NOTICE

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OPENING THE QUESTION

A "POLITICAL" READING OF TEXTS BY JACQUES DERRIDA,

GAYATRI SPIVAK, ROLAND BARTHES, AND DAPHNE MARLATT

by

Sarah Harasym

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

SPRING 1988

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

RELEASE FORM

NAME OF AUTHOR: Sarah Harasym

TITLE OF THESIS: Opening the Question: A "Political" Reading of Texts by Jacques

Derrida, Gayatri Spivak, Roland Barthes, and Daphne Marlatt

DEGREE: Doctor of Philosophy

YEAR THIS DEGREE GRANTED: 1988

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled Opening the Question: A "Political" Reading of Texts by Jacques Derrida, Gayatri Spivak, Roland Barthes, and Daphne Marlatt submitted by Sarah Harasym in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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(Supervisor)

Date: ....

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Ms. Sarah Harasym
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Sincerely yours,

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak
Andrew W. Mellon Professor

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(Supervisor)

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Date: Feb. 8/88

Et qu'il y a là un type de question, disons encore historique, dont nous ne faisons aujourd'hui qu'entrevoir la conception, la formation, la gestation, le travail. Et je dis ces mots les yeux tournés, certes, vers les opérations de l'enfantement; mais aussi vers ceux qui, dans une société dont je ne m'exclus pas, les détournent devant l'encore innommable qui s'annonce et, qui ne peut le faire, comme c'est nécessaire chaque fois qu'une naissance est à l'oeuvre, que sous l'espèce de la non-espèce, sous la forme informe, muette, infante et terrifiante de la monstruosité.

— Jacques Derrida, L'écriture et la différence

Here there is a kind of question, let us still call it historical, whose conception, formation, gestation, and labor we are only catching a glimpse of today. I employ these words, I admit, with a glance toward the operations of childbearing—but also with a glance toward those who, in a society from which I do not exclude myself, turn their eyes away when faced by the as yet unnamable which is proclaiming itself and which can do so, as is necessary whenever a birth is in the offing, only under the species of the nonspecies, in the formless, mute, infant, and terrifying form of monstrosity.

— Jacques Derrida, Writing and Difference[1]

[1]L'écriture et la différence (Paris: Seuil, 1967) 428; Writing and Difference, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978) 293.

ABSTRACT

From within the desire, interest, and power networks of global capitalism and nation-state alliances two of the questions that must be posed today are: what place does the ideological production of knowledge occupy within the politico-economic social text and what interventional force could, and does, deconstruction have in the political rewriting of this general text and its destination? The opening of these questions is a long term project that will involve a meticulous and cautious unfolding of the heterogeneous politico-economic, historical, social text. Here, in this thesis, I can only hope to open these questions and to begin, in a very provisional and general way, to approach the double gestural program of the first step of this project: a) reading the political role deconstructive and/or feminist texts play in the production, reproduction, and transformation of social discourses and knowledge and b) implementing a strategy of reading that is sensitive to class, race, ethnic, and gender differences for producing political readings of texts.

Addressing these two questions, this thesis is broken into two sections. The first two chapters, "Re-opening the Question," and "The Affirmation of Political Thought," focus upon the potential interventional force of deconstruction. Chapter three, "In Search of Roland Barthes," traces the place the figure of the m(other) occupies in Barthes' texts. Barthes' theory of non-authoritarian discourse, a theory which structurally equates non-authoritarian discourse with the figure of the mother, has an important place in French, American, and Canadian theory. It is for this reason that I feel it is

necessary to question whether Barthes' theory of writing (écriture) can provide us with a strategy for reading and for writing that does not appropriate the figure of the mother. Chapter four, "En-countering the Context: Daphne Marlatt and the Limits of Feminism," in a somewhat similar way, situates the figure of the "third world woman" in Daphne Marlatt's work.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The people to whom I am indebted in the [research] and in the writing of this dissertation must be acknowledged.

I wish to thank Dr. Gayatri Spivak, Dr. Jacques Derrida, Dr. Geoffrey Hartman, Dr. Shirley Neuman, Dr. Tilottama Rajan, Dr. Henry Kreisel, Dr. Anthony Purdy, Dr. Allan Stoeckl, and Dr. F.S. Chia for their interest and their support.

I would especially like to thank Dr. Gayatri Spivak for granting me permission to quote from her unpublished essays and lectures.

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INTRODUCTION

> Human beings make their own history, but they do not
> make it with free parts; not in self-chosen, but in
> immediately encountered circumstances. .
>
>   - Karl Marx, The Eighteenth Brumaire[1]

From within the heterogeneous desire, interest, and power networks of

global capitalism and nation-state alliance at this time of global crisis, two of

the questions that must be posed are: what place does the ideological production

of knowledge occupy within the politico-economic, social text and what

interventional force could and does deconstruction have in the political rewriting

of this general text and its destination? The opening of these questions is a long

term project that will involve a meticulous and cautious unfolding of the

heterogeneous politico-economic, historical, social text. Here, in this thesis,

I can only hope to open these questions and to begin in a very provisional and

general way to approach the first step of this project: a) reading the political

role a select number of deconstructive and/or feminist texts play in the production,

reproduction, and transformation of social discourses and knowledge and

b) implementing a strategy of reading that is sensitive to class, race, ethnic

and gender difference. In a time of unprecedented politico-economic crisis and

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[1]This translation is by Gayatri Spivak and appears in her essay, "Can the
Subaltern Speak?" in Marxist Interpretations of Literature and Culture: Limits,
Frontiers, Boundaries, ed. Larry Grossberg and Gary Nelson (Urbana: University
of Illinois, forthcoming).

epistemological crisis—even a cursory glance at newspapers,[2] journals (financial, literary, philosophic, etc.) and television programs[3] would illustrate my point—literary studies must be situated within this global network of problems. The production of knowledge is not an apolitical practice; it is a political discursive practice that is purposeful and ideological. To do any less than situate literary studies would be to ignore our institutional responsibility.

To address these questions, I have broken this dissertation into two sections. The first two chapters, "Re-opening the Question," and "The Affirmation of Political Thought," both implicitly and explicitly focus upon the interventional force of deconstruction in the political rewriting of texts and their destinations. If I have chosen to address this question at this time of unprecedented world crisis by way of specific texts by Jacques Derrida and Gayatri Spivak, and indirectly by Paul de Man it is for at least three reasons. First, the "deconstructive" notion of textuality, as it provides us with a strategy for interpreting the heterogeneous forces or scripts which we inscribe and are inscribed by, simultaneously, calls these interpretations into question. Secondly, the texts I have chosen to discuss explicitly confront and enact political questions. Thirdly, the texts of Jacques Derrida, of Paul de Man, and of Gayatri Spivak display an especially acute critical vigilance which I often find lacking in other writers' texts. Having discussed in the first two chapters the "interventional force" of deconstruction and having also examined some of the problems that arise in contemporary French thought, chapter three introduces the second gesture of

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[2]See, for example, the series of articles the _Globe and Mail_ has printed on the relation between "third world" countries and the World Bank, between August and October, 1987.

[3]The fact that CBC can publicly broadcast a series on the "Politics of Food", I believe, suggests that we have indeed reached a state of crisis.

this project: implementing a strategy of reading that is sensitive to class, race, ethnic and gender differences. Chapter three, "In Search of Roland Barthes," traces the place the figure of the m(other) occupies in Barthes' texts. Barthes' theory of non-authoritarian discourse, a theory which structurally equates non-authoritarian discourse with the figure of the mother, has an important place in French, American, and Canadian theory. It is for this reason that I feel it is necessary to question whether Barthes' theory of writing (écriture) can provide us with a strategy for reading and for writing that does not appropriate the figure of the mother. Chapter four, "En-countering the Context: Daphne Marlatt and the Limits of Feminism," in a somewhat similar way, situates the figure of the "third world woman" in Daphne Marlatt's work. I am not suggesting that the problem of colonizing the "third world woman" is a problem restricted to Marlatt's work. On the contrary, the problem which we discover in these texts is a problem inherent to a great number of Canadian texts and must be taken into account. This chapter simply marks the opening of the political question within the Canadian context. Before we begin, I must clarify that the objective of this thesis is not to produce global, hegemonic generalizations about the politics of deconstruction or of the role literature plays in the production of cultural representation. Rather, the objective of this thesis is to discover in situational, specific ways the questions and problems posed in this small selection of texts.

There is no easy solution to these problems. Caught within the heterogeneous desire, interest and power networks, my chapters make only tentative explorations[4] displaying, no doubt, my complicity as a "first world" white academic. What

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[4]These explorations are tentative explorations since it is impossible to determine the effects of an ongoing process, to be more specific, the process of deconstruction at this time. (Deconstructive discourses have questioned the traditional authority of history, of theological narratives, and of "rational" cause and effect justifications.) To do so would be to assign predetermined limits and in doing so to, perhaps, delimit future possibilities.

I have written here seeks to be undone in its turn.

To what extent is my dissertation directed according to the interests of deconstruction? It is directed according to such interests to the extent that I share with Jacques Derrida, with Paul de Man and with Gayatri Spivak "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; and, finally, the acknowledgement that its own discourse can never be adequate to its example."[5]

At this "historical" moment, I believe it is more important to question the possibility that literary studies are written into and by the politico-economic text in a non-conclusive, tentative way, than it is to construct a coherent theory of determined causes and effects. Those readers who are troubled by the fact that I have not provided a coherent·theory with a "proper" conclusion, I will simply ask to meditate on the problems addressed and on the questions opened by this select number of texts.

There is one further resistance that readers might have to this thesis that it is necessary to confront. It could be argued that the language/content is too difficult. Yes, I agree the language/content is at times difficult, but so are the issues being addressed. If I have focused my attention on deconstructive writers and if I write from within their terminology and interests, it is because I believe

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[5]Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Translator's Forward to "Draupaudi." In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics (New York and London: Methuen, 1987) 180.

that deconstruction offers the most critically aware approach to the issues being addressed in this thesis, at this particular time of crisis. At the same time, we must acknowledge that what is difficult for one is not difficult for another and that our language is in a constant process of change. Even the meaning of a word, as my first chapter will illustrate, is open to a number of interpretations. "Difficult," itself, is an ideological notion, which is constructed in a binary opposition with "easy." Yet, we know that such oppositions—truth/fiction, manual/skilled, theory/practice—are politically interested oppositions that work in the service of "common sense." I am not attempting to ignore the fact that at times I use "neologisms" and "phrases" that everyone might not be familiar with. Where I have done so, I have tried to explain, as best I can, "the meaning of the word." In the first chapter, "Reopening the Question," I refer to a text by Jacques Derrida entitled Otobiographies: L'enseignement de Nietzsche et la politique du nom propre [The Ear of the Other: Otobiography, Transference, Translation].[6] In this text, Derrida directly confronts the Nazi appropriation of Nietzsche's essay "On the Future of Our Educational Institutions." The lesson to be learned from this example is, perhaps, that the future of the text and the differential force of language must not be closed. Indeed, difference is the possibility for change—the possibility for thought.

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[6] Jacques Derrida, Otobiographies: L'enseignement de Nietzsche et la politique du nom propre (Paris: Galilée, 1984); The Ear of the Other: Otobiography, Transference, Translation (New York: Schocken Books, 1985).

CHAPTER 1

RE-OPENING THE QUESTION

[What is m]ost thought-provoking in our thought-provoking time is that we are still not thinking.

— Heidegger, What is Called Thinking[1]

[C]e qu'on appelle très vite la déconstruction n'est jamais un ensemble technique de procédures discursives, encore moins une nouvelle méthode herméneutique travaillant sur des archives ou des énoncés à l'abri d'une institution donnée et stable; c'est aussi, et au moins, une prise de position, dans le travail même, à l'égard de structures politico-institutionnelles qui constituent et règlent notre pratique, nos compétences et nos performances. Précisément parce qu'elle n'a jamais concerné seulement des contenus de sens, la déconstruction devrait ne pas être séparable de cette problématique politico-institutionnelle et requérir un questionnement nouveau sur la responsabilité, un questionnement qui ne se fie plus nécessairement aux codes hérités du politique ou de l'éthique. Ce qui fait que, trop politique aux yeux des uns, elle puisse paraître démobilisante aux yeux de ceux qui ne reconnaissent le politique qu'à l'aide des panneaux de signalisation d'avant la guerre. La déconstruction ne se limite ni à une réforme méthodologique rassurante pour l'organisation donnée, ni inversement à une parade de déstruction irresponsable ou irresponsabilisante qui aurait pour plus sûr effet de laisser tout en l'état et de consolider les forces le plus immobiles de l'université.

What is somewhat hastily called deconstruction is not, if it is, of any consequence, a specialized set of discursive procedures, still less the rules of a new hermeneutic method that works on texts or utterances in the shelter of a given and stable institution. It is also, at the very least, a way of taking a position, in its work of analysis, concerning the political and institutional structures that make possible and govern our practices, our competencies, our performances. Precisely because it is never concerned only with signified content, deconstruction should not be separable from this politico-institutional

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[1]Martin Heidegger, What is Called Thinking?, trans. Glenn Gray (New York: Harper and Row, 1968) 6. For the German see Martin Heidegger, Was heisst Denken? (Tubingen: Max Niemayer Verlag, 1954).

problematic and should seek a new investigation of responsibility, an investigation which questions the codes inherited from ethics and politics. This means that, too political for some, it will seem paralyzing to those who only recognize politics by the most familiar road signs. Deconstruction is neither a methodological reform that should reassure the organization in place nor a flourish of irresponsible and irresponsible-making destruction, whose most certain effect would be to leave everything as it is and to consolidate the most immobile forces within the university.

— Jacques Derrida "The Conflict of Faculties"[2]

The "politics" and the (political) interventional force of deconstruction continue to be issues of debate, a "conflict" and "contest" of faculties within the politico-institutional arena.[3] Since as early as the publications of De la grammatologie[4] and L'écriture et la différance[5] and the English translations of these texts, this debate has raged within and between representatives of the "Left" (those who profess "militantism" and "progressive commitment") and representatives of the "Right" ("neo-conservatives").[6] With the introduction

[2]Jacques Derrida, "The Conflict of Faculties," Languages of Knowledge and of Inquiry, ed. Michael Riffaterre (New York: Columbia University Press, forthcoming). Passage quoted in Jonathan Culler, On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism after Structuralism (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982) 156. For the French edition of this essay see "Mochlos ou le Conflit des Facultés," Philosophie 2 (1984), 42.

[3]I borrow the phrase "the conflict of faculties" from Derrida's essay by this name and from Kant's "The Conflict of Faculties," and the phrase "contest of faculties" from Christopher Norris' The Contest of Faculties: philosophy and theory after deconstruction (Methuen: London and New York, 1985).

[4]Jacques Derrida, De la grammatologie (Paris: Minuit, 1967); Of Grammatology, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1976). Throughout this dissertation both the French editions and the English translations of Derrida's texts will be quoted when both texts are available.

[5]Jacques Derrida, L'écriture et la différence (Paris: Seuil, 1967); Writing and Difference, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978).

[6]I borrow these distinctions from Jacques Derrida, "But, beyond...Open Letter to Anne McClintock and Rob Nixon," "Race," Writing, and Difference, ed. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1986) 367. See also Paul de Man, "Hegel on the Sublime," Displacement: Derrida and After, ed. Mark Krupnick (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983) 139.

of "affirmative deconstruction" the conflicts intensified.[7] Christopher Norris' text The Contest of Faculties has once again brought this debate to the fore.

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[7]The general "program" of deconstruction as articulated by Derrida in Positions (Paris: Minuit, 1972); Positions, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981) consists of two phases. (Due to the length of this footnote I have included English translations only.) The first phase is to destabilize the textual hierarchy by reversing the multiple binary opposition which constitutes it:

> On the one hand, we must traverse a phase of overturning. To do justice to this necessity is to recognize that in a classical philosophical opposition we are not dealing with the peaceful coexistence of a vis-à-vis, but rather with a violent hierarchy. One of the two terms governs the other (axiologically, logically, etc.), or has the upper hand. To deconstruct the opposition, first of all, is to overturn the hierarchy at a given moment. To overlook this phase of overturning is to forget the conflictual and subordinating structure of opposition. Therefore one might proceed too quickly to a neutralization that in practice would leave the previous field untouched, leaving one no hold on the previous opposition, thereby preventing any means of intervening in the field effectively. . . . The necessity of this phase is structural; it is the necessity of an interminable analysis: the hierarchy of dual oppositions always reestablishes itself (41-42).

The second phase is to displace the textual hierarchies of oppositions by marking "undecidables, that is, unities of simulacrum" which cannot be included within the oppositions but work to disorganize them from within, and therein, leave no room for a solution through "speculative dialectics":

> [I]t has been necessary to analyze, to set to work, within the text of the history of philosophy, as well as within the so-called literary text. . ., certain marks, shall we say. . .that by analogy (I underline) I have called undecidables, that is, unities of simulacrum, "false" verbal properties (nominal or semantic) that can no longer be included within philosophical (binary) opposition, but which, however, inhabit philosophical opposition, resisting and disorganizing it, without ever constituting a third term, without ever leaving room for a solution in the form of speculative dialectics. . . (42-43).

Depending upon the text being read, these "undecidables" take different forms and names: différance, supplement, pharmakon, hymen, etc. Derrida summarizes these simulacra as such:

> [T]he pharmakon is neither remedy nor poison, neither good nor evil, neither the inside nor the outside, neither speech nor writing; the supplement is neither a plus nor a minus, neither an outside nor the complement of an inside, neither accident nor essence, etc.; the hymen is neither confusion nor distinction, neither identity nor difference, neither consummation nor virginity, neither the veil nor unveiling, neither the inside nor the outside, etc.; the gram is neither a signifier nor a signified, neither a sign nor a thing, neither a presence nor

If at this time, I call your attention to Jacques Derrida's Mémoires: for Paul de Man[8] and "But, Beyond. . .Open Letter to Anne McClintock and Rob Nixon"[9] and if I, also, suggest twó very general patterns of response by those on the "Left"

· 7 (cont'd)

> an absence, neither a position nor a negation, etc.; spacing is neither space nor time; the incision is neither the incised integrity of a beginning, or of a simple cutting into, nor simple secondarity. Neither/nor, that is, simultaneously either or; the mark is also the marginal limit, the march, etc. (43).

The deconstructive "double writing" program itself as it has emerged in Derrida's texts may also be read as a double gestural program: the project of deconstituting the founding concepts of philosophy and the project of "affirmative deconstruction." In "Ja, ou le faux-bond," Digraphe, 11 (1977): 84-121, Derrida notes this difference as follows:

> Glas proposes a deconstruction (as much as possible—as always, but this must be repeated it seems—affirmative) of the opposition arbitrary/motivation. . .(but deconstruction is not a critical operation, the critical [le critique] is its object; deconstruction always bears at one moment or another on the trust put in the critical instance, the critico-theoretical, i.e., deciding, instance, in the ultimate possibility of the decidable; deconstruction is deconstruction of critical dogmatics. . .(Translation is mine, 103).

Gayatri Spivak in "Love Me, Love My Ombre Elle," Diacritics 14.4 (1986): 24-25, describes the different phases of deconstruction as follows: "Although it is not a clear demarcation. . .the former project is carried out in many meticulous analyses of the texts of phallogocentricism—the only texts we have. The latter project is more mysterious, leads to orphic utterances, is concerned with forging a practice that recognizes its condition of possibility in the impossibility of theoretical rigor, and that must remain apocalyptic in scope and tone, 'render delirious the interior voice of the other in us.'" Yet, this explication takes into account neither the rigour nor the interventional force of Derrida's readings.

[8]Jacques Derrida, Mémoires: for Paul de Man, trans. Cecile Lindsay, Jonathan Culler and Eduardo Cadava (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986). At the time I wrote this thesis the French edition of this text had not yet appeared.

[9]Jacques Derrida, "Race," Writing, and Difference, ed. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. 354-69. The preceding year this essay appeared in Critical Inquiry 13.1 (1986).

and those on the "Right": 1) the tendency to dismiss deconstruction as ahistorical

and/or apolitical,[10] or 2) the tendency to attempt to analogically equate, or

to "harness" deconstruction to a political program, (i.e., Marxism;[11] both

tendencies are, of course, founded upon misreadings of the Derridean notions

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[10]See for example, Edward A. Said, "The Problem of Textuality: Two Exemplary Positions," Critical Inquiry 4.4 (1978) and "Reflections on American "Left" Literary Criticism," The World, the Text and the Critic (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983); Richard Rorty, Consequences of Pragmatism (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 1982); M.H. Abrams, "The Deconstructive Angel," Critical Inquiry 3.3 (1977); Dennis Donoghue, "Deconstructing Deconstruction," New York Review of Books 27.10 (1980); Terry Eagleton, "The Idealism of American Criticism," New Left Review 127 (May-June, 1981) and Walter Benjamin or Towards a Revolutionary Criticism (London: New Left Books, 1981); Fredric Jameson, The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981); Postmodernism and Politics, ed. Jonathan Arac (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986); Perry Anderson, In the Tracks of Historical Materialism (London: Verso, 1983); Stephen W. Melville, Philosophy Beside Itself: On Deconstruction and Modernism (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986); Christopher Butler, Interpretation Deconstruction and Ideology (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984); Howard Felperin, Beyond Deconstruction: The Uses and Abuses of Literary Theory (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985); Walter Jackson Bate, "The Crisis in English Studies," Harvard Magazine, Sept./Oct., 1982; "The Shattered Humanities," Wall Street Journal, Dec. 31, 1982; John Brenkman, "Deconstruction and the Social Text," Social Text (1979): 186-88; and Anne McClintock and Rob Nixon, "No Names Apart: The Separation of Word and History in Derrida's 'Le Dernier Mot du Racisme,'" "Race," Writing, and Difference, ed. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. 339-53.

[11]See especially, Michael Ryan, Marxism and Deconstruction: A Critical Articulation (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1982), and "Deconstruction and Social Theory: The Case of Liberalism," Displacement: Derrida and After, ed. Krupnik; Les fins de l'homme: A partir du travail de Jacques Derrida, ed. Philippe Lacoue - Labarthe et Jean-Luc Nancy (Paris: Galilée, 1981); Ernest Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics (London: Verso, 1985); and Literature, Politics and Theory, ed. Francis Barker et als. (New York: Methuen, 1986). Here, my reading would also be different from Deborah Esch's description of the political force of deconstruction, as an ideological critique, see Interview XVII, 7. It seems to me that Esch totally dismisses the first session of difference—the irreducible force of difference that constitutes and destabilizes, at the same time, the conditions for the possibility and the impossibility of theoretical rigour. Derrida explicitly posits a gap between discourses of immediate political deconstruction and a deconstruction of theoretical or philosophical aspects in Positions (113).

of "textuality"[12] and of the "interventional force of deconstruction"[13]), it is

not to settle accounts once and for all. Here, I shall simply urge you to reread

the aforementioned texts by Derrida, texts which effectively counter these

misreadings. I have chosen to approach this issue indirectly, by focusing upon

the structure of the promise in a number of Derrida's text, especially in "Le

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[12]Derrida explains "textuality" as follows in "But Beyond. . .Open Letter to Anne McClintock and Rob Nixon,"

> No more than writing or trace, [text] is not limited to the paper which you cover with your graphism. It is precisely for strategic reasons (set forth at length elsewhere) that I found it necessary to recast the concept of text by generalizing it almost without limit, in any case without present or perceptible limit, without any limit that is. That's why there is nothing "beyond the text." That's why South Africa and apartheid are, like you and me, part of this general text, which is not to say that it can be read the way one reads a book. That's why the text is always a field of forces: heterogeneous, differential, open, and so on. That's why deconstructive readings and writings are concerned not only with library books, with discourses, with conceptual and semantic contents. They are not simply analyses of discourse such as, for example, the one you propose. They are also effective or active (as one says) interventions, in particular political and institutional interventions that transform contexts without limiting themselves to theoretical or constative utterances even though they must also produce such utterances. That's why I do not go "beyond the text," in this new sense of the word text, by fighting and calling for a fight against apartheid, for example. I say "for example" because it also happens that I become involved with institutional and academic politics or get myself imprisoned in Czechoslovakia for giving seminars prohibited by the authorities. Too bad if all this strikes you as strange or intolerable behavior on the part of someone whom you, like others, would like to believe remains enclosed in some "prison-house of language." Not only, then, do I not go "beyond the text," in this new sense of the word text (no more than anyone else can go beyond it, not even the most easy-to-recognize activists), but the strategic reevaluation of the concept of text allows me to bring together in a more consistent fashion, in the most consistent fashion possible, theoretico-philosophical necessities with the "practical," political, and other necessities of what is called deconstruction. The latter, by the way, has never presented itself as a method, for essential reasons that I explain elsewhere. . . (366-67).

[13]See opening quotation to this chapter for a working definition of the interventional force of deconstruction.

Dernier Mot du Racisme,"[14] for prior to considering the "politics" or political force of deconstruction it is necessary to question the performative structure of "deconstructive" texts. Hence, the question this chapter addresses is: What does Derrida give us to think about the structure of the promise and the textuality or "politicity," of the law.[15] Promises, contracts, affirmations, contradictions, and double inscriptions will chart our path.[16]

This chapter is divided into four sections. The first section describes the structures of "trace" and "iteration" since I shall refer to both of these structures repeatedly throughout this chapter and throughout this thesis. The second section focuses on J.L. Austin's theory of speech-acts as well as on Derrida's deconstructive reading of Austin's theory. Only then, in the third and fourth sections, shall I focus upon the structure of the promise and the politicity of the law.

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[14]"Le Dernier Mot du Racisme" first appeared in the bilingual catalogue for the Art Contre/Against Apartheid Exhibition. The English translation of Derrida's text, "Racism's Last Word," trans. Peggy Kamuf was reprinted in Critical Inquiry 12.1 (1985) and in "Race," Writing and Difference, ed. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. 329-38. Page references to this text will be to the original bilingual version (French) and to the final reprint of the English version cited above.

[15]I borrow these phrases from Derrida, Mémoires: for Paul de Man 132.

[16]Since I have limited this discussion to the specific problem of the promise and indirectly to the politics of affirmative deconstruction, the general framework within which deconstruction is situated will not be taken into account. I shall, however, recommend a number of books which I read as important commentaries on Derrida's work: Irene E. Harvey, Derrida and the Economy of Différance (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986); Geoffrey H. Hartman, Saving the Text: Literature/Derrida/Philosophy (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1981); Sarah Kofman, Lectures de Derrida (Paris: Galilée, 1984); Rodolphe Gasché, The Tain of the Mirror: Derrida and the Philosophy of Reflection (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986); and Judith Butler, Subjects of Desire: Hegelian Reflections in Twentieth-Century France (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987). There are, also, numerous collections on Derrida's work, for example: Deconstruction and Philosophy: The Texts of Jacques Derrida, ed. John Sallis (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987); Derrida on the Mend, ed. Robert Magliola (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 1984); and Ecarts: quatre essais à propos de Jacques Derrida, ed. Lucette Finas (Paris: Fayard, 1973).

The Trace Structure

> Avant même d'être lié à l'incision, à la gravure, au dessin ou à la lettre, à un signifiant renvoyant en général à un signifiant par lui signifié, le concept de graphie implique, comme la possibilité commune à tous les systèmes de signification, l'instance de la trace instituée (68).

> — De la grammatologie

> Even before it is linked to incision, engraving, drawing, or the letter, to a signifier referring in general to a signifier signified by it, the concept of the graphie [unit of a possible graphic system] implies the framework of the instituted trace, as the possibility common to all systems of signification (46).

> — Of Grammatology

If Heidegger's number gesture and provisional solution to the question of Being is to place "Being" under erasure ("sous rature"), to write a word and to cross it out so that the sign is and is not there, Derrida interrupts this problematic with the structure of the trace. What is the trace? This question cannot be answered with a philosophic answer, for, as will soon become evident, the trace-structure does not belong to the order of being. Like the associations which circulate around the word "trace" in French—track, imprint, footprint—the notion of the trace, as Spivak points out in the translator's introduction to Of Grammatology, "presents itself as the mark of an anterior presence, origin, master" (xv). The trace-structure which constitutes and operates as a disruptive force within the field of écriture [writing] marks the heterogeneity of the sign: "l'ordre du signifié n'est jamais contemporain, est au mieux l'envers ou le parallèle subtilement décalé—le temps d'un souffle—de l'ordre du signifiant" (31;18) ["the order of the signified is never contemporary, is at best the subtly discrepant inverse or parallel—discrepant by the time of a breath—from the order of the signifier"]. The sign then is always already a mark of heterogeneity and difference.

Both the conditions of possibility and the limits of thought, like the structure

of the sign, are broached in the "never-annulled difference from 'the completely

other.' Such is the strange 'being' of the sign: half of it always 'not there' and

the other half always 'not that'" (xvii). Indeed, as Derrida writes: "La trace

est en effet l'origine absolue du sens en général. Ce qui revient à dire, encore

une fois, qu'il n'y a pas d'origine absolue du sens en général. La trace est la

différance qui ouvre l'apparaître et la signification" (95; 65). ["The trace is in

fact the absolute origin of sense in general. Which amounts to saying once again

that there is no absolute origin of sense in general. The trace is the difference

which opens appearance. . .and signification"].

Perhaps the clearest articulation of the trace-structure is the following

passage from De la grammatologie [Of Grammatology], a passage which explains

arche-trace as both a necessary and an irreducible concept:

> . . .la valeur d'archie transcendantale doit faire éprouver sa nécessité
> avant de se laisser raturer elle-même. Le concept d'archi-trace doit
> faire droit et à cette nécessité et à cette rature. Il est en effet
> contradictoire, et irrecevable dans la logique de l'identité. La trace
> n'est pas seulement la disparition de l'origine, elle veut dire ici—dans
> le discours que nous tenons et selon le parcours que nous suivons—
> que l'origine n'a même pas disparu, qu'elle n'a jamais été constituée
> qu'en retour par une non-origine, la trace, qui devient ainsi l'origine
> de l'origine. Dès lors, pour arracher le concept de trace au schéma
> classique qui la ferait dériver d'une présence ou d'une non-trace
> originaire et qui en ferait une marque empirique, il faut bien parler
> de trace originaire ou d'archi-trace. Et pourtant nous savons que
> ce concept détruit son nom et que, si tout commence par la trace,
> il n'y a surtout pas de trace originaire (90).

> . . .the value of the transcendental arche [archie] must make its
> necessity felt before letting itself be erased. The concept of arche-
> trace must comply with both that necessity and that erasure. It is
> in fact contradictory and not acceptable within the logic of identity.
> The trace is not only the disappearance of origin—within the discourse
> that we sustain and according to the path that we follow it means
> that the origin did not even disappear, that it was never constituted
> except reciprocally by a nonorigin, the trace, which thus becomes
> the origin of the origin. From then on, to wrench the concept of
> the trace from the classical scheme, which would derive it from a
> presence or from an originary nontrace and which would make of
> it an empirical mark, one must indeed speak of an originary trace

or arche-trace. Yet we know that that concept destroys its name and that, if all begins with the trace, there is above all no originary trace (61).

It follows then that the movement of the trace is "necessarily occulted." Indeed, the trace produces itself "as such" as "self-occultation" and "dissimulation" of itself "as such." ("As such," here, refers to the irreducible movement of "dissimulation" and "self-occultation" which has no origin that is not always already marked by "self-occultation" and "dissimulation" [68-69; 47]). The trace is, I repeat, the force and the track of the "never-annulled difference" of the mark from itself and from the "completely other."

In "La Différance" ["Différance"][18] Derrida links "différance" to the "archi-trace" as follows:

> La différance, c'est ce qui fait que le mouvement de la signification n'est possible que si chaque élément dit «présent», apparaissant sur la scène de la présence, se rapporte à autre chose que lui-même, gardant en lui la marque de l'élément passé et se laissant déjà creuser par la marque de son rapport à l'élément futur, la trace ne se rapportant pas moins à ce qu'on appelle le futur qu'à ce qu'on appelle le passé, et constituant ce qu'on appelle le présent par ce rapport même à ce qui n'est pas lui : absolument pas lui, c'est-à-dire pas même un passé ou un futur comme présents modifiés. Il faut qu'un intervalle le sépare de ce qui n'est pas lui pour qu'il soit lui-même, mais cet intervalle qui le constitue en présent doit aussi du même, coup diviser le présent en lui-même, partageant ainsi, avec le présent, tout ce qu'on peut penser à partir de lui, c'est-à-dire tout étant, dans notre langue métaphysique, singulièrement la substance ou le sujet. Cet intervalle se constituant, se divisant dynamiquement, c'est ce qu'on peut appeler espacement, devenir-espace du temps ou devenir-temps de l'espace (temporisation). Et c'est cette constitution du présent, comme synthèse «originaire» et irréductiblement non-simple, donc, stricto sensu, non-originaire, de marques, de traces de rétentions et de protentions (pour reproduire ici, analogiquement et

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[17]This is also the passage Spivak uses in her discussion of trace in the introduction to Of Grammatology xvii.

[18]Jacques Derrida, "Différance," Marges de la philosophie (Paris: Minuit, 1972) 1-29, "Différance," Margins of Philosophy, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982) 1-28.

provisoirement, un langage phénoménologique et transcendantal qui
se révélera tout à l'heure inadéquat) que je propose d'appeler archi-
écriture, archi-trace ou différance. Celle-ci (est) (à la fois) espacement
(et) temporisation (13-14).

It is because of <u>différance</u> that the movement of signification is
possible only if each so-called "present" element, each element
appearing on the scene of presence, is related to something other
than itself, thereby keeping within itself the mark of the past element,
and already letting itself be vitiated by the mark of its relation to
the future element, this trace being related no less to what is called
the future than to what is called the past, and constituting what is
called the present by means of this very relation to what it is not:
what it absolutely is not, not even a past or a future as a modified
present. An interval must separate the present from what it is not
in order for the present to be itself, but this interval that constitutes
it as present must, by the same token, divide the present in and of
itself, thereby also dividing, along with the present, everything that
is thought on the basis of the present, that is, in our metaphysical
language, every being, and singularly substance or the subject. In
constituting itself, in dividing itself dynamically, this interval is what
might be called <u>spacing</u>, the becoming-space of time or the becoming-
time of space <u>(temporization)</u>. And it is this constitution of the
present, as an "originary" and irreducibly nonsimple (and therefore,
<u>stricto sensu</u> nonoriginary) synthesis of marks, or traces of retentions
and protentions (to reproduce analogically and provisionally a
phenomenological and transcendental language that soon will reveal
itself to be inadequate), that I propose to call arche-writing, arche-
trace, or <u>différance</u>. Which (is) (simultaneously) spacing (and)
temporization (13).

I ask the reader to keep this passage in mind—the dynamic intervals of
trace or of difference—as we proceed.

Iteration ("iter comes from itara, other in Sanskrit")

Iterability supposes a minimal remainder (as well as a minimum
of idealization) in order that the identity of the <u>selfsame</u> be repeatable
and identifiable <u>in, through,</u> and even <u>in view of</u> its alteration. For
the structure of iteration. . .implies <u>both</u> identity <u>and</u> difference.
Iteration in its "purest" form—and it is always impure—contains <u>in
itself</u> the discrepancy of a difference that constitutes it as iteration.
This iterability of an element divides its own identity <u>a priori,</u> even
without taking into account the fact that this identity can only
<u>determine</u> or delimit itself through differential relations to other
elements and that it hence bears the mark of this difference. It is
because this iterability is differential, within each individual "element"

as well as between the "elements". . . .that the remainder. . .is never
that of full or fulfilling presence: it is a differential structure escaping
the logic of presence. . . .

— "Limited Inc: ABC"[19]

The notion of "iteration" appears in "Signature événement contexte"
["Signature Event Context"].[20] In this essay, iteration is the "undecidable"[21]
Derrida uses to deconstruct the ethico-political presuppositions and propositions
of communication theory. J.L. Austin's How to Do Things With Words[22] is read
within this framework. Before turning to Derrida's reading of Austin's text,
a brief introduction to the notion of iteration is required.

The "differential logic" of iteration, as it is articulated in the quotation
above, could be summarized as follows. Iteration, like "restance," implies that
a minimal remainder and a minimal amount of idealization must be carried over
for the mark to act and to be legible as a written mark in the "radical absence"
of empirically determined subjects. Or, in order for the written mark to be
recognized and repeated as a written mark, there must be a minimal remainder
and a minimal amount of idealization carried over within the mark. At the same
time, the identity of the iterable element is always already (a priori) divided
in and of itself. "Trace" or "différance," noted earlier, work with a similar
economy. The "differential logic" of iteration means that an irreducible space

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[19]Jacques Derrida, "Limited Inc: ABC" (Baltimore: The John Hopkins
University Press, 1977) "Limited Inc: ABC," trans. Samuel Weber, Glyph 2 (1977):
190. Page references are to the Glyph edition.

[20]"Signature événement contexte," Marges de la philosophie 367-93;
"Signature Event Context," Margins of Philosophy 307-30.

[21]See note 7.

[22]J.L. Austin, How to Do Things With Words (Cambridge: Harvard University
Press, 1975).

of difference is both the condition for the possibility of the iterable element and its difference from itself prior to its differential relation to other elements.

