Xcp 7

cross cultural poetics

"Everyday Life"

"Death Sightings" an essay by Kathleen Stewart
(plus new essays on Michel de Certeau and Henri Lefebvre)

Nicole Brossard's "Theater: Speed of Water" (translated by Rosmarie Waldrop)

Everyday Life Galleries: Wing Young Huie & Jamason Chen

New poetry from Diane Glancy, Harryette Mullen, Rae Armantrout,
Kamau Brathwaite, Justin Chin, Theodore Enslin & others

Reviews of recent books by Édouard Glissant, Walter Benjamin,
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College of St. Catherine-Minneapolis

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Contents

"Everyday Life"

Reviews

“Everyday Life”

Death Sightings

Kathleen Stewart

Sometimes you can see someone's death coming in their body. There is a sad slackening. The body coming into death both surges into view as the literal shade or shadow of an exhausted vitality in flux and shrinks from view as if exposed in a public secret. To the viewer, the slackening body might seem auratic or re-enchanted at this moment when matter becomes vibrant with a force field, this moment when form and affect are pushed to excess and left hanging. A life's particularity and significance suddenly erupt into view in just the moment when death comes calling.

> *I saw him the day before he died. He was in good health and he was telling me his life's achievement — money saved, kids raised and doing well. His papers, he said, were finally in order. Then he said he was tired and the sad slackening came. Suddenly he was smaller, looser; the edges of his body seemed blurred, the body itself seemed fluid and blurred as if I was viewing him through water. I wanted to shake my head and turn on more lights in the room as if there was something wrong with my eyes. The next day he stayed up very late surrounded by excitement and then died in his sleep.*

In the death sighting the surfaces of the body appear not as borders enclosing separate substance but as surfaces of exposure and susceptibility (Lingis 1989: 179-180). The sighting touches you, as if death itself had brushed your cheek in passing. It draws your attention and leaves you in a state of nervous arrest, haunted by a phosphorescent alterity that can't be confronted and is utterly strange.

> *A year later I went to help a friend who had been drinking himself to death for the past year. He had decided to quit but had not yet returned to life or even begun to imagine such a move. I sat with him for the afternoon, giving him soup and muscle relaxants to soften the withdrawal. He was very down — lower than I had ever seen anyone. He was perched on the edge of an old couch, his head and shoulders hanging almost to his knees. And then, in a moment, I saw the slackening come again. The blurring, the body slumping as if half the water had suddenly been sucked out of it, the strange, eerie vibrancy of a life force emerging. For a long moment, maybe half an hour, we sat there suspended in this state. Then he sank into the couch and closed his eyes and I turned to stare out the window. The next day he was back in life – miserable with withdrawal and with the exhausted anxiety of hav-*

ing to confront a vengeful real life again after a year of active avoidance and after all the other times he had been in this position in the past. Starting over again and so helplessly tired of it. As a witness, I was permanently shaken.

***

The death sighting might stop you dead in your tracks at first sight. Or it might come to you later, after the death, as a retrospective shock of recognition — in a memory, a vision, an omen or a dream.

When I was doing fieldwork in West Virginia, stories of death sightings were common. Some people would say they had seen a long lost friend's death coming as if the vital slackening had escaped the body-affect of the dying and traveled through space to pay them a visit. They might see their friend's truck driving itself up the holler with no one at the wheel. Or they might hear a disembodied voice, or the house might suddenly fill with an overwhelming smell. Then, when news of the death came, they would ask exactly when the friend had died and it would be at just that moment when the omen had come to them. They would piece this together with an uncanny shock of recognition and any strange event erupting to fracture the ordinary would be noted as an omen of something not yet known. There were visions too where the dead one would come through an opening in the clouds, stare and smile at them, and then turn and walk away, slowing disappearing into the mist.

These are moments of impact. As a sign, the death sighting is not a communication of information but a transmission of a trembling on the limits of beings (Lingis1989: 189). It does not produce a common understanding – an ideal, or a positive law. Rather, the relationship with the dying of the other is a passion, a contagion of nocturnal terrors, that moves you to touch the place of disarray where alterity disconnects every project and every comprehension.

In the coal camps in West Virginia people used to take pictures of the dead in their coffins, memorializing the death sighting as an event in itself.

These pictures hung on living rooms walls as the ordinary days passed, casting sunlight and shadows on them. The slackened body held its shrunken pose.

The photographs hung on the walls not as signs of meaning but as literal traces of the passing itself. They pictured an economy of expenditure—a disturbance that does not seek resolution or repair but only wants to discharge itself (Lingis 1983: 145, 149). Like omens, ghosts, and visions, the photographs picture the trembling matter of mobile and contagious forces. Flows of energy irradiate, condense, intersect, build and ripple in them. They literally trace the work of mourning– the struggle between holding on and letting go. Their aura,

or the performance of the spectral arising out of matter in them, demonstrates Derrida's claim that the work of mourning is not just one kind of work among others but is work itself – the spectral spiritualization that is at work in all techne (Derrida 1994: 97). Like the visitations of ghosts and visions, death sightings draw us not into a universal rational economy of signs but into the phantomatic mode of production where apparitions strike a series of blows to be deciphered and something unrepresentable presents itself. There's no being in this mode of production without the uncanny (Derrida 1994: 100, 101).

In West Virginia, the phantomatic mode of production erupted as a cultural force in moments of collective trauma. Like the terrible accident that killed five children. Everyone was "turned around" by it. The story of the accident was filled with omens and ghosts, and in the days after the accident people were walking and driving around in trances; there were stories about people walking into walls, drifting off the roads, failing to recognize neighbors at the post office. Hundreds of people went to the wake and stood staring at the little bodies in their caskets. Instead of the usual stories there were intense, fractured comments about how strange the bodies looked — a head sitting askance on a pair of small shoulders as if it had not been properly re-membered, a shrunken limb that had gone unnoticed in the child's life. Then people lined up outside in an uncanny scene, leaning against buildings and talking in fragments. With numb voices, they related memory scenes of the kids in life, as if the scenes now floated to them through air thick with substance. A scene of a little pink ribbon in the little girl's hair when she was only two or three, or a scene of the boy trying to help his grandmother by shoveling her driveway with a toy shovel, or a scene of the kids playing on a couch on their porch after school as the viewer's car drifted slowly by as if in a dream.

The moment of people lined up against store fronts caught in a collective dream is a moment of what Jean-Luc Nancy (1991) calls the inoperative community – a community based on a communication of a dissolution, dislocation, or conflagration. A traumatic secret erupts to fracture the banality of the everyday and the ideal and in that moment, the hidden and the uncanny are not simply revealed but are, rather, performed, as Taussig (1999) argues, in a repetitive discharging circuitry of concealment and revelation that leaves force fields in its wake. A collectivity forms itself as a voracious public of onlookers searching together for the traces of impacts.

In the phantomatic excesses of contemporary U.S. culture, we slide between apocalyptic alarms and equally outrageous dreams of redemption or escape. Trauma in one moment, the dream of banality in the next. The ordinary has an aura like the sad slackening of the body sliding into death. Ideals and values are thrown up as feel-good claims to certainty and clear routes to salvation against their own sad slackening. On the one hand there is an effort to revive these things we call ideals, to bring them back to the clear life of the light of day. But on the other hand, we are watching, fascinated, for the latest late-breaking news that performs the other, phantomatic, mode of cultural production that pictures the uncanny moment when spirit touches matter. This is a more compelling vitality – not the squeaky

clean vitality of rational claims to progress and therapeutic culture but the spectacular graphics of disaster, monstrosity and strangeness that literally capture and captivate the mass subject (Berlant, 1997; Foster, 1996; Seltzer, 1998; Warner, 1993). The airwaves are filled with the tales of disgruntled lovers and workers who go berserk and with strange scenes hidden behind closed doors. There are daily images of the man who bursts into his ex-girlfriend's trailer, shooting her and her new lover in their bed, or the educated couple who calmly go away on vacation, leaving behind a hundred cats – some dead, some alive, wild ones living in the walls. On the nightly news we see the concrete spectrality of the trailer wrapped in crime scene tape or the cat cages and cans of unopened cat food all over the house. John Kennedy junior's plane goes down and the national imaginary is moved to a mourning. The shootings at Columbine exceed the flurried search for causes and explanations until finally Adam Gopnik goes on NPR to say that there is no transcendent lesson to be learned here — the meaning of the shootings is simply that we love our kids and that unspeakably sad things happen.

Monsters and victims are now our central public figures and their luminous tales are plumbed for every telling detail. We look for sightings. America's Most Wanted prints photos of bank robbers with and without beards so you can scan the faces at the 7-11 for a match.

