1927: 271, italics mine)

Obviously, in her accounts of disease-stricken, battered Indian women imploring help and protection from the West, Mayo never mentions that venereal diseases such as syphilis and gonorrhea were most likely introduced into India by the British troops who were supplied with Indian prostitutes (Whitehead, 1992; Chatterjee, 1992: 51). Furthermore, in detailing the filthy sanitary conditions, and unhealthy practices of the women (again attributed to Hindu superstition), Mayo never considered that the urbanization policies of the colonial government, the construction of transportation lines such as railway embankments without sufficient drainage had caused the increase of swampy areas, and contamination of water, a major cause for Malaria outbreaks and cholera (Whitehead, 1992: 49).

Said's Orientalism manifests powerfully in Katherine Mayo's writings, and the us -them dichotomous representations are never so blatantly expressed as in the two books. Not only must the East be judged by Western standards, they have to answer to them as well. As Said writes "the West is the actor, the Orient a passive reactor. The West is the spectator , the judge and jury, of every facet of Oriental behaviour"(Said, 1978: 109). The Indian peoples are completely incapacitated and paralysed from initiating better living

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[12]"Whenever India's real condition becomes known." said an American Public Health expert now in international service, "all the civilized countries of the world will turn to the League of Nations and demand protection against her." (Mayo, 1927: 371)

conditions since "their minds as a rule do not turn to the accumulation of things" (Mayo, 1927: 407) and they prefer "their ancient measure of leisure", thus confirming more than ever, the myth of the lazy native. For no matter how the Indian peoples change (by discarding the barbaric practices which are equated with all the various facets of Indian culture), they cannot succeed, by virtue of nature and culture.

The Différance of Representation

Orientalism, as Lisa Lowe argues (1990), is not a monolithic discourse in which the Occident invents, absorbs and controls the Orient. Orientalism, in fact, is "articulated within a heterogeneous and plurally inscribed discursive terrain" (Ibid: 117) in which the notion of the Other is neither "static" nor "discrete". By maintaining the monolithic conception of Orientalism, in fact is to perpetuate the binary oppositions in which a powerful Western discourse appropriates and contains all dissensions thus, underestimating the play of contradictions, tensions, continual play of resistance, and accommodation by different positions. This argument is particularly relevant if we consider the infinite and diverse character of resistance and rebellion, for example in James Scott's *Weapons of the Weak* (1985) in which he documents the everyday forms of resistance of the Malay peasants[13]. In identifying the everyday form of peasant resistance, Scott argues that poor rural victims are not merely victims of hegemony and false consciousness, but people who are perfectly capable of penetrating the self-serving claims of the rich and also manipulating and subverting elements of the dominant ideology. Similarly, the historiography of the Subaltern Studies Collective undercuts the binary nature of the Indian nationalist movement (solidaristic subject races vs. imperialist masters), and exposes its heterogeneity. Numerous peasant uprisings, sectarian politics, populist groups, the bourgeois Indian classes form overlapping oppositions to colonial rule, and desired outcomes are characterized by moments of betrayal[14]. In considering the place of difference

[13]Scott work is concentrated on the Sedaka peasants in Malaysia and their resistance against the propertied classes. In the face of rapid economic changes which marginalized the very poor, Scott argues not only is resistance covert, multiple and anonymous, there are also innumerable acts of ideological resistance.

> Just as peasants....do not simply vacillate between blind submission and homicidal rage, neither do they move directly from ideological complicity to strident class consciousness. If, behind the facade of behavioral conformity imposed by elites, we find innumerable, anonymous acts of resistance, so also do we find, behind the facade of symbolic and ritual compliance, innumerable acts of ideological resistance. (304)

[14]In the *Prose of Counter Insurgency* (1988), Ranajit Guha challenges the myth of the irrational, spontaneous peasant uprisings and shows [through deconstructing three discourses which

and otherness, or "the space of the adversarial," Homi Bhabha (1985) argues it is never "outside or implacably oppositional." Instead

> it is a pressure, and a presence, that acts constantly, if unevenly, along the entire boundary of authorization, that is, on the surface between what is disposal–as–bestowal and disposition–as–inclination. The contour of difference is agonistic, shifting, splitting. (Bhabha, 1985: 152)

Lowe tl s proposes the concept of discourses as "heterotopical" whereby discourses are "heterogeously and composed of statements and restatements, contestations, and accomodations generated by a plurality of [positions]" (144). Such observations are helpful because they are significant to the experience of colonialism, cultural transformations, and modes of resistance which have emerged all over the post–colonial world.

Written as a "sequel" to *Orientalism*, Said's *Culture and Imperialism* (1993) elaborates the powerful impact of imperialism upon the local cultures of the subject colonie d the Western powers themselves. For the Third World, the impact of colonialism was never one of an imperial encounter which pitted an "active Western intruder against a supine non–Western native" (xii). Rather, the coming of the White Man spawned successful movements of resistance and decolonization, along with assertions of nationalist identities and politics all across the Third World[15]. The vast experience of imperialism left behind an interrelated world in which the production of culture across societies and nations emerged out of these overlapping experiences, and "consolidated the mixtures of cultures and identities." Out of this intermeshing of cultures emerged antagonistic conditions and irresolution among subcultures of resistance, mainly the exiles, refugees, migrant workers and immigrants. Other than the surge of resistance and nationalism, the impact of the "White Man" produced transnational alignments which provoked and challenged static notions of identity[16]:

shaped the Indian nistorical corpus of insurgency) that such counter–insurgencies were carefully planned tactical operations.

The distorted representations of peasant insurgencies were not only constructed by the British officers and scholars through a series of linguistic "transformations" but also manifested in the historical prose of Indian scholars. The language of betrayal is displayed in the tertiary discourse of the radical variety (the Indian historian), and according to Guha exhibited "the same disdain for the political consciousness of the peasant masses when it is mediated by reliogisity" (79).

[15]Recall critique (see footnote in chapter 1) of the nationalist movement in India by Partha Chatterjee (1986).

[16]Said draws from literary sources, citing literature by Franz Fanon, Amilcar Cabal, Walter Rodney, Chinua Achebe, Ngugi Wa Thiongo and Wole Solyinka as examples of colonial

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> So vast and yet so detailed is imperialism as an experience with crucial
> cultural dimensions that we must speak of overlapping territories,
> intertwined histories common to men and women, whites and non-whites,
> dwellers in the metropolis and on the peripheries, past as well as present and
> future. (61)

The "overlapping of territories", "commingling of nations" and "intertwined histories"
produced a cultural experience which was "radically quintessentially hybrid."

Cultures are not impermeable, and the imperial legacy left behind residues which
somehow fed into and transformed the cultural being of many former colonies, and the
static construction of identity. Identity is then no longer an ontologically given,
predetermined stability but was now a matter of indeterminate, irreducible character. It is
this imbricated intertextuality of culture which disrupts the monolithic and unitary act of
representation.

For Foucault and Derrida, or for that matter, most of the poststructuralists, meaning
and truth are never finalized, nor finite but are specific, contextual and temporal. Any
attempt to locate an origin or a starting point is an exercise in futility. Textualizing lives
involves the reading of variations, themes, tropes, repetitions, which are almost never
immediately present but are often located within the silence of the text. It is within the text,
and its "silent spaces" that Derrida locates the *quite–other or tout–autre*[17] (for positing an
Other is to claim the notion of the self–consolidating subject) which has been suppressed
by the logocentric act of containing pluralities in the name of "lifting up" a *presence*.
Wherever power claims privilege in the "metaphysics of presence" – the name of Being,
authority, speech, essential nature and absolute truth, the strategy of différance becomes
a necessary invocation as a subversive and displacing force – a strategy of "polysemy,"
"empirical wanderings," and "a non–transcendent truth." One considers too, the micro-
operations of power and discourse which interpellate representation, not so much as to
improve upon its "authenticity" but rather to help avoid the threat of singularity and totality.
Representation must therefore be regarded as a heterogenous act: it is an unstable gesture
enunciated at specific moments in which neither meaning is contained nor a distinct image
claimed. Where previously a taken–for–granted *a priori* "langue" enabled the immutability
of the signifier, the poststructuralist decentering of the stable "langue" or Derrida's
"transcendental signified" renders the act of representation to a site of conflict where

resistance, and post–colonial explorations of identity.

[17] The *tout–autre* is also the Other of Jean Baudrillard who allows him not to repeat himself
(1993), and Giles Deleuze (Boundas, 1993). The Deleuzean Other is not a replica of things but
expresses "possible worlds," and is "the strange detour" in which "elements are released and
renewed...forming a thousand capricious figures" (63–65).

multiple meanings emerge out of signifying contests. Representation is always ambivalent, subject to the play of power; and just as power relations underlie the act of representation, it is power which enables resistance to the confining act of representation, and contributes to the skidding forms of reality. In the play of representation[15]. Mediated by language, representation is therefore inadequate because "images of the world are language dependant and cannot be exchanged between people with any degree of certainty" (Rosenau, 1992: 96).

Textualizing the World: Semiology and Reading The Cultural Hybrid

In chapter 1, I argued that the postmodern significance for the Third World lay within the notion of cultural heterogeneity. One must caution against imagining colonialism and today's "accusation" of "neo-colonialism" as a homogenous experience which produced similar effects all over the Third World; a distinction that Said did not qualify in *Culture and Imperialism* despite his many references to overlapping histories. As expansive as colonialism was, it was also administered in politically fragmented ways. In British Malaya, the colonial government administered a divide and rule policy in which certain groups benefitted from the non-intervention, while some were marginalized. The poly histories of the colonial experience produced fractured experiences which cannot be accounted for under the shared experience of oppression.

Since imperialism or "Westernization" leaves behind ineradicable imprints on local culture/s, it is no longer congruent to see the East-West Cultural relationship as anti thetical. If the cultural imperialism of the West is so overwhelming, one would not be able to discern any heterogeneous characteristics which enable the construction of the Other. The world as a text, and intertext is composed of multitudes and differences where meaning construction and interpretive activity are best described as infinite, as well as local and contextual. In reading the social space and the individuals as text, one charts cultural discontinuities and disruptions within linguistic activity[16], for example, the mimicry, silent

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[15]"The point of origin becomes ungraspable. There are things like reflecting pools, and images, an infinite reference from one to another, but no longer a source, a spring. There is no longer a simple origin. For what is reflected is split *in itself* and not only as an addition to itself of its image. The reflection, the image, the double, splits what is double. The origin of the species then becomes a difference" (Derrida, 1976: 36)

[16]"The Postmodern world is not only about agonistic language games, it is also about deconstructing the multitudes of languages, and the inherent power relations which are institutionally inscribed. Is it not enough that the colonial language is a colonizing principle itself, and that everytime we utter forth English, French or some other European language, one is acknowledging

parodies, the doubling and splitting of language, inflections, and tropes. Difference is no longer composed of distinctly "pure" ethnic or national entities, but are also trans-national, emerging out of diaspora and miscegenated experiences which the historical situation of imperialism engendered:

> No one today is purely *one* thing. Labels like "Indians", or "women" or "muslim" are not more than starting-points, which if followed into actual experience for only a moment are quickly left behind. Imperialism consolidated the mixtures of cultures and identities on a global scale....as

Western intellectual and political hegemony. Yet, such languages have become an ineradicable part of the lives of non-European peoples; they take shape in various ways, as the language of government, they have evolved into unique local forms of communication or colloquialisms.

In Malaysia, such linguistic disruptions in *Bahasa Malaysia* (Malay language) have been gradually increasing over the past few decades. The Malay language has no gendered distinctions in terms of personal pronouns. *Dia* (she/he) is referred to anyone but if there is a distinction to be made, one describes by saying *perempuan itu* (that girl), or *lelaki itu* (that boy). Furthermore, there is a huge difference between the Malay *kami* or *kita* (we) where *kami* excludes the person addressed while *kita* includes the person addressed; or in *Saya* and *aku* (both meaning I) where *aku* is more representative of I and others, while *saya* is mainly addressed to the individual self. Yet the colonial legacy and impact of Westernization have produced a linguistic hodge-podge where words like *kita* and *kami* are replaced with the English "we" i.e. "*we* nak pergi berjalan-jalan" (We want to stroll around/ windowshop/ gallivant), "*I* suka baju ini" (I like this dress), "*He/She* sangat lawarlah" (He/She is so fantastic/attractive). Furthermore, the Malay words are limited in terms of the language of bureaucracy and this is compensated by transposing English words into vernacular Malay, i.e. Immigration is *Imigrasi*, Passport is *Paspot*, Station is *stesyen*. Singlish is actually a mixture of Malay, English and a whole range of Chinese dialects, and is reflective of the multicultural milieu of Malaysia and Singapore. In a manner, it borrows from whatever's available to expedite communication.

This is significant because the shifts or discontinuities in the local languages are important indicators of social and global dynamics. British colonialism left behind a complex web of bureaucratic structures which the Malaysian government inherited and developed in accordance with global political and economic systems. With these foreign structures, a new vocabulary was needed and inserted into the existing Malay language, (or in other languages, where one just pops in the necessary English word). More importantly, if language is central to the postmodern subject, the shift from the Malay "pronouns" to the English ones is indicative of a reconstituted subjectivity, where a more communal-sensitive language is experiencing a transition to a more Western individualistic tone. While there really is no detailed research on my part, the rate of urbanization, and rural-urban migration which have paralleled Malaysia's rapid economic growth over the past decade does reflect the changes in cultural value systems, for example, the changes impinge upon the subjectivities of young women who look beyond marriage into educational attainment and high paying professions.

> human beings make their own history, they also make their own cultures
> and ethnic identities. No one can deny the persisting continuities of long
> traditions, sustained habitations, national languages, and cultural
> geographies, but there seem no reason except for fear and prejudice to keep
> insisting on their separation and distinctiveness, as if that was all human life
> was about. Survival, in fact, is about connections between things. (Said,
> 1993:336)

The injection of foreign elements into the local cultural space thus, generates a situation
of unceasing struggles which produce discursive shifts and formulations. In Homi Bhabha's
concept of the *cultural hybrid*, the dominant colonial discourse is subjected to a discursive
shift when domination via "disavowal" produces instead the double condition of hybridity
in which the Colonial (or Western) "gaze" is reversed and displaced.

In proposing a theory of the cultural hybrid as a displacement of cultural
imperialism, Homi Bhabha (1985) argues that the exercise of disavowal by colonial
authority produced differentiations, identifications and individuation which "terrorized
authority with the ruse of recognition, its mimicry, its mockery" (156). In order to subject,
the imposition of the English language and an English curriculum in India seeks a "strategy
of disavowal [the production of discriminatory identities that secure the pure and original
identity of colonial authority]," in which the process of "splitting" produces the condition
of subjection. But in the act of "disavowal" of the local culture, "the trace of what is
disavowed is not repressed but repeated as something *different* – a mutation, a hybrid"
(153). The hybrid in its "plural," *tout–autre* form, is not mimetic (of colonial literature),
but disrupts colonial authority in such a manner that consensual authority is impossible.

> Hybridity is the sign of the productivity of [neo–] colonial power, its
> shifting forces and fixities; it is the name for the strategic reversal of the
> process of domination through disavowal. Hybridity is the reevaluation of
> the assumption of colonial identity through the repetition of discriminatory
> identity effects. It displays the necessary deformation and displacement of
> all sites of discrimination and domination. It unsettles the mimetic or
> narcissistic demands of colonial power but reimplicates its identifications
> in strategies of subversion that turn the gaze of the discriminated back upon
> the eye of power. For the colonial hybrid is the articulation of the
> ambivalent space where the rite of power is enacted on the site of desire,
> making its objects at once disciplinary and disseminatory...if discriminatory
> effects enable the authorities to keep an eye on them, their proliferating
> difference evades that eye, escapes that surveillance. (Bhabha, 1985: 154)

It is the effect of colonial power which produces hybridity rather than overt commands
of authority or the silent repression of the Other. Colonial power is destabilized and no
longer immediately visible through the reversals and displacements (*entstellung*) which

hybridity effectuates[20]. Hybridity, thus becomes a "problematic of colonial representation," a reversal of colonial disavowal in which other "low-ranking" knowledges enter the unbounded space and further dilapidates colonial authority. Hybridization, as a form of resistance emerges in the reversal of colonial disavowal, "the effect of ambivalence produced within the rules of recognition of dominating discourses as they articulate the signs of cultural difference," and reimplicate them within the colonial structures of hierarchy, normalization, and marginalization. Hybridization, is thus a fearful act for it weakens the symmetry and duality of the "self/Other," enabling heterogenous sites and circuits of power to emerge and creating new signifying disruptions and a proliferation of identities. The "double marking" or "double writing" of hybridization denies any authority of a singular truth, and enables us to challenge the practices of subjectification in which the notion of cultural imperialism appears inadequate.

The *bizarre reality* that Western modernism whips up in the non-West assumes a more heterogeneous and complex character that transcends political and economic determinants. The cultural milieu that is taking shape in the non-West, particularly in the Newly Industrialized Countries[21] are polysemic spaces which integrate and superimpose Western symbols and norms with local ethos. It cannot however be explained by reductionist arguments of neo-imperialist brainwashing, or cultural colonialism, as many critics of Westernization have claimed. Not everyone is simply a victim of cultural doping. Jean Baudrillard is correct in claiming that with hyper-consumerism, and the technological relay and production of information, we have entered a dizzying hyper-realized world of signs and simulacra where the realms of illusion and reality have collapsed into each other. But the proliferation of vast shifting webs of signs, symbols and images are themselves indicative of something more beyond the saturated world of simulation and mimicry. All aspects of culture possess a semiotic value, and every taken-for-granted phenomenon can be constituted as a sign which is not so readily apprehended in experience. Signs are themselves the interpretive product of a certain discourse, rooted in the operation of the signifier, and thus can be regarded as ideological. Following the post-structuralist

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[20]Bhabha speaks of the reversal of the colonial gaze – but Rey Chow (1993) proposes a different conception of the colonial gaze. Chow argues that the colonizer is subjectivised as a result of the gaze from the natives. Feeling that he is looked at, the colonizer-subject constructs through self-reflexion, the native as his image, with all the perjoratives of lack associated with the image.

[21]Which according to certain standards have not reached First World status despite annual rapid economic growth. The NICs are generally understood to occupy the position between underdeveloped nations and developed nations. While economic growth is an important indicator, socio-cultural development and standards of living are also taken into account.

preference for signifiers (Barthes and Derrida), the *langue* or the linguistic codes or structures which determine the *parole* or the sound–image, is unstable and subjected to the infinite play of meaning. Signs always generate more signs; just as the signifier is always already signified, the signified is always already a signifier. As ideologically inscribed signs are, the generation of signs also signify a refusal to accept static cultural codes and the dynamic re/construction of social life. These heterogeneous signifying activities interrupt the normalizing tendencies and challenge totalizing principles. This is where the postmodern orientation towards language and semiology offer an interesting way in understanding how Westernization[22] processes manifest themselves in the Non–West or the Third World.

From the vantage point of many in the Third World, Western consumer culture continues to contain exciting references and cultural connotations. The Western import of such consumer products as soft drinks (Coca–Cola, Pepsi), clothes (Levis, Esprit, Benetton), fast–food chains (MacDonalds, Wendy's, Pizza Hut) do not merely take physical, concrete forms but one should consider too, the symbolic associations of the products. MacDonalds, Pepsi and Levis jeans are selling a feeling, or an association with a value system and cultural referents formed out of a global relation and specific historical situations. In the case of the Third World, the imprints of imperialism are embedded into the value and referent system of many non–Western cultures[23]. While one usually patronizes MacDonalds in America out of hunger and thriftiness, it is a symbol of being "hip" or "cool" to eat at MacDonalds in a non–West country, for it is emblematic of Western "advanced" or "modern" culture. But, as Bhabha argues (1985), the displacement of value from symbol to sign frays the dominant discourse and its authoritative power. Culture, as the space for "intervention and agonism, as the trace of the displacement of symbol to sign," can be transformed by desire for hybridity. Deprived of its full presence, and immersed in uncertainty and ambivalence through reversals and displacements, a form

[22]This is not to say that Westernization is an all powerful force that will engulf the non–West. However, its sweeping force does affect many nations in the Non–West, especially now with the impact of technology. The movie *The Gods Must Be Crazy* actually exemplifies how an insignificant object (to many but not to the film's protagonist, a tribal man), such as a Coca–Cola bottle which is symbolic of civilization and the West can penetrate the heart of Africa and disrupts a tribal man's life.

[23]Either one spurns Western culture as evil and amoral, or regards the West in an idolizaing manner and to be emulated. However, very little literature deal with the nature of miscegenated cultures and if the situation is addressed, the "mixture" is often considered as ambiguous, confused or a process of indigenous cultural decline or adaptation. Baudrillard's thesis of the decline of real differences in the face of technological dissemination of information is an important one for it questions the notions of cultural purity.

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of "suturing" occurs where Western knowledge may be articulated along with local knowledges. In countries such as Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand, one takes account of the fact that open air hawker foodstands continue to thrive next to Western fast food chains, and MacDonalds restaurants (in Malaysia and Singapore) serve curry chicken wings, satay[24] and sugar cane juice. What these cultural vignettes imply are that Western values have not effaced local culture, and that instead, a certain cultural *hodge-podge* has emerged that denies an immutable linguistic structure or value system. What we have are arbitrary and differential signifiers and signifying practices[25], undergoing incessant struggle, re/negotiation and re/definition.

In many parts of the Third World, signifying practices enter a more complex and dynamic realm where endogenous and exogenous cultural codes are furiously contested within a particular social space. These codes are subjected to more intricate signifying practices, if one takes account of uneven global relations between the First and the Third World, and the unstable value systems which have emerged from a multicultural pastiche. When I choose to eat a Big Mac with coconut juice (bought from a hawker outside a MacDonalds outlet) in Malaysia, the sign produced (out of the relationship with other signs or *the stock of signs*) is also one symbolic of a cultural hybrid and resistance towards a unitary, monocultural adaptation. However one perceives it, as cultural confusion, contamination or conglomeration, signs in relationship with other signs in a given social context generate what Roland Barthes term as a mythical sign, that is a sign that encompasses a whole range of cultural values. Semiology enables us to look beyond the limitations of economic or political constraints on the Third World, and the idea that the Third World and its peoples are passive receivers of Western cultural imperialism. Rather, the impact of Westernization does not usually assume the gradual annihilation or absorption of local cultures in the Non-West. Instead, we find instances of resistance, contestation, and transformation that do not merely settle for a binary solution: seeking to revive an archaic non-adulterated cultural past, or embrace the rationale and progress of Western civilization. Resistance in this case assumes a form of reconceptualization and

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[24] A popular shish-kebab type food (chicken, beef, mutton, pork) served with peanut sauce, raw onions, cucumbers and *ketupat* (packed rice) sold almost everywhere in Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore.

[25] By signifying practices, I mean "the establishment and countervailing of a sign system Establishing a sign system calls for the identity of a speaking subject within a social framework, which s/he recognizes as a basis for that identity. Countervailing the sign system is done by having the subject undergo an unsettling, questionable process, this directly challenges the social framework with which s/he had previously identified, and it thus coincides with times of abrupt changes, renewal or revolution in society" (Kristeva, 1980: 18).

reappropriation, wherein counteraction is not erasure but constant displacement and transformation. The vestiges of Western colonialism, the radiating capitalist economy, and increasing technological information leave indelible marks on non-Western cultures, and often the manifested condition is an eclectic synthesis of lifestyles and values that defy the various modes and gestures of representation. The purpose for providing a semiological analysis of cultural hybridization is to draw attention to the fact that Westernization, or "cultural imperialism" cannot be circumscribed within a binary construction where "A" (the Third World society/ culture/ nation) is the passive, helpless receiver of "B's" (The West) invading tide of economic, political and cultural values.

At the level of the individual subaltern woman in the Third World, one too perceives recurring images of the subaltern woman etched in her timeless, immutable location, helpless in the face of "patriarchy[26]" and the penetration of the capitalist economy. Yet, the academic woman or the development expert faces the difficulty of speculating and theorizing the subaltern woman's consciousness and mapping a subjectivity which lies within the context of experience, an experience that is untranslatable[27]. It is rather disturbing to note that while Western women progress from emancipated beings to fragmented subjects, *guess who* is still stuck in her unchanging, impoverished state, denied of her own representation, silenced and absent despite her presence; always the pretext to someone else's text.

> 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.
> (Spivak: 1988: 306)

For when change in the form of "modernization" is negotiated the feminist experts are often debating the outcomes of the changes; either the subaltern woman is sucked into some capitalist patriarchal conspiracy (when she enters beauty contests, become a social escort) or she has become "liberated." The body of the subaltern woman is, therefore, a

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[26]Unless qualified, patriarchy here should be taken as the general notions of patriarchy as cultivated by Western feminists, namely, male dominance over women (also in terms of the phallus – in which the phallus is the dominant symbol, the transcendental signifier); in te.ms of the household, where men are economically, sexually and culturally in control; and the Marxist feminists' version in which capitalism and patriarchy are intertwined.