Since the mark is constituted only by its iterability (repetition/alterity), one must take into account the "structural possibility" that the written mark may, or can be, severed from its "referent or signified." This structural possibility, for Derrida, constitutes a "grapheme in general": "la _restance_ non-présente d'une marque différentielle coupée de sa prétendue «production» ou origine" (378; 318) ["the nonpresent _remaining_ of a differential mark cut off from its alleged 'production' or origin"].

This force breaking with its alleged source of production is not an accidental fault; it is the "structure" of the written mark. This force of breaking— rupture—as the space that constitutes the written mark separates the mark from all forms of a referent (past or future) or of original meaning. In turn, the structural possibility that the written mark may be extracted from and grafted to other chains must be taken into account:

> C'est sur cette possibilité que je voudrais insister : possibilité de prélèvement et de greffe citationnelle qui appartient à la structure de toute marque, parlée ou écrite, et qui constitue toute marque en écriture avant même et en dehors de tout horizon de communication sémio-linguistique; en écriture, c'est-à-dire en possibilité de fonctionnement coupé, en un certain point, de son vouloir-dire «originel» et de son appartenance à un contexte saturable et contraignant. Tout signe, linguistique ou non linguistique, parlé ou écrit (au sens courant de cette opposition), en petite ou en grande unité, peut être _cité_, mis entre guillemets; par là il peut rompre avec tout contexte donné, engendrer à l'infini de nouveaux contextes, de façon absolument non saturable. Cela ne suppose pas que la marque vaut hors contexte, mais au contraire qu'il n'y a que des contextes sans aucun centre d'ancrage absolu. Cette citationnalité, cette duplication ou duplicité, cette itérabilité de la marque n'est pas un accident ou une anomalie, c'est ce (normal/anormal) sans quoi une marque ne pourrait même plus avoir de fonctionnement dit «normal» (381).

> This is the possibility on which I wish to insist: the possibility of extraction and of citational grafting which belongs to the structure

of every mark, spoken or written, and which constitutes every mark as writing even before and outside every horizon of semiolinguistic communication; as writing, that is, as a possibility of functioning cut off, at a certain point, from its "original" meaning and from its belonging to a saturable and constraining context. Every sign, linguistic or nonlinguistic, spoken or written (in the usual sense of this opposition), as a small or large unity, can be cited, put between quotation marks; thereby it can break with every given context, and engender infinitely new contexts in an absolutely nonsaturable fashion. This does not suppose that the mark is valid outside its context, but on the contrary that there are only contexts without any center of absolute anchoring. This citationality, duplication, or duplicity, this iterability of the mark is not an accident or an anomaly, but is that (normal/abnormal) without which a mark could no longer even have a so-called "normal" functioning (320-21).

This minimal restance necessarily blurs the lines of demarcation as it problematizes (politically) interested binary oppositions (truth/"citation"). "Whereas repetition presupposes a full idealization. . . , iterability entails no more than a minimal idealization which would guarantee the possibility of the re-mark," Spivak notes in "Revolutions That As Yet Have No Model: Derrida's Limited Inc." "But since 'the iterability of the mark does not leave any of the philosophical oppositions which govern the idealizing abstraction intact'. . . , this is an impure idealization, a contradiction in terms, which cannot be caught up within the either-or logic of non-contradiction."[23] Once again, we discover that the possibility of theoretical purity is rendered problematic since the condition for the possibility of theoretical purity would require full idealization and the logic of repetition. Iterability works as a force which deconstructs binary oppositions. Perhaps it is with this interventional force in mind that Derrida suggests, in "Limited Inc. ABC," that iteration has "an essential rapport with the force (theoretical and practical, 'effective,' 'historical,' 'psychic,' 'political,' etc.) deconstructing oppositional limits" (246). "Repartons." Let us go on.

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[23]Gayatri Chakrovorty Spivak, "Revolutions That As Yet Have No Model: Derrida's Limited INC." Diacritics 10.4 (1980): 38.

Derrida's engagement with Speech Act Theory (his deconstructive reading of J.L. Austin's <u>How to do Things With Words</u> and the ensuing debate published in <u>Glyph</u>[24] with John Searle) is well-known and thoroughly recorded. Gayatri Spivak's and Jonathan Culler's readily available accounts of this debate are recommended reading.[25] My interest in this debate is more modest and is directed toward the structure of the promise. What I would like to draw your attention toward, at this point, are Austin's distinction between performative and constative utterances and the questions Derrida poses to destabilize Austin's theory,

Austin distinguishes between constative and performative utterances as follows. A "constative utterance" refers to an assertion that would, most often, designate a "true" or "false" description, report, or constatation of determined facts or events. The referent of a constative utterance precedes the uttering of the statement. With a performative utterance, however, the act of uttering the sentence is, or is part of, the doing of the action. The performative utterance is an "original" production or transaction: the force of the act of stating enacts a transformation of a situation. Austin's interest in establishing such a theory is to counter the assumption of philosophers that the business of a 'statement' can only be to 'describe' some state of affairs, or to 'state some fact,' which it must do either truly or falsely."[26]. Those statements that did not meet these criteria were classified as "pseudo-statements." Austin's project is not only to somehow develop a theory that will account for those "pseudo-statements," that have been traditionally excluded as marginal and problematic, but to account

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[24]John Searle, "Reiterating the Differences: A Reply to Derrida," <u>Glyph</u> 1 (1977) 198-208.

[25]Spivak, "Revolutions That As Yet Have No Model" and Jonathan Culler, <u>On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism After Structuralism</u> (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982) esp. 110-34.

[26]Austin, <u>How to do Things With Words</u> 1-3.

for them without in any way getting caught within the two fetishes of classical philosophy: "1) the true/false fetish, 2) the value/fact fetish" (150). The problem is then a problem of determination. Rather than determining statements as "true/false" or as "value/fact," Austin proposes determining statements by their illocutionary or perlocutionary force.

Before turning to Derrida's questions, there is one passage from How to Do Things With Words that I shall draw to your attention. In this passage, Austin deliberates on the choice of the word "performative":

> A number of other terms may suggest themselves, each of which would suitably cover this or that wider or narrower class of performatives: for example, many performatives are contractual ('I bet') or declaratory ('I declare war') utterances. But no term in current use that I know of is nearly wide enough to cover them all. One technical term that comes nearest to what we need is perhaps 'operative,' as it is used strictly by lawyers in referring to that part, i.e. those clauses, of an instrument which serves to effect the transaction (conveyance or what not) which is its main object, whereas the rest of the document merely 'recites' the circumstances in which the transaction is to be effected. But 'operative' has other meanings, and indeed is often used nowadays to mean little more than "important" (7).

Since the problem of determination, the structure of promises, or of declarations, and the place the promise occupies within the law are the topics of this chapter, my reason for calling your attention to this passage is not entirely fortuitous. Here, we have both the appeal to the law (Austin's distinction between performative and constative utterances bears an uncanny similarity to the distinction between operative clauses and clauses which simply "recite") and the need for a law (the need to find a word that is not contaminated with additional meanings—a need for semantic rigidity).[27] I ask you to keep this passage, the

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[27]This need for semantic rigidity is even more evident in Austin's "The Meaning of a Word," Philosophical Papers, ed. by J.O. Urmson and G.J. Warnock (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979) 55-75.

distinction between operative/non-operative clauses and "recit[ation]," in mind as we proceed.

Où est la loi?

For Derrida, the problem with Austin's theory of Speech Acts is that "Austin n'a pas pris en compte ce qui, dans la structure de la locution (donc avant toute détermination illocutoire ou perlocutoire), comporte déjà ce système de prédicats que j'appelle graphématiques en général. . ." (383; 322) ["Austin has not taken into account that which in the structure of locution (and therefore before any illocutory or perlocutory determination) already bears within itself the system of predicates that I call graphematic in general. . ."].[28]

Derrida approaches this problem by proposing that Austin's analysis demands "a value of context" (383; 322). It depends upon a number of traditional presuppositions (intentional meaning, the conscious presence of speakers and/or receivers participating in the performative as well as their conscious presence for the duration of the act, a determined context, etc.) and exclusions (in particular, "citations," "infelicities," and "failures").

The tempo of the article is brisk as Derrida proceeds by questions and suggestions to focus on the criteria upon which Austin justifies the exclusion of "citations," of "infelicities," and of the "possibility of failure" from his theory. (Although Austin acknowledges these possibilities throughout his text, he excludes them as derivative. The grounds upon which he legitimizes these exclusions as derivative are numerous. Yet, his line of argument tends to be heavily weighted toward favouring and, therefore, repeatedly returning to, the law of a determined context, "a value of context.")

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[28]See section on iteration.

At this point I call your attention to three premises of Derrida's argument.

1) Working with Austin's exclusion of the possibility of risk and/or of failure, Derrida contends that since Austin does not recognize the possibility of failure "comme prédicat essential ou comme loi" (385; 324) ["as an essential predicate or law"] or, in other words, since Austin does not recognize that the possibility of risk is "always possible"—indeed, a "necessary possibility"—the opposition between the success or failure of illocution and perlocution is "insufficient" and "derivative."

2) Derrida points out that Austin's exclusion of "infelicities" and "citations" as "parasitical" or "abnormal" is founded upon a classical philosophic concept of language, a concept of "normal" language that founds its condition of possibility in this (ethico-political) binary opposition. If the concept of "normal" language is derived from this opposition, then the concept of "normal" language must always already be marked by that which is defined as "parasitical" or "abnormal." (The possibility of determining something as "normal" presupposes that something must be excluded as "abnormal.")

3) Since a performative must repeat a "coded" or "iterable" statement (i.e., the ritual utterances that take place in a marriage ceremony or a declaration of war) in order to be determined as "successful," the phrase or cluster of words, must be "identifiable" as "citation" (388-89; 326). It is important to note that Derrida does not contend that this type of citation (the citation required for a performative act) can be equated with "philosophic reference[s]," with citation within a play or with the "recitation of a poem." On the contrary, Derrida acknowledges that "[c]'est pourquoi il y a une spécificité relative, comme le dit Austin, une «pureté relative» des performatifs" (389; 326) ["[t]his is why there is a relative specificity, as Austin says, a 'relative purity' of performatives"]. It is for this reason that Derrida suggests that rather than constructing "relative

specificity" "against" citation and/or iteration, "relative specificity" should be situated in relation to "d'autres espèces d'itération à l'intérieur d'une itérabilité générale" (389; 326) ["other kinds of iteration within a general iterability"]. This transcription renders the opposition between performative utterances and citation problematic. Speculating upon this typology of iteration, Derrida proposes that if such a typology were possible, then three consequences would have to be taken into account: 1) the intention which gives rise to the performative utterance "ne sera jamais de part en part présente à elle-même et à son contenu. L'itération qui la structure a priori y introduit une déhiscence et une brisure essentielles" (389; 326) ["will never be completely present in itself and its content. The iteration which structures it a priori introduces an essential dehiscence and demarcation"]; 2) the distinctions between "non-serious"/"ordinary" language and "citation"/"ordinary" language are no longer tenable; and 3) since the concept of determined context, in a manner comparable to the concept of "ordinary" language, depends upon the notion of conscious intention as self-present to itself ("discours éthique et téléologique de la conscience") (389; 327) ["an ethical and teleological discourse of consciousness"] and since iteration deconstructs this intention, a totally determinable context is not possible. I leave the conclusion of this argument to Derrida's articulation of the dissymmetrical relation between the specificity of effects (linguistic, performative, etc.) and the structure of iteration:

> Je n'en tirerai surtout pas comme conséquence qu'il n'y a aucune spécificité relative des effets de conscience, des effets de parole (par opposition à l'écriture au sens traditionnel), qu'il n'y a aucun effet de performatif, aucun effet de langage ordinaire, aucun effet de présence et d'événement discursif (speech act). Simplement, ces effets n'excluent pas ce qu'en général on leur oppose terme à terme, le présupposent au contraire de façon dissymétrique, comme l'espace général de leur possibilité (390).

> Above all, I will not conclude from this that there is no relative specificity of the effects of consciousness, of the effects of speech (in opposition to writing in the traditional sense), that there is no effect of the performative, no effect of ordinary language, no effect of presence and of speech acts. It is simply that these effects do not exclude what is generally opposed to them term by term, but on the contrary presuppose it in dyssemtrical [sic] fashion, as the general space of their possibility (327).

Promises

> Just as any other reader, [Rousseau] is bound to misread his text as a promise of political change. The error is not within the reader; language itself dissociates the cognition from the act Die Sprache verspricht (sich); to the extent that is necessarily misleading, language just as necessarily conveys the promise of its own truth. This is why textual allegories on this level of rhetorical complexity generate history.[29]

> — Paul de Man, Allegories of Reading

As I turn to a discussion of the promise, I ask the reader to keep in mind the "differential logic" which constitutes "trace," "différance," and "iteration"; the structural possibility of extraction and of grafting; and how this "differential logic" and the possibility of extraction/grafting rupture the presuppositions (self-conscious intention, presence, determined context, etc.) and the propositions of J.L. Austin's Speech Act theory. Let us now turn to Mémoires: for Paul de Man (which implies turning to Paul de Man's essay, "Promises") for it is in this text that Derrida articulates the structure of the act of promising and situates the place the promise occupies within the law. Needless to say, this text does not merely discuss the problem of promising, it performs a promise in its turn.[30]

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[29]Paul de Man, "Promises (Social Contract)," Allegories of Reading: Figural Language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke and Proust (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979) 277.

[30]Mémoires: for Paul de Man is both structured as a promise (performs a promise) and thematically traces a promise: the future thought of Paul de Man.

What is the structure of the promise? What place does it occupy within the law? And, what does promising have to do with affirmative deconstruction? The exergue[31] by which I shall approach this cluster of questions consists of a quotation from "Acts," the lecture in which Derrida addresses these questions, the citation (above) from Paul de Man's "Promises (Social Contract)," and a four-point outline of Derrida's reading of de Man's passage. With the general framework in place, I shall then track backward and forward between de Man's and Derrida's texts, to discuss the exergue.

Beginning with the traditional concept of promise, Derrida proposes that a promise is "always excessive. Without this essential excess" the promise would not be a promise (performative), but the description (constative) of a determined fact/event or of a known future possibility (93-94). Immediately, however, Derrida breaks with this traditional concept of the promise. The "essential excess" of the promise does not belong to the promised content of a promise; it is "within the very structure of the <u>act</u> of promising":[32]

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[31]Exergue derives from the Greek <u>ex-ergon</u> meaning "outside the work." In French and in English, the exergue refers to the space on the coin reserved for an inscription. In French, exergue also has the sense of an epigraph, this combination of meanings—the coin, the inscription, the space, the epigraph, the outside—is what Derrida plays upon (and what I borrow, here) in a number of his essays. Structured as a performative, the exergue calls attention to the fact that we always promise too much. See "La Mythologie Blanche," <u>Marges de la Philosophie</u> 247-330; "White Mythology: Metaphor in the Text of Philosophy," <u>Margins of Philosophy</u> 209-72.

[32]I am reminded when I read this passage of the passage in "Signature événement contexte"; "Signature Event Context," which reads as follows: "Ecrire, c'est produire une marque qui constituera une sort de machine à son tour productrice, que ma disparition future n'empêchera pas principiellement de fonctionner et de donner, de se donner à lire et à réécrire. . . . Pour qu'un écrit soit un écrit, il faut qu'il continue à «agir» et être lisible même si ce qu'on appelle l'auteur de l'écrit ne répond plus de ce qu'il a écrit. . . ." (376; 316) [To write is to produce a mark that will constitute a kind of machine that is in turn productive, that my future disappearance in principle will not prevent from functioning and from yielding, and yielding itself to, reading and rewriting. . . . For the written to be the written, it must continue to "act" and to be legible

. . .[the] "too much" of the promise does not belong to a (promised) content of a promise which I would be incapable of keeping. It is within the very structure of the <u>act</u> of promising that this excess comes to inscribe a kind of irremediable disturbance or perversion. This perversion, which is also a trap, no doubt unsettles the language of the promise, the performative as promise; but it also renders it possible—and indestructible. Whence the <u>unbelievable</u>, and comical, aspect of every promise, and this passionate attempt to come to terms with the law, the contract, the oath, the declared affirmation of fidelity (94).

(We shall return to this passage in a moment.) With this proposition in place, Derrida then goes on to quote the conclusion of de Man's "Promises" and to remind readers that prior to this conclusion de Man had just demonstrated the impossibility of "distinguish[ing]" or of "reconcil[ing]" the constative and performative function of certain "acts of language ('statements')" (95). Elaborating upon this quotation, Derrida proposes that if the "aporia, which divides the act, occurs, if no one can master it," and "if we are already committed before any active commitment on our part," it is "because the rhetorical structure of language [rhetoric here implying the impossibility of distinguishing between performative/constative acts and rhetoric as persuasion/rhetoric as trope] precedes the act of our present initiative." This "faktum" or "fact of language" constitutes the "impossibility of the promise" (95). The excess of the promise then amounts to the irreducible aporia between constative and performative acts of language. Let us backtrack a little to the passage above before moving forward.

The passage I quoted from the beginning exergue of "Acts" seems important to me for three reasons: 1) Since the "disturbing" and the "perverting" logic, like the "differential logic" of iteration, is the force that constitutes the "structure of the act of promising," the excess of the promise is written as a force of rupture

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32 (cont'd.)even if what is called the author of the writing no longer answers for what he has written. . . .] We will come back to this productive "machine."

and of disturbance within the very _act_ of promising. 2) "Disturbance" and/or "perversion" are designated as the condition 'for the possibility and of the impossibility of a "pure" promise. 3) The phrase "no doubt" can be read as an ironic signature (Derrida's) which signs a commitment and a promise. This commitment and promise a) affirms 'the impossibility of a "pure" promise, b) affirms the necessity of promising, and c) situates the "disturbance" and "perversion" of the promise as the law of the promise. How can we bring together these two passages—the promises and the commitments of Derrida and de Man?

Formulating an answer to this question could lead to interesting work. I shall reserve that thought for future work. Here, I shall leave this question open and, prior to extending this exergue, draw your attention to four specific points in Derrida's reading of Paul de Man's re-inscription of the celebrated Heideggerian passage, "Die Sprache spricht." (You will find, as we proceed, that the question of the promises of and between Paul de Man and Derrida has not been left entirely unattended.)

1) By replacing "spricht" (speaks) with "verspricht" (promises), Derrida contends, Paul de Man takes note "(prendre acte) of the _fact_ that language is not the governable instrument of a speaking. . .subject" and that the "essence of speech is the promise" (96-97).

2) Since the German prefix "ver" connotes disturbance, corruption, drift, etc.," what de Man is implying with the word "verspricht" is not only that language promises; he also is suggesting that the promise of speech "becomes unsettled, disturbed, corrupted, perverted, affected by a kind of fatal drift" (98).

3) The "sich" in parenthesis, Derrida notes, marks not only the promise of language to itself, but, also, the effacement of the promise as it is affected by the "ver." Both "sich" and "ver" connote the possibility and the perversion/effacement of the promise.

4) Commenting upon de Man's notion of unreadability ("textual allegory")

Derrida writes:

> Allegory of Reading—this means many things in the book which bears this title: the scene of reading represented in the abyssal structure of a text, the allegory of "unreadability," "textual allegory," etc. You cannot read without speaking, speak without promising, promise without writing, write without reading that you have already promised even before you begin to speak, etc. And you can only take note of this, in other words, note as acte, before every act. You can only say and sign: yes, yes in memory of yes (99-100).

Here we have the double affirmation, the "yes, yes in memory of yes" which structures affirmative deconstruction. Deconstruction is on and in this condition, this always open contractual structure of promising. Deconstruction affirms this condition of (un)readability. Affirmative deconstruction affirms the necessity of thinking this thought, this act—the impossibility of distinguishing between performative and constative language acts—and the possibility of perversion and disturbance.

To recapitulate: within this exergue, numerous suggestions have been proffered:

a) The excess of the promise which constitutes the structure of the act of promising inscribes an irremediable disturbance or perversion, as well as an irreducible aporia between constative and performative utterances. This excess and/or aporia is a "faktum" [95] of language over which we have no control. Language promises: "Die sprache verspricht (sich)."[33]

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[33]The notions of the always already promise of language and of the possibility of failure, disturbance and perversion destabilize the concept of the "pure promise." Since, at least as early as "Signature Event Context" Derrida has placed on stage all notions of promises and contracts. See for example: "Pas," Gramma 3/4 (1976): 111-215, "Loi du genre," Glyph 7 (1980): 176-201; "The Law of Genre," ibid., 202-29, "Survivre," Parages (Paris: Galilée, 1986): 117-218; "Living On/ Borderlines," ed. Harold Bloom, Deconstruction and Criticism (New York: Seabury,

b)　The excess of the promise within the promise does not prevent commitment from taking place nor from "bequeathing its record." Contracts

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33 (cont'd.)1979): 75-175 ("Loi du genre," "Pas," "Survivre" and "Titre à préciser," are reprinted in Parages [Paris: Galilée, 1986]), L'oreille du l'autre: (Montreal: VLB, 1982); The Ear of the Other: Otobiography Transference Translation, trans. Peggy Kamuf (New York: Schocken Books, 1985). The French text, Otobiographies: L'enseignement de Nietzsche et la politique du nom propre (Paris: Galilée, 1984), is somewhat different. See also "Des Tours de Babel," Difference in Translation, ed. Joseph F. Graham (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985) 209-48; "Des Tours de Babel," trans. Joseph F. Graham, ibid., 165-207; and many other texts. In "Des Tours de Babel" Derrida writes as follows on the structure of the translation contract:

> La dette n'engage pas des sujets vivants mais des noms au bord de la langue ou, plus rigoureusement, le trait contractant le rapport dudit sujet vivant à son nom, en tant que celui-ci se tient au bord de la langue. Et ce trait serait celui de l'à-traduire d'une langue à l'autre, de ce bord à l'autre du nom propre. Ce contrat de langue entre plusieurs langues est absolument singulier. D'abord il n'est pas ce qu'on appelle en général contrat de langue: ce qui garantit l'institution d'une langue, l'unité de son système et le contrat social qui lie une communauté à cet égard. D'autre part on suppose en général que pour être valable ou instituer quoi que ce soit, tout contrat doit avoir lieu dans une seule langue ou en appeler (par exemple dans le cas de traités diplomatiques ou commerciaux) à une traductibilité déjà donnée et sans reste: la multiplicité des langues doit y être absolument dominée. Ici au contraire un contrat entre deux langues étrangères en tant que telles engage à rendre possible une traduction qui ensuite autorisera toute sorte de contrats au sens courant. La signature de ce contrat singulier n'a pas besoin d'une écriture documentée ou archivée: elle n'en a pas moins lieu comme trace ou comme trait, et ce lieu a lieu même si son espace ne relève d'aucune objectivité empirique ou mathématique.
> Le topos de ce contrat est exceptionnel, unique, pratiquement impossible à penser sous la catégorie courante de contrat: dans un code classique ou l'aurait dit transcendantal puisqu'en vérité il rend possible tout contrat en général, à commencer par ce qu'on appelle le contrat de langue dans les limites d'un seul idiome. Autre nom, peut-être, pour l'origine des langues. Non pas l'origine du langage mais des langues—avant le langage, les langues.
> Le contrat de traduction, en ce sens transcendental, serait le contrat lui-même, le contrat absolu, la forme-contrat du contrat, ce qui permet à un contrat d'être ce qu'il est (228-29).
> The debt does not involve living subjects but names at the edge of the language or, more rigorously, the trait which contracts the relation of the aforementioned living subject to his name, insofar as the latter keeps to the edge of the language. And this trait would be that of the to-be-translated from one language to the other, from this edge to the other of the proper name. This language contract among several languages is absolutely singular. First of all, it is

continue to be signed.[34]

c) Affirmative deconstruction affirms the necessity of thinking or of taking note ("prendre acte") of the anachronistic _act_ of language which precedes active commitment. Here, we find the "yes, yes to in memory of yes." The remainder of this chapter elaborates the points of this exergue.

What I now propose is that the structure of the promise is that of a "double session" or "double inscription." I borrow these two concept-metaphors from a text by Derrida, entitled "Double Session."[35] Since we are always already

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33 (cont'd.)
> not what is generally called a language contract: that which guarantees the institution of one language, the unity of its system, and the social contract which binds a community in this regard. On the other hand it is generally supposed that in order to be valid or to institute anything at all, a contract must take place in a single language or appeal (for example, in the case of diplomatic or commercial treaties) to a transferability already given and without remainder: there the multiplicity of tongues must be absolutely dominated. Here, on the contrary, a contract between two foreign languages as such engages to render possible a translation which subsequently will authorize every sort of contract in the originary sense. The signature of this singular contract needs no written document or record: it nevertheless takes place as trace or as trait, and this place takes place even if its space comes under no empirical or mathematical objectivity.
> The topos of this contract is exceptional, unique, and practically impossible to think under the ordinary category of contract: in a classical code it would have been called transcendental, since in truth it renders possible every contract in general, starting with what is called the language contract within the limits of a single idiom. Another name, perhaps, for the origin of tongues. Not the origin of language but of languages—before language, languages.
> The translation contract, in this transcendental sense, would be the contract itself, the absolute contract, the contract form of the contract, that which allows a contract to be what it is (185-86).

Rodolphe Gasché would call this session of the contrast, the "infrastructural chain." See, The Tain of the Mirror 185-224.

34"Tours de Babel" 191.

35Jacques Derrida, "Double Session," La Dissémination (Paris: Seuil, 1972) 199-319; "Double Session," Dissemination, trans. Barbara Johnson (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981) 173-286.

committed before our active commitment, the first inscription of the promise is irreducible and anachronistic. Our active commitment and affirmation of

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35 (cont'd.)

   b, <u>La double inscription de la mimésis</u>. Il est impossible d'immobiliser la <u>mimesis</u> dans une classification binaire ou, plus précisément, d'assigner un seul lieu à la <u>technè mimetikè</u> dans la « division » du <u>Sophiste</u> (au moment où l'on cherche une méthode et un paradigme pour organiser la chasse au sophiste). La mimétique est <u>à la fois</u> l'une des trois formes de l' « art de production » (<u>technè poetikè</u>) et, sur l'autre branche de la fourche, une forme ou un procédé de l'art d'acquisition (<u>ktetikè</u>) (non productif, non poétique) utilisé par le sophiste dans sa chasse aux jeunes gens riches (218 <u>d</u>-233 <u>b</u> sq.). « Sorcier et imitateur », le sophiste peut « produire » les « mimèmes et homonymes » de tous les étants (234 <u>b</u>-235 <u>a</u>). Le sophiste mime le poétique qui pourtant comporte en lui-même le mimétique, il produit le double de la production. Mais tout près d'être capturé, le sophiste échappe encore à la prise, par la division supplémentaire, vers un point de fuite, entre deux formes de la mimétique (235 <u>d</u>), l'<u>eikastique</u> qui reproduit fidèlement, et la <u>fantastique</u> qui simule l'eikastique, fait semblant de simuler fidèlement et trompe l'oeil dans le simulacre (phantasme) qui constitue une « part très large de la peinture (zôgraphia) et de la mimétique en son ensemble ». Aporie (236 <u>e</u>) pour le chasseur philosophe, en arrêt devant la bifurcation, incapable de continuer, à traquer son gibier, échappée sans fin pour le gibier (qui est aussi chasseur) que nous retrouverons, après un long détour, du côté de la <u>Mimique</u> de Mallarmé. Ce mimodrame et la <u>double science</u> à laquelle il doit donner lieu n'auront concerné qu'une certaine histoire barrée des rapports entre la philosophie et la sophistique (212).

   b. <u>The double inscription of mimesis</u>. It is impossible to pin <u>mimēsis</u> down to a binary classification or, more precisely, to assign a single place to the <u>technē mimētikē</u> within the "division" set forth in the <u>Sophist</u> (at the point at which a method and a paradigm are being sought in an effort to hunt down the Sophist in an organized manner). The mimetic form is <u>both</u> one of the three forms of "productive or creative art" (<u>technē poiētikē</u>) <u>and</u>, on the other branch of the fork, a form or procedure belonging among the acquisitive arts (<u>ktētikē</u>) (nonproductive, nonpoetic) used by the Sophist in his hunt for rich young men (218d-233bff). As a "wizard and imitator," the Sophist is capable of "producing" "likenesses and homonyms" of everything that exists (234b-235a). The Sophist mimes the poetic, which nevertheless itself comprises the mimetic; he produces production's double. But just at the point of capture, the Sophist still eludes his pursuers through a supplementary division, extended toward a vanishing point, between two forms of the mimetic (235d): the making of likenesses (the <u>eikastic</u>) or faithful reproduction, and the making of semblances (the <u>fantastic</u>), which simulates the eikastic, pretending to simulate faithfully and deceiving the eye with a simulacrum (a

this fact, this "faktum" of language, the "yes, yes in memory of yes" structures

the second inscription. Here, the promise comes forward and is written as a

promise and as the thought of the promise. This thought, this "act," of the promise

looks, simultaneously, forwards and backwards: forward to the future of the

thought of the promise and to renewing the contract and back to the "act," the

irreducible act (performative/constative) which always already commits us to

promising prior to our active commitment. The "yes, yes" affirms the aporia

which subtends and which constitutes the promise as well as the possibility of

perversion and disturbance.

The notion of double affirmation the "yes, yes" is central to Derrida's work.

Perhaps, the most spectacular presentation of the "yes, yes" is Ulysse gramophone:

Deux mots pour Joyce.[36] I call your attention to two passages from this text

which articulate the structure of the act of affirmation:

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35 (cont'd.)
> phantasm), which constitutes "a very extensive class, in painting
> (zōgraphia) and in imitation of all sorts." This is an aporia (236e)
> for the philosophical hunter, who comes to a stop before this
> bifurcation, incapable of continuing to track down his quarry; it is
> an endless escape route for that quarry (who is also a hunter), who
> will turn up again, after a long detour, in the direction of Mallarmé's
> Mimique. This mimodrama and the double science arising from it
> will have concerned only a certain obliterated history of the relations
> between philosophy and sophistics (186).

[36]Jacques Derrida, Ulysse gramophone: Deux mots pour Joyce (Paris: Galilée, 1987). The "yes, yes to the memory of yes" recurs throughout Derrida's texts. See note 32 for reference to some of the texts in which double affirmation is central. See, also, D'un ton apocalyptique: adopté naguère en philosophie (Paris: Galilée, 1983); "Of An Apocalyptic Tone Recently Adopted in Philosophy," trans. John P. Leavey, Jr., Semeia, 25 (1982): 63-96, Glas (Paris: Galilée, 1974); Glas, trans. John P. Leavey, Jr. and Richard Rand (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986) as well as many other texts. "[The] yes, yes of life, in which the yes, which says nothing, describing nothing, but itself, quotes, cites, itself, "yes—to itself as (to an-) other in accordance with the ring, requotes and recites a commitment that would not take place outside this representation of a performance without presence" ("Living On/Borderlines" 104)).

Que nous donne à penser ce oui qui ne nomme, décrit, désigne rien
et qui n'a nulle référence hors marque? et non hors langage car le
oui peut se passer de mots, en tout cas du mot oui. Par sa dimension
radicalement non constative ou non descriptive, même s'il dit oui
à une description ou à une narration, oui est de part en part, et par
excellence, un performatif. Mais cette caractérisation me paraît
insuffisante. D'abord parce qu'un performatif doit être une phrase
et une phrase assez douée de sens par elle-même, dans un contexte
conventionnel donné, pour produire un événement déterminé. Or
je crois, oui, que, pour le dire dans un code philosophique classique,
oui est la condition transcendantale de toute dimension performative.
Une promesse, un serment, un ordre, un engagement impliquent toujours
un oui, je signe. Le je du je signe dit et se dit oui même s'il signe
un simulacre. Tout événement produit par une marque performative,
toute écriture au sens large engage un oui, qu'il soit ou non
phénoménalisé, c'est-à-dire verbalisé ou adverbialisé comme tel (125-
126).

How should we think [donne à penser] the yes that names, describes
or designates nothing and which does not refer to anything outside
the mark? extra-significant outside of language? and not
extra-linguistic. For yes can dispense with words and in any case
it can do without the word yes? Through its radically non-declarative,
non-descriptive dimension, even if it says yes to a description or
narrative, yes is totally and par excellence a performative. But this
characterization appears insufficient. First, because a performative
must be a phrase, one that has enough meaning in itself in a given
conventional context to produce a specific event. Well then, yes,
I believe that, in order to say it in classic philosophic parlance, yes
is the transcendental condition of any performative dimension. A
promise, an oath, a command, a commitment always imply a yes,
I sign. The I of I sign says yes and says yes to itself even if it indicates
a mere simulacrum. Any event produced by a performative sign, any
writing in the broadest sense, implies a yes whether or not it is
phenomenalized, that is, verbalized or adverbalized as such.
(Translation is mine.)

The "yes, yes" is the very structure of the act of promising. The second passage

relates the "yes, yes" to the structure of "différance":

Car s'il y a de l'autre, s'il y a du oui, donc, l'autre ne se laisse plus
produire par le même ou par le moi. Oui, condition de toute signature
et de tout performatif, s'adresse à de l'autre qu'il ne constitue pas
et auquel il ne peut que commencer par demander, en réponse à une
demande toujours antérieure, de lui demander de dire oui. Le temps
n'apparaît que depuis cette singulière anachronie (127).

> For if some Other exists, if there is a degree of yes, then the Other
> can no longer be produced by the same one or by the I. Yes, being
> a condition of signatures and of any performative, is directed toward
> the Other of which it is not a part and of which it can only start out
> by questioning [demanding] in response to an always anterior question
> [demand] which demands it to say yes. Time makes its appearance
> only after this singular anachronicity. (Translation is mine.)

In a comparable manner, in L'oreille de l'autre [The Ear of the Other] Derrida

links the structure of the biographical contract and Nietzsche's affirmation of

the eternal return to the "untimely" and "anachronistic" structure of the promise.

Nietzsche's autobiographical contract "remains a line of credit opened onto

eternity and refers back to one of the two I's, the nameless parties to the contract

[Nietzsche promises to honour the contract in "the name of the name, in his

name and in the name of the other"], only according to the annulus of the eternal

return" (19). Thus, the contract structured by iteration is always open to future

interpretation, to citation, to grafting and to perversion. We will return to this

contract in chapter two with this iterable structure in mind; let us now approach

the notion of the irreducible aporia.

What does this irreducible aporia consist of and how does it relate to the

structure of the law?[37] For Paul de Man, the structure of the text is made explicit

when it is stated in legal or political terms:

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[37]A number of writers in the United States and Britain are re-interpreting
the language of legal contracts and are relating law to speech and act theory.
See for example, H.L.A. Hart, Essays in Jurisprudence and Philosophy (Oxford:
Clarendon Press, 1983); Stanley Fish, "Working on the chain gang: Interpretation
in the law and in literary criticism," Critical Inquiry 9 (1982): 201-16; and Ronald
Dworkin, "Law as Interpretation," Critical Inquiry 9 (1982): 179-200. Both Fish's
and Dworkin's essays have been reprinted in Texas Law Review 60 (1982). Recently
the Faculty of Law at Harvard University sent a letter to its members to apologize
for the turmoil within their department as the left and the right dispute the
law of interpreting the law. This movement does not follow the direction of
de Man's and of Derrida's texts. It is, to a large extent, a dispute among
pragmatists.

There can be no text without grammar: the logic of grammar generates
texts only in the absence of referential meaning, but every text
generates a referent that subverts the grammatical principle to which
it owed its constitution. What remains hidden in the everyday use
of language, the fundamental incompatability between grammar and
meaning, becomes explicit when the linguistic structures are
stated. . .in political terms (269).[38]

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[38]Closer to home, we have an excellent example of the aporia between
grammar and meaning, or between political prescriptions and social practice
in Programme of Action for the Second Decade to Combat Racism and Racial
Discrimination (Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services Canada, 1985). In the
Preface to this Declaration Otto Jelinek writes:

> Canada is participating in the "Second Decade" with the active
> support of the provinces and territories.
> As a nation, Canada has come a long way since the adoption of
> the Universal Declaration of Human Rights on December 10, 1948;
> prior to this date racial minorities were denied by law important
> rights enjoyed by other citizens. Today the law provides for equality
> before and under law and equal protection and benefit of law to every
> individual in Canada.
> The task now for our society is to translate these provisions into
> the reality of everyday life, particularly for those many Canadians
> who still suffer from racism and racial discrimination so well
> documented by such national studies as Equality Now! and Equality
> in Employment.
>
> . . . .
>
> We all anticipate a new era in human rights in Canada with the
> coming into force on April 17, 1985, of Section 15, the Equality Rights
> Section of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Together
> wtih Section 27 on Multicultural Heritage, it is a timely instrument
> to combat racism for the second UN decade and indeed for decades
> to come.
> While we can all be proud of significant steps in this field, much
> more needs to be done simply because the challenge of eliminating
> racism and racial discrimination is still very much with us.
> In the second decade, we will have to redouble our efforts if we
> are to live up to the promise of an equitable society. Not only do
> we need to intensify our commitment and our efforts on initiatives
> already underway but we must also create a new level of awareness,
> understanding and action (5).