> *Andrew Cunanan went on a killing spree. The late breaking news tried to piece it together – where's the motive? Who is this man? They came up with the traveling details of moments of his love life, his friendships, and his murders. Then the story flashed into luminous substance in multiple sightings of the man on the run; someone spotted him in Lebanon, New Hampshire, in a gray Mercedes Benz with Florida license plates. His pockets were stuffed with money and it was falling out of cracks and crevices in his clothes like some kind of monstrous fashion statement from the guy who killed the king of fashion. Then all this turned out to be just some kind of apparition – a sighting someone had and shared with everyone on the nightly news. The voice of the inoperable community.*

Talk shows feature the traumatic, phantomatic gossip of racialized, sexualized bodies and voices lined up on stage and outing their loved ones for this or that monstrous or defiant act. Reality TV shows bust in on the intimate dramas of whole families addicted to sniffing cans of white paint in their living rooms and drifting through desperate days wearing tell-tale rings of white that encircle their cheeks and chins like some kind of tattooed stigmata.

June 23, 1998. I clipped a notice from the *New York Times* which read simply:

> *Life Sentence Is Imposed In 3 Kidnaping Killings*
> *WHEATON, Ill. — A jury on Monday sentenced a man to life in prison for killing his pregnant ex-girlfriend and two of her children, and kidnap-*

ing his nearly full-term son from her womb. The man, Levern Ward, 26, denied taking part in the killings. Mr. Ward had been found guilty of the 1995 slayings of Debra Evans, 26, and her daughter, Samantha, 10, and her son, Joshua, 7. He was also convicted of kidnaping the baby, who survived and is being cared for by Ms. Evans's father.

The clipping took me back to a visit in West Virginia in 1995 when everyone was talking about this story. They were piecing together the details. They said a pregnant woman and some of her kids had been murdered by her ex-husband, or ex-boyfriend, or whatever he was, and this other woman. There had been other men there too – some kind of gang on drugs. They cut the baby right out of her belly and left her to die. Then they took the baby home and claimed that this other woman had given birth the night before. Like no one would know the difference.

The women were especially fascinated by the detail of the woman cutting the baby out of the other woman's belly. They said she just wanted a baby and decided to get one as if she had been drawn, blindly and demonically, to the scene of her own desire turned phantomatic and then realized in a crazed moment where a dream literally cut through the matter that hosted it. Then, what was she thinking, parading the baby around town like no one would notice. They pictured it like a dream you can't wake up from and you're in it but it's not real. It was unreality realized.

Like the American dream itself – the dream of an unhaunted home space where life settles down into a little vignette and ideals touch matter in a utopia of colorful decor. But being "inside" the American Dream also means waiting for sightings of your own sad slackening or the sudden eruption of monster/victims on the streets or from behind the closed doors next door. Sightings which open onto the circuitry of circulation and impact, matter shifting into image shifting into matter in the other – phantomatic – mode of production.

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Tongues

Diane Glancy

You think of language as a formation which
does not ring a bill yet seems

a formidable field with birds.
If language follows a line,

the rev of engine before any take off,
you watch from behind a chain-link fence

you can almost get the toe of your shoe into,
but it slips sometimes

and you hold on with your fingers
and once you get over

you remember to speak about.
You hear yourself making a sound different

than when you heard your own voice.
The vent of language finding a point

turning in your mouth
a lock of birds exceeding.

Velcro

Diane Glancy

The fieldsopen the skie if crops don't come the topsoil blows them away. The Dust Bowl wift the durt liftd skiewurd. We givit all away. The durt-mounds bie the Missouri River in lowa are fields from Oklahoma lifted. We drive thair in trucks to get ddurt back. Shuvel all night. How many truckloady you think dis take? Thair're windbreaks now between fields to keep it back. We knowd our own story but no one telling. This ropad we drivin a history shuffled into remembering different than it wuz hurd.

Retrieval

Diane Glancy

Tuesday, April 18, 2000
St. Paul Pioneer Press
Jaroslav Pap/Photographer Associated Press

Forest Ranger Laslo Kneht grips an exhausted roe deer as he fishes it out of Tisza River floodwaters near Becej, Yugoslavia. "I didn't even feel the antlers cutting my arms. All I could see were the does' terrified eyes, their small bodies trembling with fear and exhaustion," said Kneht, who saved 36 deer on Sunday.

She had a pencil with a narrow rubber stamp
she marked the date the book due back

the stamp raised by a brass prong
off the end of the pencil like a small antler of a deer
no bigger than a pencil

the stamp arched as if a single antler
to stamp the paper glued inside the back cover of the book
lined and ruled with narrow rows that fit the rubber stamp

and could pull the books swimming in the floodwaters
of children's houses
back to the library

the books only trying to cross the river
as if anything out of the ordinary.

I am your true woman, Blinky

Diane Glancy

No one has loved you like me
lets push through the halls
and rise over the house
pink as icing of the morning sun on a cupcake
the windows blow their openness to space
let's go baby let's toot out of here
that *lick of the lawn*
let's pilot our car with no place to land
we got mowed into the ages swell
the hosts take us to the limits of the driveway
the paper flying through the yard at down I got an idea
several of them really but one I'm zoned on
called me Blinky call me *zone.*

X-ray Vision

Harryette Mullen

You don't need x-ray vision to see through me.
No super power's required to penetrate my defense.

Without listening to your mother's rants
you can tell that my motives are transparent.

A sturdy intuition could give you
the strong impression that my logic is flimsy.

Before the flat lady sang the first note of the book,
you knew that my story was thin.

Present Tense

Harryette Mullen

Now that my ears are connected to a random answer machine, the wrong brain keeps talking through my hat. Now that I've been licked all over by the English tongue, my common law spout is suing for divorce. Now that the Vatican has confessed and the White House has issued an apology, I can forgive everything and forget nothing. Now the overdrawn credits roll as the bankrupt star drives a patchwork cab to the finished line, where a broke robot waves a mended tablecloth, which is the stale flag of a checkmate career. Now that the history of civilization has been encrypted on a medium grain of rice, it's taken the starch out of the stuffed shorts. Now as the Voice of America crackles and fades, the market reports that today the Euro hit a new low. Now as the reel unravels, our story unwinds with the curious dynamic of an action film without a white protagonist.

"Everyday Life"
Gallery One: Wing Young Huie

Wing Young Huie is a Minnesota-born photographer who has received national and international recognition for his work. Huie has been featured in two major Walker Art Center exhibitions, *Unfinished History* and *Dialogues: Paul Beatty/ Wing Young Huie,* both of which included photographs from Lake Street, USA.

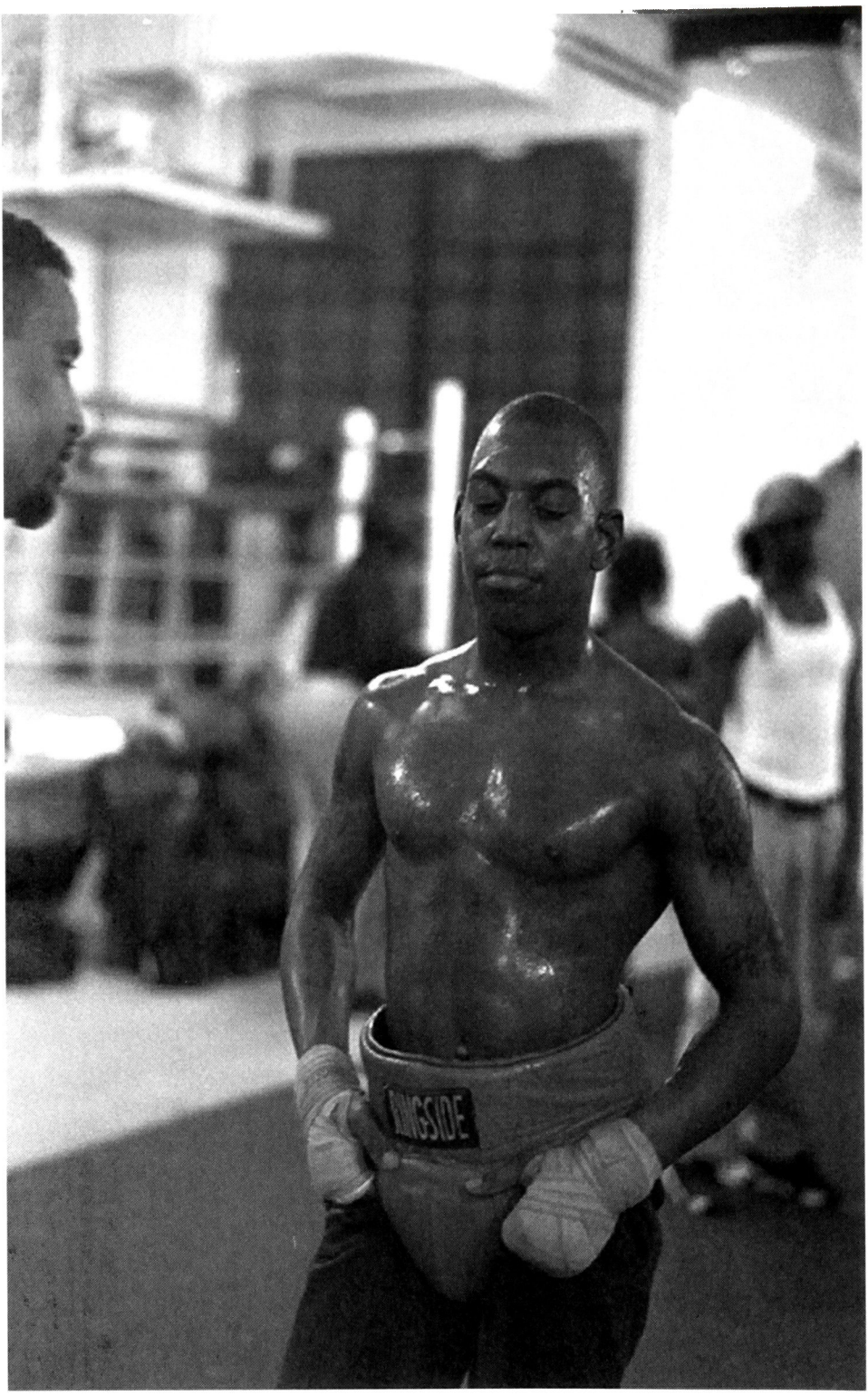
Huie has transformed six miles of Lake Street in Minneapolis into one of the largest exhibitions of photographs ever mounted in a public space. "Lake Street, USA" is made up of 600 photographs that have found their way into store fronts, bus stops, and even mural-sized prints hung from the Great Lake Center. Four years in the making, Huie's humanistic photographs reflect the dizzying mixture of socioeconomic, ethnic, and cultural realities that embody the twelve neighborhoods connected by Lake Street.