[27]Rey Chow argues that even the notions of contexts and specificities in mapping out differences are prey to the hegemony of the dominant discourse which eagerly "converts, recodes, makes transparent, and thus represents even those experiences that resist it with stubborn opacity" (1993: 38).

battleground for contesting discourses. Yet, there are two significant ways in which we can regard this contestation of the subaltern female body: that the subaltern is rendered voiceless amidst the din of feminist debates, or that the subaltern is the non-representable, always escaping the fixedness of representational acts – acts of "seeing as," "construction or invention" and "speaking for." While the former demands our serious consideration, it is the latter that I will insist upon in this thesis: that the subaltern woman is inimitable and she will always slip past the coercions and restraints of representation.

It is absurd then to think that one can capture "woman," "man" "gender," "society," or "culture" and treat them as scientific objects to be classified, coded and defined. Signification, as Derrida reminds us, is derived from the play of difference – the time/space constitution of language. The figure of Woman, like culture does not hold still for portraits (Clifford and Marcus, 1986: 10), and any attempt to contain them would end up with simplification, exclusion, of the "construction of a self-other relationship, and the imposition of a power relationship" (ibid). Identities are always in motion. In that way, subaltern women are "trickster" figures – shape changers who exceed the gaze of the West, and circumvent universalizing representation/s. As much as she is the subject of power and desire, she is also the unpredictability of *presence* and a subject constituted by the Derridean *spacing* of différance: she is *trace*[28], the endless signifier and signified, representer, represented and representation. One not only requires the unmasking of the power relations responsible for her representation, but rather to apprehend the multivalence and slipperiness of representation in which the subaltern plays an integral role. Can the subaltern speak[29]? *My answer is an inchoate yes and no, for the subaltern woman speaks but is never listened to – yet she cannot be easily spoken for and of either.*

Subjectivity and Agency: Poststructuralist–Feminism and the Decentered Subject

The post-structuralist focus on an indeterminate language system, and discourse

[28] I refer to the Derridean *Trace* as elaborated in the previous chapter: "We must permit to appear and/disappear the trace of what exceeds the truth of Being. The trace (of that) which can never be presented: that is, appear and manifest itself, as such, in phenomenon. The trace beyond that which profoundly links fundamental ontology and phenomenology. Always differing and deferring, the trace is never as it is in the presentation of itself. It erases itself in presenting itself, muffles itself in resonating..." (Derrida, 1993: 124)

[29] We recall here Spivak's position that the act of speaking is rooted in a history of Western thought. In treading Spivak's line on recognizing the subaltern, Rey Chow writes that "it is only when we acknowledge the fact that the subaltern cannot speak that" we can begin to plot a different kind of process of identification for the native" (1993: 36).

pays attention to the concepts of an ever fluid subjectivity[30], and the ubiquity of power and resistance. The notion of the unitary, stable subject, and the identity is the central focus among the poststructuralists, especially among the postmodern/structuralist feminists who struggle to insert into, and justify their politics of differànce within the poststructuralist paradigm. In *Positions* (1981), Derrida argues that "there is no subject who is agent, author and master of différance, who eventually and empirically would be overtaken by différance. Subjectivity − like objectivity is an effect of différance, an effect inscribed in the system of différance" (28). Since subjectivity is merely an effect, the poststructuralist claim is that identities are never fixed, and that the subject is constantly being constituted and reconstituted, as it interacts with multiple discourses and webs of representation, thereby occupying numerous conflicting subject positions and coordinated with power to form practices. According to Foucault, truth is only enunciated in discourse, and coordinated with power to form practices[31]. The forceful operations of power (invested by discursive knowledge) deploy distinctive patterns of thinking in coercive institutions and practices. Therefore, we are all basically constructs, imprinted by history, and our subjectivity is a construct "mediated by and/or grounded on a social discourse beyond (way beyond) individual control (Alcoff, 1988: 416). Macro forces, which are "unpredictable networks of overlapping and crisis-crossing elements that have no unilinear directionality," have no final end stage; one is merely subjected to this constant imbrication of discourses. Since our subjectivity is the product of the world we live in, the poststructuralist feminists insist that forms of subjectivity are produced historically and change with shifts in the wider range of discursive fields which constitute them. Yet, they also further the argument by claiming that the individual is the site of conflicting forms of subjectivity (Weedon, 1991: 33). As Linda Alcoff asserts, it is the task of feminism to reconceptualize the construct of "woman" and agency by appropriating the useful ideas of poststructuralism.

This is where Judith Butler's book *Gender Trouble* (1990) makes a valuable contribution to the debate on subjectitivity, agency, identity and politics. As the subject of

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[30] I use Chris Weedon's definition for subjectivity here. Subjectivity "refers to the conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions of the individual, her sense of herself and her way of understanding her relation to the world" (1991: 32) Subjectivity is produced in a whole range of discursive practices in which meaning and identity are negotiated.

[31] A discourse as a whole cannot be true or false because truth is always contextual and rule dependant (Flax, 1992: 452). Laclau and Mouffe use the term "discourse" to emphasize the fact that every social configuration (including social space) is meaningful (Laclau and Mouffe, 1987: 82). Flax defines it as having "its own set of rules or procedures that govern the production of what is to count as a meaningful or truthful statement....and may be enabling or limiting" (1992: 452).

woman is no longer seen in stable and abiding terms"(1). Butler's argument extends the reflexion of the self beyond the dichotomies of sex and gender. Gender is a phantasmic identity "tenuously constituted" in time" and instituted through a "stylized repetition of acts (includes bodily gestures, movements, styles)." If a gender (or in the interests of this chapter, the woman's subjectivity) transformation occurs, it occurs in a failure to repeat and in parodic performances. The gendered self, for Butler does not exist, it is merely a performance, and the agency of gender arises out repeated performance – in which repetition is at once "a reenactment and reexperiencing of a set of meanings already socially established" (140).

> The question of locating *agency* is usually associated with the viability of
> the *subject*, where the subject is understood to have some stable existence
> prior to the cultural field that it negotiated. Or, if the subject is culturally
> constructed, it is nevertheless vested with an agency, usually figured as the
> capacity for reflexive mediation, that remains intact regardless of its cultural
> embeddedness. On such a model, *culture* and *discourse* mire the subject, but
> do not constitute that subject. This move to qualify an to enmire the
> preexisting subject has appeared necessary to establish a point of agency
> that is not fully determined by that culture and discourse. And yet, this kind
> of reasoning falsely presumes (a) agency can only be established through
> recourse to a prediscursive convergence, and (b) that to be *constituted* by
> discourse is to be *determined* by discourse, where determination forecloses
> the possibility of agency. (Butler, 1990: 143)

With the death of the cogito, the subject is constituted through discursive construction, and systems of signification wherein the "I" is provided by the "structure of signification, the rules that regulate the legitimate and illegitimate invocation of that pronoun, the practices that establish the terms of intelligibility by which that pronoun can circulate" (ibid). The subject is not "determined by the rules through which it is generated because signification is not a founding act, but rather a regulated process of repetition that both conceals itself and enforces its rules precisely through the production of substantializing effects" (145). In the repetition of signification, agency arises in the possibility of any variation on the repetition; variations which are improvisations of the existing iterability of signification. Such variations occur when injunctions, which are discursively produced, (for example, to be a good mother) on gender roles produce necessary failures, "a variety of incoherent configurations that in their multiplicity exceed and defy the injunctions" (ibid). There is as Butler argues, no transcendental self which facilitates action amidst the convergence of the discursive injunctions.

> There is no self that is prior to the convergence or who maintains 'integrity'
> prior to its entrance into this conflicted cultural field. There is only a taking
> up of the tools where they lie, where the very 'taking up' is enabled by the

tool lying there. (Butler, 1990: 145)

Read in Foucauldian terms, resistance, and the "complex reconfiguration and redeployment" of the self and the subjectivity will most likely emerge from the capillary operations of power where an oppressive discourse encourages "tools" to be taken up, modified, and reconfigured into contextualized action. These "tools" would also be, in Foucault's study of power, the "suppressed discourses" and local and particular forms of knowledge in which it is the task of genealogy to unveil[22]. But if the construct of the subject and her agency is determined by the "tools", then the ongoing configuration and negotiation of the subject is limited to whatever tools that are available at the given moment. Yet, the subject is not entirely reducible to yet another position in discourse but retains some autonomy and ability to rearrange and negotiate the signification of language.

The work of Teresa de Lauretis (in film studies) rescues the agentic subject by constructing a poststructuralist subjectivity that refuses to reduce the subject to a discursive post, or to borrow Seyla Benhabib's apt description "the Lockean tabula rasa in latter-day Foucauldian garb" (1992: 217). By designating that subjective experiences are social constructs, and that basically we all possess the basic mental foundations, we entrap ourselves in the liberal argument where race, class, and gender are ultimately irrelevant to questions of justice and truth. De Lauretis maintains that "the relation between women as historical subjects and the notion of woman as it is produced by hegemonic discourse is neither a direct relation of identity, a one to one correspondence, nor a relation of simple implication" (1984: 5–6). De Lauretis's work is important because she rescues agency and resistance from the poststructuralist's discourse–dependant subject by grafting elements of the Cartesian self–constituting subject onto the constituted subject. Arguing that despite the centripetal direction of discursive activity towards the subject, the subject is able to rework the discursive knowledge in her own particular ways and so avoids a kind of determinism. De Lauretis conjoins the Cartesian notion of the inner self (self–constituting subject) with the poststructuralist position of the external determination (the constituted subject). Critiquing what she perceives as simplistic determinism, that is Catherine McKinnon's stance of how patriarchal notions of gender socialization construct the identities of women. De Lauretis argues that it is also crucial to understand "the ways in which the process works, and how the experience of sexuality, in en–gendering one as female, does effect or construct what we may call a female subject" (Ibid: 167). Subjectivity is constructed

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[22]A wonderful example of "taking up the tools" in terms of local knowledge would be the hill tribes of the Cordilleras in the Philippines. In the face of environmental degradation and encroachment of industrialization, the women removed their upper clothing as an act of protest. Such an act is linked to the fact that bodies are sacred, and that the unclothed body is part of nature. By removing their clothing, any physical attack would equate to harming nature and defiling its sacredness.

through the process of placing oneself or "is [being] placed in social reality, and so perceives and comprehends as subjective those relations–material, economic, and interpersonal–which are in fact social and, in a larger perspective, historical" (Ibid: 159). The subjectivity, according to De Lauretis is what one perceives and understands as subjective and is constructed through a continuous process of daily renewal, a dynamic reconstitution based on an interaction with the world which she defines as experience:

> [the subjectivity] is produced not by external ideas, values or material causes, but by one's personal, subjective engagement in the practices, discourses, and institutions that lend significance (value, meaning, and affect) to the events of the world around her. (De Lauretis, 1984: 159)

The poststructuralist feminists perceive women as a diverse group whose boundaries shift, and whose differences can be expressed and renegotiated through connections, through the understanding that individual experiences are the result of a complex bundle of determinations and struggles, a "process of continuing renegotiation of external pressure and internal resistance" (De Lauretis, 1990: 137). The individual is both the site and subject of discursive struggles, but it is a struggle in which the individual is an active player. The identity therefore, becomes the site of multiple and variable positions from which one may come to assume a subjectivity in the form of political consciousness. But one must also note that if women construct subjectivity for themselves, they do so within the socio–cultural constraints of their own society.

Situated Knowledges

Established as an oppositional force, the feminist movement predicates itself upon a different form of knowledge, rather, "a woman's way of knowing." Because the experience of women is engendered by her situation as a woman, her perception of reality is different from that of men. The argument for an alterna(rra)tive feminist knowledge that is rooted in a knowledge community outside academic disciplines, and in the experiences of those who are once objects of study is the focal point of postmodern knowledge/s. The call for a feminist standpoint theory based on women's lives would allow for the emergence of what Foucault calls "low ranking" knowledges, knowledges once imposed and subjugated, and which through painstaking multiple genealogical research might reveal a rediscovery of struggles along with the rude memory of their conflicts (Foucault, 1980: 82 83). By inserting the narratives and cultural knowledge of subaltern women into a postmodern feminist framework, this approach can be significant for a reconstruction of strategies for transformative action in women and development. But a standpoint theory is also encumbered with the limitations of recognizing not only the specificities of women's experience, but the unique interpretation of the situation as well.

Feminist Standpoint Theory or *Standpoint Objectivity* as articulated by Nancy Hartsock and Sandra Harding reflects the view that women (or feminists) occupy a social

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location that privileges them with superior access to social phenomena. Rooted in materialist feminism, a standpoint is an objective location that is theoretically understood as grounded in women's lives: "the articulated observations of and theory about the rest of nature and social relations – observations and theory that start out from, and that look at the world from the perspective of, women's lives" (Harding, 1991). Putting it simply, women, because of their unique social location and experiences as subordinated beings, can comprehend social phenomena better than men do. Theorizing from a standpoint theory enables the feminist struggle to "see beneath the appearances created by an unjust social order" where women have always been the object of legitimate knowledge claims. Since material life structures understanding, women's experiences are derived from the division of labour of patriarchy. But experiences are not enough to rediscover the "knowledge-essence" of women, "the historical specific experience of subjugation, then mediated by political struggle, is the ground for discovering an adequate, rather than partial and mystified, knowledge of reality as a whole" (Crosby, 1992: 133). Similarly, Sandra Harding maintains that experiences are not enough because the lives of women "are structured by the patriarchal ideology of femininity, not by feminism" (1992: 188). In order to transform their lives into "feminist" lives, Harding issues a "how-to" list which includes self-reflection, dialogue, critique, and an ingestion of feminist theories. Thus, women's lived experiences must undergo an intellectual overhaul and be mediated by a political purpose in order for it to be translated into a feminist standpoint that will destabilize androcentric/mainstream thinking.

However, standpoint theorizing is greatly flawed and has been criticized by many postmodern feminists who argue that this position merely inverts an enlightenment-entrenched patriarchal discourse (Lugones and Spelman, 1984; Haraway, 1988; Haraway, 1990; Hekman, 1990; Probyn, 1990; Butler and Scott, 1992; Mohanty, 1992; Hennessy, 1993; Longino, 1993;). By grounding standpoint theory in materialist feminism, the common historical subjection of women provides "mediated knowledge" for a feminist theory, a "theory in which knowledge follows from and leads to identity" that posits women as "prior to thought" (Crosby, 1992: 133). Such a theory dehistoricizes and universalizes the experiences of women, and stakes its legitimacy in the fact that history mirrors the present and patriarchy is a global phenomenon. By claiming a superior vantage point, standpoint feminists are merely adapting what they have been fighting against for decades, a dichotomous dead-end solution. Harding's standpoint theorizing presumes a dichotomous situation where the experiences of women are always victimized and subordinate to men no matter the situation. Also, her prescription of "how to be a feminist" denies the various facets of the women's movement the world over as well as reduces women to tabula rasas who cannot initiate "feminist action" unless guided by a set of orientations defined by

Western feminism[33]. Haraway describes it best as "the deadly fantasy that feminists and others have identified in some versions of objectivity, those in the service of hierarchical and positivist orderings of what can count as knowledge" (Haraway, 1988: 580). All these, according to the Postmodern Feminists lead to essentialism. Furthermore, the assumption of a common experience of oppression is a problematic one for it assumes that experiences, are immediately accessible, understood and named (Mohanty, 1992). The complex relationships between behaviour and representation are made irrelevant, and "experience is collapsed into discourse and vice versa" (82).

By constructing knowledge for a feminist theory out of the observations and experiences of women's lives, the distinct historical experiences of individual women are absorbed into a general theory that eliminate the differences of each woman and her "level of attitude and intention". Furthermore, what counts as experience is often subjected to contestation and interpretation, and is neither self-evident, nor straightforward (Scott, 1992)[34]. As Hennessy writes, the starting thought from women's lives can expose the ways in which women are oppressed and exploited, how they resist, or consent, how the contradiction and distribution of resources, and the ways prevailing knowledge contribute to the structures of exploitation, "but only from a perspective that understand social relations in systemic terms" (Hennessy, 1993: 16). Therefore, experiences must be understood within the context; a battered woman in India does not share the same situation as a battered woman in North America does (factors of culture i.e. way of life, social status,

[33] "I face difficulties now in approaching anything that names feminism as politics. Even if feminism is constructed out of heterogeneous experiences, the problem is in the definition of feminist politics as distinct from the everyday struggles of women who do not name themselves as feminists. The tapestry of feminism might be diverse, one which weaves together differentiated positions, but whose pattern or picture is it? How does one approach, for example, groups too appear to fight for feminist causes but not in terms of feminist standards (again, whose standards?) such as the Madres De La Plaza De Mayo, or the Inkatha Women's Brigade?

[34] "That is why for scholars such as Spivak, Trinh, Chow, Lugones and Spelman, even the "native informant" is not to be taken for granted. This is because the native informant might very well be constituted within the discourse of informing First World projects – speaking cannot be taken-for-granted for one should also question as to who is/are speaking. To "listen" to the subaltern woman also demands the question of what are you listening to? The speaking subaltern woman, in order to speak, so often must participate in the very terms of the discourse. For example, in order for the subaltern woman in the Third World to be heard and justified by development practitioners, they must first speak of their oppressive circumstances, economic, political and "patriarchal" (see Perdita Houston's *Third World Women Speak Out* [1979] for examples of the "native informant's" place in justifying the projects of First World feminists.)

economic structures might come to play). In Helen Longino's words, "I cannot produce thought from the life situation of women in India that takes the point of view as seriously as they take my own. However much I and they inform ourselves about one another's life situations, we can neither share nor escape our social situation, unless we materially [and systematically]* [55] dismantle them, and everything, and even then we cannot escape our histories" (Longino, 1993: 211). Elspeth Probyn (1990) constructs a similar argument when she maintains that the experience and knowledge should be considered in terms of the local, locale and location [56]. The engagement with the intersection of the local, locale and location enables the deconstruction of ideological inscriptions upon our bodies and opens up the "subjugated" knowledges of the locale. Yet, one still requires a critical practice which enables the recognition of individual "semiotic technologies for making meaning" (Haraway, 1988: 579) and "an earthwide network of connections, including the ability partially to translate knowledges among very different–power–differentiated–communities" (580).

In her brilliant synthesis of science and feminism, Donna Haraway unleashes a protean world teeming with "fabricated" subjects who are cyborgs and chimeras (1988; 1990). In her criticism of standpoint epistemology, she argues that the privileged subjugated positions are not "innocent positions" and cannot be exempted from critical reexamination, deconstruction and interpretation. Subjugated standpoints, she maintains, are preferred "because they seem to provide more adequate, sustained – objective transformation accounts of the world" (584) but the problem however is not seeing from that position, but "how to see". Positioning politics, being rooted in struggles are "struggles over what will count as rational accounts of the world, [and] are struggle over how to see" (587). Knowledge founded upon subjugation which in turn is dependant upon an ontology is an impossible and blinding position. In fact, any claim to objective knowledge, based upon relativism [57] or totalizing versions, is a "god trick," " a way of being nowhere while

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[55] * Personal interjection

[56] The concept of locale is used by Probyn to "designate a place that is the setting for a particular event, i.e. the home". The local is "that directly issuing from or related to a particular time and place". Location is "the methods by which one comes to locate sites of research....location knowledges are ordered into sequences which are congruent with previously established categories....[delineating] then what we may hold as knowable.....[thus] rendering some experiences as true...while excluding others" (178). An awareness of the triad of local, locale and location helps us raise epistemological questions of what constitutes our experiences and knowledge, and directs us to the constant movement and contestation of subjectivity.

[57] If there is no foundation to be relative to, relativism ends up in the troubled bin of postmodern concepts. As Jane Flax writes, relativism only takes on meaning "as the partner of its binary opposite

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claiming to be everywhere equally....both deny the stakes in location, embodiment, and partial perspective" (ibid). Haraway argues instead for "situated knowledges" – a "doctrine and practice of objectivity that privileges contestation, deconstruction, passionate construction, webbed connections, and hope for transformation of systems of knowledge and ways of seeing" (585). The knowing self, Haraway contends is split and contradictory, composed of heterogeneous multiplicities that "are simultaneously salient and inescapable of being squashed into isomorphic slots or cumulative lists" (586). The self is therefore, an imperfectly stitched, multidimensional being, often in tension, and mobile – producing partial perspectives and not "clear and distinct ideas" as scientific objectivity or Standpoint epistemology would have us believe[35].

Reading Subjectivity and Resistance in The Subaltern Woman

Despite the rhetoric by poststructuralists, are all women privileged with the same shifting subjectivity, power and resistance? Often "Third World women are represented as mired [in the past], ever arriving at modernity when Western feminists are already adrift in postmodernism" (Ong, 1988: 87). But before we concerned Third World women embrace Ong's statement, there is the need to critically understand how the Third World subaltern woman figure within poststructuralism. In positing the subject as constituted by discourse, power and language[39], postmodernism or poststructuralism disengages the subject from the

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– universalism" (1992: 452)

[35]In discussing Foucault's notion of the subject, Garth writes that "[The subject] is not accessible through a description of lived experiences in which consciousness is face to face with itself and truth is marked by the clarity of presence....[the subject] is only accessible obliquely, not in the continuity of its self-consciousness but in the discontinuity of its shifting forms, in the different interrogations to which it is submitted, and in the ways in which its interiority is hollowed out" (1988: 37).

[39]There is an important distinction to be made here. Language and discourse are not the same. While the focal point of poststructuralism is on language and its evocations, especially in the play of the written word, discourse also figures prominently in the work of Michel Foucault. As in Chapter 2, my problem here is trying to synthesize Foucault and Derrida (an attempt that both thinkers, I am certain, would consider reprehensible) – an ultimately impossible attempt. The crucial question here of course **is language and meaning dependant on discourse or vice versa?** In this thesis, I will consider discourse and language as inextricably intertwined.

Discourse, is not a language or a text, but a historically, socially, and institutionally specific structure of enunciative statements, rules, terms, categories, beliefs. For Derrida, the multiplicity of meaning is contained within the *logos*, the written word. In fact, Foucault perceives

economic – materialist element, and the historical experience of imperialism, a position that I am not willing to support. Spivak suggests however, that the "economic" could be placed under erasure,' "to see the economic factor as irreducible 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" (1988: 280). For the subaltern woman in the Third World, her location and representation cannot be severed from the economic factors and the topographical experience of imperialism. The poststructuralist engagement with the decolonization of the subaltern female subject of the Third World must be able to articulate the decentred subjectivity into and along with the economic factor and the historical experience of imperialism. Between the self-regulating subject of late capitalism and the postmodern subject of desire, the subaltern woman is hardly paralyzed in contradictions but actively negotiates her subjectivity and resistance within the pressures and constraints of her environment.

In their deconstructive reading of "Shahbano," the first Muslim women in India to be awarded a higher settlement from a Muslim divorce, Zakia Pathak and Rajeswari Sunder Rajan (1992) detail the formation of a discontinuous female subjectivity "in response to the displacement of the Muslim woman question onto several discourses" (260). In her bid to win higher maintenance fees from her husband, the figure of Shahbano unwittingly became the site of multiple intersections of power, and several competing discourses, the main one being the discourse of protection as articulated by numerous positions, in this case – The State, the Law, Indian feminists, Muslim women's groups, and Hindu fundamentalists who all sought to promulgate their politics on "behalf" of "protecting" Shahbano. Yet throughout the brouhaha which the Shahbano case engendered, Shahbano herself shifted from one

the logos as another discourse already in operation (1971). For myself, the analysis of language is at a micro-level while discourse is more macro. Without coming across as too foundational, language (in all forms, i.e. speech, writing, gesture etc.) as the basis of all communication, also constitutes the sphere of discourse – the modes of assemblage and types of social power. However, discourse is also contained and expressed in organizations and institutions as well as in words; all of these constitute texts or documents to be read (Scott, 1990). Ultimately, reading returns us to language, though not necessarily reading the written word, but also gestures, expressions and speech which are forms of language.

In this section of the thesis, my concentration is on Foucault's discursive constitution of the subject, while I consider the shifting subjectivity and agency as both an effect of language and discourse. For example, if we consider the Malaysian case again, when I substitute the pronoun "I" for the Malay pronoun "Saya", this is not only a linguistic shift but also a discursive rupture – in the sense that (as I have previously explained), "I" is more connected to the discourse of Western individualism. From this linguistic disruption, new discursive formations emerge in the social space.

