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**“World”-travelling: Identity, culture, knowledge in post-colonial times**

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**City University of New York, 1993**

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**"WORLD"-TRAVELLING:  
IDENTITY, CULTURE, KNOWLEDGE IN POST-COLONIAL TIMES.**

by

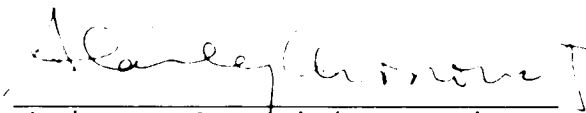
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## INTRODUCTION

"Those of us who are "world"-travellers have the distinct experience of being different in different "worlds" and ourselves in them. We can say "That's me there, and I am happy in that 'world'." The experience is one of having memory of oneself as different without any underlying "I"...

The shift from being one person to being a different person is what I call "travel." This shift may not be willful or even conscious, and one may be completely unaware of being different than one is in a different "world"...

We inhabit "worlds" and travel across them and keep all the memories." (Maria Lugones, 1990)

"You do not see me because you do not see yourself and you do not see yourself because you declare yourself outside of culture." (Maria Lugones, 1990)

**"World"-Travelling 1**

We are now in America.

California: calamitous

Father decided to uproot the family to California. He had assured mother of the ideal opportunities it offered for success. The plan entailed selling all the furniture and abandoning many of our possessions. Dad carried the money, Mother loaded up the Chevy Impala, including the kids to the backseat. We drove for two weeks cross-country during which the periods of silence were filled with lament. In the middle of the desert Dad would sniff out a bar. Parked alongside a

road, the three of us remained being rocked asleep by the trembles made of trucks passing in waves.

Installed into a predominantly Black neighbourhood in Los Angeles, we were the only light skins on the block. I remember one incident At the court yard of our U-shaped housing complex, some other tenants sat with my parents to watch their kids play. I kept insisting to one boy to give me a ride. It was only when his mother ordered him to do so that he did. After two spins round, he had hastily shifted the bike and spilled me to the ground. Only looking back, he sped away without an apology.

Costa Rica: indigenous

By my fifth birthday, Mom had left Dad sitting on a bar stool. Like fugitives, the three of us arrived "home" in Costa Rica. Disoriented, we were able to find a home at Aunt Julia's abode, just outside the capital, San Jose. Although her domain had few amenities it would become a fabulous homestead. Any inconvenience was made up for by the abundance of love and warmth...

For a time I enjoyed helping my grandfather with his carpentry. He said I did well; even better than the men. On other days, with neighbourhood kids, we would all join up to construct a dam at a small stream then let it go...we would gather the fallen leaves atop the hill in order to slide down on them. Later, we would meet at the hill to wait for the typical early evening rainfall. From afar one could see the

wondrous cloud making its way slowing across the heavens. It would bring with it its shimmering rain to give us a chase into our homes...

The day arrived when Mother would sit down my brother and me to tell us of our forthcoming migration back to Dad in North America. As it was we hadn't retained much of the language and Mom can still only manage a few simple phrases...Classically, and until the last day, someone would bother Clarence and me to "talk English" or call my brother and me "gringos". Mother assured us that the latter was out of jealousy.

Florida: estranged

Passing through the International Terminal, Mother pointed to a distant man. He was tall, dark, sported a beard and was our Dad. We could hardly recognize him. He took us to our new home at the center of the state. Everything we saw was clean and pretty. We enjoyed a lovely backyard, paved streets, and tables full of oranges. How wonderful!

...Clarence came home after school one day to argue with Mother about where her birthplace was geographically located. Apparently his second grade teacher was under the impression that Costa Rica was an island. She had convinced my brother of this untruth. Instantly, Mom pulled out a half pushed in, once rotating, plastic globe to prove the teacher wrong. When I'm asked about origin now, I automatically add "It's bordered by two countries!" My first grade teacher, a fly swatter of a woman, confirmed how "we are now in America" (North, she

meant). She said, "Here your name is pronounced 'Mar'le-ne'" and not as I knew it...

M.A. New York. October, 1990.

## **"World"-Travelling 2**

### **On "true" blackness.**

Because I am light-skinned, with more hair than the average Black woman, I have had to hear statements such as "you have that pretty horse-shit complexion" or "you can't be Black with all that hair." I have been told countless times by Black friends, I have a "white" nose (because it is pointy), I have a "white" butt (because it isn't a Bahama-mama booty), I have "white" lips (because they aren't full) and worst of all I have a "piss-colored yellow complexion." If you prefer, you can call me "red-boned." I have had arguments with my darker complexioned brothers and sisters about how "high-yellow" Black people get better treatment than darker Black people. I have also been told all too often about how light-skinned Black women tend to be stuck up...

While attending elementary school, I had Black friends, white friends, brown friends, and yellow friends. I never labelled them by their colors. I only saw them as people and accepted their different shades. When I attended junior high, I had more white friends than anything else. They accepted me more than my own people. The Black children felt I thought I was

"cute" because I was lighter than they were. Due to the fact that they rejected me, I dissociated myself with the majority of them. Throughout my attendance at public high school, it seemed to get worse and I began keeping more to myself in school. All the light-skinned Black people hung around each other, the same went for the darker-skinned Black people, the same for the White people and so on. People said I talked "white" or sounded "white" on the phone. I didn't wear the clothing or type of jewellery that was then in vogue for Black people to wear and therefore I got branded an "oreo", Black on the outside (not really) and "white" on the inside. Most of my white peers were metal heads, which I was not, they were into a different scene than I was, so I was banned from that clique. The light-skinned Black girls all felt they had to have an extension in their hair (which I did not need) or earring in their nose (which I did not desire) or bamboo earrings drooping from their earlobes (which did nothing for me). Another clique from which I was banned. Needless to say, "yellow" people did not flock around with "jig-a-boos" so I was basically a nomad in public high school...

My senior year in high school I spent in a private school. The majority of the people there were white with too much money. I was accepted with genuine smiles when they assumed at least one of my parents were white. Those smiles did not remain genuine when I voiced my discontent at constantly being mistaken for a mulatto. No, I did not care to tell them that

yes my grandfather was white, but it was none of their business. In my last year of high school I realized people tend to judge your appearance (hair length, hair texture, hair color, complexion) and decide whether or not they want to accept you before they give your inner-self a chance. I've found Black people and White do it but Black people tend to do it ten times more subtle than Whites.

T.D. New York City. 1989.

### "World"-Travelling 3

"Thanksgiving Dinner. In the land of the family."

On Thanksgiving my mother's side of the family gets together for a feast of food, gifts and prayer in celebration of this holiday. It was a pretty big get together, the kind that you need to withdraw from for about a month after.

On these wonderfully planned occasions, everyone including myself, comes in with a list of questions with which to interrogate and judge the lives of these so-called loved ones. I usually need to know whether or not my family members are alive and healthy, whether or not there are new additions and whether or not the kids are doing well in school and adjusting through their stages (something I was never asked). My family's questions differ from mine. They usually start off with my religious faiths. My response is "Sorry, I don't have one." End of story. Unless someone wanted to challenge me. I

think for a moment, nah! you can't have a discussion on religion if everyone is religious except you!

The first person with whom I speak is my Uncle Tony. He is like the father I do not have and I am like the daughter he wishes his daughters were more like. He always asks about my health, education and even my romantic life. I find it easy to speak with him because he understands my values, ideas and life as though it were his own. He knows where they come from and why I have taken certain routes that I have. Uncle Tony has been exposed to other worlds than the one in which he sits. He is obviously not a religious man. "Religion is an extreme and an excuse," he always says. So far so good in the land of the family.

My next encounter is with the male cousins. On this occasion there are four very funny characters sitting in the living room area, laughing and drowning out the noise of pots and pans. I decide to join in and reminisce on our growing pains. These are the boys with whom I spent most of my childhood for I was not allowed to have males as friends. As I walk in, the laughter subsides. They all turn to watch me as though I were a stanger very different from them. I greet them all the only way I remember how. "Hey Nat, how's school? Hey Jelson, how's the police work? Hey, Johnny, adjusting well in college?...Boy you've grown!...Oh, Hutch, you look very well, how's your girlfriend?...I hope you are all in school and doing well...I'm hungry, how about you?...Boy, do I miss these get

togethers and these home-cooked meals!" They individually respond in the same old fashion: "Hey, you look skinny...no man is going to be attracted to a skinny girl with no body...heh...heh...heh...You finally found time to come visit your family. Did you forget who they were? You do look like you need real food. Hey, what do you eat anyway? Don't tell me you are one of those people who don't eat meat? Why, that is ridiculous! So we hear you are still going out with that Jewish guy. Forget about your family? Would you rather be Jewish? Remember Jews don't like Gentiles! Why are you with him? Is he going to provide you with a future? Well if that's the case then it's O.K. with us. Go ahead, get married, we wouldn't mind having little A's running around thinking they are better than us...Hah...Hah. Just kidding! Welcome home!!" To this warm welcome I responded with vehemence. I challenged them to support their verbal accusations and judgements. The response was a simple one that I undoubtedly expected from the three closed-minded clowns that sat across from me. They really just couldn't understand why I had chosen to separate myself from my family by moving out and into another state. They hadn't the slightest idea of why I had entered college. They couldn't fathom why I was going out with a Jew. They couldn't understand why I am able to communicate with people other than who I grew up with. They accused me of having a strange vocabulary in order to separate myself from them because I thought I was superior. They accused me of entering

other races and cultures because I was not proud of my own. They accused me of not being a real Latina. A real Latina in their eyes would look a certain way, act a certain way, her priorities would not be mine. They accused me of hiding my Latin culture and only learning about my father's Italian-American culture. The stories they heard from their elders on how my father was a racist made them pass judgement on me because I resemble my father. The lifestyle I have chosen is strange to them because it is out of the Latin norm. The idea of a young unmarried woman living away from her family, working a full-time job and attending classes full-time disturbs them because it is not part of their prescription and it plays with their masculinity. The idea that I love a Jewish man confuses them and offends their masculinity. The idea that I can accept his religious views but not theirs offends them. I explain to them that I don't want to be categorized because these categories bind me culturally. I don't identify with Italian-Americans because I really know nothing about being Italian-American. They saw I was not going to accept what they thought was true...

The conversation was interrupted by my mother who came in to announce the meal (she actually travelled into two rooms, one for the kids, one for the men; she was in the kitchen with the rest of the women). My mother serves me and gives me a look that tells me to be quiet and keep my opinions to myself. I have always taken this to mean that I am outnumbered by my

family and that it would serve no purpose for me to speak. I smile and eat and smile and eat, complying with my mother's wishes. I glance over the table to find my older religious sister lending me support with facial gestures. I glance over the other side and find my little sister laughing. Because the food is so very wonderful, I bear the environment which I am in.

A.N., New York City. 1991.

#### "World"-Travelling 4

Coming out.

No one believes me but I have known I was gay since I was five years old. In kindergarten I would play house, and want to be the mother. When friends and I played, I would rather play the games the girls played. Like double dutch and hop-scotch. I liked to play cops and robbers too, but I liked the girls' stuff the most. I even used to play with girls' dolls. Not as if they were the mother to some other doll, but I used to enjoy styling the doll's hair. Dressing them up and things like that. By the time I was in the second grade, I began to have problems with the other kids. They would call me a "sissy" and say things like "he's a girl". The names made me feel bad about myself. I was never able to talk to my parents about what I was going through. I was learning it was wrong to be the person I was. So I tried to cover up my ways. As I got

older the name calling continued. By the time I got in Junior High School, the names were more vicious and cruel. They called me stuff like faggot, homo, pato and other choice names. The most frustrating thing about the name calling was I couldn't figure out why it was happening to me. I didn't think I was doing anything to provoke it. It seemed that it was just my presence that caused it. I would walk into a room and the whispers would start. There would always be someone who found it necessary to call out faggot when I walked down the street. Most of the time it would be a guy or a group of guys who were insulting me, but girls would do it too. Yet I didn't dress outrageously or switch when I walked. I didn't talk like a girl or act overly feminine. Needless to say I had several physical confrontations as a result of being taunted. Fortunately, I never got my ass kicked. I always managed to rank as even competition or the winner of the fight. This was small consolation given the distress I felt at the anger and hatred being expressed to me. A total stranger walking up to me and insulting me! It's a slap in the face. It's an attack on my manhood. I would insult my opponent after the fight. "You just got your ass kicked by a faggot so what kind of MAN are you?" As I grew older I knew I could walk away from fights and still be proud. What some jerk I didn't even know thought of me was irrelevant.

By the time I was fourteen I was sleeping with boys, and it was quite clear to me I was gay. I wasn't openly gay though.

*I was seeing someone none of my friends knew, someone who was not attending my school. There was no way anyone could know what I was doing. I also had a girlfriend who I love very much. We are still good friends today, even though we stopped sleeping together six years ago. I had a boyfriend at the same time...*

*I never felt I was ashamed of what I was doing or hid it because it was bad. The problem I had with my homosexuality was the way other people dealt with it. I was living a double life. Now, I think what difference does it make if I love a man or a woman? The important thing is to love somebody. That's the bottom line for me.*

*E.W. New York City. 1987.*

This project takes the "crisis" of knowledge in the contemporary historical conjuncture in Western cultures, and specifically, in this instance, in the discourses of science and sociology, as its central problematic. Hall (1980b) has pointed to the possibility of the break up of certain structures of thought under the force of historical events which those frameworks could not explain. Rejecting both the notion of an endless, unwinding of "tradition" and the notion of an "epistemological rupture", Hall claims that "[w]hat is important are the significant breaks - where old lines of thought are disrupted, older constellations displaced, and elements, old and new, are regrouped around a different set of

problems and themes. Changes in a problematic do significantly transform the nature of the questions asked, the forms in which they are proposed, and the manner in which they can be adequately answered. Such shifts in perspective reflect, not only the results of an internal intellectual labour, but the manner in which real historical developments and transformations are appropriated in thought, and provide Thought...with its conditions of existence. It is because of this complex articulation between thinking and historical reality, reflected in the social categories of thought, and the continuous dialectic between 'knowledge' and 'power', that the breaks are worth recording" (p.57). Hall is, of course, referring to Cultural Studies and its emergence in Britain as a distinctive problematic in the 1950's. But the formulation of the project of Cultural Studies had also to do with the specific "crisis" in the discipline of sociology - Hall refers to its "disarray" - as it was, and continues to be, confronted by both contemporary post-colonial historical/cultural conditions in Britain, North America, Australia<sup>1</sup> and "third world" countries, and a constellation of discourses constituting critical cultural theory, including the discourse of Cultural Studies.

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<sup>1</sup> In Australia, where I am writing this, sociology shows signs of responding to contemporary post-colonial conditions (which include a movement away from Britain towards its Asian neighbours) with courses such as "the sociology of aboriginal society" and "the sociology of Asian societies" being established on various campuses. Still, one has to question the extent to which these courses contribute to de-colonizing processes.

Cornel West (1989) has pointed to three historical coordinates which he thinks are significant in producing the contemporary historical/cultural conditions, of which this "crisis" of knowledge is symptomatic; the waning of the age of Europe since the second World War, the decline of North America as a superpower and an ongoing decolonizing process with the consequent dislocation and mobility of peoples all over the world and the formation of different post-colonial diasporas. Significant, too, are new global telecommunications, the international division of labor and the outdated notion of nation-states and their boundaries.<sup>2</sup>

In these post/neo-colonial times (I prefer this term to "postmodern culture" or "postmodern condition" as will be explained in chapter one), the epistemological and theoretical frameworks, the narratives, metaphors and categories of (social) science and, specifically, sociology, are under challenge, not for the first time (see Chapter three), but in some new and powerful ways. There are two aspects I want to focus on: one, the presence in sociology classrooms of "new", "post-colonial" students whose life experiences cannot be explained by mainstream American monocultural, sociological

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<sup>2</sup> This last is filled with complex contradictory tensions. Contemporary events in Europe are obvious instances but in Australia, too, there's a movement both towards and against national identity. The battle to save the SAO biscuit, a national icon, from a "sellout" to Campbell's soup is currently being fiercely waged!

frameworks and whose presence, therefore, brings to crisis hegemonic "sociological knowledge" (as it is presented in most available introductory textbooks to date), and, secondly, a constellation of intersecting discourses which constitute contemporary radical cultural theory, namely feminism, "postmodernism", the critiques of colonial discourses and Cultural Studies. These have converged at this historical moment to put into question (I am avoiding the use of the term "rupture" or "break") the modernist discourse of (social) scientific knowledge in all its dimensions, philosophical, epistemological, organizational (the disciplines and their boundaries), methodological (the collection of knowledge) and teaching/pedagogy as key "activities" in the dissemination of knowledge. These critiques also critically interrupt each other, thus constituting a complex, intertextual articulation of the problematic of this project.

I turn to the theoretical discourses first in order to set out the multilayered nature of this project. In chapter one, I outline how post-structuralism (philosophical "postmodernism") has challenged and undermined the foundations of modern science and then I ask the question what is the potential of "postmodernism" when "read against" the theory-practice of critical cultural studies? I make the argument that philosophical "postmodernism", in its various versions, has opened some critical space for Cultural Studies and some ways

out of the current crisis of modern knowledge. By reversing modernist principles of universality, objectivity, rationality and representation, by moving to an "epistemology of difference" in opposition to the modernist "epistemology of identity" and by blurring the boundaries between science and fiction, and theory and narrative, "postmodernism" has offered at least a supporting argument for new directions in epistemology and the theory-practice of knowledge production, specifically, the possibility of new knowledge producers and new kinds of knowledge.

However, read against the theoretical/practical/political project of a radical Cultural Studies (chapter one), or against feminism and post-colonial discourses (chapter two), the radical potential of philosophical "postmodernism" begins to fade in my view. Its move "beyond" representation and its militant dismissal of ideology and culture are highly problematic for critical cultural work. Moreover, in chapter two, I argue, following Laura Kipnis (1988) and Gayatri Spivak (1988), that philosophical "postmodernism" is "not yet post-modern" but rather a return to aesthetic modernism and that, despite its rhetoric of difference, it also returns the Eurocentric male subject to the center of discourse and meaning making. For the most part, feminists and post-colonial critics (West, Hall and Spivak, for instance) step warily in and around "postmodernism", taking from it what, if anything,

they find useful, but making central the problematic of representation, especially colonizing Western discourses, in this instance "postmodernism" itself. A strong claim is made that any feminist or post-colonial appropriation of "postmodernism" will depoliticize those discourses, regressing to an aesthetic modernism.

If radical cultural critics read "postmodernism" as a colonizing discourse, feminism, too, has been read in this way. While feminist critiques of "postmodernism" make some headway in establishing new directions for an epistemology and a theory-practice of knowledge and cultural critique for contemporary times (see chapter two for de Lauretis' reworking of experience and ideology, for instance), post-colonial critiques of feminism (by women of color, "third" world women and lesbian critics) claim that the feminist project is "white" and heterosexual in its formulation. Kipnis' suggestion that feminism be taken as a post-colonial discourse (taking "women" as a "colony") is rejected by post-colonial critics (Spivak, for instance) because feminism is itself a culturally imperialistic discourse, excluding women of color and lesbians in its attempt to represent "all women", and through its seemingly unproblematic use of the category gender.

This critique of feminism is of central importance in articulating the problematic of this project. But, it must be added, that Cultural Studies is also implicated in discursive colonization (see, for instance, Paul Gilroy's comments on British Cultural Studies in chapter one and the feminist critiques in chapter one and two). Indeed, it turns out that each of the Western discourses available for radical cultural critique, feminism, "postmodernism" and Cultural Studies, are complicitous in one way or another with Western imperialistic tendencies and, therefore, they must constantly be reworked.

Homi Bhabha's (1986) work on colonial discourses is instructive here. He claims that colonial discourses function through a strategy of disavowal and that this involves a twofold process of self-erasure and cultural disavowal. In this way, a colonizing, universalizing discourse by avoiding difference, can claim itself as a discourse for all times and places. This provides a useful framework for analysing how "postmodernism", feminism and Cultural Studies function. So that, while feminism has been in a relation of tension with Cultural Studies, critically interrupting it (as Hall presents the trajectory of Cultural Studies at Birmingham, although feminists claim they have had little impact [see chapter two]), feminism too has, since the beginning of the 1980's, been critiqued by excluded others. I argue that new directions for feminist Cultural Studies must therefore foreground

culture and self-representation. While feminism has countered Cultural Studies for its lack of attention to gender specificity, that focus on gender is now made problematic by post-colonial critiques. And feminism's strategies of self-and cultural disavowal (particularly evident in recent feminist theorizing, with its consequent depoliticizing effect), must be rejected in favour of a move towards cultural work with a different representational politics, taking culture (understood as lived lives and signifying practices) and self-representation as its points of departure. This mode of knowledge production would take into account both identity and difference, an epistemology (suggested by Spivak) of identity-in-difference.

If this is the current state of the art of radical cultural critique, what, then, of science and sociology? The argument has been made, again by feminist and post-colonial critics, that science and *sociology*, too, is an instance of *discursive colonization in the context of contemporary heterogenous cultures* (see, for instance, Mohanty, 1991). If that is the case, and I argue it is, then it becomes, in the context of the post-colonial classrooms in which I teach, a moral, ethical and political imperative to engage in a radical critique of, and intervention into, sociology at the various levels of its process, including the process of "teaching" sociology. This project engages in such a critique and

cultural intervention. It works against sociology-as-colonizing discourse by seeking new directions in the theory-practice of "sociological knowledge" and, in particular, (1) new directions in epistemology for post-colonial times, displacing the "epistemology of identity" which has underpinned modern science and sociology; (2) a move beyond "method", unmasking and displacing what has been the central debate between "qualitative" and "quantitative" sociology; (3) useful border crossings between disciplinary boundaries (particularly science and fiction and science and Cultural Studies, the latter facilitating the foregrounding of the disavowed category "cultures") and (4) innovative teaching strategies, especially the use of "autobiography as cultural critique" in the classroom through which bodies, "selves" and subjectivities, together with their cultural embodiment, can be reclaimed and deployed to contest and displace old, worn out frameworks and categories.

The categories of particular interest here are what Hall has referred to as "the mantra" of gender, race and class which pervade the social sciences and sociology, as well as feminism and other discourses of radical critique. Sociology (and feminism), underpinned as it has been by an "epistemology of identity", has constructed identity in discrete parts and without reference to cultures. Traditionally, as is evident in any introductory sociology textbook, gender is often connected

to age but always separated from race and class. Sexuality is omitted altogether, except in the most recent editions (Giddens, 1991, for instance). My interest is in attempting to rearticulate sociological categories of identity, within the frame of an epistemology of identity-in-difference (Spivak, 1988) but in doing so not to become trapped in "the identity question." While identity is central in reformulating sociology (I am suggesting the "world"-traveller), "who am I?" cannot be the key question.

*More Than One Time, More Than One Place: The "World"-Traveller and the Critical Zone-Between*

The post-colonial scene in which this project was staged were undergraduate introductory sociology classrooms in The City University of New York in the 1980's. I taught on three campuses of The City University from 1985 to 1991. Students on those particular campuses during that time were predominantly men and women of color (more women than men), and specifically Afro-Caribbean, African-American, Latin-American and Asian-American (to use labels which are themselves unsatisfactory for a number of reasons).

Arguably, contemporary cultural conditions (a "pervasive condition of off-centeredness" [Clifford, 1988]) raise the possibility of a new constitutive role in the production of knowledge for post-colonial "subjects", in this instance,

students in the institutional setting of the academy. I use the term "world"-travellers (more in the sense of Lugones, 1990, than Clifford, 1992)<sup>3</sup> to name the new political subject, the hybrid, hyphenated (Trinh, 1991)<sup>4</sup> students who daily cross cultural borders ("border" persons [Anzaldúa, 1987]) inhabiting multiple places and times and multiple "worlds" in these post-colonial times. But "world"-travelling need not always imply the presence of a hyphen. I also take it to mean the "travelling" between "worlds" of insider/outsideers whose lives are not so obviously marked by a hyphen. Stories from the gay and lesbian communities (E's insider/outsideer story of his life as a gay black man or A's Thanksgiving scene [see above]) are also instances of what I mean by "world"-travelling.

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<sup>3</sup> Clifford (1992) chooses "world"-traveller, a term he takes from Said (1983). While Clifford (and hooks, 1992) note that "travelling" is marked by its historical reference to the play of a white male elite, he argues that it may still be deployed usefully in the sense of *jouneying through different "worlds" to explore inter-cultural subjectivity in post-colonial conditions*. I share his interest in concrete histories of dwelling, exile and migration but, Maria Lugones' expansion of the meaning of "world"-travelling, by using it as a *cross-over* term to articulate the cross-cultural, cross-racial movement of "outsider" women of color who skillfully, creatively and playfully "travel", against their will, between their homes in the black and Latino communities to the mainstream white "world", interests me more. For more on this and Norma Alarcon's idea of shifting positionalities, see chapter 2.

<sup>4</sup> For Trinh Minh-ha (1991), the hyphenated reality of Asian-Americans, Caribbean-Americans, African-Americans, Latin-Americans signifies the *cultural interval between, in-between ground, a becoming* where old rules and old categories don't apply.

If "world"-travelling and "travel" stories, "border" persons and "border work" are central motifs in this project, my argument is that the lives of "world"-travellers is a useful and necessary point of departure for the teacher-as-critical cultural worker committed to the production of new sociological (or any other) knowledge. The "world"-traveller, as displaced/dislocated hybrid, can provide a vantage point on the scene of post-colonial cultural politics, and, in particular, bring to 'crisis' Western modernist notions of time and space which underpin modern science and "the social" sciences. But, as Trinh (1991) cautions, *critical work in the space-in-between* should not fall into the old modernist (or Left and feminist) trap of privileging one category of person as *the* critical subject. We need to shift to a more complex view of "subjects" and of the old center-margin opposition which has been deemed necessary for radical critique. Besides, if Stuart Hall is to be believed, hybridity is to be found everywhere (Hall, 1992). We are all hybrids in one way or another so that, while the hyphenated perspective may provide that vantage point on hegemonic Western discourses and knowledge production, and challenge those knowledge forms, she is not to be taken as the central or sole source of a critical perspective on modernity.

I use "displacement" in two ways, one to name the global uprooting of numbers of people in contemporary historical

conditions (the experience of dislocation or *geographical displacement* [de Lauretis, 1991] of large numbers of students in The City University of New York) and, secondly, to refer to the task of re-reading/re-writing, un-naming/re-naming old modernist theoretical-practices in search of new narratives, metaphors, categories and knowledge (what de Lauretis calls "*conceptual displacement*"). That is, the notion of "displacement", if it is to challenge the real world of "occupied territories" of modernist discourses, including sociology, if it is to attempt a de/reterritorialization as a political/cultural intervention (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983), must exceed the mere textual strategies of Derridean "postmodern" philosophy.

*Cultural Studies as Pedagogical Practice: My Improper Vocation*

In this project I focus my discussion of Cultural Studies on an institutional space, one possible space, the classroom in the academy. If Cultural Studies as pedagogical practice is not the only form or site of Cultural Studies, it is, nevertheless, a very significant site and one which, as Carolyn Steedman, bell hooks and others (1992) have pointed out, is rarely taken account of in discussions of what constitutes Cultural Studies practice.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> It is interesting to note Carolyn Steedman's comment (1992) that *what is missing so far from accounts of the history of "British" cultural studies is how it has been shaped by teachers and taught as much as by theoretical questions*. Cultural studies as educational practice has long been institutionalized in British

Doing Cultural Studies as pedagogical practice, in my understanding, means that the teacher, as critical cultural worker, must engage in a worldly and, therefore, *improper* vocation. She provides a forum for cultural battles, struggles over meaning and representation, that is, ideological and political battles which are at the root of knowledge and of radical pedagogical practice (Hall, 1992). Moreover, doing Cultural Studies in the post-colonial sociology classroom, has to be understood as a deliberate strategy to foreground culture (and ideology and meaning making) in a scientific discourse which has traditionally disavowed or disguised its cultural and ideological allegiances. This kind of cultural work implies a movement within and without the discipline of sociology, and constitutes a critical reflection and rethinking of that discipline's modernist frameworks, categories and methods, a challenge which I argue must be mounted in contemporary cultural conditions (see chapter two and four). It must also be stressed that this is a move away from the kind of sociological cultural studies described, for instance, by Mukerji and Schudson (1991) which I reject as 'business as usual'. Instead, a cultural studies as pedagogical practice inside/outside modernist sociology raises questions about what a post-disciplinary, post-modern

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Polytechnics (rather than Universities), where teachers have accommodated to "constituencies of learners" and "the allure of certain models of teacher-student relationship" (p.618).

sociology might look like. It offers the possibility of incorporating the practical/political work of cultural studies, including its interest in the contemporary, but also of transforming traditional sociological categories such as identity, 'the social' and culture to a more complex articulation of the nexus of "the social," culture, identity and knowledge. For the "teacher", of course, it involves the personal and intellectual risk of taking up an improper vocation, challenging what professional sociologists say sociology is, while being told that your work is out of bounds, 'not sociology'. (see Chapters 1,3 and 4)

#### *Autobiography as Cultural Critique*

Teaching sociology in contemporary post-colonial classrooms has, for me, constituted the moral, ethical and political ground for inventing a new pedagogical/sociological (and therefore cultural) practice through which to both understand and intervene in contemporary cultural politics and the discipline of sociology. Although, as Spivak suggests, "[N]o one can quite articulate the space she herself inhabits" in terms of time, place and identity (Spivak, 1990, p.68), this project is premised on the critical possibilities of speaking and writing autobiographically as a point of departure for radical cultural critique. Cornel West (1991), for one, has suggested a radical pedagogy should work from real life

stories rather than the static categories of modernist social science.

I borrow the term "autobiography as cultural critique" in part from Nancy Miller's Getting Personal (1991). (see Chapter 4) The bringing into play of 'the self' in science or in classrooms has, of course, been forbidden. Neither 'I' nor 'we' nor 'you' appears in the language of (social) science. If they enter, the field shifts to "not science", the field of literature or poetry. But, as has already been suggested, the "postmodern" critique of science and literary and cultural critiques have contested those boundaries, pointing to their arbitrariness and opening space for *border crossings*. And while the narrativity of science has been revealed (the notion of *science as fiction* opens up new possibilities for critique [see Chapter three]), "the subjective" and personal are also being re-read in their cultural and social connectedness and 'the self' and 'the' body reclaimed for the production of new knowledge.

Moreover, the strategy of "autobiography as cultural critique" brings together, and foregrounds, those two dimensions of the strategy of disavowal deployed by science as a universalizing and colonizing discourse, self-erasure and cultural disavowal. In that way, this project engages in the unmasking of (social) science; it aims to gain entry to an exclusive discursive

field by reclaiming the selves/subjects/subjectivities, bodies, voices and cultures made invisible in the science project. Irigaray (1988) asked "how can we enter the closed system of science? How can we engage in a dialogue or a confrontation with science?" My response is that the classroom is one site/occasion for such an encounter between sociological texts and the I/we of "world"-travelling, post-colonial students.

And, as I have already suggested, this is not only a challenge to the hegemonic discourse of sociology, it is also a challenge to traditional educational practices in the academy where 'the personal' has been suppressed, a unified body of knowledge has been taken to be certain, permanent and transmissible, and the "teacher" alone has the right to speak. But it is my view that, in post-colonial conditions, the movement of women and men of color to speaking-writing positions is a moral, ethical and political necessity, and that the division of intellectual labor, between "the teacher" and the researcher, "the teacher" and "the learner" must also necessarily change.

***Retrieving and transforming consciousness raising in the contemporary post-colonial classroom***

There are several reasons for returning to consciousness-raising as a feminist technique, transforming it to suit the

contemporary situation and transporting it for use in post-colonial classrooms. Autobiographical story telling and writing, individually and collectively, enables self/collective exploration of self/others as subjects-in-process and, in a multiracial, multiethnic classroom, this becomes useful in the critique of old knowledge and the production of new. Moreover, whereas consciousness raising had been used in the '70's as a strategy by white women seeking solidarity through *common* experiences and knowledge, it had been underpinned by an epistemology of identity which has now to be challenged. My use of a version of consciousness raising in post-colonial classrooms is therefore intended to seek the production of new knowledge through an epistemology of identity-in-difference (see chapter four).<sup>6</sup>

#### *Counter-Memory and Memory Work*

I take up Foucault's notion of memory as a site of resistance together with Frigga Haug's (1987) term "memory work". According to Foucault the process of remembering can be a practice which transforms a judgement about the past into a

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<sup>6</sup> One familiar response by educators to contemporary post-colonial conditions has been a form of 'multiculturalism' which does little more than acknowledge the plurality or diversity of cultures while promoting "inclusion". I am committed to countering this liberal view of *multiculturalism as inclusion* by moving to put the *discourse of difference to work in radical new ways*. "World"-travellers undermine simplistic versions of multicultural curriculum.

counter-memory that combats our understanding of truth and justice, helping us to understand and change the present by bringing it into a new relation with the past. The familiar becomes a point of departure. The space-in-between the familiar and the unfamiliar and the to-and-fro movement between them can constitute new knowledge. In chapter four, I suggest the possibilities of this and Haug's notion of memory work in the context of the classroom.

*Story telling and Meaning Making as "Braided Narrative".*

Post-colonial feminists, notably Trinh Minh-ha (1989; 1990), seek to reclaim story telling and bring together, without merging, story and analysis, split by modern science. "Reading" (interpretation) is understood as incorporated into story; story as incorporating "analysis". I view story/reading as "*braided narrative*". And, whereas Theory in the modernist project occupied a privileged territory and register, *theory here is the "braided narrative" of story-telling/reading*. Theory-making as professional practice is displaced. The idea is to construct meaning dialogically through the interaction of readers/writers of autobiographical texts and 'sociological' texts. Of course, to re-work the meanings of standard disciplinary texts, to re-write, re-read texts rather than transmitting them as taken for granted knowledge demands risk, vision and political commitment on the part of the

teacher *and* students who are well conditioned to traditional pedagogical practices.

**IN SEARCH OF CRITICAL SPACE 1:  
POSTMODERNISM AND CULTURAL STUDIES**

*"A theory is exactly like a box of tools...it must be useful. It must function. And not for itself. If no one uses it, beginning with the theoretician himself (who then ceases to be a theoretician) then the theory is worthless"...(Deleuze to Foucault, 1977, 208)*

*"To say that this historical ground is, for example, postcolonial and postmodern is not to say much - except to name what one hopes no longer to have to be." (Clifford, 1988, 113)*

In order to contextualize and to begin to articulate in the broadest way the central problematic of this project, namely the "crisis" of knowledge in the contemporary historical moment, and specifically in sociology, I will begin with two of the discourses within the constellation of contemporary cultural theory which engage in the debates around knowledge and cultural critique. This chapter is in three parts. In part one, I outline selected issues in the "postmodern" critique of modern science, with special attention to the epistemological positions. In part two, I pose the question "what critical possibilities does philosophical "postmodernism" open or foreclose for critical cultural studies?" Thirdly, I turn to what seem to be the pressing issues in Cultural Studies work in the '90's.

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To present "the headlines" in the "postmodern" critiques of science, and to do a critical reading of those critiques from the point of view of Cultural Studies, I have selected a series of "events" (as Morris has put it [Morris, 1988]) as my focus: first, I have selected specific texts of Baudrillard, Lyotard and Jameson, and second, Foucault and Derrida in order to "read" them together and against the other. I try to avoid the approach, now rather common in discussions of "postmodernism", where a list of features or characteristics is provided (Rosenau, 1992, is one instance), an approach which itself has affinities with certain fetishistic, programmatic representations of "postmodernism" discussed below.

### **"Postmodern" positions**

#### *On the post in "postmodernism"*

The term "postmodernism" is problematic. I take the "post" to signify a position about temporality, a time after, a time beyond. The (post-Marxist)-postmodern claim that we are, here and now, *in* the postmodern, is to claim the arrival of a new space and time, a new period, a new stage in the development of capitalism and a 'break' / 'rupture' with the project of modernity, now apparently passed. Jameson is one who unequivocally makes this claim. I reject this position that

"the postmodern" is here and now, agreeing with those who have argued (*Spivak, for one*) that *the post-modern is not yet*. There are those of us who cannot not know (to draw on a phrase Cornel West has used) that "we" are still inside modernity, at the same time as "we" struggle to go beyond it. But that some theorists want to claim that "the" postmodern is here raises interesting questions about time and who's telling the time. *Whose time? Whose story-time is it? Who (whose "world", in what national contexts?) benefits from a post-modern present tense?* This brings me to the significance of the hyphen in postmodernism.

#### *On the hyphen*

I use the hyphen in post-modernism to signify a difference between philosophical "postmodernism" (not yet post-modern) and post-modernism yet to come. I have adopted this position in order to make some contribution to undoing the widespread use of the term "postmodern". Some theorists have decided to abandon or avoid the term altogether. Butler, for instance, in Gender Trouble (see chapter 2) doesn't use it at all. Occasionally, in that text, she makes reference to post-structuralist discourses (Foucault, for one). Hall uses the term but is careful not to claim a "postmodern" position for his own work.

The hyphen in post-modernism, in this project, is intended to indicate *post-modernism as a movement of thought and action still in the process of emerging through struggle in specific historical and cultural (including post/neo-colonial) conditions*. The hyphen signifies the interval in-between, neither a separation nor an assimilation (Trinh, 1991; Bhabha, 1992), a post-modernism in process. It maintains the tension between the passing, but not yet passed, and the futures to come, and allows for struggle and movement to be foregrounded.

**Culture, Condition, Period: Conservative postmodernism.**

Foster (1983) suggested three political positions within "postmodern" theorizing, a conservative postmodernism, an anti-modernist stance and a "critical postmodernism". I begin here by adopting the first of Foster's three categories to describe the texts of Lyotard, Baudrillard and Jameson. Their theoretical narratives of postmodernity take the position of postmodernism as "culture" and "condition". A close reading of the different ways the term "postmodernism" has been appropriated and used by them reveals the conservative politics implicit in their texts. However, I will also argue (see chapter 2), that the categories Foster has suggested must be displaced. Foster takes postmodernism to be multiple discourses with different political orientations and, therefore, different critical potential, but the movement

(social/cultural/political) to a not yet post-modernity is somewhat confused, even elided, by the categories he uses.