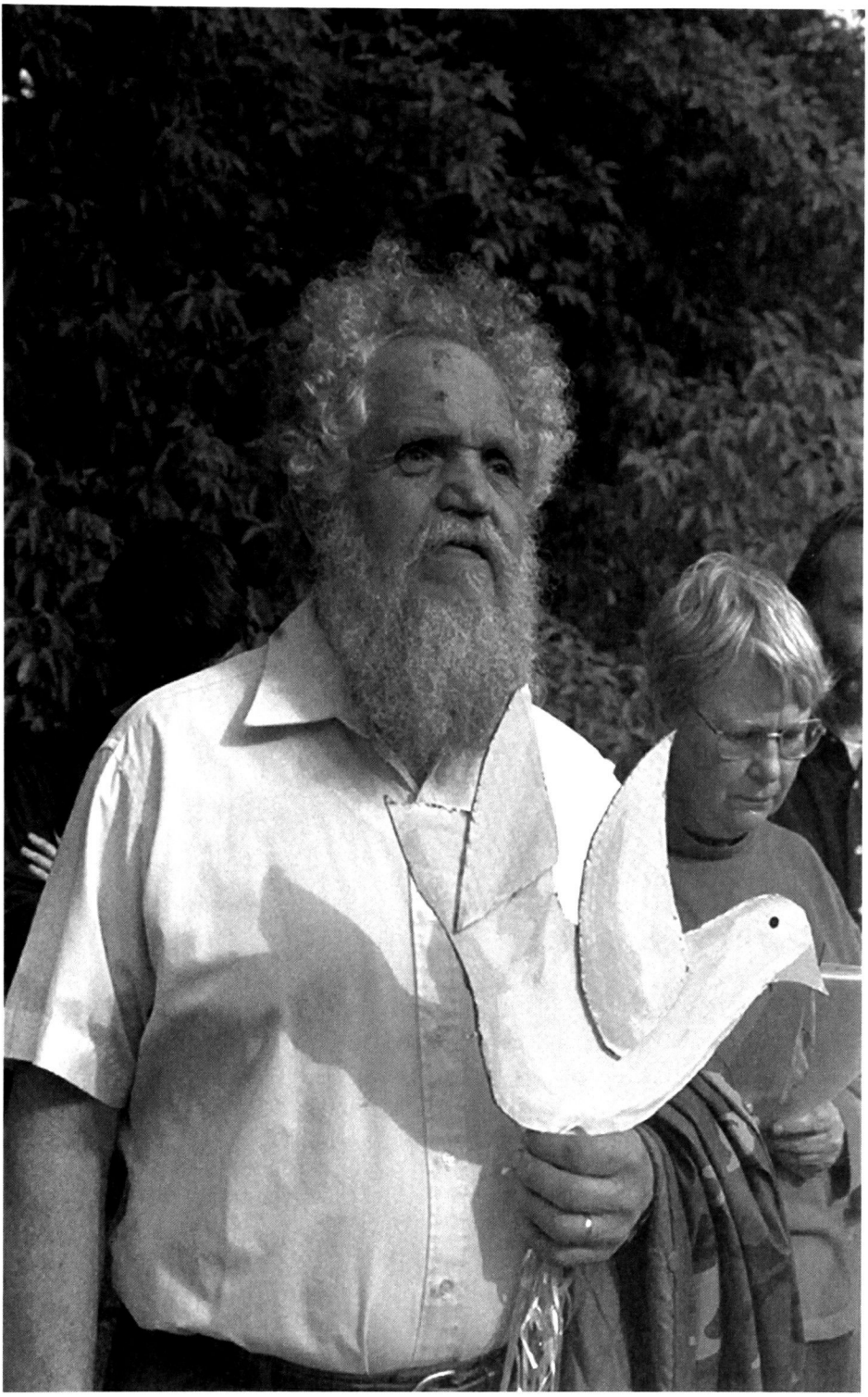
A resident of Lake Street, Wing Young Huie has pursued this project full-time from the perspective of a neighborhood resident. He meets most of the people he photographs on the street. Sometimes they will invite him into their homes and introduce him to other people. In this circuitous way Huie wends his way through the various neighborhoods. Except for public celebrations and ceremonies, Huie asks permission to photograph, inviting Lake Street residents to participate in their own representation.


EXIT


SINGER


3542


RINGSIDE




OPEN
FINE AS
FROG'S
HAIR


BORD

Michel de Certeau: The Logic of Everyday Practices

Michael Sheringham

In 1974, the historian and social anthropologist Michel de Certeau, on the strength of his writings on cultural activity, and particularly the significance and repercussions of May '68, received a commission from a branch of France's Ministry of Culture responsible for cultural development to survey and report on future prospects and orientations. The demand was for crystal-gazing rather than statistics, since the latter had been amply furnished by a major enquiry into the *Cultural Practices of the French*, published in 1974, which, it is worth noting, had been largely taken up with accounts of the activities of consumers. Certeau created a team, some members of which, notably Luce Giard and Pierre Mayol, were to make major contributions. Completed in 1979, and published in 1980, the results of the commission comprised two volumes: *L'Invention du quotidien, I, Arts de faire,* written by Certeau alone (this is the text translated into English as *The Practice of Everyday Life,* translated by Steven Rendall, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1984) and *L'Invention du quotidien II, Habiter, cuisiner,* which consisted of a brief foreword by Certeau, an afterword by him and Giard, and two monographs based on recorded interviews, one, by Pierre Mayol, on the relation of inhabitants to their local neighbourhood, the other by Luce Giard, focused exclusively on women, on the range of gestures and actions involved in making meals.

The Practice of Everyday Life is, through and through, an experiment and a project. Even though the contributions of Mayol and Giard are more conventional than Certeau's extraordinary text, the overall impact of the two volumes derives in part from the exceptionally multi-faceted ways in which the topic of the everyday is addressed. In Certeau's contribution, the avoidance of linear argument reflects the tactical play with systems and disciplines which is his central focus. In the field of everyday practices, the progression from one site to another, is by no means purely random. But by underlining contingent links and parallels Certeau suggests that it is figural logic that conditions his progress, just as it does that of the pedestrian in the city. And just as narratives or stories (récits) will be held to knit places together, bringing the contingencies of utterance to bear on sites otherwise monopolised by controlling discourses, so Certeau conceives his text as a series of stories whose aim is to recount 'common practices'. The explicit aim here is to make form a function of content; analysis, Certeau claims, must be made a variant of its object. Equally, then, to read or write about *The Practice of Everyday Life* is to invent an order, and in what follows I intend for the most part to provide an account of the principal aspects of Certeau's theorisation of the everyday, paying particular attention to the way his diffuse text progressively elaborates an overall 'operational logic' of everyday practices, establishing the 'systems of operational combination which . . . compose a "culture"' (xi).