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subject position to another, i.e. the oppressed woman, the lower class subaltern, the devoted Muslim; refusing, at times, and turning to other subject positions offered to her, and responding to her situation amidst the public hue and cry with a discontinuous and apparently contradictory subjectivity that embodies resistance:

> Shahbano's actions...have no centre and no closure. If we reverse its trajectory, we find that for every constituted "effect" there is a simultaneous act of resistance. This......exemplifies that refusal of subjectification....Shahbano's multiple identities must be read in a different relation to each other. None of them is a positive term but exists in combination with other terms to produce meaning. (268)

The significance of the Shahbano case is in the fluidity of Shahbano's subject positions and her discontinuous subjectivity. Within the arena of competing discourses, Shahbano, the subaltern Muslim woman, refused to be constituted by any one dominant discourse, thus resisting any permanent fixed positioning of her stance. But the subject of Shahbano here is both the subject discussed by Butler and De Lauretis. The variations of Shahbano erupting out of the repetition of themes from various groups, picking up the "tools" (in this context, the subject positions) whenever necessary, while "engaging with the collectivity" by placing herself in the public realm, allowing "a strategic redefining of her subject position in accordance with the exigencies of the shifting political position, thus problematizing and disrupting the shared assumptions about her. The subaltern woman here is not a tabula rasa for in her disruptive shifts, she prevents herself from being "protected" by any one group nor allows herself to be represented, and enshrined within a fixed representation.

I find it helpful to return to and re/appropriate Judith Butler's (1990) notion of "parodic performances" and extend it beyond the gender transformation debate. Since the context in this thesis is the subaltern woman in the Third World, I wish to move "parody" beyond deliberate gender performances towards the arenas of class/status and ethnicity. The notion of parody as argued by Butler, in its effects, posture as an imitation. It is an act or a performance where identities are fabrications – manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means. It is a perpetual displacement and subversive act which suggest a fluidness of identities, and an openness to resignification and recontextualization. It challenges the fixity of essential gendered, or in this case class/status and ethnic norms and liberates the possibilities of innumerable configurations of subjective positions. In the context of the subaltern woman, parody manifests in "pretence," "mimicry" or "dissembling acts," encompassing a range of personal tactics of resistance in terms of challenging existing gender, class/status and ethnic (even regional) identities. Such parodic performances may be extended to include dissembling tactics, fashion emulation, and the adoption of "male attributes" as exemplified by the following discussion on the Lucknow courtesans, the Aymara Indian women in Bolivia and the village Malay girls in Malaysia.

Chapter 3
Representation, Feminism and the Third World Subaltern Woman

In considering the dynamic subjectivity and the resistance of women, and the meaning making processes which emerge from the subject's engagement with the world, Vera Oldenburg's (1990) study of the courtesans of Lucknow, India provides us with a fascinating example of resistance via dissemblage. The lifestyle of the courtesan is a form of covert resistance rather than the perpetuation of patriarchal values with their own self-perception, definition and description of social norms, for example, preferring autonomy over virtue. The courtesans remain independent, (unlike their "married sisters"), establishing a female lineage and a female domain, and celebrating their womanhood in the privacy of their apartments, thus resisting and reinventing the rules of gender in the larger society. Far from being complicitous with male authority, the narratives of the courtesans detail their escape from hellish male-dominated households, and arranged marriages, and their comfort in finding the security of a woman's world and freedom in the brothels. They in fact, reverse gender roles in society by resorting to a repertoire of dissembling tactics, such as acting out the roles of "ideal femininity" i.e. acts of servitude, compliance:

> [The Courtesans] live in outward harmony with male power and male sexuality for the struggle can only be effective if their subterfuges are mistaken for compliance and their true intentions as collusion with men against other women. (281)

When they enter the public realm, the courtesans are clothed in purdah but the wearing of purdah is also an extension of autonomy and mobility, grounded upon a reversal of patriarchal logic with the intent of blocking the gaze of sexually frustrated men who can only imagine the delights of the brothels when they perceive these women[40]. By doing so, the women reverse gender roles, relegating men to "celibacy" while they celebrate their sexual activity, and retain their autonomy. In reference to Butler's book, the notion of "parodic performances" may be appropriated here, not so much in terms of gender transformations, but more in terms of subjectivity and agency with regards to the dissembling tactics and the acts of compliance.

The very act of challenging and reconstituting gender and class/status roles and negotiating selfhood is found within fashion statements, in which fashion, as a form of consumerism is "picked up as a tool" for the self-reconstitution of identity, characterized by a negotiation between self-definition and the array of possibilities offered by the capitalist market (Friedman, 1990; Shields, 1992). Fashion is a cultural symbol – a manifestation of culture and the product of our desires, choices and "rationale". To an extent, like the choice of donning the purdah, fashion is also a form of empowerment. The

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[40]Also see Lama Abu Odeh's "Post-Colonial feminism and the Veil: Thinking the Difference" *Feminist Review* 43, 1993: 26–36. Odeh's article details how, contrary to popular feminist belief, some veiled women perceive the purdah as empowering.

reconstitution of identity through fashion expresses an absence in individuality, preservation of inner freedom, an indication of social position, and counteraction against dominant ideas (Simmel, 1957). In Bolivia (Gill, 1993), fashion is the site for competing images of the ideal woman, in which women select and manipulate aspects of gender and ethnicity to set themselves apart from one another to protect and sustain their class position. Fashion is the cultural practice which is increasingly contested by women of various class and ethnic backgrounds as they struggle to impose, defend and define class-based notions of femininity. For the impoverished Aymara Indian women immigrants who migrated from the rural areas to the cities, and who find themselves marginalized by women from the upper classes, fashion is the arena in which the women cultivate a sense of urban sophistication and stylishness. Since the Aymara Indians cannot enter the exclusive classes, they constantly create their own styles and practices, and redefine the elements of the dominant culture in order to incorporate them into their own social experience. Keeping abreast with the latest European and American fashion, the Aymara women view Western clothing as emblematic of upward mobility and elevated status. Here the image of "ideal femininity" is unstable, and riven with contradictions as fashion becomes a form of everyday resistance in which the Aymara women pose their own challenge to class-defined feminine propriety.

In Malaysia, the fashion trend of the "sarung to jeans" movement has spawned debates concerning the moral predicament of young Malay women from the *kampungs* (village) (Ong, 1987, Lie and Lund, 1991). With the increasing rural–urban migration and recruitment into the transnational industries located near urban centres, the social mores of the kampungs is displaced and disrupted by the ethos of urban life. Far from the *Adat Perpatih* (tradition, morality, way of life) of kampung life where Malay maidens dutifully observe the modesty code, urban living and wage work offers new lifestyle possibilities, and greater choices to negotiate independence and autonomy, such as improving their educational skills, and selecting their own husbands. In the words of a Malaysian Stateswoman: "these kampung girls want to compete and prove that they have as much or even more freedom than their town counterparts[41]." The "sarung to jeans" movement, of course, refers to the conspicuous fashion change among the Malay girls which prompted observations from kampung women such as

It is not nice the way [some factory women] attempt to *imitate male style*. Like they want to be *rugged*. For instance, men wear "Wrangler," they want to follow suit...some of them straight away take on the attributes of men in

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[41]The New Straits Times, 1994 (Malaysian newspaper, incomplete reference)

their clothing, they forget their sex. If they are already very *bebas* (free)[42]
they forget that they themselves are women. (interview quoted in Ong,
1987: 199)

Wearing Western "Wrangler" jeans and being "rugged" mark a resistance towards the ideal
representations of religious piety and feminine modesty usually imposed on Malay women
from the rural areas. The jeans here are visual symbols of change: that these girls want to
imitate (or parody) men, and to assume "male" attributes by indicating a discursive shift
in their subjectivities – from the docile Malay maiden of the kampung to the independent
urban woman who actively participates in resisting and challenging the social codes and
the reconstitution of gender roles and relations[43].

The Subaltern Woman in the Third World

The marriage between postmodernism and feminism[44] has so far been a

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[42] The Malay *bebas* means free, but in this context, it also means looseness of "morals" usually
associated with men, and with urban behaviour. *Kampung* (village) people distinguish between
Orang Islam (Islam person) and *Orang Asing* (outsider) i.e. urbanites who are not raised the
kampung way. It is very important to note here that one is not measuring the autonomy of women
and men – the concept freedom is highly dependant upon the socio-cultural context. However, the
freedoms of men, especially those who seem to shirk familial responsibility, are not usually
perceived in an approving light.

[43] This is not say that there were no repercussions for these Malay girls. Factory wages are
insufficient, and thus moonlighting as Waitresses, Social Escorts etc. is a normal occurance. Some,
however end up as prostitutes and runaways, who are too ashame to return home.

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[44] Criticisms levelled at the conjoining of postmodernism and feminism have been numerous.
Most have concentrated on the fragmentation of the subject, the apolitical nature of postmodernism,
and its threat to the bonds of global sisterhood. By advancing the multifluous nature of women
(Foucault, Baudrillard, Derrida, Cixoux, Kristeva, Irigaray), a type of essentialism occurs thus
supporting the binarism of women/nature/flux vs. man/culture/stasis. Also, as a result of positing
women as an "effect", postmodernism has been criticized for ignoring the systemic and economic
structures of oppression which have repressed the agencies and voices of women. Although
supportive of postmodernism, bell hooks (1990) argues that it is ironic that such a "contemporary
discourse which talks the most about heterogeneity", the decentred subject, otherness "still directs
its critical voice" to a specialized audience, "one that shares a common language rooted in the very
master narratives it claims to challenge" (hooks, 1994). Also, anti postmodern feminist critics like
Somer Brodribb claim that feminism entraps itself in another dominant patriarchal discourse. After
all, according to Brodribb, postmodernism is the *master's* words, dressed up in the deceptive
language of difference. Feminism would then do better to seek her own more creative voices and

controversial one; one that occupies multiple arguments and contentions, and one that fulfils the poststructuralist premise of constant recontextualization within interdiscursive formations. For Susan Hekman (1990), postmodernism and feminism form a necessary alliance for both have something to offer each other. Since feminism has worked as a marginalized discourse, as a kind of "other", and is rooted in political struggles based upon the subordination of women, its role as a subversive discourse fits into the postmodern framework. Postmodernism shatters the binary positions of categories, and encourages a reflexive position that challenges dogmatism, racism, essentialism, and the reduction to single cause analysis within the feminist movement. It recognizes diversity and seeks the production of new knowledge from which to act and to diffuse power as a "means to take advantage of the range of mobile and transitory points of resistance inherent in the networks of power relations" (Lather, 1991: 38). Similarly, the transformative agency in feminism forces the need to construct new multivaried knowledges and strategies out of the heterogeneous realities that postmodernism constitutes. By forcing it to question and deconstruct itself, the feminist movement is also forced to confront its own illusions of "sisterhood", and unitary objectives. Postmodernism threatens the stability of conceptual boundaries which in turn undermines the construction of unitary feminist goals, and the struggle against difference in terms of gender subordination. Destabilization also shakes the foundations of feminism as the movement now grapples with racism and ethnocentrism and the need to redefine feminism and its conceptualization of a women's movement.

Feminism has been after all, another totalizing Westerncentric label that claims to speak for all "women" who have been located at specific times and places in subordinate positions. The only problem of course, is that few of these women were ever allowed to speak or represent themselves. Accused of generalizing oppression and homogenizing the experiences of all women (and even men), Western feminism's insistence upon the coherence and unity of the category of women has suppressed the multiplicity of cultural, social and political intersections in which women are also constituted. The illusion of unity and consensus has also excluded other knowledges as viable frameworks for formulating strategies of action and empowerment. The displacement of the homogeneity of Third World women and the notion of shared oppression has revealed the inherent racism and superior dominant attitudes of Western feminism. The matrix of unity then has been shattered and as Haraway writes (1990), "we [privileged Western feminists] cannot claim innocence from practising such dominations. White women, including Euro-American socialist feminists, discovered (i.e. were forced kicking and screaming to notice) the non-innocence of the category 'woman'"(199).

knowledges.

Chapter 3
Representation, Feminism and the Third World Subaltern Woman

The non-western subject is often constituted primarily through a sense of a gaping loss – a loss of an ancient history and traditional past which one needs to build a foundation, or an identity (Chow, 1990[45]). Logocentric reasoning presumes this – that somewhere lost in the misty clouds of time and translation, and in the idealizations of the Western anthropological mind, an unadulterated shangri-la like origin or a transcendentally pure spirit exists[46]. The romantic illusions of some of the Western *orientalists* defend the *Ancient* East against the scourge of Westernization, proffering the arguments of cultural exploitation, false consciousness, and vulnerability (that until the non-west subjects retrieve their origins, they are not strong enough to defend themselves, nor speak for themselves). And so, the non-West often suffers traumatically from *confronting* pluralisms, the result of the bloodied hand of European and American imperialism, ever shuttling "between bloodshed and sympathy". One can chart a fulcrum shift in thought here where once the non-West was the old world, the inferior and primitive cultural alterity of the West/New World, to be conquered and subdued. Now, the inverse appears, where the non-west and its cultures represents the return to the noble (in their anti-imperialist struggles), the virtuous, and the innocent in contrast to the capitalist barbarity and vulgarity of Western cultures which have also contaminated and oppressed the non-West. Consider the various environmentalist groups who plead for the indigenous peoples of the world and their jungle habitat – the repository of traditional knowledge, and protesting the economic degradation of natural resources by puppet Third World governments and their greedy Western puppet-masters. Suddenly the bookshelves are brimming with books on the environment, home

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[45]Chow argues that the status of the native is the indifferent defiled image:"the native is not the defiled image and not not the defiled image. And she stares indifferently, mocking our imprisonment within imagistic resemblance and our self deception as the non-duped" (1993: 54).

[46]"The modern Orientalist was....a hero rescuing the Orient from the obscurity, alienation, and strangeness which he himself had properly distinguished. His research reconstructed the Orient's lost languages, mores, even mentalities...The specific Orientalist techniques – lexicography, grammar, translation, cultural decoding – restored, fleshed out, reasserted the values both of an ancient, classical Orient and of the traditional disciplines of philology, history, rhetoric, and doctrinal polemic. But in the process, the Orient and Orientalist disciplines changes dialectically, for they *could not survive in the original form*. The Orient, even in the `classic' form which the Orientalist usually studied, *was modernized*, restored to the present; the traditional disciplines too were brought into contemporary culture. Yet both bore the traces of *power* [Said's emphasis], power to have resurrected, indeed created, the Orient, power that dwelt in the new, scientifically advanced techniques of philology and of anthropological generalization." (Said, 1978: 121)

remedies, Eastern philosophy[47], and clean rural lifestyles. Where once the language of colonialism was overflowing with references to the "inferior races," "subordinate peoples," "dependency," "expansion," "authority,", the language which impels development discourse and emancipatory programmes are terms such as "innocent victim," "the oppressed," "self-determination," "empowerment," "aid/expertise". The terms all convey a moral and intellectual mission to "return" the native to her "right" of self-development, and cultural histories.

Being a Third World female Other is not an enviable position. One pendulates either to the insufficiently oriental or exotic, or the insufficiently Europeanized and modernized. Whether it is the language of colonialism or development, there appears to be a zero-sum situation in which the subaltern Other is placed. Recall Said's Oriental Other who is constructed out of the will and representation of the West, the Other who is so crucial to the enterprise of Orientalism. Should the Other become Westernized, denying her "cultural essence," and emulate the ways and values of the West, the Other becomes a disappointment, ignorant of her historical past, a let-down by the standards of those scholars and politicians who long for difference, an "authentic native," and a romanticized Orient. Yet, if the Other chooses to remain within the discourse of the Orientalist Other, she is not granted the same privileges or equal position as the Western peoples. She will become the ignorant, the helpless, the victim, the exotic – placed within the location of subalterity. Even when "empowered" or "emancipated," she will remain the backward subaltern, always catching up to the standards of the West. Either way, she is marginalized – always lacking either a cultural foundation that denies her fullness or the standards which would enable her "membership" into the acceptable circles of Western culture.

Who the Other is, is constructed within a particular discourse which carves or moulds the Other into a comprehensible frame of reference. Western feminists claim awareness of oppression by becoming conscious of their otherization by the dominating patriarchal male. But for the Third World woman, the experience of being an Other is not

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[47]This is not to say that I am against such publications and activity. My concern lies with the fact that these practices might be selling an idealized past. We cannot merely turn our backs on the present; a reversal of lifestyle orientations cannot negate the problems of the world today. Here we cannot confuse the act of reviving and retrieving traditional practices or intergenerational knowledge, and the historical unveiling of practices as seeking an origin. Alternatives do not equate to a return to an innocent past. Similarly, one must be wary of a feminism which invokes a matriarchal past or a pre-colonial past where until the injection of colonial rule, men and women were living harmoniously. Reversals merely secure the idea of dichotomies, an either-or situation. Displacing the dominant discourse requires a deconstructive approach, one seeks instead the imprints, the supplements, measuring the silent spaces so as to understand, challenge and subvert

merely related to patriarchy, but rather to the Western feminist, who establishes her moral authority over the masses of women in the non-West. As Chandra Mohanty (1991) and Trinh T. Min Ha (1989) remind us, the contextualization of the Third World from the vantage point of the West rests upon the overdetermined and reified discourse of underdevelopment and economic dependency which justifies the privilege and self-representation of the West;

> The setting up of unitary opposites is a result of the well meant intentions
> of equating the unequal, which thereby assumes its responsibilities for the
> constraints of equality while allowing inequality to maintain its being"
> (Trinh, 1989: 54).

Thus, most Third world women are never creators but objects of theory construction and practice in First World feminist scholarship. Furthermore, a neat binary conceptualization of power enables the perpetuation of the "victimhood" dogma, and reinforces the superior self-presentation of the West. In her article on Algerian women, Marnia Lazreg criticizes how feminism regards women in Islam, reducing them to ahistorical and static non-beings, and subsumed under an oppressive religion. The act of inserting Third World women into categories of victimhood is an act of negation or the act of exclusion of the others, and therefore, the refusal to acknowledge the existence of others. Recognizing the act of categorization as an inherent need to stabilize the world and suppress subordinate knowledges, Lazreg calls for a phenomenology of women's lived experiences to explode "the constraining power of categories" (1988: 95) for such a study would elicit information from [the women] about lives that helps us construct a conception of them.

We need to see subaltern women as agents whose role includes an active shaping one which alters and moulds our strategies of research and understanding. As Rey Chow writes "the task then for Third World feminists is not simply to animate the oppressed women of their cultures but of making their voices the conscious points of departure in their intervention" (1993:68). Animating voices, however does not mean that the subaltern women are spoken for, ventriloquized by the academic elite. Speaking "for" often imbricates the act of speaking "of or about," and as Linda Alcoff (1991) reminds us, "exists in the very structure of discursive practice, no matter its content" (23). Thus, the act of speaking for others must always be a wary one; one that requires the transformation of the discursive position in which "speaking for" is located. Academic feminists, located the world over must systematically unlearn female privilege (Spivak, 1988: 295), meaning that learning to "critique post-colonial discourse with the best tools it can provide and not simply substituting the lost figure of the colonized." All the effort of publicizing anti-hegemonic Third World Feminist discourse would be nothing short of hypocritical if the subaltern women are not ceded the rights of autonomous enunciation, and to be active participants and disruptors of discourse formation and control. Third World feminists must also be aware of their cross-cultural limitations and that their own use of the "victimhood

dogma" of Third World women is "both symptomatic of and inevitably complicitous with the `First World'" (Chow, 1993: 68).

In the postmodern realm of disseminated multiplicities, the unitary, solidaristic voice is lost in the maelstrom of differences[48]. The postmodern vogue of ever conjuring up the concept of difference or the Derrida *différance* often omits some contextual elaboration of th. usage, so much so that difference becomes a tokenistic approach to selling the global sisterhood of feminism. Building for differences, according to Gayatri Spivak, must be a vigilant project against taking anything (but especially the personal) for granted. Chicano feminist Chela Sandoval criticizes the "(White) woman's movement for creating an "empowered sisterhood through erasing the differences of women of colour under the `unifying' category of `woman,'" (1991: 65), a category that she maintains is formed out of the opposition to the category "men", thus excluding other conceptions of gender relations. For Himani Bannerji, the politics of difference might very well constitute the ever appropriation of difference as an us–them issue by White or privilege feminists, and as a pretext for Otherizing, and ignoring power relations. In this case, difference is not a plural recognition and acknowledgement of all groups of women but an end–state, or an enclosure, and inverted knowledge that generalize and ignore social transformative action (1991: 83). Difference, then, is justified as an us–them issue, where Western women appear confident, liberated and assuming control over their lives, while Third World women are locked into fixed cultural positions that limit agency (Mohanty, 1992). The postmodern celebration of diversity and alternatives cannot be some *world's fair* of exotica where otherness is a merely some official repertory of cultural differences. Acknowledgement of difference is not the same as acknowledging the subject of difference and her right to negotiate her differences in terms of action and resistance. Often, the rhetoric of feminism claims a converging goal of chimeric solidarity, and ignores the situational and partial politics of diverse women in the Third World.

The resistance towards acknowledging Third World women as a heterogeneous reality is the perpetuation of fixed and anachronistic subject–object positions that privileges those who extend "salvation" as active subjective beings, and objectifies those who are situated in the Third World. Not surprisingly, Third World women "never rise above the debilitating generality of their "object" status" (Mohanty, 1991: 71) The act of objectifying is coterminous with producing an image, and the re/production of an image, is rooted in power relations. The final image produced, is an imposition of foreign meaning systems that finalizes inquiry and deflects deeper analysis into the representation of the picture and

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[48]Modernity's conception of difference is a paradoxical one. Difference under modernity was "licensed", in terms of scientific legitimation yet the licensing authority had to be accepted and acknowledged as a universal discourse. On another contradictory note, modernity also presupposes the convergence and equality of peoples and nations.

freezes the woman in a universalized, ahistorical image that legitimates First World hegemony. Locked in dichotomous representations, the subaltern woman is either the voiceless victim who must be represented by those who possess a voice [read First World or/and privileged women][49] or described as indomitable warrior–women battling the evils of Colonialism, Patriarchy and Capitalism. Consider the following extract from the second chapter (entitled 'Nationalism and Masculinity') of Cynthia Enloe's highly praised book *Bananas, Beaches, and Bases* (1989):

> Colonized women have *served* as sex objects for foreign men. Some have married foreign men and thus *facilitated* alliances between foreign governments and thus facilitated alliances between foreign governments and companies and conquered peoples. Others have *worked* as cooks and nannies for the wives of those foreign men. They have *bolstered* white women's sense of moral superiority by accepting their religious and social instruction. They have *sustained* men in their communities when their masculine self-respect has been battered by colonists' contempt and condescension. Women have *planted* maize, yams, rice in small plots to support families so that their husbands could be recruited to work miles away in foreign owned mines or plantations. Women as symbols, women as workers and women as nurturers have been crucial to the entire colonial undertaking. (Enloe, 1989: 44, italics mine)

Enloe's colonized women are "sex objects", "domestic workers", innocents who accept "religious and social instruction", sustainers or "nurturers", small time agricultural cultivators, and "workers" but they are never dynamic agents of change, strategy creators, or major decision makers. They are women who *serve, facilitate, work, bolster, accept, sustain,* and *plant,* but never create, act, resist, negotiate, interact, initiate, organize, choose and lead[50]. Such verbs as those found in the extract connote a subordinated status and

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crystallize the subaltern woman in a permanent location of ignorance and dependence. To add further insult to the injury. Enloe regards those colonized women who intermarry with their colonizers with a certain contempt, disapproving perhaps, of the blindness and ignorance of these women in marrying their white colonizers. And yet, such is the given message that inundates development activity, academic research, the media, and literature concerned with the plight of women in the Third World, and which proceeds to lump and stereotype most women from the Third World as victims – Third World women whose sometime hostility towards First World aid projects, are translated as false consciousness or "male constructed". Such then is the insidious message that surrounds and dominates the simple word "aid" or "needs assessment" in the arena of development work, and encourages the homogenized oppressed image of Third World women who must be "empowered" with the right tools that will impel her towards self-worth and action for "natives must be taught in order to be anti-colonialist and dewesternized; they are indeed

that later played a dominant role in shaping the new Malayan nation (Malaya gained independence from the British in 1957). During the pre-and post-independence elections (especially during the 1955 and 1959 elections), women often constituted the highest number of voters. Although small in number, during the 1959 elections, there were 20 women candidates running at the state and federal level; 9 women won their seats (Danez, 1987: 140–147). This is q ite a remarkable number considering that Malaya then was a newly independent Third World nation, with Islam as the national religion (stereotypes often prevail of the gender inequality in Third World nations). To this day, despite setbacks (sexism is a predominant factor), women continue playing a powerful role in shaping the political future of Malaysia, even if some do not choose to fill the parliaments.