The Declaration itself, is structured as a promise:

A. Action to combat apartheid

1. The conference calls upon all States, United Nations organs and
intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations to ensure
the full and universal implementation of mandatory Security Council
resolutions and to make efforts to implement other United Nations
resolutions. Particular attention should be paid to specific measures,

The divergence between grammar and referential meaning is what Paul de Man calls "the figural dimension of language." This divergence when stated in legal terms consists of the dissymmetrical relation between "political action and political prescription": the law as a text and the text of the law:

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38 (cont'd.)

including those contained in the present Programme of Action, designed to ensure the implementation of the provisions relating to apartheid.

2. The Conference reaffirms that the system of apartheid in South Africa is the most extreme form of institutionalized racism, a crime against humanity and an affront to the conscience and dignity of mankind, and that South Africa's policies and practices constitute serious breaches of and threats to regional stability and to international peace and security. The Conference calls upon all States, international organizations, private institutions and non-governmental organizations to render increased political and material assistance to the oppressed peoples of South Africa and Namibia, and to accelerate greatly campaigns for obtaining the release of all political prisoners imprisoned for their activities against apartheid.

3. The Conference further reaffirms the legitimacy of the struggle of the oppressed peoples of South Africa and Namibia and their national liberation movements for the elimination of apartheid by all available means, including armed struggle, and the special responsibility of the United Nations and the international community to provide them with moral, political and material assistance in the realization of their quest to exercise their right to self-determination.

4. The Conference reiterates the commitment of the United Nations to the total eradication of apartheid and to the establishment of a democratic society in which all the people of South Africa as a whole, irrespective of race, colour, sex or creed, will enjoy equal and full human rights and fundamental freedoms and participate freely in the determination of their destiny (7).

The divergence between political prescription and political action must be taken into account when we implement political programs.

See D'un ton apocalyptique: adopté naguère en philosophie; "Of An Apocalyptic Tone Recently Adopted in Philosophy" for a discussion of the need for and the impossibility of theoretical vigilance.

> The tension between figural and grammatical language is duplicated in the differentiation between the State as a defined entity (Etat) and the State as a principle of action (Souverain) or, in linguistic terms, between the constative and the performative function of language. A text is defined by the necessity of considering a statement, at the same time, as performative and constative, and the logical tension between figure and grammar is repeated in the impossibility of distinguishing between two linguistic functions which are not necessarily compatible. It seems that as soon as a text knows what it states, it can only act deceptively, like the thieving lawmaker in the Social Contract, and if a text does not act, it cannot state what it knows (270).

The "double rapport" and the "double inscription" of the act—the impossibility of "knowing" when acting—is the law: the text of the law and the law as text. This disjunction establishes the possibility of history, of action, and of law. For Paul de Man, the legal machine of political prescription inevitably produces "too much" (excessive state control) or "too little" (entropy of the state) which amount to an increasing deviation of the law of the state and of the state of the law. "This differential" de Man contends, "engenders an affectivity and a valorization" which cannot be a criterion of political value judgment "since this difference is one of epistemological divergence" (272). We are at the point where the impossibility and the necessity of (ideological) critique is situated. But, let us now turn to Derrida's discussion, in Mémoires: for Paul de Man, of the law, the law of Speech Act Theory.

For Derrida, J.L. Austin's "The Meaning of a Word" can be read as a text of law, the ethico-political speech act theory of laws which seeks to "de-legitimize" dangerous phrases (115). Austin's argument is that the meaning of a word can only be determined within a determined context; yet, ironically, what Austin "proposes to delegitimize," Derrida notes, "is the very thing he promises to speak to us about and which gives title to his lecture" (115):

> [Austin's theory, Derrida contends] would seek. . .to produce political
> effects and change conventions, to legitimize or de-legitimize, to
> constitute, through its very irony, a new right. . . . And every theorem
> on speech acts, for example, any theorem on the distinction between
> performative and constative, and in particular on the promise, already
> proceeds as a promise, a promise of truth, with all the paradoxes
> and aporias which can attend such an approach (115-19).

The new right of this promise, Derrida argues, "cannot be totally grounded in existing conventions" since "everything depends," for Austin, "upon contexts" (115). These contexts are, as noted above, "always open" and "non-saturable." Every word carries within itself the structural possibility of a number of "potential phrases in which it is to be inscribed" (115-16). Such is the structure of the promise. Once again as Paul de Man points out in his text, the prescriptive law consists of an irreducible aporia between and within performative and constative acts of language. The possibility of perversion and disturbance constitute the structure of the act of promising.

In Otobiographies: L'enseignement de Nietzsche et la politique du nom propre [The Ear of the Other] Derrida confronts the possibility of perversion in his discussion of the Nazi appropriation of Nietzsche's texts. Listen to Derrida:

> La question qui se pose à nous aurait peut-être cette forme: ne doit-
> il pas y avoir quelque puissante machine à produire des énoncés qui,
> dans un ensemble donné (toute la difficulté se concentre dans la
> détermination d'un tel ensemble, qui ne peut être ni simplement
> linguistique ou logique ni simplement historico-politique, économique,
> idéologique, psycho-fantasmatique, etc., aucune instance régionale
> ne pouvant l'arrêter, pas même celle de «dernière instance» qui
> appartient à la philosophie ou à la théorie, sous-ensembles de cet
> ensemble), programme à la fois les mouvements des deux forces
> contraires et qui les couple, les conjugue, les marie comme la-vie-
> la-mort? Avec cette puissante machine programmatrice, aucune
> des deux forces antagonistes ne peut rompre, elles lui sont destinées,
> elles y puisent leur provenance, leurs ressources, elles y échangent
> leurs énoncés, les laissent par elle passer les uns dans les autres avec
> un air de famille, si incompatibles qu'ils paraissent parfois. Cette
> «machine» n'est évidemment plus une machine au sens classiquement
> philosophique, puisque la «vie» en est ou fait partie et qu'elle joue

avec l'opposition vie/mort. Ce «programme» n'est pas davantage
un programme au sens téléologique ou mécaniste du terme (94-95).

The question that poses itself for us might take this form: Must
there not be some powerful utterance-producing machine that programs
the movements of the two opposing forces at once, and which couples,
conjugates, or marries them in a given set, as life (does) death? (Here,
all the difficulty comes down to the determination of such a set,
which can be neither simply linguistic, nor simply historico-political,
economic, ideological, psycho-phantasmatic, and so on. That is, no
regional agency or tribunal has the power to arrest or set the limits
on the set, not even that court of "last resort" belonging to philosophy
or theory, which remain subsets of this set.) Neither of the two
antagonistic forces can break with this powerful programming machine:
it is their __destination__; they draw their points of origin and their
resources from it; in it, they exchange utterances that are allowed
to pass through the machine and into each other, carried along by
family resemblances, however incompatible they may sometimes
appear. Obviously, this "machine" is no longer a machine in the classic
philosophical sense, because there is "life" in it or "life" takes part
in it, and because it plays with the opposition life/death. Nor would
it be correct to say that this "program" is a program in the teleological
or mechanistic sense of the term (29).[39]

This programming machine, Derrida continues, not only calls for
"decipherment" but also for "transformation." For not only Europe or this century,
"le «présent» dans lequel nous sommes, jusqu'à un certain point, et prenons
position ou parti" (96; 30) ["the present in which we are, up to a certain point,
and in which we take a position or take sides"] is at stake. I cannot stress enough
the importance of this call to attend to the possibility of perversion and
disturbance. This is the problem, the gift of thinking, deconstruction gives us
to think.

If we are always already committed prior to our active commitment and
if the possibility of perversion and disturbance are already structured within
the mark of writing, how can we take into account the irreducible structure
of language, of promising and the possibility of perversion? Formulating an answer

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[39]See __De la grammatologie; Of Grammatology, L'écriture et la différence;
Writing and Difference, Marges de la philosophie; Margins of Philosophy, Spurs:
Nietzsche's Styles/Éperons: Les Styles de Nietzsche,__ trans. Barbara Harlow
(Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1979). See note 32 and note 34 for
other references to texts in which this call is thought.

to this question could have interesting effects if the risk of promising (the double inscription of the promise which looks forward and back, at the same time, and which affirms "yes, yes to the memory of yes"), the structure of the aporia, and the possibility of mutation, of perversion, etc., were accepted. In Mémoires: for Paul de Man, Derrida joins de Man in affirming the impasse, the aporia, as the "most 'trustworthy,' 'reliable' place or moment for reopening [the] question" (133).

If I risk a rather long quotation (although I know it is not standard practice), here, it is because it is in this passage that Derrida articulates (indirectly) the economy and the strategy of "Le Dernier Mot du Racisme." It would, also, be possible to read this passage as a working "definition" of "affirmative deconstruction":

> There is no beyond-the-undecidable, but this beyond nevertheless remains to be thought from this "somewhat more reliable point of reference'"; and one can only be involved there in a promise, giving one's word on this subject, even if one denies it by signing ironically. There remains to be thought an other undecidability, one no longer bound to the order of calculation between two poles of opposition, but to the incalculable order of a wholly other: the coming or the call of the other. It must be unpredictable, aleatory beyond any calculation. There is no inside-the-undecidable, certainly, but an other memory calls us, recalls us to think an "act" or "parole" (speech), or a "speech act" which resists the opposition performative/constative, provoking at the same time the aporia and movement forward (la marche), the relation of one to the other, that is to say, history or the text. But we know...that this singular memory does not lead us back to any anteriority. There never existed (there will never have existed) any older or more original "third term" that we would have to recall, toward which we would be called to recall under the aporetic disjunction. This is why what resists the non-dialectizable opposition, what "precedes" it in some way, will still bear the name of one of the terms and will maintain a rhetorical relation with the opposition. It will be figured, figurable. It will have the figure of opposition and will always let itself be parasited by it. We will call "act," for example, that act (of speech or not) which precedes the opposition between the language of act and the language of truth, between the performative and the constative. We could say the same thing for positing (Setzung indeed, Ubersetzung): even if it remains (as Heidegger says) a metaphysical determination of Being, it will

give its name to a movement which cannot be reduced to metaphysics. The staging (mise) of the promise is a committed positing (position). We could say the same thing for words like "deconstruction" or "memory": memory without anteriority, memory of a past which has never been present, a memory without origin, a memory of the future, it is without an accepted or acceptable relation to what we commonly call "memory." We will, however, keep this name which can, under certain conditions of writing, allow something to which it appears unrelated to be thought" (137-38).

"The staging (mise) of the promise is a committed positing (position)." This complex, cryptic sentence articulates the "double inscription" of affirmative deconstruction. Affirmative deconstruction affirms irreducible undecidability —the place of contradiction—and, at the same time, affirms the necessity of thinking beyond undecidability by placing on stage ("mise") its "promise" as a "committed positing (position)." In doing so, affirmative deconstruction calls attention to the irreducible dissymmetrical "rapport" between constative/performative speech-acts, or between language as truth/language as act—a disjunction which opens the very possibility of thought and the impossibility of theoretical rigour—and to its own acts as an act of "staging (mise)" the problem of an act of promising.

A thorough reading of this citation would require an immense commentary, which I shall not undertake here. However, there are two motifs in this passage that I shall draw your attention to since they occur throughout Derrida's text. These two motifs are not unrelated to "Le Dernier Mot du Racisme." The first motif is the call to or coming of the other, and its relation to "thought."[40] This call comes to the other from within the place of contradictions or from within

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[40]See, De la grammatologie; Of Grammatology, Eperons Styles de Nietzsche/Spurs: Nietzsche's Styles, L'ecriture et la différence Writing and Difference, Marges de la philosophie; Margins of Philosophy, and notes 33 and 35 for references to other texts in which this call is thought.

the aporia of undecidability. The "staging (mise) of the promise [as] a committed positing (position)" is the second motif.

"Le Dernier Mot du Racisme"

> APARTHEID—que cela reste le nom désormais, l'unique appellation au monde pour le dernier des racismes.
>
> Qu'il le demeure mais vienne un jour où ce sera seulement pour mémoire d'homme.
>
> Une mémoire d'avance, c'est peut-être le temps donné pour cette Exposition. A la fois urgente et intempestive, elle s'y expose, elle risque le temps, elle parie et elle affirme au-delà du pari. Sans compter sur aucun présent, elle donne à seulement prévoir en peinture, tout près du silence, et la rétrovision d'un futur pour lequel APARTHEID sera le nom d'une chose abolie enfin. Alors cerné, abandonné à ce silence de la mémoire, le nom résonnera tout seul, réduit à l'état de vocable hors d'usage. La chose qu'il nomme aujourd'hui ne sera plus.
>
> Mais APARTHEID, n'est-ce pas depuis toujours l'archive de l'innommable?
>
> L'Exposition n'est donc pas une présentation. Rien ne s'y livre au présent, rien qui soit présentable, mais seulement, dans le rétroviseur de demain, feu le dernier des racismes, the late racism (11). (Spacing modified).

> APARTHEID—may that remain the name from now on, the unique appellation for the ultimate racism in the world, the last of many.
>
> May it thus remain, but may a day come when it will only be for the memory of man.
>
> A memory in advance: that, perhaps, is the time given for this exhibition. At once urgent and untimely, it exposes itself and takes a chance with time, it wagers and affirms beyond the wager. Without counting on any present moment, it offers only a foresight in painting, very close to silence, and the rearview vision of a future for which apartheid will be the name of something finally abolished. Confined and abandoned then to this silence of memory, the name will resonate all by itself, reduced to the state of a term in disuse. The thing it names today will no longer be.
>
> But hasn't apartheid always been the archival record of the unnameable?
>
> The exhibition, therefore, is not a presentation. Nothing is delivered here in the present, nothing that would be presentable—only, in tomorrow's rearview mirror, the late, ultimate racism, the last of many (330).

The brief discussion of "Le Dernier Mot du Racisme" which follows is specifically directed towards two questions. What is the structure of the ethical

appeal? What is Derrida giving us to think about the problem of the (political) promise in this text? "Le Dernier Mot du Racisme", as an ethical appeal, is I propose, structured as a double session which performs and affirms (here, we have the double affirmation, the "yes, yes") the "urgent and untimely" project of the Art Contre/Against Apartheid exhibition by placing on stage (mise en scène) the enactment of the appeal as a "committed positing (position)." At the same time, this ethical appeal is situated in and calls from the heterogeneous economic, theologico-political contradictions of the "West".

"Le Dernier Mot du Racisme" works in at least three directions at once: a) as an ethical appeal or "call to action," b) as an affirmation and as an exposition of the itinerant project of "Art Contre/Against Apartheid," and c) as a text which reads the exhibition project as a contradiction and an indiction of all of "Western history," and of intra-European justico-political or theologico-politico, and economic inscriptions.[41]

The Structure of the Ethical-Appeal

As Derrida points out in his Open Letter to McClintock and Nixon, "Le Dernier Mot du Racisme" is an "ethical appeal" as "indicated by that which, in both ethics and politics, passes by way of memory and promising, and thus by way of language and denomination" (358). Yet, matters are not quite so simple. For the contradictions within which apartheid exists (contradictions which Derrida

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[41]Here, my reading differs from Anne McClintock's and Rob Nixon's as well as from R. Radhakrishnan's readings of this text. See, Anne McClintock and Rob Nixon, "No Names Apart," and R. Radhakrishman "Ethnic Identity and Post-Structuralist Differance," Cultural Critique 6 (Spring, 1987): 199–220. Although Radhakrishman recognizes the necessity of taking into account the double sessional structure of constructs (ethnic), he must foreclose the irreducible first session in order to relate the "thematic connection between the 'ethnic' and the 'heterogeneous'""to its entrapment in multiple temporalities and histories." For a different articulation of the necessity of and the impossibility of such political programs see chapter two (216).

explicitly calls attention to) are contradictions that were and continue to be made possible by national and by international promises, commitments, and interests.

In addition, if deconstruction is an "ethical appeal" and if as an "ethical appeal" it is prone to all the problems of ethics and politics, the question we must ask is—are the projects of affirmative deconstruction and of the art exhibition complicit with the traditional problems of ethics and of politics? Derrida deals with this problem in three important ways. First, he directly confronts the possibility that the "Art Contre/Against Apartheid" project could become another dogmatic program, by raising the following questions and by leaving the possibility open: "Mais comment faire pour que ce témoin-satellite, en la vérité qu'il expose, ne soit pas arraisonné? Pour qu'il ne redevienne pas un dispostif technique, l'antenne d'une nouvelle stratégie politico-militaire, une machinerie utile pour l'exploitation de nouvelles ressources ou le calcul en vue d'intérêts mieux compris?" (19; 333) [Yet, what can be done so that this witness-satellite, in the truth it exposes, is not taken over and controlled, thus becoming another technical device, the antenna of some new politico-military strategy, a useful machinery for the exploitation of new resources, or the calculation in view of more comprehensive interests?] Remember the passage from Otobiographies. This possibility is structured within every act of promising and within every call for (political) action.

Secondly, the structure of "Le Dernier Mot du Racisme" calls attention to the aporia between performative/constative language acts. If you re-read the preceding quotation from the second section of "Le Dernier Mot du Racisme," you will find that through the syntax of the phrase "may that remain," the performative—the promise oriented toward the future—as indicated by the word "may" is situated within the constative. "Remain" connotes that which is always

already anterior to the promise. Derrida points this structure out in "But, beyond
. . . (Open Letter to Anne McClintock and Rob Nixon)" (358). What this syntactical
structure does is to wed the possibility of the future as it calls toward the future,
with the "realistic" problem of apartheid. The appeal is grounded within and
calls beyond the confines of the current situation. "A memory in advance," and
"the memory of man" work as comparable structures. All three phrases, indeed,
the entire opening and concluding sections of this text call attention to the
dissymmetrical structure of the promise and to the impossibility and the necessity
of promising.

Thirdly, Derrida situates and affirms the project's appeal as an appeal which
calls unconditionally toward the future of another law and another force which
would lie beyond the totality of the present, and, also, as a call to read, to think,
and to do "beyond the present of the institutions" supporting the "Art
Contre/Against Apartheid" project. This call for and to the coming of the other
has occupied an important place in Derrida's work since at least as early as De
la grammatologie [Of Grammatology]. In this text, Derrida calls for "une pensée
fidèle et attentive au monde irréductiblement à venir qui s'annonce au présent,
par-delà la clôture du savoir" (14; 4) ["a way of thinking that is faithful and
attentive to the ineluctable world of the future which proclaims itself at present
beyond the closure of knowledge"]. (4) The chapter entitled "De la grammatologie
comme science positive" ["Of Grammatology as a Positive Science"] concludes
as follows:

> La constitution d'une science ou d'une philosophie de l'écriture
> est une tâche nécessaire et difficile. Mais parvenue à ces limites
> et les répétant sans relâche, une pensée de la trace, de la différance
> ou de la réserve, doit aussi pointer au-delà du champ de l'épistémè.
> Hors de la référence économique et stratégique au nom que Heidegger
> se justifie de donner aujourd'hui à une transgression analogue mais

non identique de tout philosophème, pensée est ici pour nous un nom parfaitement neutre, un blanc textuel, l'index nécessairement indéterminé d'une époque à venir de la différance. D'une certaine manière « la pensée » ne veut rien dire. Comme toute ouverture, cet index appartient, par la face en lui qui se donne à voir, au dedans d'une époque passée. Cette pensée ne pèse rien. Elle est, dans le jeu du système, cela même qui jamais ne pèse rien. Penser, c'est ce que nous savons déjà n'avoir pas encore commencé à faire : ce qui, mesuré à la taille de l'écriture, s'entame seulement dans l'epistémè. Grammatologie, cette pensée se tiendrait encore murée dans la présence (142).

The constitution of a science or a philosophy of writing is a necessary and difficult task. But, a thought of the trace, of difference or of reserve, having arrived at these limits and repeating them ceaselessly, must also point beyond the field of the epistémè. Outside of the economic and strategic reference to the name that Heidegger justifies himself in giving to an analogous but not identical transgression of all philosophemes, thought is here for me a perfectly neutral name, the blank part of the text, the necessarily indeterminate index of a future epoch of differance. In a certain sense, "thought" means nothing. Like all openings, this index belongs within a past epoch by the face that is open to view. This thought has no weight. It is, in the play of the system, that very thing which never has weight. Thinking is what we already know we have not yet begun; measured against the shape of writing, it is broached only in the epistémè. Grammatology, this thought, would still be walled-in within presence (93).

This affirmation of the necessary and impossible thought of the future, of a promise to end racism, which as an appeal calls from the place of the contradictions of the West toward the future of another thought and, in doing so, traces a double inscription, is, I contend, the gift, the thought, of the problem of the promise, that Derrida gives us to think here. This call and the structure of the act of promising must be thought before we question the "politics" of deconstruction.

I began this chapter with a citation from Heidegger's text, What is Called Thinking; I would like to end with the thought of this text:

Most thought-provoking is that we are still not thinking—not even yet, although the state of the world is becoming constantly more thought-provoking. True, this course of events seems to demand rather that man should act, without delay, instead of making speeches at conferences and international conventions and never getting beyond proposing ideas on what ought to be, and how it ought to be done. What is lacking, then, is action, not thought.

And yet—it could be that prevailing man has for centuries now acted too much and thought too little. . . .

Most thought-provoking in our thought-provoking time is that we are still not thinking (4-6).

CHAPTER 2

THE AFFIRMATION OF POLITICAL THOUGHT

> A text is defined by the necessity of considering a statement, at the
> same time, as performative and constative, and the logical tension
> between figure and grammar is repeated in the impossibility of
> distinguishing between two linguistic functions which are not
> necessarily compatible. It seems that as soon as a text knows what it
> states, it can only act deceptively, like the thieving lawmaker in the
> Social Contract, and if a text does not act, it cannot state what it
> knows. The distinction between a text as narrative and a text as theory
> also belongs to this field of tension.
>
> — Paul de Man, Allegories of Reading[1]

As in the first chapter, my argument takes a specific direction. We have

already touched upon the structure of the promise, double sessions, iteration,

différance, the "politicity" of the law, the irreducible aporia between constative

and performative speech acts or between rhetoric as persuasion and rhetoric as

trope, and the (political) interventional force of deconstruction in the political

rewriting of the text and its destination. Here, in this chapter, we will once again

approach many of these same issues, especially the political force of

deconstruction. What I am interested in tracing is Gayatri Spivak's

deconstructive-marxist-feminist articulation of a) the double session of

representation—representation as Vertretung, or as tropology, and representation

as Darstellung or as persuasion, b) the question of value, and c) a political project

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[1] Paul de Man, Allegories of Reading: Figural Language in Rousseau,
Nietzsche, Rilke, and Proust (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979) 270.

of the open end.[2]

To what do we refer when we speak of representation or of value? What is representation? What is value? What interests are involved in the opposition materialist/idealist with respect to the question of value? What is the difference between political, economic, and philosophic representation and representation as it refers to the constitution of the subject? How is the "idealist" predication of the subject as "thought" or as consciousness, related to the materialist predication of the subject as labour power? What is at issue in the debate between marxist, feminist, and deconstructive thinkers when they speak of representation and/or of value?[3] What place does the work of Gayatri Spivak occupy in this debate?

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[2]It was a difficult task to limit my discussion of Gayatri Spivak's important work to these three issues. I hope to write a more comprehensive study of her work in the near future. I would like to thank Gayatri Spivak for providing me with many difficult-to-find and unpublished papers and for discussing her work with me.

[3]Within the feminist context see, The Feminist Body in Western Culture: Contemporary Perspectives, ed. Susan Rubin Suleiman (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1986); Michèle Barrett, Women's Oppression Today: Problems in Marxist Feminist Analysis (London: New Left Books, 1980); Judith Fetterley, The Resisting Reader: A feminist approach to American fiction (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978); Catherine Belsey, Critical Practice (London: Methuen, 1979); Barbara Christian, Black Women Novelists: The development of a tradition (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1980); Gloria T. Hull et al. eds., All the Women are White, All the Blacks are Men, But some of Us are Brave: Black Woman's Studies (Old Westbury, New York: Feminist Press, 1982); Michelle Z. Rosaldo, "The use and abuse of anthropology: Reflections on feminism and cross-cultural understanding," Signs 5.3 (1980): 389-417; Annette Kuhn and Ann Marie Wolpe, Feminism and Materialism: Women and Modes of Production (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978); Judith Newton and Deborah Rosenfelt, eds., Feminist Criticism and Social Change: Sex, Class and Race in Literature and Culture (New York: Methuen, 1985); Teresa de Lauretis, Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), and (ed.), Feminist Studies: Critical Studies (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986); Monique Wittig, "The Straight Mind," Feminist Issues 1 (1980): 105-06; and Catherine A. MacKinnon, "Feminism, Marxism, Method and the State: An Agenda for Theory," Signs 7.3 (1983): 515-44. Also see note 6.

If I have chosen to approach the problem of representation[4] by way of two

texts by Gayatri Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" and "Scattered Speculations

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[4] I am not suggesting that there are not other discussions of representation. Here, however, I am interested in focusing upon Spivak's deconstructive-marxist-feminist discussion of representation. The amount of scholarship devoted to the study of representation is immense. I list below a few texts which I have found useful and which are theories against which Spivak's theory could be read. See, for example: Edward Said's Orientalism (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), The Question of Palestine (New York: Times Books, 1979), Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981), and The World, the Text and the Critic (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983); Fredric Jameson, The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981); Jameson's earlier book Marxism and Form (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971) is also noteworthy although questioned by his later projects; Fredric Jameson, "Post-Modernism or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism," New Left Review 146 (1984): 53-93; Abdul Jan Mohamed, Manichean Aesthetics: The Politics of Literature in Colonial Africa (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1983); Etienne Balibar and Pierre Macherey, "On literature as an ideological form," Untying the Text: A Post-structuralist Reader, ed. Robert Young (London: Methuen, Inc., 1981): 79-100; Francis Barker, et al. (eds.), The Politics of Theory (Colchester: University of Essex, 1983), Confronting the Crisis: War, Politics and Culture in the Eighties (Colchester: University of Essex, 1984), and Literature, Politics and Theory: Papers from the Essex Conference 1976-84 (New York: Methuen, 1986); Bhabha Homi, "Of mimicry and men: The Ambivalence of colonial discourse," October 28 (1984): 125-33; Jacques Derrida, Of Grammatology, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1976); Terry Eagleton, Literary Theory: An Introduction (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), Criticism and Ideology: A Study of Marxist Literary Theory (London: Schocken Books, 1978), Marxism and Literary Theory (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976); Johannes Fabian, Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983); Henry Louis Gates (ed.), Black Literature and Literary Theory (New York: Methuen, 1984); Antonio Gramsci, Prison Notebooks, ed. and trans. G. Hoare and G. Nowell Smith (New York: International Publishers, 1977), Selections from Cultural Writings, ed. and trans. D. Fergacs and G. Nowell Smith (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1985); Claude Lévi-Strauss, Tristes Tropiques (Paris: W.S.P., 1982), Structural Anthropology, trans. Claire Jacobson and Brooke Grundfest Schoepf (New York: Basic Books, 1977), and Structural Anthropology, Vol. II, trans. M. Layton (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978); Toril Moi, Sexual/Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory (New York: Methuen, 1985); Linda Nochlin, "The Imaginary Orient," Art in America 5 (1983): 188-31, 187-91; Pierre Macherey, A Theory of Literary Production, trans. Geoffrey Wall (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978); V.N. Voloshinov, Marxism and the Philosophy of Language, trans. L. Matejka and I.R. Titunik (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973); Raymond Williams, Marxism and Literature (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977); Eric Wolf, Europe and the People Without History (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982); Partha Mitter, Much Maligned Monsters: History of Europe's Reaction to India (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977); Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics,

on the Question of Value,"[5] it is for at least three reasons. First, the problems

Spivak refers to with vigilance in her critical reading of "Intellectuals and Power:

A conversation between Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze,"[6] are problems

inherent to a number of political theories which must be taken into account.

Secondly, Spivak's deconstructive-marxist-feminist articulation of the irreducible

discontinuity between idealist and materialist predications of the subject and her

political project of the open end are important contributions to political thought.

The questions Spivak opens in these texts are questions and problems central to

the constitutional specificities of the Canadian cultural, political economy. This

is my third reason.

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4 (cont'd.)trans. Winston Moore and Paul Cammack (London: Verso, 1985); Tony Bennett, Formalism and Marxism (London: Methuen, 1979); Louis Althusser, Lenin and Philosophy, and Other Essays (London: New Left Books, 1969); Louis Althusser and Etienne Balibar, Reading Capital (London: New Left books, 1979); Hayden White, Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth Century Europe (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), and Tropics of Discourse (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1978); Dominick LaCapra, Rethinking Intellectual History (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), and History and Criticism (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984); Robert Ferandez Retamar, "Caliban: Notes Towards a Discussion of Culture in Our America," Massachusetts Review 15 (1974): 7-71; Ranajit Guha (ed.), Subaltern Studies: Writings on South Asian History and Society, Vol. I-V (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1981-85); Ranajit Guha, Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983); Partha Chatterjee, Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World-A Derivative Discourse (London: Zed Books Ltd., for The United Nations University, 1986); and "Race," Writing and Difference, ed. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1986.

5Gayatri Spivak, "Scattered Speculations on the Question of Value," Diacritics, 15.4 (1985): 73-92, reprinted in In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics (New York: Methuen, 1987) 154-78, and "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in Larry Grossberg and Gary Nelson, eds., Marxist Interpretations of Literature and Culture: Limits, Frontiers, Boundaries (Urbana: University of Illinois (forthcoming).

6Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze, "Intellectuals and Power: A conversation between Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze," Language, Counter-memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews by Michel Foucault, ed. Donald F. Bouchard (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977) 205-17. Since Spivak uses the English translation in her discussion I have followed her example.

The Double Session of Representation

Since the 1960's, the question that has often been addressed by French post-structuralist political thinkers is how to combine the contributions of post-structuralist thought—the necessity for a persistent critique of the irreducible networks of "power, desire, and interest," the necessity to destabilize notions of self-sovereignty and the necessity to "disclose" and attempt "to know society's 'other'-s"[7]—with a political (marxist/feminist) program.[8] The presupposition that subtends this question is the conviction that if marxism and the production of counter-ideological readings are not radically revised, they will simply reproduce or at best, reverse, the existing politico-economic social power structures. For a number of intellectuals, psychoanalytic notions of desire and repression and poststructuralist theories of pluralized subject effects or the de-stabilization of

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[7]Gayatri Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" 2.

[8]See for example, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, L'Anti-Oedipe (Paris: Minuit, 1972); Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia, trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), Catherine Clément and Hélène Cixous, La jeune née (Paris: UGE, 10/18, 1975); The Newly Born Woman, trans. Betsy Wing (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986); Catherine Clément, Pierre Bruno, and Lucien Sève, Pour une critique marxiste et la théorie psychanalytique (Paris: Editions Sociales, 1973); Catherine Clément, "La Femme dans l'idéologie," La Nouvelle Critique 82 (1975): 416; Luce Irigaray, Speculum de l'autre femme (Paris: Minuit, 1974); Speculum of the Other Woman, trans. Gillian C. Gill (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), and Ce sexe qui n'en est pas un (Paris: Minuit, 1977); This Sex Which Is Not One, trans. Catherine Porter (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985); and Hélène Cixous, "Le rire de la méduse," L'Arc 61 (1975): 39-54; Keith Cohen & Paula Cohen, trans. "The Laugh of the Medusa," New French Feminisms, ed. Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtivron (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1980) 245-64 and "Le sexe ou la tête," Les cahiers du GRIF 13 (1976): 5-15; Annette Kuhn, trans. "Castration or Decapitation," Signs 7.1 (1981): 41-55. See also Sherry Turkle's account of the psychoanalytic revival in Psychoanalytic Politics: Freud's French Revolution (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1978). I have limited my references, here, to post-structuralist thinkers. For a different perspective on how to combine contemporary philosophic thought (Derrida's texts) with a Marxist program, see the special issue on French Culture and Politics in Telos 67 (1986).

the sovereign subject,[9] seem to offer a solution to this problem. I tend to think that for many intellectuals these notions are subterfuges and attempts to escape the problem of ideology. Some of Michel Foucault's and Gilles Deleuze's work can be situated within this problematic.[10] It would be possible to argue, by borrowing Paul de Man's tropological model of deconstruction,[11] that as Foucault and Deleuze discover the troping error of self-sovereignty and hegemonic theories of desire, they begin to perform the problems they were attempting to deconstruct. Gayatri Spivak does not approach the problematic presuppositions that subtend Foucault's and Deleuze's conversation by way of Paul de Man's model, but her contention is, in a sense, similar: "[s]ome of the most radical criticism coming out of the West today is operated by a desire to conserve (and an interest in conserving) the Subject of the West, or the West as Subject."[12]

I list below five of the many issues around which Spivak counters Foucault's and Deleuze's argument:

1) institutional responsibility: the failure to take into account the "class fix," the "institutionality," and the historical situation of the intellectual or how the intellectual within socialized capital can help consolidate the international division of labour;

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[9]What these theories attempt to avoid is the clearing of a "subject-position."

[10]Michel Foucault, The Order of Things: An Archaeology of Human Sciences and the Discourse of Language, trans. A.M. Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1973); The Archaeology of Knowledge, trans. A.M. Sheridan Smith (London: Tavistock, 1977); The History of Sexuality: Volume I An Introduction, trans. Robert Hurley (London: Penguin Press, 1979), Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Vintage Books, 1973), and Power/Knowledge, Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977, ed. Donald F. Bouchard, trans. and ed. Colin Gordon (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1980).

[11]Paul de Man, Allegories of Reading. In this essay, Spivak does not use this model of reading which I have borrowed from her essay entitled "Imperialism and Sexual Difference," Oxford Literary Review 8.1-2 (1986): 225-240.

[12]Gayatri Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" 1.

2)   the foreclosure of the problem of ideology (the subject production of the worker and the unemployed within nation-state ideologies in the centre and in the third world); thus, the foreclosure of the necessity for counter-ideological production;

3)   Deleuze and Foucault ignore the epistemic violence of imperialism and the international division of labour by sublating and effacing the problems of exploitation into the problems of power and domination.[13] In doing so, they do not or cannot acknowledge the geo-political discontinuity brought about by eighteenth century imperialism that consolidated the hegemonic structures of the West. Here, Asia is rendered transparent;

4)   the establishment of the sovereign subject on at least three levels: the source of interest or of power, the investigating subject of the critic, and the articulate oppressed who know their victimization and can speak for themselves;

5)   the valorization of a pré-critical notion of desire and a too simplistic notion of repression.

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[13]Also problematic, as Spivak pointed out in her lectures at the University of Alberta in 1986, is the conflation of immigration problems with the problem of exploitation. First world and third world differences must be recognized. This is, also, a problem common to many Canadian texts. Within the feminist arena, see for example, Louky Bersianik, L'Euguélionne (Montréal: La Presse, 1976); Gerry Denis, Alison Hewitt, Donna Murray, and Martha O'Brien, trans. L'Euguélionne: A Triptych novel (Vancouver: Press Porcépic, 1981); Madeleine Gagnon, "Mon Corps dans l'écriture," in Hélène Cixous, Madeleine Gagnon and Annie Leclerc, La venue à l'écriture (Paris: UGE, 10/18, 1977) 63-116, and especially, "La femme et le langage: sa fonction comme parole en son manque," La Barre du jour 50 (Winter, 1975): 45-57. Both Bersianik and Gagnon blur the lines of demarcation between domination and exploitation and, in doing so, structurally equate the one with the other.

See footnote 7 for a select number of texts in which the problem of desire and pluralized subject-effects seems problematic. This is also a problem common to a number of the British post-Althusserians generally referred to as the "Hindness and Hirst" collective. The key spokesmen for this group are Barry Hindness and Paul Hirst. For a critical review of this collective's work see Philip Corrigan and Derek Sayer, "Hindness and Hirst: A critical review," The Socialist Register, 1978. This is not a problem in the work of Jacques Derrida.

These five problems, in particular, the valorization of desire, a too simplistic notion of repression, the foreclosure of the specificities of the desiring subject, and the abnegation of institutional responsibility are problems common to many contemporary theories of desire and/or of pluralized subject effects.[14] I would

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[14] A related problem arises in the following passage from Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, Towards a Radical Democratic Politics 108:

> (a) The fact that every object is constituted as an object of discourse has nothing to do with whether there is a world external to thought, or with the realism/idealism opposition. An earthquake or the falling of a brick is an event that certainly exists, in the sense that it occurs here and now, independently of my will. But whether their specificity as objects is constructed in terms of 'natural phenomena' or 'expressions of the wrath of God', depends upon the structuring of a discursive field. What is denied is not that such objects exist externally to thought, but the rather different assertion that they could constitute themselves as objects outside any discursive condition of emergence.
>
> (b) At the root of the previous prejudice lies an assumption of the mental character of discourse. Against this, we will affirm the material character of every discursive structure. To argue the opposite is to accept the very classical dichotomy between an objective field constituted outside of any discursive intervention, and a discourse consisting of the pure expression of thought. This is, precisely, the dichotomy which several currents of contemporary thought have tried to break.