Consumption as Production: 'the multiform labor of consumption' (30)

The Practice of Everyday Life is not about popular culture, nor is it a study of consumer behaviour. Certeau's aim is to tease out the common logic underpinning everyday practices – the way people go about things in their ordinary everyday lives. What interests him about the activities of consumers or users – selecting goods in the supermarket, zapping between TV channels, using the amenities of the city or locality, reading books, periodicals or advertisements – is their alleged passivity in the face of the technocratic, bureaucratic and other systems that produce the goods, services and environments in which consumption takes place. Certeau mounts a strong challenge to the portrayal of consumers as docile and manipulated subjects. His basic hypothesis is that consumption or use is in fact active and productive. If consumers are subject to manipulation, as they 'deal with' images and representations, they also manipulate the material they receive and with which they engage. Some TV viewers are couch-potatoes, munching mindlessly on chewing gum for the eyes. But even in vacuity there is distance, if only that of indifference or disengagement. And often it makes sense to ask 'what the consumer *makes* of these images and during these hours' (31). There is a gap between the image and the '*secondary production* hidden in the process of its utilization' (xiii, emphasis added). The model here is that of 'the problematics of enunciation' (33). In linguistic performances, the language-user produces utterances by appropriating or re-appropriating a common system. Like utterances, the 'productions' of consumers are ephemeral, and tied to specific present contexts. Certeau stresses that the kind of productivity involved here differs markedly from the rational, dominant, visible production to which it responds. 'Utilizing tactics' (32) are characterised by their 'quasi-invisibility' (31); the production secreted in these 'modes of use – or rather re-use' (30) has as its characteristic features 'its ruses, its fragmentation (the result of the circumstances), its poaching, its clandestine nature, its tireless but quiet activity' (31). All these features will be recurrent, and demand further discussion. At this point the metaphor of poaching calls for comment. 'Everyday life invents itself by *poaching* in countless ways on the property of others' (xii). Poaching is a clandestine use of resources that one does not own, on a territory that is not ours. Certeau places great emphasis on the idea that the everyday has nothing to call its own, no fixed contents or characteristics, and above all no space that is specifically its own. The distinction between tactics and strategy, at the heart of poaching, is based on this 'absence of a proper locus' (37): 'the space of a tactic is the space of the other' (37). Tactics work within the constraints of a given order, bringing about 'manipulations within a system' on the basis of an '*absence of power*' (38). Like the 'Jokes' of Freudian *Witz*, the consumer's 'ways of operating' constitute 'cross-cuts, fragments, cracks and lucky hits in the framework of a system' (38).

Consumption or use is a form of play that injects Brownian movements into the workings of systems. Lacking autonomy, it plays with the other's codes. The work of consumption – its 'multiform labor' (52) – is reactive, insofar as it can only work with the constraints of the given, but also distortive: it alters, erodes and displaces the 'institutional frameworks' on which it operates. 'Everyday practices' often involve the ludic, subversive modes of appro-

priation for which the Situationists adopted the term 'détournement' (diversion). For Certeau the paradigm of a 'diversionary practice' (24) is to be found in the clandestine activity sometimes known as '*la perruque*' (literally 'the wig') where workers disguise their own work as that of their employer, asserting their own, often collective, identity, by using left-over materials and unaccounted time in the workplace to make their own, often useless and purely decorative articles (45). '*La perruque*' introduces another economy, that of the gift and the potlatch, based on reciprocity, gratuitousness and pure 'expenditure', thus subverting the dominant order. In making a useless object out of spare parts the worker applies his or her know-how in a way that foregoes the authority of expertise. The subject of everyday 'practices' is not an expert but someone whose competence takes the form of tact, flair, and the 'aesthetic judgement' identified by Kant (73). Certeau sometimes employs the motif of blindness to contrast everyday 'ways of operating' (30) with strategic order where the creation of dominated space is associated with sight – scopic, or panoptic, mastery (61). 'Lacking its own place, lacking a view of the whole, limited by the blindness (which may lead to perspicacity) resulting from combat at close quarters, limited by the possibilities of the moment, a tactic is determined by the *absence of power*, just as strategy is organized by the postulation of power' (38). Here, blindness is perspicacious and powerlessness efficacious – at least in its own terms.

This is where Certeau's account of the logic or 'formality' of 'practices' differs markedly from that of Pierre Bourdieu, and why Certeau, in the chapter which also discusses Michel Foucault's *Discipline and Punish*, devotes space to an appraisal of Bourdieu's *Sketch for a Theory of Practice*. Like Certeau, Bourdieu sees practices as heterogeneous and transgressive insofar as they cut across established divisions and systems of order rather than simply execute a pre-determined script. His analyses are thus predicated on the disparity between the objective structures of the social world, that can be quantified statistically, and the actual 'logic of practice'. But unlike the tactics of Certeau the strategies studied by Bourdieu turn out not to be free and active but ultimately, albeit by an indirect route, to conform to established structures. This mode of conformity or attunement is accounted for by the concept of '*habitus*'. For Bourdieu 'practices' are driven by the accumulation of symbolic capital or 'heritage' in the form of goods and social roles. However anarchic, improvisational, or adaptive they are, practices serve to generate a stable 'acquisition', a kind of dwelling made up of internalised dispositions and modes of understanding. The *habitus* of a group or individual is acquired in the process of upbringing and it ends up determining and regulating the play of practices. Bourdieu concentrates on how the *habitus* is generated, and on how it tends to reproduce itself in all the manifestations of an individual or group. And he also stresses that this reproduction is automatic and unconscious. Subjects are unaware of how their practices generate and then reproduce the stable *habitus* which ultimately binds them to a world of controlling structures. For Certeau, there is a flagrant opposition between Bourdieu's account of how practices work in the space between subjects and systems, an account which has many affinities with Certeau's vision of tactical play, and the way Bourdieu ultimately denies any freedom or control to the subject by his insistence on the way subjects act out their *habitus* unconsciously and passively – in 'docta

ignorantia' (50). Bourdieu's logic of practices is based on reproduction rather than production.

'The unexpected pertinence of time' (89)

If, for Certeau, *strategies* work through spatial domination, setting up resistance to time by asserting permanence, *tactics* derive their efficacy, their productiveness, from time and timeliness. 'Tactics are procedures that gain validity in relation to the pertinence they lend to time' (38): a timely intervention is one that profits from circumstances, from spotting the 'right moment'; swiftness of action can affect the organisation of space; a sense of the unfolding of a process can lead to ways of determining its outcome; a sense of differential time-scales or rhythms can be advantageous.

Certeau derives some of his thinking on the temporality of everyday practices from a book published in 1974 by Marcel Detienne and Jean-Pierre Vernant. In *Les Ruses de l'intelligence: la mètis des Grecs* (1974) Detienne and Vernant unearthed the Greek concept of *mètis*, designating a form of practical intelligence that enables a weaker party to get the better of a stronger by seizing fleeting opportunities and exploiting blind spots in the operation of superior power. *Mètis* is not a philosophy or world-view but a series of context-specific operations — ploys, scams, knacks, 'tuyaux', 'astuces' — that re-jig the balance of forces. Accordingly, Detienne and Vernant build up their picture of this 'form of intelligence' by retelling numerous myths and legends, and tracing the recurrences of terms which, in the absence of an abstract body of doctrine, make up a coherent semantic field. The link between *mètis* and the practical specifics of stories, as opposed to the schemes of abstract rationality, will be of importance to Certeau. A key word in the semantic field of *mètis* is *kairos:* the 'opportune moment': 'mètis is rapid, as prompt as the occasion that it grasps on the wing, without letting it pass' (Les Ruses, 22). The art of rusing (on which Certeau derives further ideas form Clausewitz's treatise on war) is effective and inventive not because it brings something from the outside, but because it seizes opportunities located within the temporal configuration of a situation. *Kairos* is inseparable from particular occasions and circumstances. Certeau adopts and develops this concept in terms of a particular form of memory. Although the 'grasping of the right moment' is not dependent on a force deriving from another place, it does not happen quite *ex nihilo*. It depends on a form of unsystematic memory acquired exclusively through experience and which is therefore inseparable from the particular occasions which have nurtured it

> This knowledge is composed of many moments and heterogeneous elements. It has no general and abstract formulation, no proper place. It is a *memory*, whose attainments cannot be dissociated from the time of their acquisition ... drawing its knowledge from a multitude of events among which it moves without possessing them (they are all past, each a loss of place but a fragment of time), it also computes and predicts 'the multiple paths of the future' by combining antecedent or possible

particularities...The flashes of this memory illuminate the *occasion* (82).

Such memory manifests itself in a flash as it homes in on an occasion. Occasions only exist insofar as they are grasped; they do not pre-exist the exercise of a faculty which identifies or creates them. But this faculty only exists at the point when it is exercised: in the conjunction with a set of circumstances that it grasps, thus transforming the situation. There is something paradoxical in Certeau's recourse to a notion of memory since it inevitably introduces connotations of cumulative experience pointing in the direction of an 'acquis' which would have some of the characteristics of a place ('lieu') from which strategies could flow. That is why Certeau is so insistent on the actual operations of such memory, of this daily 'practice that consists in seizing the opportunity and making memory the means of transforming places' (86). If this can sound like falling back on established know-how, assessing the new in the light of the old, Certeau gives a very different account of the mechanism of what he calls '*the implantation of memory in a place*' (86), insisting that it is 'neither localised nor determined by memory-knowledge' (86). The occasion, he affirms, is seized not created. What is implanted by the invisible treasure of a practical memory is not a 'ready-made organization' (86) but a quickly improvised 'touch', 'a little something, a scrap which becomes precious in these particular circumstances' (86). Even if it provides this missing detail, memory only receives its form from the external circumstance in which it comes into operation. And in the process memory is itself altered or re-fashioned.