The issue however, is not whether women partake of the Nationalist movements, or the questions of numerical equality or supremacy in the governing houses, but to what extend did women gain a public voice and/or influence State decision making during the post-colonial period, and their perception of the political role (Moore, 1988: 178–179). Also, while access to the state or government level participation and policy making is necessary, what also must be addressed is the value system of women within particular cultural spheres and how women regard themselves in terms of public political participation, as well as the reconceptualization of participation and sphere of influence (also see Rudie, 1991). If we take visible public participation and organization to mean gender equity, and ignore decision-making or influencing within other spheres (i.e. household, community, religion), then we perpetuate in muting and marginalizing the actions and voices of countless women worldwide, never acknowledging the micro-processes of negotiation that take place outside the public domain. This is one of the problems of the dualistic conception of the private and the public; that it often elevates the importance of one over another, and reduces the categories to isolated activities. Women's influence and participation in shaping society and nation must extend beyond the reductionist Western feminist discourse of democratic state-level participation and take into account, a woman's conception of herself, her role, and her relation to the family, and the wider community, as well as the polyglot, if not complex, interweaving processes of negotiation and decision-making that exist at every level of society, and in every sphere

in this world of inequity, the handicapped who cannot represent or learn how to represent themselves" (Trinh, 1989: 59).

Of *Bananas, Beaches and Bases*, and Bias

Read for its informational purpose regarding the economic exploitation of women, Cynthia Enloe's *Bananas, Beaches and Bases* is a comprehensive book detailing the hierarchical division of economic and political power in the world, and how the interrelated dynamics and sustenance of the global economy depend upon the *feminization* of women's roles. She also extends her focus to the historical, such as the colonial world's fairs, the tourism industry, transnational industry, domestic services, and even the image of Carmen Miranda. Enloe criticizes the patriarchal domination of international politics and the world economy, elucidating how the "personal is also international" for the process of gendered subordination and oppression is not isolated to particular nations, but is built upon a complex web of transnational activity, i.e. a woman buying a Benetton sweater in the US for $150 is supporting exploitative garment industries which hire women to sew at a pitiful wage of $1.75 a day. From the Chiquita Bananas plantations to the domestic workers, and the diplomat's wife, women are feminized according to a patriarchal ideology which depends on women's labour to support and perpetuate the international capitalist enterprise. The necessity of promoting such an international consciousness via the feminist discourse constitutes Enloe's book for "women tend to be in a better position than men to conduct such a realistic investigation simply because so many women have learned to ask about gender [in the sense] of how public and private power operate" (Enloe, 1989: 197). But like so many "concerned" global feminists who work within development or international relations, Enloe offers numerical elaborations, social consequences and selected interview extracts to legitimize her essentialist arguments of the exploited subaltern woman. Moreover, the language of the book and the representation of subaltern women are textured with essentialist and ethnocentric assumptions which border upon the derogatory.

Enloe's feminist preachings concerning the global interrelated oppression of women are not only petrified but are also tinged with reductionist and essentialist portrayals of women. Her conception of the Third World subaltern woman are often ambiguous; vacillating between radical feminist defiance and passive complacence. Throughout her book, acknowledgements of women's resistance and action are often juxtaposed with victimizing descriptions which inevitably convey a futile situation, leading one to conclude that despite the counter-resistance of the women, patriarchal ideology still moulds women into an idealized image that most women uncritically accept:

> [F]eminists who listen to women working for multinational corporations
> have heard these women articulate their own strategies for coping with their
> husbands' resentment, their foreman's sexual harassment and the
> paternalism of male union leaders. To depict these women merely as

> passive victims in the international politics of the banana or garment
> industries doesn't do them justice. It also produces an inaccurate account of
> how these global systems operate. Corporate executives and development
> technocrats need some women to depend on cash wages; they need some
> women to see a factory or plantation job as a means of delaying marriage
> or fulfilling daughterly obligations. Without women's own needs, values and
> worries, the global assembly line would grind to a halt. But many of those
> needs, values and worries are defined by patriarchal structures and
> strictures. If fathers, brothers, husbands didn't gain privilege, however small
> in global terms, from women's acquiescence to those confining notions of
> femininity, it might be much harder for the foreign executives and their
> local élite allies to recruit the cheap labor they desire. (Enloe, 1989: 17)

But Enloe does not do the women justice either, for the not-so passive victim who
articulates her own strategies never rises above her interpersonal coping strategies in the
extract above. One must still be reminded of the overwhelming forces of patriarchy in
defining women's "own needs, values and worries", and Enloe never explains exactly what
are the "confining notions of femininity" (femininity as a negative notion is repeated
throughout the book). This line of argument pervades throughout the book with
"governments and companies with government backing [having] made explicit attempts to
try to control and channel women's actions in order to achieve their own ends" (199).
Enloe's approach is entrenched in logocentric reasoning where either the Third World
woman must adapt a feminist standpoint in order to be visible in the arena of international
politics, and challenge successfully the patriarchally-controlled structures (while never
quite defining what she means by her general conception of patriarchy), or women would
never progress beyond the immediate problems of the community, and thereby perpetuate
the inherent patriarchal practices in the global economy.

Enloe's pro-feminist standpoint position dwells upon an essentialist zero-sum
language which allows no room for alternative positions or narratives, and merely inverts
the male-female domination-subordination model. There is no acknowledgement of
specific cultural manifestations of resistance or action that emerge out of the synthesis of
cultures and cultural changes, especially the interaction between the West and the East.
What is even more disturbing with Enloe's work is that her representations of women are
such that their blank subjectivities are being imposed and controlled by a patriarchal
discourse but fails to explain how this tabula rasa can be transformed via feminist
interventions. Cooperation and denial is not merely ignorance or false consciousness that
a little feminist common sense can cure. Even if women are participating as active players
in the economic arena, they either do not control it or are colluding with the dominant
[read:male] system. Similarly, if women like Margaret Thatcher and Jeanne Kirkpatrick
attain such powerful stature, it is because they play at becoming men. Ignoring women's

Chapter 3
Representation, Feminism and the Third World Subaltern Woman

movements across the world (eg. Madres De la Plaza De Mayo) who do not tread the feminist line, Enloe's feminism is the singular answer to counteracting patriarchal domination, the only route to women's liberation. While acknowledging the complicity of white women in extending the sphere of oppression, the feminist movement remains outside critical deconstruction. Similarly, women who work in the development arena or those actively rallying for feminist consciousness–raising in international relations are untainted by issues of race and class/status oppression. While Enloe does remind us that the label "Third World Woman" is not a homogenous category and women within every nation and culture are divided by class and status, she also claims that

> middle class women, even if they are feminists and want to support factory women in Third World societies often speak a political language that is unfamiliar, even alienating to the very women they wish to help. And of course, as in industrialized countries, there are those Third World women, admittedly a minority who are so comfortable with their class and racial privileges that they feel quite threatened when garment workers challenge established ideas about respectable feminine behaviour. (Enloe, 1989: 175–176)

According to Enloe, the feminists are only alienating in terms of the unfamiliar political language, but it is the Third World woman herself who hinders the emancipatory project because she wants to protect her racial and class privileges. Apparently, feminists are not as divided by class or race, nor do the ethnocentric content of feminist discourse discriminate or offend any women. Other than unfamiliarity or alienating elements of the feminist language, Enloe excludes the possibility that unfamiliarity and non–consensus could signify cultural gaps and Westerncentric impositions that have little significance to women in different societies. Also, many women in Third World cultures may regard class and ethnic discrimination with greater urgency, and ally with men in political struggles.

Enloe's call for a feminist awareness [read: Western feminism], in international politics mirrors the Western liberal democratic discourse, where action and change is only acknowledged through having a voice, visible unitary participation, and organized resistance mounted at the level of the public sphere. To speak is not necessary to emerge as an independent subject, for speaking too is merely to ventriloquize dominant discursive positions. In order to speak, the subaltern woman must be provided with the justification for her speech (Chow, 1993: 27–54). Meanwhile, silence, and non–presence as opposed to speech and presence are synonymous with passive acceptance, oppression or collusion and complicity. Silence has many faces, one of them being resistance, and must be freed from the Western defined context of absence. As Trinh T. Minh Ha writes, "silence as a will not to say or a will to unsay and as a language of its own has barely been explored" (1990: 373). Factory girls in the assembly line industries, domestic nannies and plantation workers are not universal agents nor are they united by similar experiences of oppression

for example, factory female workers from a Japanese transnational electronics firm do not have solidaristic bonds with factory female workers from an American garment factory[51]. Ignoring the heterogenous cultural elements of Third World societies, she commits the White feminist's assumption that women's experiences in counteractions against patriarchal structures share a common feminist ideology. Feminism, and most certainly sisterhood, unfortunately is not global, and feminism is plagued by not only racism and class discrimination, but its substance is bound to a discourse rooted in Western Enlightenment thought that at times might not be wholly compatible with contemporary cultural notions of the female self and localized gender relations. For Enloe, while movements and organizations may be contextually bound, they should also fall desirably within the parameters of Western feminist discourse. The relation between the domestic sphere, where in some cases, a complex interaction of social relations occur and decisions are negotiated, to the public sphere is ignored; rather, the domestic is equated with the female world and patriarchal subordination and the perpetuation of conventional femininity. While it is crucial to acknowledge the linkage between consumer activity in the First World and the economic exploitation of Third World workers, a binary conception of domination and subordination does not do justice to the intricate operations of power at the subaltern level. Power, as Foucault reminds us is not possessed, but is invested in the individual through discourse. While it has taken varieties of power to subordinate women, and as much as one needs to comprehend the international dimensions of power, women are not merely inert objects of power. Women, either individually or en masse, have also appropriated and utilized forms of power to resist and act in endless number of ways that do not necessarily compound the hierarchical effects in the world system.

While the invisibility of women's labour constitutes a serious problem that has resulted in women's exclusion from national and global development policies, subaltern women however, do not deserve to be regarded as providing "a plantation's male workers

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[51]This is certainly true in the case of Malaysia. Part of the difficulty in conducting any analysis of female factory workers in Malaysia lies in the complexities of Malaysia's multicultural society. Women are not only divided by ethnicity, but by class, status, regional, and religious factors as well. Differences arise in terms of jobs: some semiconductor operators earn more than the garment factory worker. On the other hand, the skilled cutter in a garment factory earns more than the supervisor in a semiconductor plant. Also, Japanese plants may be more rigidly regulated than American plants. The cultural and ethnic backgrounds of the worker also determine future ambitions, and union participation. Also, the predicament of the female worker varies in terms of regional locations of the FTZs (Free Trade Zones). Fewer female workers moonlight as waitresses, social escorts if the FTZs are located near rural areas. Union concerns and participation is highly dependant upon the TNCs and their management. Any unitary workers' movement is quite an impossible occurance.

with unpaid food cultivation, child care and sexual satisfaction" (Enloe, 1989: 149) and because of land seizure and displacement, having little choice "but to sexually service soldiers and banana workers" (Enloe, 1989: 198). For Enloe, unless the action of women assume an organizational form that adopts feminism as its dominant ideology; unless there is a global and solidaristic female presence, strategies of resistance and coping mechanisms are deemed limited successes or as aggravating the hierarchical structure of the world:

> women ...are not merely passive puppets or victims. As we have seen,
> women of different classes and different ethnic groups have made their own
> calculations in order to cope with or benefit from the current struggles
> between states. These calculations result in whole countries becoming
> related to one another, often in hierarchical terms. (Enloe, 1989: 198)

There is no doubt that the economic exigencies created by the interrelated conditions of human activity demand our attention. Yet we cannot deny the efforts of Third World subaltern women who formulate their own strategies outside feminist or expertise advice. An "interrelated" awareness should not gloss over the need to acknowledge cultural differences. Projects in the name of "interrelatedness," are laden with power relations which engender exclusions and marginalizations. Once again, one questions the authority behind the definition and value system of an "interrelatedness" condition. Beneath the victimhood umbrella are subaltern women who initiate and organize outside so called feminist prescriptions, and in face of societal changes reevaluate the self in relation to her family and community, and the choices she makes. Subaltern women constitute part of the social space in which multiple networks of signification confront the penetration of the money economy as another ingredient thrown into the arena, to be negotiated and contested. Subaltern women are part of this meaning making process; they are subjects and effects of the contestation, their presence sometimes lost in the interstices of discursive activity because one tends to read only the transparent effects of discourse, and not the intersections in which discontinuities and disruptions, and the contestation of the given symbols of authority are most likely to occur. In the next chapter, I shall elaborate this in terms of Women and Development.

Chapter 4
Reading the Subaltern Woman in Women and Development: Textual Gaps

Introduction

It is partly through the dissemination of writing in print that the First World is able to construct and elaborate a portrait of savagery and primitivism in the Third World. It is Western scholarship, with its written details and intellectual endeavours which promote orientalism, the exotic alterity with an ancient past, prior to and predecessor of Western Civilization. The anthropologist is often portrayed with his/her transcribing machines, carrying out ernestly, his/her ethnographic task of *writing culture*. The language of development today appears to us in print as piles of UN/NGO and political documents are circulated with written facts and figures, and sometimes, inserted with the permanent fixture of illustrations with the starving child or persevering farmer in the Third World.

The concern for the plight of women in the Third World by the liberated First World is paved naturally with good intentions. Notions such as emancipation and empowerment have become transnational household keywords and goals in development projects. Yet, it is also interesting to note that whenever the subaltern is mentioned in women and development, the taken for granted subjects (and sometimes objects) of reference are Third World women[1]. The language of women and development cannot escape ethnocentrism; a form of "Orientalism" persists in a more benevolent yet insidious manner under the objective of development, where the subaltern Third World woman is constantly represented as a victim. Words running rampant in development discourse i.e. "lacking" and "deprivation" [whether they are material goods, education, self-esteem, self) are necessary notions when set up against privileged women in the First World. Because *they* (the not-I, the Other, the non-West) lack, *we* (the I, West) have to give.

Feminist, and Women and Development (WAD)[2] issues do not easily converge. While they are both emancipatory and empowering projects aimed at overcoming the subordinate and oppressive positions of women, WAD issues do not all necessarily purport

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[1] This representation is very clear in Ester Boserup's landmark *Women's Role in Economic Development* (1970). Her vision of women in economic development is situated within the modernization paradigm, and *women* in her title is concentrated on women in the Third World. Boserup names oppressive patriarchal impositions and cultural limitations imposed on gender relations, for example Confucianism in hindering the economic progress of women. Boserup also romanticizes the past, when she writes about the erosion of women's status in "primitive agricultural" systems due to the impact of colonialism. Boserup's recommendations take on the usual Western "progressive" ideals, among them, education, job training, and increased employment opportunities to overcome women's subordinate position

On the other hand, Jessie Bernard's (1987), *The Female World from a Global Perspective* provides a comprehensive global coverage of women.

[2] I have selected Women and Development over Women in Development mainly because the latter is a sub-field promoted within the liberal-modernist paradigm.

that universal patriarchy is the source of oppression while the feminist movement is bound by that very notion. Yet the assimilation of feminism into WAD theories and practices has disrupted the economic framework of WAD, and forced a recontextualization of women within gender relations and her status within the family, the household and the community. But the insertion of feminism into WAD has also stirred up a whole new pot of controversies, one of which manifested itself at the UN Conference on Women held in Copenhagen in 1980 when Third World Feminists who in articulating their own positions were accused of being "male-identified" by some of their more enlightened Western sisters. If Third World women have resisted the rhetoric of oppression, it is mainly because their multifarious realities counter the experiences of First World women, especially the simplistic patriarchal domination-subordination stance that First World women maintain (Lugones and Spelman, 1983; Bernard, 1987; Moore, 1988; Stolen and Vaa, 1991; Mohanty, 1991; Parpart, 1993).As Ingrid Rudie critically observes, in bringing the "issues of gender out of the doxa of the researcher's community, the feminist movement may have reintroduced a new dosage of ethnocentrism at another level. Western notions of nature and culture; notions about power, equity, and female role dilemmas between employment and family life have been charged spots" (Rudie, 1993: 108).

As mentioned before, the world as postmodern is disputable, when many nations in the Third World are still traversing the modernist path of development, seeking the material status of all that is modern. From the angle of many Third World nations, the concept of postmodernity continues to be an alien discourse debated within the academic institutions in the West. Despite its apolitical and fragmented appearance, postmodernism's advocation for contextuality and pluralism is also remarkably political for it creates spaces for multi-loci political interests and interventions. A postmodern approach to critiquing WAD, I believe opens up a dynamic intersubjective process of praxis construction that would acknowledge the fluidity of women's lives, a refusal to privilege one strategy over another, and non-hierarchical, multiple points of intervention and action.

Women and Development: Theoretical Positions

In 1970, when Ester Boserup published her groundbreaking *Women's Role in Economic Development*, attention was called to the negative impact of an androcentric development project on women, as well as to the vital role that women played in economic development. Her landmark study also initiated the call towards placing women's issues on the international development agenda, and helped inaugurated the United Nations declaration of the UN Decade of Women (the first major conference being held in Mexico

City in 1975[3]). Since then, theorizing in Women and Development (WAD) has adapted different theoretical orientations which, in turn have led to varied policy implications.

Following Boserup's work, a new subfield emerged entitled "*Women in Development*" (WID) which drew upon the *Modernist–Liberal* paradigm, and embraced the sequential and convergence models of economic development[4]. For the WID advocates, economic autonomy was fundamental to improving the lives of women in the Third World, and thus, they called for the integration of women into the development process. The recognition of women's economic contribution in the households, fields, the markets, and urban settings in the development process was imperative, along with improved and equal access to employment, education and material benefits. In the model of integration, the gender dimension was based on the belief that the situation of women would improve when women were brought into existing modes of "benevolent" development without the major restructuring of the development process – a process which equated development for the subaltern woman to becoming more modern and Western (McFarlane, 1988; Tinker, 1990; Momsen, 1991; Parpart, 1993). With the focus shifting to the population crisis, environmental degradation and the failure of trickle–down economics, the provision of basic needs became an urgent task since women were seen as constituting the poorest of the poor. Ironically, despite widespread poverty and deteriorating structural conditions in the Third World, the whole notion of development and gender hierachies were still not challenged as advocates merely resorted to recycling modernization strategies.

The *Socialist–Feminist* paradigm, with its strong emancipatory content, questioned and criticized the whole process of development itself, calling attention to class and gender

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[3] The objectives of the UN Decade for Women that were laid out in Mexico City (1975) are still deemed relevant today. The three objectives are Equality, Development and Peace. However, I just want to lay out the definition of *Development* as provided by Arvonne S. Fraser (1987: 94–95) and adopted by most WID advocates:

> Development is here interpreted to mean total development – political, economic, social, cultural – and also the physical, moral, intellectual, and cultural growth of the human person. The improvement of the status of women requires action at the national and local levels, within the family, and in the attitudes and roles of both men and women. Women's development must be seen as an essential component in every dimension of development and must be an integral part of the global project for the establishment of the New International Economic Order. (Fraser, 1987: 94)

[4] See Chapter 1, footnote 15.

inequities[5]. With the restructuring of capital and the recognition of the interconnections between race, class and gender on a global scale, some WAD theorists have turned their focus onto the relation between patriarchy and capitalism. One example of this position is by Maria Mies. To claim, as Maria Mies (1986) does, that patriarchy is a world-system that predates capitalism, and capitalism is an expression and derivation of patriarchy, is to basically paint a sweeping ahistorical portrait of gender relations and household structures the world over, regardless of specific cultural or territorial factors. Equating men with the practice of capitalism is to advance an essentialist stand where women are by nature, not capitalists, and are included in capitalism only as victims of labour and patriarchal exploitation. Echoing Cynthia Enloe's position, Mies's women are completely erased from their roles as agents and actors, rendered inert under the yoke of *Capitalist-Patriarchy*. Capitalist-patriarchy is maintained by a series of structures and practices including the family, systematic violence and the exploitation of women's labour. And while Mies quite rightly argues that there is a certain division in consumption patterns where First World women consume goods made through the exploited labour of Third World women, she also proposes a globalizing phenomenon of the *housewization* of women wherein the housewization of First World women and the exploitation of Third World women are derivative of each other[6].

In the same vein as proletariatization, Mies argues that with industrialization and the colonial impact on the world economy, Western women are gradually confined to the domestic domain[7] and dependant on a "male" breadwinner. In the Third World, the "housewization" of women takes on a greater burden for they are not seen as "free workers," and are thus, subject to overexploitation by the export-industries in the developing countries and the transnationals. In naming such a general concept as

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[5] Implied in the Socialist-Feminist framework is the controversial equation of patriarchy with capitalism. Therefore, female subordination cannot be isolated from class subordination. By opposing capitalism, one is also opposing patriarchy; and the reconstruction of gender relations must also be accompanied by a socio-economic reconstruction. However, one can argue that capitalism can survive without patriarchy and vice versa. While worthy of recognizing the problem of class, Socialist Feminists ignore the problem of racism within the women's movement [also assuming that by overcoming capitalism, one overcomes racism).

[6] Mies thus calls for a "feminist consumer liberation movement" that would clarify "our minds about our really existing relations within which we live and work both as objects and subjects" (Mies, 1991: 143).

[7] With the industrialization of Europe, Mies notes how middle class and eventually working class women were confined to their home as the division grew between the public and the private. Since women in the West did not have to produce anymore, they could purchase their groceries and basic household goods produced by exploited Third World women.

housewization, Mies ignores the specificities of household structures, and the work that houswives carry out which Mies deems as unimportant to her analysis. Furthermore, what is also at stake are the values attached to being a housewife, and Vallestrand (1991) in her study of peasant housewives in Coto Sur, Costa Rica, refutes Mies's arguments by arguing for contextuality in the definition of housewife. To the Coto Sur women, being a housewife also extends to helping the men in the fields but full time housewifezation (being dependant on male-breadwinners) is regarded as a luxury. Not surprisingly, the recurring image of a bifurcated world saturates Mies's book. Following in the footsteps of the Dependancy theorists, the world is presented to us in a dichotomous centre and periphery picture, where men are regarded as capitalists, or as constructers of capitalism while women are not.

More recently, the work of *DAWN (Development Alternatives For Women in a New Era)*, a group founded in Bangladore in 1984, has been significant for its attempts to build development alternatives out of the multiple experiences of subaltern women, and the emphasis on the matrices of gender, class and race, in relation to the global economic and political system (Sen and Grown, 1988). The aim of DAWN is to "reknit the fabric of development theory and action by drawing together the strands of improved living standards, socially responsible management and use of resources, elimination of gender subordination and socioeconomic inequality and the organizational restructuring that can bring these about" (20). According to DAWN, privileging the vantage point of the subaltern women whose articulation of poverty and oppression is crystallized in everyday life would enable one to judge and evaluate the impact of development strategies more tangibly. While notable in terms of its critical evaluation of WAD practices, and the recontextualization of feminism within the Third World-development problematique, DAWN also perpetuates totalizing representations such as the colonial heritage as a homogenous experience which exacerbated the economic and gender subordination of women[x]; and women as an oppressed and counter-reactive group, who also "[develop]

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[x]For example, the loss of traditional land rights, is a much documented account based on pre-colonial land possession of women or equitable land distribution between men and women. Such notions of land possession and ownership are often rooted in Western logic, that gender equity and female autonomy are equated to quantifiable possessions. The characteristics of gender relations move beyond divided possession, yet most analysis of gender roles and status is mired in this perception.

I wish to address the issue of the loss of traditional land rights due to the impact of colonialism with reference to the matrilineal tradition of the Minangkabau women in the state of Negeri Sembilan in Malaysia (Stivens, 1985: 3-36). Again, I must point out that the experience of colonialism is heterogeneous in Malaysia, where the Malay people received the priority protection of the British while other ethnic groups were given a certain amount of autonomy. Contrary to feminist arguments which claim that women's traditional land rights are dissolved by colonial authorities, and devalued by economic transition, the *feminization* of land has in fact

great capacities for internal resilience and resistance" but who are not everyday acting subjects within the economic sphere. Such noble declarations of "we want a world where inequality on class, gender, and race is absent from every country, and from the relationships to other country...we want a world where all institutions are open to particpatory democratic processes, where women share in determing priorities and making decisions" (80–81) are also, unfortunately mired in totalizing Western–modernist assumptions defined and promulgated by a group of privileged women. The problem lies in the assumptions toward inequality in gender relationships, and what is meant by "participatory democratic processes". As I have argued in the previous chapter, the weakness of political participation lies not in access or right of participation but whether the mass of the population has the means to define the terms of and the nature of their participation. Also, one seeks the values attached to gender participation in the political processes, and women who prefer to negotiate their influence from the domestic sphere are not necessarily excluded from political involvement. Essentialism also tinges DAWN's manifesto, especially in asserting and priviliging the more "nurturing" aspect of women's world; "each person will have the opportunity to develop her or his full potential and creativity, *and women's values will characterize human relationships*"(ibid, italics mine).