Here, we have a simple reversal of the idealist/materialist opposition. Within the feminist arena I call your attention to the following passage from Parveen Adam's "A note on the distinction between sexual division and sexual differences," m/f 3 (1979): 52:

> My argument is that as long as feminist theories of ideology work with a theory of representation within which representation is always a representation of reality, however attenuated a relation that may be, the analysis of sexual difference cannot be advanced because reality is always already apparently structured by sexual division, by an already antagonistic relation between two social groups. And thus the complicated and contradictory ways in which sexual difference is generated in various discursive and social practices is always reduced to an effect of that always existent sexual division. In terms of sexual division what has to be explained is how reality functions to effect the continuation of its already given divisions. (The different ways in which sexual differences are produced is actually denied as a political fact in this position.) In terms of sexual differences, on the other hand, what has to be grasped is, precisely, the production of differences through systems of representation; the work of representation produces differences that cannot be known in advance.

like to pause, here, to read two examples. The first passage is a passage from "Intellectuals and Power: A Conversation between Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze," quoted (in part) by Spivak:

> A theorising intellectual, for us, is no longer a subject, a representing or representative consciousness. Those who act and struggle are no longer represented, either by a group or a union that appropriates the right to stand as their conscience. Who speaks and acts? It is always a multiplicity, even within the person who speaks and acts. All of us are "groupuscules." Representation no longer exists; there's only action —theoretical action and practical action which serve as relays and form networks (Language, Counter-memory, Practice 206-07).

For Spivak, even if Deleuze's contention is that the binary opposition between theory and practice must be undone, his articulation of this contention is extremely problematic (7-10). Two concepts of representation are being elided into one another here: political representation as "speaking for" and representation as in "art and philosophy." These two senses of representation "are related, but irreducibly discontinuous" (10). The blurring of these lines of demarcation between these "irreducibly discontinuous" concepts of representation, it seems to me, amounts to a disavowal of institutional responsibility and an attempt to side-step the problem of ideology and the intellectual's institutional complicity.

Within the Canadian context, this is a problem inherent in a number of feminist texts (and not only feminist texts) which privilege a pre-critical notion of desire. Here, I draw your attention to a passage from Madeleine Gagnon's text

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14 (cont'd) What this argument, as Michèle Barrett points out, amounts to is i) "rejection of theories of ideology; ii) a denial that there is any knowable relation between representation and that which is represented; iii) an insistence that functionalist formulations are always and necessarily incorrect." See Michèle Barrett, Ideology and the Cultural Production of Gender 87.

entitled Poélitique:[15]

> le DESIR inscrit non plus au creux de nos cervelles
> mais de nos actes inscrits dans les mémorables
> j'écris c'est ce qu'on m'a appris à l'école
> j'écris pour déchirer la poésie tordre les alphabets
> rompre les codes jusqu'aux formes sonores de la carte
> c'est derrière un discours que se noue le désir oui (n.p.)

> Desire inscribed no longer in the hollow of our brains
> but in our actions inscribed in the memorable
> I write it's what they taught me at school
> I write to tear up poetry to bend the alphabets
> break the codes down to the sonorous forms of the map
> it's behind a discourse that desire is formed yes (n.p.)

Poélitique marks a transition in Gagnon's texts from marxist critique to a feminist theory of desire. As Karen Gould notes in her essay, "Madeleine Gagnon's Po(e)litical Vision: Portrait of an Artist and an Era," "Gagnon would have us believe, [that] the poet is the artist whose literary projects seek to obliterate all barriers between language and action, ideology and desire."[16] Needless to say, when all "barriers" are blurred, ideology creeps in with a capital I.

If the critique of ideological subject constitution within state formation and systems of the "political economy" and if the "affirmative theoretical practice of the 'transformation of consciousness'" are to be taken up, Spivak contends, then "the shifting distinctions" between representation as Vertretung (political representation) and representation as Darstellung (economic representation) must not be effaced (10). To consider the play of Vertretung and of Darstellung, Spivak reads a number of passages from the work of Karl Marx.

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[15]Madeleine Gagnon, Poélitique (Montréal: Les Herbes Rouges, 1975). Translation by Karen Gould, "Madeleine Gagnon's Po(e)litical Vision: Portrait of an Artist and an Era," Traditionalism, Nationalism, and Feminism: Women Writers in Quebec (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1985) 200.

[16]Karen Gould, "Madeleine Gagnon's Po(e)litical Vision: Portrait of an Artist and an Era" 188.

If for Foucault, "we never desire against our 'interests'" (6), when we turn to the texts of Marx a different story is told. Considering the play of <u>Vertretung</u> and <u>Darstellung</u> in <u>The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte</u>,[17] Spivak reminds us that Marx's initial, descriptive definition of class is a differential one: "[i]n so far as millions of families live under economic conditions of existence that separate their mode of life, their interests and their cultural formation from those of the other classes...they form a class."[18] Indeed, for Marx "class is artificial and economic agency or interest is impersonal because systematic and heterogeneous." This agency or interest is central to Marx's critique of the Hegelian subject for it marks the subject's empty place in the process that is history and the political economy. What Marx notes in his reading of Hegel is that even though Hegel attempts to create a subject without history, or a trans-historical subject, the historical representative space of Hegel, himself, as an investigating subject gives his subject a history. For Althusser, Marx's notion of the subject's empty place in history and the political economy is not unlike Derrida's notion of <u>erasure</u>:[19]

> Undeniably, for it has passed into his works, and <u>Capital</u> demonstrates it, Marx owes to Hegel the decisive philosophical category of process. He owes him yet more, that Feuerbach himself did not suspect. He owes him the concept of the process without subject....The origin, indispensable to the teleological nature of the process...must be <u>denied</u> from the start, so that the process of alienation may be a process without subject....Hegel's logic is the affirmed-denied Origin: first form of a concept that Derrida has introduced into philosophical reflection, the <u>erasure</u> (350).

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[17]Karl Marx, <u>The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte</u> collected in <u>Surveys from Exile</u> ed. David Fernbach (New York: Random House, 1973), Vol. II: 143-249.

[18]Karl Marx, <u>Surveys from Exile</u> 239.

[19]Louis Althusser, "Sur le rapport de Marx à Hegel," <u>Hegel et la pensée moderne</u>, ed. Jacques d'Hondt (Paris: Presses Universitaires, 1970) 108-09.

For Spivak, Marx problematizes representation when he describes the representative ("vertreten") of the small peasant proprietorial class as a representative who appears to work toward another interest. The word, notes Spivak, that Marx uses to speak of representation when discussing political representation is not darstellen, but vertreten. What we encounter between the texts of Spivak-Marx and Foucault and Deleuze, as she suggests, is a much older debate, a debate "between representation or rhetoric as tropology and, as persuasion" (12). Here, is the Marxian passage with which Spivak supports her contention that for Marx the subject's consciousness and his representation are "dislocated" and "incoherent":

> [The small peasant proprietors] cannot represent themselves; they must
> be represented. Their representative must appear [erscheinen, the
> philosophical term] simultaneously as their master, as an authority over
> them, as unrestricted governmental power that protects them from the
> other classes and sends them rain and sunshine from above, The
> political influence [in the place of the class interest, since there is no
> unified class subject] of the small peasant proprietors therefore finds
> its last expression [findet also darin seinen letzten Ausdruck, the
> implication of a chain of substitutions—Vertretungen—is strong here]
> in the executive force [Exekutivgewalt—less personal in German]
> subordinating society to itself (12-13).

In the first chapter we noted that for Paul de Man the necessity to think beyond the aporia (between grammar and meaning, and between rhetoric as tropology and rhetoric as persuasion) and the difference between political prescription and (political) action marked the possibility of history:

> Just as any other Reader, [Rousseau] is bound to misread his text as
> a promise of political change. The error is not within the reader;
> language itself, dissociates the cognition from the act Die Sprache
> verspricht (sich): to the extent that it is necessarily misleading,
> language just as necessarily conveys the promise of its own truth. This

is why textual allegories on this level of rhetorical complexity generate history.[20]

Here, in "Can the Subaltern Speak?" Spivak reading Marx's texts makes a similar suggestion:

> Not only does such a model of social indirection—necessary gaps between the source of "influence" (in this case the small peasant proprietors), the "representative" (Louis Napoleon) and the historico-political phenomenon (executive control—imply a critique of the subject as _individual_ agent, but a critique even of the subjectivity of a _collective_ agency. The necessarily dislocated machine of history moves because "the identity of the _interests_" [Foucault and Deleuze's word] of these proprietors "fails to produce a feeling of community, national links, or a political organization." The event of representation as _Vertretung_ (in the constellation of rhetoric-as-persuasion) behaves like a _Darstellung_ (or rhetoric-as-trope) taking its place in the gap between the formation of a (descriptive) class and the non-formation of a (transformative) class (13).

We shall come back to this aporia and the step (pas) forward later in this chapter. Let us continue to follow Spivak's argument.

Class is for Marx, as we have noted above, a "descriptive and transformative concept." Class formation is "artificial." The "economic agency, or interest, impersonal because systematic and heterogeneous," is related to Marx's critique of Hegel's "individual positive subject." Marx problematizes representation further as he marks the representative (vertreten) of the small peasant proprietorial class as a representative who appears to work toward another interest (darstellen). Hence, Marx does not simply problematize the subject as individual agent. If we turn to The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte, there we can read a critique of collective agency as well.

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[20]Paul de Man, _Allegories of Reading_ 277.

Even if class agency were possible, Spivak contends, it would not amount to, as Foucault's and Deleuze's conversation infers, "a desiring identity of the agent(s) and his (their) interest"; rather, the project of full class agency is "a contestatory replacement as well as an appropriation (a supplementation)"[21] of something that is artificial to begin with—the "'economic conditions of existence that separate their mode of life'" (14). Whereas Foucault and Deleuze do not or cannot distinguish between class consciousness and the transformation of consciousness, for Spivak, the project of class consciousness and the transformation of consciousness are on a second level of abstraction and are discontinuous (15). Marx's articulation of Darstellung, "the philosophic concept of representation as staging, or signification" (17) is representation in the field of economics.

We have already noted how, by eliding the two senses of representation into Darstellung, Foucault and Deleuze fail to distinguish between class consciousness and its representation and evade the problem of ideology. Spivak begins her discussion of Darstellung by noting another problem with Foucault's use of representation: Foucault's failure to distinguish between Marx's and Ricardo's theories of value (17). This is evident in the Order of Things when Foucault writes "Value has ceased to be a sign, it has become a product" (17).[22] Having reduced Marx's theory of value to "a product" and having failed to distinguish between Ricardo's and Marx's theories of value, Foucault then goes on to sublate exploitation into domination. As Spivak notes "in the absence of a theory of exploitation as the extraction (production), appropriation, and realization of (surplus)value as representation of labour-power, capitalist exploitation must be seen as a variety of domination (the mechanics of power as such)" (18).

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[21]Jacques Derrida, De la grammatologie 203-226; Of Grammatology 141-57.

[22]See also, Johannes Fabian, Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object 139.

There are two further passages from Marx in which the double session of representation is written and to which Spivak draws our attention in "Can the Subaltern Speak?" The first passage from Grundrisse[23] is the Marxian (non)analogy for how to interpret representation (darstellung) in value:

> To compare money with language is not less erroneous. Ideas are not transformed in language, so that their specificity is dissolved and their social character exists alongside them in language, like prices alongside commodities. Ideas do not exist separately from language. Ideas which have first to be translated out of their mother tongue into a foreign language in order to circulate, in order to become exchangeable, offer a somewhat better analogy; but the analogy then lies not in language, but in the foreignness of language (20).

In order to interpret the representation of value, the foreignness of money to value, as a differential, must be interpreted. What being produced in signification (ideas or money) is value and only indirectly commodities.

In the second passage Marx once again writes the performance of "Vertretung" of revolutionary practice, as an inscription of difference—the appropriation of what is foreign. The text being read is The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte as translated by Spivak in "Can the Subaltern Speak?":

> Human beings make [die Menschen machen] their own history, but they do not make it [sie machen sie nicht] with free parts [aus freien Stücken; 'by themselves' would be more colloquial; 'free will,' the usual translation, is too heavy; I am trying to preserve the theatrical metaphor in 'Stück' (part)]; not in self-chosen, but in immediately encountered [unmittelbar vorgefunden; 'directly confronted' changes the aura to Hegelian necessity rather than to something like Heideggerian 'thrownness'], given, and passed-on [überliefert] circumstances. The tradition of the dead generations weighs like an incubus on the brain [wie ein Alb auf dem Gehirne] of the living. And, just when they appear to be engaged in making over [umwälzen]

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[23]Karl Marx, Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy, trans. Martin Nicolaus (New York: Viking Press, 1973) 162-63.

themselves and things in general [Dinge]], in order to produce something which was not yet there [noch nicht Dagewesenes zu schaffen], precisely in such epochs of revolutionary crisis they timidly conjure up the spirits of the past into their service [beschworen zu ihrem Dienste herauf] borrow their names, combat-passwords [Schlachtparole] and costumes so as to perform [ausführen] the new world-historical scene in the venerable disguise and borrowed language. . . . Thus the beginner who has learned a new language, always translates it back into his mother tongue; he has however, appropriated the spirit of the new language, and can produce in it [produzieren in ihr] freely, as soon as he can move in it without reminiscence [Rückerinnerung], and forgets in it the language bred and rooted in him [die ihm angestammte Sprache] (22-23).

The greatest danger for Marx, Spivak argues, is that the revolution will be turned into a "pantomime." In order to act, Marx prescribes forgetting the mother-tongue. As we read through this passage what we notice in this interplay of representation of the movement or graphics, of the supplement:[24] the active transactional reading of sign systems. Catachresis marks the (non)originary origins of the double session of representation, or in the words of Paul de Man: "It seems as soon as a text knows what it states, it can only act deceptively, . . .and if a text does not act, it cannot state what it knows" (270). I draw your attention to three other important issues articulated in this passage: the divided and dislocated subject (represented and representing); the supplementary transaction of politico-economic discursive displacements; and active forgetfulness as the moment/movement of action and of history. Earlier we noted the play between Vertretung and Darstellung, as political representation. Here, once again, Darstellung as the representation or sign of money, and the Vertretung of revolutionary practice are irreducibly discontinuous.

The role of the critic, Spivak writes, is to attend to the double session of representation rather than reinscribing "the constitutive subject"—as the "subject

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[24]Jacques Derrida, De la grammatologie 243-55; Of Grammatology 171-79.

of desire and power as an irreducible methodological presupposition," as the "self-proximate oppressed subject," or as the transparent investigating subject: all these subjects are inscribed through totalizing concepts of "power and desire" (25). This subject and the obliterated trace of the other in its "precarious Subjectivity" (27), Spivak argues, belongs to the "exploiter's side of the international division of labour (26)." This French Intellectual, she contends, cannot encounter the irreducible discursivity of representation on the other side of the international division of labour from within the critique of the constitution of the European subject, nor can he imagine the "kind of power and desire" that constitute the Other of Europe. This problem of representation is further problematized; indeed, the problem is irreducibly discursive since:

> in the constitution of that Other of Europe, the most assiduous and strenuous care was taken precisely to obliterate the textual ingredients with which such a subject could cathect, occupy (invest?) its itinerary; not only by ideological production and scientific production, but by the institution of the Law (27).

How then can we speak to and learn from the Subaltern? One way, Spivak, suggests, is by "systematically unlearning our privilege as our loss"—not to abstain from representation, but to force the irreducible universalizing moment when we appropriate the other through assimilation to crisis. A second path is to attend to the constitution of the other in its subject-ivity. It is a double gestural program irreducibly discursive. Acknowledging the possibility that the intellectual is complicit in the appropriation of the other, Spivak suggests that one possibility for a political project would be to put the economic text "under erasure" (sous

râture):[25] "to see the economic factor as irreducible... it re-inscribes the social text, even as it erased, however imperfectly, when it claims to be the final determinant or the transcendental signified" (27).[26]

The Question of Value

> . . .toute Valeur est réécrite (→) en Théorie.
>
> — Roland Barthes, Roland Barthes[27]

"Scattered Speculations on the Question of Value," which suggests that we put the economic text sous râture (under erasure, to cross out the word so that both the deletion and the word are present), is, to date, the best introduction to Gayatri Spivak's deconstructive-marxist-feminist reading of the question of value when it is determined by a materialist subject-predication. What I am interested in tracing, here, is what renders the economic text textual, how Spivak places the economic text sous râture, and in what way the materialist and idealistic predications of the subject are irreducible.

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[25]As I read this passage I am reminded of the following passage from Paul de Man's Allegories of Reading:

> We call text any entity that can be considered from such a double perspective: as a generative, open-ended, non-referential grammatical system and as a figural system closed off by a transcendental signification that subverts the grammatical code to which the text owes its existence. . . . It seems that as soon as a text knows what it states, it can only act deceptively, . . .and if a text does not act, it cannot state what it knows (270).

[26]Jacques Derrida, De la grammatologie 31; Of Grammatology 19. Martin Heidegger, The Question of Being, trans. William Kluback and Jean T. Wilde, bilingual edition (New York: Twayne, 1958).

[27]Roland Barthes, Roland Barthes par Roland Barthes (Paris: Seuil, 1975) 181; Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977) 179. This passage reads in English as follows: ". . .all Value is rewritten (→) as Theory."

She begins with the incomplete syllogism:

> One of the determinations of the question of value is the predication of the subject. The modern "idealist" predication of the subject is consciousness. Labor-power is a "materialist" predication. Consciousness is not thought, but rather the subject's irreducible intendedness towards the object. Correspondingly, labor-power is not work (labor), but rather the irreducible possibility that the subject be more than adequate—super-adequate—to itself, labor-power: "it distinguishes itself [unterscheidet sich] from the ordinary crowd of commodities in that its use creates value, and a greater value than it costs itself" [Karl Marx, Capital, Vol. 1, 342; translation modified] (154).

Spivak goes on to weave a text through the aporia or the political oppositions materialist/idealist when they refer to the question of value. What is value? How is the materialist predication of the subject as labour power related, or is it related to, the idealist predication of the subject as thought? What is at issue when marxist, feminist, and deconstructive thinkers speak of value?

What is value? Before we turn to the complex textual scheme of value which constitutes the general text, let us consider the question of value within the narrow disciplinary sense. When the question of value, Spivak reminds us, appears in relation to canon-formation, marxist/feminist/deconstructive intellectuals tend to focus upon domination. The questions raised include: "What is the ethico-political agenda that operates a canon" and "[w]hat subject-effects[28] were

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[28]In "Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography," in In Other Worlds, Spivak describes subject-effects as follows:

> A subject-effect can be briefly plotted as follows: that which seems to operate as a subject may be part of an immense discontinuous network ("text" in the general sense) of strands that may be termed politics, ideology, economics, history, sexuality, language, and so on. (Each of these strands, if they are isolated, can also be seen as woven of many strands.) Different knottings and configurations of these strands, determined by heterogeneous determinations which are themselves dependent upon myriad circumstances, produce the effect of an operating subject (204).

systematically effaced and trained to efface themselves so that a canonic norm might emerge?" (154-55). Within this framework, canon-formation is placed within the "network of successful epistemic violence" (155). When, in this narrow disciplinary sense we focus upon the problem of domination, the question of value is determined by its "idealist" predication. Here, the critic's obligation, Spivak notes, "seems to be a scrupulous declaration of interest" (174). To consider the question of value in its materialist predication we must "examine Marx's investigation of exploitation."

The first distinction we should note is that for Spivak value escapes the onto-phenomenological question: ti esti (155,164)?[29] Within the continuist version of Marx's schema of value, value is most often conceived of as a sign, or as the representation of labour. For Spivak, even though the continuist version of value is not entirely "absent in Marx, and certainly not absent in Engels" (155) (the discontinuities of the Grundrisse are to a large extent covered over in Capital—here, we must consider the mode and context and interest of these two texts), the textual chain of value, as outlined in Grundrisse is open ended and the unified names (value, money, etc.) "harbor discontinuities." The textual chain of value is written as follows:

	representation		transformation	
	→		→	
Value		Money		Capital (158)
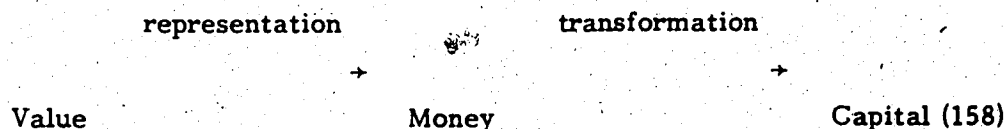
At every step of the chain something breaks off into open-ended textuality:

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[29]The onto-phenomenological question is: What is value? Of course, everything escapes this question.

indifference, inadequation, and rupture (158).[30] Furthermore, the definition of

value for Marx, formally resembles his definition of class in that it is "not only. . ."

a representation but also a differential":

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[30]I quote, in full, Spivak's reading of this chain since it is central to understanding the question of value:

Position: The money commodity—the precious metal as medium of universal exchange—is posited through a process of separation from its own being as a commodity exchangeable for itself: "From the outset they represent superfluity, the form in which wealth originally appears [ursprünglich erscheint]" [Grundrisse 166; translation modified]." As it facilitates commodity exchange "the simple fact that the commodity exists doubly, in one aspect as a specific product whose natural form of existence ideally contains (latently contains) its exchange value, and in the other aspect as manifest exchange value (money), in which all connection with the natural form of the product is stripped away again—this double, differentiated existence must develop into a difference [147]." When the traffic of exchange is in labor-power as a commodity, the model leads not only to difference but to indifference: "In the developed system of exchange. . .the ties of personal dependence, of distinctions, of education, etc. are in fact exploded, ripped up. . . ; and individuals seem independent (this is an independence which is at bottom merely an illusion, and it is more correctly called indifference [Gleichgültgkeit—im Sinne der Indifferenz —Marx emphasizes the philosophical quality of indifference]" [163].

Negation: Within circulation seen as a constantly repeated circle or totality, money is a vanishing moment facilitating the exchange of two commodities. Here its independent positing is seen as "a negative relation to circulation," for, "cut off from all relation to [circulation], it would not be money, but merely a simple natural object" [217]. In this moment of appearance its positive identity is negated in a more subtle way as well: "If a fake were to circulate in the place of a real one, it would render absolutely the same service in circulation as a whole as if it were genuine" [210]. In philosophical language: the self-adequation of the idea, itself contingent upon a negative relationship, here between the idea of money and circulation as totality, works in the service of a functional in-adequation (fake = real).

Negation of negation: Realization, where the actual quantity of money matters and capital accumulation starts. Yet here too the substantive specificity is contradicted (as it is not in unproductive hoarding). For, "to dissolve the things accumulated in individual gratification is to realize them" [234]. In other words, logical progression to accumulation can only be operated by its own rupture, releasing the commodity from the circuit of capital production into consumption in a simulacrum of use-value (159-60).

In the exchange-relation of commodities their exchange-value appeared to us as totally independent of their use-value. But if we abstract their use-value from the product of labor, we obtain their value, as it has just been defined. The common element that represents itself (sich darstellt) in the exchange relation of the exchange-value of the commodity, is thus value [Capital Vol. 1, 128; translation modified by Spivak] (158).

The Ben Fowkes' translation of this passage reads as follows:

We have seen that when commodities are in the relation of exchange, their exchange value manifests itself as something totally independent of their use-value. But if we abstract from their use-value, there remains their value, as it has just been defined. The common factor in the exchange relation, or in the exchange-value of the commodity, is therefore its value.[31]

By placing the German (sich darstellt) in parenthesis Spivak is c█████████ntion to the textuality of value. What is essential to note here █████ play on representation. "Sich darstellt" connotes the aporetic structure of value: What is represented (in the sense of substitution) and what represents itself (the separation, difference, staging) in the commodity-differential is value.

The second distinction which Spivak points out, and which we must note, in the textual chain of value is the moment when capital is fully developed: the moment when capital produces itself without extra-economic coercion is the moment that constitutes the "historical possibility of the definitive predication of the subject as labor-power" (161). This moment, notes Spivak, does not arise with "the coercive extraction of surplus-value in pre-capitalist modes of production, or with the accumulation of interest capital or merchant's capital (accumulation out of buying cheap and selling dear)" (161). If for Derrida iteration (minimal idealization) is the (im)possibility of thought, for Spivak-Marx "the

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[31]Karl Marx, Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, Vol. 1, trans. Ben Fowkes (New York: Vintage Books, 1977) 128.

necessary possibility of the subject's definitive super-adequation" of itself or the amount of surplus labour that the subject produces beyond the amount of socially necessary labour is the "origin of capital" and the "historical" possibility of the definitive predication of the subject as labour power (161).

The third point we must note is that for value to be interpreted as value it must be consumed outside the production circuit (164). It is necessary, then, for circulation time to be interrupted:

> "The continuity of production presupposes that circulation time has been sublated [aufgehoben]. The nature of capital presupposes that it travels through the different phases of circulation not as it does in the idea representation [Vorstellung] where one concept turns into the other at the speed of thought [mit Gedankenschnelle], in no time, but rather as situations which are separate in terms of time" [Grundrisse 548; translation modified]. By thus sublating circulation into Mind, production (of Value) as continuous totality would annul Value itself. For Value would not be value if it were not realized in consumption, strictly speaking, outside of the circuit of production. Thus capital, as the most advanced articulation of value "presupposes that it travels through different phases." The scheme is made problematic by the invagination of use-value. (163-64).

By placing the German word "Vorstellung" in brackets, Spivak emphasizes the fact that when Marx is writing about representation in the "idealist" sense he uses the word Vorstellung (with the connotation of supplementation), rather than Darstellung. In contrast to "the continuist romantic anti-capitalist" that determines social "value" by pre-critical and mystified notions of "word-processors," and of "independent commodity production," and by displaying "hostility to theory," for Spivak it is use-value that "puts the entire textual chain of Value into question" (161-62). Her argument is as follows. Use-value is both inside and outside the system of value determinations. It is outside the system since "it cannot be measured by the labor theory of value." According to Marx: "A thing can be a use-value without being a value." It is not, however, entirely

outside the system of determination since exchange-value, "a parasite of use-value"
is part of the system:

> This character (of exchange) does not yet dominate production as a whole, but concerns only its superfluity and is hence itself more or less superfluous... .an accidental enlargement of the sphere of satisfactions, enjoyments. . . . It therefore takes place only at a few points (originally at the borders of the natural communities, in their contact with strangers [Grundrisse, 204] (162).

(I ask the reader to note in passing that even in "natural communities" when Marx speaks of value it is in relation to what is foreign—here, "strangers." It could be argued that this moment of exchange between the "natural community" and "strangers" is a moment of separation—the separation constituted in the exchange of commodities and the separation of the community from itself in its encounter with the "other.")[32]

For Spivak, exchange value turns "the part-whole relationship" inside out:

> (Derrida calls this "invagination." See "The Law of Genre," Glyph 7 [1980]. My discussion of "invagination" is to be found in Displacement: Derrida and After, ed. Mark Krupnick 186-89.) The parasitic part (exchange-value) is also the species term of the whole, thus allowing use-value the normative inside place of the host as well as banishing it as that which must be subtracted so that Value can be defined. Further, since one case of use-value can be that of the worker wishing to consume the (affect of the) work itself, that necessary possibility renders indeterminate the "materialist" predication of the subject as labor-power or super-adequation as calibrated and organized by the logic of capital. In terms of that necessarily possible "special case," this predication can no longer be seen as the excess of surplus labor over socially necessary labor. The question of affectively necessary labor brings in the attendant question of desire and thus questions. . ,the mere philosophical justice of capital logic without necessarily shifting

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[32]For Spivak, "there can be no doubt that it is. . .separation rather than inscription or coining that is for Marx the philosophically determining moment in the discourse of value" (165). How could we bring these two separations together?

into utopian idealism. . . . The concept of socially necessary labor is based on an identification of subsistence and reproduction. Necessary labor is the amount of labor required by the worker to "reproduce" himself in order to remain optimally useful for capital in terms of the current price-structure (162-3).

Spivak's reading of the text of value not only destabilizes the continuist, Romantic, anti-capitalist version of use-value by placing the text of value, as it is inscribed within the economic field, in relation to "desire" and "affect," her reading simultaneously, questions the philosophic justice of the materialist predication of the subject as labour power. In other words, the philosophic justice of capital logic is questioned. Hence, the question of the ideological production of the worker, etc., can be broached and the irreducible relation of complicity between "idealist" and "materialist" predications which constitute the question of value can be announced.

We have already read through the passage in the *Grundrisse* where Marx presents us with an allegory of how to interpret money. Juxtaposing this passage from Marx with Saussure's proposition that language is always, already "foreign"—"the linguistic signifier. . .[is] constituted not by its material substance but only [uniquement] by the differences that separate its acoustic image from all others" (165-66)[33]—Spivak notes that "the binary opposition" (aporia?) "between the economic and cultural" texts is irreducible; thus, a "persistent undoing" is necessary (166). If we attend to Spivak's argument (that the opposition between the economic and social text is irreducible, and therefore, must be persistently undone), then, when the question of value is raised within the arena of literary studies we must take into account 1) "the fact that. . .the complicity between

[33]Ferdinand de Saussure, *Cours de linguistique générale* (Paris: Payot, 1973); *Course in General Linguistics,* trans. Wade Baskin, ed. Charles Bally, Albert Secehaye, and Albert Riedlinger (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966) 118-19.

cultural and economic value-systems is acted out in almost every decision we make," (166); 2) "that economic reduction is. . .a very real danger," (166); 3) that the periodization of knowledge has an intricate relation to "the world-system of political economy" (172);[34] 4) that since "[t]he 'postmodern' and 'pre-modern' are

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[34]Spivak has published a number of articles that place literature within the politico-economic text. See, for example, "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism," Critical Inquiry 12.1 (1985): 243-61; "Explanation and Culture: Marginalia," Humanities in Society 2 (1979): 201-21; "Reading the World: Literary Studies in the 1980's," College English 43.7 (1981): 671-79; "Sex and History in the Prelude (1805): Books Nine to Thirteen," Texas Studies in Literature and Language 23.3 (1981): 324-360; "Three Feminist Readings: McCullers, Drabble and Habermas," Union Seminary Quarterly Review 35 (1979): 15-34; "Imperialism and Sexual Difference," Oxford Literary Review 8.1-2 (1986): 225-40; "Feminism and Critical Theory," ed. Paula A. Treichler, Cheris Kamarae, and Beth Stafford, For Alma Mater (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1985):119-42 (most of these essays are now reprinted in In Other Worlds); "The Rani of Sirmur: An Essay in Reading the Archives," History and Theory 24.3 (1985): 247-72. This essay will be reprinted in Master Discourse, Na██████████ant. (Columbia University Press, forthcoming). In "Criticism, Femi██████████stitution," Thesis Eleven 10/11 (1984-85): 175-87, Spivak defines "te████████:

As far as I understand it, the notion of textuality should be related to the notion of the worlding of a world on a supposedly uninscribed territory. When I say this, I am thinking basically about the imperialist project which had to assume that the earth that it territorialised was in fact previously uninscribed. So then a world, on a simple level of cartography, inscribed what was presumed to be uninscribed. Now this worlding actually is also a texting, textualising, a making into art, a making into an object to be understood. From this point of view the notion of textuality within the western European/Anglo-U.S./international context tries also to situate the emergence of language as a model from the second decade of the twentieth century to see how the location of language or semiosis as a model was in itself part of a certain kind of worlding. Textuality is tied to discourse itself in an oblique way. Classical discourse analysis is not psychological largely because it tries to get away from the problem of language production by a subject. Textuality in its own way marks the place where the production of discourse on the location of language as a model, escapes the person or the collectivity that engages in practice so that even textuality itself might simply be an uneven clenching of a space of dissemination which may or may not be random. From this point of view, what a notion of textuality in general does is to see that what is defined over against 'The Text' as 'fact' or 'life' or even 'practice' is to an extent worlded in a certain way so that practice can take place. Of course, you don't think this through at the moment of practice, but a notion of generalised textuality would say that practice is, as it were, the "blank part" of the text. . . [emphasis mine 175-6].

inscribed together" (171), when we speak of domination, we must, simultaneously, discuss the underside of the palimpsest text, where the text of exploitation, constituted by the international division of labour, is written; and finally, 5) that a "scrupulous declaration of interest in the text of the production of Value" (174) must be our starting point.

I shall conclude our reading of "Scattered Speculations On the Question of Value" by calling your attention to a passage near the conclusion of this text and to its attending footnote. The passage reads as follows:

> Derrida's own understanding of surplus-value as capital-appreciation or interest, is. . .restricted. I simply wrest it back from that "false" metaphor and "literalize" it."[20] If and when we ask and answer the question of value, there seems to be no alternative to declaring one's "interest" in the text of the production of Value (173).
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> [20]The most powerful development of this conception is the mysterious Spurs: Nietzsche's Styles, trans. Barbara Harlow (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978). Part of the mystery lies, I think, in that Derrida is here trying to make "woman his subject" (his "interest"?) and hint enigmatically at "affirmative deconstruction." As I will soon explain, my notion of interest must take the risk of being related to the deliberative consciousness. Over a year after the writing of this essay, at the point of implementing the final editorial suggestions, I begin to realize how astutely Paul de Man had predicted this move from "false" metaphor to "literalization" in the field of political practice. It would take a careful elaboration of de Man's entire complex argument in Allegories of Reading to establish the parallel between my move here and grammar and "figure" in the following definition of textuality: "We call text any entity that can be considered from.) . a double perspective: as a generative, open-ended, non-referential grammatic system and as a figural system closed off by a transcendental signification that subverts the grammatical code to which the text owes its existence." [Paul de Man, Allegories of Reading 270. . .]. Suffice it here to consolidate the parallel by pointing out that, towards the bottom of the same page, de Man aphoristically describes the necessity of this subversion, this closing off, in the following way: ". . .and if a text does not act, it cannot state what it knows" (italics Spivak's) (296).

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34 (cont'd.) I emphasize "practice" and "practice is, as it were the 'blank part' of the text" to remind readers of the passage from de Man's text Allegories of Reading, that we keep coming back to: "It seems that as soon as a text knows what it states, it can only act deceptively, . . .and if a text does not act, it cannot state what it knows" (270).

In the first chapter, we approached this passage by way of Derrida's Mémoires: for Paul de Man.[35] In this quotation, Spivak offers us a different reading of this passage, a reading which emphasizes the necessity of "literalization" in the field of "political practice."[36] Spivak's "Scattered Speculations on the Question of Value," as it places the economic text "sous râture," as it affirms the necessity of acknowledging the fact that the economic text irreducibly inscribes the social text and as it, at the same time, qu██████ economic text as a concept of the last resort, is written in this (pas) step.

Spivak joins Derrida and de Man to announce "the pluralized apocalypse of the practical moment" and to affirm "as its concept-metaphor the performative":

> I say above that "the full implications of the question of Value posed within the 'materialist' predication of the subject cannot yet be realized." I must now admit what many Marxist theoreticians admit today: that in any theoretical formulation, the horizon of full realization must be indefinitely and irreducibly postponed. On that horizon it is not utopia that may be glimpsed. . . For utopias are historical attempts at topographic descriptions that must become dissimulative if attempts are made to represent them adequately in actual social practice. The complicity between idealisms and materialisms in the production of theory is better acknowledged, even as one distances oneself from idealism, if one designates this open end by the name of the "apocalyptic tone." This tone announces the pluralized apocalypse of the practical moment, in our particular case the set or ensemble of ideology-critical, aesthetic-troping, economically aware performative or operational value-judgment. My careful language here should make clear that the practical moment is not a "fulfillment." In the pluralized apocalypse, the body does not rise. There is no particular need to see this as the thematics of castration. Why not affirm as its concept-metaphor the performative and operational evaluation of the repeated moves of the body's survival and comfort, historically named woman's-work or assigned to domestic labor when it is minimally organized? Why appropriate the irreducible non-fit between theory and practice (here in the grounding and making of Value judgments) into Oedipus's hobble? (175).

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[35] Jacques Derrida, Mémoires: for Paul de Man, trans. Cecile Lindsay, Jonathan Culler and Eduardo Cardava (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986).

[36] See footnote 33.

[37] Pas in French can mean either "step" or a negation "ne. . .pas."

Practical Politics of the Open End

It seems to me impossible to separate Gayatri Spivak's vigilant thinking of the politico-economic, social, historical texts from the necessity of bringing the law of the text to crisis. This disjunction—the call to think beyond the aporia and to affirm a "politics of the open-end," and the necessity to bring the law of the text to crisis—inscribes the texts of Gayatri Spivak. I have already noted the footnote to "Scattered Speculations on the Question of Value" where Spivak moves Derrida's notion of issue from "false metaphor" to "literalization" by way of Paul de Man's theory of the move from "grammar to figure" in the field of political action. There is one further footnote, the final footnote, of this text to which I would like to draw your attention: "I believe it is possible to read in this obscure text ["Of An Apocalyptic Tone Recently Adopted in Philosophy,"][38] a practical politics of the open end. . . . I will content myself with quoting a relatively less aphoristic sentence: 'To raise or set the tone higher. . .is to. . .make the inner voice delirious, the inner voice that is the voice of the other in us'" (297).

These three moves—Spivak's notion of the move from "false metaphor" to "literalization," de Man's notion of the "text" as a "generative, open-ended, non-referential grammatical system and as a figural system closed off by a transcendental system that subverts the grammatical code to which the text owes its existence,"[39] and Derrida's suggestion that "[t]o raise or set the tone higher . . .is to. . .make the inner voice delirious, the inner voice that is the voice of the other in us"[40]—are important for two reasons. First, they clearly state the

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[38]Jacques Derrida, _D'un ton apocalyptique: adopté naguère en philosophie_ (Paris: Galilée, 1983) ["Of An Apocalyptic Tone Recently Adopted in Philosophy"], trans. John P. Leavey, Jr.; _Semeia_ 23 (1982): 63-96.