Lyotard's The Postmodern Condition (1984) is central to the debate about the postmodern. According to Morris (1988b) there are three different uses of the term in Lyotard's text. "The postmodern" refers to a period (which he vaguely dates from the nineteenth century and, more specifically, from the 1950's coinciding with post-industrial society in the West). Secondly, postmodern marks the state of culture in this post-industrial age, what Lyotard names "*the postmodern condition*". And third, he equates postmodernism with the *avant garde* of modernism. In this usage, "postmodernism" does not signal an end but rather a return into (aesthetic) modernism. (see Kipnis' argument in chapter 2)

In my reading, postmodernism as period, culture and condition are pretty much interchangeable although the medical metaphor "condition" is suggestive of somewhat morbid, possibly fatal, outcomes for contemporary culture depending on who you read. The "condition", in Lyotard's post-Marxist analysis, has come about through global changes in capital, changes in the role of the state and the rise of a technoculture. His focus is the crisis of representation in science and knowledge that has resulted. According to him, the two grand narratives which have legitimated the modernist project of science have lost

their power in contemporary technoculture. The emancipation of humanity (the narrative of justice) and the accumulation of a unified body of knowledge (the narrative of truth) are now obsolete, he claims. The same can be said for the two grand narratives of modernity, organicism (later functionalism and cybernetics) and Marxism, which have provided the models for theorizing in the social sciences. Now, neither the rendering of "the social" and "society" as a unified totality nor the duality and dialectics of Marxism offer relevance or critical edge.

But if the grand narratives have met their demise (a fait accompli, for Lyotard) that does not herald the end of science. Borrowing from Wittgenstein, Lyotard transcodes science and social relations into language games, a strategy he adopts, in part, in his polemic against Habermas' untenable notion of rational communication and easy consensus between equal actors. Language games suggest instead conflict between unequal players, albeit this conflict is reduced to moves, counter moves and displacements.

Science, now recast as a language game, can legitimate itself and multiply prolifically. There are many different language games; heterogeneity and locality rule the postmodern. But a problem then arises. What is the relation of the scientific community, as players of one particular language game, and

everybody else? If you don't know the rules, you can't play the game, nor can you judge the game from outside by another set of rules. All we can do, Lyotard says, is "gaze in wonderment at the diversity of the discursive species" (p.26)!

Lyotard is, of course, at a dead end here. The metaphor of language games, while seeming to offer conflict and difference, leaves us immobilized. Discourse is reduced to a set of moves and counter-moves within a walled community. Lyotard has discovered difference but only as a feature of the new postmodern condition, and then only in some sort of abstract pure form, difference as transcendent. He is no more interested in real conflict than Habermas is!

In Lyotard's postmodern condition, science not only survives, it proliferates. But the rules of the game have changed. Now self-legitimizing technology serves to legitimate science. Nobody can get a handle on either. Knowledge, too, has changed. A certain new logic emerges in the computer age which constitutes "*postmodern knowledge*". No longer is there an interest in what is true or just. Instead, efficiency, calculability and marketability rule the day. For Lyotard "*postmodern knowledge*" is that which serves the interest of the system (p.52). It is the knowledge stored in data banks. And it is also the knowledge produced by interdisciplinary studies, the move to draw knowledge across traditional

boundaries. He reads this disciplinary border crossing as a symptom of the postmodern condition brought about by the demise of the grand narratives of modernism. The weakening of the disciplinary divides enables interdisciplinary moves and the emergence of new territories. A wider conceptual framework, with greater explanatory power, is then available but *in the service of the system* not radical critique. In Lyotard's usage "postmodern knowledge" becomes one more feature of the new condition we are in. Worse, if knowledge in the contemporary condition is devoid of radical power, does this mean cultural studies, as an inter/non-disciplinary move can only empower the system?

Baudrillard's 1983 essay "In the Shadow of the Silent Majorities...or the end of the social" reveals a similar theoretical-narrative about the state of contemporary "postmodern culture". I read his politics as a reactionary yearning for modernism. His metaphors are significant. While Lyotard offered us images of the break up of the grand narratives and their dispersal into "clouds of narrative elements" (his version of "difference"), Baudrillard pictures the collapse of meaning and *the end of the social* in an "implosion" and dispersal in a "blaze of signifiers", leaving us with individual particles, no one, no other, no polarities, to keep the current flowing and therefore an end of the social, of meaning, of the political. His is a catastrophic,

fatalistic tale of postmodern culture, *the end of a world* in which everything that was in place, is now in chaos. From his position of white Eurocentric male supremacy, he plays out his fear of loss of modernity. (see Kipnis and Spivak's analyses of this in chapter 2)

Representation, too, is at an end, brought about by the implosion of the real and the imaginary in the contemporary age of simulation. Representation belongs to an era now past and any effort to regenerate its principles of reality and universality are archaic and nostalgic. In the *new age* of simulation, it is not a question of models being projected on the real, the model now *becomes* the real, the hyperreal. With the collapse of the imaginary and the real, the two oppositions fundamental to representation in the Western modernist project, there is no possibility of an exchange of the real for meaning. There is only an uninterrupted short circuit without reference. No more wholes, only a flat surface, a series of partial objects is left. All interpretations are 'true' and exchangeable; all stories of equal value.

Baudrillard's is a dangerous and unacceptable politics. If everything is dead, criticism is futile; if all interpretations are equally true, there is no ground for resistance; opposition is impossible. And if theory takes

itself as object and occupies center stage? We end, in his postmodern condition, in the prisonhouse of language.

This brings me to Jameson's narrative of postmodernity. Adopting a classical Marxist position, he claims "the postmodern" is a new period corresponding to the development of late capitalism. The economic conditions of possibility for postmodernism, in place at the end of the 50's, include the international division of labor, the flight of production to the 'third world', decolonization and new forms of media, computers and automation. Speaking in old Marxist terms of the dialectic of the economic and culture, "the postmodern" is the "cultural logic" of late capitalism, its "hegemonic norm" (Jameson, 1991, p.6). This "logic" supposedly explains the way things are in postmodern culture. The only alternative Jameson sees is the random difference of Lyotard or the chaos of Baudrillard. Therefore Marxism is retained as the grand (master) narrative. Postmodernism, becomes a coverall term for contemporary culture. The economic, the cultural and the social have collapsed. Culture has burst out of its modernist sphere of autonomy and everything in social life is now "cultural". This is the postnatural age, the end of nature has come and culture is all.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Note already the constant slippage in Jameson's text between theory and the real, a point I will expand on below.

Postmodern culture, in Jameson's story, is in an unhealthy condition. Its key "symptom" in his diagnosis is historical "deafness". Progress, "alive and well" until recently has now "vanished without a trace" (Jameson, 1991, p.xi). The prognosis is not good. The condition appears beyond our control. Theory is merely able to describe the condition we are in but, even then, not too well since the instruments are gross and the condition somewhat elusive. In fact, to Jameson, the whole thing is something of a mystery! Still, *what a coup the contemporary culture was named postmodern*, he exclaims. *Its naming was a success story, a "lexical neoevent". Its competing terms, post-structuralism and post-industrial society were much too narrow, marked as they were by their particular provenance, and had to be displaced.* Postmodernism has a broader meaning. (you could argue none at all in the sense he would have us use it!) Now "not many people are left who can avoid using the word postmodern" (Jameson, 1991, p.xv).

For Jameson, Theorist, playing with the term postmodern has given him some socially useful new tasks, as he himself puts it. These include *describing* the state of affairs, *"recataloguing"* and *"transcoding"*. Jameson has written off the possibility of critique in "the postmodern"; theoretical discourse in postmodern culture must take itself as object. What he calls "authentic" history is lost; its texts have

become simulacra. And we, amidst texts without a referent, and unable to position ourselves in relation to past and future, have no possibility of political action. Jameson takes this theoretical story to be the real situation. Jameson admits he has constructed a totalizing situation, *the postmodern*, from which there is no room for critique (1991, p.5). Yet there are glimmers of hope in the closing section of his 1991 collection. One can't dismiss the notion of "transcoding" if *the real is not dismissed*. But Jameson writes: "I can set about measuring what is sayable and 'thinkable' in each of these codes or idiolects and compare that to the conceptual possibilities of its competitors" (p.394). Transcoding allows for the examination of the political and ideological functionality of conceptual frameworks and a tossing out of old worn-out codes but it is not clear to me what criteria Jameson would use to do this. The trouble is what I assume is Jameson's continued dismissal of the real world. It is difficult to support any "transcoding" process that doesn't actively engage with reality. Otherwise, Althusser's "autonomous theory" looms.

Some final parting comments are in order about Lyotard, Baudrillard and Jameson's texts. The first is their tendency to "analytical slippage". Hall (1986) and West (1991) have argued that to name the contemporary historical juncture the "postmodern condition" or "postmodern culture" is to fall into

the trap of collapsing analysis and description, theory and world, metaphor and reality, a reductionist move with serious consequences for cultural critique which is displaced by this move.<sup>8</sup> It gives the impression contemporary culture has been summed up and no more need be said. The same can be said here of the term "postmodern condition". When so vastly expanded, it becomes the *name for, not the critique of*. Such a totalizing, moralistic, and essentialist position turns out to be a depoliticizing and disempowering move. If we are in a postmodern condition, then we are assuming it has arrived and deny, perhaps conveniently, the need for political (including discursive) struggle.

"The end of" type of argument is also problematic. Some categories significant in modernist discourse have to be retained. Without ideology and a theory of the subject, rather than its "death", we forego the possibility of struggle. Moreover, Hall (1986) argues that "the end of the social", as Baudrillard would have it, is actually the end of a particular *ideology of the social*, not the social itself. For Lyotard, the grand narrative of Marxism has lost its critical potential, but does this mean "the end of" meta-narrative? Or all theory? Grand/master narratives and meta-narratives are different (Morris, 1988) and isn't postmodernism itself a

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<sup>8</sup> Spivak comments in her preface to On Grammatology that Nietzsche's expansion of everything into metaphor ends up as a gesture which turns back on itself.

meta-narrative? Isn't metanarrative necessary for cultural critique? *Can narratives of justice and truth be done without?*

Lyotard, Baudrillard and Jameson would have us entrapped in "postmodern culture" or "the postmodern condition", a condition in which "difference" is a key feature, we are told. But though their discourse is filled with the rhetoric of "difference", theirs is not a difference that can make a difference. We, the mere effects of discourse, or of language games, are left at our posts, gazing "in wonderment at the diversity of the discursive species" (Lyotard, 1983, p.26). Difference is reduced to the pure difference of speech acts or language games and comes dangerously close to the political in-difference of 'anything goes' that Foster (1983) warned about.

The discourse on "the postmodern condition" is an unmarked discourse in the process of being marked. It is a white male Euro-American discourse (see Morris, 1988), conservative, nostalgic for a lost past, elitist in its distaste for the popular and the masses, and about to be displaced by feminist and post-colonial discourses. (see chapter 2)

**Postmodernism as anti-modernism**

In this section, I explore "postmodernism as anti-modernism" (Foster, 1983; Hebdige, 1986) in specific texts of Foucault and Derrida in order to make an assessment of its possibilities, especially epistemological, for cultural critique. Since the theoretical narratives of Foucault and Derrida are different (despite similarities), and complex, while bringing them together in this section, I am not attempting to do more than make some headlines and to draw out some key points for discussion.

#### *Against representation*

For Foucault (1973), Kantian transcendental philosophy is the threshold of modernity, its two guiding principles, universality and the idea of a unified body of knowledge, are key to the 'age of representation'. Universality is established by dismissing experiencing subjects as the basis of representation, thereby setting up the conditions of possibility of objective knowledge. The principle of universality divides the knowable and the unknowable, establishes Absolute Truth as the domain of a pure form of knowledge and an immobility of things, all of which Foucault sees as a desire to preserve order. And, in the modern era, *Man* appears as the object of knowledge, linking the project of Western humanism with the transcendental discourse of modern science.

In The Order of Things (1973), rationality is revealed as the 'episteme' of modernity. Knowledge, in the age of modern science, is constituted through rational thought, through deduction and observation, measuring and ordering.

Representation, or the writing or speaking about something, invokes the Kantian illusion of transcendence, purity and unity. The attempt to re-present, to copy, assumes the possibility of imitation (mimesis), presence and the availability of a stable, invariant meaning, a pure meaning and absolute Truth. Language is taken to be transparent and a direct, unmediated relationship is assumed between sign and referent. Representation is the quest for sameness, identity and repetition.

For Foucault and Derrida (and their predecessors), modernity as the age of representation must be opposed. Their quest has been for a nonrepresentational, non-mimetic and non-dialectical<sup>9</sup> mode of conceptuality.

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<sup>9</sup> Nietzsche's critique of the dialectic as a move to open up new possibilities of thought and to oppose the absolute knowledge of nineteenth century philosophy handed down from Fichte and Hegel is reworked by Foucault and Derrida's rejection of the Hegelian dialectic as teleological and totalizing. Its economy works to reduce and resolve difference and flatten conflict. It permits differences to live but only under the rule of the negative, as an instance of non-being. The freeing of difference requires thought without dialectic, without negation. What is needed is positive thought about difference. The philosophy of truth and identity, the logic of the same, is displaced by the philosophy of difference.

A certain notion of difference is key to the postmodern critique of representation. Derrida seeks to put into question the meaning of being and presence with his notion of "writing" or *differance*. He argues that nothing is simply present in and of itself, referring only to itself. No sign can function in itself without referring to another. The relation of presence and being is always one of deferral. This interweaving of signs through which a text is produced, this constant deferral/ *differance*, Derrida calls "writing", using the term in a new, more general sense and introducing a different economy to that of classical metaphysics implicit in representation. He argues that within metaphysics, philosophy and scientific rationality, "writing", as the play of *differance*, is repressed. Derrida's economy of "traces" shifts from the economy of sameness/identity to indefinite difference. *Intertextuality* reigns, not autonomy. A text is always already a network of referrals to other texts. Derrida's move against one absolute meaning (the phallogentric fable of meaning) towards multiple meaning (the hymen fable) is to substitute being and Truth and is-ness for the 'play' of the world. The text remains open indefinitely.

In "The Discourse on Language" (1972) and in The Order of Things (1973), Foucault makes representation problematic by raising questions around the *unrepresented*, the *excess*. What is outside the frame becomes the center around which the

representation is ordered and made possible. The world is not simply there to be read (as he claims it was in the sixteenth century), it must be ordered and that ordering in terms of sameness/difference places what is different outside the frame. Mimesis, as the perfect mirror reflection of the same, excludes difference. Difference, then, must be the key to the critique of the order of things in modernity.

On the totalizing effect of *categories* in representation, Foucault writes in "Theatricum Philosophicum": "...categories create a condition where being maintains its undifferentiated repose...Categories organize the play of affirmations and negations, establish the legitimacy of resemblances within representation, and guarantee the objectivity and operation of concepts. They suppress the anarchy of difference, divide differences into zones, delimit their rights..." (1980, p.186). Can difference be liberated by an *acategorical* thought? Or can the new configuration of post-modernism offer the possibility of rearticulating categories previously kept separate?

Central to the debunking of the myths of modernity is the notion of mediation. The claim made by the project of realism (telling it like it is), in its search for unmediated meaning and the purity of Truth, that non-allegorical description was possible, has been contested by the revival of rhetoric by

literary and cultural theorists (Barthes, De Certeau), psychoanalysis (Lacan's post-structuralist reading of Freud which posits language, desire and culture as mediators of meaning and knowledge) and the reevaluation of epistemology (the understanding of the constructed nature of representation, 'interpretation' becomes a 'making').

Nietzsche, Bataille and Heidegger are significant among predecessors of these moves, and of the texts of Foucault and Derrida. Nietzsche's questioning of Truth (Truth as a "mobile army of metaphors...Truths are illusions" (cited by Spivak in Derrida, 1976, p.xxii)) and his opposition to philosophy's alleged separation of Truth and reality, rhetoric and logic, the literal and figurative, concept and metaphor, argument and narrative has highlighted the rhetorical and aesthetic aspects of language, philosophy and science, making available the notion of *science as fiction*. For Foucault, all you can do is produce socio-fictions which have 'reality effects'. So the notion of science as narrative suggests that, rather than providing a direct copy of reality, science, while retaining a relation to reality, narrates the facts.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> In The Postmodern Condition (1983), Lyotard moves to affirm and restore narrative to science. This he attempts in two ways. In the first instance, he wants to restore narrative knowledge/truth in *opposition* to science, claiming Science is only one form of knowledge and truth. Narrative is another, existing in competition with scientific knowledge and may include knowledges excluded from science such as competency, justice and wisdom. But from the point of view of imperialistic modern science, narrative is prescientific story telling, the customary knowledge form of a traditional

The *theory-practice opposition* is reworked within the post-modern critique of representation. The modernist separation of Theory and practice is linked to the creation of a domain of Theoretical knowledge, the territory of professional experts. Previously, Theory was 'made' from practice and applied to practice. Either way, in a conversation with Foucault (1977), Deleuze comments that the theory/practice relationship as it was previously conceptualized, was an aspect of *totalizing representation*. Deleuze would have instead a partial and fragmentary relation, rather than a relation of resemblance. "Practice is a set of relays from one theoretical point to another, and theory is a relay from one practice to another," says Deleuze. "No theory can develop without eventually encountering a wall, and practice is necessary for piercing this wall" (p.206). Representation, as Theory representing practice, must be displaced. *Theory is practice*, claims Deleuze. But that conflation, familiar within postmodern theorizing, must also be rejected. Perhaps Foucault's suggestion of an *analytics of power* rather than a theory of power has potential to move beyond the confines of representation. And a blurring of boundaries between theory

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community, mere opinion, myth, ideology fit only for women, children and savages. From this perspective, narrative can only be a weak opponent in any contest with modern science! But there is some hope in his second move to restore narrative. Lyotard's notion of science as narrative (small, local stories) seems to offer the possibility of critical space blocked so far in his own story of postmodernism.

and non-theory, the notion that theory itself is narrative rather than a direct representation, may be more productive."<sup>11</sup> And, as a final point, the elitist division of labor implied by the separation of Theory and practice (Theory being done by intellectuals never "the masses") is also implicated in the separation of high and low culture and the consequential exclusion of certain knowledges, the knowledge of 'the masses', the knowledge of everyday life and of the *contemporary*. A reconceptualization of the theory/practice divide challenges that division of labor between intellectuals and 'others' (those who have been the *subjects/objects* of inquiry) and opens up the possibility for a new kind of knowledge of central interest in this project.

### *The critique of reason*

McCarthy (1982) points to the radical critique of reason as the central thematic of French post-structuralism. Cartesian and Kantian conceptions of reason have been widely challenged by post-structuralists and their precursors, he notes. I have already mentioned Lyotard's (1983) opposition to Habermas' idea of rational communicative action with his notion of language games in The Postmodern Condition. In the Order of

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<sup>11</sup> This notion of theory as narrative also becomes available through the destabilization of the meaning/writing subject, the critique of the sovereign subject discussed below and in chapter 2 (Trinh, 1989).

Things (1973), Foucault opposes reason by positing the 'episteme' (the codes of a culture, the a priori criteria), as that which orders reality in any particular historical time. Knowledge is constituted within the 'episteme' lodged, according to Foucault, at the level of 'archaeology'. The 'episteme' establishes common rules of formation which are evident at the disciplinary level. So across the human sciences, for instance, the same rules define the construction of objects and the theories, concepts and metaphors used. But while the 'episteme' sets the ground rules for the constitution of knowledge, it also works to limit the system of thought, what *can* be thought within a particular space and time. In Nietzsche's phrase, we cannot see around our own corner.

Leaving aside questions raised by Foucault's overall position in The Order of Things, his turn to cultural/historical specificity is significant, if undeveloped. In other moves against reason, the unconscious is restored together with Nietzsche and Bataille's notion of radical experience, of excess, of going beyond meaning. Nietzsche's will to power posits desire at the base of the rational. Lyotard's move is to privilege the sublime, that which is without form, the excess of rationality, to disrupt the project of the Enlightenment. Things are more complex, more difficult, more opaque than reason suggests. Each of these moves gives access

to the 'other' of reason but the restoration of 'the' body is of special significance for the project of moving towards a post-modern knowledge. The question, though, is does Foucault restore the body? (see chapter 2 for post-colonial critiques of "the body")

Nietzsche's problematization of the mind/body split and his notion that the body constitutes knowledge which is not merely 'cognitive', is central to his critique of philosophical discourse which has denied the body, and to the apparent<sup>12</sup> postmodern opposition to the disembodied, disengaged, disinterested,<sup>13</sup> autonomous subject of transcendental discourses of modernity. Foucault's 'genealogy', which I will discuss later, claims to restore "the body". Knowing subjects are embodied and engaged.

*The mirror, the circle and the line: displacing metaphors of modernity*

The mirror, the circle and the line are modernist symbols of imprisonment and containment. The mirror and its significance

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<sup>12</sup> It is "the body" as inscribed surface of events which is reclaimed by postmodernism. See the feminist critique and the post-colonial critiques of feminism in chapter 2.

<sup>13</sup> Modernist aesthetics, claiming superiority for vision as disinterested, established the primacy of vision and the body-as-object in modern science. The 'look', of course, is not disinterested, as feminist theorists, amongst others, have pointed out.

in mimetic representation I have already mentioned. The politics of mimesis is containment; difference is always outside the frame. Linearity conveys continuity and an unaltered vision of things, the security of a straight line, of cause and effect (determinism). In Foucault's critique, modernist linear progression, including metaphors of growth, accumulation and improvement, "gives the comforting illusion that one knows where one goes". Foucault substitutes a chain for the line and argues against modernist metaphors implied in modernist history. Against stages, phases and periods, he posits 'discontinuity' in his 'genealogy'.

#### ***Against centrism***

Against centrism, Deleuze and Foucault, in a reversal of Platonism, declare that the circle must be abandoned as a faulty principle. There is no one center but multiple centers. Their move against centrism is a move against structuralism and metaphysics. Underlying structuralism is its desire for unity, wholeness, structure and conservation. This implies that things get 'written over', and that incoherence and contradiction are suppressed.

The modernist longing for a center has also given rise to binary oppositions which are paradigmatic of metaphysics and structuralism. The construction of modern science is also based on these dichotomies; nature/culture; inside/outside;

science/art; personal/impersonal; objectivity/subjectivity; masculine/feminine are all dichotomies of modernist thought which validate scientific knowledge and exclude other forms. Derrida's 'deconstruction' is his strategy of textual reading to combat modernist centrism and its binary oppositions. 'Deconstruction', as the unmaking of a construction, is concerned with what is concealed in the text, what it says and what it doesn't, how it transgresses its own laws. The idea is to take apart a text, to produce a reading by opening up the textuality of a text. The "method" of deconstruction involves a double gesture, reversal and displacement. It is not enough to neutralize the oppositions by reversal, the reversal must be displaced otherwise all that is achieved is a neutralizing that leaves the field in tact.

*Foucault's 'genealogy' as critique of modern knowledge*

Foucault's genealogy, built on Nietzsche's deconstruction of history, (Nietzsche opposed Platonic notions of history as reminiscence, continuity, and knowledge), as well as the texts of Bachelard and Canguilhem challenging modernist knowledge, works against totalizing *general history*. Foucault rejects modernist notions of continuity and progress, and seeks to displace old notions of memory (based in the metaphysical concept of time and the model of consciousness that acquires,

progresses and remembers<sup>14</sup>) with a *counter-memory*, in an attempt to transform history into a different form of time. Discontinuity replaces continuity, the traditional concentration on a straight line, on 'periods' and 'centuries' and 'great men'. The notion of 'the one' general history is displaced by multiplicity and difference. There are many pasts, not one single form, one world view, one system of values providing a purpose, a telos for Man. Knowledge is contingent and changing.

The notion of universality, certainty and the permanence of Truth are totalities opposed in Foucault. "Knowledge", Foucault writes in "Nietzsche, Genealogy and History" (1977, p.163) "does not slowly detach itself from its empirical roots, the initial needs from which it arose, to become pure speculation subject only to the demands of reason; its development is not tied to the constitution and affirmation of a free subject." "Truth is not by nature free" (Foucault, 1980b, p.60). Knowledge is always "in bondage", dependent and interested ("selfish knowledge"). And if, in Nietzsche's terms, the will to truth is the will to power, the scientific quest for truth must also be seen as a will to power. Scientific knowledge, in contemporary culture, is the 'regime

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<sup>14</sup> The banking metaphor which underlies discourses of teaching and learning come to mind here (see Paulo Freire's work, chapter 4).

of truth' disseminated and consumed in institutions of education and science.

Foucault's genealogy refuses certainty, universality and absolutes while also refusing to attack the ideology of science in an attempt to 'correct' it, a move he (mis)understands as a fruitless attempt to emancipate truth from all power. Instead, he wants to detach the power of truth from its contemporary hegemonic forms and move towards a *new politics of truth* by positing the event,<sup>15</sup> knowledge as/of an event rather than a permanent faculty. Events are produced on the surface of bodies and are the source of 'subjugated knowledges'. Events cannot be reduced to 'causes'; they form a succession, a *chain*, not a line. An analytics of events require a more complex logic than that of representation. Meaning is freed from the merely cognitive.

In genealogy, the idea is to place everything inside history thus rejecting constants. History itself is historically

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<sup>15</sup> Foucault opposes phenomenology in part with his notion of 'event'. Phenomenology is based on the opposition of essences and appearances; the latter are knowable. In rejecting phenomenology, Foucault suggests the 'event' as the way to break up this opposition. Self-expression, voice and self-consciousness which phenomenology privileges are rejected in his critique of the sovereign subject. But see the post-colonial and feminist critiques of this stance in chapter 2.

contingent, and historians, previously erased in time and space in the name of objectivity, 'facts', and permanence ("the apparent serenity of the historian" or the historian's will to power in Nietzschean terms) are now 'situated' within it. Genealogical historical knowledge is not absolute but a matter of perspective.

*On 'local' knowledge*

Foucault's genealogy, in its moves towards the 'local', the particular, and what he terms "subjugated knowledges" is anti-science (Foucault, 1980a, p.81). "Subjugated knowledges", for Foucault, are of two kinds, those present in texts but buried and disguised, and those which have been disqualified or placed low down in the hierarchy of knowledges, beneath scientificity. The latter he links with 'local' and particular knowledge, including popular culture, previously excluded. Local, popular knowledge has critical potential in working against globalizing discourses (Lyotard's 'grand narratives') and the principles of modern science, universality and a unitary body of knowledge. Returning to Nietzsche's will to power, he answers the question "But is it science?" with "What types of knowledge do you want to disqualify in the very instant of your demand: 'Is it science?' Which speaking, discoursing subjects - which subjects of experience and knowledge - do you then want to 'diminish' when you say: 'I who conduct this discourse am conducting a scientific

discourse, and I am a scientist'?" (Foucault, 1980a, p.85). A question Foucault poses, but does not answer, is the question of the autonomy of local knowledge. He has apparently set it up *in opposition to universal knowledge* and that is a problematic central to this project.

### *Against teleology*

What teleology implies is that an act has a beginning and an ending, an intention, purpose, and aim and that there is identity between these.<sup>16</sup> Nietzsche challenged origins on the grounds that origins are a pursuit of essence, pure identity. The notion of origins and authenticity assumes the existence of immobile forms, of that which is already there, an absolute Truth, the belief in God, in the purity and perfection of beginnings. The origin is postulated as the site of Truth and makes possible the field of knowledge which aims to recover that Truth. Nietzsche's genealogy sought to disturb what was immobile and to reject foundations through revealing difference and contradiction. The move against teleology erodes notions of purposiveness and goal orientedness, that *you can know where you are going and what the effects will be.* (the kind of discourse that permeates education and social

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<sup>16</sup> Note how this works in modernist educational discourse; teachers must write out their aims and purposes so that their success in achieving these can be measured and evaluated. We are led to believe we can isolate a teaching act and a learning act and that 'learning' can be traced to its origins in teaching.

science, for instance, the discourse of transmission) Derrida, against teleology, argues we have to read the act in its textuality.

***Against essentialism and the unitary subject***

Rewriting Heidegger and Husserl,<sup>17</sup> Derrida undermines the notion of the present perceiving 'self', the unitary autonomous subject which relies on the continuity of time-perception by his claim that the subject is shaped by absence and "writing", that is, is constituted in 'differance' and is an effect of textuality. The subject becomes 'decentered' in the text. There is no essential core self. Identity as essential is displaced by the notion of identity as multiple, and decentered. In Derrida and Foucault the subject and subjectivity belong to the constituted rather than the constituting. There is no constituting subject/subjectivity. In Foucault, the notion that the subject is constituted in discourse is combined with the conjunctural, cultural, historical constitution of the subject, a move away from the atemporality of modernism.

***Against the project of Western humanism: a theory of the subject?***

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<sup>17</sup> Specifically, Heidegger's interest in confronting the problem of definitions. For the nature of anything to be defined as an entity raises the question of being and essence. Husserl's notions of self-differentiation and self-postponement are relevant.

In Foucault, humanism is about a series of sovereignties which are to be rejected: the all-knowing sovereign self (the gender of that subject is not mentioned), the soul, the individual, consciousness, and freedom. Foucault's way out is to pose 'the subject' in opposition to the humanist individual and 'self'. Subjects are not unitary. They are decentered by their multiple 'subject positions', their dispersion by "various enunciative modalities", "the various statuses, the various sites, the various positions that he (my emphasis) can occupy or be given when making a discourse" (Foucault, 1972, p.54). These discursive positions are the "positions of subjectivity" (p.55). Foucault's theory of the subject (if it can be called such) and his notion of decentering is specifically located in *the constitution of the subject in discourse*.

Foucault wants to "get rid of the subject itself" and account for the conditions of possibility of the entry into discourse of a subject, the rules the subject must follow. This argument is developed in "What is an Author?"

#### ***Against the sovereign subject***

"What is an Author?" (Foucault, 1977, pp.113-138) displaces the sovereign subject of philosophy, the all-knowing subject-as-author, the individual 'I' with intention and meaning (the one meaning) and the myth of mastery and creativity (the closing of the circle) by the subject-as-effect of discourse.

In "Foucault", 'it' writes. In examining the relation between author and text, "Foucault" rejects writing as expression, as self-referential. The text is viewed as an interplay of signs freed from any notion of 'expression' or insertion of a subject in language. As an effect, a function of discourse, the writer disappears and is lost in the text. He writes: "In short, the subject (and its substitutes) must be stripped of its creative role and analysed as a complex and variable function of discourse...*What matter who is speaking?*" (Foucault, 1977, p.138; my emphasis). This 'death of the author' negates the modernist desire of authorial immortality through writing. "Marx doesn't exist," Foucault tells his interviewers in "Questions on Geography" (1980a, p.76). "I mean the sort of entity constructed around a proper name, signifying at once a certain individual, the totality of his writings..."

In his critique of discursive authority, he rejects the notion of a 'book' as a possession of an 'author'. Contesting the modernist notion of intentions and the author as source and origin of meaning (in traditional literary criticism recourse was always made to the 'author' to interpret a text), he claims the 'author' is constructed within a particular time and discourse.<sup>18</sup> The author, as the sole source of meaning and

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<sup>18</sup> It is interesting in the context of my project to note that he also points, uncritically, to traditional story telling as *authorless* and *modern science* as *authorless discourse* positioned

the purity of the text, gives way to the *intertext* in which the distinction between originals and copies is blurred. The distinction between a critical and a creative text is also blurred.<sup>19</sup>

In "Derrida's" reworking of the sovereign author and 'the book' as 'the work', a similar move is made towards the text and away from the author. The author is seen as the effect of the text (not discourse as in Foucault). In an interview with Kristeva (Derrida, 1981), he says: "There is no subject who is agent, author, and master of difference...Subjectivity - like objectivity - is an effect of *differance*" (p.28) and "the subject, and first of all the conscious and speaking subject, depends upon the system of differences and the movement of difference...the subject is constituted only in being divided from itself, in becoming space, in temporizing, in deferral" (p.29). The question, of course, is how useful is this as a 'theory' of the writing-subject?

### ***Against totalization***

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within an anonymous conceptual system of truths and methods. I take the anonymity of science as an aspect of the problematic of modernity. Story telling, for me, requires a speaking "I".

<sup>19</sup> I have already indicated the significance of this blurring in the instance of the theory-practice relation and the relation of theory and story telling.

The grand/master narratives of the Enlightenment and their generalizing tendency are rejected. Foucault's 'genealogy' discussed above works against grand narratives of history (as in Marx), a form of history that introduces a supra historical perspective, implying an end, a completed development.<sup>20</sup>

Foucault finds Marx's narrative problematic for a number of reasons. His story (my phrase) is about Man (humanism), totality and teleology, told in the model of the human individual. His privileging of ideology which is itself based on humanism is to be rejected. 'The' body in Marx is covered over by his interest in ideology and consciousness, Foucault claims. And the Marxist conception of power as an aspect of Marx's totalizing discourse, based in centrist notions including the primacy of the economic, is also to be rejected.

Foucault rejects the two eighteenth century models of power prevalent in Marx's work, the idea of power as repression and power as oppression. Both represent a totalizing power.

Marxists have searched for critical space and critical subjects 'outside' that hegemonic power, on the margins. Critical theory was always based on the notion of the inside/outside, center/margin dichotomies. Drawing from

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<sup>20</sup> This is implied, of course, in the discourses of 'the postmodern condition' and 'postmodern culture'. The contradictions within postmodernism lie, in part, here with those who reject but reassert totalizing discourses in their own work.

quantum mechanics, Foucault counters 'oppression' with the notion of power as something that does not emanate from a central point of origin but is produced in every relation from one point of a net to another, circulating in a chain. She is always inside power as it flows and is "never in anybody's hands" (Foucault, 1980a, p.98). Therefore 'the' subject cannot only be subjugated because she does have power (of course this argument must reflect back on his own notion of "subjugated knowledges" which is itself problematic). She is both an active carrier and an effect of power posted at a multiplicity of points of resistance. *But is that enough?*<sup>21</sup>

### *Against disciplines*

In "The Discourse on Language" (1973), Foucault writes that "disciplines" are "defined by groups of objects, methods, their corpus of propositions considered to be true, the interplay of rules and definitions, of techniques and tools: all these constitute a sort of anonymous system, freely available to whoever wishes, or whoever is able to make use of them, without there being any question of their meaning or their validity being derived from whoever happened to invent

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<sup>21</sup> See how this has been applied to the critique of feminism, including its emancipation politics. (see chapter 2)

them" (p.222; my italics). The question of 'disciplines' raises significant questions for a critique of modernist knowledge. If power is not to be invested in the sovereign author as we are told it ought not, are we to unproblematically invest power in anonymous discourse? The question, of course, is who can speak the truth? Foucault has told us it doesn't matter who speaks. ("What is an Author?") Yet truth can only come from *inside* the rules of a particular discursive/disciplinary field. In Discipline and Punish (Foucault, 1979), 'discipline' becomes an economy of space<sup>22</sup> and time. It is a mechanism of control, a formula of domination, a *mode of imprisonment*. 'Discipline' demands enclosure, a cellular splitting off of people and knowledge from others, an isolation and distribution of individuals in space. There are rules as to who can have access. But access is limited to a particular community. Disciplines are invariably closed, impenetrable<sup>23</sup> to the 'outside', and within, space is organized hierarchically, requiring the 'art of rank'.

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<sup>22</sup> De Certeau (1985) takes "space" as appropriation of "place", the 'proper' place of science etc. which enables mastery over time and mastery through sight since compartmentalization of space makes possible panoptic practices. A specific type of knowledge is created, knowledge from within a specific space. For De Certeau, a *challenge to the disciplines is mounted by the return to everyday life*.

<sup>23</sup> This is the line Lyotard also followed in The Postmodern Condition with his notion of language games. See discussion above.

The notion of 'disciplines' is also linked to the modernist notion of a *continuous, accumulated body of knowledge*. Disciplinary 'cells' store and contain this knowledge. Of course, Habermas (1983) is, one who has defended the project of modernity, claiming it has yet to be completed and arguing against the breaking down of autonomous cultural spheres and the destruction of the modern order of distinct and autonomous disciplines. But postmodernism as anti-modernism has raised notions of discontinuity and difference (the 'episteme') and intertextuality in an attempt to make problematic modernist knowledge premised on continuity, unity, boundaries and the compartmentalization and containment of knowledge within disciplines. The postmodern critique of modernist knowledge moves towards '*border crossing*' and the dissolving of lines arbitrarily constructed between forms of knowledge. Postmodern critiques working at the borders of the "occupied territories" of culture and disciplines have blurred the boundaries between art and fiction/literature, literature and criticism, theory and narrative, science and fiction enabling moves towards new forms of knowledge.

#### ***The critique of the intellectual***

Discourse theory, the critique of disciplines and 'border work' make possible a reworking of the role of the intellectual as expert, as gatekeeper and professional. Expertise depends on compartmentalization and reification of

knowledge; the occupation of territories of 'proper' knowledge validates professional knowledge while invalidating other forms of knowledge. 'Territorialized knowledge' determines who can speak and who and what can be taken seriously. It implies distance between professional (the scientist, for instance) and the work/others as objects-subjects, and distance between the professional disseminator of knowledge and 'receivers' (the teacher/student relation) and thus assumes a position of unquestioning mastery.

Foucault's critique of the role of the intellectual has to be understood in the context of his critique of universality and his move to local and particular knowledges. The intellectual can no longer be the dispassionate observer, the producer and disseminator of universals. He suggests instead the *specific intellectual* who works with 'local' knowledge.