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increased in Negeri Sembilan. In response to the increasing economic activity of the Chinese and the British desire to create a rice growing peasantry in the region, the matrilineal customary law and land rights (*adat perpatih –ideology, value–systems, way of life*) were codified. In fact, as Maila Stivens warns, this is not a colonial imposition for the legislation of the *adat* is also at the request of the local people themselves for whom, the legal texts are the ultimate source of authority to maintain the *adat*. Adherence to the adat strenghtens women's property rights *vis –à –vis* men by giving women individual titles to ancestral lands [as well as] underlines women's identification with the matrilineal community. Thus, the preservation of the matrilineal adat is also a historical one, protecting the "communitarian ideology, the moral economy of the peasantry and the cultural valuation of women" (29) and inextricably tied to the fate of land rights. Without going into the complex details of how the *adat perpatih* works, gender relations among the Minangkabau are dependant upon the adat perpatih, and the household is regarded as an intergrated unit where all family members must contribute to the family income. This intergration has lately been threatened by the penetration of the capitalist economy, which has encouraged the younger generation towards greener pastures, that is, the urban sectors (the matrilineal land, is after all small).

Thus, the effects of colonialism and capitalist penetration have produced a complex, uneven and contradictory situation which have reconstituted the matrilineal society in Negri Sembilan. With the expansion of industrialization, the decline of the rural economy, religious revivalism, and the rural–urban migration of the younger generation who have no wish to perpetuate the adat, the women's base in the community is being undermined. The men also perceive women as needing protection, thus the maintainance of the matrilineal land–ownership tradition or Stiven's *feminization* of land is seen as a women's social insurance against economic vulnerabilities.

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This perception contradicts the position of DAWN to be flexible, open and sensitive to issues and methods as defined by different groups of women themselves. The call for "self-definition" appears to be approved as long as it meets the prescribed feminist-development paradigm of DAWN, for example, "we recognize that there can be many diverse meanings of feminism, each responsive to the needs and issues of women in different regions, societies, and times" but feminism, to the DAWN advocates also holds "the unshakeable core [of] commitment to breaking down the structures of gender subordination and a vision for women as full and equal participants, with men at all levels of societal life" (79). Thus, "self-definition" of feminism here must still be structured around that commitment which of course leaves no room for any other conception of feminism or even any subaltern women's politics claiming a non-feminist stance.

To what extent then, do *postmodernism* and *poststructuralism* contribute to the lives of Third World women in development theories? A postmodern approach to women and development appears an impossible synthesis, after all, the notion of development and universal progress appears to be nullified by postmodern claims to fragmentation, difference, the end of history, non-hierachies, and the decentred, multiple and endlessly shifting subject. Not surprisingly, with its rejection of the human essence and global liberationist politics, the postmodern paradigm is viewed with suspicion by many, including WAD practitioners, and other schools of feminism, as undermining progressive development projects. Unfortunately, this suspicion also helps secures the continual representation of subaltern Third World women as subordinated beings to be rescued from their misery and ignorance.

Postmodernism calls attention to the emergence of subaltern knowledges and struggles: knowledges which could undermine and dislodge the privileged positions of those whose salvationary politics hinge upon the constant representations of subaltern women as victims. As Jane Parpart observes, "an approach to development that recognizes the connection between knowledge and power, and seeks to understand local knowledges both as sites of resistance and power, would provide a more subtle understanding of Third World women's lives" (1993: 456). Subaltern women are constantly engaged in waging discursive battles and resisting oppression: more specifically, the matrix of gender, race and class oppression. Feminists and WAD practitioners everywhere should move beyond their political ventriloquism, and their caricatures of subaltern passivity, and voicelessness, remove their logocentric blindness and seek to understand how subaltern women construct their subjectivities and negotiate their agency within unstable socio-economic and political boundaries. One must also seek alternative methods of analyses which are not factored upon numerical results and public displays of participation, but consider as well, the specific ways in which subaltern women are active subjects in creating and changing their social and cultural worlds. While women in the Third World are victims of economic, political and cultural oppression, one cannot also perpetuate a victimhood dogma found in

such widely circulated WAD books as *Third World, Second Sex* (1983), which by its very title alone paints a sweeping portrait of victimization and struggle. It is this dynamic rewriting and re/conceptualization of the subaltern Third World women that is imperative today, if we are to understand their lives, their struggles, and to re/construct viable strategies of social transformation that would take into account their various expressions of resistance, their narratives, and cultural knowledges.

Reconceptualizing The Subaltern in Women and Development

When WAD theorists and practitioners speak of privileging the unique perspectives of oppressed Third World Women who are most likely to perceive the "links between these crises and the current economic and social structure" (Sen and Grown, 1987), one must recall the argument against standpoint epistemology here and the dangers of privileging the perpective of the marginalized. In the first place, one must question the naming of "oppression," "the oppressed woman," and their place within the discourse of WAD, and the power relations involved in the representation of "oppression". So often the subaltern assumes the place of the "native informant" who justifies the projects of the West. As I have argued in the previous chapter[9], the speaking subaltern, in order to speak must participate in the very terms of the discourse – the subaltern must speak of their deprived and helpless conditions in order to be heard (and spoken for). In her article on the urban women cooperators in Zimbabwe, Christine Sylvester documents the multiple positions which the women took in answering the interviewers questions while also noting that the Zimbabwean subaltern spoke to her "as a subject-type they had run into before [and] were often uncooperative in answering questions they saw as representing [Sylvester's] subjectivity" (1991: 52). In fact, cooperation from the subaltern Zimbabwean women depended on who they were talking to, the most cooperative responses (being) toward donor agencies[10]. Clearly dynamic subjects who can act and negotiate, the Zimbabwean women cooperators nevertheless "struggle as if stereotypes rule" (55), in lobbying foreign donor assistance – weaving in and out of power and "non-power" positions even as they strategize.

Can the subaltern woman speak outside the discourse of oppression and beyond the

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[9]See Chapter 3, footnote 34.

[10]Sylvester notes that the women would rather seek outside help than work with local subalterns who are often men. They would rather "coopt the power of re-sourcing for thier own purposes rather than enter a male-oriented cooperative community whose narratives of equality may evacuate sites of 'progress' for women" (1991, 59).

category of the "native informant"? It appears that in many WAD texts, she cannot[1]; one such text being Perdita Houston's *Third World Women Speak Out* (1979) wherein selected interviews of women from six countries (Tunisia, Egypt, Sudan, Kenya, Sri Lanka, and Mexico) who are all (coincidentally) oppressed if not by cultural traditions then by poverty, childbirth, and gender subordination. In Houston's book, the women occupy the transcendental signified of universalized oppression prior to entry in the development process, all sharing the common need for education and training, wage work, access to health and nutrition, political participation, and legal rights (see pp 115-125). The content analysis of Houston's method is claimed to be an "unstructured interview" which allows "women to speak for themselves"(129). If the women were allowed to speak for themselves, their words would not be glossed over with perfect translations and editing, and their voices presented in the third person while Houston positions herself in the space of the first person narrative. The interactions between the Western subject and the subaltern Other are almost always never symmetrical.

So who is the oppressed woman of the Third World? As sensitive as their position is to the subaltern woman, the theorists and practioners who work under the banner of DAWN also need to ask themselves who these "oppressed women" are and acknowledge the coping mechanisms and strategies of action that these women construct and negotiate daily. To recognize their marginalized positions is not the same thing as granting them creativity and initiative in constructing their own "modes of development" and conception of empowerment processes that do not necessarily seek a "transformation of the structures of subordination" (since the subaltern might not regard subjugation in the same context as DAWN) (Sen and Grown, 1988: 81). Is the subaltern not emancipated unless she fulfills the criteria mapped out by feminists, liberation theologists, and development experts? What is the concept of the self, personhood, and autonomy, and agency for these subaltern women? Because they are impoverished and located in oppressive locations, does this mean that they do not possess an active emergent subjectivity imbued with power and agency? Does internal resilience and resistance not translate to action unless through "feminist consciousness raising" and "empowerment"? Were there not resistance and organized struggles prior to feminism and WAD practices? Everyday strategies of resistance and survival are often ignored, and when recognized, touched up, repackaged and dressed in the language of expertise. When she struggles and wages her battle, it is a last resort and a desperate response to the powers that be. If she speaks with chronological "confusion" in interviews, it is because she has faced a lifetime of illiteracy and "powerlessness" (Mernissi, 1989). Is it not enough that the subaltern is deprived of the control of industrial and commercial products but also of imagination, creativity, initiative,

[1]After all, if the subaltern speaks, she would not be a subaltern anymore

resistance, and agency? The subaltern woman simultaneously remains inside and outside change, the passive victim of the impact of change. As Judith Abwunza writes:

> It is necessary to challenge and change the language and to extend the theoretical perspectives to reflect women's power in work and decision making. It is no longer possible to assume women are powerless or marginal actors "strategizing" in situations dictated by men and that there is a reified world economic structure in which the will of capitalism always wins. (Abwunza, 1993: 11)

There is then, I feel the necessity to demand, in development praxis aimed towards social change and empowerment of women, a reconceptualization and reconstitution of the label 'Third World women', not in terms of a monolithic capital W, but Third World women as a "cultural and ideological composite" (Mohanty, 1991b: 53); as multifaceted, diverse, and shifting emergent subjects situated within specific and dynamic historical, and cultural locations (Momsen and Kinnaird, 1993). It is these locations, and the constraints found within them (either by endogenous or exogenous cultural, socio-economic or/and political pressures; either through varying discursive contestations and power struggles) that act to limit or suppress the agency of Third World women and engender them in subordinate positions. Yet it is also within the same locations and constraints that the formation of identities in resistance take place, where women negotiate their subjective positions, and articulate multiple strategies for resistance. It is cautionary then to remind that any approach towards gender issues in the Third World cannot begin with *a priori* assumptions or knowledge that have been cultivated and harvested in privileged locations. Therefore, the representation and reconstruction of any gender and development issue must shift towards the acknowledgement of the individual subjectivity and cultural meaning systems of Third World women. Rather, we need to resist the tendency to write our subjective knowledge onto the Other, and instead, concentrate on a repositioning of praxis that eschews the subject-object distinction while recognizing self-reflexivity and intersubjectivity as our goals. We must "learn to learn from [the subaltern], to speak to them, to suspect that their access to the political, [economic] and sexual scene is not merely to be *corrected* by our superior theory and enlightened compassion" (Spivak, 1988: 135).

> How then can one learn from and speak to the millions of illiterate rural and urban ...women who live "in the pores of" capitalism, inaccessible to the capitalist dynamics that allow us our shared channels of communication, the definition of common enemies? The pioneering books that bring First World feminists news from the Third World are writtten by priviledged informants and can only be deciphered by a trained readership. The distance between the "informant's world," her "own sense of the world she writes about," and that of the non-specialist feminist is so great that, paradoxically, *pace* the subtleties of reader-response theories, here the distinctions might easily be

missed. (Spivak, 1988: 135)

By priviliging the self-knowledge of the subaltern community, and positioning the representation of "development" as constantly responding to, learning from, and facilitating practice, I do not mean to suggest that the interaction between the Western-subject and Subaltern Other is impossible. Local practices are not entirely virtuous. Multiple spaces must be created in order for intersubjective cooperation and strategy-making. The notion of intersubjectivity[12] when regarding Third World women encourages the position of seeing women's lives as engaging in adjusting, at times resisting, and shaping and transforming their environments, leading meaningful and viable lives instead of the doom and sorrow that cloud the literature on women in the Third World. Furthermore, a recognition of the "Others" (Read: Third World Women) agency would alter dominant scholarship methods that mask privileged power positions, and work towards relational worlds both academic and social, that might "renegotiate what agency names, and what theory does" (Taylor, 1993: 78).

Bound by their economically impoverished positions, subaltern Third World women cope with their everyday environments, and improvise their and their families' survival within the structures that constrain them. It is therefore inadequate to resort to a reductionist and instrumentalist view that culture or evil patriarchal capitalism is the source of their oppression. Such an assertion would only lead to closure, and thereby, erasing other "marginal and resistant modes and experiences" (Mohanty, 1991b: 72-73). As Kristi Anne Stolen notes, "there can be no absolute control of women by men, regardless of how assymetric the relationship between them may be. Women will always have 'room to manoeuvre' where they can use their creativity" (1991: 9). While one cannot deny that cultural fetters, and patriarchal practices do limit Third World women, one must also remember that culture is not only an isolated static entity linked to social values, attitudes and practices but is also situated within the trinity of the historical, political and economic, and therefore is a site of contested meanings. Moreover, the overrepresentation of a universal patriarchy as a monolithic construction of male domination in Western feminism

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[12]Intersubjectivity in this thesis arises out of Taylor's definitions (Taylor, 1993, 70). Intersubjectivity here values both the post-structuralist/postmodern understanding of plural and overlapping subject-positions and sustained dialogical negotiations among people with diverse experiences of power relations. Intersubjectivity names a dynamic process, a dialogical activity that begins from connecting how we position ourselves as subjects and what we are able to think. It recognises positions of dominance — mainly scholars, researchers, educators who have to give up their fixed privileged foundations in favour of constant revisioning and self-reflexivity, as they engage in dialogue that re/negotiates narrative and social power, including what conventionally stands as coherence, judgement, evidence or value in order to reconceive relationality. It involves deconstruction at multiple levels, including the self as researcher, ethnographer etc. or any position in which one is placed at the privileged level.

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tends to override or reduce distinct articulations of gender relations in specific cultural contexts. Difference does not equate to inequality, and differences in male-female relationships in "Other" cultures are not analogous to the unequal and hierachical nature of gender relations in Western societies. Gender relations are often complex negotiated practices where postures of subordination and compliance are tactical "trade-offs" for such benefits as preserving a female domain or space (Stolen and Vaa, 1991). The domination-subordination motif (which as a counterstance has frozen into a universal feminist dogma) which prevails existing gender relations theory is yet another dominant Western conception that has, unfortunately extended to, and dominated Third World gender studies. Such dualisms have further problematized and limited WAD studies and practices.

"Everyday Forms of Resistance"

When one names resistance, one conjures up images of underground movements, mass rebellions, organized strikes and planned protests. Resistance is often associated with the political milieu, perceived as highly organized projects or outright collective defiance and framed within a binary framework of two opposing camps, and not located within everyday individualistic acts of defiance. Foucault's conception of power and resistance is a pertinent reminder here as he locates the multiple points of resistance within the dispersal of power relationships[13]. Since power is exercised ubiquitously, resistance manifests as splintered responses and strategies.

> There is another problem about the political definition of resistance. If one turns, not to the fictitious schema of the disciplined subject but to the question of what is it for real people to reject or refuse, or on the other hand in some manner to consent to, acquiesce in, or accept the subjection of themselves or of others, it becomes apparent that the binary division between resistance and non-resistance is an unreal one. The existence of those who seem not to rebel is a warren of minute, individual, autonomous tactics and strategies which counter and inflect the visible facts of overall domination, and whose purposes and calculations, desires and choices resist any simple division into the political and the apolitical. The schema of a strategy of resistance as a vanguard of politicisation needs to be subjected to re-examination, and account must be taken of resistances whose strategy is one of evasion or defence - the Schweijks as well as the Solzhenitsyns. There are no good subjects of resistance. (Gordon on Foucault, 1980: 257)

The movement away from dichotomous representations of oppressed and oppressor is also

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[13]See Chapter 2, pp. 63-70.

evident in such studies for example, as James Scott's *Weapons of the Weak* (1985) where he documents the everyday forms of resistance of the Malay peasants.

Resistance, to Scott, is not necessarily located within heroic struggles, but in the everyday battles over mundane things such as work, food, and autonomy. In fact, outright confrontations with the authorities, development policies or onerous new laws are often risky to the subaltern; "instead they are likely to nibble away at such policies by non-compliance, foot dragging, and deception" (xvi) while maintaining "publicly," a posture of "calculated conformity". Thus, "everyday forms of resistance" are the ordinary weapons of subaltern groups, manifesting in acts such as "foot dragging, dissimulation, desertion, false compliance, pilfering, feigned ignorance, slander, arson, sabotage, and so on" (ibid). These inconspicuous forms of resistance remain outside class struggles, charting no beginnings or ends, and having little or no coordination or planning. They take advantage of the tacit understanding established within kinship and informal networks, and they are often individual initiatives. The poor, as Scott reminds us, "when they may do so with relative safety, display an impressive capacity to penetrate behind the pieties and rationales of rich farmers and to understand the larger realities of capital accumulation, proletarianization, and marginalization" (304)[14], as well as engage in innumerable acts of ideological resistance.

The problem of course in such a conception of resistance is the tendency for dichotomies, where one pits "organized" resistance at the state level against the powerless subaltern who has to resort to the surreptitious everyday tactics of survival which are often dismissed as ineffective and insignificant. Such an equation usually arises out of tying resistance to transformations (structural and emancipatory), which is not necessarily the goal in some cases where resistance is aimed towards protecting existing structures, as in the case of the Sedaka peasants who had a very crucial stake in protecting traditional agrarian practices. However, Scott makes it very clear that such tactics are consciously planned and effective, and what it is, is actually a withdrawal from the realm of state control, and the indication of the peasants' disillusionment with the state[15], perhaps owing

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[14]Scott warns against the tendency to resort to the argument for hegemony and false consciousness when compliance is demonstrated. When the poor in Sedaka say that "it doesn't matter whether you protest or not, nothing comes of it," the poor are actually expressing a realistic, pragmatic view of the situation as they have experienced it (1985: 325).

[15]In Malaysia, the NEP (New Economic Policy) was implemented with the aim of a more equitable distribution of wealth among the Malays and rapid modernization. However, the policy actually marginalized the very poor Malays, especially those whose agrarian or maritime activity was at the level of self-subsistence. How then does one explain that only 1.3% (out of 45% of visible Malays or *bumiputeras* [sons of the soil]) own 75% of the national shares? (See K.S. Jomo, [1990/91] "Wither Malaysia's New Economic Policy." *Pacific Affairs*. 63, 4: 469–499)

to the fact that the very poor have always been marginalized within the state. All the more reason, then for Scott who sees these covert tactics as a "tenacity of self-preservation" and "the grinding efforts to hold one's own against overwhelming odds" (Scott, 1985: 350).

Although Scott does not address his everyday forms of resistance specifically to gender, he does provide an interesting study of how three groups of women rice transplanters in Sedaka resolved to organize a boycott against the use of the combine harvesters which threatened their seasonal earnings[16]. However, the fact that the wealtheir farmers still required transplanters left open some spaces for negotiation. The women did not stage any open confrontation but related through intermediaries their dissatisfaction, and made it clear that they would not work for anyone who had used the combines in the previous season. When the season came, circumspection prevailed – the women did not refuse outright but staged a foot-dragging, delaying tactic which enabled them not to offend the farmers and at the same time find work with those who did not opt for combine harvesters. After two weeks of the war of nerves, and the sight of the nursery paddy passing its prime, six farmers let it be known that they were going to hire outside labourers. The boycott collapsed since the women feared that the jobs would be going permanently to outsiders. Scott writes that the brief and abortive attempt to stop the combine by collective action may be regarded as either "the subject of demoralized or self-satisfied postmortems" (1985: 251–252). The boycott was not an insignificant failure, since the women were clearly aware of the weakness of their positions and knew eventually they would have to give in. This was implicit in the indirectness of the boycott – for example, the non-confrontational and delaying tactics. Compliance in this case, must not be read as helplessness or powerlessness; compliance, like resistance, should be seen as a strategy, part of a process of negotiation which has no beginning and no end (Moore, 1988: 180). Such covert tactics, which included among others, withdrawal and gossip, are difficult to analyse for they do not result in the overthrow of the "social, productive and reproductive relations within which they are embedded" (Moore, 182) – they are non-events, and outside the historical dramas of grand revolutions. Yet they are a testament to the human spirit – "a spirit and practice that prevents the worst and promises something better" (Scott, 1985: 350).

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[16]The village of Sedaka is highly stratified according to landholdings, and smallholders, tenants and landless labourers are dependant upon the income from transplanting and harvesting rice. The introduction of the combine harvesters while benefitting the bigger landholdings thus threatens the income of whole families who engage in transplanting work, and who depend on being hired by the wealthier landowners.

Chapter 4
Reading the Subaltern Woman in Women and Development: Textual Gaps

Aihwa Ong's Deae Ex Machina[17] as (an example of) Everyday Forms of Resistance

The Third World as I have claimed in this thesis is not a homogeneous conception, and the emergence of the NICs (Newly Industrialized Countries) has reinforced the postmodern trope by fracturing the overtotalizing centre-periphery compartmentalization of development paradigms. Conceived as a phenomena of our times, and the central object of new development theories, the presence of the NICs has revealed the uncomfortable position of the "great developed nations", and has become a threat of displacement of economic and political status and power. The NICs, (especially those in the Asia-Pacific region) with their embracement of the TNCs have become the distributor of high technology, and the orientation towards automated societies has also been accompanied by disruptions in much cherished cultural values and norms, and increasing State sponsored regulation eg. the strengthening of the Confucian State in Singapore. More significant is the fact that women in these countries find themselves in ambiguous spaces which more and more reflect Foucault's and Baudrillaud's postmodern implosion of new power configurations, hypertechnology, multi-simulation and intertextual information. The postmodern world has not been kind to women, and "intensifications of hardship experienced worldwide in connections with the social [and economic] relations of science and technology are severe, [and] what people are experiencing is not transparently clear" (Haraway, 1990: 215) The strong ambivalence that arises out of the structural arrangements related to science and technology in this late Capitalist stage is strongly reflected in the intergration of women into the assembly-line production, the obvious "feminization" of taylorized work.

In her fascinating study of the eruptions of hysteria among Malay women factory workers in the Japanese TNCs in Malaysia, and working through the voices of the women themselves, Aihwa Ong focuses on the disruptions, conflicts and contradictions that accompany capitalist transformation of social and economic relations, as well as the differentiated "spirits of resistance" of the neophyte workers. Though not classified as an NIC, Malaysia, is nonetheless an emergent economic power in the South East Asian region, and the TNC activity there (since the 1970s) is significant enough to disrupt societal values, and norms. Aihwa Ong's study focuses primarily on the recontextualization of the sexuality of young "docile bodies" (the Malay women factory workers) within transnational corporations, and the management and control of the women's bodies by the TNCs, the State, and society. The development of the mechanisms of control, whether in state offices, or factories, involves changing material relations as well as an altered sense of reality,

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[17] There is a double writing in this deliberate feminization of *Deus Ex Machina*. The women are the "spirits" who run the transnationals factories, the solution to the supply of cheap labour. It also speaks to the divine intervention which assumes the form of female projected spirits that disrupt the operations of power on the neophyte factory women.

changing self-knowledge, shifting one's (un/stable) subjectivity, and the cultural justification of the social order. In their changing positions within the family, the village/community, the labour process and wider society, the "young docile bodies" devised counter tactics for resisting fixed images imposed on them, and re/constructed their own images (Ong, 1987: 4). It is then helpful to recall Foucault's argument that sexuality is always situated within the matrices of power, and that it is always produced or constructed within specific historical practices, both discursive and institutional.

The penetration of the TNCs in Malaysia entailed the utilization of a cheap female labour force with nimble fingers[18] for the assembling of electronic goods that witnessed the disruption of traditional and religious (Islam is the Malaysian National religion) practices governing the young women's lives. With the channelling of these young women into factory work, the sexuality of these new working women in the TNCs became a focus of anxiety. The rupture caused by the rural–urban migration, and economic autonomy from kinfolk manifested itself through these young women's increasing social and sexual independence (Ong, 1987; Buang, 1992: 197–210; Lie and Lund, 1991: 147–164). Young Malay maidens, once the symbol of purity and piety became reconstituted as a sexual/moral threat, and were often the victims of sexual harassment, and critique by the state and religious institutions for their seemingly "careless" behaviour with men (not necessarily Malay men either). Deeply ambivalent about change, alarmed parents and dominant religious groups succeeded in pressuring the state to "regulate" the morality of the young women. Through a series of religious programs initiated by religious teachers, groups, and institutions, steps were made to increase scrutiny on the women's social interaction, and to increase sexual surveillance on the young women. Anguished by the contemptuous representations of themselves, some women sought Islamic guidance and discipline to complement the regulation at work (while some resisted, and increasingly flaunted their independence at the religious regulators, only to be hauled into the Syiarah [Islamic] Courts). Yet, the reconstitution of subjectivity, and the frustration of over–regulation began to manifest itself in particular acts of defiance.