[39]Paul de Man, _Allegories of Reading_ 270.

[40]Jacques Derrida, "Of An Apocalyptic Tone" 71.

conditions of the possibility and the impossibility of thought and action: the necessity to think beyond the disjunction and the necessity to bring the text to crisis. Secondly, I believe that these phrases can be read as ironic signature(s) (de Man's, Derrida's, and Spivak's): as commitments and promises. The conclusion of this chapter is a preliminary tracing of Gayatri Spivak's political promise and commitment: a practical politics of the open end.[41]

Political Promises

"Scattered Speculations on the Question of Value" is one textual instance of a "practical politics of the open-end"—the economic text "sous râture." In a seminar on Jacques Derrida's The Ear of the Other: Otobiography, Transference, Translation,[42] at the University of Alberta in 1986, Spivak outlined in a very general way what was of interest in this text for her own project. Her discussion centred around the place of woman in Derrida's-Nietzsche's text(s), the problem of autobiography, and the necessity to intervene and to transform the text and its destination. I repeat, her reading of this text was not an overview of Derrida's reading, but a summary of what was useful in this text to her project. The projects of Derrida and of Spivak are very different, perhaps irreducibly discontinuous. I summarize below, in a schematic way, the issues addressed by Spivak.

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[41]This chapter works as a blueprint for a book I hope to write about these three important thinkers—Gayatri Spivak, Paul de Man, and Jacques Derrida—and their inscriptions of "practical politics of the open end."

[42]Jacques Derrida, The Ear of the Other, Otobiography, Transference, Translation, trans. Peggy Kamuf, ed. Christie V. McDonald (Montreal: Schocken Books, 1985). I refer to the English translation since this is the text Spivak was using in her seminar at University of Alberta, 1986. I have used the tape recordings of this seminar with the permission of Gayatri Spivak.

The Place of Woman

In numerous texts and lectures, Spivak has argued that Derrida's concept-metaphor of woman has a privileged place in Derrida's texts and is not unlike Husserl's "finessing" of language:[43]

> Of all the names that Derrida has given to originary undecidability, woman possesses this special quality: she can occupy both positions in the subject-object oscillation, be cathected as both, something that differance, writing, parergon, the supplement, and the like—other names of undecidability—cannot do without special pleading. Derrida's arrival at the name of woman seems to be a slow assumption of the consequences of a critique of humanism as phallogocentrism. But at least since Glas, the graphic of sexual difference is never far from Derrida's work.
>
> In his earliest published book, Derrida suggests that Edmund Husserl, unable to give a phenomenological account of the moment or space before the institution of geometry, assumes it as already accomplished, and concentrates instead on the historical reactivation of that institutionality. This allows Husserl to analyze the privileged concept of Language as the condition of possibility of such a history. I am suggesting here that woman in Derrida is such a privileged figure. Her place is different from that of names such as differance, trace, parergon and the like—attempts at giving a name to the pre-institutional origin of institution. Woman is the name of the absolute limit of undecidability that such attempts must encounter (24).

Very generally, Spivak's argument is that although Derrida's figure of woman, as a figure of undecidability, makes "woman the mark of the critique of the proper, at the same time," to see indeterminacy in the figure of woman might be the effect

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[43]See, "Displacement and the Discourse of Woman," Displacement: Derrida and After, ed. Mark Krupnick (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983): 169-95, and "Love Me, Love My Ombre, Elle," Diacritics 14.4 (1984): 19-36. The quotation is from the latter essay. See also, Christie V. McDonald, "Choreographies," Diacritics 12.2 (1982): 66-69; Jacques Derrida "Voice ii" Boundary 2 12.2 (1984): 68-93.

of an ethicolegal narrative whose oppressive hegemony[44] still remains largely unquestioned.

What place does the feminine occupy in The Ear of the Other: Otobiography, Transference, Translation? While discussing autobiography as the problem of determination (to determine oneself as "I," "I live," and as a subject of the sentence "I live"), Spivak called attention to a) the opposition between the "living feminine" (that has no access to the proper name) and the patronymic (the proper name, the work of dead time, etc.) and b) the confusion between concrete experience and autobiography (access to naming). These two issues are related, but cannot be structurally equated. It is for this reason that I cannot completely follow Spivak's reading of this text. In particular, I cannot agree with Spivak's suggestion that in Derrida's text the living feminine is being while the patronymic is the work of death. For it is this binary opposition that Derrida destabilizes by inscribing the "living feminine" as the regenerative iterability of writing and the irreducible possibility of citation, grafting, and perversion. The "living feminine" in Derrida's text is the force of différance which destabilizes all bio-graphical contracts and, in doing so, leaves the text open to renewal, to future orientation. Here, we have the double session of the bio-graphical contract. Although, I agree with Spivak's suggestion that the problem of determination and the confusion of being and determination must be taken into account, we must, at the same time, take into account the double sessional structure of Derrida's-Nietzsche's texts. If Spivak was suggesting that Derrida's reference to the "living feminine" is that which is "regenerative" or the force that "lives on" beyond the death of the patronymic, then her articulation of the difference between the living feminine and the

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[44]Wilhelm Georg Hegel, Hegel's Science of Logic, trans. A.V. Miller (New York: Humanities Press, 1969).

patronymic was problematic.[45]

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[45]I wrote above that Spivak's reading of the figure of woman in Derrida's - Nietzsche's text moves from "false" metaphor to "literalization" for a specific reason. First, to structurally oppose the feminine to the patronymic in and between these texts is to foreclose the interventional force of Derrida's reading and the double sessional structure of the contract which problematizes such oppositions, in the interest of producing a political reading. If this political reading is meant to address the problem of access to biography in the "third world," and if the concept-metaphor is changed from the "living feminine to the native informant," as proposed, then, I do agree with Spivak's project. If, however, this reading is restricted to a critique of the "living feminine" within the first world arena, I am not sure if we gain or lose by such a critique. Although, I totally agree with Spivak's reading—in "Displacement and The Discourse of Woman," and "Love Me, Love My Ombre, Elle"—of Derrida's inscription of "woman" as "a woman generalized and defined in terms of the faked orgasm and other varieties of denial," ("Displacement" 170), I tend to think that within Otobiographies: L'enseignement de Nietzsche et la politique du nom propre, Derrida's inscription of the feminine is different.

Let me explain. One could argue that the contract Nietzsche draws up with himself, according to Derrida, is a secret contract; "he has taken out a loan with himself and has implicated us in this transaction through what, on the force of a signature, remains of his text" (The Ear of the Other 8). In the exergue, between the Preface signed F.N. and the first chapter, "Why I Am So Wise," Nietzsche's affirmation of life, like the secret contract he takes out with himself, is future-oriented. Life, as the living feminine, does not exist before this affirmation. Life is not opposed to predication (the work of death, or the patronymic). The question "what is life" as opposed to "death" cannot be answered. Derrida's interpretation of this affirmation reads as follows:

> To receive one's life as a gift, or rather, to be grateful to life for what she gives, for giving after all what is my life; more precisely, to recognize one's gratitude to life for such a gift—the gift being what has managed to get written and signed with this name for which I have established my own credit and which will be what it has become only on the basis of what this year has given me (the three works mentioned in the passage), in the course of the event dated by an annual course of the sun, and even by a part of its course or recourse, its returning—to reaffirm what has occurred during these forty-four years as having been good and as bound to return eternally, immortally: this is what constitutes, gathers, adjoins, and holds the strange present of this auto-biographical récit in place. "Und so erzähle ich mir mein Leben.". . .[Y]ou cannot think the name or names of Friedrich Nietzsche, you cannot hear them before the reaffirmation of the hymen, before the alliance or wedding ring of the eternal return. You will not understand anything of his life, nor of his life and works, until you hear the thought of the "yes, yes" given to this shadowless gift at the ripening high noon. . . .Without fail, the structure of the exergue on the borderline or of the borderline in the exergue will be reprinted wherever the question of life, of "my-life," arises. Between a title or a preface on the one hand, and the book to come on the other, between

But let us move on. For Spivak, the opposition between the living feminine and the patronymic—the access to proper names—belongs to the history of the West, to be more specific, to the history of imperalism, a history which must be undone. The question that must be asked, she proposed, is the question of access to biography. To do so, involves moving the argument of Derrida's text from the "masculinist context" into an "imperialist context" and changing the concept-metaphor of the living feminine to the concept-metaphor of the native informant.

This project is, of course, directly related to Spivak's suggestion that the "aporia" between being and nomination, or between the living feminine and the patronymic in Derrida's text, is a "violent aporia." This "violent aporia" is the

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45 (cont'd.)
> the title Ecce Homo and Ecce Homo "itself," the structure of the exergue situates the place from which life will be recited, that is to say, reaffirmed—yes, yes, amen, amen. It is life that has to return eternally (selectively, as the living feminine and not as the dead that resides within her and must be buried [my italics], as life allied to herself by the nuptial annulus, the wedding ring. . . .It is in this place that affirmation is repeated: yes, yes, I approve, I sign, I subscribe to this acknowledgment of the debt incurred toward "myself," "my-life"--and I want it to return (12-14).

I underline "selectively, as the living feminine and not as the dead that resides within her and must be buried" since this sentence clearly problematizes the binary opposition of the living feminine and the patronymic (determination). The structure of the living feminine as that which remains is always open to future interpretation. This possibility of political readings open to the future is a practical politics of the open-end. This gift is the possibility of future thought and, as such, must be acknowledged.

My final point is related to Spivak's suggestions that a) when "Zarathustra fails to take into account the living feminine, he is also a master establishing an institution" and b) that it is when the double session of the text is not recognized, when the first irreducible session of différance is not taken into account, that the possibility of fascism appears. Indeed, it seems to me that it is the double sessional structure that must be effaced at the moment when the feminist critique of Nietzsche's-Derrida's text is launched. What is missing, perhaps, from this description of the double session of différance is the force of iteration and the possibility of perversion that is always already at work in the text. What we must take into account when we read (Nietzsche's) texts is the fact that the future of the text as the living feminine is not closed and, I will add, must not be closed.

opposition upon which affirmative deconstruction focuses in terms of the situational specific forces of the opposition and finds a place of practice: the (political) interventional rewriting of the text and its destination. This intervention which affirmative deconstruction calls for and enacts does not consist in decipherment or labelling. The political project of affirmative deconstruction is a transformative practice that begins by taking into account the relation between the academic institution and "ideological production."

In her most recent text, "Imperialism and Sexual Difference," a section of Master Discourse, Native Informant, the method by which Spivak actively intervenes and transforms the text and its destination consists in a strategy of reading that intercepts the text between sender and receiver by "animating the perspective of the 'native informant.'" Here is the summary of this strategy given in this essay:

> The clearing of a subject-position in order to speak or write is unavoidable. One way to reckon with this bind is an interminable preoccupation with the (autobiographical) self. If we are interested in a third-worldist criticism, however, we might want to acknowledge that access to autobiography, for whole groups of people, has only been possible through the dominant mediation of an investigator or field-worker. The 'autobiographies' of such people have not entered the post-Enlightenment European 'subjective' tradition of autobiography. They have gone, rather, to provide 'objective evidence' for the 'sciences' of anthropology and ethnolinguistics. 'Oral history,' coming of age in the sixties, tried to efface or at least minimize the role of the investigator. Much third-worldist feminist work has taken on this task of the effacement of the investigator in works typically entitled '_____ Women Speak.' This brief account reveals the various alibis that the dominant subject-position gives itself as it constructs the subordinate as other. The curious 'objectified' subject-position of this other is what, following the language of anthropology and linguistics, I call the position of the 'native informant.' In order to produce a critique of imperialism, I suggest the invention of a reading-subject's perspective that would occupy or cathect the representative space or blank presupposed by the dominant text. The space will remain specific to the dominant text which presupposes it and yet, since this is not a space of the critic's autobiography as a marginal, it must be

foregrounded as a historically representative space. The other must always be constituted by way of consolidating the self. This method will at least make the problems visible, and the efforts at hedging the problems provisionally-accessible to the reader.[46]

The itinerary of recognition through and assimilation of the other, or the construction of the other (be it Asia, the international division of labour, the figure of man, the subaltern gendered subject, etc.) as the self's shadow occupies an important place in Gayatri Spivak's work. Within the field of feminism, Spivak's articulation of the complicity between first world feminism and imperialism and the complicity between deconstruction and phallocentrism are important contributions that must not be overlooked. Indeed, the question of complicity is the question we must confront when we dream and enact (political) projects.

With a charac_____acute critical vigilance, in "Imperialism and Sexual Differen_____ks the limits of tropological feminist deconstruct___

_____ritics discover the troping error of the masculist
_____lity or academic objectivity, we perform the
_____of global sisterhood where the mesmerizing
_____female sparring partners of generalizable or
_____ity who are the chief protagonists in that
_____est. In order to claim sexual difference where it makes
_____e, global sisterhood must receive this articulation even if
the sisters in question are Asian, African, Arab.(226).[47]

This passage moves from "false" metaphor to "literalization" as it calls for a practical political program of the open end. These two gestures—the vigilant

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[46]Gayatri Spivak, "Imperialism and Sexual Difference," Oxford Literary Review 8 1-2 (1986): 229

[47]Ibid. See, also, Chandra Talpade Mohanty, "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourse," Boundary 2 12.3/13.1 (1984): 333-58.

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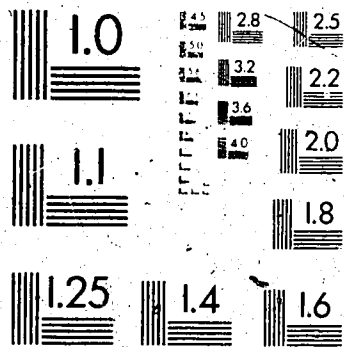
critique of the assimilation of the other and the move from "false" metaphor (trope) to "literalization" (rhetoric as persuasion that takes into account, though not fully, its tropological constitution, its double session of _différance_, and then takes a step (pas) beyond the aporia)—counter-sign the texts of Gayatri Spivak.

In "Can the Subaltern Speak?" Spivak turns to the question of "how to keep the ethnocentric Subject from establishing itself by selectively defining an Other" as presented by Derrida in "Of Grammatology As A Positive Science," in _Of Grammatology_. I am grateful to Spivak for drawing my attention to this program. "It is a program," as she suggests, "for the benevolent Western intellectual. For those of us who feel that the 'subject' has a history and that the task of the First World subject of knowledge in our historical moment is to resist and critique 'recognition' of the Third World through 'assimilation'" (52-53).

Spivak begins her discussion of the place of "all the rest of the world"[48] by reminding readers of the three prejudices which Derrida posits as the symptoms

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[48]I borrow this phrase from Jacques Derrida and Gayatri Spivak. In "Love Me, Love My Ombre, Elle," Spivak borrows this phrase from Derrida to ask: "Why should we read an elaboration of such a problematics [_la carte postale: de Socrates à Freud et au-delà_] given the urgency of the 'rest of the World'" (20-21). The footnote which attends this sentence reads as follows:

> I borrow the phrase from Derrida's incisive consideration of the politics of institutional psychoanalysis in "Géopsychanalyse: 'and the rest of the world'" [_Confrontations_, February (1981)]. In the project of the Constitution of 1977, as it was accepted at the 30th Congress of the API in Jerusalem, a parenthetical sentence defines in a way the divisions of the psychoanalytic world:
>
> > (The association's main geographical areas are defined at this time as America north of the United-States-Mexican border; all America south of that border, and the rest of the world [sentence in English in original]). . . .[The last phrase] names at bottom Europe, place of origin and old metropolis of psychoanalysis. . .and, in the same "rest of the world," all the still virgin territory, all the places in the world where psychoanalysis has not yet, so to speak, set foot [12].

Something of the politics of a discourse is disclosed when one computes "the rest of the world" that the discourse defines monolithically.

of the crisis of European consciousness and which Spivak reads as coming from "the

appropriate ideological self-justification of an imperialist project" (53). We recall

that the three prejudices include the "theological prejudice," the "Chinese

prejudice" and the "hieroglyphist prejudice." These three prejudices may be

summarized as follows: "the theological prejudice" posits God as having written

a natural Script, either Hebrew or Greek; "Chinese is a perfect blueprint for

philosophical writing, but it is only a blueprint. True philosophical writing is

'independen[t] with regard to history'. . . and will sublate Chinese into an easy-to-

learn script that will supersede actual Chinese"; and the "hieroglyphist prejudice

suggests that Egyptian script is too sublime to be deciphered" (53). Contrasting

Marx's "'materialist' predication of the Subject as labor-power" to the two solutions

Derrida offers to destabilize the aforementioned prejudices (Nietzsche's "physio-

philologist" destabilization of the intentional subject and Freud's inscription of the

heterogeneous network of the unconscious cathexes and ethico-political interests

of the subject), Spivak notes that, if the chain of "the subject in consciousness"

which "stretches from the amoeba" to the "computer" does not have "'materialist'"

support, "such critiques can lead to a certain unexamined enthusiasm about

telecommunication" (55). This enthusiasm—not quite a prejudice—as it erases and

effaces the abstraction and appropriation of surplus labour in "all the rest of the

world," marks the limits of First world theories.

After situating the importance of Derrida's intervention into the problem of

ethnocentricism, Spivak differentiates between the project of a "post-colonial

critic of imperialism" and the European philosopher's deconstructive problem (the

tendency to constitute the other as "marginal to ethnocentricism"). Spivak turns

to the trace structure as the graphic of the double bind: the (non)place

of complicit traces and interruptions between logocentricism-deconstruction-

imperialism and the post-colonial critique of imperialism:

It is within the context of this ethnocentricism [the European problem] that [Derrida] tries so desperately to denote the Subject of thinking or knowledge as to say that "thought is. . .the blank part of the text" (OG 93), that which is thought is, if blank, still in the text and must be consigned to the other of history. That inaccessible blankness circumscribed by an interpretable text is what a post-colonial critic of imperialism would like to see developed within the European enclosure as the place of the production of theory. The post-colonial critic and intellectual can attempt to displace her own production only by presupposing that text-inscribed blankness (57).

This "text-inscribed blankness" marks the limits of the production of theory.

"Can the Subaltern Speak?" concludes with an affirmative deconstructive political reading of the gendered subaltern subject. Borrowing Freud's theory of the double origin of repression—one origin "hidden in the amnesia of the infant, the other lodged in the archaic past of humankind" (65)—and Derrida's double session of différance, Spivak moves from "false" metaphor to "literalization" in the interest of producing a political reading of the place the feminine gendered subaltern subject occupies within the "ideological dissimulation of [the] imperialist political economy" and the "classical and Vedic past of Hindu India, the Rg-Veda and the Dharmastra" (65). Here we have another example, of what could be called a practical politics of the open-end. This reading inscribes a "double session."

During the seminar on The Ear of the Other, at the University of Alberta, Spivak described the double session of différance as follows. The concept-metaphor of différance has a double session or is bi-cameral. The first session is irreducible because you have to assume a pre-originary space exists prior to your discourse. This pre-originary space is anachronistic and cannot enter into the methodology. If you try to bring this différance into your argument "you efface it even as you produce it. The production is the effacement." "Affirmative deconstruction," she suggested, "which has a political project," attempts to keep the

possibility of the irreducible first session "alive inside brackets" and "to win possibility from it."[49] Whereas, the first session is irreducible, the second session, a "methodological necessity," in "broaching" its method effaces the first session.[50] When we place this summary next to the following passage from "Can the Subaltern Speak?" we have an interesting configuration:

> We are fascinated rather by how Freud predicates a <u>history</u> of repression that produces the final sentence. It is a history with a double origin, one hidden in the amnesia of the infant, the other lodged in the archaic past of humankind itself, assuming by implication a pre-originary space where man and animal were not yet differentiated. We are driven to impose a homologue of this Freudian strategy on the Marxian narrative to explain the ideological dissimulation of imperialist political economy and outline a history of repression that produces a sentence like the one we have sketched. This history also has a double origin, one hidden in the maneuverings behind the abolition of widow sacrifice by the British in 1829; the other lodged in the classical and Vedic past of Hindu India, the <u>Rg-Veda</u> and the <u>Dharmasastra</u>. No doubt there is also an <u>undifferentiated pre-originary space</u> [my emphasis] that supports this history.
>
> The sentence I have constructed ["White men are saving brown women from brown men"] is one among many <u>displacements</u> [my emphasis] describing the relationship between brown and white men (sometimes brown and white women worked in) (65).

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[49]I am reminded when I read this sentence of the following passage from "Le dernier mot du racisme," in <u>"Race," Writing, and Difference</u>, ed. Henry Louis Gates, Jr.

> But if one day the [Art contre/against Apartheid] exhibition wins, yes, <u>wins</u> its place in South Africa, it will keep the memory of what will never have been, at the moment of these projected, painted, assembled works, the presentation of some present. Even the future perfect can no longer translate the tense, the time of what is being written in this way—and what is doubtless no longer part of the <u>everyday current</u>, of the cursory sense of history.
>
> Isn't this true of any "work"? Of the truth that is so difficult to put into words? Perhaps (337).

[50]See Jacques Derrida, <u>La Dissémination</u> (Paris: Seuil, 1972); <u>Dissemination</u>, trans. Barbara Johnson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981).

I emphasize the words "displacements" and "undifferentiated pre-originary space" for a specific reason. These phrases, it seems to me, work on two levels at once and, in doing so, constitute an aporia or a double session. On one level, Spivak takes these "false" metaphors and literalizes them to produce a political reading of the discursive displacement of "sati" (widow sacrifice) and of the ideological production of the feminine gendered subject within colonial law ("the abolition of widow sacrifice by the British in 1829") and within the "classical' and Vedic past of Hindu India." On another level Spivak continually reminds us that she is constructing a "counter-narrative" which acknowledges that "the arena of the subaltern's persistent emergence into hegemony must always and by definition remain heterogeneous to the efforts of the disciplinary historian."[51]

How does the word "displacements" function in this sentence? It would seem at first that the word "displacements" in this sentence refers to a change in discourse or what is often referred to as "discursive displacements."[52] Yet, one cannot be sure of whether Spivak is using this concept-metaphor in such a restricted sense. The Oxford English Dictionary defines displacement as "to change the place of."

Let us backtrack and step forward a little. How does the word "displacement" function in the texts of Freud and Derrida, texts with which Spivak is very familiar. In "Displacement in the Discourse of Woman" Spivak differentiates between two notions of displacement which function within the texts of Freud. The "notion of displacement," she contends, that deconstruction is

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[51]"Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography," In Other Cultures 207.

[52]Ibid. 197.

interested in is not displacement as Verschiebung, Freud's word for the transfer

of psychic energy from one idea to another in the process of dream formation, not,

that is, displacement as the complement of condensation; rather what interests

deconstruction is Entstellung, "distortion" as used by Freud in "the dream work in

general."[53] I call back Verschiebung to ask if there might not be "something like

a relation" between Verschiebung (displacement in the restricted sense as the

changed function of words in a sign system) and Entstellung (displacement in the

general sense as inscribed by deconstruction).

Displacement as the psychic movement of energy which attaches itself to

and invests (cathects) one idea after another is central to symptomatic formation

since it is a fundamental aspect of the primary process of the unconscious. Freud

describes this movement as a "chain of associations" traversing "associated

pathways."[54] In a later essay entitled, "On Dreams," Freud returns to the problem

of interpreting dreams and narrates a displacement. Freud's question in this

"displaced text" is how to "associate" the latent material of dreams to dream

thoughts since "the elements which stand out as the principal components of the

manifest content of 'the dream. ...[do not play] the same part in the

dream-thoughts" (SE, IV, 305). In his discussion of condensation in

"overdetermination," Freud writes as follows: "A dream element is, in the strictest

sense of the word the representative of all this disparate material in the content

of the dream" (Emphasis mine, SE, V, 652). If we consider the double meaning of

the concept-metaphor "representative" as meaning both a) rhetorically to represent

or to stand for; and b) the tropological sense of the word as in literature, then we

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[53]Spivak, "Displacement and the Discourse of Woman," Displacement: Derrida and After, ed. Mark Krupnick (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983) 172.

[54]Sigmund Freud, Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works, trans. James Strachey, (London: Hogarth, 1964), IV, 308. All subsequent references are to this edition of the collected works and will appear in the text with the abbreviation "SE" and with the appropriate volume and page numbers.

have an interesting configuration—an "associated pathway" between displacement

in the narrow sense as a chain in sign systems and displacement in the

deconstructive sense.

What is deconstructive displacement? In his discussion of Derrida's workings

of displacement, Mark Krupnick[55] differentiates between three important

"mentions of displacement": displacement as "dissemination" and "intervention";

displacement as the force that is not "the teleology of discourse"; and the operation

of displacement in the "general strategy of deconstruction." It is the latter two

"mentions of displacement" that are of interest here. In what specific way do these

"mentions of displacement" figure?

While commenting upon the proceedings of the Cluny conference in an

interview with Houdebine and Scarpetta, Derrida learns that his "thought" is in

"full evolution." Derrida articulates displacement as follows:

> Je ferais tout mon profit de ces encouragements. . .si la valeur d'
> « évolution » ne m'avait toujours paru suspecte dans tous les
> présupposés qu'elle abrite. . . . Non, il s'agit de déplacements textuels
> dont le cours, la forme et la nécessité n'ont rien à voir avec
> l' « évolution » de la « pensée » ou la téléologie d'un discours (66).
>
> I would benefit greatly from such encouragement. . .if the value
> "evolution" had not always seemed suspect to me. . . . No, it is a
> question of textual displacements whose course, form, and necessity
> have nothing to do with the "evolution" of "thought" or the teleology
> of a discourse (48-49).[56]

Derrida continues this discussion of displacement with an explication of a passage

from Of Grammatology which we have come across in chapter one and in Spivak's

discussion of the project of the third world critic. I quote the passage in full:

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[55]Mark Krupnick, ed., Displacement: Derrida and After 10-12.

[56]Jacques Derrida, Positions (Paris: Minuit, 1972), Positions, trans. Alan Bass
(Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981).

« D'une certaine manière, « la pensée » ne veut rien dire ». « La pensée » (guillemets : les mots « la pensée » et ce qu'on appelle « la pensée »), cela ne veut rien dire : c'est le vide substantifié d'une idéalité fort dérivée, l'effet d'une différance de forces, l'autonomie illusoire d'un discours ou d'une conscience dont on doit déconstruire l'hypostase, analyser la « causalité », etc. Premièrement. Deuxièmement, la phrase se lit ainsi : s'il y a de la pensée — il y en a et il est tout aussi suspect, pour des raisons critiques analogues, de récuser l'insistance de toute « pensée » —,ce qu'on continuera d'appeler la pensée et qui désignera par exemple la déconstruction du logocentrisme, cela ne veut rien dire, ne procède plus en dernière instance du « vouloir-dire ». Partout où elle opère, « la pensée » ne veut rien dire (66-67).

"In a certain way, 'thought' means nothing." "Thought (quotation marks: the words "thought" and what is called "thought") means nothing: it is the substantified void of a highly derivative ideality, the effect of a différance of forces, the illusory autonomy of a discourse or a consciousness whose hypostasis is to be deconstructed, whose "causality" is to be analyzed, etc. First. Secondly, the sentence can be read thus: if there is thought—and there is, and it is just as suspect, for analogous critical reasons, to contest the authority of all "thought" —then whatever will continue to be called thought, and which, for example, will designate the deconstruction of logocentrism, means nothing, for in the last analysis it no longer derives from "meaning." Wherever it operates, "thought" means nothing (49).

I ask the reader to question how this "thought" relates to the thought of the subaltern? On the other side of the world from socialized capital, this thought marks both the possibility for constructing counter-narratives of the subaltern subject and its impossibility (since the "subaltern is necessarily the absolute limit of the place where history is narrativized into logic").

"The concept-metaphor" "pre-originary spaces" works with a similar economy. In the first chapter, we discussed the structures of the (arche)-trace, of iteration, and of différance. In this chapter, I summarized Spivak's description of the double session of différance. Différance does not support historical binary oppositions, for there is no pre-originary space that is not always already constituted by difference. The force of différance destabilizes binary oppositions and definitive origins. By adhering to the notion of a pre-originary space that is

"undifferentiated," Spivak brackets the irreducible first session of différance and "wins" possibility from it, the possibility of producing a political reading.[57] At the same time, as I have already suggested, Spivak questions the discursive production of her own reading. These two gestures enact a promise, a commitment, as they inscribe an aporia—a practical politics of the open end. Here, we are at the place where the affirmation of political thought is announced.

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[57]Spivak summarizes the counter-narrative which she produces in "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in "The Rani of Sirmur," as follows:

> . . .I have analyzed the Brahminical discourse of widow sacrifice: beginning with moments from its so-called authority in the Rg-Veda, through the admonitory texts of the Dharmasastra, the legal sanctions of the sixteenth century and after; and concluded that it was a manipulation of female subject-formation by way of a constructed counter-narrative of woman's consciousness, thus woman's being, thus woman's being-good, thus the good woman's desire, thus woman's desire; so that, since Sati was not the invariable rule for widows, this sanctioned suicide could paradoxically become the signifier of woman as exception. On the other hand, I suggest that the British ignore the space of Sati as an ideological battleground, and construct the woman as an object of slaughter, the saving of which can mark the moment when not only a civil but a good society is born out of domestic chaos. Between patriarchal subject-formation and imperialist object-constitution, it is the dubious place of the free will of the sexed subject as female that is successfully effaced. Here I append a brief summary of my argument:
>
> For the female "subject," a sanctioned self-immolation within Hindu patriarchal discourse, even as it takes away the effect of "fall" attached to an unsanctioned suicide, brings praise for the act of choice on another register. By the inexorable ideological production of the sexed subject, such a death can be understood by the female subject as an exceptional signifier of her own desire, exceeding the general rule of a widow's conduct. The self-immolation of widows was not invariable ritual prescription. If however, the widow does decide thus to exceed the letter of ritual, to turn back is a transgression for which a particular type of penance is prescribed. When before the era of abolition, a petty British police officer was obliged to be present at each widow-sacrifice to ascertain its "legality," to be dissuaded by him after a decision was, by contrast, a mark of real free choice, a choice of freedom. Within the two contending versions of freedom, the constitution of the female subject in life was thoroughly undermined (268-69).

THE RIGHT TO CRITICIZE

In the first two chapters, I called your attention to the (political) interventional force of deconstruction in the political rewriting of the text and its destination. I commented upon the structure of the promise, the double sessions of representation, the irreducible aporia between constative and performative speech acts, and the necessity to think beyond the aporia while, simultaneously, forcing the universalizing moment when we appropriate the other (the clearing of a subject position) to ████. In chapter two, I also discussed Gayatri Spivak's critical reading of t██████ of woman in Jacques Derrida's texts. Before I begin my discussions of █████ the mother occupies in Roland Barthes' texts and of the place the "third world" woman occupies in Daphne Marlatt's texts, I would like to acknowledge my indebtedness in these chapters to the work of Gayatri Spivak and to the work of Jacques Derrida.

Here at this mid-point of this thesis, I would like to share with you a passage from "A discussion between Gayatri Spivak and Sneja Gunew":

> [I]f you make it your task not only to learn what is going cn. . .through language, through specific programmes of study, but at the same time through a historical critique of your position as the investigating person, then you will see that you have earned the right to criticize, and you will be heard [Unpublished discussion].

This passage is the preface to the second gesture of this thesis.

CHAPTER 3

IN SEARCH OF ROLAND BARTHES

.Hébert ne commençait jamais un numéro du <u>Père Duchêne</u> sans y mettre quelques «foutre» quelques «bougre». Ces grossièretés ne signifiaient rien, mais elles signalaient. Quoi? Toute une situation révolutionnaire. Voilà donc l'exemple d'une écriture dont la fonction n'est plus seulement de communiquer ou d'exprimer, mais d'imposer un au-delà du langage qui est à la fois l'Histoire et le parti qu'on y prend.

> Roland Barthes, <u>Le Degré zéro de l'écriture</u>[1]

Hébert, the revolutionary, never began a number of his news-sheet <u>La Père Duchêne</u> without introducing a sprinkling of obscenities. These improprieties had no real meaning, but they had significance. In what way? In that they expressed a whole revolutionary situation. Now here is an example of a mode of [écriture] whose function is no longer only communication or expression, but the imposition of something beyond language, which is both History and the stand we take in it.

> Roland Barthes, <u>Writing Degree Zero</u>

When Barthes discusses the pleasure of the text and the responsibility of

form in both <u>Le Plaisir du texte</u>[2] and <u>Leçon inaugurale</u>[3] faite le vendredi 7 janvier,

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[1]<u>Le Degré zéro de l'écriture</u> (Paris: Seuil, 1953); <u>Writing Degree Zero</u>, trans. Annette Lavers and Colin Smith (New York: Hill and Wang, 1972). The epigraph of this chapter is the opening passage of this text.

[2]Roland Barthes, <u>Le Plaisir du texte</u> (Paris: Seuil, 1973); <u>The Pleasure of the Text</u>, trans. Richard Miller (New York: Hill and Wang, 1975).

[3]Roland Barthes, <u>Leçon</u> (Paris: Seuil, 1978) translated by Richard Howard in 1979 in <u>Oxford Literary Review</u>, reprinted in <u>A Barthes Reader</u>, ed. Susan Sontag (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982). All further references will be to these editions.

1977, he links the displacement of language's socio-political subjection to a child

playing with his mother's body and to a child's sinuous line of play—a line that

departs from and returns to or amounts to (the French phrase 'retourne vers elle'

renders this play on words possible) his mother.

> J'aimerais donc que la parole et l'écoute qui se tresseront ici soient
> semblables aux allées et venues d'un enfant qui joue autour de sa
> mère, qui s'en éloigne, puis retourne vers elle pour lui rapporter un
> caillou, un brin de laine, dessinant de la sorte autour d'un centre paisible
> toute une aire de jeu, à l'intérieur de laquelle le caillou, la laine
> importent finalement moins que le don plein de zèle qui en est fait
> (Leçon 42-43).

> I should therefore like the speaking and the listening that will be
> interwoven here to resemble the comings and goings of a child playing
> beside his mother, leaving her, returning to bring her a pebble, a
> piece of string, and thereby tracing around a calm centre a whole
> locus of play within which the pebble, the string come to matter
> less than the enthusiastic giving of them (Leçon 476-77).

If we were to combine Paul de Man's suggestions that, "[t]he autobiographical

moment happens as an alignment between two subjects involved in the process

of reading in which they determine each other by mutual reflexive substitution"

and that "the structure implies differentiation as well as similarity,

since both depend on a substitutive exchange that constitutes the subject,"[4]

together with Barthes' suggestion that "the imposition of something

beyond language. . .is both History and the stand we take in it," then, it

would be possible to read the child's sinuous line of play, one of the

configurations through which Barthes articulates difference, as the historical

biographical line that signs his _écriture_ and defines the place from which he

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[4]Paul de Man, The Rhetoric of Romanticism (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984) 70. Here we have a working definition of the clearing of a subject position.

speaks in history.[5] Once again, we are at the point where the "yes, yes", the double affirmation of the self and the other is announced. Since a full scale treatment of how this configuration inscribes Barthes' biographical line into a narrative of the struggle for freedom within the realm of necessity[6] extends

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[5]Barthes writes in an essay entitled "Ecrivains, Intellectuels, Professeurs," Le Bruissement de la langue: essais critiques IV (Paris: Seuil, 1984), as follows:

> C'est parce que le langage n'est pas dialectique (ne permettant le troisième terme que comme pure clausule, assertion rhétorique, voeu pieux) que le discours (la discursivité), dans sa poussée historique, se déplace par à-coups. Tout discours nouveau ne peut surgir que comme le paradoxe qui prend à rebours (et souvent à partie) la doxa environnante ou précédente; il ne peut naître que comme différence, distinction, se détachant contre ce qui lui colle. . . .[C]e serait sans doute chez l'un des plus grands penseurs de la dialectique, Marx, que la nature indialectique du langage serait la plus intéressante à constater . . . . Ce double mouvement de détachement et de reprise aboutit non à un cercle, mais, selon la belle et grande image de Vico, à une spirale, et c'est dans ce déport de la circularité. . .que viennent s'articuler les déterminations historiques (354).

> It is because language is not dialectical (does not allow the third term other than as pure oratorial flourish, rhetorical assertion, pious hope) that discourse (discursivity) moves, in its historical impetus, by clashes. A new discourse can only emerge as the paradox which goes against (and often goes for) the surrounding or preceding doxa, can only see the day as difference, distinction, working loose against what sticks to it. . . . [D]oubtless it is in one of the greatest thinkers of dialectics, Marx, that it would be the most interesting to verify the undialectical nature of language. . . . This twofold movement of separation and renewal results not in a circle but, according to Vico's great and beautiful image, in a spiral and it is in this drift of circularity. . .that historical determinations are articulated ("Writers, Intellectuals, Teachers," A Barthes Reader 388).