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### **Critical possibilities of anti-modern postmodernism for Cultural Studies**

I posed at the start the question of what critical possibilities were opened up by "postmodernism" for Cultural Studies. Deleuze and Foucault talked of the 'use' value of any theory, of theory as "a tool box". If it was of no use to the theorist-practitioner, then it should be given up. So the

question to put to their own work, now, is how useful is it for radical cultural critique in contemporary heterogenous societies? Since I have already made critical comments along the way and, in chapter 2, I will discuss in more detail the feminist and post-colonial critiques of "postmodernism" (and feminism), I offer here a brief summary of the critical possibilities of anti-modern "postmodernism" for Cultural Studies.

*"Postmodernism" or the radical philosopher's dream of knowledge*

In the first instance, "postmodern" philosophy, despite its critique of universality and the argument for an epistemology of "the local", itself remains a discourse of transcendence. What is the difference between the removal of the experiencing subject from Kantian transcendental discourses in the name of universality, and the 'disappearance' of the subject, for instance, in Foucault and Derrida's anti-modernist theories? Both remove active experiencing subjects; both suppress difference and discursive struggle.

Moreover, the postmodern theorist is himself a "transparent intellectual". The postmodern challenge to the role of the intellectual is deceptive, argues Spivak (1988). The "authors" of postmodern theory only pretend that they (and their subject effects) have "*no geo-political determinations*" (p.272). Their

assumed transparency actually "marks the place of their interests." It is easy to argue, as feminist and post-colonial critics indeed have (West, Kipnis, Spivak, Morris), that these dismissive gestures work to restore "postmodern" theorists to enunciatively reoccupy the place of control of meaning. "Postmodernism" is a discourse about their own demise in the post-European era.

Philosophical postmodernism (or any other "body" of theory for that matter), has to be understood in the context of its production. The question to be asked is whether "postmodernism", created in the specific political context of post 1968 France ("yesterday's French ideas", as Hall [1980b] has put it), cut free from that cultural/historical context of production, commodified, and, as "world" travelling theory, can function effectively in the service of radical cultural analysis elsewhere and, especially, in contemporary heterogeneous neo-colonial or decolonizing cultures such as North America. This is an epistemological/political question about the production and distribution of knowledge to which I believe the answer is "no". To be sure, some knowledge (often in the form of general principles) is transportable and consumable without change, but each cultural context poses its own problems and specific social, political and theoretical struggles. This ought to be the case, otherwise creativity, struggle and excitement which are a part of the production of

knowledge are displaced by a universal, totalizing, unchanging and Eurocentric knowledge/theory (which I believe is the hidden desire of postmodern discourse, see chapter 2).

In "Black Culture and Postmodernism" (1989), West argues that "postmodernism" has to be read (and used) in the context of "three fundamental historical coordinates", the waning of the age of Europe, the waning of the economic and military power of the United States and the decolonization of Third World peoples. "Postmodernism" turns out to be First world reflections on the decentering of Europe, "a kind of European navel-gazing", parochial, provincial and Eurocentric. (see chapter 2 for other feminist and post-colonial analyses along similar lines) Versions of it remain, in various ways, within the terrain of aesthetic modernism (loyal to modernist heroes like Nietzsche and Bataille), postmodern rather than post-modern. Consequently, as an African-American cultural critic, West is suspicious of "postmodernism" for two reasons. One, because the term "modern" has oppressed "Third world" peoples (and why should "postmodern" be any different?), and, secondly, because African-American people historically embody and enact "postmodern" themes of "degraded otherness and subaltern marginality". The question, then, is does the "postmodern" debate acknowledge and serve the distinctive cultural and political differences of oppressed peoples? Or "does this debate highlight notions of difference,

marginality, and otherness in such a way that it further marginalizes actual people of difference and otherness" (West, 1989, p.91-2)? The response West (and others, see chapter 2) make is that "postmodernism" displaces those actual voices of difference.

The shift to discourse in Foucault, and the privileging of textuality by Derrida,<sup>24</sup> is also a related and problematic issue for Cultural Studies, despite the fact that numerous Leftists, feminists and post-colonial critics, have appropriated this move. (De Lauretis and Bhabha are two; see chapter 2) However, the question that is constantly raised is what is the relation of discourse to *the real world*? Is there a real world beyond the text? Isn't the move to discourse *depoliticizing*? Spivak's answer to this is to say that textuality is representation of the world *in the world* (she deconstructs the separation and emphasizes simultaneity). But unsettling questions remain. West (1990) has referred to philosophy's *flight from "the specific, concrete, practical and particular"* and the foreclosing, in Derrida's work, of analyses "that guide action with purpose" (p.30). The

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<sup>24</sup> Interestingly, Foucault accuses Derrida of "the reduction of discursive practice to textual traces"... "the elision of the events that are produced there in order to retain nothing but marks for reading; the invention of voices behind texts in order not to have to analyse the modes of implication of the subject in discourse...there is nothing outside of the text...(this) permits (him) to read the text indefinitely" (cited by Spivak in Derrida, 1976, p.lxi).

postmodern subject of culture is transhistorical; it addresses the subject in general not historically determinate social subjects. Therefore, it is incapable of moving into concrete historical/cultural analysis. We are offered no theories for social transformation by Foucault or Derrida. And Derrida's endless textual play of meaning remains problematic for cultural workers interested in change. Postmodernism, as a discourse about discourse, is arguably a shift away from the world and, therefore, a *depoliticizing return to aesthetic modernism* (Kipnis, 1988). In chapter 2, I argue that this is the case and, as such, it displaces the theory-practice of Cultural Studies.

Significantly, too, the critical potential of Foucault and Derrida is, in part, constrained by the *limitations of philosophical reason*. This is particularly evident in the frequently employed gesture of "reversal". The effect is to end up on the opposite side of what is opposed in a discursively specific mechanical move. The theory of the fragmented, dispersed self, for instance, is arrived at through the move against wholeness and sovereignty. But as such, it should be read, I think, as a statement of what is being opposed within a specific, historical discourse (philosophy) rather than as either a description or analysis of contemporary cultural conditions.

West (1992) and Hall (1986) have warned of the problem of 'analytical slippages' which occur when cultural theorists uncritically transport categories from philosophical discourse. (see my discussion of Baudrillard and Lyotard in section one above) West gave the example of 'essentialism' (which pervaded white feminist critiques in the 1980's). As a category of philosophical discourse, essentialism could not offer an analysis or explanation of culture yet theorists had appropriated the term in this way (what West called a "category mistake"). If bodies, or lived lives, were made the point of departure, instead of philosophical categories like 'essentialism', cultural critics would come up with a different kind of analysis (West, 1992).

The philosophical move of reversal also tends to cover over *contradictions* and *complexities* which radical cultural critics prefer to highlight. Again, there are numerous instances but the shift to an "epistemology of difference", in a reversal of the "epistemology of the same", is central to my work which is seeking, in part, new directions in epistemology. The question is, is this move to difference the way to go in the contemporary historical conjuncture? One problem is that the "postmodern" move to "difference", achieved by the gesture of reversal, makes no reference to an actual community of knowing persons. The kind of "difference" referred to is "pure" difference.

Foucault's shift to "local" knowledge in response to the problem of universality, is another instance of an inadequate philosophical gesture of reversal which refuses complexity. The timeless/spaceless discourse of the universal (the fiction of singular temporality, "allochronic" time [Harraway,1992; Morris,1992]) cannot be simply displaced by a shift to "local" time/place. It's not a question of dismissing one and reverting to the other. The fact is some knowledge does travel. Therefore, it's a question of articulating a different kind of relation between what has been called "the universal" and "the particular", of blurring the boundaries, finding an *in-between zone*, a way of moving in-between. Foucault's "local" knowledge, and the related notion of the "specific intellectual", are inadequately theorized, in my view. I would prefer to take up Spivak's (1988) suggestion of an epistemology of "identity-in-difference". (see chapter 2)

New directions in epistemology require a re-theorizing of the time/space relation. But, in another move of reversal, Foucault has apparently shifted away from temporality (which, for him, remains within the model of humanism and individual consciousness which he seeks to displace) to the side of "space", deploying spatial metaphors such as displacement, landscape, site, position, location, field, territory, region throughout his work. He claims these metaphors are enabling for him in working out the relationship between power and

knowledge, and in conducting a genealogy of knowledge. The point is, though, he has dismissed one and shifted to the other when what is needed, in contemporary heterogenous cultures, in which people live in more than one time and more than one place simultaneously<sup>25</sup> (the hybrid living of the "world"-traveller, see chapter 2), is to reconstruct the time-space relation as an aspect of reconstructing a new epistemology of knowledge for contemporary times.

The move "beyond" representation also remains problematic for any critical cultural studies. Read in context, it is a statement of "postmodernism's" loyalty to aesthetic modernism. But, in the context of critical cultural studies, to take representation as no longer is absurd. Worse, this gesture has the effect of covering over the representational practices of postmodernists themselves and, secondly, of displacing the central problematic of much cultural critique including my own, namely *the politics of representational practices in the contemporary historical juncture*.

In two early papers, "Cultural Studies and the Centre: some problematics and problems" (1980a) and "Cultural Studies: two paradigms" (1980b), Hall outlined the central theoretical/

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<sup>25</sup> As Morris (1992) says of contemporary heterogenous cultures, "in a mixed space one inhabits not just many 'positions', but multiple times" (p.451).

practical problematic of Cultural Studies at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies in Britain at that time. Tracing its trajectory through two strands, the *culturalist* (following Hoggart, Williams and Thompson), and the *structuralist* (derived from Levi-Strauss and Althusser), Hall argued that the *culturalist paradigm foregrounded culture, consciousness, experience and agency*, and a "method", in the spirit of "practical criticism", of "reading" culture (understood as lived lives) like "texts". Culture was the site of convergence of Hoggart, Williams and Thompson's texts. The structuralist interventions, on the other hand, had been articulated around the concept *ideology* and a particular understanding of culture. (see chapter three for a discussion of their understanding of culture) Hall concludes that, although neither culturalism (which cannot theorize the relation between specific practices and wider structures), nor structuralism (which goes too far in erecting the machine of structure) are adequate to the study of culture, both can be deployed to measure the weaknesses of other "rallying points" such as post-structuralism (postmodernism).

Hall argues that the claims of "postmodernism" (another version of structuralism?) to have displaced all the terms of earlier structuralisms is "wildly over-ambitious" (1980b, p.70). While Foucault's return to a concrete analysis of discursive and ideological formations is useful, his

epistemological positions can't be "swallowed whole". In fact, Hall argues, Foucault contradicts those positions in his own more concrete work. In Hall's view, the best of early structuralism and culturalism, holds greater advances in the direction he thinks Cultural Studies must go than does post-structuralism/postmodernism. Returning to the concepts of *culture and ideology*, they attend to the core problem of Cultural Studies, addressing both the specificity of practices and the articulated unity those practices constitute (Hall, 1980b, p.72). It is on these grounds that they hold out the possibility of a Cultural Studies based in a materialist theory of culture.

Since then, Hall (1986) has developed this argument further. Carefully avoiding positioning himself inside "postmodernism", he claims that Foucault's moves leave us with *no representation, no meaning, no agency, no ideology and no subject, all of which are key to cultural critique*. Moreover, Hall asks how Foucault can retain the notion of resistance, while rejecting ideology which is necessary for understanding the construction of truth and action, the subject and subjectivity. Significantly, too, Spivak (1988) has argued that to adopt an anti-stance to thinking causally or universally, or within humanism, is disabling for a radical left political/cultural practice because these notions are

*necessary to ground social justice, to make moral and ethical judgements and to take political action.<sup>26</sup>*

My position is that any new direction for a post-modern epistemology must reject "postmodern" epistemologies of difference which negate ideology, meaning and representation. In my classroom cultural work, the foregrounding of *limits*, (specifically ideological, political and material limits), as the borders of thought and action in lived in bodies, are taken as points of departure for a critical cultural pedagogical practice, and as necessary in any theory-practice of personal/social/cultural transformation.

On the positive side, there have undoubtedly been some useful notions put forward, the decentered subject, the deconstruction of the inside/outside dichotomy (see chapter 2 for a reworking of this in feminist/post-colonial terms), Foucault's rewriting of centrist notions of power, the opening up of the debate (or continuing it) around Theory, and the movement, generally, to undermine the modernist epistemology of identity. But perhaps the most significant contributions of "postmodernism", at least in the case of my own work, are two:

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<sup>26</sup> Lazreg (1988) makes a similar argument. She claims that "a certain form of humanism must be reaffirmed" (p.98) otherwise feminists run the risk of losing the ethical/moral grounds for action, an ethics of responsibility. She wants to retain the notion of intersubjectivity which implies the possibility of a common bond that ties women and men together.

the reclaiming of narrative and the notion of *science as fiction/narrative* (see chapter 3) and, secondly, the apparent support for anti-disciplinary moves to break down modernist cultural spheres, including the disciplinary boundaries and compartmentalization of knowledges in the modern university.

This latter move is central to Cultural Studies work, especially in its articulation as an anti- or non-disciplinary activity within the academy. Traditionally, knowledge production/dissemination in the academy has been separated from culture and 'life', and the suspension of politics in a sphere of its own, political science, has depoliticized everything else. Teaching in the modern university has been about professionalism, accuracy of representation and dissemination of knowledge as 'facts'. Pedagogical discourse is packaged in the language of economy, goal orientedness, measureability and calculability.

Now, the university, as the site of disciplinary autonomy ("religious constituencies", Foster suggests) and the defender of the faith in, and gatekeeper of modernist knowledge (Said, 1983) is under siege from within and without. Knowledge, produced and disseminated under surveillance in specialized disciplinary territories (in this project, I am specifically interested in the social sciences and sociology), which protect the *methods of knowledge production*, the identity of

the field, its experts, its institutional presence, is being challenged by postmodern critiques, made more powerful by their intersection with post-colonial discourses in contemporary heterogenous cultural conditions of post-coloniality. "Border crossings", a central theme in this project, are breaking down the disciplinary constraints and challenging and transforming the hierarchies of knowledge and power. Cultural studies, in as much as it is, in part, a border crossing movement interested in the production of new forms of knowledge, gains some support from this postmodern move.

### *New directions*

So far in this chapter I have taken stock of the philosophical discourses of "postmodernism", particularly in their "conservative" and "anti-modernist" stances. As it turns out, (and this becomes clearer in chapter 2 when I turn to the feminist and post-colonial critiques), these philosophical discourses remain more within the modern than they are movements to the post-modern and consequently, there must be serious doubt about the possibilities of "radical" philosophical discourse in any contemporary cultural theory-practice. Moreover, Foster's old categories (including "critical postmodernism" which is a confusing misuse of the

term), now need to be displaced. The new direction towards postmodernity which is not yet, must be *away from a privileging of the aesthetic, away from a separation of the aesthetic and the political and into the world*. Movements towards post-modernism, I argue, necessitate a reconnection with the *social/cultural movements* of the 1960's and with the contemporary moment of decolonization of Third world peoples. *Culture* is the central category which has been disavowed by modernism and "postmodernism" and must now be foregrounded and reinscribed. In this way, any claims to territorial separation of post-modernism and cultural studies would dissolve.

3

**What are the current issues in cultural studies?**

One might expect Cultural Studies (Grossberg, Nelson & Treichler, 1992), as the text of a relatively recent international conference on Cultural Studies, to throw some light on the current debates and I will turn to selected pieces in that collection here. What interests me is that 'the political' seems to be the cutting edge question in both Cultural Studies and "postmodernism", at least from the perspective of those like myself engaging in radical cultural critique. Consequently, it may be that the directions I have just proposed for post-modernism must also be demanded of

Cultural Studies. Obviously, Cultural Studies can't be taken automatically as the radical discourse. This shouldn't be surprising given that middle class white men dominate the academy and bring to hegemony certain versions of discourses which support their own position.

I say this with Morris' (1988) "Banality in Cultural Studies" in mind. She is interested, there, in the politics of Cultural Studies as representational practice. In her opening, she suggests that "Baudrillard" as an "author" (and cultural worker) constitutes *a different event* to "British cultural studies" which *"is a complex historical and political movement as well as a library of texts"* (p.15; my italics). Still, Morris' argument seems to be that if you're looking for instances of radical cultural critique, neither camp will deliver. The politics of Baudrillard's cultural theory is implicit in her label "banal"; a banal theory (presumably his) "assumes...that the subject is more powerful than the object" (p.19). She understands that Baudrillard, in his Francophone elitism, "enunciatively reoccupies the place of control of meaning" (p.19).<sup>27</sup> But neither is all well in the camp of British cultural studies. Banality is also a problem there. Morris writes: "...what I see emerging from the recent Cultural Studies boom is the beginning of a move to

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<sup>27</sup> For similar feminist and post-colonial critiques of postmodernism, especially by Spivak and Kipnis, see chapter 2.

'commodify' an appropriate theoretical *style* for analysing everyday life - and consequently a proper (and in my view, "banal") speaking-position for the theorist of popular culture" (p.16). Morris cites repetitiveness and circularity ("the sheer proliferation of the restatements") and a "restrictive definition of the ideal knowing subject of cultural studies" (p.14). She claims there is an active process going on, a function of the Cultural Studies boom, of discrediting radical cultural critique, namely the voices of feminists and leftists. If cultural studies emerged, at least in Britain, in part to give voice to those excluded from mainstream discourses, Morris asks whether in fact this is actually happening (or has it become as clean as "the sanitized world of a deodorant commercial?" [p.23])

Cultural Studies itself a "*banality machine*"? Commodified, recycled, losing its critical force? Its white male theorist a "bimbo?" (p.14) How could this be when 'we' have heard of "British cultural studies" and its connections with social/political *movements*, a different kind of event to philosophical postmodernism ("Baudrillard" for Morris is in the camp of cultural studies) and different, too, to cultural studies in the academy in the United States where, if we are to believe Grossberg (1992), Cultural Studies has lost or is likely to lose, its critical edge.

I for one am neither convinced of a "boom" nor, secondly, that a critical edge has been lost, at least not at the hands of a boom. It depends where/which time/space of Cultural Studies, you stand and speak from. Neither Morris, nor Grossberg, are speaking from a position inside Cultural Studies similar to my own. Morris, at least, acknowledges the cynicism of her own textually oriented position, knowing others than herself are engaged in other forms of Cultural Studies, including *cultural studies as pedagogical practice*. And that is not to deny Morris' leftist (if white) politics. Grossberg, on the other hand, may unfortunately fall within the camp of those promoting Cultural Studies for their own professional interests, only to bring about the very demise he apparently fears. Certainly he doesn't speak of any of the institutional roadblocks the Cultural Studies Committee of The Graduate Center of The City University of New York has encountered in attempting to establish a cultural studies program in the 1980's in that setting. Nor does he (or Morris) seem sensitive to the difficulties West and Gilroy highlight of getting visibility for *black* cultural studies, (comparable to establishing women's studies and gay/lesbian studies). You can't argue there's a boom in these arenas, nor a loss of critical edge!

If the political is an issue in Cultural Studies debates, perhaps ~~the~~ issue, it is partly focussed around the category

culture itself. The debate goes in several directions. One turns on the *nationalist* representation of Cultural Studies. In Cultural Studies, Turner, West, Morris and Hall (1992) addressed the issue of nationalism and culture. The writing of the history of Cultural Studies as a singular event with its origins in Britain is one instance implying both the homogeneity of "British" culture and denying 'other' forms or sites of cultural studies elsewhere. Hall tries to right this, rejecting any notion that there was ever a homogenous tradition of Cultural Studies in Britain. He leans on the principles of certain postmodern critiques of history to make his argument (one instance where *cultural studies and postmodernism* are visible as *two conversations co-terminous and supportive of the other*). Cultural Studies, he asserts, has multiple discourses, a number of histories<sup>28</sup> and no continuity. One moment in "British" cultural studies was marxist critical practice and then it was "interrupted" by feminism, by Gramsci, by anti-racist *movements*. But this history of "interruption" can be read as indicative of the very struggles that have, and must, take place around the category culture, struggles which expose moves to nationalist naming of culture as ethnocentric.

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<sup>28</sup> Cornel West (1992, pp.689-705) claims a history of cultural studies in the United States, one which is necessarily different given the different cultural and historical conditions. He suggests that American Studies is the North American version of British cultural studies.

Gilroy (1992, pp.187-198) addresses this. His ethno-historical reading shows how Cultural Studies, through the history of its principle category culture, is entangled in the project of modernity. Ethnocentrism and racism are inherited aspects of the notion of culture (normalizing and exoticizing definitions of culture have pervaded traditional anthropology and sociology) and are, consequently, inherent in the current so-called Cultural Studies 'boom'. Gilroy speaks of "the ethnic garb" of cultural studies, its whiteness and Englishness. When we speak of 'culture' the question is *whose culture?* (and, of course, who are 'we' speaking?) For whom is there a 'boom'? And whose 'methods' are used in the study of culture? Besides, the notion of a 'national' culture, Gilroy points out, simply doesn't stand up anymore. 'The nation' has been undermined as a political, economic and cultural unit in the face of the global shifts of capital and population. *Cultural hybridity* is everywhere yet contemporary cultural critique can be guilty of unifying or hiding difference. So, whereas Ian Hunter (1992, pp.347-372), a white Australian male critic, wants us to remember the roots of Cultural Studies in modern aesthetics (a return to modernity and depoliticization as I read him), Gilroy, concerned with the image of *black* in modern aesthetics, reads that as a sign of the ethnocentric roots of cultural studies which he contests.

Not only are there signs of ethnocentrism and racism in Cultural Studies, there is also evidence of masculinist theorizing (the "subculture" studies are evidence of both). Morris wrote of "the white male theorist as bimbo" in an attempt to expose the gendered interests of cultural theorizing (1988). She has also pointed to the modernist, and masculine, themes that inhabit certain practices of cultural studies (1992, pp.450-478) including the construction of the object of Cultural Studies, namely the notion of culture as "everyday life" or "the people" or even "popular culture" (Fiske, pp.154-173; De Certeau, 1988). This discourse inscribes the European, middle class male; it is *his* everyday life. The practice of feminist cultural studies cuts across those notions, in part by rearticulating the relation of "the social" and culture (see chapters 2 and 3), but also by bringing to center stage the necessity of a radical political and ethical commitment in the practice of Cultural Studies. Is there a 'boom' in this kind of cultural studies practice?

**IN SEARCH OF CRITICAL SPACE 2:  
FEMINISMS, POSTMODERNISM, AND POST-COLONIAL DISCOURSES**

*"Being women together was not enough. We were different. Being gay-girls together was not enough. We were different. Being Black together was not enough. We were different. Being Black women together was not enough. We were different. Being Black dykes together was not enough. We were different.*

*Each of us had our own needs and pursuits, and many different alliances. Self-preservation warned some of us that we could not afford to settle for one easy definition, one narrow individuation of self...It was a while before we came to realize that our place was the very house of difference."*  
Audre Lorde, Zami: A New Spelling of My Name. p.226.

Any discussion of the discourses of feminism, "postmodernism" and post-coloniality puts into question what I call the "world"-travelling potential of theory. Philosophical postmodernism has represented itself as a universal discourse for/of "our" time (Spivak, 1988). But whether the narratives of philosophical postmodernism, with their historical, political and ideological specificity, can "travel" across space and time and be effective/useful in contemporary Anglo or North American cultural theory-practice now seems to be in doubt. Furthermore, the provinciality of theory may be evident in the problematic border crossings of feminism (French or Anglo-American) and philosophy, and again, at the now critical contemporary historical juncture of post-coloniality, in the

relation of "First World" and "Third World" feminism. Post-colonial critics in both "First" and "Third" worlds have challenged the imperialistic tendencies of Western Eurocentric Theory and social science. "White" mainstream feminism, too, has been challenged as complicitous with those colonizing discourses.

In this chapter I want to pose two broad questions. First, does feminism find a supporting argument for its claims in philosophical postmodernism? Does the epistemology of philosophical postmodernism serve the interests of feminism? Does postmodernism open up, or foreclose, critical space for feminism? Can feminism critically interrupt postmodernism in its current orthodox articulation? Secondly, what transformative potential do the critiques of colonial discourses have for the "white" Western feminist project? What new directions are suggested for feminist epistemology in post-colonial times?

1

### **Feminism and Postmodernism**

Feminist responses to philosophical postmodernism in North America have tended to fall on the pro side or the con side with few in between. On the pro side, Nicholson and Fraser, in the collection edited by Nicholson, Feminism/Postmodernism (1990), have argued, somewhat superficially I think, that

there are many points of overlap, and that "postmodernism would appear to be a natural ally of feminism" although they do concede some "dangers" for feminism in certain versions of postmodernism (1990). Could there be a "trading of criticisms" whereby each would remedy the deficiencies of the other? (what Kipnis calls a "theoretical renovation" [Kipnis, 1988]). In that case, the prospect would be a *postmodernist feminism* which Nicholson and Fraser take to mean an *integration* of the respective strengths and weaknesses of each. But would this additive approach foreclose a radical politics and work against the necessary reformulation of both the feminist project and the current philosophical articulation of postmodernism as anti-modernism? Certainly, it is difficult to see how a postmodern feminism could attend to the problem of the domination of the feminist project by white, middle class North American women, a problem Nicholson alludes to in her introduction but perpetuates in her choice of contributors to her collection. Or could it be that a postmodern feminist discourse is not a conversation women of color are interested in participating in?

In what I take to be an even more politically conservative move, Flax, in that same collection, argues for the location of feminism in the terrain of postmodern philosophy, taking feminism to be "a type of postmodern philosophy" (p.40). To assimilate feminism into philosophy is to discount the

contradictions and differences between feminism as a political project and postmodernism, feminism and philosophy and the respective relation of these discourses to the lives of real women. Such an incorporation would surely spell the death of feminism as radical political practice!

Miller (1986) is among those who remain skeptical of any compatibility between feminism and postmodernism. She makes the suggestion that feminism and postmodernism (she is referring specifically to deconstruction) are two "chronologies" (which I take to mean different stories in different times) and two *rhetorics*, the former "dilatatory", the latter "hortatory". Her position is that feminism and postmodernism cannot form a critical alliance "due to the fact that their relationship has never been one of complicity - of being on the same side" (Miller, 1986, p.105). Important though this view is to retaining a feminist politics, postcolonial feminists make a different argument (see section two below), revealing Miller's own class and race privilege. From a slightly different, but still skeptical angle, Di Stefano (1990) argues that, since men have had their Enlightenment, "[i]s postmodernism a theory whose time has come for men but not women?" Again, post-colonial critics will remind Di Stefano and others who take this "white" feminist position, that not "all men" have had their Enlightenment or even have wished for such! Last amongst skeptics I'll mention

here are those feminists who vigorously reject postmodernism specifically because of its perceived danger to a feminist identity politics. The fear that postmodernism would bring an end to feminist organizing based on identity politics is perhaps one of the weakest reasons for rejecting postmodernism as I will discuss later.

Spivak (1990) and Kipnis (1988) make a different kind of argument on the con side, one which I want to pursue in some detail here because it provides a significant point of departure for my own project. They put into question the anti-modernist stance, what I have already referred to as the hegemonic articulation of postmodernism. Spivak argues feminists should be "*looking forward to postmodernism*" (1990, p.132) suggesting that a post-Enlightenment era has not yet arrived.<sup>29</sup> In 1988 she wrote that philosophical postmodernism had to be read as symptomatic of a crisis of European consciousness (the waning of the Age of Europe) and warned that that theory, as "cultural ideology", had imperialistic tendencies, seeking to reproduce itself, its "authors" and culture. From a "Third World" perspective, postmodernism (and feminism) could be viewed as a theoretical project with a set

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<sup>29</sup> Here, I want to acknowledge, but reject, Harraway's (1992) rejection, following Latour, of both terms, modern and postmodern, in preference for "amodern". She sees no possibility of representation because there is nothing to be represented (as in possessed). Since nothing can be represented, there can be no "modern" science. The problem with this is her slippage between the real and the philosophical.

of directives by/for race and class privileged Western academics. With this argument, Spivak undermines the self-representation of postmodernism as a theory for "our" time.

Laura Kipnis, in her piece "Feminism: The Political Conscience of Postmodernism?" (1988) makes a persuasive argument that the *"postmodernism" of radical French philosophy is neither radical nor post-modern; rather it is a conservative return to aesthetic modernism, "a postmodernism not yet postmodern."* She begins her argument with the attempts to synthesize ("renovate") feminism and Marxism respectively with psychoanalysis. Any turn to a theory which offers no theory of social transformation, is implicated, she argues, in a "dialectic of defeat" and is arguably paralleled by syntheses of postmodernism and feminism (as in the case of French "Feminism" and postmodern feminism and psychoanalytic feminism in North America in the conservative years of the 1980's). Further, since any theory constructs its object, this appropriation of theories with no transformative potential (a psychoanalytically "inflected" theory, for instance, or [my suggestion] a feminism "inflected" by postmodernism) would construct a particular object, define a set of strategies (reversal, in the case of anti-modernist postmodernism) and inscribe a political agenda. Thus theory becomes a strategy of containment as well as possibility, in Kipnis' argument (not a new argument, but one powerfully employed here). So, whereas

a feminism which rejects psychoanalysis tends to a realist aesthetics and political effectivity, a feminist-psychoanalytic synthesis signals a politically regressive tendency to *aesthetic modernism*, that is, to the *aestheticization of the political*, its central concerns being with philosophy not practical politics. Theory, Kipnis' argument continues, becomes esoteric (reminiscent of Althusser's notion of theoretical autonomy, the floating signifier of theory), displacing mass practice and popular consciousness and, simultaneously, bringing about a distancing of intellectuals from the popular, a problem for a radical left politics.

Kipnis' argument about psychoanalysis is easily made in relation to postmodernism and feminism. To begin with, given the argument she is making, she is able to unpack the pervasive confusion in the use of the terms post-structuralist and postmodern. Whereas French "Feminism" for instance has been named "postmodern", she argues the tendency (of Kristeva, Cixous, Irigaray and others) to aestheticize the political returns them to modernism. In the same way, French radical philosophy's repudiation of subjectivity, representation and history (its anti-modernist stance) implies a modernist aesthetics. It is a *postmodernism not yet postmodern*. Any Anglo-American feminist appropriation of postmodernism or French feminism (she refers to psychoanalysis in her argument)

would lead to a disturbing neo-Kantian aestheticizing tendency and an increasing distancing of theory and political practice.

I find Kipnis' analysis of the hypervisibility of the subject/subjectivity, the theoretical proliferation of the subject in philosophical "postmodernism", as implicated in the ethos of defeat (post 1968) and the waning of the Age of Europe to be in agreement with (if more fully developed than), Spivak's (1988) critique above. For Kipnis, the postmodern theory of "the subject" is an instance of what Spivak has referred to as a crisis in European consciousness. The 'centered subject' of Enlightenment humanism corresponds to the Age of Europe; the 'decentered subject' its decline and the decline of white Western men. Through his "theory" of "the subject" as effect the white male European theorist seeks to confine the disturbing knowledge of his own decline. So, despite the rhetoric (of difference, the turn to the local and the rejection of master narratives, for example) Kipnis reads philosophical postmodernism as an attempt to retain power while apparently giving it up. The rise of France as "the world capital of theory" is the sequel of its political decentering. If Kipnis is right, philosophical postmodernism can only represent a *closing off not an opening up of political/critical space.*

Meanwhile, Kipnis argues, a narrative has emerged in discussions of postmodernism in North America that "*feminism is the paradigmatic political discourse of postmodernism*" (1988, p.160). Owens (1983) and Huyssen (1986) seem to have started this story. Owens (1983), lamenting the lack of feminist work in postmodernism, wrote: "Theories of postmodernism have tended either to neglect, or to repress that (feminist) voice. The absence of discussions of sexual difference in writings about postmodernism, as well as the fact that few women have engaged in the modernism/postmodernism debate, suggest that postmodernism may be another masculine invention engineered to exclude women," (p.61). And Huyssen, agreeing with Owens, wrote of the 1970's: "It was especially the art, writing, film making and criticism of women and minority artists...their emphasis on exploring forms of gender- and race-based subjectivity...which added a whole new dimension to the critique of high modernism" (p.250) and, "[I]n light of these developments it is somewhat baffling that feminist criticism has so far largely stayed away from the postmodern debate which is considered not to be pertinent to feminist concerns. The fact that only male critics have addressed the problem of modernity/postmodernity however does not mean that it does not concern women. I would argue - and here I am in full agreement with Craig Owens - that women's art, literature and criticism are an important part of the postmodern culture." In "Mapping the Postmodern", Huyssen,

perhaps sensing that "postmodernism" is not yet post-modern, turns to radical social movements as the future of postmodernism.

The irony is, I think, if Kipnis' argument is followed, that *philosophical postmodernism has actually displaced feminist and other anti-Enlightenment social movements of the 60's, and succeeded in attaining hegemony over the postmodern debate, at least in the academy through the 70's and '80's.* But, getting back to Kipnis, if feminism were to become paradigmatic of a now re-emerging post-modernism, that would make of feminism, she argues, "the dominant articulating principle" of post-modernism through which other political struggles could be articulated. And, to support this, Kipnis suggests that women be understood as a *colony* (not a new idea), and *feminism* be read as a *decolonizing movement, itself in the space of contemporary post-colonial movements.*

This latter position separates Kipnis' argument from Spivak's. As post-colonial critic, Spivak has pointed out that feminism is itself a colonizing discourse/movement and so to speak of *feminism as a post-colonial discourse, seductive though it may seem at first, is to obscure its own colonizing tendencies, its own complicity with Western race and class privilege.* Further, to set feminism in place as the principle social movement (that's how I read Kipnis' "the dominant articulating

principle"), the point of articulation of other movements, is, I think, to speak from the position of "white" feminism. In the contemporary historical juncture feminist theoretical practice is under challenge from post-colonial discourses, from women of color and from lesbians for its complicity with hegemonic discourses in its universalizing, imperialistic and reductive tendencies.

Rather than collapsing feminism and post-coloniality or feminism and postmodernism, I argue (and this sets the frame of this chapter and the overall project) that it is necessary to reconceptualize and reconnect the post-modernism of the '60's with a newly emerging post-modernism which itself re-displaces philosophical "postmodernism" (now understood as still modern) through an ongoing critical to-ing and fro-ing between the discourses of "postmodernism", cultural studies, feminism and post-colonial discourses within and without the "First World". This move (a re-membering of history) would redistribute Foster's (1983) categories of "conservative", "anti-modern" and "critical postmodernism". Understanding the latter as the only possible emerging post-modernism, it would (1) challenge modernism by showing its historical limits rather than merely opposing or rejecting it, a move Foster suggested but, in an expansion and reconceptualization of those earlier arguments, it would (2) challenge "postmodernism" in its anti-modernist but still

modern version, (3) challenge the assumptions of feminism, its modernist roots and universalizing tendencies, (4) engage contemporary post-colonial discourses, and (5) engage with the reality of the lives lived in contemporary cultures (cultural studies). In the remainder of this chapter I will explore some of the issues in (2), (3) and (4).

*The Feminist Critique of Postmodernism as Anti-Modernism*  
Feminist critiques of postmodern epistemology.<sup>1</sup>

In chapter one I set out the postmodern anti-stance to modern epistemology. The postmodern "epistemology of difference", in its attempt to displace the modern "epistemology of identity", raises important questions for feminism. Can representation be rejected or should it rather be made problematic? Are all metanarratives, even all theory, to be rejected? Is a feminist "epistemology of identity" no longer viable for feminists? Is an "epistemology of difference" an adequate replacement? Must feminists give up epistemology (understood as a discourse presuming generalizations and transcendent reason) altogether? Are notions of universalizing, generalizing, objectivity and humanism specific only to modernity? Must feminists reject universalizing altogether and turn to "particular" or "local" knowing and what does that sort of knowing imply anyway? Is the anti-humanist move of "postmodernism" in accord with the

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<sup>1</sup> By feminist I mean here "white" feminism and also those versions of feminism adopted by post-colonial critics.

feminist critique of humanism? Need it imply a postfeminist or anti-feminist stance? Can the postmodern theory of "the subject" adequately support a theory of knowledge? And what of the relation of power and knowledge offered by "postmodernism", particularly Foucault? Can a feminist politics of identity be displaced by a politics of difference and still provide feminists with the grounds for political organizing? I address these questions, briefly, in the remainder of this section.

On the postmodern critique of metanarrative and theory.

Some feminists (for instance, Bordo, 1990) read postmodernism as proclaiming the end of metanarrative while reestablishing it through the back door, so to speak. Lyotard rejects the project of theory, yet produces it himself. In another reading, the postmodern story, representing itself as a universal discourse, turns out to be another version of the modernist master discourses (Spivak, 1988; Kipnis, 1988). Morris (1988) asks is there a difference between a meta-narrative and a master narrative? And can the narrative of the end of master narratives be other than a master narrative? In yet another reading, Nicholson and Fraser (1990) argue that, if feminism appropriated the postmodern anti-metanarrative stance, that would serve to close down critical space.

Moreover, the anti-metanarrative stance is implicated in the postmodern critique of representation as a move beyond representation, which has to be rejected by feminists. To go beyond representation (an absurd notion anyway, as Spivak comments) would be to give up the possibility of mounting any challenges to the regimes of representation (including postmodernism!) which is central to the feminist project.

More significant than postmodern moves are those feminist and post-colonial critiques which focus concern on the need for a *transformation of theoretical practice*. Blurring the boundary of Theory and non-Theory and questioning the fixed position of Theorist (Morris, 1988) by opening up access to theory making are key themes. (see section 2)

On postmodernism and the feminist "epistemology of identity".

Early feminism had critiqued modern foundational epistemologies. By connecting the personal and the political, feminism undermined the modernist notion of the all-knowing, individual subject and deconstructed the opposition between the personal and the public and the individual and the social/cultural. But feminism still tended to found itself, in spite of its critique of any essentialist notion of women (women are made, not born), on an epistemology and politics of

identity, and a notion of the subject<sup>2</sup> which relied on a version of an essential, authentic, core self and the elimination of all that is Other. Alarcon refers to the subject of Anglo-American feminism as "an autonomous, self-making, self-determining subject who first proceeds according to the logic of identification with regard to the subject of consciousness" (1989). That notion of subject/ identity "supposes that a clear dividing line can be made between I and not-I, he and she...between us here and them over there" (Trinh, 1988, p.371). Difference is understood as that which separates one identity from another. Feminism has, thus, set its limits, privileging "women" and gender identity and the opposition between men and women above all else. *Women's* ways of knowing, and consciousness raising as the feminist method implying a direct link between the female sex, experience and knowledge<sup>3</sup> have also been privileged.