Individualistic conduct, acts of defiance, and violent incidents of hysteria were scattered and differentiated tactics aimed primarily not at the capitalist relations of production, but at defining and protecting one's reconstituted identity and dignity. Significantly, economic autonomy expanded the social horizons of the young women, and enabled them, at least partially to assert their independence, and define and control their

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[18] On a Malaysian Investment brochure: "Her hands are small and she works fast with extreme care. Who, therefore, could be better qualified by nature and inheritance to contribute the efficiency of a bench assembly production line than the Malaysian girl" (Ong, 1987: 152). Thus, by virtue of her biological make-up, the Malay girls are seen to be the perfect workers to staff the semi-conductor industry.

lives. Most of the workers saw their jobs as a springboard to better jobs, and higher education. Another but more violent manifestation of resistance were the eruptions of hysteria among the women, a common but never well analyzed phenomenon among Malay women in Malaysia that has been interpreted as spirit or demon possession within local Malay beliefs[19]. Ong suggests that the hysteria, often manifested as violent flailings and shrieking of curses against men and the workplace, is a thinly disguised protest against the overregulation and dehumanizing work conditions: "spirit imageries reveal not only a mode of unconscious retaliation against male authority but fundamentally, a sense of dislocation in human relations and a need for greater spiritual vigilance in domains reconstituted by capitalist relations of production" (Ong, 1987: 207, Moore, 1988: 181–183, March and Taqqu, 1986: 67–85).

Following James Scott's study, Ong also regards the manifestation of resistance as outside organized counter–reactive movements. Resistance is also embodied or encoded in the absent or silent spaces, in recalling historical or counter memory, and in the various gestures of everyday life. While resistance does not necessarily translate to victorious or revolutionary action, it does exist and is sometimes channelled into action, organized or unorganized, individually or collectively as seen in the study of the neophyte factory workers. The demon–possession incidents are not only forms of resistance and protest that arise out of reconstituted urban subjectivities, they are also expressive of the over–regulated and exploitative environment of the factory shopfloor, along with other subversive acts that are more spontaneous such as damaging the machines, stalling

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[19] It should also be noted that the eruptions of hysteria are also prominent among Malay school girls who live in the *asrama* (hostels). Interestingly, these girls are usually from the villages, and the *asramas* are often very strictly regulated. Spirit (*Hantu or Syaitan*) possessions often occur because of "spiritually" weak bodies. Thus, those who are stricken are often weak in their religious beliefs, and who have succumbed to the evils of the secular world. Very few cases are reported among males, although an interesting case in Singapore appeared a few years ago, where a group of Thai construction workers became epileptic and died. Many blamed it on a "nymphomaniac" female ghost. Given the conditions they lived in, which was a wooden hut with scattered straw mats, and a constant diet of glutinous rice (pulut) and durian fruit (a common diet in Thailand), and removed from their families, some psychologists felt that their deaths were not surprising.

Henrietta Moore (1988: 181–182) also provides a spirit possession example from the Somali pastoral nomads of north–east Africa, who are a patrilineal Muslim people. One particular form of spirit possession afflicts the married women wherein ailments or physical symptoms are accompanied by a demand for luxuries such as clothes, and dainties. Coincidentally, such incidents of spirit possession often take place when husbands intend on marrying again. Thus, these incidents are often intepreted in terms of gender wars, where the women resort to these tactics to air out their grievances against their husbands.

operations, destroying products. In the absence of unions[20], covert revolts against factory men, and supervisors who are known sexual harassers take on the form of crying wolf, victimhood displays and tearful gossiping[21] which result in violent incidents as some men resort to gangbusting confrontations, to defend "the honour of the women". The covert nature of countless acts, when compounded, may be read as collective action and protests against mounting work pressures, as well as the demand for the renegotiation of workplace rules. One recalls James Scott's work here on the Sedaka peasants who in

> [Their] individual acts of foot dragging and evasion, reinforced by a venerable popular culture of resistance and multiplied many thousand-fold, may, in the end, make an utter shambles of the policies dreamed up by their would-be superiors in the capital. Everyday forms of resistance make no headlines. But just as millions of anthozoan polyps create, willy-nilly, a coral reef, so do the multiple acts of peasant [read: factory workers] insubordination and evasion create political and economic barrier reefs of their own. (Scott, 1985: xvii)

It is largely in this fashion, that the female neophyte factory workers make their presence felt.

The demon hovers over the ambiguous spaces that these Malay women occupy as they are uprooted from their *kampungs* (villages) and inducted into the integrated circuitry of assembly production, and regulated in a dehumanizing fashion both by the state and the TNCs. The everyday forms of resistance, compounded in the multiple inscriptions of

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[20]This is not to say that union activity is low in Malaysia, but in comparison to Singapore's union, the MTUC (Malaysian Trade Union Congress) is often quite inactive. However, one should take account of the different unions in different industries in the Free Trade Zones. For example, it is ironic that the unions in the textile factories failed to raise the level of worker welfare and since 1990, worker welfare fell below general standards achieved by non-union electronics component industry workers. Trade union activities are often monitored in Malaysia, lest they disrupt the economic profits of the nation. Women are not generally active in the trade unions but when they are, their are quite effective, through union tactics such as work stoppages and work to rule. 25% of women are involved in the unions but other than that they are isolated until conditions require unionizing. Gender ideologies, state imposed constraints, and Islam discourages union activities, instead some factories promote family picnics, beauty contests, family incentives, allowances. Nevertheless, there have been tremendous improvements in some of the Japanese TNCs, with improved housing, transportation, accident/health benefits, allowances, bonuses, higher wages, due to a series of union activity and government intervention which realized that worker protection was integral to drawing more workers into the industries.

[21]Gossiping for example, is the key weapon to challenging the hierarchies of men (as in rural Taiwan), making and breaking reputations through the circulation of false words (March and Taqqu, 1986: 24).

protests, in diverse fields of power emerge through the cracks and fissures of discipline, as the women revolt against the relentless demands placed upon them by the TNCs, the state and the wider society. The women are engaged in a covert daily battle within the nexus of power relations which tend to suppress them; and their insistence on disruption demands their polyphonic voices of resistance, and their diverse countertactics noticed. It is to Ong's credit that she does not treat the young Malay women as mere victims of the forces of capitalism or patriarchy. More is at work here than the usual conflicting traditional/modern values. A complex interaction of family and cultural values, along with private hopes and ambitions, re/constitute new subjectivities which emerge between the spaces of over-argued dichotomies. The female body is the social space inscribed with social codes that are to be contested, and battled over by the state, religion, the TNCs and the neophyte workers themselves. As Malaysia propels towards NIC status, as industrialization acti ities increase, the transformation of the cultural milieu will not only involve subaltern women as passive participants but as dynamic subjects and effects of the changes themselves.

"The Jeeps Come and Go[22]": External Expertise and McProjects[23]

Development projects are oftentime like fast food restaurants. They are impersonal, offering short term gratifications and no long term security jobs nor benefits; and despite the long hours of training (the locals, in this context) the skills acquired remain at the basic level, and once in a while, they conduct certain experiments that appear to be radical but eventually fail due to poor results, and the standard prosaic formulations return. In short, they are *McProjects* – development projects that are impersonal, lacking any accompanying or continuing support and training structures which enable the recipients of the project to improvise and further existing projects. However, oftentimes due to the discretion of the project sponsors, when the funding ends, the project ends, and uncompleted projects are left behind, eg. half-built irrigation systems, tractors which will never have enough diesel, spare parts and mechanical skills to maintain. Income generating projects such as setting up credit cooperatives do not easily take off either when infrastructural support is limited to the metropolitan areas or when externally sponsored self-help groups are formed with little attention paid to the historical and socio-cultural

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[22] In a conversation with a development practitioner from Kenya regarding the nature of the WID projects that were carried out in the rural areas, she explained that development projects were not exactly gratefully embraced by the inhabitants of the area after all "*so many jeeps come and go*" and "the villagers negotatiate what they can from the development planners because *the projects never last and as soon as the jeeps and the experts leave, the people will wait for the next development project to appear*".

[23] I have to acknowledge the so called generation X guru, Douglas Coupland for this reappropriation of *McJobs*.

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make-up of the community or region concerned.

Development projects sponsored by national foreign and domestic governments as well as NGOs are mired in bureaucratic red tape, so much so that "the resulting maze turns Max Weber's view of the possiblities of bureaucratic intentionality into a complexity prone to chaos or recalcitrance and vulnerable to personal idiosyncracies as well as organizational inertia" (Jensen, 1990: 247–264). In very much the spirit of Weber's bureaucratic human detachment, human beings become little more than statistics on a glossy folder, recognized in terms of life-cycles or life-courses and economic production. The individual recipient of such beneficient projects are engulfed by the paperwork which dresses the subaltern in an alien bureaucratic world of dehumanizing language. As Jensen acutely observes, even if problems of bias and blindness

> are constituted in ways Western scholars and bureaucrats have trouble
> comprehending, their mystifying qualities hardly disappears once the
> Westerner is actually in the village...and once data concerning those biases
> are collected, analysed, even published, they do not necessarily enter the
> body of "established facts". (Jensen, 1990: 255)

On paper, with the formalized language of bureaucracy, one is distanced and the village or the community appear only as a unit of analysis, and not a location where people live out their everyday lives as agents and participants of the social world. The success of the projects are measured through technical efficiency, economic performance, input/output factors on a time scale based upon assumptions of a community or region possessing a presumably stable social system that has been previously impervious (at least until social change is externally injected) to time and change. Either that or the community having been exposed to the Western norms and the capitalist economy is incapable of negotiating such a transition and must receive guidance.

The difficulty of instituting social change is due partly to the myopia of those sponsoring and implementing it. To begin with, the dichotomous picture of the centre and the pepriphery or the city and the countryside cultivates the image of the countryside/periphery as a timeless, and serene homogenous entity while the metropolitan/centre is dynamic and advanced. There is also the implicit assumption that the recipients of such change are passive objects who cannot institute the change themselves. Change involves constantly negotiated instances from the individual to the global level; the new water tank in the village does not necessarily secure a better life for the villagers. Presumably, internal social dynamics do not exist and if they do, they are stifling and bound to irritating time-wasting, non-efficient traditional forms and methods. Furthermore, to impose rules that are external and incompatible to the cultural realities, does not enable one to discover how internal social dynamics work, or how values-systems and gender relations are constructed. Finally, the notion of strategy construction does not necessarily imply or require external or even domestic expertise: any planned action by an individual

or a group is strategy by itself. There is an urgent need for development literature to concentrate on contextuality, and to understand how specific social relations, and cultural practices respond, and react to the changes that many Third World societies are experiencing today.

In Small's study of the women's self–help groups ("Moving Forward" organization or MFO) in the Kingdom of Tonga, she details how the MFO was initially constructed as a profit–making, self–help model but eventually became an institution of another order. The MFO converted traditional prestige and kinship obligations (or reciprocity) into a development fund and thereby, redistributed village wealth into the hands of women. The ability of the women's MFO[24], according to Small is not based on the content of development planning nor bureaucratic structures, but on the socio–cultural, historical and economic conditions that fostered this conversion and redistribution process and is beyond the influence of development planners. As Small argues,

> once a development institution has been intergrated into village life, it is then subject to the economic and historical forces that shape all social institutions – the success and failures of the development institutions will have less to do with the goals, structures, and policies of development planners than with the deeper conditions affecting the choices and relationships of village women, and hence the shape that any village institution will take. (Small, 1990: 266)

No culture is static; development planning cannot be formulated with the idea that one can inject change, especially, exogenously. Nor should one expect that if plan 'A' fails, a correcting, supplementing plan 'B' with its alternatives of intergrating women into development, empowering women or educating men, can formulate a rosy future:

> It is...a form of arrogance to believe that the administration, bureaucracies, and programs of the international planning community, without the political or economic clout to significantly change a nation's social order, can transform or reverse social realities that proceed from that order....most development agencies are in the untenable position of attempting to alleviate the effects of class development – a process associated with growing wealth differences between men and women, rich and poor...and when our programs do not work, we look to improve our plans and bureaucratic strategies. It is...equally arrogant to presume that failures in Third World development proceed from some flaw in our own thinking or organization. Without both politicizing development efforts and recognizing the import of indigenous social processes (and, for instance, devoting

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[24]The MFO was not entirely a success, and overtime became vulnerable to petty factioning, and power struggles which marginalized the poorer women.

> support to indigenous movements like unions that tend to counter class
> inequities), development efforts will be futile. It is important to understand
> that, even if planners were able to assume more revolutionary directions, an
> unlikely scenario given the source of most development funding, planners
> can no more make "revolution" than they can make social change.
> Revolutionary programs can succeed only when there are indigenous
> revolutionary movements underway. (Small, 1990: 286)

One turns instead to development analyses which acknowledge and incorporate "ground-up
analysis," "development from within" – the "indigenous revolutionary movements
underway" namely, informal, grassroots and community self-help groups and
organizations, which are not always established within the development framework (March
and Taqqu, 1986; Moore, 1988; Small, 1990; Staudt, 1990; Momsen, 1991; Taylor and
MacKenzie, 1992).

Depending on their location and substance, these domestic movements are
sometimes structured outside bureaucratic lines, and rational-legal authority, but assume
forms such as networks[25], kitchen meetings, and church groups which take advantage of
powerful kinship or communal ties. Such groups are informal associations whose activities
resist incorporation into more formalized structures lest it would risk their flexibility and
mutuality. Among subaltern women, these informal associations take on unique
characteristics and are also important indications of the autonomy and power derived from
the mutuality found in the various networks of women. The plural character of informal
associations the world over serve as important data bases for understanding the various
ways in which subaltern women are able to negotiate the economic structures as well as
provide important insights into the character and dynamics of subaltern women's
"strategizing".

While the penetration of the capitalist economy does lead to social transformation,
there is also a need to understand that the injection of capitalist economy does not dissolve
the former exchange practices. Bourdieu reminds us of the ethnocentric limitations and
restricted definitions of what constitutes the theory of economic practice, and proposes the
concept of *symbolic capital*[26] which is embedded in many good faith economies that pattern

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[25] Woman networks are very powerful ways of assisting women in certain communities.
Depending on their geographical and cultural settings, these networks not only assist women
economically, but often structure political patronage and/or solidarity for entire communities. They
are also crucial communication links – information about jobs, migration possibilities, family
deaths and births are gleaned through such networks which depend upon the verbal circulation of
women.

[26] Symbolic Capital refers to the non-calculative aspect of exchange. It adds to the
economic practice and covers a wide range of ritual parctices, coventions, moral obligations,

economic transactions the world over. Bourdieu's symbolic capital is important and relevant to a remarkable number of strategic economic practices by subaltern women in the Third World, especially those who depend on women's networks, community kinship patterns (March and Taqqu, 1986; Thorbek, 1987; Small, 1990) and are actively participating in economic life. Women's self-help groups and informal associations, such as those found in various African nations such as Kenya and Tanzania have been rather successful in their wide range of enterprises which encompass such activities as tree-planting, marketing (communal agricultural production), beer-brewing and school and housing development (Moore, 1988: 155–164; Nkhoma-Wamunza, 1992; Taylor and Mackenzie, 1992). One also rarely learns of the informal forms of income generating activities across Asia and Africa, such as a *tontine*[27], a loan activity or a revolving-credit association, which appears to be outside development strategies, and regarded as the underground economy or the

reciprocal norms and values that characterise and reproduce established relations and other kinship patterns. For example, good faith economies are based on total confidence, not marked by written documents and witnesses but "the general law of exchange...that the closer the individuals or groups are in the genealogy, the easier it is to make agreements" (Bordieu, 1994: 168)

> The theory of strictly economic practice is simply a particular case of a general theory of the economics of practice. The only way to escape from the ethnocentric naiveties of economism, without falling into populist exaltation of the generous naivety of earlier forms of society, is to carry out in full what economism does and partially, and to extend economic calculation to *all* the goods, material and symbolic, without distinction, that present themselves as *rare* and worthy of being sought after in a particular social formulation–which may be "fair words," or smiles, handshakes or shrugs, compliments or attention, challenges or insults. (Bourdieu, 1994: 173)

[27] It is difficult to define a tontine because they take on so many kinds of credit activity. Some are linked to producers' cooperatives (income generating activities in terms of growing or producing) which disburse money in times of social exigencies, for example births, deaths, travel money. The one that I am familiar with in Malaysia is a rotational or a cyclical credit activity. Depending on the set-up of the rotation and the membership, the length of interval between levies, for each one or several cycles may be agreed upon. It can be a simple activity, for example, 10 hypothetical members might agree to contribute $10 a week in any given cycle, then one member collects the pooled fund. Also, a number of people may contribute a certain amount of money (a ceiling is usually set, in this case $100 per person), and then the one who requires the money may bid for it. S/he can only bid once, and returns the money gradually when someone else bids for the next pot (sometimes with a low interest), until the rotation is done. Other selection process in the rotations may go by seniority, members needs, divination. Suffice it is to say that these activities provide critical support in times of need. This form of rotational credit mostly involves women, and in Malaysia, the tontine is established mainly by women. Also, examples of tontines stretch from Vietnam to Mexico (March and Taqqu, 1986: 60–66).

subterranean sector (March and Taqqu, 1986: 54–66; Barnard, 1987: 28–30; Moore, 1988; Kempe, 1993)[28]. Tontines, as those existing in Mauritania and Ghana enable women to perform traditional services for one another and their families when they are no longer able to provide individually, and are important financial components of the female world. The River Women of Mauritania for example, save their money together and have a community savings group establishing through urban networks and group associations (Bernard, 1987: 28–29). Also, other forms of rotating associations take on labour rotation or reciprocal labour which provides an economic base for and fosters powerful solidaristic ties among women. One of the major characteristics of the subterranean sector, in fact is the increasing rate of participation of women as an entrepreneurial group. For example, female participation in the subterranean sector in Latin America is estimated at 35–39%, in urban Tanzania at 50%, and in urban Indonesia at 33% (Kempe, 1993: 866). While such subterranean activities find their way into statistical information, there is little documentation as to how subaltern women work or innovate within these economic forms in order to increase or improve their income generation capacities.

The Logocentric Trap of Development Discourse

Contained within central theoretical applications in development discourse are concepts very much entrenched in enlightenment epistemology. As worthy as the notions of empowerment, emancipation, consciousness raising or conscientization are, one must

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[28] The subterranean sector (also referred to as the informal, hidden, underground, shadow, secondary, blackmarket, invisible or parallel economy) is defined as "consisting of those economic units and workers (both professionals and non-professionals) who engage in commercial activities outside the realm of the *formally* established mechanisms for the conduct of such activities." (Kempe, 1993: 864) for example, bartering, exchange of scarce goods. Kempe argues in his article on the subterranean economy that such activities, far from being a desperate survival strategy associated with the disruptions of rapid urbanization, westernization and unemployment in the Third World, is a thriving activity performed by the destitute people on the margins of society. In fact the subterranean sector has created a new class of entrepreneurs and provided jobs for the poor. While subterranean economies also deal with such shady activities as smuggling contraband goods, among them, arms, and drugs, Kempe argues that its "vibrancy and resilience" must be enhanced for it is directly responsible for improvement in living conditions. In fact, its bottom–up approach plays a vital role in development projects which concentrate on micro–level successes. However, Kempe is also careful to warn that while there requires a concerted effort to accept and legalize the subterranean sector in the Third World (to limit such activities as drug trafficking), one must also prevent it from being absorbed into bureaucratic structures so as to maintain flexibility and curb the barriers to entry.

also be aware of logocentric reasoning[29] in which there is a disposition to impose a hierarchy when encountering dichotomies, eg. North–South, Modern–Traditional. Either one aspires to the symbols and norms of modernity or longs nostalgically for an ideal natural past. Thus, it stands to reason that women in the East or the South should be as free and independant as their sisters in the West or North or be taught to be anti–colonialist and dewesternized (Trinh, 1989). Yet, such ideas of emancipation, empowerment, and conscientization could very well be defined by Western feminist yardsticks of liberation and power. In her essay, *Modernist Discourse and the Crisis of Development Theory*, Kate Manzo writes, "There is nothing wrong with the concept of [consciousness raising], but whose consciousness is it that presumably needs to be raised?" (Manzo, 1991: 29). More significantly, one must question whom these bipolar constructions serve, and for what purpose. For First World or any privileged feminists to justify their salvational or empowering politics, the subaltern Third World Woman must exist as an "oppressed other" located within a discourse that places agency and subjectivity in the hands of First World "expert knowledge". A subaltern Third World woman must be denied or reduced of her agency[30] for First World feminist experts to represent her.

The categories that appear in WAD language reflect the eurocentric discourse that dominates WAD activity, an example being Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo's (1974) celebrated model for justifying universal patriarchal authority which presents the global "cult of domesticity" in terms of an uneven dual distinction of the *Private* (world of women) and the *Public*[31] (world of men). Rosaldo stages her argument upon the idea that there are

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[29] See Chapter 2. The concept of logocentrism belongs to J. Derrida. The notion of logocentrism is linked to ethnocentric language which has imposed itself upon the world. In the translator's preface, Gayatri C. Spivak writes " There is also the shadow of a geographical pattern that falls upon the first part of the book [*Of Grammatology*]. The relationship between logocentrism and ethnocentrism is intricately invoked in the very first sentence of the Exergue. Yet paradoxically, and almost by a reverse ethnocentrism, Derrida insists that logocentrism is a property of the West....Although something of the Chinese prejudice of the West is discussed... the East is never seriously studied or deconstructed..."(Derrida, 1976 lxxxii). However, in her paper *Can the Subaltern Speak?* Spivak also credits Derrida for marking "radical critique with the danger of appropriating the other by assimilation" (Spivak, 1988).

[30] I define agency here in terms of the acting agent who participates in the communicative structures, by effectuating and legitimating meaningful action (meaningful to the agent) through self-interpretation of the unstable and polyglot discursive situation that she is in.

[31] In defining the concept of *public*, authors March and Taqqu also reminds us that "the concept of 'public', then, subsumes two major facets: the nature of the collectivity involved, and the nature of the space or style in wich that collectivity operate" (1986: 3). The Western idea of the public also invokes the notion of public action, undertaken openly, and under public scrutiny

universal assymmetrical differences between male and female activities, and that male activities "are always recognized as predominantly important, and cultural systems give authority and values to the roles and activities of men"(19). Her justification comes from examplifications of hierachical power (despite women's power, men are always chiefs), and the behaviour of women in certain cultural groups, for example she cites the Yoruba woman who, despite their control of resources, must feign "ignorance and obedience, kneeling to serve the men as they sit" (20). Rosaldo[32] thus proposes the opposition between the domestic and the public as her universal structural framework in identifying and exploring the place of male and female "in psychological, cultural, social and economic aspects of human life" (23). The *domestic* refers to "those minimal institutions and modes of activity that are organized immediately around one or more mothers and their children" while the *public* refers to activities, institutions and forms of association that link, rank, organize, or subsume particular mother–child groups" (23). In Rosaldo's words:

> I have tried to relate universal assymetrics in the actual activities and
> cultural evaluations of men and women to a universal, structural opposition
> between domestic and public spheres. I have also suggested that women
> seem to be oppressed or lacking in value and status to the extent that they
> are confined to domestic activities, cut off from other women and from the
> social world of men. Women *gain power and a sense of power when they*
> *are able to transcend domestic limits, either by entering the men's world or*
> *by creating a society unto themselves.* (Rosaldo: 1974: 41, italics mine)

Clearly, the gaps in her conception lie in the fact that she is projecting Western assumptions of gender relations and family structures onto the non-West Other cultures, and she does so by using Nancy Chodorow's psychonalytic model of sex–role behaviour (women raise their daughters to be little mothers and sons to be like their fathers). The conceptualizations of and the value systems underlying gender relations vary across cultures, and are not so easily captured by anthropological observations. As Henrietta Moore reminds us, the differentiated activities between men and women do not easily equate to hierarchical and asymmetrical male–female relationships (1988).

Such a dualistic conception is rooted not only in the socio–economic experiences but also in the asymmetrical gender relations of the West, and adapted as universal categories for the analysis of the subordination of women. The capitalist economy impacts

Questions of access, to information and participation also accompanies this Western conception of public. The private, in this sense stands in opposition – that which is closed and intimate; the sphere of activity in which the public cannot infringe upon.