[6]I tend to think that Barthes' texts en-act the double session of this utopian struggle: "Ainsi le choix, puis la responsabilité d'une écriture désignent une Liberté, mais cette Liberté n'a pas les mêmes limites selon les différents moments de l'Histoire. . .Comme Liberté, l'écriture n'est donc qu'un moment. Mais ce moment est l'un des plus explicites de l'Histoire, puisque l'Histoire, c'est toujours et avant tout un choix et les limites de ce choix" (Le Degré zéro de l'écriture, 16-17, Writing Degree Zero). ["Thus the choice of, and afterwards the responsibility for, a mode of writing point to the presence of Freedom, but this Freedom has not the same limits at different moments of History. . . . Writing as Freedom is therefore a mere moment. But this moment is one of the most explicit in History, since History is always and above all a choice and the limits of this choice."] Here is what Marx writes on that struggle: "The realm of

beyond the limits of a chapter, I shall merely touch upon this narrative by questioning and by situating the place the mother-figure occupies within this configuration as the limit of History and of the stand Barthes takes in it.[7]

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[6](cont'd) freedom actually begins only where labor which is in fact determined by the necessity and mundane considerations ceases: thus in the very nature of things it lies beyond the sphere of actual production. · Just as the savage must wrestle with Nature to satisfy his wants, to maintain and reproduce life, so must civilized man, and he must do so in all social formations and under all possible modes of production. . . . Freedom in this field can only consist in socialized men, the associated producers, rationally regulating their interchange with Nature, bringing it under their common control, instead of being ruled by it as by the blind forces of Nature; and achieving this with the least expenditure of energy and under conditions most favorable to, and worthy of, their human nature. But it nonetheless still remains a realm of necessity. Beyond it begins that development of human energy which is an end in itself, the realm of freedom, which, however, can blossom forth only with this realm of necessity as its basis." Karl Marx, _Capital_ III, trans. David Fernbach (New York: Vintage, 1977) 820.

[7]I am not interested at this point in defying Barthes' theory of history; rather, I shall focus my attention on the place the mother figure occupies in Barthes' text and question whether or not Barthes destabilizes or reinforces traditional historical concepts of the woman figure. See Dominick La Capra, _Rethinking Intellectual History_ (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), _History and Criticism_ (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984), Hayden White, _Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth Century Europe_ (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), _Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism_ (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), and Frederick Jameson, _The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act_ (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981) on the subject of "History". We could also read this track as "a scene of writing". The scene of writing is the scene played out in the text by marks and traces that resist the self-sovereignty of the writer. For a detailed discussion of the scene of writing see Derrida's "Freud et la scène de l'écriture," _L'écriture et la différance_ (Paris: Seuil, 1967) 293-340; "Freud and the Scene of Writing" in _Writing and Difference_, trans. by Alan Bass (Chicago Press, 1978) 196-231.
    The texts being read include: _La chambre claire_ (Paris: Seuil, 1980) (CC); _Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography_, trans. Richard Miller (New York: Hill and Wang, 1974) (I shall refer to this text by using the French title), _Le Plaisir du texte_; _The Pleasure of the Text_, 1975), _Fragments d'un discours amoureux_ (Paris: Seuil, 1977); _A Lover's Discourse: Fragments_, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978), _S/Z_ (Paris: Seuil, 1970); _S/Z_, trans. Richard Miller (New York: Hill and Wang, 1974), _Mythologies_ (Paris: Seuil, 1957); _Mythologies_, trans. Annette Lavers (New York: Hill and Wang, 1972), _Le Degré zéro de l'écriture_; _Writing Degree Zero_, _Roland Barthes par Roland Barthes_ (Paris: Seuil, 1975) (RB); _Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes_, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977). All further references are to these editions.

Although there is a considerable amount of criticism written about Barthes'
texts, I shall not enter directly into that debate here. I will, however, remind
the reader of four important critical studies of Barthes' work: Annette Lavers'
Roland Barthes: Structuralism and After (1982), Steven Ungar's Roland Barthes:
the Professor of Desire (1983), Stephen Heath's Vertige du déplacement (1974)
and Réda Bensmaia's Barthes à l'essai: Introduction au texte réfléchissant (1986)
as well as of two important articles that deal with the mother-figure: Jacques
Derrida, "Les morts de Roland Barthes," Poétique 47 (1981) and Gayatri Spivak,
"A Response to John O'Neill," in Hermeneutics: Questions and Prospects, edited
by Gary Shapiro.[8] My point of departure is Leçon and Le Plaisir du texte.

From the publication of his first text, Le Degré zéro de l'écriture in 1953,
Barthes has written about discourse's political subjugation. Indeed, one might
summarize Barthes' deconstructive project as an attempt to de-sexualize and
de-subjectivize discourse. He not only displaces logocentric concepts of a unified
subject or self (traditionally posited as masculine), but he also attempts to de-
stabilize all subjective discourse. Traditionally, women are the subjected subjects
par excellence of socio-political discourse. If the subject who is subjected in
a dialectical exchange of the text identifies herself or himself as a subjugated
object, then the subject is fixed in a dialectical position. As Sarah Kofman notes,

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[8]Annette Lavers, Roland Barthes: Structuralism and After (London: Methuen
and Co., 1982), Steven Ungar Roland Barthes: The Professor of Desire (Lincoln:
University of Nebraska Press, 1983); Stephen Heath, Vertige du déplacement.
Lecture de Barthes (Paris: Fayard, 1974), Réda Bensmaïa, Barthes à l'essai:
Introduction au texte réfléchissant (Paris: Gunter Narr Verlag, 1986); The Barthes
Effect: the essay as Reflective text (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press,
1987) (At the time I wrote this thesis I was not familiar with this text. Although,
I have discovered upon reading this excellent commentary that we quote similar
passages from Barthes' texts, the itineraries of our reading project are different
as are the tracks we trace); Gayatri Spivak, "A Response to John O'Neill," in
Hermeneutics: Questions and Prospects, ed. Gary Shapiro (Amherst: University
of Massachusetts Press, 1984): 182-98; and Jacques Derrida, "Les morts de
Roland Barthes," in Poétique 47 (1981): 269-92. All further references
will be to these editions.

the situation of the subject in this position is one in which the subject is susceptible to being penetrated by the paternal penis.[9] Barthes' project is, then, not only to deconstruct origins, it is to displace the exchange dialectic of textuality: a dialectic which subjectivizes, stereotypifies and universalizes—reducing difference to sameness.

In Leçon Barthes addresses the socio-political ramifications of language. If, as he suggests, servility (the gregariousness of repetition) and power[10] (the

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[9]See Sarah Kofman "Sartre: Fort! Da?" Diacritics 14.4 (1984): 9-36. There is a very interesting similarity between Sartre's and Barthes' struggles for freedom, and the places that the "mother," or "woman," and homosexuality occupy within this struggle.

[10]In Leçon Barthes describes power as follows:

> [N]ous avons cru que le pouvoir était un objet exemplairement politique; nous croyons maintenant que c'est aussi un objet idéologique, qu'il se glisse là où on ne l'entend pas du premier coup, dans les institutions, les enseignements. . .le pouvoir était pluriel. . . .[N]otre vraie guerre est ailleurs; elle est contre les pouvoirs, et ce n'est pas là un combat facile : car, pluriel dans l'espace social, le pouvoir est, symétriquement, perpétuel dans le temps historique : chassé, exténué ici, il reparaît là ; il ne dépérit jamais : faites une révolution pour le détruire, il va aussitôt revivre, rebourgeonner dans le nouvel état des choses. La raison de cette endurance et de cette ubiquité, c'est que le pouvoir est le parasite d'un organisme trans-social, lié à l'histoire entière de l'homme, et non pas seulement à son histoire politique, historique. Cet objet en quoi s'inscrit le pouvoir, de toute éternité humaine, c'est : le langage—ou pour être plus précis, son expression obligée : la langue (Leçon 10-12).

> We have believed that power was an exemplarily political object; we believe now that power is also an ideological object, that it creeps in where we do not recognize it at first, into institutions, into teaching. . .power [is] plural. . . . [O]ur true battle. . .is against powers in the plural, and this is no easy combat. For if it is plural in social space, power is, symmetrically, perpetual in historical time. Exhausted, defeated here, it reappears there; it never disappears. Make a revolution to destroy it, power will immediately revive and flourish again in the new state of affairs. The reason for this endurance and this ubiquity is that power is the parasite of a trans-social organism, linked to the whole of man's history and not only to his political, historical history. This object in which power is inscribed, for all human eternity, is language, or to be more precise, its necessary expression: the language we speak and write (Leçon 459-460).

authority of assertion) are inevitably intermingled with discourse and if we think,

read, and speak from decisions imposed upon us by language, then the writer's

freedom and responsibility depend upon the labour of displacement that he brings

to bear on language. The configuration of this displacement is, as I have suggested,

the child's circular return pattern, a pattern which departs from and returns

to the m(other). Within this economy the child is both different from (other)

and joined to the m(other). Through this two-fold movement of separation and

renewal, unity and displacement, Barthes problematizes the exchange dialectic

of difference and of subjugation as he articulates the economy of the mother-

tongue as ethico-political historical movements of disfiguration and of difference,

as is indicated in the following excerpt from Le Plaisir du texte [The Pleasure

of the Text]:

> L'écrivain est quelqu'un qui joue avec le corps de sa mère...pour
> le glorifier, l'embellir, ou pour le dépecer, le porter à la limite de
> ce qui, du corps, peut être reconnu; j'irai jusqu'à jouir d'une défiguration
> de la langue, et l'opinion poussera les hauts cris, car elle ne veut
> pas qu'on «défigure la nature» (60-61).

> The writer is someone who plays with his mother's body...in order
> to glorify it, to embellish it, or in order to dismember it, to take
> it to the limit of what can be known about the body: I would go so
> far as to take bliss in a disfiguration of the language, and opinion
> will strenuously object, since it opposes "disfiguring nature" (37).

For Barthes, the mother-tongue is a discourse of undecidability since it is both

the umbilical language which links speakers of a community together and the

language of displacement. Since displacement is the displacement of the subject-

object dialectic, it is unspeakable, inter-dicted. Barthes writes of the mother-

tongue in Roland Barthes par Roland Barthes as follows:

. Ce n'est pas un amour national: d'une part, il ne croit à la précellence
d'aucune langue et il éprouve souvent les manques cruels du français;
d'autre part, il ne se sent jamais en état de sécurité dans sa propre
langue; les occasions sont nombreuses où il en reconnaît la division
menaçante; parfois, entendant des Français dans la rue, il est étonné
de les comprendre, de partager avec eux une partie de son corps.
Car sans doute la langue française n'est rien d'autre pour lui que la
langue ombilicale.
    (Et en même temps, goût pour les langues très étrangères, tel,
le japonais, dont la structure lui <u>représente</u>—image et remontrance
—l'organisation d'un sujet <u>autre</u>) (119-120).

This is not a national love: on the one hand, he does not believe in
the primacy of any one language and often experiences the cruel
deficiencies of French; on the other, he never feels in a state of
security in his own language; the occasions are frequent when he
recognizes its threatening division; sometimes, listening to French
people in the street, he is amazed to understand them, to share with
them a part of his body. For doubtless the French language is nothing
more or less for him than the umbilical language.
    (And at the same time, a taste for the very exotic languages,
such as Japanese, whose structure <u>represents</u> for him—image and
remonstrance—the organization of an altogether different subject
(115-116).[11]

The mother-tongue is a textual topos between bodies: a discourse which is not

controlled by a unified, interiorized subject. It is a shared, external discourse

between bodies. The economy of the mother-tongue is, for Barthes, the

undecidable, aporic topos where bodies inter-act with each other: neither a

body, nor a sign, but both, simultaneously. In the last chapter, I referred to Gayatri

Spivak's reading of the place the figure of "woman" occupies in Derrida's critique

of Western thought. Here in our reading of Barthes' texts, we will discover,

once again, that "woman" is inscribed as the limit where the proper (patronymic,

self-sovereignty, truth, authority, etc.) becomes undecidable. Near the conclusion

of this chapter, I shall offer some criticism of the figure of the m(other) in Barthes'

texts. In doing so, it will become evident how my reading of Barthes' texts differs

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[11]It is important to note that Barthes does not attempt to speak for the
"other" as he acknowledges the "other's" irreducible ethico-political textual
production. Yet, problems necessarily arise as we soon shall see.

from readings by readers who fail to question Barthes' project and from feminist readers who attempt to define "woman" by way of the critique of man.[12]

The Limits of Ex-sense

Rather than the traditional logocentric Oedipal search for the name of the father, the phenomenological project of La chambre claire is to (dis)cover the essence of the m(other).[13] The questions we shall ask are: What place does the figure of the mother occupy? And whether or not Barthes' search for feminine essence (ex-sense) amounts simply to an appropriation of the other in order to destabilize the sovereign subject? I have chosen to address these questions by focusing upon those passages in La chambre claire in which the figure of the mother appears.

A brief summary of the layout of the double structure of this text would read as follows. The first part of La chambre claire inscribes the theoretical framework and the problematics of photography, in which the place of the m(other) will be situated. Barthes' notion of the studium and the punctum have something like a relation with the distinctions Barthes inscribes between the readerly text and writerly text or with the differences between the text of pleasure and the pleasure of the text.[14] The studium, the cultural reading of the photograph,

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[12]John O'Neill's "Breaking the Signs: Roland Barthes and the Literary Body," The Structural Allegory: Reconstructive Encounters with the New French Thought, ed. John Fekete (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984) 183-200 is an example of a critic who essentializes Barthes' texts and reads with a non-critical eye. Annie Leclerc's "Mon écriture d'amour," Les Nouvelles Littéraires, no. 2534 (May 26, 1976): 19 is an example of a woman writer who defines woman's essence from within the French intellectual arena of the critique of man. See Chapter 4 for a summary of this issue.

[13]See Jacques Derrida, Glas (Paris: Galilée, 1974); Glas, trans. John P. Leavey, Jr. and Richard Rand (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986).

[14]See Barthes, S/Z and Le Plaisir du texte.

is destabilized by the inexpressible blindfield and shock of the punctum. In turn,

the "shadow," "supplement," or "air" of the photographic image—its ex-

sense—deconstructs unified images and gives birth to mobile, "light" images.

As in logocentric language, it is the image which is caught and the self which

Barthes posits as "light," "divided," and "dispersed." This gesture is an attempt

to render unstable the subjugation of subjects to fixed, socio-political images

of death: an attempt to displace the exchange dialectic of advanced capitalism

and its commodification of images[15] and, in doing so, to save both Barthes and

the m(other) figure from being objectified or feminized. Indeed, in the proleptic

conclusion, Barthes' call for the valorization of photographic "ecstasy" is an

attempt to reverse the letter of time and to awaken intractable reality: a step

("pas") toward displacing the commodified images of advanced capitalism. Our

task is to situate and, then, to question this intervention.

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[15]Barthes' attempt to combat the commodification of advanced capitalism
is most evident in the conclusion of La chambre claire: "Ce qui caractérise les
sociétés dites avancées, c'est que ces sociétés consomment aujourd'hui des images,
et non plus, comme celles d'autrefois, des croyances; elles sont donc plus libérales,
moins fanatiques, mais aussi plus «fausses» (moins «authentiques»)—chose
que nous traduisons, dans la conscience courante, par l'aveu d'une impression
d'ennui nauséeux, comme si l'image, s'universalisant, produisait un monde sans
différences (indifférent), d'où ne peut alors surgir ici et là que le cri des
anarchismes, marginalismes et individualismes: abolissons les images, sauvons
le Désir immédiat (sans médiation)" (182-183; 118-119) ["What characterizes
the so-called advanced societies is that they today consume images and no longer,
like those of the past, beliefs; they are therefore more liberal, less fanatical,
but also more "false" (less "authentic")—something we translate, in ordinary
consciousness, by the avowal of an impression of nauseated boredom, as if the
universalized image were producing a world that is without difference (indifferent),
from which can rise, here and there, only the cry of anarchisms, marginalisms,
and individualisms: let us abolish the images, let us save immediate Desire (desire
without mediation)"]. I acknowledge the problem Barthes articulates; yet I find
it necessary to question in what way desire, as a position in discourse, can be
without mediation. Perhaps, the problem amounts to the difference between
mediation and destabilization? See Frederic Jameson's "Postmodernism, or The
Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism," New Left Review 146 (1984): 53-93; and
Jean Baudrillard, La Sociétie de consommation (Paris: Gallimard, 1970),

Parcours

Alone in his apartment, Barthes (dis)covers by moving backwards in time from photograph to photograph the truth of the face he had loved. The photograph of his mother's truth is a photo taken of her at the age of five in which she is accompanied by her elder brother. Barthes writes:

> J'observai la petite fille et je retrouvai enfin ma mère. La clarté de son visage, la pose naïve de ses mains, la place qu'elle avait occupée docilement sans se montrer ni se cacher, son expression enfin, qui la distinguait, comme le Bien du Mal, de la petite fille hystérique, de la poupée minaudante qui joue aux adultes, tout cela formait la figure d'une innocence souveraine (si l'on veut bien prendre ce mot selon son étymologie, qui est «Je ne sais pas nuire»), tout cela avait transformé la pose photographique dans ce paradoxe intenable et que toute sa vie elle avait tenu: l'affirmation d'une douceur. . . . Sa bonté était précisément hors-jeu, elle n'appartenait à aucun système ou du moins elle se situait à la limite d'une morale. . . (La chambre claire 107).

> I studied the little girl and at last rediscovered my mother. The distinctness of her face, the naïve attitude of her hands, the place she had docilely taken without either showing or hiding herself, and finally her expression, which distinguished her, like Good and Evil, from the hysterical little girl, from the simpering doll who plays at being grownup—all this constituted the figure of a sovereign innocence (if you will take this word according to its etymology, which is: "I do no harm"), all this had transformed the photographic pose into that untenable paradox which she had nonetheless maintained all her life: the assertion [affirmation] of a gentleness. . . . Her kindness was specifically out-of-play, it belonged to no system, or at least it was located at the limits of a morality. . . (Camera Lucida 69).

Whereas Derrida's and Nietzsche's texts,[16] as Spivak notes,[17] write

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[16]See Jacques Derrida, Eperons: Les Styles de Nietzsche/Spurs: Nietzsche's Styles, trans. Barbara Harlow (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979). Bilingual edition.

[17]Gayatri Spivak, "Displacement and the Discourse of Woman," Displacement: Derrida and After, ed. Mark Krupnick (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983): 169-95.

affirmation as the affirmation of women's faked orgasm, in La chambre claire, I contend, Barthes writes affirmation as the affirmation of love: "Car ce n'est pas l'indifférence qui enlève le poids de l'image. . . .c'est l'amour, l'amour extrême" (27; 12) "For it is not indifference which erases the weight of the image. . .[it is] love, extreme love"]. This gesture is an attempt to free the mother from subjugation and from the funereal immobility which the photograph marks. Yet, Barthes not only destabilizes the reified image of his mother, he also writes a plural topos for himself (as we soon shall read). What is the "parcours" Barthes weaves toward the place that the mother-figure occupies?

The movement of Barthes' regressive search for a photograph which captures the "essence" of his mother is a double repetition: the repetition of the retentive movement of photography as well as the regressive movement of his mother's illness:

. . .[J]e la perdais alors deux fois, dans sa fatigue finale et dans sa première photo, pour moi la dernière; mais c'est alors aussi que tout basculait et que je la retrouvais enfin telle qu'en elle-même. . .
Ce mouvement de la Photo (de l'ordre des photos), je l'ai vécu dans la réalité. . . . Pendant sa maladie, je la soignais, lui tendais le bol de thé qu'elle aimait parce qu'elle pouvait y boire plus commodément que dans une tasse, elle était devenue ma petite fille, rejoignant pour moi l'enfant essentielle qu'elle était sur sa première photo. . . . Elle, si forte, qui était m'a Loi intérieure, je la vivais pour finir comme mon enfant féminin. Je résolvais ainsi, à ma manière, la Mort (111-13).

. . .I was then losing her twice over, in her final fatigue and in her first photograph, for me the last; but it was also at this moment that everything turned around and I discovered her as into herself. . . .
This movement of the Photograph (of the order of the photographs) I have experienced in reality. . . . During her illness, I nursed her, held the bowl of tea she liked because it was easier to drink from than from a cup; she had become my little girl, uniting for me with that essential child she was in her first photograph. . . . Ultimately I experienced her, strong as she had been, my inner law, as my feminine child. Which was my way of resolving Death (71-72).

She engenders him and he engenders her. Hence, in this scene of reading difference
may be read as either non-conceptual sexual difference[18] or bi-sexual
difference.[19] Both Barthes and the mother-figure, simultaneously, contain the
difference of both sexes within them. This problematic also appears in _Roland
Barthes par Roland Barthes_. In this text, Barthes attempts to avoid sexual
distinctions, and to dissolve the confrontations and paradigms of sexual dualities
by denoting the beloved as the "loved object" and by calling for pluralism
(homosexualities) and for difference:

> De même, la _différence_, mot insistant et très vanté, vaut surtout
> parce qu'elle dispense ou triomphe du conflit. Le conflit est sexuel,
> sémantique; la différence est plurielle, sensuelle et textuelle; le sens,
> le sexe sont des principes de construction, de constitution; la différence
> est l'allure même d'un poudroiement, d'une dispersion, d'un miroitement;
> il ne s'agit plus de retrouver, dans la _lecture du monde et du sujet_
> [my emphasis], des oppositions, mais des débordements, des
> empiétements, des fuites, des glissements, des déplacements, des
> dérapages (73-74).
>
> Similarly, _difference_, that much-vaunted and insistent word, prevails
> because it dispenses with or triumphs over conflict. Conflict is sexual,
> semantic; difference is plural, sensual, and textual; meaning and
> sex are principles of construction, of constitution; difference is the
> very moment of dispersion, of friability, a shimmer; what matters
> is not the discovery, in a _reading of the world and of the self_, of certain
> oppositions but of encroachments, overflows, leaks, skids, shifts,
> slips. . . (69).

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[18]See Gilles Deleuze, _Différence et Répétition_ (Paris: Presse Universtaires
de France, 1968). Deleuze writes of two models of difference: simple conceptual
difference and the concept of difference. Whereas conceptual difference is
a dialectical difference within an identity, the concept of difference recognizes
not only the difference within identity, but also the difference between identity
and non-identity (nonconceptual difference). Heidegger's attempt to displace
the question of sexuality, to return to a presexual difference may also be of
interest here. This desire to return to an originary source, as a theoretical
fictional (the arché-trace) construct re-enacts on the psychoanalytic level the
child's circular-return pattern and the narrative structure of the struggle
freedom. Such gestures simply consolidate the problem that sexual difference
is thought in every decision that is made.

[19]See Sigmund Freud, _Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological
Works_, trans. James Strachey, XXII (London: Hogarth Press, 1964).

For this deconstructive critic difference displaces subjection. I underline "Lecture du monde et du sujet" ["Reading of the world and of the self"] for a specific reason. As I reread this passage and as I recall Gayatri Spivak's and Jacques Derrida's vigilant thinking of the ethico-political (social) text, I cannot read this passage as anything other than an attempt to avoid the problem of ideology and the institutional responsibility of critics. If this gesture by Barthes is an attempt to intervene in the text and its destination, we must recognize the limits of such strategies. For such gestures, if they are not accompanied by critical "readings of the world and of the subject," will simply consolidate the heterogeneous ethico-political forces and in doing so, will leave everything as it is. Such gestures can only lead to further marginalization of woman and of literary/philosophic inquiries. As we return to Barthes' texts, the question we must ask is does Barthes simply reduce the mother-figure to traditional, logocentric metaphor(s) of mother and/or child?

Traditionally, women have been perceived as children, and as mothers. The structural metaphor of woman (mother/child) as exchange object elucidates the subtext of patriarchal, economic, sexual structures.[20] Within the field of psycho-analytic interpretation, Freud's Oedipus castration narrative reinforces this subtext. Lacan re-writes this narrative, translating maternal loss into originary loss—the unisexual lack constituting discourse.[21] Desire, for Lacan, destabilizes

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[20]See Jacques Derrida, Glas; Sarah Kofman, L'Enigme de la femme: La Femme dans les textes de Freud (Paris: Galilée, 1980).

[21]Jacques Lacan, Ecrits (Paris: Seuil, 1966). For Lacan, the other is the object of desire. Desire operates for Lacan in relation to lack, or to absence. Virginia Thorndike Hules in the introduction to French Feminist Criticism: Women, Language, and Literature: An Annotated Bibliography (New York: Garland Publishing Inc., 1985) describes Lacan's notion of desire as follows: "[Desire] is constituted during the Oedipal stage through the agency of the castration complex for boys and penis envy for girls. The subject becomes subject by

self-sovereignty and renders unstable all notions of unitary sexual identity. Although Barthes deconstructs the Oedipal triangle—by identifying with his mother, the (homosexual) child is self-castrated—there is an uncanny similarity between Barthes' inscription of the mother as a figure of undecidability and Lacan's conception (I use this word deliberately) of the mother as the unisexual "lack" constituting discourse. At the same time, we must note Barthes' uncritical notion of desire. This is the second problem that we must keep in mind as we read through Barthes' texts. The homosexual writer (Barthes) discovers and affirms the excess of desire prior to its appropriation and dialectical reproductive coupling. It is through this double session of deconstruction and homosexuality that Barthes attempts to de-stabilize political subjection. In order to trace this subtle shuttle play in La chambre claire, we must backtrack a little and return to the m(other).

To begin with, the phrase "telle qu'en elle-même" marks a regressive movement which en-acts Barthes' notion that photographs do not take ["prendre"] they turn ["tourner"]. Both the photograph and the mother turn inward. The mother's essence is not a projection outside herself, but an enfolding to herself.[22] Barthes refrains from naming this

21 (cont'd.) incorporating the Law-of-the-Father. . .which forbids union with the pre-Oedipal, phallic mother. The Phallus. . .is the primary signifier of desire. It symbolizes the separation from the complete, powerful mother and the absence through which the subject is constituted, ... Lacan distinguished between desire, which is masculine, and jouissance, which is feminine. Desire, born of separation, is satisfaction ever deferred. It is also integration into linguistic structuration, the laws of grammar and syntax. Jouissance is a primal, contiguous sexuality that seeks 'to realize itself in rivalry with the desire that castration liberates in the male'" (xxii).

22 An interesting narrative is written between this scene of writing and the concluding passage of Hegel's Phenomenology, trans. J.B. Baillie (1931; rpt. New York: Harper and Row, 1967), 807: "the other aspect, however, in which Spirit comes into being, History, is the process of becoming in terms of knowledge, a conscious self-mediating process—Spirit externalized and emptied into Time. But this form of abandonment is, similarly, the emptying of itself by itself; the negative is negative of itself. This way of becoming presents a slow procession and succession of spiritual shapes (Geistern), a gallery of pictures, [Camera Lucida] each of which is endowed with the entire wealth of Spirit, and moves so slowly

enfolding process: "Dans la Mère, il y avait un noyau rayonnant, irréductible. . . .une âme particulière," (117; 75). ["In the Mother, there was a radiant, irreducible core. . .an individual soul."] Since the photograph of Barthes' mother as a child enfolded "telle qu'en elle-même" temporally precedes any possible identity Barthes may have constructed of her, this photograph places on stage the problematic of historical phenomenological discourse and the economy of the Derridean trace.[23] Barthes' text, in its ambivalence toward the mother's "e[x]sence," discovers that the other can only be subjected to her own difference from herself. Difference cannot be affirmed as an ultimate transcendental truth since it is an ex-centric movement, a movement which subverts and subtends the foundations of any affirmation: "[E]lle est. . .une différence qui ne s'arrête pas. . .une différence dont chaque texte est le retour" (S/Z 9; S/Z 3) ["It is a difference which does not stop. . .a difference of which each text [La chambre claire or Barthes] is the return."] In this dual sense, Barthes' figure of the mother is both the structural-biological condition of possibility and limit of Barthes' text.

This subtle play of difference is emphasized in La chambre claire in at least three other ways. First, Barthes does not name the essence he discovers; instead, he quotes a line from Mallarmé (this line is repeated three times in the

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22(cont'd.)just for the reason that the self has to permeate and assimilate all this wealth of its substance. Since its accomplishment consists in Spirit knowing what it is, in fully comprehending its substance, this knowledge means its concentrating itself on itself (Insichgehen), a state in which Spirit leaves its external existence behind and gives its embodiment over to Recollection (Erinnerung). In thus concentrating itself on itself, Spirit is engulfed in the night of its own self-consciousness; its vanished existence is, however, conserved within; and this superseded existence--the previous state, but born anew from the womb of knowledge--is the stage of existence, a new world, and a new embodiment, or mode of Spirit. I am grateful to Geoffrey Hartman for pointing out this Hegelian passage.

23Rather than attempting to avoid the responsibility of addressing the constitution of the Other in its subject-ivity, the question that must be asked is how the assimilation of the other takes place and what the nature of the interchange, or the dialogue, with the other is and should be.

text): "telle qu'en elle-même." Barthes uses direct quotation as a strategy of displacement and as a means for opening the text to other voices.[24] This gesture of undecidability, or of iteration, reminds us that Barthes omits the adjectives expressing the accord he experiences in looking at the Winter Garden photograph. The photographic punctum produces a non-dialectical shock which cannot, for Barthes, be reduced to words.[25] The central displacement is, of course, the displaced Winter Garden photograph: the absent centre from/to which Barthes departs and returns. Yet, there is still more playing going on. Subtly Barthes shuttles into the place of the m(other) and in doing so, problematizes the investigating subject's self-sovereignty and deconstructs the Oedipus narrative: "C'est mon droit politique d'être un sujet qu'il me faut défendre" (32; 15) ["It is my political right to be a subject which I must protect"].

As a figure of non-dialectical difference the mother is the ça/sa, the point of departure and convergence of countless metaphors: "supplement," "fold," "envelope," "essence," and "soul." Rather than supposing herself ["supposait"], a gesture of mimicry, she "lends" herself to difference:

> [M]a mère «se prêtait» à la photographie, craignant que le refus
> ne se tournât en «attitude»; elle réussissait cette épreuve de se
> placer devant l'objectif (acte inévitable) avec discrétion (mais sans
> rien du théâtre contracté de l'humilité ou de la bouderie); car elle
> savait toujours substituer à une valeur morale, une valeur supérieure,
> une valeur civile. Elle ne se débattait pas avec son image, comme
> je le fais avec la mienne: elle ne se supposait pas (105).

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[24]See V.N. Volosinov, Marxism and the Philosophy of Language, trans. Ladislav Matejka and I.R. Titunik (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973, rpt. 1986): 134-39.

[25]This problematic has an uncanny resemblance to the problem existentialism dramatizes.

> [M]y mother "lent" herself to the photograph, fearing that refusal
> would turn to "attitude"; she triumphed over this ordeal of placing
> herself in front of the lens (an inevitable action) with discretion (but
> without a touch of the tense theatricalism of humility or sulkiness);
> for she was always able to replace a moral value with a higher one
> --a civil value. She did not struggle with her image, as I do with
> mine: she did not suppose herself (67).

By opening herself to difference, the mother displaces superiority and postures

of mastery and "lends" herself to the otherness which photography marks. She

contains in her difference the otherness which destabilizes language and the

logocentric tradition, what Heidegger called ereignis,[26] the force of disturbance

within language which cracks it apart--the fundamental irreducible otherness

of every language and its generative source. Of course, this interpretation is

based upon a problematic view of woman. To see undecidability or

"indeterminacy," as Gayatri Spivak argues, "in the figure of women might be

the effect of an ethicolegal narrative whose oppressive hegemony still remains

largely unquestioned."[27] At the same time, we must notice that within this

narrative, woman is the mark of the critique of self-sovereignty. Let us deliberate

on these issues as we continue our reading.

The arrest of interpretation and the inability of words to describe the "satori"

of the mother's photograph is similar to the "affect" of the punctum. The Winter

Garden photograph (flat and impenetrable) wounds Barthes. The m(other) figure

amounts to and returns to a blind field of evidential force which marks a space

between the subject of the photo and the investigating subject and also marks

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[26]Martin Heidegger, Poetry, Language and Thought, trans. Albert Hofstadter
(New York: Harper and Row, 1971) and Being and Time, trans. John Macquarrie
and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper and Row, 1962).

[27]Gayatri Spivak, "Love Me, Love My Ombre, Elle," Diacritics 14.4 (1984):
22.

a temporal field between two time structures. Barthes calls this space the "intractable," or the "interfuit": that which has been present and yet is deferred. Here, in this space, the mother's body is, for Barthes, both too much and too little.

In Le Plaisir du texte, Barthes links this interdicted space to feminine jouissance. Like jouissance the photographic punctum exceeds representation:

> La jouissance est in-dicible, inter-dite. Je renvoie à Lacan («Ce à quoi il faut se tenir, c'est que la jouissance est interdite à qui parle, comme tel, ou encore qu'elle ne puisse être dite qu'entre les lignes. . .») et à Leclaire («. . .celui qui dit, par son dit, s'interdit la jouissance, ou corrélativement, celui qui jouit fait toute lettre—et tout dit possible—s'évanouir dans l'absolu de l'annulation qu'il célèbre.») . . .'.vous ne pouvez parler «sur» un tel texte, vous pouvez seulement parler «en» lui, à sa manière, entrer dans un plagiat éperdu, affirmer hystériquement le vide de jouissance (et non plus répéter obsessionnellement la lettre du plaisir) (36-38).

> Bliss is unspeakable, inter-dicted. I refer to Lacan ("What one must bear in mind is that bliss is forbidden to the speaker, as such, or else that it cannot be spoken except between the lines. . .") and to Leclaire (". . .Whoever speaks, by speaking denies bliss, or correlatively, whoever experiences bliss causes the letter—and all possible speech—to collapse in the absolute degree of the annihilation he is celebrating"). . . .[Y]ou cannot speak "on" such a text, you can only speak "in" it, in its fashion, enter into a desperate plagiarism, hysterically affirm the void of bliss (and no longer obsessively repeat the letter of pleasure) (21-22).

This inter-dicted (between) space can only be affirmed hysterically. Affirmation amounts to, or returns to, the space between words, the place from within which Barthes strains to hear the other voice that is woven there—what is inter-dicted —that which our particularism fails to hear: the m(other)-tongue.[28] (I ask the reader to keep in mind that the problem with this configuration of the woman's

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[28]See L'obvie et l'obtus: essais critiques III 107?

body as difference, as we noted in the last chapter, is that it also exists "too much" as the "place of evidence, of the law as the code of legitimacy and inheritance.")[29]

This post-structuralist writer attempts to inscribe the mother as a figure of undecidability, a figure which endures beyond death and indifferent nature. For, as we noted earlier, to affirm the mother, for Barthes, is to affirm her in her difference—in her re-turn ("truth") not in her "identity." As Barthes writes in Fragments d'un discours amoureux to affirm is to begin again. La chambre claire amounts to, or returns to, the absent figure of the m(other) inscribed within the sinuous line of "Pity":

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[29]Gayatri Spivak, writes in "Displacement and the Discourse of Woman" as follows:

> As the radically other she does not really exist, yet her name remains one of the important names for displacement, the special mark of deconstruction. The difference in the woman's body is also that it exists too much, as the place of evidence, of the law as writing. I am not referring to the law in general, the Logos as origin, Speech as putative identity of voice and consciousness, "all the names of the foundation, of the principle, or of the center (that) have always designated the invariant of a presence (eidos, archè, telos, energeia, ousia [essence, existence, substance, subject], aletheia, transcendentality, consciousness, God, man, and so forth." I am speaking in the narrow sense, of the law as the code of legitimacy and inheritance.
> One version of this "simple" law is written on the woman's body as an historical instrument of reproduction. A woman has no need to "prove" maternity. The institution of phallocentric law is congruent with the need to prove paternity and authority, to secure property by transforming the child into an alienated object named and possessed by the father, and to secure property by transforming the woman into a mediating instrument of the production and passage of property. In this narrow but "effective" and "real" sense, in the body of the woman as mother, the opposition between displacement and logocentrism might itself be deconstructed. Not merely as the undecidable crease of the hymen or envied place of the fetish, but also as the repressed place of production can the woman stand as a limit to deconstruction (184).

When Barthes brackets the necessity of reading textual inscriptions of the subject and the world, these are the important problems that he totally dismisses.

. . .[J]e passais outre l'irréalité de la chose représentée, j'entrais
follement dans le spectacle, dans l'image, entourant de mes bras
ce qui est mort, ce qui va mourir, comme le fit Nietzsche, lorsque
le 3 janvier 1889, il se jeta en pleurant au cou d'un cheval martyrisé:
devenu fou pour cause de Pitié (179).

. . .I passed beyond the unreality of the thing represented, I entered
crazily into the spectacle, into the image, taking into my arms what
is dead, what is going to die, as Nietzsche did when, as Podach tells
us, on January 3, 1889, he threw himself in tears on the neck of a
beaten horse: gone mad for Pity's sake (117).

In De la grammatologie [Of Grammatology],[30] Derrida notes that "Pity"

is a linguistic construct, the first derivation of self-love. In linking pity to passion,

which engenders love and guarantees the continuation of the species, is it possible

that Barthes is suggesting that "Pity," or passion, precedes linguistic constructs?

Is this perverse deconstructor blindly embracing ontological passion in this scene

of writing? The text is ambiguous: it amounts to the same and/or to the m(other).

For when Barthes refers to "Pity" he does so indirectly by quoting Kristeva and

Podach. "Pity," then, must be an inter-textual construct. Hence, "Pity" is the

limit of "intractable" reality, reality that cannot be named, or approached, except

through revulsive textual movement and through the dead letter of time.[31]

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[30]Jacques Derrida, De la grammatologie (Paris: Seuil) 243-255; Of
Grammatology, trans. Gayatri Spivak (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University
Press, 1976) 171-179.