Of course, postmodernism puts into doubt the possibility of any epistemology at all on the grounds that modernist epistemology implies a rationality and general principles of

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<sup>2</sup> For further discussion of "the subject" of postmodernism and feminism and the need for the notion of "collective selves", see below.

<sup>3</sup> Norma Alarcon (1990) has commented on the "bizarre position" a gendered standpoint epistemology has led feminism to in relation to other liberation movements (for further discussion of this, see the next section. For a discussion of the uncritical feminist appropriation of the modernist theory of consciousness, see chapter 3 on standpoint epistemology and chapter 4 on consciousness raising).

knowledge which postmodernism rejects. The first question for feminists, then, has been whether epistemology can be rejected out of hand. Can feminism do without a theory of knowledge? I take the position of Harding (1986, 1987, 1989), amongst others,<sup>4</sup> who say "no". Critiques of modernist epistemology need not imply "the end of" epistemology! Feminism, as a political project of personal/social transformation, needs a more developed theory of knowledge production rather than no theory at all.

But if feminists, generally, have said no to postmodernism's dismissal of epistemology, a question for any feminism is whether the postmodern move to an "epistemology of difference", a reversal of the "epistemology of identity", is an enabling and sufficient alternative. Doesn't such a move remain within the old frame, opposed to sameness and conceived narrowly as separateness? Indeed, feminists argue that a relativist, pluralist notion of difference, prevalent in postmodernism (see the discussion below), verges on political *indifference* and would undermine a feminist project which has an invested interest in transformation. And, if it is no

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<sup>4</sup> That epistemology is historically/culturally specific and that there can be different epistemologies is suggested, for example, by Latour and Woolgar (1986).

longer possible to speak unproblematically of "all women"<sup>5</sup>, or of the feminist project (feminisms are more appropriate in post-colonial times), any feminist/women's studies must now, more than ever, be interested in understanding *both commonalities as well as differences within and between women.*

As post-colonial critic of both feminism and postmodernism, Spivak (1988) too has opposed the argument that knowledge is predicated on identity, that only women can know about women and only "the native" can know "the native". Indeed, she regards the feminist obsession with identity ("who am I?") as part of the repetitive and narcissistic epistemology of a certain mainstream feminism from which she wishes to distance herself. To displace both identity and difference, she has suggested an "epistemology of identity-in-difference." While an epistemology of identity is too simplistic, trivializing and reductionist, she claims, and an epistemology of difference unacceptable in its relativism, the notion of

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<sup>5</sup> The controversy around "speaking as" a woman/feminist (the text Men In Feminism [1987] edited by Jardine and Smith brought this debate to center stage in North America), revealed that the "epistemology of identity" in mainstream feminism had reached an impasse. Needless to say, the same debate still goes on and flares up around the organization of any conference. What the "speaking as" position simplistically assumes is (1) that the speaker represents others in the category, (2) that a cause or an origin can be attributed to identity (being a woman etc), (3) that identity (gender race, sexuality etc) is "pure" and (4) that something of a politically correct line can be justified. This is not to argue, however, that gay, lesbian, Black, Latina/os should not be specifically represented in any conference!

identity-in-difference, by deconstructing the two and moving to an in-between zone might, at least theoretically, keep open the possibility for feminisms of shared knowledge across differences. But that move requires a different understanding of "difference" to that found in postmodernism.

On the question of difference.

Like "the subject", "difference" has a certain hypervisibility in the discourses of postmodernism. That hypervisibility has been received with some suspicion by feminists (and post-colonial critics of both postmodernism and feminism, see section 2). The problem is the notion of difference in, say, Derrida or Lyotard's texts, is a pure form of difference, having little or no relation to reality. *The effect of writing difference in this way is to displace/annul it in reality.*

Feminists, on the other hand, are concerned with *real differences* as they exist in hierarchized sex relations.

White feminists have used gendered difference as a way of opening up critical space, as a tool for creativity to challenge masculinist categories. They have, therefore, pointed to postmodernism's complicity, given its version of *pure difference*, in perpetuating dominant power relations. "Difference", in postmodernism, is a dimension of its ideology of dominance. "We deceive ourselves if we believe that

postmodern theory is attending to the 'problem of difference' so long as so many concrete others are excluded from the conversation," wrote Bordo (1990, p.140).

That feminist viewpoints have been deliberately excluded from the postmodern frame has been pointed out by white feminists, such as Morris (1988). She's referred to the "Euro-American male's post-modern machine." Feminists, she declares, have been told, by those occupying the territory of postmodernism, that they apparently have little or nothing to say about "postmodernism" since they have said nothing. But, she argues, while Euro-American men have framed the debate, excluding feminist work in the process, they have then turned around and lamented its absence! In her bibliography to Pirate's Fiancee, Morris counters feminist exclusion by bringing to center stage (she literally places the list upfront!) feminist work while excluding the "male pantheon". But the problem with Morris' work, as will be discussed below, is her adherence to privileging the category of gender.

The position that feminism has been excluded from the frame is supportive of the claim de Lauretis (1987) makes that postmodernism itself may be a "technology of gender", constituting subjects in hegemonic heterosexual power relations, and of those claims, in other critiques, that "the subject" of postmodernism is male. "[A]ny theory of the

subject has always been appropriated by the 'masculine'," wrote Irigaray (1985, p.133).

Moreover, the apparent refusal to write of real "women", their displacement onto the textual figure of femininity, has been read as indicative of postmodernism's own complicity with humanist discourse despite its anti-humanist, anti-phallogocentric critique. "The discourse of Man is in the metaphor of Woman," wrote Spivak (1988). In Derridean deconstruction, the woman is taken as the model of "deconstructive" discourse but, while the deconstructor is *apparently* seeking his own displacement, Spivak argues that the feminization of philosophy actually serves the male deconstructor because it displaces feminist understandings and constructions of bodies and pleasures. So, Spivak argues, the question of woman "is their question, not ours" (Spivak, 1988). Postmodernism turns out to be a version of postfeminist discourse since it ends up recontaining women; no space in reality is opened up for women to speak. According to Bordo, by not thinking sexual difference, "radical" philosophy has not thought difference (Bordo, 1990).

However, that isn't the end of the story of difference. Post-colonial critics reveal the limited notion of difference within white feminism itself! (see section 2) For any feminism to adopt an epistemology of identity-in-difference would imply

an acknowledgement of both differences within and without female subjects, which "white" mainstream feminism has disavowed. Gender is only one site of difference and cannot stand alone. "Difference" has to be understood as "situated, shifting, and contingent" (Trinh, 1991 p.105). There is a need for a *"to and fro movement" across boundaries of differences, gender, ethnic, color, sexual* (Trinh, 1989; see section 2).

On postmodernism and feminist politics of identity.

An identity politics has limited and constrained feminism. Butler has argued that new possibilities of agency are opened up by the notion of gender/identity as a discursive effect (following Foucault) which were foreclosed by identity categories understood as foundational and fixed (Butler, 1990, p.147). Still, the postmodern notion of the decentered subject and critique of sovereignty (there is no ready-made subject) has put in doubt, for some feminists,<sup>6</sup> the very possibility of an effective politics and, therefore, jeopardized the feminist project itself. Doesn't feminism need a unified subject "woman"? An agent? But from other angles, critics of colonial discourses (women of color, lesbians, "third world" women) have rightly asked who are the feminists who seek to hold onto an identity politics which privileges the category "woman"? In

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<sup>6</sup> Joan Scott, for instance, at the "Identity in Question" symposium, CUNY, November 16, 1991, expressed concern that postmodern notions of a fluctuating identity jeopardize feminist organizing around the category "woman".

post-colonial times a *politics of solidarity* must necessarily displace the old identity politics for, while the postmodern critique of the multiple and shifting subject has undoubtedly shaken up academic feminist theorizing (see, for instance, the discussion of Butler [1990] below), the pressure of political necessity in women's movements to involve 'other' women has, arguably, made more urgent the articulation/action of a politics of solidarity.

**Feminism on postmodernism as a discourse of transcendence.**

"The body" in postmodernism is problematic. Bordo (1990) argues that, while postmodernism (she gives Derrida as her specific example) may claim to restore "the body", the dream is of a *disembodied epistemology* free of locatedness, what she calls a "*dream of everywhere*" (p.136). The epistemology of difference is itself a fantasy of escape from locatedness in "the body". Derridean deconstruction offers images of play, dance and movement to replace the "fixing stare of the motionless spectator" of modern science. Finality and certainty are displaced. But how real humans do negotiate through this "infinitely perspectival world" is not the concern of postmodernism. Bordo argues that postmodernism, while uncovering the pretensions of modernist science to objectivity and neutrality, effects the same erasure of the body as does modernist science and, therefore, remains a version of transcendentalism. She concludes "[i]f the body is

a metaphor for our locatedness in space and time and thus for the finitude of our perception and knowledge, then the *postmodern body is no body at all* (p.145; my italics). The postmodern "epistemology of difference" turns out, in Bordo's reading, to be a utopian fantasy and another epistemology of conquest. Worse, it implies an unacceptable *postfeminist* stance.<sup>7</sup> New directions in feminisms and post-modernism would require a *theory of subjectivity-in-culture/history* (a notion of *the self/body as ground/place of knowledge* rather than the instrument or vehicle of knowing implied in an epistemology of identity [Spivak, 1988,p.260]) and the restoration, and further articulation, of notions of experience, memory and ideology as lived in body limits.

On postmodern anti-humanism and postfeminism.

Gender difference, has been key to the white feminist critique of humanism. White feminism's argument against humanism is a move against the master's discourse, the discourse of the universal male. Feminism has also critiqued humanist conceptions which assume an a priori subject, a substantive person with essential attributes. This universal conception of

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<sup>7</sup> Any feminist appropriation of this postmodern body without shape (Harraway's "Trickster" and "Cyborg" for example [Harraway, 1991]), while claiming to take pleasure in the "confusion of boundaries", "also obscures the located, limited, inescapably partial, and always personally invested nature of human 'story making'" (Bordo, 1990, p.144). It has to be read as a refusal to take responsibility, she argues, because no kind of body *is free to travel, to change shape and location at will.*

"the person" is displaced by notions of gender as relational or contextual.

Both white feminist and postmodern critiques of humanism have to be understood in their specificity. The anti-humanist stance of avant garde philosophy (Derrida's "Ends of Man", for example) is a move against 'Man the Hero', the privileged subject of metaphysical philosophy. Of course, that there are these different versions of anti-humanism again points to the specificity of theory as narrative and the problem of how well theory travels. Derrida's anti-humanist stance, as the critique of the name of Man and of phallogentrism, may seem to support feminism's own critique of Man yet it is very different. It turns out that, white feminist anti-humanism locates Derrida's anti-humanist stance back in the discourse of humanism! Perhaps there is an affinity between the imperialist masculine subject of feminism and the Hero of Enlightenment philosophy, but whereas the white feminist critique has been from the ground of gender difference, revealing the masculinist legacy of the Enlightenment, Derrida is not interested in treating real differences in his deconstruction of humanist philosophy. If a feminist agenda includes combatting liberal-nationalist-universalist notions of humanism, Spivak asks, how can any feminism align itself with the postmodern anti-humanist stance? (Spivak, 1988, p.263).

Significantly, Kristeva's (1982) appropriation of this anti-humanist stance leads her to a principled *postfeminism*. Spivak warns that Kristeva's shift of interest to the avant garde and the literary (the multiplicity of individual differences which displaces gender difference) has to be understood as a move away from revolutionary and women's movements in the wake of the post 1968 backlash.<sup>8</sup> Accordingly, any attempt to 'apply' French High "Feminism" "to a different situation of political specificity might misfire" (Spivak, 1988, p.141). The point is though, to return to Kipnis' argument discussed earlier, that postfeminism does not only signal an end of gender difference and a return to humanism (as de Lauretis, [1984], sees it), it displaces real women and women's movement, and therefore signals a *depoliticized rather than a post-feminist state*.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Kristeva's "Women's Time" (1982) argues there have been (in Europe) three "generations" of the women's movement; the first aspired to equality with men, and implied a "logic of identification" with certain values which she names as "the logical and ontological values of a rationality dominant in the nation-state". Universalist in its approach, this current of feminism globalized the problems of women under the label "the Universal Woman". In the second "generation" feminists demanded a recognition of an irreducible identity without equal in the opposite sex. They claimed to be outside "the linear time of identities". The third "generation" was/is a "mixture of the two", shifting to aesthetic practices and a focus on singularity and multiplicity. Feminism then becomes "but a *moment* in the thought of that anthropomorphic identity" (p.53), a *postfeminism*.

<sup>9</sup> Moi (1988) has pointed out that much feminist theorizing in North America is also implicated in this sort of postfeminism. Moi wants a materialist feminist theory like Spivak's in In Other Worlds (1988).

The postmodern 'theory' of "the subject".

The postmodern critique of the unified subject (opening up the possibility of differences within) and of any notion of a pure, original, authentic self constitutes what might be taken as the postmodern "theory" of "the subject", although, given the apparent rejection of theory as meta-narrative, the status of theory may be in doubt.

White feminists have, by and large, taken on the notion of "the subject", too uncritically it would seem. De Lauretis (1984) and Spivak (1988) warn of the conflation of the individual/ self and "subject", suggesting that an uncritical move to discourse, "the subject" as its effect, and "subject positions", may be to accept a notion of the speaking subject, a subject confined within language, which may, in turn, remove the possibility of a theory of "real" selves.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, the "deconstructed", "decentered subject" remains within the confines of non-gendered philosophical discourse. The multiple subject of feminism and post-colonial discourses means something different as I will discuss in the next section.

But feminists have been more critical of the critique of the sovereign subject and the apparent postmodern rejection of agency. The latter suggestion that the subject is always

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<sup>10</sup> Later, in Technology of Gender (1987), it seems that de Lauretis falls into this trap herself. See my discussion below.

production and never ground, and the emptying out of the subject position to the point where it no longer matters whether one says "I" or not, go against the grain of any feminist project which demands history, experience, memory and the body as "ground" for action. Hartsock (1987) argues that, just when "women" (she means white women) were finding their voices and claiming the authority of their experiences as subjects, postmodern theorizing of the subject as discursive effect undermined agency, the coming to voice "women" had never had. The only subject who had held sovereignty was male, Hartsock claimed, and so any critique of sovereignty must be of the male subject.<sup>11</sup> Similarly, Miller (1986) opposes the postmodern critique of the sovereign subject and the shift to textuality, arguing that the "monolith of anonymous textuality" (p.104) produced sweeps aside the political significance of authorship, and removes the possibility of differentiating between readers. In Barthes' story (and later Foucault's) of the "death of the author", what emerges, according to Miller, is a disembodied, ownerless *écriture*. How can feminism find a supporting argument for its claims here, she asks, when, from a feminist perspective, "the author" has stood for the exclusion of the writing of women and

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<sup>11</sup> From the point of view of the post-colonial critic, that subject is not only male but specifically white and Western as I have already discussed above. Spivak (1988), writing of Foucault and Deleuze, claims that the theory of pluralized subject effects gives the illusion of undermining the sovereign subject while providing a cover for this subject. The sovereign subject is actually restored.

"minorities". Questions of writing, reading and power central to feminism are suppressed. Of course, for Miller, and other "white" feminists in the mid 80's, postmodernism's "massive deconstitution of subjectivity" was understood as putting into jeopardy the possibility of identity central to the mainstream feminist project at that time. Miller wrote: "Because women have not had the same historical relation of identity to origin, institution, production, that men have had, women have not, I think, (collectively) felt burdened by too much Self, Ego, Cogito" (1986, p.106). The female subject has been "decentered" in a "real" sense, "her relation to integrity and textuality, desire and authority, is structurally different" (p.106). Feminism needs to keep open the possibility of identity as key to feminist critiques. But, more recently, Miller's position, her reductive references to "women" and "men" and her assumed interchangeability of women have been shown to cover over the *different temporalities of women* and the transparent relation of identity and reading and writing has been undermined.

Trinh (1989;1990) rewrites the critique of the sovereign subject in a different (if Derridean) way. She displaces the unitary self/subject and the postmodern "self" which privileges decentering and multiplicity in the abstract, with "*the self*"/subject-in-process, "*the self*" in the making, offering the possibility of a notion of agency "born of

history and geography" (Mohanty, 1991, p.37). For her, the modernist sense of the writer as individual creator is to put the writer in the position of God or priest.<sup>12</sup> But the postmodern critique of writing assumes a narrow, ahistorical and decontextualized view of writing as domination and of the individual creative subject as dominator. It does not take into account *the social function of writing* and assumes the writer/writing are mere vehicles. She prefers the notion of an act, a process, a movement and, in the case of the writing self/subject, she argues that, since writing is a practice located at the intersection of the subject and history, *writing-in-process reconstitutes the subject-in-process*. This idea, while very different to the modernist all-knowing, no change subject, displaces the postmodern critique which merely substitutes sovereignty with the "death of the author". Trinh claims to situate "the subject" with the writing, not above it. Writing "weaves" into language the complex relations of the subject.

**Feminism on theories of reading/meaning.**

In modernist epistemology meaning is the act of a transcendental ego cut off from the body, the meaning making of the transparent scientist. Postmodernism (Derrida) prefers

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<sup>12</sup> And, Trinh writes, "the woman who writes about herself/others from the standpoint of the one-who knows deliberately/involuntarily carries on the conventions of the Priest-God scheme" (1989, p.30). Feminists speaking of "all women" and "all men" may themselves be guilty of this!

the deferral and "play" of meaning, the multiplicity of meaning. But what postmodernism cannot address, argues de Lauretis (1984), are the *power relations of enunciation and reception*. If the subject is taken as a discursive effect, there is no space for reading. Moreover, since inquiry into the process of making meaning has been limited to media and film and, De Lauretis notes, since the discourse on meaning/signifying practices has been too limited and must be regarded as "theoretically obsolete" and of no use to a feminist theoretical practice, it is time to reconceptualize and expand the arena of inquiry. De Lauretis argues the necessity for feminism of a theory of *meaning/reading as continual cultural production*, as a historical process, involving difference, contradiction and ideology.<sup>13</sup>

#### On power in Foucault

The equation of power and knowledge, power as knowledge, in Foucault is problematic. According to Bhabha's (1986) post-colonial critique, (see section 2) to make this equation is to act on the side of hegemony, to engage in "evangelism". What "the native's" questions do is to breakdown that equation of power=knowledge (what Bhabha refers to as "an Evangelical equation") which then disarticulates the structure of the God-

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<sup>13</sup> By returning to Peirce, she restores "the body" to reading. Peirce, however, does not refer to the specificity of bodies. Noticeably, de Lauretis remains within white feminism.

Englishman equivalence. The natives' voices bring to crisis, destabilize colonialist authority. Though Foucault's strategy of shifting from an oppressive, repressive form of power has been useful in that it has challenged old feminist ideas of oppressor/victim and feminist emancipation politics (Foucault challenges the idea of freedom), opening up resistance as an oppositional conception of power (women *do* have power), nevertheless, his heliocentric discourse (his metaphors of "the point" and "network"), fills the empty place of the agent and, if Spivak's feminist/post-colonial<sup>14</sup> argument is to be followed, restores "the Subject of Europe" (Spivak, 1988, p.274).

Foucault's analytics of power turns out to be more colonial discourse rather than an analysis of those discourses. Feminisms, on the other hand, have an interest in understanding how knowledge/power hierarchies are constituted as colonizing discourses, in exploring their complex interlinking with notions of subject/subjectivity, desire, experience, and ideology, and how they may be transformed.

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<sup>14</sup> I want to add here Bhabha's (1986) claim that understanding the exercise of *colonialist power* requires a different framework from the sort of power regime Foucault analyses whereby power is exercised through the fact of things being known/made visible. The exercise of colonial power is differently organized; it depends, not on the assumption of the collective and the eye of power, but on the *strategy of disavowal* which Bhabha argues requires a *theory of hybridization* of discourse and power ignored by Western postmodernists (he uses the term post-structuralists) "who engage in the battle for 'power' as the purists of difference" (p.172).

New feminist directions.

That postmodern epistemological maneuvers do not provide an adequate theory of the subject or subjectivity is evident. Agency is not articulated; experience is denied, negated or removed as an appropriate source of knowledge. Ideology is rejected. Power is simplistically equated with knowledge and cannot account for change. How these exclusions function to benefit philosophical postmodernism, contributing to its hegemony, is an important question. Feminisms, however, are interested in the constitution of subjectivities-in-ideological power relations, the complexity of contradictions and the possibility of transformation through the active production (in the classroom, for instance) of counterhegemonic ideologies.

In this regard it is worth turning briefly to de Lauretis' work (1984; 1986; 1987) which begins to lay the path for new directions for a feminist (and post-modern) theoretical-practice of knowledge. She makes a number of moves. In relation to a theory of "the subject", she argues that the terms in which the subject has been cast since the 50's (functionalism, structuralism and post-structuralism) are too narrow. She suggests displacing notions of "the subject"/subject-as-effect with an "identity" who is a user and maker of culture and capable of self-representation. The feminist argument has to be for a theory of subjects who speak, listen,

write, read, work, play and so on. This supports Trinh's work discussed above. Secondly, de Lauretis claims feminism differs from postmodernism in its interest in a politics of experience which establishes the ground for a different production of reference and meaning (discussed above). The importance feminism has placed in the personal, the subjective, and "the body" (specifically sexed female) as the site of the material inscription of ideology must now be developed further (although any direct relation between female bodies, ideology and knowledge [reading as a woman, for instance] is no longer acceptable). De Lauretis' resurrection of Peirce's concept of "ground" as the place from which "reading" is made possible, opens up the possibility of theorizing subjectivity and social transformation in new ways. "Ground" is relational and "experience" is a process by which subjectivity is constructed. Subjectivity and "experience" are ongoing constructions, not fixed points of departure. In Alice Doesn't (1984, p.159), de Lauretis writes of experience: "I use the term not in the individualistic, idiosyncratic sense of something belonging to one and exclusively her own even though others might have "similar" experiences; but rather in the general sense of a process by which, for all social beings, subjectivity is constructed. Through that process one places oneself or is placed in social reality, and so perceives and comprehends as subjective...those relations - material, economic and interpersonal - which are in fact social and, in

a larger perspective, historical. The process is continuous, its achievement unending or daily renewed. For each person, therefore, *subjectivity is an ongoing construction, not a fixed point of departure or arrival* from which one then interacts with the world. On the contrary, it is the effect of that interaction - which I call experience; and thus it is *produced not by external ideas, values, or material causes, but by one's personal, subjective, engagement in the practices, discourses, and institutions that lend significance (value, meaning and affect) to the events of the world"* (p.159; my italics). Thus, she articulates the connection between the personal and the social/cultural, "the self" and group which was implicit in the feminist consciousness raising groups and must be retained as necessary for a feminist theory of personal and social transformation. Ideology is understood, in this frame, as larger than, but dependent on, the "individual subject". De Lauretis' notion of inside/outside ideology (that feminism, while complicitous with hegemonic heterosexual ideologies, is nevertheless simultaneously outside those dominant ideologies but never outside ideology per se) and of a to and fro movement between the "inside" and the "outside", the "space off", the elsewhere, opens the possibility of discursive transformation.<sup>15</sup> But in my reading

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<sup>15</sup> De Lauretis' discourse theory of gender developed in her "Technology of Gender" (1987) is both useful and problematic. The shift to discourse, following Foucault, and the consequent displacement of real women as the subject of feminism is a move that I read as detrimental to a radical feminist politics.

of her, de Lauretis' work seems something of a "mixed bag" and at times I am left confused. I think it has to do with the combination of her appropriation of postmodernism on the one hand, with her interest in Italian feminism and consciousness raising, lesbianism and her acknowledged need to respond to the critiques of women of color. In my view this second strand of her work is more productive because it begins to foreground what I think are the fundamental components of the sort of feminist epistemology I am interested in articulating.

*The postmodern critique and the implications for feminism.*

The relation between postmodernism and feminism is a two-way street in that each has critically interrupted the other, albeit to varying degrees. In outlining the feminist critique of postmodernism, I have also made some reference to the ways in which postmodernism has challenged feminism and, in my reference to de Lauretis, how postmodernism has been appropriated by feminism. In the last part of this section, I return to the appropriation of postmodernism by feminism and to the argument put forward by Kipnis (1988) that any synthesis of feminism with discourses such as psychoanalysis or postmodernism led to a depoliticization and a return to modernist aesthetics. It is also interesting to note that conservative mainstream feminists, whose skepticism towards postmodernism I have already alluded to, worry whether the category gender, which they have privileged in defining the

feminist project, can survive postmodern critiques. Taking the world to be gender dominated, mainstream feminism has centred its goal on the analysis of a *single axis*, gender relations (Flax, 1990; Di Stefano, 1990) which the critique of the unified subject has put into question. ( I come to what I think are more powerful post-colonial critiques in section 2) With this in mind, I turn to Judith Butler's (1990) Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity which is, in my reading, a critical appropriation of postmodernism, and in particular Foucault. My question is what happens when feminists appropriate postmodernism as their theoretical framework and point of departure? How enabling/disabling is this critique for feminism?

First of all, it would be incorrect to suggest Butler's Gender Trouble is some sort of "pure" appropriation of postmodernism. In fact, she positions herself in relation to postmodernism by never using the word. Does she believe that postmodernism has not yet arrived? She doesn't say. Hers, she claims, is a *post-structuralist/lesbian/feminist* analysis of gender. She argues that to resist the "domestication" of gender studies in the academy and "to radicalize the notion of feminist critique", a mix of interdisciplinary and "postdisciplinary" discourses is necessary. She argues this opens up the possibility of "imagining alternatively gendered worlds" (p.xiii) which is

apparently her main agenda. But is this agenda about transgression or transformation? That is, how radical is it?

Butler, following Foucault, reads gender as the effects of a specific formation of power, of institutional practices and discourses which she names phallogocentrism and compulsory heterosexuality (the "epistemic regime" of heterosexuality). This move is similar to de Lauretis' discourse theory of gender and the notion of a "technology of gender" discussed above. Already, this shift into discourse signals, to me, a problematic relation to reality. As her point of departure, Butler takes this configuration, this heterosexual power matrix, as that which constructs difference in the form of binary oppositions between the subject and Other, and between gender and sex categories, oppositions which stabilize and serve the heterosexual matrix of power. Butler's question is what happens when you unmask these apparently ontological categories (the natural turns out to be cultural, an old argument in feminism and one which has contributed to the current impasse)?<sup>16</sup> Such a task would necessitate, not a search for origins or authenticity, but an inquiry into the political stakes underpinning gender and sex categories as

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<sup>16</sup> Butler points to the impasse brought about by two instances of circularity in feminist discourse, two different positions about gender; the position that takes gender as constructed and the position that takes language as phallogocentric and which marks off the feminine from signification. *Écriture féminine* for Irigaray and Cixous becomes the way to restore the feminine to discourse.

effects. And, if these categories are destabilized, what are the political possibilities? What could be the consequences for feminist politics of the unloosing of identity including the category "women"? Or does a feminist politics, based in the notion of a common identity, preclude a radical critique of identity? If so, what are the stakes for a feminist politics in this preclusion? It seems we are either stuck with the old epistemology and politics of identity or a "destabilized" identity. Are these the only choices? The politically effective choices? So far Butler is in her theoretical playground. The question of how women "live identity" in their daily lives is not at stake.

But Butler's text moves on to reconsider the status of "women" as the subject of feminism and the sex/gender distinction that has long framed the feminist project for politically motivated reasons. Feminism, as political movement and theoretical project, has assumed the stable identity of "women". Now "women" as the subject represented by feminism has been made problematic first, by the post-structuralist critique of the "foundationalist fictions" which have supported the notion of the subject and second, by the political problem of representation implied in the term "women". The post-structuralist critique has made it clear that if she "is" a "woman", that is not all she is. (Cixous took this to the extreme, claiming, following Derrida, that feminism was

impossible because it is impossible to speak of "woman". She doesn't exist). Butler puts it this way: "Gender is not always constituted coherently or consistently in different historical contexts, and because gender intersects with racial, class, ethnic, sexual, and regional modalities of discursively constituted identities...it becomes impossible to separate out "gender" from the political and cultural intersections in which it is invariably produced and maintained" (p.3). This is indeed more grounded cultural critique but there's no great revelation here. Elite "white" feminism has taken time to grasp this as de Lauretis (1990) admits in her reading of Barbara Smith's "Toward a Black Feminist Criticism". "Experience is articulated, she [Smith] argues, not only in sexual terms...This is not so easy a concept for a white woman to grasp, because, from a position that is presumed to be racially unmarked, one might assume simply that all black people experience the same racism and black women also experience sexism, in addition" (p.134).

The political assumption of the universal category "women", based in an identity assumed to exist cross-culturally, goes with the notion that there is also a singular form, a universal patriarchy. This presumed universality and unity of the subject of feminism is now under challenge. The notion of a stable subject presumably demanded by representational politics has generated multiple refusals of the category of

gender, and of feminism itself, as reifying, regulatory and coercive. Butler claims that the opposition to feminism is indicative of its exclusionary representative practices and a refusal of its claim to represent many women in many different contexts, a problem not ameliorated by the claim of "strategy".

What are the power relations served by this construction of a stable, universal and unified subject of feminism, asks Butler. To what extent does the category of "women" achieve its coherence in a heterosexual context? As to politics, it would seem a "*postfeminist juncture of cultural politics*" has arrived which demands a new sort of feminist politics and a freeing of feminist theory and politics from an apparent necessity to construct a single ground. Butler suggests that an interrogation of the category of "women" may preclude the possibility of feminism as representational politics. If representation is the focus, then there's inevitable exclusion. In that case, feminism needs to be freed from representational politics and from the category "women" as the focus.

Working from within what I am taking as a "postmodern" framework and from her position as a (white) lesbian, she argues against the coherence and continuity assumed in concepts of identity, sex, gender, sexuality. She wants to

undo the taken-for-granted notion that there is a causal relation between them, that sexuality reflects or expresses gender. What she introduces is discontinuity and incoherence. What looks like a cause, she claims as an effect. It is the heterosexual regime which constructs such coherences and oppositions, she claims. The heterosexual matrix works to regulate what identities can exist.

In her critique, Butler argues for a radical splitting of the gendered subject to contest the unity of the subject of feminism. The feminist split between sex and gender is a split in the feminist subject. It was constructed to argue against the biological and masculinist construction of women, that biology is destiny, that women are born that way. If gender is culturally constructed, sex and gender don't need to follow *logically* "in any one way" (a female doesn't have to become feminine or heterosexual, when it comes to sexuality). This, Butler argues, would allow for a *radical discontinuity* between sexed bodies and culturally constructed gender and the possibility of *more than two genders*. I take it this is her notion of hybridity. But it's a *logical* sort of hybridity, different to the lived hybridity post-colonial critics (see section 2) have talked about and which is of central interest in my project. I would argue it is not only possible, but more satisfactory, to come to a notion of gender hybridity taking lived lives as the starting point. Everybody knows she/he is

"mixed", not pure masculine and feminine, and more than masculine and feminine. A more interesting question is to understand that hybridity in its multiple contexts. But Butler's point of departure has been, from the start, the theoretical acceptance of a binary gender system which assumes (again logically) a mimetic relation of sex and gender. Her move, from that binary system, is to make of gender "a free-floating artifice, with the consequence that man and masculine might just as easily signify a female body as a male one" (p.6).

This, in turn, raises questions about sex and its ostensibly natural status. Butler asks if sex is discursively produced by scientific discourses in the service of other political and social interests? "Sex", she argues, is also culturally constructed. Maybe the framing of "sex" is a gender framing and the distinction between sex and gender is no distinction at all, both being culturally constructed. Gender is not to culture as sex is to nature. Sex is produced as prediscursive, as natural, and it is this discursive operation that is concealed.

In addition to the displacement of the binary relation of masculine/feminine, sex/gender, she also attempts a displacement of the metaphysics of substance, the is-ness of gender. "Gender is not a noun", she declares (p.24). Gender is

a becoming, an activity, not a substantial thing or a static, fixed category. The grammar of gender requires not nouns but present participles, "expansive categories" (Butler, p.112). That categories of true sex, discrete gender and specific sexuality have constituted the stable reference point for feminist theory and politics (and for the social sciences) is problematic in her argument. Instead, she argues, gender could be seen as performatively produced, a masquerade, thus constituting identity rather than being an expression of some pre-existing identity.<sup>17</sup> Gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time, involving a stylized repetition of acts. The idea of an interior essence is then seen as fabricated, an effect of social discourse.

But, however useful this is in disrupting identity categories in feminism and, I'd argue, the social sciences, Butler's critique remains within theoretical/philosophical discourse, which takes theory as its point of departure and its end. Butler remains within a discourse theory of gender and deploys Foucault's tactic of *reverse-discourse* whereby everything that appears as a cause gets turned into an effect. Many of Foucault's critics have spoken of this move as a mere

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<sup>17</sup> This is a use of Foucault's reading of Nietzsche's idea that there's no being behind doing; the doer is a fiction added to the deed, the deed is everything. Feminism has assumed a doer behind the deed, that is agency, an *a priori* subject, one sign of feminism's roots in humanism, which Butler seems determined to eradicate.

reversal. The same seems to apply to her work. Her re-dis-ordering of binary categories is logical and mechanical and makes no reference to lived lives.<sup>18</sup> And her questions are inevitably framed within the postmodern (Foucauldian) problematic; questions about gender ontology, coherence and unity remain philosophical questions, not questions women pose about their own lives. Moreover, it remains more surface description than what I would call cultural critique.

Feminists like Bordo (1990) take the postmodern critique of gender as problematic when appropriated in a programmatic and politically correct way and I think this is the case to some extent in Butler's work. Interestingly, Bordo notes that, while the notion that identity is constructed heterogenously may be useful in opening up identity, this approach does not necessarily make feminist theory more useful or less ethnocentric. In terms of use, Bordo finds it difficult to see what contribution this postmodern notion can make to demystifying "human" (in the absence of ideology, culture, gender, race, historical location). It is true Butler sees identity to be variously culturally/historically constituted, yet ideology is absent and it is the complexity of ideology that must be a point of departure in real life gender. Yet

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<sup>18</sup> Her re-reading of Foucault's reading of Herculine's journal, she sees as a critical opportunity to re-dis-order binary categories since Herculine, as a transsexual, is not categorizable in binary terms. But who benefits from such a reading?

this postmodern "insight" has become the authoritative critical framework, an assumed "neutral matrix" legislating the terms of critique around the category of gender (Bordo, 1990, p.139). Postmodernism's self-presentation as a principled, theoretically pure, disinterested, non-ideological discourse has to be resisted.<sup>19</sup>

And here it is useful to return to Kipnis. It could easily be argued, following Kipnis, that Butler's feminist-postmodern critique of identity, the hypervisibility of her multiply gendered subject, is symptomatic of the waning of power of white Euro-American feminists (and "white" theoretical feminism) in the current rearrangement of power in post-colonial times. Butler's Gender Trouble is undoubtedly a class/race marked work. As a lesbian, her intervention in feminist discourse is to counter the anchoring of gender to the single axis of heterosexual difference. But, while she sees heterosexuality as the power matrix which produces gender trouble, she pays no attention to the critiques made by women of color or "Third world" women for whom heterosexuality is also only one form of domination. Not only sexual difference, but also homosexual difference, are inadequate to account for the multiple power relations and differences within and

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<sup>19</sup> That philosophical space doesn't accommodate women is one instance revealing vested interests in philosophical discourse. *She becomes philosophically displaced from herself.* I see this as symptomatic of the problematic relation of feminism to philosophy.

between women.<sup>20</sup> Further, Spivak (1988) has warned of the narcissism of "First world" feminism and the urgent need to go beyond the question "who am I?" to "who am I in relation to who you are" in the context of the contemporary multinational division of labor. This could open up the possibility of a new materialist feminism, displacing the tendency to aesthetic modernism and depoliticization in Euro-Anglo-American feminist theorizing over the last decade.

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**Feminism at the crossroads: post-colonial critiques of feminism (or, the empire strikes back).**<sup>21</sup>

"What am I? A third world lesbian feminist with Marxist and mystic leanings. They would chop me up into little fragments and tag each piece with a label. You say my name is ambivalence? Think of me as Shiva, a many armed and legged body with one foot on brown soil, one on white, one in straight society, one in the gay world, another in the working class, the socialist, and the occult worlds. A sort of spider woman hanging by one thin strand of web." (Anzaldua, 1981, p.205)

"What Chou Mean We, White Girl?" The title of a poem, published by Lorraine Bethel and cited in bell hooks Ain't I

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<sup>20</sup> The words of Audre Lorde, in her "Open Letter to Mary Daly" are worth recalling here: "When radical lesbian feminist theory dismisses us, it encourages its own demise" (1983, p.96).

<sup>21</sup> I take this from the title of a well-known publication by the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, The Empire Strikes Back: Race and racism in 70's Britain (1982).

A Woman? (1981) signals more than gender trouble! The mainstream feminist project has come under serious challenge over the last decade. 1981, the date of publication of This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color edited by Moraga and Anzaldua and of hooks' Ain't I A Woman<sup>22</sup> is often cited as the turning point. Both texts mounted a significant challenge to Anglo-Euro-American feminism. If Kipnis (1988) suggested that feminism be taken as a discourse of the colonized, the critiques of feminism by women of color, lesbians and "Third World" women have taken *feminism itself as a colonizing discourse*. The privileging (fetishizing) of sexual difference and the gendered subject, of the opposition of Woman/Man, women/men,<sup>23</sup> feminine/masculine and the focus on "the" feminine as the "outside" oppositional space<sup>24</sup> has been denounced as totalizing, imperialistic and racist. Likewise, the feminist representation of "all women" was rejected as a strategy which decontextualized, historically and culturally,

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<sup>22</sup> And 1982 saw the publication of All The Women Are White, All The Blacks Are Men, But Some of Us Are Brave: Black Women's Studies edited by Gloria Hull, Patricia Bell Scott and Barbara Smith.