[32]Although Rosaldo later reformulated her argument, the devestation had been done, and her model has been widely adapted, and persists even today despite criticisms.

differently with specific cultures, and in many instances, the public/private analysis is incompatible to specific cultural manifestations of female involvement in income generation and decision-making. Also, in demanding public action and public recognition, the public realm is privileged over the private, and undermines cases where women negotiate power from the private domain or when a woman's space is regarded as sacrosanct to womanhood during certain periods of time. The binary concept of the private and the public also imposes a clear cut division of what is usually not so distinguishable. Neat analytical categorizations deflect a deeper and complex internal inquiry into how overlapping forms of power that are articulated beyond the economic (read: public) arena or the Western focus on presence and authority. For example, the emphasis of patriarchy as the dominant system overshadows matrifocal rights (eg. Chinese households), because the latter is not equated with economic value; when certain conditions do not fulfill the requirements of what household power is; and when the categories are conflated in instances where the private is also the public for example, home-based occupations and cottage industries.

> Although domestic households are significantly units of economic
> production and consumption in many societies, they are rarely the only
> important economic units, nor are they apolitical. Women's control over
> domestic production often gives them considerable influence, even power,
> and sometimes authority, over the shaping of public political events. (March
> and Taqqu, 1986: 17)

In that sense, Rosaldo also perpetuates the devaluation of women, and women's housework when she denies power and authority to the domestic sphere. There is the need to reconsider the value of women's domestic labour, which in some households is indispensible to the widening of their political base, sometimes beyond that of men, for example in Melanesia, men's formal politicking depends upon the domestic contribution of women (March and Taqqu, 1986: 13-15). This is especially true when the expansion of the political base is tied to informal economic activities. Unfortunately, because of the tendency to resort to the private/public distinction, the power of women's domestic activties occupies a diminished profile. Dichotomous categorizations, while helpful and necessary at times, also lead to a type of knowledge closure that slams shut the door on the lives and narratives of subaltern women, and their power as agents of social change.

Another disputed concept belongs to Maxine Molyneux's *Practical* and *Strategic* gender interests. Molyneux (1985) defines gender interests as "those that men or women may develop by virtue of their social position through gender attributes." Strategic interests are "derived...deductively..from the analysis of women's subordination and from the formulation of an alternative, more satisfactory set of arrangements to those which exist." Long term in nature, strategic interests requires the formulation of strategies aimed at overcoming women's subordination, eg. abolition of sexual division, institutionalized

discrimination, freedom of reproductive choice. Practical gender interests are inductive, arising "from the concrete conditions of women's positioning within the gender division of labour. Unlike strategic interests, these are formulated by women who are themselves within these positions rather than through external interventions" (1985: 232) They are short-term in nature [a response to an immediate need], and do not contain a strategic goal, for example, women's emancipation" (232–233). What is implied in Molyneux's conception is that it is unreasonable to continue practical action if it does not change society, or generate strategic action. However, one questions on whose normative and cultural values these categories of gender interests are based or the forms of gender construction which vary across cultures. Naturally, this problematizes the definition of a practical and strategic need. Women for instance may have a perceived need for clean water, in fact the whole population has the need, but it becomes a woman's need because of the role ascribed to her by the society. Women's need for water is a practical need, called for by the existing constructions of gender; to enable them to meet the need is not to change society and is not a feminist action (see Momsen and Kinnaird, 1993: 272). Similarly, terminological uncertainty occurs when practical gender interests also demonstrate a measure of strategic interests, as in the case of the Indonesian women's mass organizations (Wieringa, 1992: 98–113).

Saskia Wieringa's analysis of two Indonesian women's mass organization challenges Molyneux's dichotomous notion of practical gender interests (PGIs) and strategic gender interest (SGIs) by focusing on the principles and aims of each woman's organization. Gerwani (*Gerakan Wanita Indonesia* or Indonesian Women's Movement) is a militant left-wing, democratic centralist feminist organization[33] which mobilizes women towards the reconstruction of family structures, and demonstrating against unjust landowners, factory owners, and the government. The PKK (Family Welfare Guidance), which represents the other end of the pole is a right wing, state-sponsored organization set up by upper-class wives of civil servants and military officials to promote the ideal figure of womanhood – as the compliant faithful wife whose public roles are extensions of the domestic ones. The parallel activities of Gerwani and PKK are manifold – both conduct sewing and cooking classes as well as encourage small-scale income generation activities. But the underlying principles differ, for example, income-generating activities promoted by Gerwani are aimed toward economic autonomy while the income generation activities of PKK are geared toward supplementing the husband's income. Idologically, Gerwani and PKK represent two extreme positions: Gerwani's aim is to work towards a transformation of society, and for women to be active and vocal participants of society while the PKK's aim is to integrate women into the right-wing bureaucratic state without questioning the nature of the state. Both propagate the idea of the mothers of the nation or the *ibu* (mother) –

[33]Banned after 1965 and after a brutal slaughter of its members by the Sukarno government.

Gerwani's ibu as powerful, strong warriorlike women while PKK's ibu is literally the mother, wife and faithful companion to the husband.

Both Gerwani and PKK have engaged themselves mainly with PGIs in order to further SGIs but they have done so in a different manner. For example, Gerwani has tried to link women's practical concerns with the issues of landownership, gender relations, and nationhood. I will also argue (and this is not Wieringa's position) that the PKK's attempt to center women's activities around the *Panca Dharma Wanita* (five duties of women)[34] is also strategic, in the sense of the transformation of a specific concept of womanhood – even if this womanhood is regarded as an ideal compliant woman and an "appendage to men"[35]. Molyneux has also argued that PGIs arise out of the prevailing forms of gender subordination but, as Wieringa argues, this is not the case with Gerwani for what should be reexamined is not the nature of those interests but the perspective and values on society and womanhood.

Household Dynamics

In WAD analysis, the household[36] is regarded as the basic unit of society involved in production, reproduction, consumption and socialization (Moore, 1988: 54). The gravitation towards the money economy does not only transform societal structures and social relations but penetrates deep into the family and individual relations. Anchoring the subordinated status of women to the cohesive family unit (but particularly Western conceptions of the family)[37], the household is often times reduced to a locus of oppression by First World feminists where Westerncentric indices such as gender relations, commodity production and consumption, reproduction, family head, breadwinner, and decision-making

[34]Loyalty to husbands, procreate the nation, educate and guide the children, regulate the households, and to be a useful member of society.

[35]Although the PKK was set up originally by the state, and the political response to Gerwani by Sukarno, there is no explanation for PKK's popularity.

[36]"While most households consist of kin (either affinal, consanguinal or both), it is also wrong to assume *ipso facto* that households may be equated with residential 'family' units. Unrelated household members may sometimes be co-opted as 'fictive' kin through ritual practices such as 'godparenting,' but equally they may retain their non-kin status. Households may not be visible entities in terms of buildings or sets of rooms within residential units, but isolable only in terms of specific functions such as cooking or the pooling of finances; on the other hand, there may be active inter-household networks of reciprocity and exchange which are regular features of multi-family compounds and low-income neighbourhoods" (Brydon and Chant, 1989: 9-10). Such reciprocity and exchange often found are baby-sitting services, and food distribution (see Thorbek, 1987 for examples of such reciprocities and pooling in an urban slum area).

[37]See Mies, 1986.

play a determining role in analysing household dynamics and women's power.

The historical and cultural variability of households pose a problem to most analyses because such surveys or questionnaires of determining household power or decision-making are often based upon Western approaches to knowledge (for example, the idea that one can quantify and qualify knowledge thought concatenating a series of questions and answers). The household must be understood beyond the black box conception of a unit collectively engaged in a single form of production (Sage, 1993). The current analysis of the internal structure of the household is very much rooted in the commodification argument and qualified in terms of control over resources, sphere/s of production, land ownership, and labour relations. Problems also arise in determining the household head where in some households, decision-making is shared and not so easily determined due sometimes to other variables such as age and cultural affiliation (eg. godmothers) (Amadieume, 1992). Considerable autonomy, and decision-making power, for example, are granted in the reproductive sphere (seen usually as the locus of oppression by some Western feminists) in some cultures. Also, perspectives on women's power are usually limited to claims that "the boundaries of women's power usually coincide with those of gender-based divisions of labour and interests which confine them to areas like food, child and dependant care, clothing, rent and day to day expenses" (DAW[a], 1991: 41). Defining power or lack of power in terms of the division of labour and interests often conflicts with underlying value systems which do not regard gendered tasks as a division of labour and interests in which one task is subordinate to the other. Nor are such divisions of labour and interests a permanent fixture, as WAD theorists and practitioners claim, that require "democratization" to involve equal task-sharing and responsibility. The division of labour is often a flexible exchange or sharing of tasks and responsibilities in response to changing circumstances, for example in Vallestrand's study of the Coto Sur housewives. Stiven's work on the Minangkabau, and Rudie's study on the Malay peasant household, the men often "helped out" and involved themselves in tasks (for example, food gathering, winnowing) that were considered the domain of women. Women's power or their roles are not so easily determined or qualified by fulfilling a set of criteria set up by Western knowledge systems.

Far from a static, monolithic conception, the household should be apprehended within specific historical, socio-cultural forms and geographical locations subjected sometimes, to endless and imbricated discursive battles, where daily life is characterized by the everyday bargaining and negotiation of resources and power that are bound within a "web of rights and obligations". Any research and reflection upon this subject must take into consideration various levels of mediation in daily matters in which the structures and mechanisms of public and social life are condensed and revealed in complex fashions

[a]Division for the Advancement of Women. United Nations Office at Vienna

within the household, especially as revealed through individual action and practices (Rudies, 1992; Sage, 1993). In Ingrid Rudie's study (1992) of Malay peasant households in Malaysia, she points out that the keyword is autonomy, and the economically active peasant housewife's conception of autonomy in relation to her husband. In delineating the identity structures of these households, the women see themselves as complementary rather than free floating, culturally complete and potentially single individuals. Rudie notes that the acceptance of different practices (men handling the money) is not a sign of women's subjection but rather something quite different – a certain separateness in marriage coupled with equality in the project of running a household, and an implicit understanding that whoever brings the money in has the right of disposal over it (110). With increasing economic penetration into the rural areas, men are more likely to earn the wages, and therefore appear to gain control. Yet when the household undergoes change, household roles are still mediated and negotiated within the framework of the cooperative family structure. Even within ethnic, status/class or regional boundaries every individual household is highly differentiated, and social relations are organized along specific kinship and spatial patterns. The household as the domain of analysis cannot be placed in a general or categorical analysis that is separated from the public sphere. It is always a heterogeneous and fluid entity subject to constant recontextualization, for example, migration, and socio-economic and political change. Nor when modernization processes appear, do households all suffer the same fate of divided labour where the women, even if their labour extends to the public sphere of production, are burdened with domestic and reproduction tasks; their central roles as matriarchs, knowledge transmitters, decision makers and financial managers engulfed in the general and seamless categories of the public and the private.

The Problem of Empowerment: Who Empowers Whom?

In his study on the omnipresence of power, Michel Foucault has been criticized for avoiding discussion on ideology, and the international unequal division of resources and power. In naming what he perceives as the current struggle "against the form of subjection – against the submission of subjectivity," or struggles in the name of identity, Foucault opts for resistance instead of a total liberation. There is no transcendent emancipated state, only a discursive shift presenting another truth, and another power (Foucault, 1982: 212). However, Foucault's analysis of power and the subject is significant to the conventional wisdom of emancipatary politics and how we approach those who occupy subaltern positions, i.e. Third World peoples, women, racial minorities, and gays and lesbians. While it is true that a micro-level analysis of power might prevent one from recognizing the devastating effect of macro-power on the Third World, and the subaltern, I am not advocating a rejection of one study in favour of another. Rather, an alternative perspective which privileges micro-level power operations offers a non-reductionist and a more dynamic image of subaltern Third World women whose resistances are often denoted as

a unitary cumulative reaction, and not inherent in the operations of power (Mohanty, 1991: 73).

> When one conceives of power differently, in terms of its local institutions, discursive formations, of its positivity, and in terms of the production rather than suppression of forces, then unity is exposed to be a potentially repressive fiction. It is at the moment at which groups and individuals are conceived as agents, as social actors, as desiring subjects that unity, in the sense of coherent group identity, commonality and shared experiences becomes difficult. (Mohanty and Martin, 1986: 204)

Furthermore, yardsticks of emancipation, and empowerment cannot be measured by numerical inclusion or exclusion in hierachies of power, decision making, an' participation, nor be assessed in terms of socio-cultural consequences, such as prostitution, domestic violence, poverty. There always pervade the sense that the everyday life, the le quotidien is insignificant, where women accept and conform to the powers that be, in contrast to planned social movements in which people en masse challenge and question the existing social and political the status quo. While planned movements are important for large scale transformations, there is also the tendency for large scale movement to absorb the individual in the overall objective of the movement, and ignore the need to delve into the everyday forms of individual resistance. Yet there is still the need to recapture the analysis of power at the State level, and possibly to synthesize the local and specific operations of resistance with large scale state dynamics.

The concept of *empowerment* saturates the policies and practices of development projects to such an extent that the word has become a cliché, bantered about by feminists, liberationist pedagogy advocates, educators, welfare and family support programmes the world over. Empowerment has become a taken-for-granted assumption in WAD activity, having rarely been questioned or challenged as its ultimate objectives are to enhanced the position of the "powerless" and "the oppressed" who are constructed in an extreme position of languishing helplessness. Tied in with a participatory approach to emancipation, empowerment also confuses in terms of the direction of channelling power or its manifestations. Not surprisingly, the very concept has been left unexplored, as Jan Nederveen Piertese writes:

> Part of the appeal of empowerment is the aura of power. But it does not necessarily problematize power. It does not differentiate between *power to* (ability) and *power over* (control), between empowerment as acquiring skills or as seeking control. It can denote anything from individual self-assertion to upward mobility through adaptation and conformism to established rules. Accordingly, empowerment may carry conservative implications, or more precisely, it is politically neutral. It does not necessarily imply a critical consciousness. Empowerment may relate to

emancipation as a necessary but not a sufficient condition: emancipation implies empowerment, *but not every form of empowerment is emancipatory.*" (Piertese, 1992: 11, italics mine)

However, the major influence that dominates empowering projects in development policies and non-formal adult pedagogy is Paolo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire, 1969) which has been regarded as the major text for empowerment projects.

The work of Paolo Freire has become the cornerstone for critical pedagogy the world over, and has contributed extensively to adult literacy training and the politics of emancipation. Influenced by varied philosophical currents including Marxism and Christian Humanism, Friere developed his liberationist pedagogy to improve the human condition and counteract the psychology of oppression by using education as a dialogical tool for praxis to conscientize the oppressed masses. According to Freire, the oppressed are part of a dialectical process (the oppressor cannot exist without the oppressed); they are denied of their humanity, and their individual subjectivities. If they do have a subjectivity, it is a falsely mirrored one – one that reflects and "internalizes the image of the oppressor and [adopts] his guidelines" (Freire, 1983: 31). It is the image of the all powerful and invincible oppressor which makes the oppressed "fearful of freedom," and like Memmi's category of the "Colonized Man", the oppressed are trapped in this fatal attraction to the oppressor (Memmi, 1967) until the "alienation" is removed. Thus, the oppressed do not possess an "authentic self" defined by Freire as being truly human, and free to engage in the action and reflection of *praxis*. To surmount the situation of oppression, and to build a libertarian education, *conscientization* is the necessary road to transforming action. Conscientization is the process in which within the subject/object relationship, the subject finds the ability to grasp in critical terms, the dialectical unity between self and object, thus realizing one's relationship with the world and transforming it. Through the process of conscientization, the oppressed must learn to critically reflect upon the causes of oppression in order to empower themselves for transformation. Through critical awareness and dialogical action, the masses learn to see themselves as historical subjects who can transform the world. While Freire's work has been a revolutionary contribution to emancipatory literacy programmes, and to the theory of social and political change, there remains some assumptions which I find problematic.

Some of the problems found in Freire's empowering education also mark many well-meaning development projects of the world. First of all, empowerment presupposes that the subaltern or the Freirean oppressed do not possess power until they are "given" power or at least "taught" to tap that latent power and knowledge within themselves, as most educational programmes for the subaltern try to achieve. Although Freire speaks of a symbiotic form of empowerment whereupon the intellectual or the teacher who conducts the conscientization process is also in turn empowered by the empowerment process, the assumption lies in the fact that the oppressed is emancipated for the first time in their lives,

while the teacher is supplementing what s/he has learnt. Despite the effort of the teachers to locate themselves as learners, they are still the ones who set-up the literacy project, and select its contents, even if the process involves participatory action, and the generative themes are from the oppressed themselves[39]. A binary structure is set up here where I, the

[39]There is a need to elaborate Freire's literacy campaign as laid out in *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1983), for some of his methods have been adapted in numerous empowerment programmes, one of which I will be critiquing later. The literacy project is usually carried out in two phases.

There are three stages in the first phase. In stage 1, an interdisciplinary team of coordinators select the area for the literacy campaign. The coordinators observe and study how the people live out their daily lives, and determine the common vocabulary. The words used for the literacy programme must be from the people and their "linguistic universe." In stage 2, words which are most relevant are gathered and selected for the programme. These are "generative words (GWs)" for they are usually trisyllabic, phonetically rich and thus, able to generate other words (note: Freire is working within the Portuguese language, and never quite tackled the issue of linguistic differences, for example, Chinese in the implementation of his literacy method). The GWs are also chosen for their variation and their combination possibilities, thus allowing students to organise simple to more complex words, and in the process, engage students in critical discussion of thier social and political reality. An example of the GW, is "favela" (slum) from which words like "vale" and "viva" can be formed. In stage 3, the actual process of literacy training is carried out. Pictures are shown to provoke discussion, and to be decodified. Depending on the situation, decodification can vary by stages.

The pictures are the imaging or "codification" of the learner's concrete reality. By superimposing the GW on to the picture, the process of "decodification" begins where the students break down the whole and unveil their social situation through dialogue. Students and educators are thus engaged in analysing the relationship between the GW and what it signifies, thus linking the abstract picture to their concrete reality, and transforming their interpretation of reality. Decodification aims to achieve critical consciousness by moving from the abstract to the concrete.

In phase two, the literacy team investigates the themes common to the people, and select the themes for discussion, for example, dependency, nationalism, development. These are "generative themes (GTs)", selected from the thematic universe (interacting historical themes of an epoch found in the men-world relationship). To investigate GTs is to investigate human perception of reality. GTs are located in concentric circles, unfolding into other themes ("thematic fan"), from the general to the particular, for example, dependency, dispossession, poverty. The team then codifies the themes with the intention of presenting problem-posing situations that will lead to critical awareness and *conscientization*. Once the decoding is done, the team prepares the materials, breaking down the themes and having some "specialists" introduce the themes and talk about them through a picture, recording. Once the materials are prepared, and circulated, a *Culture Circle* is initiated, and conscientization and dialogical action is promoted. It is imperative that the literacy coordinators inform their students that they played a crucial role in the preparation of the manuals.

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Reading the Subaltern Woman in Women and Development: Textual Gaps

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educated or the expert privileged female possesses power, and you the subaltern women, do not. Secondly, there is also the elitist and arrogant assumption that one is a subject and an agent only when infused with power and knowledge from an external source or method, for example, literacy, participatory action, conscientization/consciousness raising. Until then, the subaltern is merely treated as a helpless object, not only by the oppressor but also by the development practitioners. Freire describes his oppressed as passive victims trapped in the "culture of silence" whose knowledge must be "rescued" and "restored" by literacy experts in order to empower and emancipate. Thirdly, local knowledges and strategy construction are not recognized because presumably, the subaltern or the oppressed do not act since they are victims of a greater power i.e. oppressor's ideology, and downtrodden into submission. Fourthly, the oppressed are often constructed in an innocent light; they can do no wrong for their subjugated positions are self-explanatory. Their lives and their subjectivities are after all, not their own, but an internalization of the oppressor's values. The fifth problem lies in the lumping of oppression (as well as that of the oppressor) as a shared, homogenous experience[40]. For example, within the same village, a homeless cripple does not have the same options as a dispossessed subsistence farmer. Finally, empowerment can result in disempowerment. For example, the greater value placed upon literacy (as a liberating tool) disempowers those who value and practice oral traditions of intergenerational knowledge transmission[41] (for example, the Andean women weavers

Throughout the whole process, despite repeated statements of the "oppressed's" central role in the preparation of the literacy project, and the educator's "humble" role, the final selection of words and themes, and the planning are the responsibility of the literacy coordinators. The oppressed in Freire's world is still very much the helpless subaltern who cannot select the generative words or themes themselves. In selecting the themes, in having "specialists" prepare the introductory notes, the power relations are still very much perpetuated which leaves one to wonder about the whole notion of empowerment. Furthermore, there is very little critical practice if all the words are deliberately selected to achieve a certain discursive or ideological purpose. Freire also ignores the power relations which are attached to the observation and selection process whereupon there are deliberate and conscious attempts of suppressing certain words and themes, and ignoring certain aspects of everyday live, while yet lifting the *presence* of others. Also, in the selection, words and themes could very well be taken out of the context in which they are presented.

[40]Which explains why conscientization is also presented as a universal model.

[41]It is the definition of "literacy" and the value attached to it which requires some deconstruction. The emphasis upon literacy or "the power and arrogance of the written word" has also bypassed, marginalized and devalued those whose knowledge is grounded upon everyday life, for example, healing. Some of the problems which are attached to many well-meaning literacy

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whose textile designs carry abstract meanings which contain mother–daughter intergenerational knowledge). What then, is empowerment? Who is empowering who, and for whom does empowerment ultimately benefit? After the business of empowerment, what happens?

The problem surrounding Freire's work is the context in which he places enpowerment, a word that lugs around an ideological baggage, and must be deconstructed in terms of the context it is presented. Empowerment becomes a disturbing concept when it is served within a binary conception in which the transfusion of empowering ideas is ordered along certain prescriptions, in this case, conscientization. This leads to another misassumption – that the conscientization process would engender critical awareness, and enable one to rationalize accordingly in which justice and freedom will prevail, and layers of false perceptions are peeled off to unveil an "authentic self". Subjective changes are always negotiated when new discourses are injected into the social space. For example, the discursive presence of a UN sponsored literacy team in a Third World village does not disrupt a timeless, unchanging situation but enters into what is already a contested space. We must be reminded here again of Gayatri Spivak's cautionary note on the voice of the "native informant" who justifies the intellectual projects of the West and the East. The oppressed is herself constructed within a discourse which places her in relation to a binary other: the oppressor. The whole notion of speaking (or in this case, dialogue) is bound up within discourse and power, and conscientization sessions, participatory action or dialogical exchanges are not innocent of re/producing desired voices or the "right answers" despite such claims to self-reflexion or critical consciousness. Factors such as personal intentions, gains, advantages come into play in such sessions, and what is "conscientization" is not the removal of an ideological cloud of false consciousness but subjective choices – especially when it is made clear that conscientization is equated with a better life[41]. One is not

programmes include the arrogant assumption that illiteracy is equated with ignorance, the misrecognition of what the subaltern perceives as their immediate and most basic needs (to be "literate" is not usually a lifelong aspiration of the subaltern). Depending on the context of the situation, literacy by itself is no solution to the subaltern. As Kamla Bhasin argues, "illiteracy is not a disease which needs immediate eradication" (1983). Literacy programmes must be argued in terms of the subaltern women's *right to learn*.

[42]Also, I want to point out that the process of conscientization is sometimes not a trasferrable one (although it can be improvised). Depending on the cultural context, dialogue is sometimes a difficult process among certain cultures whose oral histories are not usually shared among the greater community but only among family members. Conscientization depends on conversational participation, where every participant is willing to dialogue in order to "empower". Women's consciousness raising in community-based struggles in Brazil offers a very good

necessarily a subject when one is filled with critical self-awareness; one has always been a subject, only the context of awareness, and the forms of agency shift.

Empowerment must be reconceptualized as a dynamic process that responds to the context of the situation, and seen as expanding the power and options to act to a specific historical and cultural situation instead of the rigid transfer of power model. Empowerment must be a lifelong project, one that "transpowers" not merely the subaltern women but those all around her as well. When power is conceived from a Foucauldian standpoint, power is infused in every niche and corner of society, in every being, and in networks constituting subjects and endowing them with capabilities. From this perspective, power tears up dichotomies and encourages the opening up of spaces for modes of resistance and strategies, and calls attention to "subordinate" knowledges. Thus, the absence or restrained level of agency from the subaltern woman does not necessarily convey that she is devoid of power. Rather, the difference of agency lies in picking up the tools, "tools for the identification of the conditions of possibility which operate through the obviousness and enigmas of our present, tools perhaps also for the eventual modification of those conditions" (Gordon, 1980: 258), – and empowerment does not necessarily provide one with the appropriate tools to identify and modify those conditions.