> Like those birds that lay their eggs only in other species' nests, memory produces in a place that does not belong to it. It receives its form and its implantation from external circumstances, even if it furnishes the context (the missing detail). Its mobilisations are inseparable from an *alteration*. More than that memory derives its force from its very capacity to be altered – unmoored, mobile, lacking any fixed position. Its permanent mark is that it is formed (and forms its capital) by arising from the other (a circumstance) and by losing it (it is no more than a memory) ... Far from being the reliquary or trash can of the past, it sustains itself by believing in the existence of possibilities and by vigilantly awaiting them (86-7).

Far from being a repository, memory is constituted in the responses through which it is briefly summoned up and altered. 'Practical memory' involves a 'system of responsive alteration' (88). It responds and inscribes rather than records, even if the mode of memory it draws on is made up of 'individual bits and fragments . . . sharp details, intense particulars' (88). In developing a very radical model of practical memory that all but obliterates the traditional image of store and receptacle Certeau seeks to establish that 'Memory is a sense of the other': if memories are inscriptions, and thus do leave traces, it is only insofar as we receive the shock, the mark of 'external circumstances' that 'strike' us and imprint themselves like a tattoo (which may not be visible to us). Symmetrically, access to such inscriptions only arises by virtue of a subsequent response to the otherness of circum-

stance:

> Practical memory is regulated by the manifold activity of *alteration*, not merely because it is constituted only by being marked by external circumstances and by accumulating these successive blazons and tattoos inscribed by the other, but also because these invisible inscriptions are 'recalled' to the light of day only through new circumstances. The manner in which they are recalled corresponds to that in which they were inscribed. Perhaps memory is no more than this 'recall' or call on the part of the other, leaving its mark like a kind of overlay on a body that has always already been altered without knowing it . . . Memory is a sense of the other (87)

The responses of practical memory focus on the singular, metonymically absorbing a whole into a detail that has the force of a demonstrative : '*that* fellow . . . *that* aroma, (88). Above all, for Certeau, such memory is essentially mobile and the 'space' it creates, that of a 'moving nowhere' (88), might be considered the very model of the 'art of practice' he is seeking to delineate.

'The formality of everyday practices' (23)

As we have seen, the central project of *The Practice of Everyday Life* is to establish the logic of daily practices and 'arts of practice'. Although, in their resistance to 'the law of the place' (29), 'transverse *tactics*' are relative, plural, heterogeneous, contingent, and cannot be localised, their specificity may be grasped in terms of 'types' or 'operational schemas' (30). What are the common properties of different 'ways of operating' (30) or 'styles of action' (30) such as walking, reading, making, speaking? The first thing they have in common is that, at an initial level, they take place in a field that is already regulated: by the layout of streets and services, the order of chapters or paragraphs, the economic targets of a factory. But their essence as 'ways of operating' lies in the way that, by playing according to different rules, they use or take advantage of what is initially laid down, and so introduce 'a second level interwoven into the first' (30). 'These "ways of operating" are similar to "instructions for use", and they create a certain play in the machine through a stratification of different and interfering types of functioning' (30).

A second common feature of 'practices', and the operations they engender, is the way they display both heterogeneous multiplicity and metaphorical interchangeabilty. Again and again, Certeau emphasises the sheer plurality of everyday 'ways of operating', conveyed through the recurrent use of images of teeming and swarming, and such words as 'pullulation', and 'proliferation'. This multiplicity stems from the *ad hoc* contingency of interventions based not on overarching strategies grounded in doctrine but on singular occasions. But if this autonomy puts pressure on 'the institutional and symbolic organization' (59), some of the power of everyday practices stems from their interconnectedness: 'Norms, generalizations,

and segmentations would yield to the transverse and "metaphorizing" pullulation of these *differentiating* activities' (59). If, through various strategies of exorcism – for example labelling 'ways of operating' as folklore or deviancy – the homogenizing effort of the social sciences tries to resist capitulation to the heterogeneous power of 'pratiques', this is made more difficult by a proliferation that derives in part from, and is held together by, metaphorical productivity. Certeau repeatedly underlines the active force of practices, their capacity not only to elude systemic control by exploiting gaps and niches, but actively to alter and disrupt the systems from within which they work. By virtue of a commonality rooted in the paradigm of enunciation, each of the everyday activities on which Certeau focuses in detail – primarily walking, talking and reading – can be seen as metaphorically related to the other two. Walking is a mode of reading the spatial environment; reading is a mode of journeying; speaking involves narrativisation which links space together as in walking, and so on. These metaphorical links are not merely fortuitous. In fact it is this inherent metaphoricity that makes these activities – in their everyday manifestations – representative of everyday practices, those operations which, like metaphor, cut across established boundaries and hierarchies. It is insofar as they partake of the creative potential and mobility of metaphor itself that everyday practices are inventive.

A third general feature in the 'formality' that links together the multiplicity of practices is the way each of them stands in opposition to an order that is monolithic, centred, strategic, universal, timeless, spatial. In the case of walking this order is constituted by the planned city, the 'the concept-city', already in serious decline, and subject to the critiques of Henri Lefebvre and others. In the sphere of speaking, what is opposed is 'The Scriptural Economy' (title of Chapter X of *The Practice of Everyday Life*) – a view of writing as an institution predicated on the act of separation that determines an 'exteriority', a 'remainder', and on an authority typified by the regulation and subjection of bodies. Where reading is concerned, 'the practice of reading' (172) opposes the ideology of the book as a source of truth, consecrated information, and literal, universal meaning. In each case, of course, the practice does not exist independently of what it opposes, but works within it, through the way in which the dominant order is used and appropriated.

'Walking in the City' (91), in the section of *The Practice of Everyday Life* devoted to 'Spatial Practices', begins with the justly famous evocation of the 'panoptic' view of the New York streets from the top of the World Trade Center. For Certeau, this vista, where the streets are a grid, and humans like ants, manifests a disembodied, voyeuristic vantage-point where dominance over the visual field creates a fiction of knowledge and control – a 'Concept-city' (95). Certeau contrasts this with the level of the 'ordinary practitioners of the city' (93) in the streets down below. Here there is no overall view. Images of blindness, invisibility, physicality, and opacity predominate: 'Escaping the imaginary totalizations produced by the eye, the everyday has a certain strangeness that does not surface' (93). If the movements of subjects who criss-cross the city make up an urban 'text', the 'manifold story' composed of their 'moving, intersecting writings' (93) has no author, reader or spectator. The strangeness of the everyday stems from the 'obscure intertwining of everyday behaviour' (93)

which always fall outside prevailing representations: 'in relation to representations, it remains, day by day and indefinitely, other' (93).

Yet the users of the city, in their daily circulation, create a second, metaphorical city within the first. For Certeau this can come about in two distinct but complementary ways. The first relates to the way walking fits the paradigm of enunciation. If there is a 'chorus of idle footsteps' (97) it is not because walking creates an order. The phrase 'idle footsteps' registers the random, incalculable steps of the walker. What makes them into a speech or chorus is the fact of mobility itself: 'the act itself of passing by' (97). Certeau privileges the physicality of walking, seeing it as the key to 'a style of tactile apprehension and kinaesthetic appropriation' (97). It is through the motions of bodies, and by virtue of the 'scrambling' of established itineraries and landmarks, that the city is appropriated. There is no need for the lyrical stance of surrealist wandering, the 'drift' or 'diversion' of the Situationists, no need, that is, for the deliberate introduction of the aleatory. For Certeau, well aware of, and influenced by these precursors, 'the operations of walking' are in themselves 'multiform, resistant, tricky and stubborn' (96). The analogy with utterance is developed with brio, under the heading 'Pedestrian speech acts' Going a stage further, and benefiting from recent work on urban itineraries by Jean-François Augoyard, Certeau reinforces the linguistic parallelism by suggesting that the appropriation of space through motion favours two particular rhetorical figures, synecdoche and asyndeton. This reintroduces the motif of style – that it is the style or manner of an action that makes it 'operative'. The existence of such 'walking rhetorics' (100) points to the idea that walking engenders a 'stylistic metamorphosis of space' (102).