[31]I am not suggesting here that reality does not exist nor do I necessarily
conceive of Barthes' problem here as the existential reality/subject problematic;
rather, I tend to read "reality" as both the condition of possibility and the limit
of discourse. Reality then would be simultaneously the specific textual condition
of existence (world, event, etc.) and the vanishing point, or limit of the fictional
construct. Barthes writes in Leçon: "Que le réel ne soit pas représentable—mais
seulement démontrable—peut être dit de plusieurs façons: soit qu'avec Lacan
on le définisse comme l'impossible, ce qui ne peut s'atteindre et échappe au
discours, soit qu'en termes topologiques, on constate qu'on ne peut faire coïncider
un ordre pluridimensionnel (le réel) et un ordre unidimensionnel (le langage).
Or, c'est précisément cette impossibilité topologique à quoi la littérature ne
veut pas, ne veut jamais se rendre" (22; 465). That the real is not representable,

Hence, it is important to note that Barthes does not discover the secret of the m(other)'s truth, he discovers only Ariadne's thread: the thread he weaves in this labyrinthine text. (For to discover the other would amount to, or return to the problematics of subjection). La chambre claire is a process of textual re-presentation (image-making), a process that is written with one eye focused on the model and the other eye focused on the text: a reconciliation and compilation.

Fort/Da

The absent figure of a figurant, the m(other)-figure, repeats the absence-as-presence photographic structure. She not only figures the absent centre from which Barthes departs and returns, she also figures temporally the absence which photography marks: true on the level of perception and false on the level of time. Hence, she is both a temporal and a structural figure of presence-absence. In some ways, La chambre claire may be read as a text in which Barthes as he mimes the loss of his mother rewrites the Freudian fort/da game.[32]

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[31](cont'd.)but only demonstrable, can be said in several ways: either we can define it, with Lacan, as the impossible, that which is unattainable and escapes discourse, or in topological terms we observe that a pluri-dimensional order (the real) cannot be made to coincide with a unidimensional order (language). Now, it is precisely this topological impossibility that literature rejects and to which it never submits"]. See also Barthes, "L'effet de réel" Communications, no. 11 (1968); ["The reality effect,"] in French Literary Theory Today, ed. Tzvetan Todorov (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982) 11-17.

[32]Listen to Barthes in Fragments d'un discours amoureux: "L'absence dure, il me faut la supporter. Je vais donc la manipuler: transformer la distorsion du temps en va-et-vient, produire du rythme, ouvrir la scène du langage (le langage naît de l'absence: l'enfant s'est bricolé une bobine [Freud's?], la lance et la rattrape, mimant le départ et le retour de la mère: un paradigme est créé). L'absence devient une pratique active, un affairement (qui m'empêche de rien faire d'autre); il y a création d'une fiction aux rôles multiples (doutes, reproches,

In the Freudian fort/da game,[33] the mother is the absent figure whose departure the child (Freud's grandson) mimes as he throws the spool of thread away (over the bed). According to Lacan, the Freudian fort/da game represents the loss that constitutes discourse.[34] The fort/da game marks the child's entry into language, the entry which Kristeva calls the thetic moment.[35] The child's identification with the mother is broken at this point and the child, henceforth, identifies with the father. Kristeva reads this scene of separation as both a biological operation of scission, separation and division, and a joining of the always already splitting body (the self/other division and identity of the mirror stage) to socio-familial structures. For Kristeva, then, at the moment of this separation, the child posits the mother as separate from his/her body and, simultaneously,

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[32](cont'd.)désirs, mélancolies). Cette mise en scène langagière éloigne la mort de l'autre: un moment très bref, dit-on, sépare le temps où l'enfant croit encore sa mère absente et celui où il la croit déjà morte. Manipuler l'absence, c'est allonger ce moment, retarder aussi longtemps que possible l'instant où l'autre pourrait basculer sèchement de l'absence dans la mort" (22; 16) ["Absence persists —I must endure it. Hence I will manipulate it: transform the distortion of time into oscillation, produce rhythm, make an entrance onto the stage of language (language is born of absence: the child has made himself a doll out of a spool, throws it away and picks it up again, miming the mother's departure and return: a paradigm is created). Absence becomes an active practice, a business (which keeps me from doing anything else); there is a creation of a fiction which has many roles (doubts, reproaches, desires, melancholies). This staging of language postpones the other's death: a very short interval, we are told, separates the time during which the child, still believes his mother to be absent and the time during which he believes her to be already dead. To manipulate absence is to extend this interval, to delay as long as possible the moment when the other might topple sharply from absence into death"].

[33]Sigmund Freud, The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, trans. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1942): XVIII, 3-64.

[34]Jacques Lacan, Ecrits: A Selection, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: W.W. Norton, 1977): 1-8, 146-78, 281-322.

[35]Julia Kristeva, La Révolution du langage poétique (Paris: Seuil, 1974); Revolutions in Poetic Language, trans. Margaret Waller (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984): 43-46.

fixes the mother's body as a sign (a mark of absence). This separation mimes the double structure of the camera lucida and of the discourse-reality problematic (space/time) which, as we noted above, amounts to a projection/textualization of the vertical sign relation (investigating subject/object studied) onto the horizontal dimension of language (subject/predicate structure). For Lacan the gap, or lack, constituting this transition changes the child's relation to the mother from being the ultimate addressee and receptacle/garnishee of demands, to the other who contains only the possibility for, and of, signification. This shift, then, rewrites the mother's role from being an appropriated object to a figure of undecidability.

In _Mourning and Melancholia_,[36] Freud notes that successful mourning must accept the object as lost. According to this notion, the dead mother is the lost object _par excellence_ which constitutes discourse. However, since Barthes' text does not denote loss but connotes the joyful presencing of absence, Barthes can achieve only an asymmetrical economy of mourning. This economy is consistent with the desire to write, since the structure of writing is based on absence: writing is that which we read in the writer's absence and that which constitutes his, or her, pluralization in the scene of writing. This economy of semi-mourning, then, ensures the desire necessary for the textual process, a process which, as we noted above, moves by clashes and differences. (Is this semi-mourning (absence-presence) written within the inter-dicted lines of love and death contiguous with what Barthes calls "amorous mourning?" In amorous mourning, Barthes writes in _Fragments d'un discours amoureux_, the subject undergoes two miseries: the misery of the other's presence and the misery of the other's absence.

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[36]See Freud, _SE_ 14: 98-102.

Misery would then be the loss of the mother's body, or figure, and the loss of the mothertongue: "Le point le plus sensible de ce deuil n'est-il pas qu'il me faut perdre un langage—le langage amoureux? Fini les 'Je t'aime'" (124; 107) ["Isn't the most sensitive point of this mourning the fact that I must lose a language —the amorous language? No more 'I love you's'"].

Within the fort/da game this structural economy amounts to, or returns to, a symbolic deferral of death—"love's protest." The diachronic structure of La chambre claire emphasizes this repetition/return process as a postponement of death a) through allusions to the Greek practice of entering death backwards, b) in the m(other)-child reversals and repetitions, and c) in the temporal and linguistic differences of the writing process.

It would be possible to read the m(other)-figure in Barthes' texts as a threshold/borderline figure standing between life and death, between the imaginary and the symbolic realms, and between the biological and textual topoi, a figure that occupies a place similar to the place the watcher, or prostitute, occupies in Barthes' Leçon.[37] Indeed, she stands as the agent of/for the dead father (Barthes' father died at sea, mer), at the cross-roads between the living language/body of the m(other)tongue and the dead book (father/author): the agent who signs Barthes' texts biographically.

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[37]Barthes writes in Leçon as follows: "Un écrivain. . .doit avoir l'entêtement du guetteur qui est à la croisée de tous les autres discours, en position triviale, par rapport à la pureté des doctrines (trivialis, c'est l'attribut étymologique de la prostituée qui attend à l'intersection de trois voies") (26; 467) ["A writer. . . must have the persistence of the watcher who stands at the crossroads of all other discourses, in a position that is trivial in relation to purity of doctrine (trivialis is the etymological attribute of the prostitute who waits at the intersection of three roads)"].

Throughout this chapter I have noted some of the limits of Barthes' texts. My questioning-position in relation to Barthes' trajectory may now be summarized as follows: The importance of Barthes' expositions on the desire for and the act of stating, as they displace traditional binary oppositions between the public/the private, between self/other and between subject/object, etc., and call our attention to the act of stating which exposes the subject's place, energy and deficiencies, must be recognized. Yet, at the same time, we must not blind ourselves, like Oedipus, to the questions that these practices cannot, or do not ask; to do so, would be to ignore the fact that no matter how earnestly we desire to destabilize authority, the clearing of a subject position in order to speak is inevitable, as Barthes, no doubt, would acknowledge. Hence, Barthes' parcours must be questioned in return.

1) The important work on utopian inscriptions of desire must be accompanied by a persistent critique as well as by a critically extensive linguistic study: which "étudierait non plus l'origine des mots, ou étymologie, ni même leur diffusion, ou lexicologie, mais les progrès de leur solidification, leur épaississement le long du discours historique"; which " would no longer study the origins of words, or etymology, or even their diffusion ...but [would study] the progress of their solidification, their densification throughout historical discourse "[38] if it is going to have any force in changing representations of woman and in countering hegemonic discourse.

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[38]Barthes, Le Plaisir du texte 69; The Pleasure of the Text 43.

2) The foreclosure of the relation between ideology and desire/pity must be questioned before it can have any impact on disrupting commodification of advanced capitalism. The very notion of non-mediation is problematic if it is read as anything but a call for destabilizing the voice of the other appropriated and assimilated by the sovereign subject.[39]

3) Barthes' project to de-sexualize and de-subjectivize discourse is caught on the far side of sexual difference. Hence, feminist projects which attempt to address sexual difference cannot follow Barthes' path. Indeed, I agree with Gayatri Spivak's suggestion that the question woman must ask is not "what am I", (this question would reintroduce the sovereign subject), but, "what is man that the itinerary of his desire creates such a text?" This question, as she notes, would place woman in the "position of questioning subject by virtue of the question-effect, a position that the sexual differential has never allowed woman à propos of men in a licit way.[40]

4) It is necessary to question in what ways the male deconstructive critic's destabilization of authoritarian discourse by way, of the metaphor of woman (as 'an irreducible, undecidable construct) and by way of the diachronic, paradigmatic/syntagmatic structure of "camera lucida" is complicit with bourgeois mythological-ideological production of the uterine economy: an economy (still largely unquestioned) within which the place of woman's body is idealized and

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[39]See Jacques Derrida, "D'un ton apocalyptique: adopté naguère en philosophie"; "Of An Apocalyptic Tone Recently Adopted in Philosophy," trans. John P. Leavey, Jr. (Paris: Galilée, 1983), Semeia 23 (1982): 63-97.

[40]Spivak, "Displacement and the Discourse of Woman" 186.

valorized as maternal reproduction.[41] Indeed, we must question in what way Barthes' figure of the mother and his affirmation of love/pity as they destabilize the position of the sovereign subject must foreclose a) the ethico-political, gendered, historical differences which irreducibly differentiate men from women and which define woman's position as one of alterity, b) the problem of ideology, and 3) the historical politico-economic context which subtend and manage the European crisis of representation—the space/time territorial occupation of imperialism.

It is these limits which I believe define Barthes' place in history and chart the problematic complicity between Barthes' deconstructive project and the projects of logocentrism. With these questions and texts left open, I conclude with two passages that mark the fracture of a dissymmetrical irreducible discontinuity between the texts of Marx (The German Ideology)[42] and the texts of Roland Barthes (La chambre claire):

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[41]I ask the reader to question in what way Marx's reading of Hegel articulates the itinerary of the deconstruction of man by way of the figure of the m(other): "The Appropriation of estranged objective being on the sublation of objectivity in the determination of estrangement—which must proceed from indifferent alienness to real hostile estrangement—has for Hegel at the same time or even principally the significance of the sublation of objectivity, since it is not the determinate character of the object but its objective character which constitutes the offense and the estrangement for self-consciousness. The object is therefore negative, self-sublating, a nullity." Early Writings, trans. Rodney Livingstone and Gregor Benton (New York: Random House, 1963) 391. Indeed, the question of Barthes' notion of desire and difference has yet to be brought together with the texts of Hegel. I mark this question, here, for future consideration. See Spivak, "Displacement and The Discourse of Woman" 184, 190, on the figure of woman in Derrida's texts.

[42]This passage is quoted by Barthes in Mythologies.

La Photographie devient alors pour moi un medium bizarre, une nouvelle forme d'hallucination: fausse au niveau de la perception, vraie au niveau du temps: une hallucination tempérée, en quelque sorte, modeste, partagée (d'un côté «ce n'est pas là», de l'autre «mais cela a bien été»): image folle, frottée de réel (177).

The photograph then becomes a bizarre medium, a new form of hallucination: false on the level of perception, true on the level of time: a temporal hallucination, so to speak, a modest, shared hallucination (on the one hand "it is not there," on the other "but it has indeed been"): a mad image, chafed by reality (115).

Si les hommes et leurs conditions apparaissent dans toute idéologie renversés dans une chambre noire, ce phénomène découle de leur processus vital historique. . . (250).

If men and their conditions appear throughout ideology inverted as in a camera obscura, this phenomenon follows from their vital process. . . (141).

I have attempted to outline some of the limits of Roland Barthes' texts, to be more specific, the limits of the place the mother-figure occupies in La chambre claire. These limits mark the place he occupies in history and, in doing so, situate his texts within a larger oppressive, hegemonic, political ethicolegal narrative which must be persistently questioned.

CHAPTER 4

ENCOUNTERING THE CONTEXT: DAPHNE MARLATT AND
THE LIMITS OF FEMINISM

If you have been following either the itinerary of deconstruction or the itinerary of Robert Kroetsch's work[1] you will already be familiar with the problem of beginnings. I begin here simply with two quotations, one from Jacques Derrida's Of Grammatology[2] and the other from Daphne Marlatt's What Matters:[3]

> Il faut commencer quelque part où nous sommes et la pensée de la trace. . .nous a déjà enseigné qu'il était impossible de justifier absolument un point de départ. Quelque part où nous sommes : en un texte déjà où nous croyons être (233).

> We must begin wherever we are and the thought of the trace. . .has already taught us that it was impossible to justify a point of departure absolutely. Wherever we are, in the text where we already believe ourselves to be (162).

> to understand the interrelating of bodies/words

> KWAKIUTL: we live by the world = according as.the world gives
>   (a hunter's, a gatherer's sensibility)

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[1]Jacques Derrida, La Dissémination (Paris: Seuil, 1967); Dissemination, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981). Robert Kroetsch, "Taking the Risk," Open Letter 5.4 (1983): 65-67.

[2]Jacques Derrida, De la grammatologie (Paris: Minuit, 1967); Of Grammatology, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1974).

[3]Daphne Marlatt, What Matters: Writings 1968-70 (Toronto: The Coach House Press, 1980).

,ecology of language: each word what those around it relate of it as
                                                            it relates
(to) them

                              ."context"

                                          (text, the weave, the net)

. why these poems run on like prose—the ongoing line gives a larger
                                                      context-
            while the short lines tend to stress the words in isolation (Stein's
nouns) (153)

The context we shall encounter in this chapter is the bio-graphical, ethico-

political, gendered, economic, geographical, historical context of Daphne Marlatt's

configuration of the mother-tongue. Hence, once again the problem we shall

turn to is the problem of the double session of representation—_Darstellung_ and

Vertretung, representation as tropology and representation as persuasion—as

it relates to the contradiction inscribed within Marlatt's text between the issue

of "whether or not one woman can speak for other women"[4] and "woman tongue,

speaking in and of and for each other."[5] The notion of context plays an important

part in representation for, as deconstructive and feminist critics remind us, texts

(be they poetic, philosophic, historical, or scientific texts) are heterogeneous

overdetermined topoi—maps[6]—of discourses that are actively implicated in an

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[4]Daphne Marlatt, "In the Feminine," in the feminine: women and words/
les femmes et les mots Conference Proceedings 1983, eds. Ann Dybikowski,
Victoria Freeman, Daphne Marlatt, Barbara Pulling, and Betsy Warland (Edmonton:
Longspoon Press, 1985) 12.

[5]Daphne Marlatt, Touch To My Tongue (Edmonton: Longspoon Press, 1984)
27.

[6]I use the word "map" in this chapter to refer to 1) cartography, 2) ideology
at the second level of abstraction as a "worldling of a world," 3) the
interconnected operations of neurons through which the retina projects via the
optic nerves a discontinuous, or overdetermined, map of the external world on
to the cortex and the brain stem. [Hence, I use this operation to destabilize
"sovereign" perception in a manner comparable to deconstruction's use of Freud's
notion of desire to destabilize the "sovereign subject."] For further information

ongoing process of reproducing social and subjective meanings, values and ideologies. Each text or m inscribes specific effects of representations. What is of interest, here, is the specific representations of "world" and "woman" as limits of the text: the contradictory, discursive place that is, simultaneously, the condition of their possibility and their point of departure.

This chapter is a critical reading of the limits of "first world" inscriptions of écriture féminine and/or of feminist discourse,[7] and "first world" readings of feminist poetics as they are inscribed in Daphne Marlatt's texts and in Barbara Godard's and Christine Cole's readings of Marlatt's "feminist poetics."[8] To be more specific, we shall attempt a) to situate the tendency within feminist theories of feminist discourse, écriture féminine, to sublate and/or erase, through the notion of woman's jouissance, the ethico-political historical and textual inscriptions of woman as a sexual object in their attempt to destabilize the knowing or sovereign subject and phallocentric representations of "woman", and b) to situate

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6 (cont'd.)see Colin Blakemore, "The Baffled Brain," Illusion in Nature and Art, ed. R.L.E.H. Gombrich (New York: Scribner's Press, 1973) 26. Umberto Eco describes mapping as the transformation (to which we might add translation) of pertinent elements from one material continuum to another. See Umberto Eco, A Theory of Semiotics (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976) 182–83. I am grateful for Teresa de Lauretis' mention of these texts in Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema (Bloomington: Indiana Press, 1984).

[7]I use these two descriptors together since the point of departure and the subtending structure for Marlatt's feminist discourse are the presuppositions of écriture féminine. The lines of demarcation which usually separate these two notions and two approaches to feminine writing—lines of demarcation which are to some extent national boundaries; feminist discourse theories dominating primarily in the United States and écriture féminine located in France—are blurred in Marlatt's case.

[8]Christine Cole, "Daphne Marlatt as Penelope, Weaver of Words: A Feminist Reading of Steveston," Open Letter 6.1 (1985): 5–19. Barbara Godard "Body I: Daphne Marlatt's Feminist Poetics," American Review of Canadian Studies 15.4 (1985): 481–96.

the limits of these texts as they are marked by the place of the "third world woman."[9]

A solution to the problems of apartheid and sexism will not, needless to say, be given in this chapter. The most I can hope to do is to situate some of the problematic and colonizing representations of "first" and "third world" women in Marlatt's texts and, in doing so, to open to question the place of such representations in Canadian literature.[10] This is an important problem that Canadian feminists--writers, teachers, readers--must encounter if they are going to have any force in changing the representations of "first and third world women" and in countering racism and sexism in both "first" and "third world" countries. (For a country that prides itself on its open "multiculturalism" and which both borders the United States and has strong post-colonial ties with France and with Britain, this problem is central to its very constituency.)

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[9]I use the term "third world woman" with caution and to point out that the term itself, deriving from the Cold War has an economic-political history which must be recognized. See Carl E. Pletsch, "The Three Worlds, or the Division of Social Scientific Labor, circa 1950-1975," Comparative Studies in Society and History 23.1 (1981): 565-91. See Chandra Talpade Mohanty, "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses," Boundary 2 12.3/13.1 (1984): 333-58.

[10]The role of literature in cultural production must be recognized. Listen to Chandra Talpade Mohanty: "The necessary and integral connection between feminist scholarship and feminist political practice and organizing determines the significance and status of Western feminist writings on women in the third world, for feminist scholarship, like most other kinds of scholarship, is not the mere production of knowledge about a certain subject. It is a directly political and discursive practice in that it is purposeful and ideological. It is best seen as a mode of intervention into particular hegemonic discourses. . . ; it is a political praxis which counters and resists the totalizing imperative of age-old 'legitimate' and 'scientific' bodies of knowledge. Thus, feminist scholarly practices (whether reading, writing, critical, or textual) are inscribed in relations of power—relations which they counter, resist, or even perhaps implicitly support. There can. . .be no apolitical scholarship" (334).

The questions that will be raised are not meant to undermine the importance nor the necessity of feminism; rather, since we are now in the second stage of feminism, our responsibility as feminists begins in knowing the difficulty of the task we face and in situating the limits of our strategies.[11]

The contexts to be considered here are: biography, feminist readings of Marlatt's texts, theories of woman's _jouissance_, and the place of the "third world woman." We shall begin with a brief outline of Marlatt's biography cross-hatched with excerpts from Marx, Derrida and various Marlatt texts, then we are into our questions and discussion.

Biography

Daphne Marlatt was born in 1942 in Melbourne, Australia where her father was serving with the Australian military during World War II. Until the age of nine, when she emigrated with her family to Vancouver, Marlatt lived in a multi-cultural situation in Penang where five languages were spoken: English, Malay, Cantonese, Tamil, Thai.

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[11]Very generally, these two phases would refer to the first phase of political mobilization and the building of alliances and a second phase of critical evaluations of the problems which are necessarily inherent as constitutive contradictions within feminist strategies. The words "constitutive contradictions" refer to the necessary blind spots and limits upon which all strategies are built as they clear a subject position to speak. For Derrida, this subject position would be the scene of writing. See "Freud et la scène de l'écriture," L'écriture et la différence (Paris: Seuil, 1967) 293-340; "Freud and the scene of writing," Writing and Difference (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978) 196-231. For Gayatri Spivak, the clearing of the subject position would refer to these "alibis that the dominant subject-position gives itself as it constructs the subordinate as other," see Spivak, "Imperialism and Sexual Difference," Oxford Literary Review 8.1-2 (1986): 229. My critical reading of Marlatt's text is situated within this framework. Marlatt's contribution to Canadian poetry and to feminism cannot be overlooked. Yet, at the same time, the limits of these texts must be opened for questioning. It would be pre-emptory and politically unaware not to question the place the "third world woman" occupies within Marlatt's text. Here, we are back to chapter one and the "programming machine."

She received a B.A. from the University of British Columbia in 1964 and an M.A. from Indiana University in 1968. She was an active participant in the Tish collective in the 1960's, a group which followed with interest the poetry of Olson, Creeley, and Robert Duncan. Suspicious of metaphor, of simile, and of thematic descriptions, they turned to practices that were implicated with perception, the local, field composition, the uniqueness of matter, the colloquial, open syntax, and voice as breathing.[12] Daphne Marlatt is the author of fifteen books of poetry published between 1968 to 1984. The texts being read in this chapter include What Matters, Steveston, Touch to My Tongue, and How Hug a Stone.[13] Daphne Marlatt was also one of the organizers of the formative "Women and Words Conference," at which women from a wide variety of cultural backgrounds shared their writing practices.[14] She is at the present time also a member on the editorial collective of Tessera.[15]

In "Entering In: The Immigrant Imagination"[16] Marlatt provides us with a narrative of her family's three generations of colonial history in India and in Penang, Malaysia, of the two nostalgias for England and Malaysia which haunted

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[12]Other Tish participants included: George Bowering, Frank Davey, Fred Wah, and Bill Bissett as well as various peripheral participants.

[13]Daphne Marlatt, Steveston (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1974), and How Hug a Stone (Winnipeg: Turnstone Press, 1983).

[14]We now have the important proceedings of this conference in in the feminine, see footnote 4.

[15]Tessera is a Canadian bilingual feminist journal, which circulates as a guest publication of different Canadian literary journals.

[16]Daphne Marlatt, "Entering In: The Immigrant Imagination," Canadian Writers in 1984: Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of Canadian Literature, ed. W.H. New (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1984) 219-23.

her family home in Vancouver, and with a description of the specificities of the immigrant imagination which will be central to our discussion of the place of the "third world woman" in Marlatt's texts. I call your attention to two passages in particular which bring together a) a desire for assimilation, b) the textual production of the ethico-political worldling of a world (ideology), c) the representation of "amah" as an ahistorical figure of "woman," and d) the textual production of subject-effects:

> Twenty-five years after we had left Penang, i went back for a visit
> with my father and sister, living in the first house we had lived in
> as a family, sleeping in the same bedroom, finding in the amah of
> the house the same woman who had been our children's amah back
> then. Out of that grew. . .some Penang writing, as similarly going
> back to England five years later sparked in How Hug a Stone some
> English writing. . . . Yet both returns were incomplete, intercut
> always with my present Canadian consciousness, so that neither writing
> is truly emigrant (221).

> It seems to me that the situation of being such an immigrant is
> a perfect seedbed for the writing sensibility. If you don't belong,
> you can imagine you belong and you can construct in writing a world
> where you do belong. You can write your way into the world you
> want to be part of (Vancouver Poems, Steveston), even as, from outside
> it, you witness its specific characteristics. . . . The sensation of
> having your world turned upside down or inverted also, i think, leads
> to a sense of the relativity of both language and reality, as much
> as it leads to a curiosity about other people's realities. . . . It leads
> to an interest in and curiosity about language, a sense of how language
> shapes the reality you live in, an understanding of how language is
> both idiosyncratic (private) and shared (public), and the essential
> duplicity of language. . .[the] split between name and thing, signifier
> and signified, and you take that first step into a linguistic world that
> lies adjacent to but is not the same as the world of things, and indeed
> operates on its own linguistic laws (222).

The biographical line, the poetic line, the historical line—all three lines are marked by the fracture of difference. Indeed, in some ways learning how to read Daphne Marlatt's texts demands the greatest deconstructive sophistication.

As I read through these passages I am reminded of two other passages which I would like to share with you. The first passage comes from the beginning of Marx's The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte and is a passage with which you are already familiar. I borrow Spivak's translation here:

> Human beings make their own history, but they do not make it with free parts; not in self-chosen, but in immediately encountered, given, and passed-on circumstances. The tradition of the dead generations weighs like an incubus on the brain of the living. And, just when they appear to be engaged in making over themselves and things in general, in order to produce something which was not yet there, precisely in such epochs of revolutionary crisis they timidly conjure up spirits of the past into their service borrow their names, combat passwords and costumes so as to perform the new world-historical scene in the venerable disguise and borrowed language. . . . Thus the beginner who has learned a new language always translates it back into his mother tongue; he has however, appropriated the spirit of the new language, and can produce in it freely, as soon as he can move in it without reminiscence, and forgets in it the language bred and rooted in him.[17]

The second passage is from Jacques Derrida's essay entitled "Différance":[18]

> Difference is what ensures that the movement of signification is possible only if the so-called "present" element, each element that appears on the stage of presence, is related to something other than itself. . . . Some interval or gap must separate it from what it is not itself in order for it to be itself, but that interval which constitutes it in the present must also by the same token divide the present in itself, thus cutting through. . .everything that can be thought out on the basis of the present. . . , singularly the "substance" or the "subject."

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[17]Gayatri Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in Larry Grossberg and Cary Nelson, eds., Marxist Interpretations of Literature and Culture: Limits, Frontiers, Boundaries (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, forthcoming) 22-23. These page references are to an unpublished draft of this essay.

[18]Jacques Derrida, "La Différance," Marges de la philosophie (Paris: Minuit, 1972) 13; Margins of Philosophy, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982) 13. I have adapted this translation to the French text as necessary. See Chapter 1, "Re-opening the Question" (page 10) for reference to French text.

What is at issue in and between Marx's, Derrida's, and Marlatt's texts is the force of difference as active transaction and enactment (mapping) between the past and the future. This transactional or transformational reading of the ethico-political, social, historical, and gendered text, or the worldling of the world,--what Nietzsche called the "continuous sign chains"--marks both the limits and the possibility of action, of thought, and of functional changes in the sign system. The possibility of action lies in the dynamics of breaking and relinking the chain. "[P]oetics" Marlatt writes in <u>What Matters</u> "consists of attention to extension (implication unfolded)--no more the notion of filling up a form--but the <u>act</u>, out in the open" (23).

Yet, since the act is simultaneously both a breaking and a relinking of the chain, an "<u>act</u>" produced by a script, that very moment of action, of en-<u>acting</u>, is the moment in which we necessarily actively forget the aporia between performative and constative language acts--the catachretic construction of that act.[19] It is this catachretic structure of action and of thought which must be affirmed and overturned if the self and the other are not to be subjugated by hegemonic ideologies, or textual constructs. "[W]hat if history," Marlatt questions in <u>How Hug a Stone</u>, "is simply the shell we exude for a place to live in? <u>all wrapped up</u>. break out before it buries us. stories can kill" (51). Or, again:

> <u>to be free</u>, have scope, do what you like, go at large, feel at home, stand on your rights
>
> <u>to feel at home</u>, even on unfamiliar ground, stand on your own (two feet, two eyes, ears, nose, ten tactile fingers go where the wind goes. . .
> be unnamed, walk
> unwritten, de-scripted, un-described. or else compose, make it say itself, make it up (35).

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[19]I use the term "catachretic structure" to refer to the irreducible aporia between performative and constative acts. See Chapters 1 and 2 where the problem was discussed.

In "musing with mothertongue" in <u>Touch to My Tongue</u>, the mother's body is structurally equated with ethico-political textuality, Marlatt's worldling of the world:

> the beginning: language, a living body we enter at birth, sustains and contains us. it does not stand in place of anything else, it does not replace the bodies around us. placental, our flat land, our sea, it is both place (where we are situated) and body (that contains us), that body of language we speak, our mothertongue. it bears us as we are born in it, into cognition. . . . if we are poets we spend our lives discovering not just what <u>we</u> have to say but what language is saying as it carries us with it. in etymology we discover a history of verbal relations. . .that has preceded us and given us the world we live in. the given, the immediately presented, as at birth – a given name a given world. we know language structures our world and in a crucial sense we cannot see what we cannot verbalize. . .here we are truly contained within the body of our mothertongue (45-47).

It would be possible to extend this notion of the textuality of the birthing process to an inscription of the place a subject occupies in ideology. The limits of this textual inscription are the place that marks an ethico-political worldling of a world; the positioning of poetry and poetics within the context of ethico-political discourses where interests (values and effects) are socio-subjective and aesthetic-affective; and where the "production of discourse, or the location of language as a model, escapes the person or the collectivity that engages in practice."[20] Furthermore, since this ethico-political textuality of language is both "place (where we are situated)" and "body (that contains us)" and since language does not "replace bodies around us," this notion of textuality writes what is generally defined in opposition to language, or to the text,—life, fact, action, experience—as ethico-political textual constructs constructed by specific interested discourses so that thought and action can take place.

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[20]Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Criticism, Feminism and the Institution," <u>Thesis Eleven</u> 10/11 (1984-85): 175.

At the same time, there is a tendency in Marlatt's theory of the mother-tongue to privilege both a monolithic notion of ideology and an ahistorical systematic concept of language. Hence, the important role that constitutive contradictions occupy in different ethico-political, sociohistorical discourses is foreclosed as are heterogeneous contradictory subject positions: the conditions for the possibility of thought and action. The important contradiction in Marlatt's texts may have something like a relation to the representation of "woman" as a transcendental essence, rather than as a historical subject.[21] I draw your attention to one further quotation from What Matters, then we are into our questions and discussion:

what is "world"—space to move in
EXTENT—limits of vision
what one can encompass

—to encompass as much as possible (not narrowminded)
no refusal—out of stubbornness or
trying to exist at expense of others
not exclusive—ramrod

dance from place to place (bee
ecosystem: grassworld
or sail from cove to cove: mutual needs —take on water, fresh
vegetables
take away knowledge of
place
—give? (not disease)
should be exchange, products/
knowledge

[21]I am using the distinction between "woman" and women in this text in a manner comparable to Teresa de Lauretis' distinction in Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema "By 'woman' I mean a fictional construct, a distillate from diverse but congruent discourses dominant in Western cultures (critical and scientific, literary or juridical discourses). . . .[B]y women. . .I will mean the real historical beings who cannot as yet be defined outside of those discursive formations, but whose material existence is nonetheless certain" (5). Hence, the importance in attending to feminist representations of "women" as well as to representations of "woman" written within the dominant discourses of the patriarchy.

Columbus setting out in his vision—honorable & maximum use of
'man'—
but ends up colonialist plundering

it goes wrong where àctual contact occurs: he could only see distance
& not
the close-up, at hand, what was to be toucht not taken
    failure to <u>meet</u> the other (persons, objects)

power corrupts & power desired for freedom (empowered) especially
to overrule,
empire—enslaving others

but, interrelations, exchange is <u>shared</u> power (energy commune process)

"world" is social as opposed to "earth" since man is the basis—(basest?)
—measured by time by which he measures himself, hence the (rat)
"race"

limits of vision / limits of comprehension: THAT THE OTHER EXISTS

the other side of the ocean or earth, dark side of the moon

EACH MOVE MADE HERE (me) MOVES THERE (you) (125-26)

Limits of Feminism?

"EACH MOVE MADE HERE (me) MOVES THERE (you)" I hold on to this

line as we proceed. Since today the discourses of the world's privileged societies

dictate to a large extent the configuration of "the rest of the world"[22] this relation

and textualization, this worldling,—here (me)—there (you)—must be vigilantly

attended to. I ask you then to mind these "limits of vision," "the failure to meet

the other," the desire to share power and to question in what way the limits of

first world feminist practices may be marked by an encounter with the materiality

of that "other" on the other side of the world.

We now have two important readings of Daphne Marlatt's poetics: Barbara

Godard's "Body I: Daphne Marlatt's Feminist Poetics" published in <u>The American</u>

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[22]I borrow this phrase from Jacques Derrida's discussion of the geo-political limits of psychoanalysis in "Géopsychanalyse: 'and the rest of the world,'" <u>Confrontations</u> (February, 1981).

Review of Canadian Studies 15.4 (Winter, 1985) and Christine Cole's "Daphne

Marlatt as Penelope, Weaver of Words: A Feminist Reading of Steveston" published

in Open Letter 6.1 (Spring, 1985).[23] There is a tendency in both of these essays

to erase and/or sublate the problem of representation into a unified notion of

the web or text and, in doing so, to erase the irreducible dissymmetrical fracture

Marlatt inscribes between the past/present, "reality"/poetry, mother/daughter,

etc.--the fracture which as we noted above is the limit and the condition of the

possibility of thought and action. Indeed, both Godard and Cole structurally

equate Marlatt's feminist poetics with the "holistic blurring of boundaries," "an

amniotic flow' of words," "excess of signification," "regression to infinity," and

"polyphonic," "multiple" truths (Godard 481, 483) and with "postmodernist" "richly

textured interlacing. . .pattern of accumulation and resonances" (Cole 7).

Although I find a number of issues within these readings problematic, I

call your attention to three tendencies that are important for my discussion:

1) the "holistic" monolithic notion of textuality which fails to question

the place of the investigating subject and the irreducible difference that

differentiates the past from the present, and, as Marlatt suggests, the difference

that separates the poet/writer as witness from the people who are powerless.[24]

(Invisible, I contend, are the truly oppressed "powerless" people; whereas

transparent is the one who is free to choose to make herself/himself a transparent

marginal. This is an important difference which must be acknowledged.)

[23]See note 8.

[24]Daphne Marlatt in discussion with George Bowering in "Given This Body,"
Open Letter, 4th Series, no. 3 (Spring, 1979), writes "To be truly faithful I've
got to voice all the conditions of a life. And a lot of those conditions for those
people [the people in Steveston] have to do with powerlessness. . . .Once you
say 'she says' you get the frame in there. I dont want the frame. I want it just
transmitted straight" (77-78). The phrase, "people who are powerless" is from
page 72 of this same interview.

2) the tendency to erase the limits of structurally equating woman's discourse with jouissance.

3) the failure to question in what way the materiality of the "third world woman" as other may mark the limits of Marlatt's "feminist poetics."

The first problem can be countered simply by reading through a number of passages from Marlatt's texts. The five passages I have chosen for reading are five of many passages which inscribe and are inscribed within Marlatt's poetics. The first two passages mark the irreducible dissymmetrical fracture between event/description, scripts of the past/present and between representations of "woman" in narrative discourse and women as real historical beings who "cannot be defined outside of discursive formations, but whose material existence is nonetheless certain":[25]

> I'm talking about reality, & it's moving so fast that you can't even get to it. The closest thing you can do is make those different takes on it. And I'm telling you that's what I'm doing so you won't think I'm giving it to you whole.[26]

> . . .that is the limit of the old story, its ruined circle, that is not how it ended or we have forgotten parts, we have lost sense of the whole. left with a script that continues to write our parts in the passion we find ourselves enacting, old wrongs, old sacrifices. & the endless struggle to redeem them, or them in ourselves, our "selves" our inheritance of words. wanting to make us new again : to speak what isn't spoken, even with the old words.

> although there are stories about her, versions of history that are versions of her, & though she comes in many guises she is not a person, she is what we come through to & what we come out of, ground & source. the space after the colon, the pause (between the words) of all possible relation (How Hug a Stone 73).

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[25]Teresa de Lauretis 5.

[26]Daphne Marlatt and George Bowering, "Given this Body," Open Letter 4.3 (1979): 51.