<sup>23</sup> Norma Alarcon (1990) points out that in certain contexts women in fact become women in opposition to other women.

<sup>24</sup> It is interesting to note here that the critique of essentialism which preoccupied feminism in the '80's has since been read as a universalizing, silencing strategy of "white" feminism. Those critiques assumed the universality of feminine identity. Rooney (1989) pointed out that to label certain feminist political moves as "essentialist" is to cover over political differences among women. *The critique of essentialism was "a dream of the end of politics among women"* (Rooney, 1989, p.125).

the multiple forms of oppression of women.<sup>25</sup> No account was taken of multiple and complex identities or the impact of race, ethnicity and class. "White" feminists, having appropriated, demarcated and occupied the territory of the feminist project, were themselves caught in the act of engaging in totalizing "master theory" (Alarcon, 1990). These feminist practices of exclusion "are among the more impressive intellectual stunts of our time" said Spillers (1984, p.78). Nothing less than an epistemological shift involving, at minimum, a reconfiguration of "the subject" of feminism, would do.

*African-American critiques of feminism.*

African-American women/writers have colored feminism "white" and generally responded by separating themselves from it, naming themselves "womanist" or black feminist. Here I look at the perspectives on feminism in selected texts of three black women writers, bell hooks (*Ain't I A Woman*, 1981), Hazel Carby ("*White Woman, Listen! Black Feminism and the Boundaries of Sisterhood*", 1982) and Hortense Spillers ("*Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book*" (1987). My interest is in their specific contribution to the contemporary epistemological shift in feminism and critical cultural theory

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<sup>25</sup> Audre Lorde: "The oppression of women knows no racial or ethnic boundaries, true, but that does not mean it is identical within those boundaries."

and the possibilities for new knowledge emerging from these critiques.

In Ain't I A Woman (1981), bell hooks claims that "no other group in America has so had their identity socialized out of existence as have black women" and that "[N]owhere is this more evident than in the vast body of feminist literature" (p.7).<sup>26</sup> It is the racial imperialism of white feminists that has supported the use of the unmarked category "women", when "white women" were actually referred to. This privileging of the categories "women" and gender, hooks says, served two purposes: white feminists, taking white men as the enemy, made it appear that they themselves were dissociated from racial imperialism (that feminism itself was a liberating not a colonizing discourse), and secondly, that alliances did exist, unproblematically, between racially different women. But taking sex/gender as the sole defining trait of white women works to perpetuate sexism. Their class, race and sexuality is denied. However, in North America, hooks argues, where racial imperialism supercedes sexual imperialism (she reverses the categories privileged by feminism), white feminists, who disregard female black experiences, also actively perpetuate anti-black racism. The privileging of the category gender, then, becomes implicated in perpetuating sexism, racial

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<sup>26</sup> Black anti-feminism since the 60's, hooks also claims, had to do with the fact that the black power movement was male dominated and women had accepted a subservient role in it.

imperialism and classism. Class privilege, too, had not been discussed, yet the women's movement was class bound. It had been framed from the perspective of white women who had stayed at home in their middle class neighbourhoods raising children. Its interests were not those of women (including white women) who had for years been exploited in the labor force.

Rejecting white feminism, black feminist collectives formed to focus specifically on black women's issues.<sup>27</sup> But, hooks argues, this separateness assumed *experiences and knowledge could not be bridged* across the race gap. White and black women were confirmed in their belief that no alliance could be made. As a consequence, race didn't have to be dealt with. For her part, hooks chooses neither to reject feminism nor to name herself "black feminist" or "womanist"<sup>28</sup> but to *re-appropriate feminism* as a movement for all people.

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<sup>27</sup> The Combahee Women's Collective is a much cited instance. In their "Black Feminist Statement" they declared: "The most general statement of our politics at the present time would be that we are actively committed to struggling against racial, sexual, heterosexual, and class oppression and see as our particular task the development of integrated analysis and practice based upon the fact that the major systems of oppression are interlocking."

<sup>28</sup> In Alice Walker's version (cited in Anzaldua, 1990, p.370) "womanist" is defined as a black feminist or feminist of color, "[n]ot a separatist, except periodically, for health." "Womanist is to feminist as purple is to lavender." Hooks says Walker defined it to name black feminism but the term is invoked in an anti-feminist way. Black feminism is about ending racism and sexism; womanism, hooks thinks, doesn't have a sufficiently radical agenda.

In her piece, "White Woman, Listen!", Hazel Carby argued that the problem with feminism is a problem of the politics of representation. Carby charged that feminist theory in Britain (where she was living at the time) was Eurocentric. Black women's experience, unrepresented or misrepresented by "white" feminism, must therefore challenge "some of the central categories and assumptions of recent mainstream feminist thought." The two categories central to feminism, gender and patriarchy, were inadequate, in her view. First, gender is racially differentiated; the way gender is constructed in black women's experience is not the same as for white women. Therefore, to concentrate on gender as a single category, is to exclude factors important in black women's lives (she mentions Afro-Caribbean women migrants who make up large numbers of students in undergraduate classes in The City University of New York, and whose lives are central to this project). Secondly, it's not possible to treat racism and sexism as *parallel* forms of oppression because the "*experience of black women does not enter the parameters of parallelism*". The fact that black women are subject to the *simultaneous* oppression of patriarchy, class and 'race' is the prime reason for not employing parallels that render their position and experience not only marginal but also invisible" (my italics; p.213). This criticism applies, of course, to the social sciences, too. Secondly, given that there is no *single* source of oppression, patriarchy as a concept is also inadequate. The

term has to be made more complex because *racism "ensures that black men do not have the same relations to patriarchal/capitalist hierarchies as white men"* (my italics, p.213). Only black feminists have attempted to theorize the complex relations between class, race and gender, she claims.

Carby names other key concepts in feminism (and the social sciences, see next chapter) which, she argues, become problematic when applied to black women's lives. 'The family', and 'reproduction' are two. She wonders whether these concepts can be used at all to analyse black women's stories. Black family structures have been seen as 'pathological' within white feminism (and social science). The focus on the isolated position of white (middle class) women in the nuclear family structure has led feminism to exclude other instances of sex/gender systems, including black kinship systems which are unlike those of the white nuclear family.<sup>29</sup>

Carby concludes that generalizations made about women's lives across cultures haven't worked but they might be possible. What is needed, she argues, are concepts which allow for specificity while providing cross-cultural reference points. She gives Gayle Rubin's sex/gender system as one example.

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<sup>29</sup> I would argue that the isolated nuclear family is not an adequate description of white families, either, but unfortunately it has been picked up by some black feminists and used in opposition to black kinship systems. I'd suggest both have to be made more complex.

Spillers' "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book" (1987) is a blistering critique of contemporary critical theory, including feminism. She positions herself in the opening lines: "Let's face it, I am a marked woman"... "I describe a *locus of confounded identities, a meeting ground of investments*" (my italics; p.65). Spillers' position of difference (she would be unlikely to accept the term "hybrid" although that is implied in my reading of her) in contemporary North American culture, and her historical link with the position of the captive African female, provides a different angle of vision, one potent enough to undo central categories of "radical" critique.

Ethnicity is one such category. Seen in mythical time, as timeless, Spillers argues, enables several conceptual moves. "The body" becomes a target for rape and resource for metaphor.<sup>30</sup>

Whereas feminists (and postmodernists) theorize about "the body" and "subject positions", Spillers distinguishes between the captive body in the historical, cultural conditions of

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<sup>30</sup> Speaking at the opening of the Adelaide Festival Arts Week, Adelaide, Australia, 1992, Meaghan Morris made reference to this imperializing strategy, adopted by white Australians towards Aboriginal peoples. The theory of modernity, Morris argued, depended on allachronism, the casting of "others" in a different time. Aboriginals had typically been cast in the timelessness of the "primitive" which functioned to deny their coexistence and history in contemporary white Australia. Allachronism served to carve out a time/space of never ending difference and separation.

slavery and the liberated body (and the "subject positions" which can or cannot be held in either condition). The female and male body become the territory of political and cultural maneuver, "a thing". In such a situation you can't talk about negating the sovereign subject, as Foucault and Derrida do, for instance. In the historical conditions of slavery of African peoples in America, there is no possibility of a subject/speaking position. *The captive body has no voice.*

She distinguishes between *the body and the flesh*. The flesh is the concentration of ethnicity that postmodernism and feminism (and obviously, social science; I'm using these terms, she doesn't) don't acknowledge. This *flesh and blood*, what she calls *cultural vestibularity*, ("black is vestibular to culture" [Spillers, 1984]) is covered over in contemporary discourses on 'the body', including the 'female body in Western culture'. The language of 'the body' ignores the color line and "the hieroglyphics" of the flesh, argues Spillers.

The African female subject, in the historical conditions of slavery, is *ungendered*. In such conditions, any notion of engendering must be problematic. In conditions of slavery, the theft of the body, its violent severing from its own will, makes gender difference, the central issue for feminism, an impossibility. Similarly, the profitable atomizing of the African slave body makes problematic the critique of humanism.

African slaves in America never achieved the status of personhood or humanness ("the black person mirrored for the society around her and him what a human being was not" [1984, p.76]).

Questions of reproduction and mothering, family and kin, central to the interests of white feminism, take on a different meaning in the conditions of slavery. Family is the privilege of a free community, Spillers argues. Likewise, sexuality and pleasure are inappropriate in conditions of enslavement ("sexuality as a term of power belongs to the empowered" [1984]). The lexis of sexuality, motherhood, pleasure, and desire are thrown into crisis. These forms of dispossession can be read as the loss of gender or an element in an *altered reading of gender* (the captive African-American female body is not a woman).

Thus Spillers makes problematic "the American grammar" of feminism and its central category gender. She is a different social subject, left "out of the traditional symbolics of female gender." The symbolic is more than a masculine imaginary, as feminism has assumed. Moreover, neither "matriarchy" nor "pathology" will do as readings of black women's lives. What Spillers argues for is a new semantic field, a new grammar, one appropriate to African-American women. "We are less interested in joining the ranks of

gendered femaleness than gaining the insurgent ground as female social subject" (p.80), a female with the potential to name. If she could, the African-American female might write a different text for female empowerment.

**"Third World" critiques of feminism<sup>31</sup>**

Feminism is viewed by "third world" women as a culturally imperialistic Western discourse. Mohanty (1991) speaks of feminism as an instance of *discursive colonization* in relation to third world women (social science, especially, in her view anthropology, being another). By colonizing, she understands "a relation of structural domination", "a suppression - often violent - of the heterogeneity of the subject(s)" (p.52).

Feminist writing/reading, however marginal, is inscribed in the West's hegemonic relations of power, according to Mohanty. Its complicity with hegemonic discourses lies in its representation of "all women" and in the privileged deployment of sexual difference "in the form of a cross-culturally singular, monolithic notion of patriarchy". The category "women", assumed as "an already constituted, coherent group with identical interests and desires", an ahistorical

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<sup>31</sup> Mohanty, in Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism (1991), says the "third world" is bounded, geographically, by the nation-states of Latin America, the Caribbean, Africa, South and South East Asia, China, South Africa and Oceania. In addition black, Latino, Asian and indigenous peoples of the U.S, Europe, and Australia refer to themselves as third world peoples.

universal unity, implies a notion of gender which can be applied cross-culturally, universally. "All women" are seen as victims of what is assumed a universal oppression. (the old notion of power Foucault critiques) Reductive cross-cultural comparisons which cover over the specific complexities of daily existence and the lack of attention to multinational capital, and its relation to first and third worlds, function to produce "the third world woman" as Other to the First world feminist. White Euro-American women are the subjects of feminist discourse (feminism is a discourse about themselves) and third world women remain its object (to be developed like Western women).

Feminism's universalizing tendency has its roots in the project of humanism. Both feminism and science can be read, she argues, as manifestations of the cultural colonization of the non-Western world (see chapter 3).

Ong's (1988) is another critique of Western feminist readings of "Third World" women's lives. These readings are problematic for several reasons, she argues. First, non-Western women are taken as an unproblematic total category. Differences between "third world" women are glossed over. Second, the status of non-Western women is read in terms of Western feminists' definition of the feminist project in terms of gender equality in relation to men. A belief in the cultural superiority of

the West is typically encoded in these readings. Third, non-Western women are viewed as inhabiting another time (a time before). They are not understood as inhabiting multiple times, multiple worlds or times contemporaneous with Western women. This problem has already been pointed to above in Spillers' discussion of ethnicity in mythical time. Ong puts it this way: "[F]eminist scholars have a tendency to proceed by reversal: non-Western women are what we are not" (p.87). Consequently, feminist studies of "Third World" women become, like so many anthropological studies, self-validating and nostalgic.

#### *Lesbian Critiques of Feminism*

Feminism turns out to be not only white and Western but also straight. Lesbian critiques are particularly interested in finding ways to challenge the heterosexual assumptions of feminist categories, including the categories of gender and women. Wittig (1980), for one, in search of the outside critical space, offered the notion of the lesbian as "outsider", the lesbian as "not a woman" since "woman" is constructed within the binary oppositions of heterosexuality. (Butler refers to Wittig's "kind of lesbian modernism" [1990, p.121]). But Wittig's notion that homosexuality is outside the heterosexual matrix is being attacked by gay and lesbian theorists who understand gay and lesbian culture as embedded in the larger structures of heterosexuality, even though

positioned in a subversive relation to those structures. Diana Fuss' (1991) collection, inside/out: Lesbian Theories, Gay Theories, explores, in part, this insider/outsider position of gay and lesbian critics. But, elsewhere, de Lauretis (1990) has provided what is, perhaps, the most developed notion of "the lesbian" as insider/outsider critic. Her "eccentric subject" is "a standpoint at once inside and outside," "a conceptual and experiential space," a "space of contradictions" from which to rewrite feminism. The "lesbian" is an "excessive critical position" "in excess of the sociocultural apparatuses of heterosexuality" (p.139) and, therefore, of gender. Homosexual gender cannot be explained as copies of originally heterosexual identity. There is no original gender. She claims feminism has to "dis-locate" itself from its old thinking and not merely expand or reconfigure old categories but undergo a major historical shift in consciousness. (one might ask who precisely has to undergo this shift)

*Hybridity and feminist cultural critique in post-coloniality.*

De Lauretis' "lesbian" is one instance in the articulation of a key notion in the contemporary epistemological shift underway in critical feminist/cultural theory. Emerging from the critique of colonial/colonizing discourses is the *displaced/dislocated "hybrid"*, now invoked as the new political subject and epistemic point of departure of

critique. The hybrid, who is neither insider nor outsider, but simultaneously inside/out,<sup>32</sup> offers multiply different angles of vision and unmasks mainstream feminism in the West as a discourse marked by race, ethnicity, class and heterosexuality. Whereas the strategies of resistance and struggle in "white" Western feminism had been two, equality with men (taking patriarchy as a universal structure without considering race and class and historically and culturally different conditions) and a radical separatism which sought to construct a counter-hegemonic discourse around "women's" culture (implying universality and commonality amongst women and reifying women's experience and knowledge [de Lauretis, 1989; Butler, 1990]), hybridity acknowledges multiple power relations and differences *within and between women*, and different configurations of domination that cannot be accounted for within "white" feminist frameworks.

This notion of the hybrid subject is sometimes articulated in a mix of postmodern and post-colonial terms. Postmodernism's theory of the subject as "decentered", multiple, fragmented ("located" in pure difference) is articulated together with post-colonial perspectives, a subject/self dis-located in real cultural/historical/post-colonial conditions. Bhabha's (1986) hybrid subject is a case in point (although his concern is not

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<sup>32</sup> For Homi Bhabha (1986), the hybrid "occupies a position in space lying on the borderline between outside and inside" (p.171).

feminist critique). Hybridity, for Bhabha, is produced in colonial power and articulated in postmodern (Derridean deconstruction) terms. The hybrid is discursively constructed (through an act of enunciation) and taken as the effect of a deconstructive process of reversal and displacement. His hybrid has critical power, but note, it is merely the power of reversal. "Hybridity", Bhabha writes, "is the name for the strategic reversal of the process of domination through disavowal"... "the production of discriminatory identities that secure the 'pure' and original identity of authority" (p.173).

Bhabha's hybrid subject has the power to subvert colonial authority (mostly textually, though he does hint at a greater transformative potential). The hybrid's disturbing effect lies in its "proliferating difference", its presence revealing ambivalence and uncertainty at the source of colonial discourse.<sup>33</sup> What Bhabha claims hybridity can do is to articulate that ambivalent space and display "the necessary deformation and displacement of all sites of discrimination and domination." "Faced with the hybridity of its objects, the presence of power is revealed as something other than what its *rules of recognition* assert" (my italics; p.173). Its power is to pose colonial authority as problematic, to unmask that

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<sup>33</sup> His focus is the English Book in colonial India but in contemporary North American culture an instance of hybrid excess can be seen in terms of "race" categories. Hybrids don't fit the official race categories.

authority, to reverse the effects of colonialist disavowal so that "*denied*"/"*disavowed*" knowledges enter into the discourse and make strange the basis of its authority. In stronger terms, Bhabha claims the display of hybridity "*terrorizes [colonial] authority in its border crossings, its different angles of vision, its multiple other stories, its demand for the dialogical.*"

For women/feminists critiquing feminism, hybridity is understood as interlinked with a more complex and potentially more transformative notion of *displacement* than that of Derridean deconstruction. De Lauretis (1988), for one, claims that what is implied in the post-colonial notion of hybridity is a *double dis-placement: geographical dis-placement* which, according to her argument (and personal experience of migration), implies being reordered in a different hierarchy and, consequently, the re-dis-ordering of identity<sup>34</sup> which produces the second "dis-placement", a *new conceptual space and critical understanding of difference* (de Lauretis, 1989, p.128). The double displacement, as she sees it, is a displacement and a self-displacement, "a leaving or giving up a place that is safe, that is 'home' (physically, emotionally, linguistically, epistemologically) for another place that is unknown and risky...a place of discourse from which speaking

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<sup>34</sup> "I didn't know I was black until I arrived at Newark Airport" is one of many comments students have made in my classes indicating this sort of identity shift on arrival in a new culture.

and thinking are at best tentative, uncertain, unguaranteed. But the leaving is not a choice: one could not live there in the first place. Both dis-placements, the personal and the conceptual, are painful - either the cause or the result of pain, risk, and a real stake" (p.139). Hybridity is the displaced point of articulation from which to rewrite the feminist project.

Trinh's (1988,1989,1991) notion of the hyphenated, hybrid, "*inappropriate/d other*," as site of difference, comes out of a process of geographical displacement which she, like de Lauretis, has experienced, and explored in written and filmic modes.<sup>35</sup> She speaks of exile as a form of dehumanization, a *painful process of removal-relocation-reeducation-redefinition*. And from this contemporary historical moment, new forms of subjectivities have emerged. Identity can be understood as multiple, and multiplying across time and space. *More than one time, more than one space/place* is a central theme. So, women as subjects/selves are not only women, they are also bound to other categories. "All is empty when one is plural" (Trinh, 1991, p.22) is her way of emptying out the imperialistic tendency of feminism to speak of/for "all women". And "worlds" are also non-homogenous ("A Third World

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<sup>35</sup> I refer here particularly to Trinh's film "Surname Viet, Given Name Nam" (U.S.A., 1989) which explores, amongst other themes (including the relation of "Third World" women and social science), the coming into North America of Vietnamese women.

in every First World A Third World in every Third World and vice versa" [1987]).

In Trinh's work, the hybrid, as new critical subject, signals an epistemological shift on several fronts. Therein lies potential for a *new form of critical work* and the possibility of breaking out of old forms of knowledge. The mode of critique is different. Hybridity does not offer an alternative knowledge which is a mere reversal of the status quo (as is suggested in Bhabha's version), nor a simple negation, affirmation, opposition or resistance from the margins as in the old Left tradition of contestation which has long been fixated on the search for the outside(r) as critical space/subject (Trinh, 1991, p.229).<sup>36</sup> What Trinh is suggesting, instead, is a *to and fro movement across boundaries, across different positionalities*. The hybrid as multiple subject/self, then, is someone who is inside and outside her social positionings, crisscrossing more than one occupied territory at a time. As such, she remains what Trinh

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<sup>36</sup> Or as Anzaldua writes: "[I]t is not enough to stand on the opposite river bank, shouting questions, challenging patriarchal, white conventions. A counterstance locks one into a duel of oppressor and oppressed; locked in mortal combat, like the cop and the criminal, both are reduced to a common denominator of violence. The counterstance refutes the dominant culture's views and beliefs...But it is not a way of life. At some point, on our way to a new consciousness, we will have to leave the opposite bank...so that we are on both shores at once and, at once, see through serpent and eagle eyes." (1987, p.78,9)

calls *inappropriate/d, un-located in the shifting and contextual interval between boundaries.*

Trinh's critique speaks to the problematic relation of selves and voices in feminist theorizing as representational practice. Feminist theorizing is an instance of feminist imperialism in that its theory is constituted as disengaged, abstract and inaccessible. Such feminist texts are themselves oppressive. This colonizing tendency of feminist theoretical practice is implicated in the politics of representation which imply a censorship of self-consciousness, the notion that I can forget myself, myself can be constrained from implication in, what I am representing. Of course, we expect this in the rules of "objective" science (see next chapter). But, Trinh argues, a radical move by post-colonial feminists must be to attack that occupied territory of academic feminist theorizing, the arena of expertise inhabited by academic and professional feminists and to displace its style, method and categories which have become reified.

In a significant shift, Trinh argues that since theory has been separated off from story as well as from practice, the *blurring of boundaries between the theoretical and non-theoretical, theory and practice*, are now necessary. *Story telling* is, for her, (and this is central in my work, see chapter 4) another way of making theory. *Story telling*

*combines theory, analyses and practice since it is itself a reading, an interpretation. Reality is read as it is re-created.*

This is a significant move against an epistemology of modernity, with its emphasis on rationality, "objectivity" and explanation. The art/craft of story telling breaks with modernist representational practice in that "she speaks/writes to not about." To speak about is to speak from within the occupied territory of professional knowledge production which creates a space of separation between subject and object. "Speaking to" breaks that dualistic relation, Trinh claims.

Gloria Anzaldua (1987, 1990), a Chicana, has another take on the notion of hybridity. "*I am a border woman*," she writes. "I grew up between two cultures, the Mexican (with a heavy Indian influence) and the Anglo (as a member of a colonized people in our own territory). I have been straddling that *tejas*-Mexican border, and others, all my life. It's not a comfortable territory to live in, this place of contradictions. Hatred, anger and exploitation are the prominent features of this landscape" (1987, preface).

It is this "*mestiza consciousness*", "*a consciousness of the Borderlands*" (Anzaldua, 1987, p.77) that is, for her, the site not merely of resistance, but of new knowledge and new ways.

The mestiza must occupy the space of theory, transforming that theorizing space. She must be concerned about the way theory is produced. We need theories, argues Anzaldua, which help us to read the world and transform it. The mestiza writes "*theory in the flesh*" (Moraga, 1990).<sup>37</sup>

**"World"-Travelling.**

The specific articulation of hybridity I have adopted in my own work is the notion of "world"-travelling as an enactment of displacement between cultures. My notion of "world"-travelling combines Trinh's "inappropriate/d other", Anzaldua's "border woman" and Maria Lugones' (1990) notion of "world"-travelling. By "world"-travelling, Lugones understands a travelling across cultural "worlds", the movement of an outsider into mainstream, hostile Anglo "worlds", a compulsory form of travelling, a matter of necessity and survival. A

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<sup>37</sup> Feminist theorizing comes under attack in (black) feminist critiques, too. In Talking Back (1989) hooks argues for "a radical agenda" for feminist theory, that is, a change in the nature of feminist theorizing. Feminist work does necessitate theory, but not high theory. The question of feminist theory has to do, in part, with *who does theory*. Feminist theorizing, in the institution of the academy, is "Euro-centric, linguistically convoluted, and rooted in Western white male sexist and racially biased philosophical frameworks" (p.36). Consequently the vision of what theory is has become "a narrow, constricting concept." Theory must be produced which relates to concrete lives of women and men. The *separation of "theory" from experiential talking and writing needs to be overcome*. Barbara Christian (1990) makes a similar argument. Theory has become the preoccupation of the academy in the push to publish and, in the process, theory making has itself become alienated, disengaged, disconnected, and elitist.

"world", for Lugones, is inhabited by flesh and blood people; it is also inhabited by the dead and by fantasy. A "world" is never complete but "up in the air", a becoming. "Worlds" coexist within "worlds" and contextualize the construction of subjectivity through experience and memory.

"World"-travelling is an acknowledgement of *multiple and woven consciousness*, displacing unitary notions of identity and consciousness. As Alarcon puts it, consciousness is "woven" of multiple voices. It is not constituted in the single identity of gender; subjectivity is multiple voiced, involving "a process of disidentification" (1990, p.336). And, against an oppositional theory of the subject (feminist theory has been grounded on this as has most left critique), "world"-travelling understands that people live their lives as insiders and outsiders, on the margins and in the center.

In invoking "world"-travellers (who are, in the context of this project, also multiple post-colonial hybrid voices, the voices of displaced persons), I am not invoking a modernist version of an authentic voice. The post-colonial critic is not being set up as a fixed identity or the sole source of radical critique but as "points of re-departure." Hall (1992) makes this point when he says that "hybridity is everywhere," it's not a privileged position held by a few. What is important is *the use* (rather than privileging) *of the hybrid as "world"-*

*traveller as a vantage point on contemporary post-colonial cultural politics and in the service of the production of new forms of knowledge.*

### ***Feminism as Cultural Critique***

The relationship between feminism and cultural studies is one of a number of themes threaded through this project. The discourse of cultural studies, at least as it has emerged from the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at Birmingham University, manifests a relation of critical tension with feminism. Hall has talked about how feminism (and, later, anti-racist work) critically interrupted the trajectory of cultural studies, both theoretically and at the level of concrete studies (Hall, 1980; 1992). But in their introduction to a recent feminist publication, Off-Centre: Feminism and Cultural Studies (1991), the editors argue that the impact of feminism on cultural studies (in Britain) may be limited to a shift towards an interest in the personal, subjectivity and identity and, more recently, in issues of sexuality. (Richard Johnson's "What is Cultural Studies Anyway?" [1986] foregrounds subjectivity as central to cultural studies).

But I would argue that the question of "culture" remains an ongoing problematic within both the discourse of cultural studies and feminism. If feminists have challenged the various models of culture put forward by cultural studies (at CCCS,

for instance) because they have paid no attention to *gender specificity* (for instance, McRobbie's [1980] critique of the sub-culture studies with their overt masculine interests), there remains for feminism a problematic relation to culture now made abundantly evident in the post-colonial critiques.<sup>38</sup>

Feminism's questionable cultural politics is evidenced in its use of the "*strategy of disavowal*", the strategy Bhabha (1986) claimed as basic to colonizing discourses, and which involves *the erasure of culture and of selves*. Lugones (1990) wrote of "white" feminism: "*You do not see me because you do not see yourself and you do not see yourself because you declare yourself outside of culture.*" Disavowing culture turns out to be a strategy of mono-cultural defence. If you don't talk about it then you don't address differences or undermine your power. It's a strategy of boundary maintenance. But in colonizing acts, culture is implicated inevitably in the (re)disposal of power, the displacement/dislocation/ re-disordering of subjectivities/identities, the hybridization. And it comes back to haunt! The empire strikes back!

The problem of culture for feminism has also to do with its framing as a social, relational not a cultural project, and

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<sup>38</sup> It is insufficient, I believe, to analyse this problematic relation, as Franklin, Lury and Stacey do (1991) in terms of the confusions that arise because of feminism's use of a wide range of disciplinary models and, therefore, its different ways of doing cultural criticism.

thereby to the dubious influences on feminism of depoliticizing discourses such as structuralism and psychoanalysis. Patriarchy, for instance, has, until recently, been seen as a universal social structure in which men, rather simplistically, oppress women. This claim to universality relies on the notion of social structures, to the exclusion of culture.<sup>39</sup> Feminism (and the social sciences whose methods it has borrowed frequently), in privileging "the social" and/or in making the social and the cultural parallel each other, has had the effect of decontextualizing "the world" (including the multiple worlds of white, Western feminists). If we take the understanding of African-American women, and other post-colonial critics, that race and sex are *not lived as parallels*, then clearly the relation of "the cultural" and "the social" have to be rearticulated in more complex ways to move beyond this impasse.

And the interrelation of "the personal" and "the cultural" has also to be rethought in "white" feminism since self-erasure, the nonexercise of the personal, is also implicated in *this process of de-culturation and non-representation of difference*. Lazreg (1988) has made the point that *"misrepresentation" of difference implies "misrepresentation"*

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<sup>39</sup> In "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1988), Spivak suggests how patriarchy in post-colonial India co-exists with a number of oppressive discourses and, therein, lies its complex intertextual cultural difference from patriarchy elsewhere.

of self. (she was referring to Western feminists' "mis"-readings of Arab women's situations). In feminism, self-erasure seems shocking, even impossible, given its claims to have (re)claimed the personal! But "the" feminist turn to theory (which de Lauretis has lauded, wrongly in my view, as a sign of feminism "growing up" since the beginning of the 80's), to psychoanalysis and, more recently, postmodernism, has heralded an elitist academic form of theorizing which has had depoliticizing effects, in part through the strategy of self-effacement. Post-colonial critics have made special mention of the colonizing tendency of feminist theorizing. The recent return to *self-representation and autobiography*, particularly by post-colonial writers, can be read as a return to the political and cultural in feminist writing/theory as a strategy for working with contemporary cultural politics.

But this also implies the articulation of *culture as lived realities (subjectivities, identities)*. To reclaim culture is to reclaim lived reality and to make it a point of departure. And the notions of hybridity and "world"-travelling open up the possibility of exploring those lived realities, not merely in their differences but as "identity-in-difference."

But, if the intersection of feminism and colonial critiques offer space for rethinking culture, "the social", subjectivity and, indeed, suggest a major epistemological shift, problems

remain in bringing that into effect. And these problems, as I read the contemporary situation, have to do with the politics of representation and the question of whether a feminist project is possible or whether *feminisms* are the future.

In a 1988 article, de Lauretis makes the odd statement that the feminist critiques of feminism as racist, heterosexist, and anti-Semitic "have been accepted too readily" (p.134). What she apparently means is that "we" (white women) now have a problem with the ways in which those critiques are to be appropriated. "Tacking on" material about women of color doesn't work. Race, color, ethnic and sexual identification, those multiple other axes of oppression, have been given "equal status with the axis of gender in feminist theory. These varying axes are seen as parallel or coequal, though with varying priorities for particular women." Hence, what Hall has referred to as the mantra of gender, race, class and sexuality, a list of seemingly coequal terms, prevalent, as de Lauretis notes in Women's Studies classes, (but also in cultural studies and social studies/sociology), is still the preferred framework. De Lauretis says this remains a problem of theoretical articulation of the subject/self in power relations; the complexity of intersection of each axis hasn't been articulated.<sup>40</sup> This tendency to list attributes, de

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<sup>40</sup> Spivak (1988) commented that versions of North American feminism appear to have solved the problem of ethnocentrism when they list the varieties of oppression, assuming their discrete

Lauretis says, *elides the intervention of women of color* which has the *potential* to produce an epistemological shift in feminism and other contemporary critical discourses.

Clearly, an epistemological shift requires much more than an additive or expansionist approach or even a reconfiguration of boundaries. De Lauretis argues it requires "a qualitative shift in political and historical consciousness" (de Lauretis, 1988, p.139). But that still leaves the problem of representation. The questions "for whom" and "for what purposes" always need to be addressed in any feminist inquiry. And, since there are multiple purposes, audiences and agendas, perhaps multiple feminisms are inevitable.

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sequential coexistence along a horizontal axis. But that does not describe how they complexly converge. A vertical model is also insufficient because of the tendency (in feminism itself) to rank oppressions (some early feminism saw the ranking of gender oppression as the primary oppression; certain Afrocentric positions rank race as the primary oppression).

**DE-COLONIZING SOCIOLOGY 1:  
CONTEMPORARY CRITIQUES OF SCIENCE AND SOCIOLOGY**

*"Which truth, finally? And which reality, when 'life' and 'art' are perceived dualistically as two mutually exclusive poles? When dead, shallow, un-imag-inative images are validated on pre-text of their 'capturing life directly'?" (Trinh Minh-ha, 1991)*

*"How do you speak to scientists?...scientists in different disciplines each forming a world...if...each of these worlds is organized in a way that is total, closed, how can you reopen these worlds to have them meet, to have them speak to each other?" (Irigaray, 1989)*

In Chapter one and two I have shown how a constellation of discourses, which constitute contemporary social and cultural theory, intersect and critically interrupt each other. The post-ed discourses, together with feminism and Cultural Studies, intersect at the present moment to form a powerful configuration critiquing all representational practices (including the representational practices of critical theoretical discourses, none of which can be used uncritically or unproblematically in cultural critique). Science and the social sciences have been prime targets of those critiques. Consequently, the authority of modern science faces new challenges. "Postmodernism," as I have indicated in Chapter one, has undermined its quest for representation as unmediated, direct, "telling it like it is", rationality and

universality, the quest to end time/locatedness. Modern science, as the allegory of the spiral ascending from the here and now material world to the universe, has also been the focus of feminist critiques concerned to reclaim the "situatedness" of bodies and knowledge. (see Chapter two) Irigaray (1989) has argued that if access to science is blocked off, as it has been in the case of women, cutting her off from her memory of the past, the only thing to do is to return to the point of enunciation, to time and place. Feminism, unlike the discourses of both "postmodernism" and modern science, has made central the question of representation; who speaks for who and who writes "the body" of knowledge which constitutes the social sciences is a feminist question. Feminism understands writers (and readers) are marked by their own histories and cultures. These marks are written into the texts of science. Moreover, post-colonial critics (Bhabha, 1986; Lugones, 1990) understand that colonizing discourses, such as science and sociology (and here, feminism too has come under attack [see Chapter two]) function by a strategy of disavowal, *cultural disavowal* and *self-erasure*. The implication is that "I" can look at something else and forget myself, "see" without self-consciousness, that my-self can be constrained from implication in what "I" see, what "I" know. The rule is forget yourself, your culture, your own voice, and impersonate his/theirs.

In my working through of the contemporary theoretical scene I have attempted to **make a new discourse** - a space of ongoing tensions and contradictions - from the emerging critiques, their multiple re-readings and re-writings. In this Chapter my question is *what critical possibilities does this newly emerging discourse offer the theory-practice of science, and specifically, sociology? How can the project of sociology be re-visioned in the contemporary historical juncture?*

I address this question in four sections. First, I outline three positions from which feminism has critiqued science and point to the limitations and possibilities of these. Secondly, I turn to some of the contemporary critiques of ethnography, especially anthropological ethnography, and make an assessment of the critical directions being taken there. Thirdly, I explore specific critiques of sociology by women of color who argue for the need to de-colonize sociology and suggest how this can be done. And fourthly, I outline the confrontation with sociology by Cultural Studies (specifically as told by Stuart Hall at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies in Birmingham) and, finally, I argue for new directions in a feminist/post-colonial Cultural Studies which can challenge sociology (and the social sciences generally), if not displace it, in the contemporary historical conjuncture.

**Feminist critiques of science and sociology: three positions**

The feminist critiques of science have precursors to which they are indebted. Marxist epistemology is one. The critique of rationality and universality from Nietzsche to Dewey is another. A third is quantum physics which, in the '20's, gave rise to the idea that the observer and observed reality are not separate. Indeed, what happened in physics at that time served to undermine the opposition of art and science. Science could now be understood as proceeding by image and metaphor. And, more recently, in the philosophy of science, Kuhn's argument that observations are theory laden, theories are paradigm laden and paradigms are socially grounded, directed attention to the social processes in which science took place. Kuhn had shown that "the social", once thought irrelevant, was in fact an integral part of the scientific process. Post-Kuhnian studies have been interested in the coherence of science with intellectual and political cultures. In the sociology of knowledge and the social study of sociology, Merton, Mannheim, Berger and Luckman, Latour and Woolgar have all made arguments for the social construction of knowledge. One outcome of those studies is the understanding that *scientific knowledge is one form of knowing*, the hegemonic or privileged form, but that it is also culturally and historically specific. That finding opens up the possibility of other forms of knowing which are suppressed by the power of

modern science. Most recently, that argument has been supported by the critiques of modern science by post-structuralists (which, as I have indicated in Chapter one, owe much to Nietzsche).

Bordo notes that, while none of these critiques paid attention to questions of gender, they opened the way for feminist critiques of science. The specific contribution of feminist critiques has been to reveal the gendered-ness of science, that scientific discourse is a male domain, its conceptual frameworks, procedures and narratives are masculine and, therein, according to (white) feminists, lies its imperialistic and colonizing tendencies.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Merchant, in The Death of Nature (1980), argues that the changes which took place between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries contributed to the engendering of science. An organic cosmos with a living female principle gave way to a mechanistic world view in which nature was constructed as dead/matter to be controlled. Reconceptualizing reality as a machine sanctioned the domination of women and nature, Merchant argues. She reads the new images of mastery and domination as an attempt to masculinize the world. Sexual politics helped to structure the nature of the empirical method that would produce a new form of knowledge and a new ideology of objectivity seemingly devoid of cultural and political assumptions (Merchant, 1980, p.172). The mechanical framework had associated with it, as an antidote to uncertainty and instability, a set of values based on power; it reflected a certain perception of society in that historical time. Hobbes' mechanical model of society in his Leviathan (1651) was developed as a solution to the disorder that prevailed at the time. A conception of the self as a rational master housed in a machine-like body Merchant links with new conceptual frameworks. Machines became the underlying metaphor of Western philosophy and science. Her reading suggests how that has influenced the representations of knowledge since the seventeenth century. Nature is made up of discrete parts according to this framework. Hobbes wrote (De Cive, 1642) "For everything is best understood by its causes. For as in a watch, or some such small engine, the matter, figure, and motion of the

Taking gender as the point of departure, feminist critiques of science have adopted several different epistemological positions. In The Science Question in Feminism (1986), Harding outlines three feminist perspectives, feminist empiricism, feminist standpoint and feminist postmodernism.