In addition to the act of motion and the parallel with the act of enunciation, there is another way circulation in urban space is creative or 'operative'. It overlaps with another facet of utterance: the way the unfolding of discourse ('discursive . . . development', 103) is laced with incompleteness – on two counts. First, because it involves a relation between *these* words, being uttered now, and other words somewhere beyond them; and, second, a relation between a point of origin – the context within which utterance is initiated – and the 'nowhere' that it produces by virtue of the parameters (link to the present moment, to others, etc.), that make enunciation itself 'a mode of passage' (103). The parallel in the realm of walking is a relationship, embodied in the way a walk progresses, between *here* and an absent place that in some way impinges on, gives direction to the walker's steps. 'To walk is to lack a place. It is the indefinite process of being absent and in search of a proper' (103). In a section entitled 'Names and Symbols' Certeau argues that proper names (for example those of streets, squares and monuments) affect the walker's progress through 'semantic tropisms'. Proper names harbour personal meanings associated with public and private events and, to the extent that these meanings partly determine actual itineraries or ways of relating parts of the city to each other, proper names create a magic, poetic geography in opposition to 'functionalist and historical order' (105). But what is created is not a plenitude in place of a lack. For Certeau it is, rather, the reverse. By virtue of semantic tropisms, walking clears open space in closed structures. And Certeau develops a link

between this negativity, the creation of 'nowheres' ('non-lieux') within the place ('lieu') of the Other, and what he calls habitability. What makes a space *habitable*, he argues, is the way it is haunted by personal resonances: 'haunted places are the only ones people can live in' (108). He means by this that to circulate in a city is to move amidst the known and the unknown, the familiar and the unfamiliar, escorted by a host of 'multiple spirits' deriving from personal experience, historical events, verbal links. Walking makes all these absent things present, for example when we say or think: 'this is where the butcher's was', or 'this is where so and so used to live'. 'The places people live in are like the presences of diverse absences' (108). For Certeau, the habitability 'opened' by walking – through the creation of an 'area of free play' (106) is connected with belief, memory and childhood. What draws us through and orientates us in this space is local lore, a sub-stratum of legend that survives the exorcism of planning, a kind of fiction that is also linked to the question of the stories (as we shall see in a moment). The stories which enshrine this legendary material constitute a dispersed memory – an 'anti-museum' (108) – the source, not of personal continuity, but of shocks of recognition. And finally, Certeau speculates that the subjectivity articulated in such 'spatial practices' has a link to the infantile experiences at the origin of the subject (I will return to this topic at the end). Like Walter Benjamin, Certeau links city-walking to the realm of the mothers; Freud, he notes in passing, compared walking to treading on Mother earth, kneading the maternal body (110).

Voices

In Certeau's analysis, speaking, to which we now turn, confirms the overall 'formality' of everyday practices by enshrining the act of enunciation and by standing in opposition to writing. But speaking is also explicitly seen to harbour other aspects of the paradigm, by virtue, for example, of the lack of its own 'place', and of its relation to the body. Having provided a thorough survey of 'the scriptural economy', Certeau, in the chapter titled 'Quotations of Voices', looks at speech, not under the aspect of conversation, but, more radically, in terms of the return of repressed orality in the field dominated by 'scriptural systems' (196). This chapter shows many signs of being based less on explorations of the everyday than on Certeau's investigation of the discourse of mystics that would culminate in the publication of his major work *The Mystical Fable* (the notion of fable is aired here). Voice is deemed to have been banished (Certeau points to an analogy with 'the people' in this context) under the pressure of the regimen of writing. Speaking itself has been purged of the link to the singularity of the subject's body that constitutes, for Certeau, the oral. Orality returns only as a trace or mark threaded in language, in a linguistic order that is predicated on the exclusion of this dimension. Voice has no place except in the discourse of the other, where it figures as the uncontrolled dimension of enunciation. This arises from the fact that '*The place from which one speaks is outside the scriptural enterprise*' (158). Voice is therefore only present fragmentarily, as quotation from another space, that of the body, and of the other. Voice – as the 'sounds of the body' (162)– is 'heard', as in opera which allows 'an enunciation . . . that . . . detaches itself from statements' (162). Although pitched in radical form, and thus apparently remote from everyday contexts, Certeau's account of speaking is

important because it introduces a field widely associated with the everyday – that of speech, the oral and the vernacular – into the framework of everyday 'ways of doing'. And indeed, as a key illustration of the 'formality of practices', via its analogies with walking and reading, speech and orality figure in passing in many other contexts in *The Practice of Everyday Life*.

A Misunderstood Activity: Reading as Poaching

Alongside walking and speaking, Certeau's account of reading introduces a third generic practice whose formal nature derives from the paradigm of enunciation. Each of these three main practices (by contrast with more localised ones such as 'Living' or 'Culinary practices' studied by Mayol and Giard in volume II of *L'Invention du quotidien*) gives particular salience to an aspect of the overall model. In the case of reading it is the image of consumption' or 'use' itself that comes under the spotlight. Certeau criticises the pervasive image of reading as a passive activity, an image which fits in with the notion of the cultural consumer as the inert receptacle for material possessing the prestige of the written. Production is associated with writing, while reading is seen as pure reception: a child imbibing the catechism, or a TV viewer the latest bit of pap. A 'mission to inform' by the book accompanies educational methods that tend to deny any autonomy to the act of reading (166).
Yet for Certeau reading is 'a misunderstood activity' (167), and in mounting an attack on prevailing views he also attacks images of the consumer: 'such an image of consumers is unacceptable' (166). At the same time, he introduces a political dimension to the question of the status of reading. On the one hand, the suppression of the active side of reading – 'reading operations' (172) – has traditionally served the interests of powerful elites, preserving their status through the institution of literal meaning. On the other hand, the recognition of the reality of the true potential of the reading process has tended to remain restricted to the learned classes, or more recently to literary theorists. For Certeau, reading is not passive: 'to read is to wander through an imposed system' (169) whether it be that of the book or, by analogy, 'the constructed order of a city or a supermarket' (169), or of TV programmes. Drawing on the work of Roland Barthes, Certeau shows how one can see the reader as the producer of the text and how readings can transform texts. The notion of meaning as a hidden treasure secreted by a sovereign author, and to which the reader only accedes through submission, is challenged by a recognition of the reading process as involving the reciprocity of text and reader rather than hierarchy. The institution of reading is founded on fear of the ruses of free and inventive readers. But you only have to look at people reading to see that, even if intermittently spellbound, they are extremely active: skipping, day-dreaming, fantasising, jumping to the end, moving or touching different parts of the body, and so forth. For Certeau, recent attention to the reading process by literary theorists (he cites German reception theory and the work of Michel Charles) and others, risks remaining elitist, but it points to a hidden history of reading as a practice whose characteristics match those of other everyday practices. In reality, it is not so much that reading needs to be licensed, but the modes in which it already exists need to be recognised, and their political implications grasped: 'there *already* exists, though it is surreptitious or even repressed, an experience other than that of passivity' (173). Citing the psychoanalyst, Guy

Rosolato, Certeau locates in reading an experience of ubiquity and of 'impertinent' absence. Readers can, on the one hand, inhabit and explore texts in any order or manner they wish, and, on the other hand, 'absent themselves' by creating secret spaces or 'carnavals' within its order. Readers are travellers and poachers: 'nomads poaching their way across fields they did not write' (174). Yet the inventive dimension of reading does not reside in what the reader imposes on the text. To read is to expose oneself to difference and thus to be changed as well as to change. Like that of walking or speaking, the space of reading is a 'nowhere' (non-lieu): '[the reader] deterritorializes himself, oscillating in a nowhere between what he invents and what changes him' (173). What makes reading a practice is the opportunity it provides for creative interaction. Ultimately, for Certeau, recognition of the active component, the productiveness, of the reading process should act as an antidote to assumptions about the effects on individuals of generalised mass production: 'it is always good to remind ourselves that we mustn't take people for fools' (176).

Palimpsests: Narrativity and Historicity

Along with the paradigm of enunciation, the account of what renders everyday practices 'operative' is embedded in a wider context of spatial and temporal operations. The 'ways of operating' of users introduce creative play into the rigidities of ordering systems, and this results in a form of secondary production. Such productivity has no space or resources of its own, and to a large extent its link to occasions leads to a characteristic ephemerality contrasting with the aspiration to monolithic permanence of the system it subverts from within. But, as we began to see in the discussion of the role of memory in the context of *kairos* (the opportune moment), Certeau's understanding of everyday practices does also encapsulate a less ephemeral temporal order. In various parts of *The Practice of Everyday Life*, particularly the points involving a discussion of narrative (*récits*), two principles of organisation that attenuate the sheer contingency of 'everyday practices' are perceptible. The first is that of 'cutting across', the feature that earns 'practices' the label 'transverse'. The second is that of 'piling up', a feature linked to the cumulative potential of successive 'hits', 'turns' and 'diversions'.

'Cutting across'

1. 'The narrrativising of practices'

In ways that often clearly anticipate Paul Ricoeur's *Time and Narrative* (1983-5) Certeau notes affinities between the tactical operations of practices, and the practice of narrative: 'Something in narration escapes the order of what it is sufficient or necessary to know, and, in its characteristics, concerns the *style* of tactics' (79). Hence the tendency for theoreticians or historians of practice – Foucault, Bourdieu, Detienne – to adopt the art of the narrator, to tell stories: 'narrativity insinuates itself into scientific discourse' (78), particularly when everyday things are involved. Conversely, the theoretical value of the novel has resided in its status as a 'zoo of everyday practices' (78), a reservoir of accounts of practice.

But Certeau insists that it is not the objective, descriptive aspect of the novel that is at issue here, but rather the performative activity of story-telling itself, the way a story '*makes* a hit ("coup") far more than it describes one' (79). The act of narration does not cling slavishly to an objectified reality: it takes its distance and invents a way of rendering it obliquely.