The next two passages displace—or destabilize—notions of determined consciousness, the knowing subject:

> i. feel lost. layer on layer of place, person. dramatis personae. the nameless creature i am at the heart of this many-chambered shell is getting overlaid, buried under (How Hug a Stone 65).

> getting away from the (capital) "I" Freud attempted to clarify, as if that would illuminate the dark surrounding—not by domination certainly, & locate the "you" in its temporal network of relation (What Matters 150).

We shall spend the duration of this chapter attempting to situate the limits of the other two tendencies.

Woman's Jouissance

Although we have already noted how the metaphor of woman's body as metaphor of reproduction or birthing has something like a relation in Marlatt's text with the worldling of a world, a scripted world which has preceded and given us the world we live in, if we read through one more passage, from "musing with mothertongue" a different, yet related, reading of the metaphor of woman's body is possible—woman's body as jouissance.[27] It is this "productive" contradiction--the difference between the worldling of the world as a trans-historical reproductive ethico-political textual map, and woman's

[27]On the notion of jouissance see Jacques Lacan, "Love Letter," in Feminine Sexuality: Jacques Lacan and the école freudienne, eds. Juliet Mitchell and Jacqueline Rose (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1982). See also, "French Texts/American Contexts," Yale French Studies 62 (1981), Luce Irigaray, Ce sexe qui n'en est pas un (Paris: Minuit, 1977); This Sex Which Is Not One, trans. Catherine Porter (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985); Monique Wittig, Le Corps lesbien (Paris: Minuit, 1973); The Lesbian Body, trans. David Le Vay (New York, 1975), Hélène Cixous, "Le rire de la Méduse," L'Arc 61 (1975): 39-54, "Le Sexe ou la tête," Cahiers du GRIF 13 (1976): 5-15; and Catherine Clément and Hélène Cixous, La jeune née (Paris: UGE, 10/18, 1975).

"experience" of her body as <u>jouissance</u>—to which we shall now turn our attention.[28]

In what way could this contradiction figure the limits of feminism?

> so many terms for dominance in English are tied up with male experiencing, masculine hierarchies and differences (exclusion), patriarchal holdings with their legalities. where are the poems that celebrate the soft letting-go the flow of menstrual blood is as it leaves her body? how can the standard sentence structure of English with its linear authority, subject through verb to object, convey the wisdom of endlessly repeating and not exactly repeated cycles her body knows? or the mutuality her body shares embracing other bodies, children, friends, animals, all those she customarily holds and is held by? how can the separate nouns mother and child convey the fusion, bleeding womb-infant mouth, she experiences in those first days of feeding? what syntax can carry the turning herself inside out in love when she is both sucking mouth and hot gush on her lover's tongue? (<u>Touch To My Tongue</u> 47-48).

Marlatt's textual objective seems to be to inscribe a heterogeneous discourse which will convey "the endlessly repeating and not exactly repeated cycles [the feminine writer's] body knows" and to express "the mutuality her body shares embracing other bodies," but is such a discourse possible? Is it possible to comprehend without objectifying? Can we think and write the "other" as subject rather than as object? And if so, how?

This is the "double bind" that feminist discourse and deconstruction must

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[28]Marlatt links the notion of woman's body and <u>jouissance</u> to map-making in "Speaking In and Of Each Other," an interview by Janice Williamson with Daphne Marlatt and Betsy Warland, <u>Fuse</u> (Feb-March, 1985), 27. Marlatt: "if I talk about our sexuality as a hidden ground, then I have to make a distinction between ground that is laid out [phallocentric] and gridded, cleared for use, dry land versus unmapped, uncharted, untamed land that is wet and swampy and usually discarded." Yet, we must question whether or not there is something like a relation between this supposition and Freud's notion and linking of feminine sexuality and the unconscious to the "dark continent." This is not an etymological distinction but something like a "racial memory." Marlatt links etymology to "racial memory" conceived as the relation "verified in the recording of the relationship of words to various cultures" (27). It seems to me that there is only a very thin over-determined difference between apartheid and "racial memory." I recognize, of course, that there are several years of scholarship between the publication of these texts; yet, this problem is still a possibility which must be accounted for.

confront. Indeed, the notion of the "double bind" is, as Spivak points out, the greatest gift of deconstruction: to question the authority of the investigating subject without paralysing him/her as it persistently transforms the conditions of impossibility into the possibility of discursive practice.[29] Daphne Marlatt's texts encounter the "double bind" by marking the place of "woman" as the place that marks the limits of discourse—the space after the colon. This gesture is necessary and must be affirmed if the "other" is not to be insidiously objectified and controlled by knowledge and if feminist discourse does not want to become complicit with phallocentric discourse which fails to account for woman as a subject rather than in subjectivity.

At the same time we must question the implications of structurally equating feminine discourse with woman's jouissance, or sexual-textual excess. And we must note that the underlying presupposition of Marlatt's text ["the endlessly repeating and not exactly repeated cycles her body knows"] is the essentialist supposition that women have an unmediated, "instinctive," understanding of their bodies. Hence, woman's sexual difference (feminine) is an instinctive intuition rather than an ethico-political, socio-cultural ongoing semiotic process (masculine sexuality).[30] What is lost therein is woman's ability to rewrite, to intervene and to problematize traditional phallocentric conceptions of feminine sexuality.[31]

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[29]Gayatri Spivak, "Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography," Subaltern Studies IV: Writings on South Asian History and Society, ed. Ranajit Guha (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1985), 340; reprinted in In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics (New York: Methuen, 1987) 203-04, Jacques Derrida, De la grammatologie 142; Of Grammatology 93.

[30]See Hélène Cixous and Verena Andermatt Conley, "voice i," Boundary 2, 12, No. 2 (Winter, 1984): 51-67. One of the many problematic suppositions that arise in the interview is the suggestion that "third world women" do not write or will "always only write in silence" (59).

[31]See Juliet Mitchell and Jacqueline Rose, eds., Feminine Sexuality: Jacques Lacan and the école freudienne and Jane Gallop, Reading Lacan (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987).

This question takes us to the larger question of the displacement of the French feminist writings which surround the notion of écriture feminine in Canadian literature. My contention is that if Canadian feminism seeks to change the representations of "woman" and of ethico-political worldlings of the world and if feminist literary texts are interested in displacing the border between the public and the private, politics and poetry—which they must attempt to do if they are going to have any relevance—then they must attend to and question two tendencies of French feminism and its place within the Western European context of the critique of man: the tendency to inscribe a specifically feminine discourse as a counterhegemonic discourse to logocentricism and, secondly, the tendency to privilege the avant-garde notion of the female element or écriture feminine and, in doing so, to foreclose the ethicopolitical and the irreducible historical, geographical textuality and institutionality that separate "first" and "third world women" within and between "first" and "third world" arenas.[32]

The implications of structurally equating woman's discourse with jouissance, or with woman's unmediated experience of her body, is, of course, an ongoing debate. For, to identify women's liberation with sexual production, or with the excess of sexual production, is, as numerous critics such as Toril Moi, Gayatri Spivak, Pamela McCallum, Rachel Bowlby, and Stephen Heath[33] have suggested, to revert to an essentialist position and, in doing so, to inscribe

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[32]See Gayatri Spivak, "French Feminism in an International Frame," Yale French Studies 62 (1981): 154-84. Reprinted in In Other Worlds 134-53.

[33]Rachel Bowlby, "The feminine female," Social Text 7 (1983): 54-68. Stephen Heath, "Difference," Screen 19.3 (1978): 511-12. Pamela McCallum, "New Feminist Readings: Woman as Écriture or Woman as Other?" Feminism Now: Theory and Practice, eds. Marilouise and Arthur Kroker, Pamela McCallum, and Mair-Verthuy (Montreal: New World Perspectives, 1985): 127-32. Toril Moi, Sexual/Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory (New York: Methuen, 1985). Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "French Feminism in an International Frame," In Other Worlds 134-153.

a monolithic notion of ideology, hence, to erase the important intervention women have made in opening the question of desire and sexuality as discursive positions in narrative. In addition, to identify women with sexuality is a) to make sexism an end in itself (in other words, equate women with sexuality), b) to identify and legitimize the representation of woman's objective status with maternal reproduction and with a circuit of exchange,[34] c) to generalize and commodify "woman" as a generic trope or a metaphysical, ahistorical, transcendental signifier, hence d) to sublate or erase the ethico-political, economic, historical inscriptions of woman.

If you re-read the last quotation from "musing with mothertongue" in conjunction with the poem entitled "kore" it is most evident that Marlatt's speculations about discourse by way of the metaphor of the birthing body and by way of sexual difference may be situated to some extent within the French feminist problematic. More specifically, these notions may be situated within Julia Kristeva's and Hélène Cixous' utopian visions of feminine discourse as a way of re-establishing spontaneous relations with the physical jouissance and gestation processes of the female body.[35] Marlatt's configuration of écriture feminine has strong ties, also, with the avant-garde traditions of Gertrude Stein, H.D., Mallarmé, Ponge, and Joyce, with the counter-hegemonic practices of the Tish collective, and with the French feminist writings of Quebec writers

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[34]See Hélène Cixous and Verena Andermatt Conley.

[35]See New French Feminisms, eds. Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtivron for a concise translation of a wide variety of French feminist discourses. See also Julia Kristeva, Histoires d'amour (Paris: Denoel, 1983), La Revolution du langage poétique (Paris: Seuil, 1974), and Polylogue (Paris: Seuil, 1977). See also Hélène Cixous, "La Missexualité, ou jouis-je?" Poétique 26 (1976): 240-49, La Venue à l'écriture (en collaboration avec Annie Leclerc et Madeleine Gagnon) (Paris: UGE, 10/18, 1977), and Catherine Clément and Hélène Cixous, La jeune née.

(especially Nicole Brossard and Louky Bersianik).[36] The power of indeterminate suggestion and the evocative magic of phonemes, rather than determinate reference, is used as an attempt to pluralize and overwhelm the signifying conditions. Marlatt, in her turn, links these writing processes to erotic processes of "fusion," of "attractiveness" and of "rhyme" in "musing with mothertongue."

(The political potential of such practices and, therefore, of feminist practices which rely solely on these practices for mobilization is another ongoing debate which we shall not attempt to encounter within this chapter. Suffice it here to say that Aesthe... and Politics: Debates between Bloch, Lukacs, Brecht, Benjamin and Adorno,[37] edited by Ronald Taylor, and Catherine Clément's and Hélène Cixous's La jeune née[38] would be a place to start a discussion of this debate by tracing the transactional interactions that are in a constant process of reconstructing the catachretic limits of poetry and politics in these texts.)

It would be possible to read How Hug a Stone as a metaphorical mime of the erotic movement rather than of the fulfillment of textual desire. Syntactically, the text does not conform to the linear subject-verb agreement of phallocentric language. Parentheses, ellipses, and ambiguous passages proliferate. Punctuation is deleted altogether, or is used to arrest the flow of

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[36]See especially Nicole Brossard, L'Amèr ou le chapitre effrité (Montreal: Editions Quinze, 1977); These Our Mothers Or: The Disintegrating Chapter, trans. Barbara Godard (Toronto: Coach House, 1983). French Kiss Etreinte-exploration (Montreal: Editions du Jour, 1974); French Kiss, A pang's progress, trans. Patricia Claxton (Toronto: Coach House, 1986). Le Sens Apparent (Paris: Editions Flammarion, 1980), and Amantes (Montreal: Les Quinze, 1980). See also Louky Bersianik, L'Euguélionne (Montréal: La Presse, 1976); Euguélionne: A Triptych Novel (Vancouver: Press Porcépic, 1981) and Maternative (Montreal-Nord: VLB, 1980).

[37]Ronald Taylor, ed., Aesthetics and Politics: Debates between Bloch, Lukacs, Brecht, Benjamin and Adorno (London: Verso Edition, 1980).

[38]Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clément, La jeune née (Paris: Union Generale d'Editions, 1975); The Newly Born Woman, trans. Betsy Wing (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986).

words. Lines carry over and back, from, through, to, and into other lines or fold together. Textual allusions to signs, voices, stories, hysteria, and mythological discourse interfold with tape recordings and, in doing so, create a plural, mobile, irreducible narrative network. Thus, the borders between the biological/symbolic, past/present, mother/daughter, mothering (nourishing)/smothering, life/death, light/dark, conscious/unconscious, reason/madness, reason/imagination, and fact/fiction are in a constant process of destabilization and reconstruction.

The structural format of the text is not the coherence of a word, phrase, sentence, paragraph, or page; rather, How Hug a Stone links erotically by themes (ghos-ti: hosf, guest, hostile); by scenes of reading or writing; by rhyme, "my mother's quick restraint. . .they were on leave in '48" (18); by chiastic reversals and homonyms, "Reading outside London: by train to Reading" (13); and by etymologies "stone, stane, ste-ing power" (75).

In addition, each fold of the text contains a matrix or a title poem, a map, a cryptic exergue and several poetic fragments which use the terms set forth in the matrix poem as their points of departure and/or return. Hence, each fold, in its turns, infolds paradigmatically (creating a vertical din of body under body) and syntagmatically (body within body). Each poetic fragment, being both familiar (hostly) and foreign (guest), problematizes and displays the propriety of titles and proper names in the "mothertongue."

It is not to undermine the importance of destabilizing hegemonic phallocentric discourse nor to dismiss the force and the importance of feminist utopian inscriptions as practices for political mobilization and for the re-inscription of representations of women, that I question these practices; rather, what I contend is that if we do not attend to the larger historical, economic, ethico-political determinations of sexisms and to the irreducible ethico-political, economic

differentials that separate male and female subjects as well as first and third world subjects, learning to destabilize and to tropologically deconstruct the discourse of man may a) reduplicate and reinforce sexism, and b) blind us to limits of these representations of women and to textual worldlings of the world.

The practice of inscribing woman's writing by way of excess and the representation of "woman" as the female element as Spivak and Moi have suggested is a "class" and "race"[39] privileged program that can ignore the problem of identifying and reinforcing the dominant ideology as it erases and sublates the "inequities, deprivations, and violations that women as social beings rather than mythological archetypes" encounter.[40] This practice fails to differentiate between the different ethicopolitical, socio-cultural, historical subject positions that women as subjects, as subjected objects and as readers can and do occupy. The limits of these practices as they are inscribed within Touch to My Tongue and How Hug a Stone are marked by the place that the third world woman occupies.

What is the Place of the "Third World Woman"?

It is important to note that no matter how earnestly or benevolently we try to dismantle authoritative discourse and to destabilize the knowing, sovereign subject, the clearing of a subject position in order to speak, to write, or to act, is unavoidable. The "other" then must always be constituted by way of consolidating the self.[41] Thought is, as Derrida suggests, determined by the trace or track of that other which is never present.

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[39]I use these constructs in parentheses to emphasize their overdetermined ethico-political production.

[40]Toril Moi, Sexual/Textual Politics, 123.

[41]See Gayatri Spivak, "Imperialism and Sexual Difference," Oxford Literary Review: 229.

As feminist literary critics, teachers and students engaged in the ideological production of knowledge, it is our responsibility to vigilantly attend to and to situate, as best we can, these irreducible moments (the scene of writing) with a reading strategy that will trace and occupy the ethico-political space presupposed by the text.[42] In the poem entitled "kore" and in the following fragment from How Hug a Stone this moment marks both the limits and the conditions of the possibility of Marlatt's "feminist poetics":

no one wears yellow like you excessive and radiant storehouse of sun, skin smooth as fruit but thin, leaking light. (i am climbing toward you out of the hidden.) no one shines like you, so that even your lashes flicker light, amber over blue (amba, amorous Demeter, you with the fire in your hand, i am coming to you). no one my tongue burrows in, whose wild flesh opens wet, tongue seeks its nest, amative and nurturing (here i am you) lips work towards undoing (dhei, female, sucking and suckling, fecund) spurt/spirit opening in the dark of earth, yu! cry jubilant excess, your fruiting body bloom we issue into the light of, sweet, successive flesh. . . (23).

three small girls ah very pretty   to the zoo she said knowing it at Parel Road   Victoria & Albert   untouchable   scream in the air tearing like . fine silk   how does she know Hindi know this isn't the way stiffening you will die insane in a foreign country. . . (78).

What is the function of the Indo-European word "dhei" in "kore"? The only possible function of the word "dhei," here, would be to mark the space/moment when the specificity of discourse is dissolved into sexual excess. Similarly, the reference to "Hindi" in the passage above, quoted from How Hug a Stone, marks the place in the text where both the narrator and the narrator's mother, become lost and the place where the notion of insanity is structurally equated with the foreign country India.

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[42]Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak implements a practice of reading as intervention in Master Discourse, Native Informant (forthcoming) to which I am indebted. See "Imperialism and Sexual Difference" 225-40 for an account of this strategy.

Who is the one who sucks/suckles? Let us approach this question by way

of several excerpts from "In the Month of the Hungry Ghosts,"[43] a most

disconcerting text. It is my contention that the limits of this text may be situated

within the "Manichean allegory" that ideologically manages and marks the tendency

of "first" world feminism to be complicit with the exploitation of imperialism.

This grand narrative of imperialism or "the power-interest relations in colonial

societies," as Abdul R. Jan Mohamed writes in "The Economy Of Manichean

Allegory: The Function of Racial Difference in Colonialist Literature,"[44]

constitutes a field of oppositions between white/black, good/evil,

superiority/inferiority, civilization/savagery, intelligence/emotion, rationality/

sensuality, self/other, and subject/object. The force of this ideologically

productive allegory is so powerful that even anti-imperialist writers' texts can

unwittingly inscribe these hierarchical oppositions. This is the force of maximal

ideological production (at the second level of abstraction) as the wordling of

the world.[45] This moment of inscription is not biographical but is the historical

ethico-political clearing of a subject position. It is this 'fracture and moment

of complicity within the ideological production of imperialism that Marlatt's

text displays: the anti-imperialist reading of the neo-colonial situation in Penang

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[43]Daphne Marlatt, "In the Month of the Hungry Ghosts," Capilano Review 16/17 (1979): 45-95.

[44]Abdul R. Jan Mohamed, "The Economy of Manichean Allegory: The Function of Racial Difference in Colonialist Literature," Critical Inquiry 12.1 (1985): 59-87. He is also author of Manichean Aesthetics: The Politics of Literature in Colonial Africa (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1983).

[45]Hence, this "scene of writing" has something like a relation with Foucault's notion of author and subject positions as over-determined heterogeneous constructs. See Michel Foucault, "What is an Author?" Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews, ed. Donald F. Bouchard, trans. Bouchard and Sherry Simon (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977) and The Archaeology of Knowledge and The Discourse of Language, trans. Sheridan (New York: Tavistock Publications, 1972).

and the recognition of the limits of bourgeois liberal feminism[46] versus the Manichean representation of the people of Malaysia.

The first journal entry I draw your attention to describes Marlatt's return to her childhood Malaysian home in Penang:

> Eng Kim: recognized her as soon as I saw her, but curiously didn't want to show my recognition immediately. She's hardly changed at all — so amazingly similar in appearance after 25 years. Still that almost shy, perfectly naive sweetness — how can she have stayed these years so apparently untouched? She's "worked for the bank" (i.e., looked after the bank manager & family) most of the time. The perfect servant, neat & unassuming, quiet as a shadow — yet I catch a glint of humour in her smile. Will it be possible to know her better? It's so strange to be, now 25 years later, someone she serves.
>
> O the disparities — how can I relate the two parts of myself? This life would have killed me — purdah, a woman in — the restrictions on movement, the confined reality. I can't stand it. I feel imprisoned in my class — my? This is what I came out of. & how else can I be here? (50)

Although the passages end with important questions—the place "first" and "third" world women can and do represent, in the double sessional sense of that word, in Malaysia—the question with which she is occupied in this passage (as is evident in numerous other passages) is the question of her own identity. The problem of representation is turned inward, here. The dream of reaching out to the other and the recognition that "EACH MOVE MADE HERE (me) MOVES THERE (you)" is displaced and amounts to rendering Asia transparent and to the appropriation and assimilation of the other in order to destabilize self-sovereignity. Caught

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[46]It is this statement that Barbara Godard leaves out in her quotation from the passage from "In the Month of the Hungry Ghosts." The passage reads "Why plans so chain me—wanting too much from the day, wanting too much from others who can never be more than they are. In want: in fear. The 'liberated' woman in me insisting on her freedom & in terror of its being taken away. Passive resistance a better stance. Say 'yes' to restraints & simply do what you need to: act in silence" (70). See Godard, "Body I: Daphne Marlatt's Feminist Poetics" 492.

within the West's desire to destabilize the position of the knowing subject—the crisis of representation—Marlatt cannot question what place the other woman occupies in the ethico-political, economic, geographic, historic context of her ideological production. Hence, Marlatt must idealize the other as a timeless metaphysical subject. In doing so, the question of how to speak to or learn from the women of Penang is displaced.

Like many of the French writers who from time to time have reached out for all that is non-West—Kristeva[47] and the Tel Quel (their celebration and eventual disavowal of Maoism)[48]—her question is self-centred. This question of "who am I?" marks the limits of "first world" feminist practices of woman's jouissance in the "third world" arena.

The second passage is a justification for the occupation and exploitation of imperialism sanctioned by the grand narrative of the superiority of white-civil-society in the disguise of social mission[49] and a displacement of the violence of imperialism into contemporary problems of nationalism:

> They [owners of the Sungei Ara estate] don't seem to close off from any of it, a kind of empathy that would probably make them vulnerable if they weren't British to begin with & committed to a paternalistic system (she still administers cod liver oil daily to all the day care kids. . .). They really do represent the moral best of the old system

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[47] Julia Kristeva, About Chinese Women, trans. Anita Barrows (London: Boyars, 1977).

[48] See Tel Quel issues, 1968-79.

[49] I use "disguise" here in a manner comparable to Marx's description of borrowed "names, slogans, and costumes" in The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte collected in Surveys from Exile, ed. David Fernbach (New York: Random House, 1973), Vol. II, 143-249. See also Gayatri Spivak, "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism," Critical Inquiry 12.1 (1985): 243-61.

— what Mrs. Khoo complained of missing when she said the Chinese long for "the good old days of the colonial system where there was real democracy & the fittest man won, regardless of race." Which no doubt reflects more on the difficulties of Malay nationalism than the virtues of the caste system of British colonialism (61).

The third passage amounts to, or returns to, a fetishization and commodification of the other by substituting "natural amniotic" essences, through the erasure of ethico-political, economic, historical textuality, for the Malaysian people. By commodifying "third world" people into generic beings of exchange, Marlatt's inscription of the "amniotic" body, or essence, of the Malaysian people sanctions discursive and materialist practices of imperialism. The ideological function and "affective benefits proffered by the manichean allegory" operating this gesture are, as Abdul R. Jan Mohamed suggests, "the rapid exchange of denigrating [here, we might add, naturalizing] images which can be used to maintain a sense of moral difference [and] to transform social and historical dissimilarities into universal, metaphysical differences."[50] It is in this way, I contend, that the "naturalness" of Marlatt's textual inscription of the place and bodies of the "other" in this passage displaces the specificity of socio-cultural difference into metaphysical essences and natural characteristics:[51]

. . .everywhere the flare of colour, glint of metallic thread running thru a sari, shining flesh, oil gleaming off black hair — we feel pale by comparison, and immaterial (living always in our heads?) It's the same feeling I had coming home from Mexico, that people walk the

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[50]Abdul R. Jan Mohamed, "The Economy of Manichean Allegory: the Function of Racial Difference in Colonialist Literature," Critical Inquiry 12.1 (1985): 68.

[51]See also, "Given this body" (75) where Marlatt describes the Japanese people's relation to the environment as erotic. The association of eroticism with Japanese people is also a problem in Anne Ireland, A Certain Mr. Takahashi (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart Ltd., 1985) and in Sarah Sheard, Almost Japanese (Toronto: The Coach House Press, 1985).

> streets of Vancouver mostly as if they are invisible. Here people
> sleep on the sidewalks, piss in the gutters, women nurse their babies
> by the roadside, everyone selling food & eating it, or fingering goods,
> or eyeing each other (likewise tactile) — but not separate. The press
> in the streets is almost amniotic, it contains & carries everyone (63).

This idealization-naturalization through erasure of the ethico-political, economic

and historical conditions which structure the lives of the peoples of Malaysia

and which separate the latter from first world colonial subjects who are free

to come and go marks the moment of complicity within and between imperialism

and Marlatt's "feminist poetics."

Indeed, if this passage is read in conjunction with the narrations of "Amah"

--the word derives from southern India and means nurse, or wet nurse--the one

who suckles--, a mother by hire, we encounter another imperialistic configuration.

Although the journals meticulously document and criticize the gestures and

manners of the English in Penang, when Amah is introduced we are told absolutely

nothing about her ancestry, we do not even learn what her name is. Indeed, Amah

seems to be identified only by her function in the colonial household as a children's

nurse and as allegorical manichean trope of the sexually indulgent, "slave

earthmother." Hence, I cannot agree with Barbara Godard's suggestion that

"Amah's heritage has been explored."[52]

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[52]Barbara Godard, "Body I: Daphne Marlatt's Feminist Poetics," American
Review of Canadian Studies 15.4 (1985): 493. Although her recent work seems
to have taken this problem into account to some extent, Godard's attempt
to account for the absence of "native" women's voices, in "Voicing Difference:
Literary Production of Native Women," A Mazing Space: Writing Canadian Women
Writing, eds. Shirley Neuman and Smaro Kamboureli (Edmonton: Longspoon, Newest
Presses, 1986) 87-107 has many problems: the privileging of voice over writing,
the failure to de-stabilize self-sovereignty, and a confusion of "being" with
determination, etc.

It is this violent manichean allegory that Marlatt inscribes in the opposition between her two mothers--the black-childish-sexually-indulgent wet nurse and her white-rational, politically and sexually controlled English mother:

> . . .Amah, had seven children "& they all died, my dears," who cared for us too, sloppy & merry & what did it matter? except what the Mem says. [The parataxis and the blurring of the lines of demarcation between direct and indirect discourse in this sentence problematize who is speaking here and to whom it <u>does</u> matter.] What the Mem says goes (sometimes). what the Mem says exists as a separate entity in the house, to be listened to & walked around, with suitable contrition if asked. . .but separate, separate from the way life moves, on. what the Mem says was meant to last (80).

> . . .past the feel of little fish nibbling at my legs when I got in the goldfish pool with Amah hitching her sarong up around her thighs, giggling kissy kissy, fishy lips-nibbling at my skin under the sundress. "we're not supposed to do this." "tida apa, tida apa"[53]. . .lying on the bench by the summerhouse alone, feeling lips all warm, a bellyful of power. . . (82).

We begin to piece together an extremely problematic narrative if we consider the colonizing representation of the "third world woman" in this worldling of the world and if we place Marx's materialist predication of the subject as superadequate to itself--hence, the exploitation and the idealization of labour power (labour power is not work but rather the metonymic contraction of the possibility that the subject be more than adequate, superadequate to itself)[54]-- with the idealization of woman's jouissance as sexual/textual excess.[55]

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[53]"Tida apa" seems to mean something like "to rub a pain in your belly." As I am still tracking down how to translate this phrase, I leave the passage open to question.

[54]Karl Marx, Capital, I, trans. Ben Fowkes (New York: Vintage, 1976) 342.

[55]See also Louky Bersianik's Le Pique-nique sur l'Acropole: Cahiers d'Ancyl (Montreal: VLB, 1979), especially 14-47, "Le dit d'Adizétu aux yeux luisants," which seems to suggest that if women discussed and expressed their sexuality the problem of clitoridectomy would be resolved. Bersianik totally erases the

And when we consider that the crisis of advanced Capitalism, since the computerization of the stock market in 1974, is being managed in the export processing zones of comprador countries by third world women who are denied the social benefits of Capitalism in Asia,[56] today, we can not dismiss these problems and our responsibility for imperialism through disavowals such as the one inscribed by this text: "they stood there torn by difference, knowing themselves as strangers having no right" (92). It is this disavowal that must be situated and brought to crisis. Rather than attempting to escape from our complicity with imperialism and our participation in managing the crisis of advanced Capitalism by escaping into a phantasized world of the other, or by patronizing, romanticizing or naturalizing these women, the feminist must learn "to speak to them," "to learn from them" as Spivak[57] suggests, to grant them the historical, geographical, linguistic specificity of their own production, and to acknowledge that their access to the ethico-political sexual scene is not to be dismissed or structurally equated with first world theories of woman's jouissance.

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55 (cont'd.)heterogeneous politico-economic and historical specificities, that constitute this practice. Hélène Cixous' "Le Sexe ou la tête," also needs to be questioned at the point where she links jouissance and écriture feminine to a "savage tongue." This inscription of savage tongues verses cultural discourse affirms the ethnocentric, ideological presupposition of Kant's Critique of Teleological Judgment, trans. James Creed (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1928).

56See the Multinational Monitor, August, 1983. I am grateful to Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak for drawing attention to the international division of labour problems in the lectures she delivered at the University of Alberta, 1986. See the section in chapter two on value and Gayatri Spivak, "Scattered Speculations on the Question of Value," Diacritics (1985): 84, 87-89. Reprinted in In Other Worlds 167, 170-72.

57Gayatri Spivak, "French Feminism in an International Frame," Yale French Studies 62 (1981): 183-84. Reprinted in In Other Worlds 135.

These are extensive problems that Canadian feminists must confront if we are to have any force in countering and changing representations of "first" and "third" world women and in countering sexism and racism in "first" and "third" world countries. My contention is that a double gestured program that works towards changing the representation of women and countering sexism within first and third world arenas is needed. However, at the same time, we must attempt to situate the irreducible moment of universalizing and authority that is inscribed by the clearing of the subject position in order to write, to speak, and to act.[58] Perhaps, the place to begin is here:

> ...Were you fined? Did you cross the border inad-
> vertently? Did chart & compass, all direction, fail? Interned,
> your people confined to a small space where rebirth, will,
> push you out thru the rings of material prosperity at war's
> end fixed, finally, as citizens of an exploited earth:
> you drive your own car, construct your own house, create your
> registered place at Packers' camp, walk the fine (concrete)
> line of private property.
>
> ... Violence in mute form. Walking a fine line.
>
> Only, always to dream of erotic ghosts of the flowering earth:
> to return to a decomposed ground choked by refuse. profit. & the
> concrete of private property; to find yourself disinherited from
> your claim to the earth (Steveston 84). •

"EACH MOVE HERE (me) MOVES THERE (you)": I hold on to this passage.

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[58]It is this irreducible moment of universalizing and of authority that Lorna Irvine does not take into account in Sub/version (Toronto: ECW, 1986); only thus can she assert that "North America needs to listen to its women writers, to take the risk, to embrace life, to become whole" (169) and that that ethos of "historical continuity, geographical conservation, communal survival and physical as well as creative ethos" is feminine (168).

A NOTE IN CONCLUSION

L'avenir ne peut s'anticiper que dans la forme du danger absolu. Il est ce qui rompt absolument avec la normalité constituée et ne peut donc s'annoncer, se présenter, que sous l'espèce de la monstruosité. Pour ce monde à venir et pour ce qui en lui aura fait trembler les valeurs de signe, de parole et d'écriture, pour ce qui conduit ici notre futur antérieur, il n'est pas encore d'exergue.

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.[1]

From within the context of the west's hegemonic position in global capitalism and nation-state alliances, Canadian intellectuals cannot avoid questioning what place the production of knowledge occupies within these relations of power and struggle. The production of knowledge is not an apolitical practice; it is a political, discursive practice that is purposeful and ideological. To do any less than to situate literary studies within the general text would be to abnegate our institutional responsibility, to ignore the position of complicity we occupy within this network, and to ignore the complex inter-relations between first and third world countries.[2]

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[1]Jacques Derrida, De la grammatologie (Paris: Minuit, 1967) 7; Of Grammatology, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974) 5.

[2]The number of books which examine Canada's role in the global politico-economic network grows yearly. See, for example, Victor Levant, Quiet Complicity: Canadian Involvement in the Vietnam War (Toronto: Between the Lines, 1986), and E. Bonacich, "Advanced Capitalism and Black-white Relations:

This thesis has opened two rhetorical questions: what place does the ideological production of knowledge occupy within the politico-economic, social text? And "what interventional force could and does deconstruction have in the political rewriting of this general text and its destinations?" I must now admit that these questions cannot be answered. Indeed, the purpose of this dissertation was to open, rather than to close, the questions posed in this select number of texts. By way of conclusion, I shall, however, reframe the itinerary of this project. I shall also suggest how the questions raised by Derrida's and by Spivak's texts and by our reading of Barthes' and Marlatt's texts can be addressed when we dream and en-act politico-epistemological programs or, in other words, how these ideas can be introduced in first-year literature classes.

In the first chapter, I commented on Derrida's notions of trace, of iteration and of différance, of the "politicity" of the law, on the irreducible aporia between constative and performative speech acts, or between rhetoric as persuasion and rhetoric as trope, and on the political interventional force of deconstruction. In chapter two, the double session of representation and the question of value (materialist/idealist) were introduced. In chapters three and four, I attempted to implement a strategy of reading that while it attended to the conditions of intelligibility in the text (textual specificities), noted class, race, and gender differences. While the first two chapters commented on the interventional force of deconstruction, the last two chapters situated, in a class, gender and race

2(cont'd.)A split labour market interpretation," _American Sociological Review_ 41: 34-51, _The Canadian State: Political Economy and Political Power_, ed. Leo Panitch (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), _Canada Among Nations_, eds. Brian W. Tomlin and Maureen Appel Molot (Toronto: James Lorimer and Co., 1987, and Ann Gomer Sunahara, _The Politics of Racism: The Uprooting of Japanese Canadians During the Second World War_ (Toronto: James Lorimer and Company, 1981).

specific way, the place Barthes' and Marlatt's texts—to be more specific, the

place the "mother" and the "third world" woman—occupy in the ideological

production and reproduction of knowledge. In both Barthes' and Marlatt's texts,

the position the "other" occupies can be read as a representative space of the

general politico-economic social, historical networks within which these texts

are written and within which these texts must be situated. At the same time,

we must acknowledge our own position of complicity within these heterogeneous

networks. Indeed, the most responsible gesture for "first world" academics,

at this particular historical moment of crisis, is to criticize to the best of our

abilities "first world" politico-economic, social and epistemological programs

or institutions, programs which dictate, to a large extent, what happens to and

within the "rest of the world." The recent CBC television series, "The Politics

of Food" brought this issue to the foreground.

In order to do so it is necessary to take into account: 1) the complicity

between cultural and economic value systems,[3] 2) that the periodization of

knowledge has an intricate relation to the politico-economy, 3) the fact that

the scripts of the "first" and the "third" worlds are written together, and 4) the

necessity to declare our interest and to force the universalizing moments when

we appropriate the other and when we dream and en-act political programs to

crisis.

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[3]See, "Ontario universities still under-financed, plagued by troubles," The Globe and Mail 8 September 1987: A7, and "Economy is booming, but there's controversy on how to keep it going," The Globe and Mail 4 September 1987: B9. See also, "Hunger and politics: an unsettling view," The Globe and Mail 19 August 1987: A9, "Third World Debt: crisis-by-crisis policy," The Globe and Mail 28 August 1987: A7, and "The World Bank replies," The Globe and Mail 17 September 1987: D7. I also recommend reading "Asia Pacific Report," The Globe and Mail 17 September 1987: C1-C10.

Within the classroom, literary texts can be supplemented with historical, political, or economic texts. For example, The Politics of Racism: The Uprooting of Japanese Canadians During the Second World War[4] can be read together with Obasan.[5] Novels such as A Jest of God[6] can be analyzed in terms of social, institutional, sexual and familial discourses. This text by Laurence explicitly confronts the politics of family relations, of sexual relations, of ethnic differences and of the education system. Another approach would be to analyze the representation of "third world" peoples in Canadian literature and to supplement these readings with texts written by "third world" writers. When "third world" texts are taught, teachers must attend to the historical, politico-economic systems of subject constitution and of the world system of the political economy within which these texts were written. Translation must be approached from an informed perspective concerning the problems that arise in translating from one system of signs to another.[7]

The greatest gift of deconstruction that we can share with our students is to teach them to read (and therefore to act) in a critical fashion—to recognize that all starting points are provisional, to trace the economy, the strategy, and the movement of the questions in a text, to analyze the structure of the argument in relation to the system of logic, and to discover in a situation-specific way where and how the subject clears a position to speak—to criticize his/her own position as an investigating person (subject) and, in doing so, to acknowledge the limits of our strategies.

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[4]Ann Gomer Sunahara (James Lorimer and Company, 1981).

[5]Joy Kogawa, Obasan (Markham: Penguin Books, 1985).

[6]Margaret Laurence, A Jest of God (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1966).

[7]See, Gayatri Spivak, "Imperialism and Sexual Difference," Oxford Literary Review 8.1-2 (1986): 225-240. The projects I have outlined are, of course, indebted to the work of Gayatri Spivak.

Once again, I repeat, this project is a long-term project. There is no easy solution, there is no "proper conclusion" which would summarize the problems and limits broached in this dissertation. The most I can hope to do is open the questions and the problems posed in this small selection of texts to question: "What is most thought-provoking in our thought-provoking time is that we are still not thinking."[8].

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[8]Martin Heidegger, What is Called Thinking?, trans. Glenn Gray (New York: Harper & Row, 1968) 6.

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