The first, *feminist empiricism*, remains within the Cartesian framework, seeking greater objectivity and truth through a science free of masculine bias. The epistemological position assumed here is Marxist, materialist and humanist. The argument is that, since women have been an oppressed group, they have grounds for claiming a more complete knowledge of the world. Knowledge is taken as ontologically grounded. What you are is what you do and what you do is what you know, according to Marx. Being, experience and knowledge are linked to labor. The economic is the privileged base of knowledge production. What you experience, and therefore what you know, is specifically linked to your position in relation to the mode of production. The assumption is that the oppressed will see things which oppressors can't. But they'll need help to get beneath the "surface" to the "real" (Marxist epistemology posits a duality of levels of reality, "surface" and "essence").

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wheels cannot well be known except it be taken asunder and viewed in parts" (p.232).

Building on this Marxist epistemology, feminists have gone on to argue that a woman's way of knowing is different because of her historically different position in the world. Women's experience, difference and knowledge, suppressed by masculinist epistemology, must be reclaimed and revalorized if a "full human epistemology" is to be achieved. This move to "the human" (masculine plus feminine) is a sort of additive approach which assumes "humanness" is achieved when neither masculine nor feminine is the focus. Science is taken to have been conducted in the masculine voice and according to men's interests. Women's experiences have not been raised in the formulation of scientific problems. That women have not been represented implies that the findings of science will be partial and distorted and that this must now be adjusted by adding women into the frame. The agenda of feminist empiricism, then, is to clean up and "improve" shoddy science.

While remaining inside modern science, feminist empiricism does subvert that framework to the extent that, for example, feminist empiricists argue that the observer makes a difference.<sup>2</sup> The feminist move is to reclaim the body,

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<sup>2</sup> According to Cartesian epistemology, the task is to find the "right method" for obtaining knowledge or, as Descartes put it, "the method for rightly conducting the reason". The argument goes that that "method" can be used anywhere, anytime, by anyone regardless of context, and that it produces unbiased objective data, "hard" facts unaffected by "the personal". But from some feminist perspectives, objectivity has been read as a rationalization for usurping power.

particularly the female body, which was anathema in Cartesian science, and thereby feminism undermines the mind-centered, rationalist approach to knowledge wherein "the body" was silenced by exclusion (the privileging of mind) or by domination (in the form of the body-as-machine).<sup>3</sup> Knowing-in-the-head has been read by (white) feminists as culturally masculine.

The second feminist perspective on science is *feminist standpoint epistemology* which is also underpinned by a Marxist epistemology deployed in the cause of feminism.

Both feminist empiricist and feminist standpoint epistemologies remain within the discourse of science, while engaging with it. Feminist empiricism retains the old language of "bias", seeking to correct it (they argue let's have science but let's do it this way), while feminist standpoint has to be understood as directly engaged in reclaiming the political suppressed in science. But, either way, a "feminist science" is supposed to imply a less distorted, and therefore, a more "objective" science through new organizational forms, for instance around subject/object relations. They claim the need, in the contemporary juncture, to move against Kantian separations towards an epistemology reconnected with a

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<sup>3</sup> One feminist reading of the Cartesian body-as-machine is the idea that, in this way, men can give birth to themselves, out of the Reason (the head).

politics and ethics. Finally, both appeal to a modernist, Marxist, humanist epistemology of identity.

These two feminist approaches to science raise a number of questions for critics. One question is whether there can be a "feminist science" (or a "feminist method"). Feminist empiricists have targeted what they see as partial and distorted research methods and argued for "feminist methods." But just what constitutes "a feminist method"? Harding (1989) argues, persuasively I think, against both. When McKinnon, for example, calls "consciousness raising" *the* feminist method, Harding asks what it is that makes it "feminist"? It's arguable, she says, that nothing new is going on from a feminist perspective in terms of method. The same data gathering methods are being used for feminist practice as for regular science. Besides, anything new would require working on multiple levels, method, theory, epistemology, organization and so on. Harding (1987) claims that feminist social science has made its contribution, not by simply "adding women" to solve the problem of social science bias, nor by generating new methods, but in suggesting alternative problems and readings, and in shifting the social relations of research, the masculine economy of researcher-researched. Feminist research has tended to shift from the disembodied invisible voice of (male) authority to "the feminist researcher" (who could be male or female) as a real, situated historical

subject. S/he shifts herself inside the frame of representation.<sup>4</sup>

Keller's (1989) argument is to draw parallels between feminism and science. She points out that both feminism and science are discourses which, in the contemporary juncture, have category problems. While feminism has pointed out the silence of modern science around questions of gender, feminism itself, in its focus on gender, has disguised its own class/race markings and this has now come under challenge. (see Chapter two) If the problem is one of categories, and feminism itself has a category problem, Keller asks (rightly, I think) whether the claims of science to knowledge are any better than other claims and then, too, can feminism's claims be taken as "correct", the way to go to make science "right"? Moreover, she notes, a "feminist" science has usually meant a "feminine" science, that is, it has attempted to restore feminine values, presumed suppressed, to masculine science.

Longino (1989) prefers to talk, not about "feminist science" but "doing science as a feminist" which means for her to bring a specific feminist commitment to science. Like Keller, she

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<sup>4</sup> I would argue that the feminist contribution has been more radical than that, although that doesn't imply claiming a "feminist science." What I'm referring to is the considerable feminist work done at all levels of knowledge production which I have pointed to in Chapter two. (de Lauretis' attempts to develop epistemology, for instance)

comments that what is often referred to as "feminist science" is more often "feminine" science, the other side of the same coin. Yet it claims a belief in value free science, a belief that, when you eliminate the masculine bias, you end up with "good" science. The Cartesian model is alive and well, it seems. Instead of trying to free science of "bias," Longino suggests a *search for limiting frameworks*, and alternatives to them, might be more effective.

In my view (and I have argued the same for "postmodernism" in Chapter one), feminism is most powerful as *critique*. When critics, feminist or otherwise, slip from critique to adjectival description (as in "feminist science" or "postmodern condition"), the desire to occupy and name territory (the will to power) tends to overcome the need for ongoing critique. I argue that this naming verges on a certain feminist tendency to political correctness and sets up confusions and roadblocks to effective feminist (and in the case of "postmodernism", Left) critique.

As Keller at least has hinted, a problem arises in the contemporary post-colonial era, with the categories "gender" and "women". Feminist epistemologies are marked by white feminists' understanding of the power relations in which they are involved but those relations are reduced to dualities, men versus women. As post-colonial critics (women of color in the

"first" and "third" worlds - see Chapter two and the next section) have pointed out, the question is which women? "Women" belong to other categories including race, ethnicity and sexual orientation. From a "postmodern" perspective, the problem with both feminist empiricism and feminist standpoint is their foundation in a modernist "epistemology of identity". In deploying Marxist epistemology, an epistemology of identity, feminism has effectively erased differences.<sup>5</sup>

Harraway (1989) makes the argument that there is, in these feminist epistemologies, the wrong headed (and racist) assumption that "a" world, one single reality, exists and that "all women" see that world in the same way, albeit differently to men. Yet, Harraway argues, there is no "woman" or "all women" to which a standpoint or "feminist science" can appeal. The question then is does this mean standpoints have to be given up? No. But there is no single feminist standpoint. If we acknowledge feminisms, then there has to be more than one standpoint which is feminist. You could, therefore, retain the notion of standpoint as an "engaged, accountable positioning" (Harraway, 1989, p.196). Then, too, "postmodern" and post-colonial perspectives of multiple identities enable feminists

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<sup>5</sup> Hartsock's appropriation of Marxist epistemology is a contradictory position because, while rejecting the dualisms in Marx which enabled him to dismiss women and gender issues, she adopts the Marxist epistemology knowing she is "putting aside" differences amongst women and assuming commonality on the basis of a sexual division of labor.

to rearticulate what "a woman" means rather than rejecting standpoint epistemology as problematically predicated on the notion of the original unitary self. What we need is, not the old identity politics based in an epistemology of identity, but a mobile positioning which understands that being is much more problematic, multiple and shifting. "Splitting," not "being," should be the privileged image of feminist epistemology, according to Harraway. So "a woman" becomes a constructed site for interrogating meanings, not a resting place in a unitary body grounding "woman's" experience. Similarly, Trinh argues you can take a standpoint but as a point of re-departure, not as a final resting point.

The question of objectivity remains problematic too. Does objectivity always have to be seen as value neutrality? Is objectivity attainable through a degendered science, as feminist empiricists claim? If it were possible, wouldn't it return science to the value neutrality of Cartesianism? The idea that feminists have a better story, can provide a better account of the world (implied in the feminist desire to purify science, to clean it up once and for all) is a moral, ethical and political issue (in which I detect, with discomfort, a version of political correctness, another regime of truth) not an epistemological issue that can solve the problem of objectivity. (This can be avoided though if feminists understand their moves as part of an *ongoing discursive*

struggle. Early feminist critiques of science don't have this understanding, however.) In addition, Harraway argues, there's the problem that we don't know *how* categories like gender do affect the construction of knowledge. A feminist empiricism which claims to fix up science by adding gender may be a much too reductive approach.

But the main point Harraway wants to make is that there are other ways of seeing objectivity than as modern science does with its implication of radical disjunction from "the other." That version of objectivity has to be understood as a particular Western cultural, historical narrative, an ideological allegory which is, arguably, no longer viable. *(Epistemologies, including feminist epistemologies, have to be understood historically as justificatory strategies, culturally specific modes of constructing meanings in support of new knowledge claims, a reading of epistemology which enables its retention and reconstruction).* The notion of a dynamic objectivity arising from quantum mechanics, for example, may be more useful in the contemporary juncture in that it reclaims connectivity with the world whereas objectivity as objectivism insists on self-erasure. Harraway wants to ditch old modernist ideas of objectivity which are inevitably embedded in feminist empiricism. She's interested in countering body invisibility by arguing for "situating," positioning, making visible one's point of enunciation.

"Feminist objectivity means quite simply *situated knowledges*" (Harraway, 1991, p.188). She wants to reclaim the sensory system and reappropriate vision, since the male gaze has been disembodied, "a conquering gaze from nowhere" (p.188), and vision has been unmarked by location, body and accountability. It should, instead, be marked male and white. Objectivity, in her view, is about embodiment and situatedness, not transcendence. Positioning is the key practice in grounding knowledge for Harraway (a "view from a body" rather than "a view from nowhere").

Harraway's "situated knowledge" is something like the epistemological shift Foucault makes to "local" knowledge. However, I want to argue that neither "situated" nor "local" knowledge is enough. What is needed is a shift, to situatedness, yes, but to a situatedness understood in the context of an epistemology (and objectivity) created communally (she does talk about "shared conversations" and "webs of connection" [p.191] but what is not worked out enough in Harraway is the connection between the "individual" and the collective, culture and global communities). My interest is in an epistemology of identity-in-difference which tries to come to terms with knowledge in the in-between zone of culture/situation and "universality" (and which takes science as one kind of knowledge and modernist epistemology as one kind of epistemology).

The third feminist perspective on modern science is *feminist postmodernism* or *postmodern feminism*. I've already discussed this complex encounter as a critical space in Chapter two but here I want to focus specifically on the potential of this perspective for feminist critiques of science.

Harding (1986) sees "postmodernism" as the latest challenge to science, and a challenge, too, to the two earlier feminist critiques of science. She sees this critique coming from two directions, post-structuralism and the post-colonial critiques. But, at least at that time, she seems, in my reading, to be merging the two (she uses bell hooks as an instance of "postmodernism") which I argue is problematic. That she scarcely deals with the critiques of feminism and science by feminists and womanists of color remains a major gap in The Science Question in Feminism.

The "postmodern" critique hinges on the idea that the two earlier feminist critiques of science were grounded in a notion of a truth, of one true story about the world, and that there could be a new master story (a "human" story) if only the feminist (read feminine) side of the story were added in. Not a ground shaking move! The "postmodern" critique (and the post-colonial, see section 3) opens up the possibility that there is more than one story that can be told.

"Postmodernism", as I have already indicated in Chapter one and two, has challenged certainty, truth (and the quest for solutions in the social sciences), rationality, objectivity and universality. It has questioned the project of realism, the reduction of knowledge to "facts", the search for unmediated meaning and the claim that nonallegorical description was possible. While in Chapter one I rejected postmodern epistemologies of difference from my perspective of cultural critique, I want to retain three "postmodern" moves which have been deployed to demythologize science, namely, *science as discourse*, *science as bricolage* and *science as fiction*.

*The postmodern notion of discourse*

The postmodern notion of science as discourse is a useful starting point in demythologizing science. In The Order of Things (1973), Foucault wrote of the human sciences as a body of discourse that takes as its object "Man". In his representation, the human sciences have grown out of the spaces between the already established branches of knowledge and they have proceeded from models or concepts borrowed from those branches such as biology, economics, and the science of language. "Man" appears as a being with functions on the projected surface of biology; he receives stimuli, reacts, evolves, adapts to the environment, seeking to achieve regularities and norms which permit him to function. On the

projected surface of economics, "Man" is seen as having needs, desires, interests and conflicts, and on the projected surface of language, he is read as a system of signs. "Thus these three pairs of function and norm, conflict and rule, signification and system completely cover the entire domain of what can be known about Man" (Foucault, 1973, p.357).

This in-between location within the epistemological domain makes the human sciences seem both a danger and in danger. But what Foucault is pointing out here is the uncertainty and instability and the intertextuality of knowledge forms. The concepts around which they organize themselves, the type of rationality to which they refer, and by which they attempt to constitute themselves as science, are discursive and contestable. Difficulties also arise, because of what he takes to be the "common episteme", in establishing difference, of marking out, for instance, what is the 'proper' object of sociology, what are the methods 'proper' to it. Disciplinary boundaries are arbitrarily constructed. In the human sciences everything thought is thought within the rule, the system and the norm. While there are objects, categories, models, metaphors 'proper' to each, their intertextual linkages signal the underlying episteme, the conditions for what can be thought. In the case of the human sciences, Foucault argues, although they all arose with regard to a particular problem, they must be understood as events in the order of knowledge to

do with the episteme of modernity, a key principle of which is rationalism. Therefore, the 'body' of knowledge of the human sciences is not a direct representation of what is "out there", but is what is deemed representable within these intertextually derived models, metaphors and categories.

That discourse functions to exclude is a theme in Foucault's "The Discourse on Language" (1973). The exclusions governing discourse include exclusions by prohibition (no one can speak of just anything at any one time), by rejection and by the will to truth. What is considered true and false is linked to power and desire.<sup>6</sup> Feminists understand discursive colonization and have read science in that way from the perspective of gender or, in the case, for instance, of Monique Wittig, from the perspective of lesbian sexuality. In "The Straight Mind" (1980) Wittig wrote that "the discourses that particularly oppress all of us, lesbians, women, and homosexual men are those discourses which take for granted that what founds society, any society, is heterosexuality...These discourses speak about us and claim to say the truth...These discourses...oppress us in the sense that they prevent us from speaking unless we speak in their terms" (p.105). According to Wittig, discourse is oppressive

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<sup>6</sup> Doing science and teaching science are discursive acts linked by a will to truth, to power and desire. Sociology textbooks give institutional support to the will to power and do violence to the knowing "world"-travelling subject by exclusion.

if the speaking subject must participate only in the language and categories of that oppression. A discourse is colonizing in so far as its concepts and categories can affect a material and physical violence against the bodies they claim to organize and interpret.

*Science as bricolage*

The notion of science as bricolage is another demythologizing move which works to counter the myth of science as engineering and "method". Derrida (1978) has shown that knowledge is not the systematic tracking down of truth that can be found with the right instruments as modern science has claimed. Instead, all knowledge is bricolage. The human sciences are conducted by means of bricolage; there can't be anything but bricolage given that there's no specific tool adopted for a specific task. The separation between the bricoleur and the engineer (the scientist and the artist) is untenable.

*Science as fiction/narrative.*

The notion of science as discourse is linked to the notion of science as narrative/fiction. The idea is that if science is a story that is narrated then the possibility is opened up for alternative stories or, less radical, of narrative limits, of things being left out. One hegemonic cultural narrative silences others, the unspoken and undescribed others. Whose stories disappear? What are the major axes which structure the

stories of science?<sup>7</sup> In other words, in opening up how "the real" is produced, one also opens up the question of the colonizing tendencies of science, its strategy of disavowal, its erasure of self and culture. The scientist, in the name of objectivity, appropriates the insiders' subjective, personal, affective horizon as the basis of "objective", limitless, universal (timeless/spaceless knowledge). In this way he, who cannot claim the territory of the insider, nor name himself/his culture, appropriates what becomes his knowledge and this validates his own position as scientist on that territory. Cultural differences and selves have to be erased in this process.

Trinh argues argues that it is possible to undermine this colonizing strategy of science from two angles. The first is from the standpoint of a certain subjectivity. The analysis of the other doesn't occur without the "me"; meaning is arrived at through the "I". So while descriptions of scenes are not necessarily false, they are narrated. They are stories told from a certain position, reconstructed according to the individual's imagination (and, I would stress, ideologies and politics). And the second is from the standpoint of language.

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<sup>7</sup> Harraway has approached primatology in this way (see her readings in Primate Visions). It would be interesting to read sociology in a similar way, as a story about order and control. One question would be what are the dualisms in sociology and the stakes in them? How do they function? (for instance "the social" and "the cultural", and "normal" and "deviant")

Here the argument is that since language is fictional, science too is fictional.

Still, the question has to be posed, however, of the radical critical potential of any feminist appropriation of "postmodernism". In Chapter two, I took the general position, following Kipnis and Spivak, that "postmodernism" ended feminism back in aesthetic modernism. So the question now has to be asked whether a radical politics is possible, first from a position inside science and second, from a postmodern feminist perspective of/in science as narrative or does this kind of critique signal a shift to aestheticism, a Utopian imaginary (or in Paul Smith's terms, "a literarization" of science), and away from a radical cultural politics?

Harding has taken the position in The Science Question that it was possible, and desirable, for feminists to hold on to the two poles, modern science and "postmodernism". (Others, like Tyler, [see next section] believe that the one cancels the other out). Harraway's work is instructive in this regard. In her early (now cult) piece "The Cyborg Manifesto" (1991), for instance, Harraway slips between the world as construction (as fictionalized) and a description of that world, her own unacknowledged fiction. Ross and Penley (1991) challenge her apparent commitment "to faithful accounts of reality" (is she flirting with empiricism? they ask) and her resistance to take

the narrative line here and "read" the contemporary world, making a radical Left politics impossible. In *The Manifesto*, despite her insistence on the narrative, she has ended up inside a culturally disembodied description, a depoliticized and imperializing discourse similar to that of modern science.

In her magnum opus, Primate Visions (1989), Harraway argues both for retaining science and for a view of science as narrating "facts" (facts are types of stories). "Scientific practice...is a kind of story telling practice - a rule governed, constrained, historically changing craft of narrating", she writes (1989, p.4). Any scientific statement about the world depends on language. Metaphors structure scientific vision. Seeing is inherently literary and culturally and historically specific.<sup>8</sup> But, at the same time, Harraway wants to assure her readers that to treat science as fiction is not to dismiss it (1989, p.5). While critiquing science, she is adamantly remaining within it. She argues that analysing science as story telling is a way to enter debates about the social construction of knowledge. But some constructionist positions, like Latour's notion of science as literary practice which argues that truth is rhetorical, that science must persuade that its manufactured knowledge is truth, go too far and ought to be avoided in her view. The

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<sup>8</sup> Harraway argues for the need to reclaim vision from "the technopornographers" (1992, p.295).

argument is reductionist; everything gets collapsed to power, text or language.

In her 1992 piece, "The Promises of Monsters", Harraway takes a similar line. To shift into a radical constructionist view is to give more credit to men than is their due; it assumes men create the world. Constructivism and humanism come down to the same story line, that "Man" makes everything. It's the myth of Enlightenment transcendence in a new form. Instead, she prefers to talk about "artefactuality". It's not a question of opposing fiction to fact, the story teller to science; what we are doing here is unpacking, revealing the manipulations, transformations, redistributions inherent in the collecting of events. The idea of a story as unending, of continuing on rather than closing off meaning allows for the possibility of other ongoing readings/re-readings.

Putting aside, for want of space, a close reading of Harraway's readings of primatology (which I found fascinating), I want to argue that to view science as narrative, as constrained and contested story telling, is enabling for feminist practice in that it allows us to do a critical reading of the ideological and political structures of narratives which, in turn, opens the way for other actors and other stories. If scientific method constrains and enables narrative availability, feminism, adopting the notion of

*science as fiction*, can, according to Harraway, act as a *critical method for enabling a new script*. This is to move beyond method (and the researcher-researched relations which have been the focus of much liberal social science critique) to the structure of the object allowed to materialize in discourse and the readings offered of that object.

### *Feminist critiques of sociology*

Rose Brewer (1989) has outlined three specific challenges to sociology, to its objects, methods, and agenda. She dates the "crisis" of sociological knowledge back to the 60's (although the "first critique" can actually be dated back to the beginning of the discipline). That critique centered on the conflict between positivists and anti-positivists, between value-free and value-engaged perspectives. The Habermasian Marxist critique that knowledge is interested and, therefore, that values and interests are implicit in the evolution of sociological knowledge was central. C. Wright Mills opposed a value-free perspective as did Gouldner. What constituted science and what the difference was between "the natural" and "the social" sciences were key questions.

The second critique, according to Brewer, centered on the understanding that sociological discourse of the '60's was a colonizing discourse. There were two camps: Black and "third world" theorists asked who should study racial inequality and

how, and white Left critics asked: "Sociology for whom?" The first was caught up in the inside/outside question (see Merton's [1973] discussion - even Merton observed the "white male insiderism in American sociology"). The argument was that Whites had misunderstood the experiences of Blacks and that the best research could only come from "insiders", members of a particular group. The proposed "Third World Sociology" was to contribute to the decolonizing process. Ladner's (1973) The Death of White Sociology called for a Black sociology. But the problem with the Afrocentric movement to revise knowledge, Brewer argues, was that gender was scarcely addressed.

The feminist critique of sociology was the third of the waves of critiques. Smith's (1987) The Everyday World as Problematic is arguably the most significant. Her perspective falls within the first two feminist approaches outlined above. Smith's point of departure is that sociological discourse has failed to analyse the terms of its own inquiry. Self-reflection in sociology is virtually unheard of. Sociology takes for granted the possibility of direct representation, and therefore its categories, models, and knowledge. Yet, if Foucault is followed as I have shown above, the categories, in part, constitute what sociology is. Its "body" of knowledge, the property of the discipline, in turn constitutes its practitioners who learn a particular way of thinking about the world. They learn to function within a particular disciplinary

"culture", namely sociology, and to see the world as instances of "sociological knowledge". This sociological knowledge of the world amounts to "conceptual imperialism" (Smith, in Harding, 1987) that functions as currency for management. Yet it must be read as culturally and historically constructed.

Smith's interest is in a feminist sociology which would, for her, be a sociology of women, for women. Instead of adding courses on women it would be a matter of viewing the world from a woman's place. A feminist ethnomethodological approach, she argues, would start with where women are (whereas sociology has alienated women, *removing them from their memory*). It thus departs from male sociology which has either omitted or distorted the lives of women. Sociological knowledge is organized from a white, male, middle class position but that position is made invisible. Smith understands that *sociological knowledge is out of body knowledge*. There is no body in sociology.<sup>9</sup> In wanting to reclaim herself (and therefore her own body, as well as the bodies of "the researched") in the research process, Smith is seeking to work against the colonizing tendencies of sociology as science. She's interested in *grasping and exploring her own*

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<sup>9</sup> The "person" and her experiences are not used as the unit of analysis. The unit of analysis is the interaction of unmarked actors, senders and receivers of information. The categories have tended to focus interest in public life; the local, private world of women has not been mentioned.

*experience as a method of discovering society, that is restoring herself to the center of the research process.*

To break down the relation of domination in the traditional researcher-researched relation and to displace the old idea of objectivity and the disinterestedness of the observer, Smith wants to step into the frame of representation, the world of the observed. This she calls a move to "illumination" not objectivity. It enables her to return knowledge to the community.

Even so Smith is not moving outside sociology or science. She wants to hold onto sociology and work on it from the inside, making direct experience of the everyday world the primary ground for knowledge. Sociological analysis would then be shaped by everyday readings of the world which are typically discarded in sociological telling.

Smith's position, as I have already suggested, falls somewhere in between the first two feminist perspectives on science discussed above and therefore suffers their limitations. Stacey and Thorne (1985) have rightly argued that bringing women to center stage in sociology may not solve all problems. In fact, they argue that feminist critiques of sociology have had little impact on that discipline. While disciplines such as literature and anthropology have been somewhat transformed by feminism, feminism has not yet transformed the conceptual

frameworks of sociology. One reason for this, they argue, is that feminist perspectives have been contained in sociology by its functionalist conceptualizations of gender, that is, by the inclusion of gender as a variable rather than a theoretical category. Moreover, in the sociology of the family for instance, socialization and sex roles has continued to be emphasized and understood as a (non-ideological!) part of maintaining social order and reproducing that order despite frequent feminist critiques of the functionalist emphasis on consensus, stability, continuity and its consequent depoliticizing effect.

Certainly, new topics of research have been opened up. Feminism has contributed to filling in the gaps, "correcting" the sex biases and creating new topics but there has been little challenging of the basic conceptual and theoretical frameworks of sociology from within the two feminist approaches adopted.

This suggests again that the strategy of reading sociology as discourse and narrative/story may be a very useful feminist practice supported by "postmodernism" and cultural and literary practice. It offers a way to open up its closed text and to invite the construction of meaning in a dialectical relation between the feminist/post-colonial reader and writer. The point is to problematize the categories and the

narratives. Far from being "pure" descriptions of the real world, sociological ethnographies are narratively based and the ethnographer's interests, categories, narratives - his story repertory - suppress other competing stories. Terms like "structures", "systems", "roles", "the social", "socialization", "culture", "status" and "interaction" are key concepts on which the dominant sociological narrative about the order and control of "society" turns. They are prevalent in introductory textbooks in North America. These categories serve as frameworks for organizing and interpreting the world as sociological "facts". But their intertextuality has to be obscured to persuade readers of their factuality (and not their "artefactuality", as Harraway has described). A feminism which adopts the notion of science as narrative has a tool with which to unpack this intertextuality, the story structures and objects of knowledge of sociological discourse, and has the possibility of drawing on new ones, changing the objects, changing the plots and, consequently, changing knowledge. What the notion of science as fiction enables is to take a story line, a dominant narrative as a way, one way of conceptualizing the world in science.

It is structural functionalism, the hegemonic narrative in North American sociology (even in the '80's and '90's), which must be critically read in its intertextuality by feminist and post-colonial critics and abandoned for "better stories" as

Harraway has put it. Before World War 2, the biological and human sciences shared the logic of functionalism; after the war it was transformed through the physical and technical sciences. Natural-technical objects embedded in communications theories emerged from war related operations research. The war led to models of decision making to optimize the probabilities of meeting goals. Functionalism's goal was to preserve wholes, that is to control and regulate. Change was understood as "adaptation". Over the fifty years since that war, the discourse of functionalism has been transformed to a discourse on cybernetic technological systems ordered by communications engineering principles which define the construction of the sociological object. Prevalent in any version of the functionalist narrative is the machine metaphor (the body-as-machine). Terms like "breakdown", "broken" and "dysfunctional" in sociological family life are derived from machine-oriented communication engineering. The "dysfunctional" family in sociology is, of course, the "deviant" family, the one that doesn't fit the norm, and is more than likely colored "black". "The social" in biology (and, consequently in sociology) is also theorized in terms of an information exchange and control system. People become receivers and senders of signs. The narrative of "socialization" and the "transmission" of culture is told in these terms in sociology. The body in cybernetic engineering, and in structural functionalist sociology, in so far as there is one at all, is a blank page to be inscribed.

This makes impossible any thinking, willing, creating, transforming subject.<sup>10</sup> Harraway argues that one implication of this is that "social" theory can thereby be constituted without reference to the mind or body. (in sociology there has been an aversion to any theory at all which makes critique of it even more difficult) Feminists and post-colonial critics, including the "world"-traveller as the new political subject, need to look at the consequences of constructing knowledge in militarized and other exclusive ways and of, for instance, encoding "the social" and society in these particular cultural/historical terms which have mechanically, mindlessly dismissed bodies, and emphasized reproductive efficiency. Certainly, one consequence is the suppression of cultural differences and other more specific differences! The logic of difference in structural functionalist sociology is one sign of its discursive colonization. De-colonizing sociology may well mean doing away with structural functionalist thinking altogether.

## 2

### **The crisis of ethnographic authority**

Central to Clifford's The Predicament of Culture (1988) is what he calls the pervasive post-colonial crisis of

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<sup>10</sup> Functionalism is a nineteenth century subjectless strategy, the cultural narrative of Eurocentric white men.

ethnographic authority in the contemporary juncture. The authority of the West (and the Eurocentric male, it should be added) is currently being widely challenged by feminists and post-colonial critics. More than ever, questions are raised about the politics of representation, about who can speak for whom. Clifford describes it as "a period of political and epistemological reevaluation" (1986, p.100) in which the constructed nature of representational authority has become unusually visible and contested. Any notion of monological authority or monoculture is in the process of being broken up.<sup>11</sup> The ethnographic construction of "the authentic native" is being questioned in an era of boundary shifting in which "hybridity" abounds and clear cut separations and "pure" subjectivities are no longer considered possible (which implies, too, the non-viability of an "us" and "them" epistemology, observer and observed). Moreover, the separation of story telling (by the native) and analysis/interpretation (by the ethnographer) are now understood as the division of labor constructed by anthropological science to validate its ethnographic authority through discursive colonization. According to the rules of science, only he, the ethnographer, could interpret the situation. This was rationalized by the story/theory that the "actors" in the situation could not know

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<sup>11</sup> Feminist anthropology, too, is in a bind, since it is about representing "third world" women. Getting them visibility in anthropological texts, while also speaking for them is problematic.

themselves as well as an outsider. Of course, that story had to be told to validate any role for modernist science and ethnography. What Clifford argues one gets in an ethnographic account, however, is an "imaged construct of the other" which is connected "in a continuous double structure with what one understands" (Clifford, 1987, p.101). Hence the claim by Clifford and others that science, and specifically ethnography, functions as a discourse on "the self". The scientific/ethnographic search, then, is not so much for difference (as in "the new") as for identity (finding out what you already know).<sup>12</sup> Clifford cites Griaule's understanding of anthropological ethnography as a "white science" (1987, p.131).

In his quest for new directions in ethnography, Clifford returns to Leiris and Bataille and the more radical agenda of the ethnography of the surrealist '20's. Bataille, and others in The College de Sociologie, had turned to sociology in an attempt to integrate scientific rigor with personal experience in the study of cultural processes (a turn away from surrealism's excessive interest in art and literature). Leiris, particularly, was preoccupied with those autobiographical moments when the articulation of self and

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<sup>12</sup> Morris (1988), amongst others, has made the charge of circularity and repetitiveness in the social sciences and Cultural Studies.

society can be brought to consciousness. He was looking for a bridge between ethnography and self-portraiture (science and literature). Leiris questioned the distinction between "subjective" and "objective" practices. He saw the possibility of an ethnographic practice that was both analytically rigorous and poetic, focused not on the other but on the self. In this, members of the College struggled against the opposition between "individual" and "social" knowledge. His interest in ethnography in a colonialist context brought him to an understanding of the need to *de-colonize ethnography*, to *shift the agenda to cultural critique*.<sup>13</sup>

What Clifford takes from this, and the contemporary "postmodern" interest in border crossing, is an interest in de-territorializing the boundaries between science and fiction. He suggests that the social sciences cannot remain aloof from provocations outside their disciplinary boundaries or from historical changes. He understands that the boundaries between science and art are ideological and shifting. Of course, the constitution of a science depends on the construction of boundaries and the consequent exclusion and relegation to the status of art and literature of those elements which call the discipline into question.

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<sup>13</sup> My own project in sociology in the '80's has striking similarities with Leiris' brand of anthropological ethnography in the '20's and '30's.

Clifford's interest in allegory, narrative and fiction in relation to ethnography is undoubtedly also influenced by Geertz whom he cites: "It is fiction, fiction not falsehood - that lies at the heart of successful anthropological field research...it renders such research...continuously ironic" (Clifford, 1987, p.80). Rather than directly representing reality, Clifford suggests science is a morally charged story about reality and ethnography a performance "emplotted by powerful stories". But ethnography is not merely story. Clifford understands ethnographies as *both* describing the real and making additional moral, ideological statements. Ethnographic facts are truthful but "like all facts in the human sciences, are classified, contextualized, narrated and intensified" (Clifford, 1988, p.113). This is similar to Haraway's notion of "artefactuality" (see above). Moreover, this means that *analysis is not added to, or a supplement of, the account but within the account*. And if science is narrative, and the big story of anthropology was a redemptive Western allegory, the story of loss and reclamation, the question is what other emplotments, what other stories, are possible, or what other stories are told and repressed?

Tyler (1987) is also interested in opening up arbitrarily constructed boundaries. Taking the postmodern critique of representation, particularly as articulated by Derrida, as his point of departure, he argues for opening the borders between

avant garde experiment and disciplinary science, art and ethnography, surrealism and ethnography, ethnography and poetry, a move which I would argue aligns Tyler, not with feminist and post-colonial critics of ethnographical practices but with certain surrealists of the '20's and with the modernist aesthetics of the avant garde. This implies a de-politicizing move rather than a shift to a critical cultural politics, an argument I have made in Chapter two.

To be sure, Tyler's outline of what he thinks a "postmodern ethnography" would be is something of a politically mixed bag -there are signs of a shift to aesthetics and formalism as well as some possibilities for a radical cultural politics. "Postmodern knowledge", for Tyler, involves a move away from the epistemology of modern science, its method and its celebration of the triumph of logic (socio-logy, as Agger has written it) over rhetoric. But he also rejects Foucault and Derrida's epistemology of postmodernism (as I have done in Chapter one and two). Specifically, he rejects their transcendent method inspired by a will to truth, the privileging of language and discourse,<sup>14</sup> the transcendence of the interpreter as *the one* critic, the one reader/reading of

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<sup>14</sup> In Derrida's "postmodern" focus on discourse and text, the world disappears into the word, the signifier refers to nothing but itself; writing (and theory) becomes the mirror endlessly self-reflecting. The world is a text; writing and the world merge. See Chapter one.

the text, the myth of the authorless text (with the consequent consignment of creating individuals to the metaphysical dump)<sup>15</sup> and the myths of hermeneutical science (appearance v reality, surface v depth) and the fetishization of logic and reason. The will to truth and the will to power lie behind method whether conceived as hermeneutic or positivist, Tyler argues.

He wants to return to the commonsense speaking subject (he opposes the logic of science to "commonsense", which he takes to mean what everybody knows),<sup>16</sup> to reality, the real world, a more complex relation between things and signs. He would reclaim talking,<sup>17</sup> writing, and "memory work", thereby reconnecting with time, past, present and future. Method is implied in these. But it's not "the method" of the abstract

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<sup>15</sup> In the myth of the authorless text, there is no need for external authors who write as autonomous actors; the author is already "inside". Ironically, the re-appearance in "postmodernism" of authorlessness is a return to modern science. Both modern science and "postmodernism" are discourses of timelessness and universality and collude in repressing voice.

<sup>16</sup> Tyler is strongly influenced here by De Certeau and unfortunately falls for his white, Western, masculine subject which feminists and post-colonial critics find unacceptable. This move is key to reading Tyler's politics. (see Meaghan Morris' [1992] critique of "the everyday")

<sup>17</sup> In Tyler's reading, Western philosophy has given priority to representation and subordinated communication. Derrida, Tyler argues, has not moved beyond mimesis and representation because he pays no attention to the dialogical and the communicative, a mark of traditional philosophy's disdain for speech. His focus on writing works to remove speech and author.

rules of modern science in its quest for the universal.<sup>18</sup> The method of modern science separates form and content; it has to have something to order outside itself. But Tyler's argument (Trinh's is similar) is that if you make method its own object you bring together form and content. The "method" of orality is memory and invention, not analysis.<sup>19</sup> He would also focus on events, actions, relations, things that change. He would not split process and product, means and ends.

Tyler is specifically interested in shifting to a writing which "evokes" - "evocation" is the discourse of the postmodern world, says Tyler in Clifford and Marcus (1986). He opposes "evocation" to representation. Of course, what he is emphasizing here is the possibility of multiple meanings in the reader-writer relation. In this way, he argues, ethnography is freed from the rhetoric of representation; objects, facts, descriptions, generalizations, truth, the illusion of realism.<sup>20</sup> "Evocation" implies the notion of

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<sup>18</sup> Epistemological knowledge is what anybody using "the method" can apparently come to know. It's a way of setting up boundaries around knowledge so that it becomes the province of the few.

<sup>19</sup> I argue that this is a way to move away from socio-logy in its modernist form. In Chapter four, I argue that autobiographical talking/writing can achieve this. It is a mode of "self"-representation which combines orality and writing, a "writing to" not "writing about" [see Trinh]).