2 'Spatial Stories'

In a later chapter, Certeau develops the idea that a story or narration is an 'everyday tactic' on the basis that a narrative structure is inherently a 'spatial trajectory' (115). Narrative performances link disparate spaces together, like metaphors. 'Every story is a travel story – a spatial practice' (115). Certeau is here explicitly positing a mode of practice that does not simply complement the 'pedestrian enunciations' (116) produced by the act of walking, but often sets it in motion: 'narrated adventures . . . organise walks' (116). Narratives transmute places into spaces. The familiar paradigm of enunciation applies here. By giving directions, introducing vectors, speeds and time-scales, narratives 'give effect' to virtual itineraries: '*space is a practiced place*' (117). The development of modern cartography has tended to produce abstract maps that suppress the reality of trajectories which, as Barthes shows in his *Empire of Signs*, are still perceptible in the diagrams of itineraries and rendezvous exchanged by the inhabitants of Tokyo. Having developed in some detail ways that stories open spaces, Certeau emphasises the dynamic role of narratives. Stories build bridges and in so doing transgress limits. 'What the map cuts up, the story cuts across' (129), the 'microbe-like forms of everyday narration' (130) display delinquency or dissidence vis-à-vis established codes which are constantly displaced by the subordination of stable states to 'trajectories' or narrative 'developments'.

'Piling up'

As we saw earlier, Certeau's discussions of 'practical memory' in the context of *kairos* posited the notion of a cumulative memory of 'occasions'. This is echoed in the conclusion of *The Practice of Everyday Life* where Certeau develops the notion of the 'practiced place' in a rather different way. Here Certeau stresses, as in the earlier discussion of 'proper names', that 'places' (i.e. 'practiced places' in terms of the previous discussion) can be bastions of resistance to the logic of functionalism by virtue of their layerings: 'The kind of difference that defines every place is not of the order of a juxta-position but rather takes the form of imbricated strata' (200). Hence the tendency for planners to prefer the *tabula rasa* of creation *ex nihilo* rather than confronting the 'illegibilities of the layered depths in a single place' (200). Beneath the universalisation of technology and the fabrications of written authority 'opaque and stubborn places remain' (201). Where social spaces – neighbourhoods, villages, apartment buildings – are made up of heterogeneous layers, they survive not just through inertia but because they are animated by constant shifts of balance: 'The whole, made up of pieces that are not contemporary and still linked to totalities that have fallen into ruins, is managed by subtle and compensatory equilibria that silently guarantee complementarities' (201). Far from being immobile, such 'places' are marked by 'infinitesi-

mal movements, multiform activities' (201) that can be compared to the constant interactions of photons. This idea can also be linked to Certeau's remarks on the historicity of the everyday: 'this everyday *historicity*, which cannot be dissociated from the *existence* of the subjects who are the agents and authors of conjectural operations' (20). This historicity, rooted in ways of doing things rather than discourses about them, and which cannot be dissociated from circumstances, is what is suppressed by knowledge, or simply preserved in the form of inert relics in museums. One of its emblems would be Freud's dream of a Rome where all periods of history would have survived intact, and would exist and interact simultaneously (202). But for Certeau this historicity is intrinsic to being in the everyday, a point developed right at the outset of *The Practice of Everyday Life* in the discussion of Wittgenstein and ordinary language.

For Certeau, the essence of Wittgenstein's later philosophy is the insight that our world is the everyday world determined by our ordinary uses of language: 'language . . . defines our historicity . . . dominates and envelops us in the mode of the ordinary' (10). We are immersed in the everyday and the ordinary, and, despite the countless pretensions of philosophy and science there is no external vantage point from which to 'reflect on the everyday' (11). Wittgenstein's thought provides a radical critique of all attempts to find a place (the word 'lieu' is ubiquitous in Certeau's discussion here) from which to articulate the everyday – including that of the historian. Language defines our historicity, and this means that we can apprehend it only in the present: 'Wittgenstein maintains himself in the present of his historicity . . . [he] recognises that he is caught in *common* linguistic historicity' (10). We have here a criterion of historicity that is linked to a certain kind of universality, that of 'common experiences' (26), and to the coexistence, in the present, of the past layers that common usage has bestowed on language. For Wittgenstein, ordinary language is seen as a set of practices that are related to 'forms of life' (*Lebensformen*) (12), defined as 'the *factual* (historical) structurations of our existence' (209). A notion of the historicity of experience can thus be seen to underpin the two complementary faces of Certeau's reflections on everyday practices: that which focuses on the singularity of the momentary 'hit' or 'coup', and that which focuses on the layers and stratifications accumulated by 'practical memory' and communal existence.

The Ethos of the Everyday

The discussion of Wittgenstein at the outset of *The Practice of Everyday Life* points to three general features of Certeau's approach to the everyday which will bring our discussion to a conclusion. First, Wittgensteins's scrupulous and exclusive focus on ordinary language did not stem from expertise or intimacy. A 'grand bourgeois', a scientist, and a Germanophone (Certeau might have added a homosexual), Wittgenstein was triply estranged from the 'ordinary' on which he trained his attention, and this aligns his perspective with that of the ethnographer. But, as he himself stressed, to do philosophy in the way he pioneered was to forfeit all sense of being on the outside of what one was studying. It was to become 'a foreigner *at home*' (13), a stranger in one's own midst (and if this parallels the burden of

Freud's teaching, in Wittgenstein's case self-estrangement does not have the mask of the unconscious). For Certeau, Wittgenstein's stance – where the familiar is made strange, where encountering otherness and being made other are inextricably linked – outlines in abstract form a stance that provides essential clues to any attempt to grasp the ordinary.

Secondly, Wittgenstein's sense of the 'all-aroundness' of the everyday world, in the form of ordinary language seen as use and practice, feeds into Certeau's recurrent characterisation of the everyday in terms of proliferation and ungovernable multiplicity. One reason for the appeal of the notion of the ruse for Certeau is not only that it shows how well-timed wiliness, and tactical skill capable of outplaying greater strength, are centuries old, but, as Detienne and Vernant point out on the basis of ancient myths and legends, that the logic of the ruse has also been at work from time immemorial in the feints and simulations of plant and marine life. This association prompts Certeau to imagine continuity from the ocean depths to the streets of modern consumer society (xx and 41). And it also perhaps underlies his fondness for marine metaphors, as when he evokes 'the open sea of common experience that surrounds, penetrates, and finally carries away every discourse' (15), or when he describes the heterogeneous 'traverses' of consumers as like the snowy waves of he sea slipping in among the rocks and defiles of an established order' (34). Such images of the everyday chime with others such as that of 'pullulation' (61) or 'buzzing', or rhetorical tics such as the repeated use of the word 'myriad' or 'innumerable' in expressions such as 'innumerable ways of playing and foiling the other's game' (18). To view the everyday in terms of teeming multiplicity is to figure apprehending it in terms of access or surrender to a wider all-embracing sphere, and for Certeau, perhaps inevitably given his Jesuit background, it also raises the question of belief, although not necessarily belief of a specifically religious kind.

Certeau raises this question in the last part of *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 'Ways of Believing', which focuses on the fading of all convictions: 'belief has become polluted like the air and the water' (179). Advertising and the media take over the attributes of religion, while politics is reduced to an abstract system. The 'real' comes to be represented by an endless flow of information that tells us what is believable without in fact inspiring belief. Here Certeau acknowledges that, in the face of the stream of images, the TV viewer is often bereft of any clear ways of discriminating between the believable and the unbelievable: at best a kind of half belief is elicited by bits of information whose veracity is always dependent on another's authority, a 'source'. 'The "real" is what, in a given place, reference to another place makes people believe in' (188). Quotation becomes a marker of the "real" and yet, 'To cite is thus to give reality to the simulacrum produced by a power' (189). Drawing on Jean Baudrillard here, Certeau sees the 'simulacrum' – the world of simulation theorised by Baudrillard as a development of Guy Debord's concept of the 'Society of the Spectacle' – in terms of the collapse of any sense of a reality underlying experiences, the absence of 'the assumption . . . of an invisible immensity of Being (or of beings) . . . hidden behind appearances' (187). Invisibility is key here because if the order of the simulacrum is the triumph of the visible – of the 'seen' over the 'known' – the everyday, figured precisely in

terms of blindness, immensity, the unlocalisable, the practical, can be seen as an avatar of the 'invisible immensity of Being (or of beings)' indicated here. That such a postulate seems utopian would only confirm the strain of utopianism in all thinking about the everyday.