The whole argument concerning the disempowerment of the subaltern women in the Third World appears to be situated within Western enlightenment discourse. Empowerment, and how a woman identifies power are highly contextual issues that are above and beyond the political notion of power. When "enlightened" development practitioners and theorists speak of empowering the oppressed, they are also constructing a representation of the oppressed as the helpless victim who must learn to act. The literature of WAD and the documents of the UN Decade for Women (Fraser, 1987) are plastered with phrases pertaining to the deficient woman who lacks something, for example education, training, self-esteem and confidence. Why do women lack so much? When did women ever lack so much? Who decides who is lacking what? How is this idea of a "lack" disseminated? Granted that subaltern women find themselves in very oppressive and difficult circumstances but does lack here pertain to some material or/and spiritual deficiency? Subaltern women appear to be represented as partial unfulfilled beings, as so engendered by the liberal, socialist, paradigms, where the essential self must be fully developed or at least, empowered and emancipated from false consciousness. The well intentioned "empowering the oppressed" declaration must be investigated in terms of what empowering means, and empowering to do what. If empowering the oppressed is

example of the conscientizing process (Corcoran-Nantes, 1993: 136-155) Oral histories are very powerful forms of politicization in these community-based struggles, and women who participate are genuinely eager to record their political experiences and create their political identity while taking great pride in recalling and detailing the events of their struggle or protests.

prescribed within the Western enlightenment discourse, i.e. political participation, the sovereign subject and its right to self-determination, gender equality [read: Western notions of gender equality], and collective action, then empowerment itself is merely another form of ideological violence, the supplanting of one form of "liberation" for another.

Dis/Mis/Empowering Women.

I now want to turn to Sharon Taylor's (1991) "Reflections on The Use of Participatory Video in Women's Empowerment" on using the small format video as an empowering tool in Thailand – an article which I see as a strong example of "misempowering" subaltern women not so much for its incompatibility as a transferred process from North America (more precisely, Memorial University, Newfoundland) but for its Western myopic arrogance towards local cultural values and conceptions regarding notions of presence, dialogue and consciousness raising. The small format video in Newfoundland, referred to as the Fogo Process has been used as a "participatory communications tool to assist rural communities in their efforts to retain self-reliance and to develop self-confidence" (163), and has now been transferred to Thai women to empower and aid them in their efforts to overcome barriers to political and economic development. Various facets of Paulo Freire's conscientization literacy method are also incorporated into the process such as seeking generating words and themes from the local community, and dialogue. The objective however, is to use the video as a media tool to mirror "reality" and the process aims to enhance self-awareness, self-confidence and conscientize them in relation to their marginalization from the mainstream of economic and political power.

A great many problems that I have discussed in this chapter and which saturate WAD theories and practices are perfectly examplified in this article. The most obvious one being binary conceptualizations (helpless victims who must be aided by female development experts from the First World the dynamic advanced First World vs the timeless, unchanging periphery). In charting the gradual familiarity to the video equipment, one of the most damaging binary representations found in the article is set up where the Third World woman is portrayed as technologically backwards and uncertain ("hesitancy in their applications") while the First World woman is the expert who must ease the subaltern women into advanced technology. The gradual transition in terms of technological education here is implied within a discourse of "growth" – and there is this overweening superiority displayed in the article where Taylor treats her subaltern Thai subjects like naive children who gradually discover the new world of video technology and its "empowering" processes:

> It is interesting to note that the village women do not *compete* for the equipment. They *enjoy seeing themselves* on video as much as they do using

the equipment. They *mastered* the training quickly and *take the same care* with the equipment as do the university team. (Taylor, 1991: 167, italics mine)

[The men] are now *beginning* to participate with the women in looking at the videos of the dancing and *identifying the changes from the past*. They are also *beginning to explore* community values with the women and *celebrate the joy of community* in the dancing. They are beginning to identify the resources found among them and around them. (Taylor, 1991: 174, italics mine)

Is it so surprising that these women do not compete for the equipment, and that they can master the training quickly? Such assumptions only arise from an ethnocentric blindness that is truly offensive for it locates the subaltern Thai women in a prior position of ignorance and helplessness. Furthermore, to even claim that the men are *beginning* to learn community values is staggering in its scope of arrogance, especially when most Thai cultures, like most Asian cultures, are community based with powerful kinship structures. What Taylor does not recognize, is the fact that the gradual participation of the men is not some crossing of a major threshold of community consciousness but rather the possibility that the community ties were already existing and that participation had been gradual since the original project was aimed at "empowering women" – spaces of female activity that men do not usually cross over. This is the modern "Orientalist" fantasy – that the Third World subaltern who lacks the necessary tools must be taught to rediscover herself and the culture of her local community. The ethnocentric and patronizing language which pervades the entire article only serves to enhance the totalizing victimization of subaltern Third World women and their cultures, for example,

I [the author] believe that struggle against the oppression of women is ultimately fought at the cultural level by reaffirming and where necessary changing traditional value concepts and practices of ownership and achievement in order to create socially responsible use of economic resources, knowledge and information. (Taylor, 1991: 164)

The problem with such a statement above is the idea of changing and reaffirming traditional value concepts, especially in a country about which Taylor admits, she has little or no knowledge of[4]. Needless to say, Taylor also commits the Western violence of value imposition when she talks of creating a "socially responsible use of economic resources, knowledge and information" (164), as if an irrational and non-socially responsible system

[4]Unfortunately, this is the attitude which most development planners carry into their work concerning the Third World.

had existed prior to her empowering mediations.

Before I discuss Taylor's participatory video process of empowerment, I want to address briefly the conceptualization and value systems attach to ideas of media, image and presence. How one uses and perceives the media is bound by socio- cultural contexts, for example the media as an evil influence in muslim countries. There is a powerful sense of promoting the image in North America as the landscape is practically inundated by the various facets of the media. Cameras are pervasive in North American reality, and the privacy of personal lives are often laid bare to millions who tune in to afternoon talk shows such as Oprah Winfrey, Phil Donahue and other news magazine shows. The "confident" woman image is often plastered across women's magazines, even as "eye-contact" is established as the index of confidence and power levels. To be seen on television or splashed across the front pages and covers of newspapers and magazines is usually equated with fame or ignominy. Notions of fame, appearance, and presence are however, very strongly linked to cultural value systems and societal norms.

In promoting the video as an empowering tool, Taylor did not display any awareness or cultural sensitivity towards the fact that value systems are at stake, and her interpretation of the Thai women's hesitancy in handling video equipment or the subaltern's uncertainty in appearing on the video to talk about herself are rooted in Westerncentric bias. It is thus even more ironic when Taylor writes that through video participation, an obviously foreign value imposition, the subaltern Thai women are learning to challenge development planning "done in isolation, removed from the context of community and *based on values imported from other cultures*" (170, italics mine). Also, I have argued that the conscientization method of empowerment is not easily transferrable for it involves dialoguing, an impediment to cultures where speaking about personal matters are synonymous to a loss of privacy and a flaunting of oneself. To speak sometimes is not an empowering process, but a forced situation in which if the subject speaks, she is entering into another's discourse, and if she doesn't, she is still represented within that same discourse, as disempowered. It is arrogant to assume that when the subaltern does speak, it is a liberating cathartic moment when she is finally aware of the possibilities of her existence.

This is how Taylor perceives the stages of the participatory video format, and interprets the responses of her participants:

> The initial videos show each speaker as hesitant, self-conscious, anxious, interrupting themselves and attempting to make *eye contact* with group members for reassurance. After a period of two weeks with daily meetings, the videos are quite different. People are speaking calmly, *looking inward* rather than at the group members. Their words are profound and moving. There are tears as they explore the negative messages they received as children as they perceived the impact of these messages on their *self-image* as women. The video tapes were helpful in indicating objectively the growth

in awareness and strength of individuals and in revealing the *bonding* taking
place within the group. (166, italics mine)

From the above extract, Taylor is implying that it is the video, as the empowering tool
which has guided these women to their growth of awareness and the exploration of their
self-image. Also, to infer that after two weeks, there is a visible transformation in terms
of growth of awareness and critical consciousness, is to set up the idea that the subaltern
Thai women began the process with their lack of self-esteem and self-reflexion. If the
subaltern woman is "hesitant, self-conscious, anxious, interrupting themselves and
attempting to make eye-contact with group members for reassurance," it is not because she
is lacking confidence or power, rather what she is showing could be cultural discomfiture
and awkwardness, having to participate in an externally imposed process over which she
has no control. Furthermore, Asians tend not to feel as comfortable speaking in front of a
camera, let alone to an audience comprised of unfamiliar Westerners and elite university
Thai women. Quite obviously, the more one participates in such a process, the more
confortable one feels in front of the camera – hardly the gradual road to enlightnement and
empowerment, as Taylor would assume. Furthermore, if tapes are played back daily to the
participants, and one observes how awkwardly one looks, there would be a conscious
attempt to improve one's self presentation or image the next time – especially when it
appears that is the ultimate objective of the "experts". Herein lies the problem: the level of
empowerment is dependant upon the transition as recorded by the video camera. How one
sees oneself, and charts one's confidence is dependant upon the gradual confidence level
of the subaltern in relation to her interaction with the camera, or establishing that crucial
"eye-contact" with the lenses. The more familiar and comfortable she feels in front of the
camera, the more "empowered" she is. The image she portrays in the video becomes the
index upon which the subaltern charts her transition, or her conscientization, fulfilling the
criterion of "empowerment" as determined by Western standards. The camera is innocent
of the discursive marks of power and knowledge. Simply put, the camera does not lie
image, becomes and is everything.

I do not want to deny the value of utilizing video technology in recording cultural
knowledge and as a tool for empowerment. But when it is assumed, as Taylor has in her
article, that the impact of the video technology upon the village is a significant one – one
which transformed the Thai village and "healed the wounds"of the women, empowerment
becomes merely another form of perpetuating the uneven power between the First World
woman and the Third World subaltern. The videotaping process itself becomes a project
of First World women to secure her native informants – and constructed out of the
power/knowledge privilege of the West. The subaltern woman in Trinh T. Minh Ha's words
"is caught in the regime of *visibility* as deployed by the West in a wide range of humanistic
and anti-humanistic discourses to conserve its leading position as Subject of knowledge"
(1991: 186). Empowerment in this context, is *misempowerment*, for it is based upon

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Reading Subaltern Women in a Changing World

As late capitalism digs deeper roots into the many regions of the Third World, the complexities of daily lives increases as worlds become decentred, and societies become the whirlgig of cultural contestation. Cultural change is not the smooth unfolding of teleological logic but rather a disruptive, contradictory process which produces differential outcomes that "involve changes in identity, relations of struggle and dependence, including the experience of reality itself" (Ong, 1987: 3). Culture is therefore, never fixed, and, is "taken as historically situated and emergent, shifting and incomplete meanings and practices generated in webs of agency and power" (ibid: 2–3). Cultural change then, should be seen in the light of changing relations of domination and resistance. This is extremely relevant to the diasporic character of colonialism where the transportation and emigration of, or nationalistic binding of various ethnicities across the colonial world produced in many places, multi–ethnic societies. It is necessary then to enquire how groups and classes struggle to produce and reinterpret culture through multiple and conflicting discursive formations which determine practices and values. It is also necessary to capture and understand the discontinuities, and disruptions of experience in cultural change, and the reconstitution and redeployment of subjectivity within multi–foci contestations in societies such as those found within many Third World societies which are grappling with the invading tide of an alien Western culture that has resulted in a melange of attitudes and behaviour.

These are uncertain but unbounded times, where subaltern women are immersed in disruptive transformations – their lives decentred, discontinued, and yet also reconstituted. Women located in many Third World countries, and entering the modern workplace are situated between the old and the new, as they grapple with capitalism, techno/bureaucracy, the taylorized work environment and new regulatory practices, displacement of cultural and religious ties, and the severance of family structures – their identities contested in the social space of transplanted modern (read: Western) values. Out of this whirlwind of contradictions, appear the new matrices of power relations and multivaried discursive configurations that reconstitute the subjective consciousness of the Third World woman.

economic change takes place (Lie and Lund, 1991; Ehlers, 1990). Change always produces more changes, more aspirations, desires, displacements, and discontinuities as we have seen in Aihwa, Ong's study of the neophyte factory girls in the semi-conductor plants in Malaysia, as well as in Tracy Bachrach Ehler's (1990) ethnographic study of the entrepreneurial Guatamelan women in the Indian town of San Pedro Sacatepéquez whose family based cottage industries (mostly textiles, weaving, garment production) are reconstituted in the face of economic modernization. Utilizing their roles as mothers and wives, the women in San Pedro were once able to manage and control the family business and resources. With the impact of economic "modernization", the women found themselves marginalized since cottage industries had little linkage with external markets. Yet they attempted to maximize their business opportunities in other ways (despite extreme infrastructural constraints) while encouraging their daughters to "modernize," pushing them toward school and urban employment. The contradictions and conflicts which arise from the uneven and contradictory process of capitalist transformation thus, affect the changing nature of gender relations, the sexual division of labour, as well as the subjectivities of the subaltern women. Ambiguities and contradictions arise out of the encounter between the traditional and modern, and the local and the alien. But as I have argued in the previous chapter, it is inadequate to conjure up the helpless subaltern women who vacillates (or disappears in the lacunae) between the modern and the traditional. Rather we need to recognise the active negotiation and resituation of the subaltern woman and her subjectivity within the contradictions as a response to the interaction with the changing (although not necessarily for the better) polyglot environment. The subaltern Third World woman is not a mute figure: for even in her non-speech, she speaks – the problematique lies in the context in which she is speaking, and who is listening.

There remains a lack of analysis in women and development issues pertaining to the tension between the traditional-local and the modern/foreign: mainly, how do women in the Third World negotiate their lives within the contradictions and discontinuities produced by the penetration of modern capitalist practices, and in what spaces do they occupy? The tendencies to dichotomize often exclude the "void" of activity between the local/traditional and the alien/modern, and posit any problematique as the crisis to resolve the old and new; as if one lacks the agency to articulate new spaces and strategies within new (if not alien) discursive configurations or if cultural synthesis between the West and the local is an impossible task that would only produce social chaos. One is familiar with the dilemma that women face in the subsistence agricultural sector and cottage industries, and who hawk in local marketplaces. They often encounter the barriers of economic competition as the exigencies of the Capitalist world system clearly favour the larger [read usually male] producers over the smaller ones. Development marginalizes as well as exploits, but even despite the austerity and structural adjustments, subaltern women have been active players in the socio-economic and political realm. Collective action all over the world (for

example, see GABRIELA in the Phillipines), from shanty towns inhabitants to community organizations have engaged in political and economic action (eg. IMF riots) to counter the consequences of structural adjustments and other economic hardships (Moghadam, 1992: 243; Radcliffe and Westwood, 1993). However, despite the plethora of literature written on women and development in the Third World, and the levels of economic and social oppression, few address the manner in which women cope with the disruptions of cultural and traditional norms, that invariably affects the family structure, gender relations, and the community. Fewer texts even address how recontextualization take place with regards to subaltern women's abilities to control, utilize and dispose of whatever economic resources and skills they possess. One must move beyond the language of "coping strategies" and "survival" – instead, we must also focus on the multiple and flexible subjective position and agency of subaltern women within the interplay of the economic, the political and the social.

This study is not aimed towards a rejection of all other paradigms of development, rather I hope that it supplements the theorizing by adopting a poststructuralist/ postmodernist framework that would hopefully, open up new spaces for alternative perspectives and strategizing in WAD theories and practices regarding the subaltern woman. Although a postmodern approach appears at first, incommensurable with subaltern Third World women's issues, it has raised questions of the inherent racist and Eurocentric language of representation and discourse within WAD literature and "conventional" feminism. What development is cannot be sufficiently captured in grand schemes laid out by WAD theorists and practitioners or international institutions, namely, the United Nations or the World Bank; for the institutionalization of such a universal goal would only disregard and reject distinct cultural notions of development. To contest the development enterprise, we must shift our focus of knowledge and power to local communities, and evoke the multivaried subaltern voices, whose experiences and knowledges offer the possibilities of subverting "conventional development wisdom". We must[44] alter the relations between knowers and the receivers of knowledge, seeking a process where the epistemic right, the local strategies and the intergenerational knowledge of the subaltern women are also acknowledged – where multiple worlds can meet and spaces for action be re/defined and re/created. We must learn to read the subaltern woman as a dynamic subject who cannot be frozen in timeless portrayals of victimhood, and who almost always exceeds any one subjective position. We must recognize the subaltern woman as an active player imbued with the capacities to traverse borders and spaces, and create and transform her environment. Women and development must go beyond prescribing unilinear and

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[44] I realize that "must" here appears as an imposition – but I see it in terms of an alternative, and it is best read with an "also" in front of it.

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monocultural models, embracing not only the economic but also diverse and contextual cultural and individual notions of human dignity, autonomy and empowerment as significant objectives of development. Through recognizing the operations of language, discourse and power, shattering the fixed and stable subjectivity, subverting the amassing of power, and displacing grand narratives, the adoption of a postmodern framework questions the omniscience of scholars, researchers, practitioners, as well as the "innocent" standpoint of the "native informant"; thus forcing us to question our expertise and assumptions in development projects, and in the process might aid us to remove our much privilege-tinted glasses and aim for a dynamic relational and intersubjectivity grounded praxis.

I dream of a new age of curiousity....We must increase the possibility for
movement backwards and forwards. This would not lead, as people often
fear, to uniformity and levelling down, but on the contrary, to the
simultanous existence and differentiation of these various networks.

Michel Foucault

We must begin *wherever we are* and the thought of the trace, which cannot
take the scent into account, has already taught us that it was impossible to
justify a point of departure absolutely. *Wherever we are*: in a text where we
already believe ourselves to be.

Jacques Derrida

There are no beginnings and there are no ends – but I am situated at the moment
where I am suppose to write a conclusion, a position which presents a dilemma for it
requires the fulfillment of a number of conditions. Conclusions, or "effective closings" as
I have been taught in English classes have three functions: to tie together the ideas I have
been developing, to emphasize my thesis position, and to leave a strong final impression
of my main point. I have also been told that there should be no injection of new ideas in my
conclusion – even if one creates spaces for further reflection, there are boundaries to
adhere to. Conclusions are thus, difficult and risky projects, for they assume a point of
destination – to have arrived at a certain stage of knowledge where one can formulate
recommendations and resolutions. But I have not arrived at this stage, and to conclude is
to claim certainty and the coherent text. In my attempts to subvert and challenge the
dominant forms of knowledge, certainty is an illusory position, and this thesis I believe, is
far from being a coherent text. And so, I offer an alternative route – I will write
(in)conclusions – fragmented thoughts which have emerged from my writing.

I

There are no perfect paradigms which can adequately sum up the dynamic conditions of
the world, and theories, like straw figures, fail or are blown away each time they
confront the contradictions. Postmodernism leaves behind gaps in its blazing trail/s of
heightened intellectual discourses but it embraces the gaps, and evokes the gaps to
become active spaces for further discussion and debate. It does not admit to an ultimate
solution nor find comfort in an utopic future, but leave open the possibilities for endless
metamorphoses. The postmodern world is simultaneously the world of Derridean
différance, and the world of Foucault's discursive play – one needs the "deconstructive–
genealogical" unmasking of subjugated knowledge/s as the politics of différance.
Differance produces what it forbids, makes possible the very thing it makes impossible
(Derrida, 1976: 143). We live in this global mesh of imbricated cultures and experiences
that transcend centers and peripheries.

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II

Postmodernity, is not *a mere crossing from one borderline to the other or that is not merely double, but a reality that involves the crossing of an indeterminate number of borderlines, one that remains multiple in its hyphenations* (Trinh, 1991: 107). Postmodernity is the naming of cultural heterogeneities or the cultural hybrids which defy the imposition of totalizations. The spaces are never neatly delineated – their contours always subject to constant pressures, the multiple points of resistance, and a proliferation of divisions, ruptures and dislocations. Postmodernism offers no conclusions, no terminus, no final fruition, no knowledge certainty – closure is never a possibility.

III

As familiar I am with the heteroglossia of postmodernism, I do not think we can avoid the essentializing or universalizing tendencies – but one requires the incessant practice of self-reflexivity. Many times we return to the safety of binaries – to speak even of the subaltern woman is already a privileged location. The intellectual, must therefore, systematically unlearn female privileged, and learn to *critique [any hegemonic] discourse with the best tools it can provide and not simply substituting the lost figure of the colonized* (Spivak, 1988: 295).

IV

So how shall we represent the subaltern woman, or perhaps, should we? If we must, then let us be wary of the cracks in our representational projects – for she will always surely escape our comprehension. We must look at representations as slippery, protean things – understand them as instances, or moments under constant earsure – that are governed by discursive power and knowledge (Foucault) and the metaphysics of presence (Derrida). We must deconstruct to seek the endless openings – the inscriptions of multiple subjective positions. We must look for her in the intervals of discursive shifts and in textual traces. We must see her in the Derridean light of "presence", "an always-already," "différance," "trace," "supplements," and "in spacing".

V

But in the midst of the excitement of the postmodern theatre, the figure of the subaltern woman in the Third World again disappears – only to end up an always already in the "difference" politics of the West – invoked as the Non-Western emergent Other in the resonating speeches of conscientious feminists and development planners in the West, *the game of allowing the Other, an apparent aura* (Trinh, 1991: 186). Never mind the melange of cultural experiences that she constitutes – she swings back and forth from primitive Other to lost Other. The subaltern woman is another discourse, an effect of a discourse and the target of a discourse. There is no virtue in either-or formulations.

VI

The subaltern woman always exceeds representation; she cannot only be "Hispanic," "Kenyan," "Muslim," "Wife," "Mother". She is all this, and yet not at all. We cannot reverse the binary and long for the lost Other, *the fantasized Other as authoritative subject of an other knowledge* (Trinh, 1991: 186) – a figment of the modern Orientalist imagination appropriated into the language of difference and to justify the West. The Third World woman is not the privileged signifier of difference or the cultural surplus of the West. She is not the transcendental signified of oppression – *there is no virtue in global laundry lists with 'woman' as a pious item* (Spivak, 1988: 308).

VII

For even the question of "Who speaks?" as Rey Chow reminds us *tends to remain useless in its capacity to change existing power relations [for the] posing of the question itself is already a form of privilege, mostly affordable for those who can stand apart and view the world with altruistic concern* (1993: 145). The act of speaking is dependant upon the conditions of its own possibilities – conditions that must be created. I do not want to deny the subaltern of her voice – I merely want to address the conditions in which she speaks, and in which I recognize her speaking.

VIII

If we must speak, and speak for and about the subaltern – then we must dislocate ourselves, and deny the privilege within us. If we must speak of her speaking, then we must question the boundaries of that project, and understand where she is speaking from. And if she does not speak, we must not force speech but engage in that silence.
Silence is the lacuna of speech: it is the difficulties in capturing the complexities and the nuances of post-colonial identities – of subaltern positions. We have to recognize simultaneously the instances in which speaking (presence) and silence (absence) take place.

IX

For those of us who write of the subaltern Other, we must speak from multiplicities in order to dencentralize ourselves – creating the spaces in which more spaces erupt. *The space of creativity is the space whose occupancy invites other occupancies* (Trinh, 1991: 187), it proliferates itself. No one truly possesses that space – if we do occupy it, it is merely provisional and temporal.

X

Postmodernism, as I have argued in this thesis does not posture a utopic future, it merely speaks of infinite change and transformation in terms of pluralities. It is an act of dislocation and displacement forging heterogeneous alliances that take account of contextual approaches that will enable gender, economic and political self-determination. Its most dangerous position perhaps, lies in the fact that transformations are not necessarily for the better. In its ever questioning and subversive stance, in its acknowledgement of the ever fluid and fragmented constitution of the subject, in the dispersal of power beyond the binary oppositions and the explosion of categories, it offers its most hopeful visions.

XI

Nothing is more dangerous than the petrified world of mono-ideologies, of unitary futures, and totalizing prescriptions. There is no economy in dogma. We have to subject ourselves to constant displacements and destabilizations of our knowledge structures making possible the ceaseless questioning of the Derridean "presence". We must weave in and out of positions – decentralization demands that we *maintain the the dialectical relation between acceptance and refusal, between reversing and displacing* (Trinh, 1991: 186-7). But this is not a matter of sitting back and surrendering ourselves to the joyful transgressions, as Barthes would want us to. We have that what is within us to evoke the transgressions.

XII

And what of power – dare we even consider empowerment after Foucault, or even after Derrida? If we persist with our models of empowerment, then we continue to inscribe the subaltern in her position of marginality. Power is everywhere – but it is distributed unequally – some have more than others. Can we see empowerment then as a rhizomatic model – as dispersed and polymorphous – as a dynamic interweaving process in which power is exchanged and supplemented.

In that sense, I give my voice to Michel Foucault; *we have the power...we shouldn't give it up* (Foucault in Miller, 1993: 353).

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