<sup>20</sup> The plain style of science aimed at a direct representation of words and things. This quest can be read as an attempt to suppress rhetoric; plain style allows for no rhetorical tricks. No metaphors, like ornaments, cover over reality. Rhetoric is seen as

intertextuality (as opposed to the old "telling it like it is" language of modern science) but this is obscured by the textual practices of science "in order to present a factual description of 'the way things are'" (p.90). But, ethnography is a complex intertextual practice, its stories and key concepts drawn from other texts/narratives. So the anthropological ethnographer constructs other worlds through the story telling repertory he brings to the scene of writing, a way of seeing already there. Tyler claims that what you get in anthropological ethnography is not a description of the world but a translation of one world into another and that translation is oriented to the story telling repertory of the ethnographer-translator, his own culture. And therein lies, in part, its colonizing tendencies. The personal is suppressed in the name of objectivity. The talk/dialogue that goes on is not reported. That's the hidden subtext, he says. Yet this desire to control subjectivity is a utopian dream.

While Tyler's outline of a "postmodern ethnography" goes some distance in the direction I would want, nevertheless I am in agreement with Deborah Gordon's (1988) critical feminist reading of Writing Culture (a collection which features both Clifford and Tyler amongst others). She argues that there is

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a discourse of trickery and concealment distorting the relation between words and things, a mark of the speaker, of the personal. Rhetoric and speech move into worlds beyond the text, inner worlds and voices which challenge the "videocentrism" of science and must be eliminated (1987, p.9).

an historically specific masculine ambivalence towards feminism in the work represented there and that a problem with experimental ethnographic writing (and the authority it implies) is "its grounding in a masculine subjectivity". Gordon argues this new mode of ethnography which claims to be "decolonial" (while dismissing feminism) Gordon claims it doesn't work. (The reason Clifford gives for the absence of feminist work in Writing Culture is its lack of attention to textual innovation. According to Clifford, feminism has been working on setting the record straight or revising categories. Clifford separates out innovation of form and innovation in content, the latter being what he sees feminism and Third World critics contribute to.) But Gordon remains dissatisfied with the meanings associated with "experimental" because those ethnographies have relied too heavily on the critiques of Western critical theory. In arguing for a "decolonial feminist anthropology", Gordon reopens the possibility of taking ethnography in the direction of a radical Left cultural politics.

I want to argue that the tendency in experimental anthropology is to take it in the direction of modernist aesthetics and depoliticization, while at the same time it holds onto Western male power. It becomes a kind of programmatic and politically correct position while acknowledging yet avoiding a response to the critiques of colonialist discourses. On the other hand,

Gordon argues, feminist ethnographies are linked to processes of decolonization. Rabinow and Strathern juxtapose feminist and experimental ethnography. What Gordon suggests is the need for a return to political practices, which implies a return to a content/form approach rather than a fixation on form and the consequent depoliticization.

Paul Smith (1989) sees Tyler as trying to offer "a sweeping solution" to the crisis of representation in the human sciences", a solution Smith wants to reject, as I do. It's the importation of interpretative work from Geertz into anthropology that has led, Smith argues, to the "literarization" of the ethnographic text already mentioned. Geertz's retreat into the hermeneutic circle has brought accusations of taking on hermeneutics in order to *defend against the criticisms of postcolonial critics* (the turn to "postmodernism" by Tyler I have also read in this way). Smith detects two strands in the experimental methods of ethnography; the dialogic (by which he understands a lightly edited-by-'native' version of a script) and a collaborative mode (he refers to Crapanzano's script in which he supplies a text and poses questions thus offering the anthropological encounter as tentative, partial, non-generalizable). Of course, what Smith sees as a danger in this is its tendency to a relativism. But playing around with 'form' (experimenting

with social/power relations in the research process) is still the same old game essentially.<sup>21</sup>

Tyler has written at the close of The Unspeakable: "I call ethnography a meditative vehicle because we come to it not as a map of knowledge nor as a guide to action, or even for entertainment. We come to it as the start of a different kind of journey" (p.216). But I think the question has to be asked what kind of journey Tyler would lead "us" on and indeed how new or different that journey is likely to be. If his journey is in the direction of a postmodern (post-scientific - for him science and postmodernism can't go together) Utopia, as it seems to be, then it's not a journey I would want to take. It is not the movement away from science which Tyler is suggesting that concerns me; it is the reason he gives for the move and the way he attempts to make it. Without any struggle, it seems, Tyler has achieved a postmodern ethnography in which he can continue to write, to name himself "ethnographer" and to pick up a pay check by virtue of his ethnographic authority. He has found a way to return himself to the seat of authority of anthropological discourse. He will undoubtedly have conflicts with other ethnographers who see themselves as "doing science". But I would argue that we are not yet in

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<sup>21</sup> Anthropology has another possible direction too. Marcus and Fischer's response is to repatriate anthropology back to the United States which will generate new boundary disputes with other disciplines including sociology.

postmodernity, nor are we in a post-scientific culture, and therefore the struggle in and against science by cultural critics, feminists and post-colonial critics must take a different road to the one Tyler is moving down.

## 3

**The post-colonial critiques of sociology**

The politics of representation and the strategy of disavowal - of self-erasure and cultural disavowal - of colonizing discourses are central to the critiques made by post-colonial critics, mostly men and women of color in the "first" and "third" worlds. From post-colonial points of view, *post-war North American sociology has to be understood as a strand of colonialist discourse, circulating in neo-colonial and post-colonial scenes*. Sociology, a narrative or set of narratives culturally and historically produced in a particular transnational network of power relations (of which the waning of the age of Europe and North American post-war hegemony, and subsequent decline, are central), is read by post-colonial critics as a narrative constructed by Euro-American white, middle class, heterosexual men, and consequently with an agenda marked by class and race privilege. Sociology has functioned predominantly in their interests, the service of management and control (and this arguably includes the

management and control of migrating populations in the wake of North American post-war imperialism).<sup>22</sup>

Now, in the contemporary historical juncture, sociology has reached a crossroads. Its frameworks, categories and narratives are unable to address contemporary heterogeneous cultures in the context of a changing geopolitical scene and multinational capital. Post-colonial critics like Homi Bhabha (1986) and Hortense Spillers (1987) have argued for the necessity to rearticulate categories, including identity, caught up in the old monocultural time/space relation of modern Western thought. Sociological representations of identity and difference are specific instances of its discursive colonization. Modernist sociology works around the mantra of class, race and gender, apparently autonomous, separable "single issue" categories. These categories are grounded in modernist notions of identity and difference which are racist.<sup>23</sup> The "hybrid" (or, in my terms, the "world"-

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<sup>22</sup> It is interesting to note in relation to this that sociology is moving in new directions in contemporary post-colonial settings outside North America. In Australia, for instance, the category divisions of the discipline increasingly reflect contemporary political/cultural interests in that country (the sociology of Asian countries, and the sociology of Aboriginal society are two instances). Bob Connell has made the point, recently reported in *The Australian*, that Australia's historical and cultural difference could be enabling in opening up new directions in sociology.

<sup>23</sup> Hortense Spillers has pointed to the problem, prevalent in the social sciences, of conceptualizing ethnicity in mythical time, no past, no future, pure present tense - ethnicity as frozen, fixed - and the consequences this has had for the representation of black family life in sociological discourse (she is referring to

traveller) is key to the unveiling of the colonialist power of sociology since the hybrid, the new political subject, breaks open sociological categories and narratives. In my project I argue that teaching sociology in the post-colonial classrooms in The City University of New York becomes the site of this unveiling. Of course, in the process of contesting sociological discourse, the hybrid "world"-traveller becomes implicated in the reclaiming of selves and culture. Consequently, culture, which has been the colonial space of intervention and agony, the key to the construction of colonizing discourses, is reclaimed and transformed.

The transformation of "the cultural" and the new recognition of culture as lived reality rather than as object of epistemological or moral scrutiny is discussed in the following section on Cultural Studies. What I want to discuss in more detail in this section are critiques of the social sciences and sociology offered by post-colonial critics, African-American feminists/womanists in the first instance, and, secondly, "world"-travellers Mohanty and Lazreg who, in their various ways, live in the "first" and "third" worlds.

Brewer, as I have already indicated (see section on feminist critiques above), has outlined several waves of critiques of

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Moynihan's report in which the black family was considered pathological).

sociology since the '60's. She argues that the fourth, and potentially most powerful critique, a Black feminist critique, has now emerged. It succeeds/exceeds the feminist critiques in that it goes beyond gender and centers on the intersection of race, class, and gender, interactively. The argument is that most sociology is wrong-headed because these intersections are not addressed (note the separation of sociological identity into discrete components and separate chapters in introductory textbooks). A Black feminist theory understands the nexus of race, class and gender to be the major theoretical lens for analysis and that all are involved, not in a parallel fashion, but contextually and in different intensities given different historical forces (see Chapter two where this point was made of both white feminism and feminist social science). Brewer agrees, however, that delineating the nature of the nexus has proven difficult, mostly because the meta-frameworks have to be re-visioned. It's not a matter of adding and stirring. There is a need, too, for something of a holistic approach. Moreover, there is the urgent need for women of color to engage in self-representation, to define themselves instead of being represented by others. Telling stories is not enough. Hooks, Omolade and other African-American feminists and womanists have said that too often women of color have told their stories only to have them analysed by others. And that is central, of course, to the "crisis" of ethnographic authority. For Brewer, Black women must explain to themselves,

for themselves and for others what their experiences mean (p.65).

Patricia Hill Collins (1986) has also argued for the special status of African-American women, an "outsider within" status in the social sciences. On the epistemological ground that the specificity of African-American women's experience and culture provides a distinctive group consciousness and a special vantage point, she argues for a "feminist Afrocentric epistemology," one which brings to center stage African-American women and which counters the Eurocentric, white, masculinist epistemology of science. This would be an epistemology based on dialogue and coalition. Her Afrocentric epistemology is linked to the notion of "womanist" which is based, not like feminism is on men as the enemy, but on the notion of the survival of the whole race; it has a humanism built into it and a racial politic. This Afrocentric epistemology would offer a "distinctive standpoint" on sociological paradigms (implying the creative potential of "personal and cultural biographies" to explore, for instance, the interlocking nature of oppression which African-American women were in a particularly good position to understand).<sup>24</sup> She also argues that, as an "outsider within", her relation to her material is different to what is expected within the

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<sup>24</sup> She makes reference to Simmel's (1921) "stranger" and the usefulness of such a position.

culture (and, I would also add, "the grammar" - no "I", "we", "you") of sociology.<sup>25</sup> "Eurocentric epistemology" asks African-American women sociologists to objectify themselves, and devalue and displace their emotional and political allegiances, their reasons for studying black women in the first place. An alternative Afrocentric epistemology demands *an alternative grammar and culture of sociology*. Within the Eurocentric (and modernist) epistemology, a community of experts comes to agree on what constitutes truth. They claim truth according to the objective method of modern science. Yet the knowledge that gets validated is culturally shaped (and inevitably racist and sexist in its ideologies, she argues). Her argument for an Afrocentric epistemology is based on her idea that each group will have a distinctive epistemology (that epistemology is culture bound is the implication). But this is contradicted by her finding that white women come to an epistemology which has similarities to that which she has named Afrocentric.

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<sup>25</sup> This position is similar to Ladner's. She raised the dilemma of a Black woman working within the discipline and culture of sociology. For Ladner, it was impossible to bring anything but a Black perspective to her work. As a Black woman studying poor, Black inner city girls, she found she had to reject the rules of sociological method and models which demanded they be viewed as "deviant". For her, it was not possible to hold to the rules of objectivity in the light of racism and poverty.

If the tendency of science/sociology has been to turn away from "the world" in search of "the universe", the direction must now be the other way around. For Collins, any alternative epistemology must reclaim "the world". It must offer a different stance concerning how competing knowledge claims are negotiated and truth identified. *Experience, dialogue, connectedness rather than separation, alienation and the impersonal* would need to be acknowledged as criteria for establishing meaning and truth. This alternative epistemology, Collins declares, has more to do with voice, speaking and listening than knowledge through seeing. And, in this, the question of self-definition and empowerment are key as far as she is concerned. Epistemologies grounded in objectification and dehumanization have to be rejected.

Moreover, Collins argues, the process of African-American women's self-definition could contribute to re-framing the dialogue in sociology. One instance she suggests is Black femininity which is very different to the unmarked category feminine assumed as the universal femininity (this, given Black women's experiences - she compares the stereotyped image of the black woman as "a stubborn mule" and the white woman as "a dog"). Another area is "the family".<sup>26</sup> That family

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<sup>26</sup> The ideological representation of "the family" in sociological discourse has been rightly targeted by critics. In sociology (as in primatology where interest in the chimp family drew on beliefs about what constituted a 'natural' social unit [see Harraway's Primate Visions]), the focus on "the family" could be

households vary across social and class groupings, that family members are differentially integrated into wage labor (by race/ sex/ethnicity and color) and that families alter their household structures in response to changing political economies (by, for instance, adding more people, becoming female-headed, migrating to locate better opportunities) have not been taken into account. Sociological knowledge about families, work, migration and so forth has not been contextualized in terms of the "world"-traveller and the multinational division of labor of the late twentieth century.

Moving Black women to center stage does point up the inadequacy of sociological conceptualizations in a number of areas and in such a way that Black female bodies are not just sites of identity formation (the identity question has become narcissistic and unproductive, according to Spivak and other writers). The more important questions have to do with what the links are in lived lives and what possibilities are opened up by reclaiming Black culture.

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read as the key to the human story, to the unity of Man. That family discourse is intertwined with gender, race and colonial politics is evident in versions of the discourse on "the Black family" and especially the Black male as an "endangered species," the stressed "hunter" in the city, creating social instability by leaving his family and acting out his "natural" propensity to violence in a crowded and competitive world.

However, Collins' standpoint position, adopted from the point of view of African-American women, is problematic. Its limitations are, in part, those of the feminist standpoint already discussed in section one. In making reference to black women's differences, she attempts to counter its totalizing tendency in ways most white feminists have not. As she says, a standpoint position (in this instance, Black women's) is based on the assumption that all African-American women share their black womanhood and the commonality of racial/sexual oppression. Yet, there are differences. Class affects how racism is experienced. Sexuality is a key factor. And factors such as "ethnicity, region, urbanization, and age combine to produce a web of experiences shaping diversity among African-American women" (p.24). She argues that it is better to adopt a Black women's standpoint than a Black woman's standpoint as a point of departure, and, even then, that must be understood as only one angle of vision - there will be other epistemologies.

But the important question raised in relation to my project is how we (and here I am consciously linking myself, as a white woman, with Collins, an African-American) can work out an epistemology that goes beyond both identity and difference (for Collins, this means cultural difference), to a zone in-between. I would argue that Collins' Afrocentric politics, which apparently calls for a standpoint of difference,

prevents her from working out new directions for an epistemology in which the notion of hybridity plays a key role, yet she acknowledges that identities are multiple. As I read her, Collins' Afrocentric epistemology is based in the now unacceptable old modernist understanding of identity and her Afrocentric politics and standpoint remain in a state of tension and contradiction, not only in relation to differences between Black women, but also in relation to similarities between women of different cultures. Some tensions and contradictions, it seems to me, have to worked through; as some white feminists have learned, you can't ground a workable epistemology in modernist identity politics.

Andersen (1988) also wants to bring women of color to center stage in the contemporary moment for the re-writing of sociological discourse. She writes that sociology is a womanless, all-white curriculum from which women and men of color have been excluded (p.125). Where do women of color appear in sociology, she asks? If you look at the sections on race and ethnicity in introductory textbooks, you see the segregation of women into specific chapters. Gender appears as an issue only in such matters of "socialization" and "the family". Moreover, specific attention to Black, Native American, Asian-American, Latina and Jewish women is missing. The experiences of women of color are invisible, even in the areas of race and ethnic relations (race and sex are presented

as discrete categories). Women of color don't appear at all or are confined to discussions of women in the family. "We are left with the impression that white women's experience is definitive for all women" (p.126) yet the experiences of Black, Latina, Asian and Native American women don't follow the same path as white women. Andersen argues that dividing social life into component parts is problematic as a teaching strategy but, if it's in the textbooks that way, that's how it will be taught.

She asks what changes would be made to the curriculum if women of color were brought to center stage? How would it change sociological knowledge? Certainly, new teaching materials and sources would have to be found. In her own teaching she includes oral histories, autobiographies and literature (yes, literature in teaching science!).<sup>27</sup> Further, she claims studying women of color in their own terms (what she names a "more inclusive sociology") would re-frame old sociological concepts and theories, a point made by Collins. If women of color are excluded from the main frameworks of sociological analysis, then the possibility of generating theory that can explain the complexity of society structured by race, class, and gender relations is lost. The problem is race, like gender, has been coopted by functionalist-positivist research

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<sup>27</sup> She gives as one example, Gloria Naylor's Women of Brewster Place. The television production of the book is also very useful in my experience.

and turned into a variable, something affecting others "not us". Sociological thinking is pervaded by the conception of race as otherness (p.128).

"First"/"third world" critics like Mohanty and Lazreg stress cultural colonization by the West in their critiques of both feminism and social science. Mohanty (1991) has argued that both feminism and scientific inquiry are manifestations of cultural colonization of non-Western cultures. Specifically, she argues, they are modes of discursive colonization of "third world" women. Social science categories (for instance, the categories of hegemonic North American sociology) make "third world" women invisible. All women and men not white, not middle class disappear in the social sciences. Those discourses have authorized the objectification of "third world" women and men (she's referring to anthropology particularly here). Mohanty argues that anyone deploying the methods of modern science (and this includes "third world" academics who appropriate Western science) will reproduce ethnocentric universalism.

Post-colonial critics like Mohanty take feminist critiques of science which focus on the category gender as inadequate. She points out that the category gender and its assumption that women are a homogenous group pervades the social sciences. What binds women together apparently is the sociological

notion of the sameness of women bound by their common oppression. There seems to be a gap between discursively and materially produced women. This discursively produced homogeneity of women is what Mohanty argues you could call an instance of "mistaken identity". Mohanty is also concerned about how Western social science (and feminism is complicitous with this) objectifies and judges "third world" women. "Third world" women, it is implied, need to be developed to the standards of Western feminism, and that might entail giving up their religion (for example, Islam).

Both Mohanty and Lazreg (1988) stress that feminism and the social sciences are complicitous in their colonizing tendencies. Lazreg notes the ambiguous relation of feminism and the social sciences, and in particular that both are grounded historically in modernism. She takes the position that feminism must make an epistemological break with the social sciences with which it has been too closely linked. Lazreg's specific interest is in social science work "done on" women in North Africa within modernist frameworks, work which, she argues, is reductive, ahistorical and caught up in orientalist and evolutionary assumptions. It precludes any understanding of Algerian women in their lived reality. They are reified and made into bearers of unexplained categories. Algerian women have no existence outside these categories. Another instance of Mohanty's "mistaken identity".

Moreover, Western feminism has tended to view the Arab world in terms of Islam and Islam as anti-feminist. The implication has been either that religion is no good or that some religions are worse than others. To move towards feminism (read "white, Western) religion would have to be abandoned. Lazreg claims the overall effect is to deprive Arab women of their being. The naming of women as "Islamic" or "Arab" is also problematic and another sign of Western feminist orientalism. Lazreg asks what if the labelling were reversed and North American women were named "Christian"? There's a problem, too, with the coverall term "Middle East". Lazreg notes that "difference, in general, whether cultural, ethnic, or racial, has been a stumbling block for Western social science" (p.87).

Lazreg also sees a representational problem in that colonial discourses are being incorporated into current Eastern feminism and Algerian women are having the terms set for them. Against this, Lazreg wants to argue for "a phenomenology of women's lived experience to explode the constraining power of categories" (p.95). That's different, she says, to interviewing them to elicit information about their lives that confirms our conceptions of them (p.95).

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**Cultural Studies and the break with Sociology**

The confrontation and break with Sociology has been a story told and retold by Hall and others who established The Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at Birmingham. What has come to be known as the story of British Cultural Studies (Grossberg, 1992, for instance) is certainly not the only story of a break with Sociology by cultural workers, and it is not the time and place of my own story, but I turn to it (somewhat cautiously, given what Paul Gilroy has said [1992]) to explore the issues that were at stake there in that confrontation/break, issues which I want to make the focus of this section.

In two early articles, Hall (1980a, 1980b) traced the trajectory of Cultural Studies at the Centre, its theoretical perspectives and the main problematics through which it staked out a space for critical work in the '70's. In those articles, Hall makes it clear that he understood Cultural Studies to be a response to a "crisis" of knowledge at a particular historical conjuncture, a "crisis" brought about by the newly emergent cultural forces and tendencies in post war Britain.<sup>28</sup> Cultural Studies was a new intervention, a space within which to reorganize a set of problems, to ask questions about the

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<sup>28</sup> In "Cultural Studies: two paradigms" (1980b), Hall cites Hoggart's Uses of Literacy, Williams' Culture and Society and E.P. Thompson's The Making of the English Working Class as "the caesura" out of which Cultural Studies at The Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies emerged. And these texts were themselves constituted by the immediate society.

contemporary which couldn't be asked within the existing disciplinary boundaries. In this, Cultural Studies constituted a breaking out of disciplinary ghettos, the traditional compartmentalization of knowledge in the University. It heralded something other than an inter- or cross-disciplinary "raiding". As a 'space off' or space in-between, Cultural Studies at the Centre adopted an anti-disciplinary or non-disciplinary stance.

As Hall tells the story, that break from disciplinary ghettos primarily involved a critique of, and break with sociology, especially in its mainstream form. Hall claims that the disarray in sociology itself, the challenges since the 60's to its historically/culturally specific self-regulative frameworks, had opened up space for new critical questions. According to Hall, British sociology, following American Parsonian structural-functionalism, was theoretically incapable of dealing with new problems. Claiming the mantle of a science, it both refused ideology (Hall asks how this disavowal of ideology functions in science) and yet was itself highly ideological. It transposed everything into its own ideological theoretical framework and then enshrined these ideological judgements as truths. Moreover, the methods of the social sciences were also problematic, not only in their empiricist and quantitative tendencies, but the old quantitative versus qualitative method debate had itself to be

displaced since both sides of that debate essentially made the same argument. They both laid claim to sociology as the scientific discipline with the *proper method* and *proper knowledge* about contemporary society. In contrast, the "method" offered by Cultural Studies was cultural "reading", that is, Cultural Studies, as a space in between science and literature, "deconstructed" the false opposition between literary and scientific methods, deploying literary criticism to "read" lives as particular kinds of "text". Notwithstanding, the critics came out against Cultural Studies as "not science".<sup>29</sup>

Further, sociology did not deal with culture except as mass society/culture. Culture was eclipsed in its monocultural discourse in which "the social" was the privileged category framing reality. "The social" was the object of sociology from which culture was separated. In the grammar of structuralist sociology, "the social" was used substantively, as a noun,<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Note the supporting argument provided by the feminist and "postmodern" turn to science as narrative/fiction in section one above.

<sup>30</sup> Within sociological discourse, "the social" and "society", are assumed to be referents "out there"; that is, they are taken to be part of an objective world to which the sociologist assumes he has direct access. According to Trinh (1989; 1991) when "the social" reigns, "hypostatized and enshrined as an ideal of transparency", questions of "how" are dismissed (the interval between the real and the imaged becomes unreal as she puts it). Sociologists who buy into this ideology of "the social"/"society" uncritically, refuse any sense of the constructedness of categories in sociology. This supposed fixity of categories, in part, works to reproduce the discipline.

and went hand in hand with "society" (also a noun) and "socialization", the process through which the traditions of "the social" and "society" were "transmitted" to individuals with the express purpose of fitting them in to what was assumed to be an homogenous and unchanging society. Socialization, as the "transmission" of traditions, is an instance of rational, purposive action in sociological thinking. The privileged categories of sociology, "the social", "society" and "socialization", were therefore central to its systematically functionalist and integrative perspective. Its moral and ontological arguments about "the individual" and "society" (its theory of the subject and socialization) contain and support the rules for integration. According to Hall, sociology, in its desire for wholeness, normalcy and order, had "abolished the category of contradiction" and spoke instead of "norms", "deviance" and "dysfunctions". Structural rather than historical, mainstream sociology was premised on a process of ordering a unified society and was ideologically and politically opposed to any form of disruption.

In such an ideologically conservative discourse as structural-functionalism ("a particular kind of theoretical construct and synthesis, put together at a very particular historical

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moment: the moment of American world-cultural hegemony" (Hall, 1980a, p.23), "culture" becomes the potentially disruptive element and must be suppressed. For conservatives (Bell is a good example), culture (or at least cultural difference) threatens tradition. However, as Hall, Hebdige<sup>31</sup> and others have pointed out, that particular version of sociology, that ideological/political sociological frame, was no longer appropriate and had to be abandoned in the contemporary historical/cultural juncture. Baudrillard, of course, had already hailed the "death of society" and the end of "the social" and, presumably, of "sociology" which privileged it. But Hall argued for the need to see sociology and its category "the social" as discursive ("the social" is not a noun) and, given his understanding of discourse (not Foucault's), as ideological.<sup>32</sup> Read in this way, sociology becomes a discursive technology, a technology of power and colonization, and "the social" an historically and culturally constructed

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<sup>31</sup> In a piece titled "Postmodernism and 'The Other Side'" (1986), Hebdige challenged the regime of representation (the politics of representational practices) that constitutes sociology. There, he argued for the abandonment of all sociological concepts, categories, modes of inquiry and methods. Sociology is to be condemned, he wrote, not only in its positivist guise as a manifestation of instrumental rationality but also as a form of surveillance/control complicit with the power relations. In making this claim, Hebdige drew no distinctions between positivist/non-positivist, qualitative/quantitative, or marxist/interpretative/functionalist sociologies. Rather, he viewed all sociologies as embedded in institutions which implicated it in the production of particular configurations of power/knowledge.

<sup>32</sup> Baudrillard's "end of" the social is therefore read by Hall as the end of a particular ideology of "the social".

object, an instrument in that apparatus of power in the context of North American mainstream sociological discourse.

Meanwhile, Raymond Williams' and E.P. Thompson's work not only brought culture to center stage but also broke with previous conceptualizations of it. The Centre's thinking was greatly influenced by their work, and indeed, provided what Hall refers to as the "culturalist strand" or paradigm for Cultural Studies at the Centre. It became clear that any definition of culture remained problematic. Any meaning of the term had to be understood within historically specific conditions and embedded in particular 'fields'. "Culture" was one term in a matrix of related terms; it could not be taken in isolation, but had to be seen in its position in a set of concepts and in the domain of an existing ideological field. Consequently, this worked against easy definition or appropriation.

In The Long Revolution, Williams conceptualized culture in two ways.<sup>33</sup> First, culture was taken to mean how societies make sense of, and reflect, their common experiences. Culture in this sense is democratized, made "ordinary", not "high". Moreover, in this version, Williams collapsed ideology and culture: our way of seeing things is our way of living.

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<sup>33</sup> Hall claims Williams is in dialogue here with the idealist version of culture (culture as ideas), and the civilizing traditions of culture (culture as high), as well as the Marxist relegation of culture to the superstructure (that culture reflects the base).

Secondly, Williams adopted an anthropological understanding of culture. Culture referred to practices, "a whole way of life". Of these reconceptualizations, Hall takes the first as the more central into which the second can be integrated. The important step in Williams' critique of the culture-society tradition, Hall claims, is that *social practices* are here understood as *inseparable from culture*.<sup>34</sup> Whereas the elitist ethnocentric/racist notion of culture as high (Western art forms) had separated culture off from the social, the democratization of *culture* enabled a reconceptualization of it as *threaded through social relationships, as within, and underlying, social practices, "the sum of their inter-relationship"* (1980b, p.60).

However, E.P. Thompson criticized Williams for what he took to be the imperializing and totalizing sweep of his concept of culture; it didn't take into account conflicts between class cultures but swept everything in its orbit. Thompson insisted on cultures plural, the struggle between ways of life. Thompson also deployed a distinction between what is and what isn't culture. For Thompson, there is something outside of culture. So whereas Williams defined culture as meanings and values, traditions and practices, Thompson brought together

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<sup>34</sup> In a similar vein in Marxism and Literature, Williams argued against the structuralist emphasis on the "autonomy" of practices and the analytic separation of societies into discrete instances.

consciousness and experience with conditions, thus introducing midterms between conditions and culture. Experience is the authenticating position. Culture is where and how people experience their conditions of life. This, Hall says, is what marks the "culturalist" approach - structures and relations are read from the vantage point of how they are lived.

Significantly, the "culturalist" shift from culture as texts and artefacts to lived practices, systems and institutions, moved the "object" interests of Cultural Studies in the direction of the traditional field of Sociology. Moreover, the different theoretical traditions in Sociology, particularly structuralism, were not simply rejected but counterposed to the "culturalist" paradigm. But while sociology offered access to the structural approach, Hall argued that structuralism was problematic in a number of ways. In the first instance, culture didn't figure prominently. While Levi-Strauss had worked consistently with the term culture (regarding ideology as secondary, a mere rationalization), he conceptualized it narrowly in terms of categories, the mental frameworks, which a society used to classify its world. Secondly, structuralism evaded the dialectic between agency and conditions; "it thought 'structures' as uncontradictory, integrative, functionalist in an evolutionary and adaptive sense" (Hall, 1980a, p.24). The difference between the "culturalist" and structural strands was particularly evident around the concept

"experience". "Whereas, in 'culturalism', experience was the ground - the terrain of 'the lived' - where consciousness and conditions intersected, structuralism insisted that 'experience' could not, by definition, be the ground of anything, since one could only 'live' and experience one's conditions *in and through* the categories, classifications and frameworks of the culture" (Hall, 1980b, p.66). Experience is their effect. The subject is spoken by the categories of culture; he has an imaginary relation to experience. Early structuralism (and post-structuralism no less, see chapter one) held to the concept of "men" as bearers of the structures that speak and place them, rather than as active agents in their own making. Consequently, the structuralist machine, in either its early or post-form, inevitably privileged Theory/discourse.

Still, Hall argues, structuralism had its strengths. It stressed constituting conditions. It moved beyond the level of individuals. It offered the possibility of specifying different practices and their relation to structures which culturalism didn't have the theoretical framework to do. But clearly structuralism gave primacy to the formation of concepts (or, in post-structuralism, to discourse) which Hall rejects and, too, structuralism went too far in its emphasis on structures ("the structuralist 'machine'" [Hall, 1980b,

p.67]).<sup>35</sup> The strengths of "culturalism", on the other hand, are derived from structuralism's silences and absences, namely history, ideology,<sup>36</sup> consciousness and experience. The two paradigms of Cultural Studies come together in a tension between experiential accounts and the wider structural and historical determinants.

"British" style Cultural Studies, then, can be understood, in part, as an attempt to *make a new discourse* between these two major theoretical discourses available to Left intellectuals in Britain in the '70's. Importantly, Cultural Studies, at least in Hall's articulation of it, was able to put back on the agenda culture and ideology and to articulate those terms in new ways. Moreover, if culture can be defined, as Grossberg (1984) has, as the struggle over meaning, carried out in various discursive forms, this not only makes problematic the primacy of "the social" in sociology and the compartmentalization of "culture" as an autonomous, separate realm - what we need now is the foregrounding of culture in disciplines like the social sciences although culture cannot simply replace/displace "the social" as the primary category -

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<sup>35</sup> Post-structuralism, on the other hand, which could be taken as a radical version of structuralism, moves too far in the opposite direction. In Foucault, for instance, as feminists have pointed out, a sense of structure is lost.

<sup>36</sup> Certain versions of structuralism did not reject ideology. Ideology as a terrain of struggle is important in the work of Gramsci and Laclau, for example.

it also raises the broader question of the discourse of (social) science as a cultural terrain, already raised by feminists and post-colonial critics of science. Now, from the perspective of Cultural Studies, the sacred commandments of science become cultural/historical artefacts. The way culture has been conceptualized in relation to "the social" reveals how sociology has functioned as a colonizing discourse. Through a strategy of disavowal, sociology has claimed to be free of culture, ideology and politics, while actually policing those and subjectivity (the personal, the "I" and the "we"). Cultural Studies, then, constitutes one of the current challenges to the border crises of the social sciences and their arbitrary and culturally and historically specific differentiation from other terrains "not science", and thereby to science's imperializing and colonizing tendencies. While Cultural Studies offers the possibility of new objects and new frameworks and narratives for Sociology, it must be said that the relation between the two remains ambivalent. It seems that the one cannot do without the other.

## 5

### **Sociology at the crossroads: new directions**

I argue that in the contemporary "crisis" of knowledge, in the historical juncture of post-coloniality and what some call

postmodernity, there is a moral, ethical and political imperative to re-vision the project of the social sciences. Science and sociology have to be understood as the telling of cultural/historical narratives. The sociology classroom becomes a cultural terrain and social science researchers and teachers cultural workers. Reading/writing science are cultural, ideological and political acts. To engage in social science is to do cultural critique.

This re-visioning of sociology, and the social sciences more generally, necessitates the questioning of every concept and every category that has been taken for granted. Every category has to be contextualized as historical and cultural. Every category of sociology stands to be reformulated. Every story stands to be re-told, re-written. The telling of new stories re-inscribes the picture of reality. What was previously invisible, untold, unspoken and possibly unnamed can now be named. Locating the silences and asserting knowledge outside the parameters of the dominant implies a rethinking of sociality itself and how we understand difference in the production of knowledge. Key to this is the foregrounding of culture but I am not simply arguing for displacing "the social" by culture. I am reclaiming culture and understanding it as "woven" with "the social".

The contemporary disruptions of, and new interventions in, knowledge production require working at all levels - philosophical, epistemological, organizational, methodological, and at the level of pedagogical practices. In the first three Chapters I have worked through the critiques of modern and "postmodern" versions of epistemology and begun to outline what an alternative epistemology would require. Now I want to turn to the post-colonial social science classroom to consider an alternative epistemology in practice at the pedagogical levels of knowledge production. In this process, I am looking to generate a new culture and *"grammar"* of sociology. My argument is that "I", "we" and "you" have to be reclaimed. Culture and cultural critique have to be reclaimed. A more complex notion of the subject-in-culture-in-process, involving a relationship between the global and "the local", the personal, bodies and selves is necessary. I argue that the "world"-traveller, now a student in post-colonial "multi-cultural" sociology classrooms, may be the new political subject who can, although not alone, re-read and re-write contemporary "sociological knowledge" of the world. S/he is more powerful as critic than bringing to center stage any critic representing a specific culture (so, for example, the "world"-traveller displaces Collins' idea of bringing Black women to center stage. "Black women" are also "world"-travellers and it is that complexity that needs to be emphasized in the contemporary post-colonial, post-modern

junction). Moreover, the notion of "autobiography as cultural critique", deployed as pedagogical practice by "world"-travellers in the sociology classroom in post-colonial times, has the potential to de-colonize sociology.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Arguably, it reclaims, for contemporary times, Mills' notion of the "sociological imagination" lost in hegemonic North American sociology. Mills identifies an holistic epistemology as the "sociological imagination"; its task and its way of knowing enabled individuals to grasp the relations between history and biography in society.

DE-COLONIZING SOCIOLOGY 2:  
 CULTURAL STUDIES AS PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICE  
 (OR TOWARDS POST-MODERN SOCIOLOGY)

"They'd like to think I have melted in the pot. But I haven't. We haven't." (Anzaldua, 1987, p.86)

"As a mestiza I have no country, my homeland cast me out; yet all countries are mine because I am every woman's sister or potential lover...I am cultureless because, as a feminist, I challenge the collective cultural/religious male-derived beliefs of Indo-Hispanics and Anglos; yet I am cultured because I am participating in the creation of yet another culture, a new story to explain the world and our participation in it, a new value system with images and symbols that connect us to each other and to the planet... the mestiza is a product of cross-breeding, designed for preservation under a variety of conditions...she will survive the crossroads." (my emphasis) (Anzaldua, 1987, p.80,1)

"A critical distance from myself means that I am not i, am within and without i. I can be I or i, you and me both involved. We (with capital W) sometimes include(s), other times exclude(s) me. You and I are close, we intertwine. You may stand on the other side of the hill once in a while, but you may also be me, while remaining what you are and what i am not." (Trinh, 1989, p.90)

In this final chapter, I want to do two things. Firstly, I want to outline the key categories of my pedagogical theory-practice for de-colonizing sociology in post-colonial classrooms. The notion of *cultural studies as pedagogical practice* (see chapter one) and, specifically, *autobiography as cultural critique* are central to this. Secondly, I want to offer readers one autobiographical story (in addition to those pieces offered in the Introduction), not as an "illustration"

or "application" of "post-modern sociology", nor as a story that I, the critic/expert will provide a/my reading of, but as a way of engaging you, readers, in a part of the process, the movement towards what might be a "post-modern" sociology. While I have been very cautious in my use of the term "postmodern", I now return to it, but in such a way as to stress process, movement and political action, still a reaching toward something that is not yet. In this way, I am signalling the difference between my understanding of "post-modern" education and social science and the "postmodern ethnography" of Tyler, for instance, where form is emphasized and political action avoided.

1

#### **Classroom connections**

When I walk into an undergraduate sociology classroom in The City University of New York, the students see "I" am "white" and "I" am "a woman". When "I" speak, they know "I" am 'not an American.' Am "I" English? Am "I" South African? Someone soon guesses. I'm from "Downunder". They've all seen "Mad Max" and Paul Hogan in "Crocodile Dundee". They know 'Australia is racist.' "I" see "they" are mostly men and women of color, a term I've learned to use in the North American context. Students name themselves as African-American (born down South or in New York City), Caribbean-American (we have a long list

from "the Islands"), Asian-American (students have escaped the war in Vietnam or the regime in China) and Latin-American (again, "home" is anywhere from Puerto Rico, Cuba, Nicaragua to Colombia). Of course, these labels are understood to be inadequate and stories are told of the difficulties of identity and naming. In our first encounter, the beginnings of our travels together, "we" find something "we" share. "We" are a gathering of multi-"world"-travellers.<sup>1</sup> On one level, "I" and "they", in our different circumstances, are at "home" in New York City and "in exile" from home elsewhere; another time and place travels with us wherever "we" go "here". "We" share life in the in-between zone, the multiple times and places of the post-colonial, post-modern world. "We" have already begun to connect and, in connecting, to disrupt the traditional notion of time and place in the classroom. That connection (teacher-student-student) requires elaborate code switching, language bridging and openness to the possibility of unexpected alliances. My professional body as defended self (teacher or social scientist) and their student bodies have no place in matters of life (or death). As teacher-cultural

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<sup>1</sup> On the "world"-traveller, see my Introduction, pp. 21-24 and Chapter two. As I write, I am also reminded of Homi Bhabha's (1992) comment on the lack of movement and travel which characterize exiles and refugees. I am well aware that "world"-travellers in New York City may never have the money to get out of the City. Once in the new "home" travel is impossible for many. Memory, amongst other things, becomes crucial in maintaining a sense of identity.

*worker, I begin my journey into the world.'* This is my *improper vocation.*

The post-colonial classroom in the academy in contemporary times is the site that brings together a new ensemble of circumstances - "world"-travellers encounter each other encountering sociological discourse - which I, as critical cultural worker, have to be able to "see"/read as an occasion for engaging in the risky business of innovative pedagogy. This is an instant of art. Innovation is possibly even more risky in this context of "third world" students in a "first world" educational institution. Colleagues and students sometimes ask me whether I have problems. Certainly, some students have challenged me. I can recall a couple of students who have asked to be transferred to another class (one, I remember, because he didn't want to be taught by a feminist and another because she wanted a traditional teacher who taught from the Textbook). Faculty want to know what's going on especially in terms of my non-traditional relation to introductory sociology textbooks. And I have my own moments of doubting, of sliding back into "doing the right thing".

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<sup>2</sup> West, Hall, hooks, Grover, Probyn, Penley, Ross and Steedman (1992) are amongst those for whom cultural studies is not simply another discipline within the academy but a worldly vocation (a term Hall takes from Said).

*The politics of The Sociology Textbook in post-colonial classrooms*

If, as Homi Bhabha has suggested, the Enlightenment book was intended to reform society, implying a theory of reading as consumption and a cultural politics of domination, the ideology of the Introductory Sociology Textbook can be read as the maintenance of order and control and, thereby, the hegemony of Anglo-Euro-American culture.

To work against the discursive colonization of sociological discourse in post-colonial, post-modern times, necessitates working against The Textbook and the classroom as colonizing time/space, discursive and non-discursive. To engage in the battle of truth, Homi Bhabha has written, is to look at the presence of the English book (in the context of (post)-colonial India). Its effect is to stabilize truth in the colonial/colonizing space. My argument is that the presence of sociological authority resides in The Introductory Sociology Textbook, which is, to follow Bhabha's notion of the cultural in colonial discourse, an artefact of the "disposal" of colonial power, a strategic device in a specific colonial engagement (sociological discourse circulating in post/neo-colonial scenes), a symbol of colonial/colonizing authority. To circulate the textbook in the post-colonial classroom in The City University of New York in the 1980's and '90's, may be to reproduce the classroom as a space of colonial

representation where the presence of authority, *The Sociology Textbook*, and *The Professor*, who represents and disseminates a certain version of reality, become the immediately visible signs of a colonial/colonizing regime of power. Post-colonial, hybrid students, already displaced/dis-located geographically and culturally, are further displaced/dis-located by the discourse of the sociological text/teacher, the monocultural voice of modernity. The Textbook regulates certainty, stability, the body of knowledge of sociology to be learned. This is how it achieves the effect of colonial authority/presence, how it defines the field of "the true" and how it excludes, and/or marginalizes, by its particular production of identity effects (for instance the separation of gender, race and ethnicity and the omission of sexuality). The Text, moreover, signifies transparency and discursive closure. This is knowledge to be disseminated and consumed not contested.<sup>3</sup>

*Cultural Studies as pedagogical practice: my improper vocation*

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<sup>3</sup> The consumption metaphor is prevalent in educational discourse. It emphasizes linear progression, assuming that teaching is an activity that begins at a particular knowable point and progresses to an end with knowable predictable outcomes, thus giving the false hope that we know where we are going, we have the answers to give and we can control what is learned and measured. Quantified exchange dominates in an age of reification (Trinh, 1991). To "have" knowledge (the thingness of knowledge) takes precedence over knowing. From this ideological position, curriculum packages and other enclosures wrap up a product for consumption.

In arguing for cultural studies as pedagogical practice in the sociology classroom, I am arguing for a way to de-colonize sociological discourse as well as the traditional discourse of professionalism, the silencing strategy in education. The displacement of the teacher/textbook regime of colonizing representation is, I have argued, a necessary tactic. The teacher, as critical cultural worker, has to displace the dislocating Text, at least temporarily, with the textualized lives/"self" representations of "world"-travellers and, taking those lives,<sup>4</sup> and theories<sup>5</sup> about those lives, as points of departure, contest sociological narratives, metaphors, categories, truths. The hybrid, "world"-traveller tells "travel" stories which can reclaim culture and re-write the unitary self/identity (the epistemology of identity) on which the presence of sociological authority is founded.

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<sup>4</sup> Lived lives is not, here, De Certeau's notion of "the everyday". Although he claims to be bringing scientific procedures back to "their native land" (everyday life) and not to be returning to the individuality of modernism - the individual as the basis of sociality which underpins sociology - I argue that the term "everyday" retains modernist generalizing tendencies and must be superceded by a radical cultural politics. Morris (1992) has argued that "the everyday" is the white, European middle class male's everyday.

<sup>5</sup> The idea is to make popular theories circulating at a given historical time a point of departure rather than dismissing them as non-theoretical. What this does is to validate theory making outside of the professional arena and to open up the possibility of taking a close up look at ideology in action. It's part of taking popular culture seriously, as Morris has reminded us. To do so we "must eventually accept to take issue with it and in it, as well as about it" (Morris, 1988, p.8). Ross has made a similar point in his introduction to Universal Abandon!

Cultural studies as pedagogical practice goes beyond the notion of education for survival or economic gain<sup>6</sup> in its interest in "transforming" our-selves and our "worlds" but, at the same time, it rewrites (without dismissing) the "radical" discourses of critical and feminist pedagogy for post-colonial and post-modern times. Transformation is no longer understood in the old language of the politics of "emancipation" and "empowerment" but as a reading/writing and remaking/renewing of selves and "worlds", as a reorganization of culture understood as ideological practices.

Does this mean that sociology (and the social sciences more generally) is no longer? Tyler has made that argument; from his postmodern position, science is archaic and outmoded in the contemporary moment. I'd prefer not to talk in catastrophic "end of" terms (see chapter one). My interest is in transforming modern science by deploying a cultural studies perspective and that implies rejecting its modernist presuppositions and reclaiming what science in its modernist form has suppressed in the name of "science". I reject the separation of science and life, for instance. I want to undo

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<sup>6</sup> From this ideological position, the mechanical, instrumentalist view of teaching is perpetuated. Teachers are reduced to vehicles/transmitters of knowledge (rather than as representing the world) and students to receptors, the receivers of messages. If the teacher is a mechanical conveyor of material, a machine, then arguably she is easily replaced by a machine; but also if teaching is not conceived as an act, an event, then the teacher cannot be an activist.

the rhetoric of modern science and shift to cultural critique which engages me in *struggles over meaning and representation, ideological and political battles which are at the root of knowledge (and radical pedagogical practices)*. As "world"-travellers (the "new" political subject<sup>7</sup>) we can enter the discourse of science by resuming our own authority as speaking/reading/writing subjects, thus displacing, at least temporarily, professional knowledge producers and their "methods."<sup>8</sup> We de/reterritorialize the time/space of the social science classroom so that new knowledge about selves and "worlds" can be produced.

*Reappropriating feminist consciousness raising in post-colonial classrooms*

Feminist consciousness raising of the 1970's was based on the notion, now unacceptable, of the "common world of women". De

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<sup>7</sup> "World"-travelling relies on a different conception of the subject (see chapter two). "World"-travellers tell post-colonial, post-modern stories of survival. But I want to emphasize that I am making no naive (read uncritical) suggestion that the hybrid student has all the answers. The situation is more complex. Hybrid students have knowledge and experiences which are potentially, but not necessarily, subversive. The same has been said, rightly, of the working class. Hybrid students may bring into the classroom old/common/popular/taken-for-granted theories about the world.

<sup>8</sup> Amongst postmodernists, De Certeau (1988) has pointed out that disciplinary compartmentalization involves specific methods of knowledge production which are kept under surveillance and that these methods produce specific kinds of knowledge, the *proper* knowledge of that disciplinary space. If cultural studies is to reject disciplinary space, then it must engage in border work, in "*improper*" knowledge production through a to and fro movement between the inside/outside of any discipline, here sociology.

Lauretis (1990) makes reference to the Italian "autocoscienza", which she describes as a self-directed process of consciousness raising based in talking to other women about experiences. The problem is consciousness raising was always based on the category gender and "women"; it was, in fact, gender consciousness raising for white women. It was a search for commonalities.

The old idea of consciousness raising suggested possibilities as a method for pedagogical practice and as a tool for cultural critique. My use of it involves both story telling and writing, both implying reading (as in interpretation) and writing culture and changing selves and culture, by individuals and groups of students. We engage in the individual and collective coproduction and reading of texts.

In reappropriating consciousness raising, I am rejecting the old notion of consciousness based on the sovereign, unitary subject on which consciousness raising was based while not rejecting consciousness per se (as does "postmodernism"). I understand consciousness as "multiple voicings" (Alarcon, 1990) which don't necessarily originate with the subject but come out of multiple discourses. I represent the relation of the subject and "world" as concentric circles, a to and fro movement between multiple selves/voices and "the social" /culture. Therefore, I am critically appropriating

consciousness raising in the service of an epistemology of identity-in-difference, rejecting the old modernist epistemology of identity on which feminist practice was founded (adding the "third world difference" to sexual difference, as Mohanty puts it), and in the service of "transformation" and political action appropriate to contemporary post-colonial times (that is, as I have said above, not in the old politics of emancipation nor as a simple "self-reflection" and "self-improvement").

### *Story telling*

Reclaiming story telling is central to my project. Story telling, writes Trinh (1991), is the oldest form of building critical consciousness in community. To tell, to retell, is to create the new. According to Trinh, story telling is a way out of modernist ways of conceptualizing space, time and the world, a way to challenge the politics of modernist representation.<sup>9</sup> She reclaims story telling, devalued and relegated to the realm of children, women and the old, as a move against rationality and explanation.

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<sup>9</sup> "My 'stories'," writes Anzaldua, "are acts encapsulated in time, 'enacted' every time they are spoken aloud or read silently. I like to think of them as performances and not as inert and 'dead' objects (as the aesthetics of Western culture think of art works)" (1987, p.67).

Moreover, the story is neither me nor mine; my story is their story. My story is me and older than me and someone else's; it's not bound to the identity "I". Besides, the "I" is never about "the self" alone but functions as part of the collective voice. Truth exceeds measure, exceeds meaning. Story exceeds all regimes of truth. Truth is somewhere in between the regimes of truth.

Story talk (Maxine Hong Kingston's term in The Woman Warrior) isn't framed within a beginning, middle and end, the rational logic of modernism, nor does it take the shape of the spiral of transcendent discourses of knowledge. The shape of story telling is different, argues Trinh. Constantly told and retold, read and re-read (story telling is itself a reading; you read reality as you re-create it), it's headless and bottomless.

Story telling is a way of making theory, repressed by modern science. Trinh writes of the separation of story from history and from ethnographic analysis. Theory, too, has been separated off from story. Understood as a gift rather than an act of appropriation (as in Western colonial/colonizing ethnography), story telling demands remembering, creating, understanding as well as reading and theory making.

In the process of de-colonizing sociology, I am reclaiming story telling as talking (and writing) back. Back in the 1930's Leiris had the idea that, since the West had studied and spoken for the rest of the world, now the objects of the Western gaze would talk/write back. Contemporary feminist and post-colonial critics (notably, bell hooks) have also argued for talking back and writing back. Feminism has always claimed speaking as a potent act especially by those whose voices have been suppressed. What if the "object" (of science) started to speak? asked Irigaray (1985, p.135). Spivak and Spillers have cautioned that if she (the subaltern) speaks, it won't be in a pure, authentic voice. How can she come out from under the load of mythical codes by which she has been colonized?<sup>10</sup> I believe she can and must speak, albeit in multiple and contradictory voices not her "own".

### *Autobiography as cultural critique*

As I indicated in the Introduction, I borrow the term "autobiography as cultural critique" in part from Nancy Miller (1991), changing her "criticism" to "critique". Her interest

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<sup>10</sup> "When we, the objects, become the subjects, and look at and analyze our own experiences, a danger arises that we may look through the master's gaze, speak through his tongue, use his methodology - in Audre Lorde's words, use the "master's tools" (Anzaldúa, 1990, p.xxiii).

is in what could be called the "crisis" of critical authority in literature (like Clifford's "crisis" of ethnographic authority<sup>11</sup> in anthropology) and, specifically, its relation on the one hand to impersonal and personal critical discourses and, on the other, to the relation of literary readings and cultural criticism. Miller writes of the need to reclaim selves and culture in literary criticism (which explains the proliferation of autobiographical writing); the social sciences, on the other hand, are central to my interests.

I want to say what I *don't* mean by "autobiography", because the term is somewhat confusing given its history and varieties. I *don't* mean autobiography in the traditional sense, the project of heroization, the chronicle of Man, the writing of his life as a monument for future memory. Nor am I doing what Foucault<sup>12</sup> has described as turning real lives into writing which then functions to objectify those lives, subjecting them to further surveillance by one authority or another. Nor am I interested in autobiography as "confession".

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<sup>11</sup> Clifford and Fischer have written of "ethnography as cultural critique", not a new idea but one they probably took from the College du Sociologie (Bataille, Leiris and others [see Chapter 3]).

<sup>12</sup> Foucault has argued that those who led abnormal lives, the madman, the patient, the prisoner, were increasingly described, in the eighteenth century, for the purpose of surveillance. This is an argument, and a caution, African-American feminists/womanists have made of the potential abuse of writing the lives of black students. White feminist academics have been accused of only wanting to *know* about black women (for their own purposes).

In The History of Sexuality (vol.1), Foucault (1980b) wrote that: "The confession is a ritual of discourse in which the speaking subject is also the subject of the statement; it is also a ritual that unfolds within a power relationship, for one does not confess without the presence...of a partner who is not simply the interlocutor but the authority who requires the confession, prescribes and appreciates it, and intervenes in order to judge, punish, forgive, console" (Foucault, 1980b, p.61). Confession, according to Foucault, has taken the form of autobiographical narratives, amongst others. While there is an institutionally inscribed power relation<sup>13</sup> of teacher and student in which the autobiographical writing I am focusing on takes place (no matter what changes I initiate in that relation), I want to separate myself from any sort of confessional with its religious and psychoanalytic overtones.<sup>14</sup> And, whereas Frigga Haug (1987)<sup>15</sup> refused the

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<sup>13</sup> I acknowledge, too, that this power relation is made more complex for some students by the fact that I am white (amongst other things) and my students are mostly men and women of color (along with other aspects of their identities).

<sup>14</sup> Freud's psychoanalysis was an attempt to reinscribe the procedures of confession into a field of scientifically acceptable observations. The confessor (like the anthropological ethnographer in the field) was the master of truth; only he could decipher it.

<sup>15</sup> In her book Female Sexualization, Haug describes the work of a German feminist collective which engaged in confronting theoretical work on sexuality and gender in sociology through personal/collective story telling and writing. Although Haug rejects "autobiography" as doomed to fail because in its modernist form it has been based on untenable theoretical presuppositions such as linearity, causality and the notion of a 'whole life', she nevertheless adopts a "fragmented" approach to life story telling, focusing on particular situations rather than "life" in its

term "autobiography" to describe the work of the collective in which she was a participant, I retain autobiography, understanding it in the "postmodern"<sup>16</sup> sense as an old masculine genre reshaped and redeployed for a critical cultural pedagogical practice in which the "personal" ("the self", the "I") and culture can be brought into play in the sociology classroom.

When I talk about deploying autobiography in the classroom, I am engaging in the politics of representation and, in particular, "self"-representation. I am deploying "self"-representation as counter-discourse (understanding that "I" am not an autonomous self separate from the collective and culture). "Self"-representation, claiming a place from which to speak, write and "read the self" (as text [Benjamin]) is

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entirety.

<sup>16</sup> In its "post-modern" form, autobiography has a different politics and a different aesthetic. According to Trinh, the writer-subject is "inside" the writing not "above" or "before" it. Autobiographical story telling recomposes subjectivity; it re-tells, re-writes the subject-in-motion, the subject-in-action (Trinh, 1991). As the writing is in process, so the subject is in process. This is a different relation of the subject to writing than the modernist notion of the all-knowing, non-changing subject in which the author situates herself above the work as the "I", the all-knowing subject, rather than with it. Moreover, "post-modern" autobiography does not engage in realist description, the illusion of a stable world, but a world in which meanings are created. Autobiography is a collage/montage, a collection of fragments of memories put together; any number of fragments could be clipped out and pieced together.

risky business in the social sciences<sup>17</sup> and, indeed, in any educational institution where impersonal "professionalism" reigns. Moreover, sociology has restricted itself to cognitive learning/knowing. But, remember, we are "world"-travellers, and speaking/writing autobiographically - the telling of "travel stories" and "travel writing"<sup>18</sup> - is a necessary subversive practice in post-colonial sociology classrooms as a move against colonizing representation and especially the exclusion/masking by science of personal experiences and cultures.

Moreover, the "world"-traveller herself has blown away the old modernist conception of the unified subject; her story telling doesn't assume a unified self that can bring together a unified, coherent, continuous narrative of "a life" (another reason why Haug rejected the term autobiography). As insider/outsider (see chapter two), she brings a different

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<sup>17</sup> Fischer has commented that the proliferation of autobiographical material has not been taken into account by sociological discourse, undoubtedly because of its aversion to literature and fiction. Within sociology the use of autobiography is a subversive form of representation. The "I" is tabooed in science. Fiction and literature are understood as clearly demarcated from science and have no place in its territory. However, my particular use of autobiography is justified as an epistemological strategy in the contemporary historical juncture.

<sup>18</sup> It's necessary to emphasize that I'm not using the term "travel writing" in the usual way. "World"-travellers are not tourists in the usual sense of the word. They're not leisurely holidaying in a strange landscape; they are, for various reasons, forced to exist there.

representational politics to the fore. The old "insider" versus "outsider" and "subject" versus "object" dichotomies no longer stand. The "subjective" or the "personal" cannot be separated from the "objective" in the old sense. And this recasting of "the self" and "other" in turn has opened up new possibilities for autobiographical acts in post-colonial and post-modern times. Autobiography in the context in which I am using it is about reclaiming the subjective, the personal, and experience. It is a return to bodies, a way to understanding new subjectivities and rewriting culture and "the social" in sociological discourse.

It is important to stress that autobiographical acts come in multiple forms. They can be spoken, written, in the form of videotapes, film, fiction and art.<sup>19</sup> I have used Chicana/o writers like Rodriguez and Cisneros, Amerindian prose and autobiographical poetry (Leslie Marmon Silko and Vizenor), Maxine Hong Kingston's autobiographical fictions (The Woman Warrior), Jenni Livingston's documentary "Paris Is Burning" (screened in New York City in the summer of 1991) and video and television productions ("Metamorphosis" and "We Are Family" shown on PBS television).

I like to think of "autobiography as cultural critique" as a practice of visualization giving access, through re-membering,

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<sup>19</sup> Frida Kahlo's autobiographical art comes to mind, too.

to images by which to work out how to see, where to see from, who to see with, the limits of my/our own vision.

#### Memory work

Autobiographical acts demand "memory work", a term Frigga Haug (1987) used. I want to reclaim memory, not as "cognitive memory" (learning something "off by heart", memory as a storage place), but "memory knowledge" (De Certeau), memory as the vehicle of multiple sources of knowledge. Memory composed of unending fragments, involves the mediation of knowledge composed of many moments (time and history); it isn't abstract, it doesn't have a proper place. It transgresses the law of place, the law of science, scientific knowledge. It opens up multiple possibilities of events that can be inventoried and "read".

Reclaiming memory is linked to reclaiming story telling, bodies, history and difference. Memory contains, as part of itself, thinking and sensing the body. I would argue that memory displaces machines and machine metaphors of the body (and communication), the dominant narrative of modern science and sociology. (see chapter 3, section one on structural functionalism) Machines belong to the timeless/placeless discourses of the universal and transcendence. (Remember "Blade Runner"? The androids have no memory)

To reclaim memory is a way to reclaim and rewrite the self and culture by rethinking and utilizing lived relations as a basis of knowledge (Mohanty, 1991) and thereby to work against the knowledge that belongs to the expert, the "professional". As I have indicated already, there are, across the disciplines, signs of a "crisis" of the knowledge of the professional critic in the face of challenges from all directions. The proliferation of autobiographical work by "third world" women has to be read as a part of this. Reclaiming memory is to connect with a knowing that makes possible personal and social transformation.

#### *On reading*

To "read", traditionally, has been to receive the text without putting one's mark on it (De Certeau, 1988, p.169). The sacred text is untouched. Sociology has never been interested in reading practices except at the level of statistical studies concerned to profile who reads what. Most work in cultural studies on "reading" has to do with televisual/film space and viewers' "readings". I'm concerned about "reading" in the institutional site/cultural space of the sociology classroom. In cultural studies as pedagogical practice, I/we engage in the individual and collective articulation of experience, the story telling/writing and reading of experiences of self and others in the world. This involves the collective co-

production not only of texts but of meaning. (an epistemology of identity-in-difference)

Writing/reading from the position of oneself does not, of course, give immediate access to oneself; self-knowledge is mediated, experience is not readily available, it is constructed. Feminists involved in consciousness raising in the '70's understood that the production of experience of "oneself" is also simultaneously the transformation of oneself and others, when the production of experience is understood as collective and as taking place through self-reflexion and "shared conversations" (Harraway, 1991, p.191).

That story telling and writing and reading are not separate (that writing and reading are "braided") is evident in that the writer is also the first reader of her text, as Trinh has noted (1991, p.125). To textualize her experience is also to read herself and others' and thereby to reflect on her way of seeing, reading the world. She is enabled to assert her difference to others but also to find identity. In writing her experiences, she is the active reader/interpreter of her life, others' lives and events. Reading/writing beginning with the self/selves challenges classifying forms of writing meaning like science.

De Certeau describes reading as making the text habitable, feeling at home in it, furnishing it with your own acts and memories. Readers insert the messages of their native tongue and accent, their own history. Reading, he says, is the art of renters, making liveable and living in somebody else's house, insinuating differences into the dominant text. What I want to stress is a more radical project - *the re-framing of the old story and the writing of a new story*, remembering that any self or group/collective reading is provisional.

### *Ideology*

To make lives and popular theories the point of departure is to foreground ideology. I want to emphasize the importance of reclaiming ideology for a critical teaching practice. Professionalism has excluded ideology along with the moral, the ethical and political. My preferred view of ideology is that it is narrative-in-process (while appearing as the "natural", the taken-for-granted, commonsense<sup>20</sup>) and is transformable along with the subject-in-process. It can be constructed, reaffirmed, challenged, displaced or shifted in the teaching process. This implies what Spivak calls "a confrontational teaching", a confrontation with popular theoretical/ideological explanations of the world. She has written of the project of "unlearning"; changing ideologies is

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<sup>20</sup> This is one reason for rejecting Tyler's opposition of science and commonsense. He doesn't make commonsense problematic. Instead, commonsense, for him, is what we should return to.

a process of unlearning (1988, p.297) and teaching "a way of looking" so that the way of looking becomes a way of doing (a "deconstructive" project, Spivak argues [1990]). At the same time, the teacher-cultural worker cannot control how the world will be read, and it will continue to be read in multiple ways (none of which, needless to say, are measureable).

Reading a text brings into play different ideological/political formations which are never autonomous, according to Hall. They are articulated in a broader field of economic, political and cultural struggles. Students come into class with popular theories (for example, of sex, gender and sexuality), their story repertory which is not theirs, but belongs to their culturally and historically constituted community and which has to be understood as located in a wider field of discourses. This relies on the notion of the subject constituted in textuality, in ideological and historical texts, which are evident in his/her way of reading the world.

Articulated in these terms, the classroom project has, in part, to do with unravelling "the woven subject" (the metaphor of the loom as a metaphor of reading displaces the notion of analysis and interpretation in science), to critically investigate the production of the subject-in-narrative. One of the interesting things I've found in confronting popular theories is that they are often disassociated/detached from a

subject's own experience; when a subject engages in remembering her own history and constitution, an alternative way of reading self/world can form.

## 2

### **Reading the self/reading the world**

As I said at the start of this chapter, I want to avoid falling into the trap of "illustrating" or "applying" "postmodernism" (or Cultural Studies) to classroom social science practice. That would be to slip into old modernist representational practices, to attempt to answer questions like "what is a post-modern sociology?" or "what is a post-modern pedagogy or education?" All I can represent is no more than an instant, a moment, in my trajectory of teaching sociology. Moreover if, following Spivak (among others), I am to "de-hegemonize" my position of authority, I cannot provide a reading or commentary on my students' lives.

So I have considered several possible ways to close this text, provisionally of course. I could present you, the readers, with a series of juxtaposed tellings, which would represent the tellings of different/shared circumstances of a group of "world"-travellers and which could be read against each other. Or a sequence of separate tellings in search of differences

and common themes. Or an interweaving of tellings. Or just one story.

I have settled on the last option and I have decided to re-tell "Betty's story" for you, readers, to read, in the sense of bringing your story repertory to bear on her story. Of course you will be doing the reading alone and not as part of a group in a classroom setting but I want you to imagine such an event as you read. There is no one reason for my choice of story, except perhaps it was one that was told and re-told, read and re-read many times in different introductory sociology classes. It is a (one) story of patriarchy, the particular story of a Latina woman from Colombia. It is one story of migration. Certainly, it is a story that fills the silent gaps in those introductory sociology texts which make little or no mention of patriarchy let alone explore it in the in-between zone of the "world"-traveller where culture, race, ethnicity and gender are complexly articulated and none can be read separately from the others. Betty's story is told in three parts: Her father; Her husband; Her boss. I have included the first two.

#### **World"-Travelling 4**

#### **Betty's story<sup>21</sup>**

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<sup>21</sup> This story has been copied directly from the student's text without alteration. In this way I have attempted to retain the voice of one "world"-traveller for whom, in this instance, English

**Part one: Her father**

Betty came from a traditional and strict family. Her father is 70 years old and her mother is 54 years old. She has four brothers. Her parents always overprotected them. They believed that going to parties or participating in social activities led to "bad things", as they used to call it. Most of the time they spent at home with the family and close friends. Usually she stayed at home with her mother or the babysitter while her brothers played in the park with their friends. According to her parents it wasn't so dangerous for them since they were boys and could defend themselves, as it was for her.

Sometimes she played with her brothers, but they liked boys' games like football or playing with cars and bicycles. However, other times they played mother and father.

When she grew up, it was even more difficult for her, since her parents didn't let her go to her friends' parties. Although she was already 18 years old, they said she was not big enough to go to parties. They thought parties were not safe because men drank, so they couldn't control themselves and might abuse an unexperienced young girl. But according to her father, her brothers could go to parties because they had to learn about life. So at the age of 18 years she had her

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is a second language. Note, too, that the story has been deliberately written in the third person by the writer-traveller.

first boyfriend but without the knowledge of her parents, since they wouldn't allow it. Her parents allowed her to have friends, but when they visited her, either her mother or her brothers accompanied her.

She used to tell her parents that the way they were raising her was over protective, and most of the time they ended up mad at each other. They used to say that that day she was going to do whatever she wanted was the day she get her independence.

Her father said that she was a rebel because she didn't want to follow his suggestions or advice. He always wanted the best for her. He didn't allow Betty nor her mother to use make-up or cut their hair without his permission. He wanted them to use long hair, picked up with a ribbon. Most of the time he chose the clothes for them to wear, or the activities he wanted them to do. But Betty used to tell him that she herself wanted him to buy her own things, according to her taste.

Betty's father supplied them with everything, but he didn't want Betty nor her mother to have money with them. He used to pick up whatever food he wanted at the supermarket. Sometimes, he accepted suggestions from Betty's mother, but it was he who made the decisions on the menus. There was abundance of

everything at home, and he made sure that they were not short of anything.

When Betty started going to college, her parents were in conflict with themselves, because she had to work together with other groups, take time to go to the library, attend conferences, etc. so it was difficult because they could see how her college life was liberating her from them. That is why when Betty finished her first semester of school, her father didn't want her to continue studying her career of social communication, but he wanted her to study what he always wanted, which was medicine. Since it was difficult to pass the test to get into medical school and her father wouldn't pay her school for social communication, Betty decided she wanted to study nursing in the U.S.A. so that when she would be graduated she would come to work in Colombia. After her parents travelled to the U.S.A. to see the atmosphere and after talking to some of their relatives there, they accepted the plan of Betty. So she came to this country at the age of 20 years old, full of optimism and decided to try herself far from her parents. It was hard for her to get adjusted to a new way of living, its people, the school system, etc. She met many people, but had only a few friends. Betty got matured and developed her independence, overcoming difficulties.

Part 2: Her husband

After 6 months that she arrived in New York she met her husband to be who had been in this country for 2 years. He was divorced with 3 children. His children lived with their mother. Betty's husband-to-be looked like a nice person, someone who has learned from his experience and wants to start a new home again. He was 13 years older than Betty. On the other hand, she liked him and she saw in him a person who had consideration for her, a person who shared decisions with her, either big or small ones. That is how they got married, when she was 21 years old. He proposed they not have any children until she finished studying for her career. So she was to be a housewife and go to school. She wouldn't take a full time job, but she could work part time doing some housekeeping. He also proposed that she take contraceptive pills for five years, so that when his own children were grown up, then they could take care of the new baby; but Betty wanted to have a baby before 5 years.

During 2 and a half years of her married life, Betty got two summer jobs. The first one was to take care of a lady, and the second job she got was as Director of a summer day camp. Betty used to give him her paychecks, so he deposited them in their joint account at the bank. They also had credit cards under both names; but he was the one who used the cards, wrote the checks and had them with him. Both of them went to buy food at the supermarket. She could choose whatever she wanted and he

paid for them. She used to have little money with her, but had to render an account of it to him. It came to the point that they had to render accounts of every expense to each other, that is from a cup of coffee to anything big that they bought. She still keeps those lists of accounts. When they went out shopping he chose and bought the clothes he liked for her. He didn't want her to use any make-up either. Whenever she used some make up, he said he wouldn't go out with her because he didn't like to be with clowns. However, he was always well-groomed. She expressed to him feeling well when she was well-dressed and got some make-up, but he said that he wanted her natural, and that she was not a child anymore, but a married woman. She also expressed her feelings and dislikes about other things to him, but her replied that he wanted the best for both of them, that he had more experience in life than her, and this was the reason why things were done his way. He used to say "Don't worry, do as I say, do not object, that is the best for both of us."

Betty had only few friends since he didn't like to have a social life. He thought friends should be visited from time to time, because many times they are not good, so it was better not to make close friends. Besides, he thought friends might spoil Betty. Betty's husband used to open and read her mail.

Now Betty realized how he used to manage her like a child, and he tried to get advantage of her. For instance, he used to bring his children home every weekend, and said that since he was very tired from working all week, he was going for a nap and she should stay up and play with his children. After saying this he would give her a kiss and go to sleep all the afternoon. Regarding the housework, he didn't help her at all, even the times after his children had been visiting with them, because he was very tired of working all the week, and besides that was Betty's job, not his. He used to telephone her from his job, frequently, to find out what she was doing. He even connected an extension in the bathroom so that she could answer the phone when she was taking a shower. Finally, she started to realize that he was a possessive man who wanted to protect and control her. She did not want to accept this situation, so she became depressed and lost weight. She wanted to believe that when a man and a woman got married it was forever and that a girl should have only one man in her life. But at the same time she refused the idea. The fact of her realizing this and awakening to reality, raised a problem in herself and in their relationship. There was a struggle in herself because she wanted to save her marriage, but not under those circumstances. On the other hand, her husband saw he was losing his power to control her. He also saw that she was getting thinner and thought that she was ill or had some physical deficiencies. So he took her to different doctors.

All of them said she was in good health. Betty became very mad at him. She said that if she was thinner, it was because of all the pressure that he put on her. And that the only thing he would get from taking her to doctors was a big expense. This was the first time she attempted to challenge him seriously and with some anger, making herself worthy as a person.

The problems between Betty and her husband became bigger and bigger. There was a struggle of machismo on her husband's part while Betty tried to let him see that she was a worthy person. Then they decided to visit a therapist. Through therapy, Betty could perhaps understand what was happening to her as well as to their relationship. They went to see a therapist for two months, until one day the therapist said to Betty's husband: "Mr. G. What I can see from your conversation is that you are treating Betty as if she were your housekeeper, instead of your wife." That was the last day he went to see the therapist.

Problems and aggravations were getting worse because Betty could see the reality but she couldn't accept it. One day Betty refused to go to the park with him and his children. She preferred to visit with her cousin and his children. That night her husband came home very late at night and drunk. The following day Betty's husband telephoned his father-in-law in

Colombia, and told him that he was going to divorce Betty, because she didn't obey him any more and did not submit to him. Betty told her father over the phone that she herself and her husband could solve her problem and that he should not interfere in their life. So the following week Betty's father came to the United States to see them.

Her father behaved prudently and listened to each of them separately. Betty told her father about their situation and how she felt about it. She also told him that she couldn't keep on living with him in those circumstances. Betty's father told her that G. was a good man who gave her everything and that she should be more submissive and sacrificing and she should resign herself to her role since she was a woman and it is the man who is the boss of the house. Betty told her father that this was not fair since both husband and wife should make decisions and work together. To this her father replied that the man is the outstanding one in social life, however he said he would talk to G. and ask him to be more flexible.

The next day when Betty got home her father and husband had discussed the matter for a long time. Her father looked worried. He told Betty that it was her decision and she had to change her behaviour in order to save her marriage. Betty replied that if things continued the same, then her marriage would be finished. So the following day Betty's husband and

father talked more. Betty's husband said that since Betty wouldn't change her mind, he was going to take steps regarding their divorce because this was the solution. The only thing Betty's father commented was that they had everything to be happy and that Betty was a good woman. Now they had to decide on their marriage. When Betty's father left he said goodbye and wept. He also gave some money to Betty and told her that whenever she needed more money she could withdraw it from his account at the bank. G. was not aware of this.

Sometime ago, when Betty's father had just arrived, a notification from the American Consulate in Canada had arrived by mail. This was for Betty to present to get her resident visa. This document was received by G., kept by him and only given to Betty when her father left. They had only 3 days to obtain the required papers and go to Canada. Betty was surprised because of the way he proceeded, not showing her important documents before this. But G. said to her: "Do not ask any questions, do as I say". She gathered the necessary papers and three days later travelled to Canada to get her resident visa. When they were coming home they had another dispute. G. was going to take three weeks vacation from his work, and he wanted to spend it with his children and Betty. She proposed they spend half of his vacation with his children and the other half by themselves. She said they needed the

time to be alone. He got mad and said that Betty didn't love his children.

After this he called the pastor of his church who had a talk with them. The pastor advised G. to forget some of his machismo and advised Betty to forget some of her independence since the woman has to be more patient. They got reconciled. Two weeks later Betty's green card came in the mail. G. was the one who opened the mailbox and giving this to Betty, he said: "Here is the key to the prison," half serious and half kidding.

Betty got a summer job and when she received her salary she went for a hair cut. He was angry because she had not given to him her pay check. He became really mad and decided he was going to change both names of the bank accounts and credit cards to his name only which he did. This was the climax of their situation. So he went on vacation with his children and his mother for one week. From then on he changed his attitude. He started going to the supermarket to buy food. He planned their trips without the approval of Betty. When Betty challenged him, he answered: "If you want to come, that's O.K., if not stay home." Communication between them became worse and worse. He only wanted Betty to work full time and give him her paycheck so that he could pay the expenses. He suggested Betty quit school because he thought that when Betty

was graduated as a nurse, she would get married to a doctor. G. did not like her independence. He thought the best thing to do was to get a job as a housekeeper. Betty was opposed to all of this. She paid her school with her salary. This made G. very angry and he continued doing things she didn't like. He came home late. During the weekend, he dedicated his time to help his friends. One day Betty didn't have any money and asked him for some. He got mad and said that he had no money. It was only when she told him that she had looked in his wallet and saw he had \$42 that he gave her \$2. Then he said that the best thing for them to do was get a divorce, since Betty was not going to change. That night he did not come home to sleep, without any explanation. The next day he asked for his breakfast as if nothing had happened. Betty told him she was not his maid, but his wife. Therefore, he should consider her as such and give her the corresponding value otherwise she wouldn't cook for him anymore. It was then he said she would suffer the consequences. So he disconnected the phone. He didn't buy any food. He took with him the appliances and valuable things. He only left one radio. Three days later G. forced Betty to get up and fix his breakfast and lunch, and since she refused he beat her. Betty told him she was going to take him to court. He didn't believe she would. But she did and she got an order of protection. The next day G. sent Betty through his brother a claim of divorce, claiming that she had given him human cruel treatment. Betty used her father's money

to pay for lawyers service and to support herself until she got a job. Betty filled out applications for jobs and received the approval for financial aid. A month later Betty got a job as a cashier in a supermarket with the minimum salary. Soon G. realized that Betty was working and asked for half of her salary. He tried to move her from the apartment but after he was presented the order of protection he stopped. Everything continued the same after the claim of divorce. Two weeks later Betty got the job where she is working now. A couple of days later G. noticed Betty was getting ready to go out to work and asked her if she had got a better job. He expected to receive half of her paycheck, but since she didn't give him anything, he decided to move and in three weeks he rented a basement and one day when Betty was working, he moved taking with him most of the furniture and appliances.

One day before he left he told Betty that she wouldn't find another man who loved her like him, or gave her everything like him. She replied that love is to give and to cultivate but she had never received that love from him. She told him that he should realize she was not asking for material things, that things are given because the person wanted to, not because he was forced to. This was how G. moved from the apartment, leaving Betty with a debt of two months rent, utilities disconnected and in a difficult economic situation.

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