The same kind of opposition underpins the distinction between 'Theory' and 'technics' in the conclusion to *The Practice of Everyday Life*. 'Technics' are based on 'legibility', reproduction, distinction, whilst Theory (Certeau draws on the work of Michel Serres at this point) is grounded in fluidity, ambiguity, metaphor and indeterminacy. But if the notion of Theory is here used to provide another way into the beneficent indeterminacy of the everyday, it leads into a third general feature of the everyday, also adumbrated in the discussion of Wittgenstein, namely its capacity to disrupt thought. By reintroducing ordinary language into philosophy, and into the sciences whose mastery is predicated on its exclusion, Wittgenstein perturbs the order of discourse, and in his fragmentary texts 'Philosophical or scientific privilege disappears into the ordinary' (11). As is clear in the preceding discussion of Freud, Certeau's overall point is to stress the impact of what he calls 'the insinuation of the ordinary into established scientific fields' (5). In Freud's case, this refers to his focus on the ordinary man, on the psychopathology of everyday life, and indeed on seemingly banal details of his own life. In this context Certeau uses an image linked to the metaphor of the sea, that will become recurrent: that of erosion: 'I shall try to describe the erosion that the ordinary brings about in a body of analytical techniques [how] the oceanic rumble of the ordinary introduces itself into our techniques and how it can reorganise the place from which discourse is produced' (5). The image of erosion, and related images of the intrusion of a foreign body, stress that the active power of everyday practices resides in the way they introduce a minimal but irreducible and alien ingredient: 'an uncodable difference' (200), 'the unthought element of the circumstantial into calculated time' (200), or 'the occasion – that indiscreet instant, that poison' (89). Another associated image, that of the 'remainder' or 'residue' has clear echoes of Lefebvre. Wittgenstein's ordinary language seeks to apprehend a dimension of existence 'forgotten' by 'scientific methods' and 'philosophies' (10). Foucault and Bourdieu follow Kant in seeking to grasp non-discursive practices: 'this non-discursive activity . . . this immense "remainder" constituted by the part of human experience that has not been tamed and symbolized in language' (61). The 'knowledge' enshrined in 'everyday arts' – cooking, cleaning, sewing – constitutes a 'remainder' denied legitimacy by 'productivist' rationality, even if it is given symbolic value as the sign of 'private life' – and thus what is decreed to be marginal – in the nineteenth-century realist novel or in the narratives of analysands (109). For Certeau, just as 'reading practice' actively changes the text, so the invention of ways of homing in on the everyday actively changes an existing equilibrium and, through this erosion (159), disrupts the established order. Rather than leaving everything as it was, the recognition of the everyday serves to bring about its transformation.

The foregoing account of Certeau's text has deliberately sought to underline the fact that despite the tactically deliberate poly-centric and multi-dimensional qualities that make it at once a dazzling and a frustrating reading experience, a consistent logic of practices underpins the argument as it takes in such a rich and sometimes bewildering variety of fields. The

metaphorical equivalences established between speaking, walking, reading, dwelling, and a host of other related activities not only points to a general category of experience but suggest that this experience is itself inseparable from the energy of metaphoricity. This enables us to see that the operational logic at work in the activities of users, consumers, readers, urban subjects, even if it is always contextualised and contingent, has wider implications. Certeau is sometimes seen as proffering small cheer to the powerless, offering them no more than the opportunity to play in the margins of the systems set in place by their masters. But Certeau's text suggests rather that the logic of systems creates an endless dialectic of mastery, submission, and creation, that denies fixed positions. More than this, it points to a view of everyday subjects that credits them with the ability to impact on and alter the systems with which they engage. In recognising their ability to exercise a faculty that is itself implied by the logic of human systems themselves, they engage in an activity that is transformational. Enunciation may be context-bound, and thus transient or ephemeral (*scripta manent, verba volant*) but it leaves its trace in the message (énoncé). The subject of everyday practices, through engagement with the other, is involved in a process of appropriation or re-appropriation which has repercussions in the sphere of subjective existence.

The 'ways of doing' whose logic Certeau seeks to articulate illustrate an 'individual mode of reappropriation' (96), 'a mode of being in the world', albeit one predicated on the recognition, the incorporation, the recollection, of otherness. In Certeau's logic of practice the subject's mobile, context-bound interaction with an established order creates room for manoeuvre, activates a mode of subjectivity structured by absence. In the realm of place (for example the city) a glancing encounter activates memories and creates a stratified, sedimented space, a 'place that is a palimpsest' (109): 'In this place that is a palimsest, subjectivity is already linked to the absence that structures it as existence and makes it 'be there', *Dasein'* (109). The mode of subjectivity that corresponds to Certeau's account of practice (the subject of practice) is 'a being-there [that] acts only in spatial practices, that is, in *ways of registering the passage of the other*' (109). Certeau cites the Freudian *Fort! Da!* in connection with a subjectivity predicated on the inseparability of absence and presence, loss and ecstasy: the world, like the mother's body, is lost and found, found only insofar as it is first lost: 'it is because he loses his position that the individual comes into being as a *subject'* (138). Certeau's practices all involve being displaced ('To walk is to lack a place' (103)), and finding one's place in a reaction with and to the other. In Certeau's 'everyday practices', we are dealing with what he calls 'this relationship of oneself to oneself' (110), a subject's self-relation and self-realisation, in which the other is essential: '[being] there . . . without the other but in a necessary relation to what has disappeared' (109).

At the end of *The Practice of Everyday Life* Certeau describes everyday practices as bringing about a faltering of reason 'the misfire or failure of *reason'* (202), and engendering another dimension of thought geared to difference. A mode of thought 'which articulates itself on the different as its indeterminable necessity' (202). The everyday that is given (given back) through practice is the product of '*acts* of thought' (203), but if the aptitude for them can be acquired, these acts must be repeated every day.

The Decline and Fall of the Silver Glo Motel

John Harvey

> . . . a passer-by saw a man arguing with a woman
> at the lot about 9 a.m. The woman was pleading
> with the man to let her alone.

Before train tracks, before white letters on dead-grass brown, a watermelon busts into green rind and soft, orange-pink flesh. They sell stoves, refrigerators, and washers next door. Where the curtains are doesn't matter. Waves, aurora borealis, a deep blue-green vault, wings stretched out as if this meant flight, bone and feather above a forest, a curtain that doesn't move, that could be here or across the room. A man in a wheelchair pushes himself alongside a dog with a funnel around its head. He keeps yelling at the dog, "Fuck you, Fuck you" until a truck pulls through its own dirt cloud, and the man leans his head back so the world spins upside down. Which is a song you can sing about the sun, about clear light, about the bluest of blues. If I'm wrong about this, I'm wrong about the whole thing. I look for Jimmies Icehouse, a Sprite bottle balanced on the curb, small words like We Fix Flats. This is what follows, what we press close to our hearts, day after day. And then she's there, between Charlie's Liquor and a washateria. Her face turns back to me as he walks toward her, but their eyes look all wrong, and their mouths collapse as she bends to pick something up. His hand reaches out, grabs at air, at the Lucky Food Store, a dead-end covered with gravel, with a speckled-gray. She asks him, talks to him. Please, stop this. Anyone understands that. He listens to her, waits. A pair of black dress shoes follows a bar chair and a Motorola outside a thrift store, while the sky learns to come down and drift among us. The shoes almost break my heart as if what we do comes with its name. As if only one thing appears when it's called. I'm not the face of the man as he touches her arm. I'm not the face of the woman as she pulls away. I'm not the brick, the asphalt that hides these things. I'm not even the face I've become. What is there to spell out? The seventy-nine empties in front of the Silver Glo Motel. Someone I don't know holds a green umbrella against the sun as she steps into a cloud settled along Airline. This name belongs to something else, no matter how you press your lips against a mirror, against a window. Bluest of blues, what follows—a song, our hearts . . . almost touched, almost pierced. It won't rain again, they say, until tonight.

The Cell Phone At Your Ear May Not Exist

Rae Armantrout

"You know what, take this down.

How you doing, lady, you doing okay?

Cause I got your name in my phone book.

I was talking to someone before

and her name was something like that.

I'm just here, kicking back.

Coffee shop, barber shop. Yeah,

it's gonna be alright

cause your name's right here. Okay?"

*

Is quotation vicious?
Poignant?

A chicken head
is winking,

sipping through a straw
from the "u"

in "regular"

Yet

Rae Armantrout

Now the toothless man
in fringed leather
looks over his shoulder
at them kindly.

Now the very
fabric
of space

is an agreement
to agree.

"We're looking for the coincidence
detector
that lets cells know
they've fired simultaneously."

*

One believes she moves
forward

by absorbing
what has just occurred.

One thinks
he's the space
he clears.

*

They tell this story
about themselves:

Fashion
is the big business

of making way
for what comes next

though this next thing's
not important,

not terribly important
yet

from ***(poverty of such)***

Chad Sellers

what is there
as it can't be said—
waking knowing floated
on family money

*

having that rather on a car
then watching interpreting the sea
(coming &
squeezing them)

*

where people's seriousness
is that which
going unchecked (& barking)

*

(occurring to them only to grow up
and be done with it)

*

ogle the oligarchy
of those floating
on family money
(greenery of people)

*

electing them—
who're rising sunk
in family money

*

pigs which are more than that—
wallowing

(pants around ankles)

*

dogs playing nude
(poverty of such)

*

this isn't on floating—
the elected martini boating

voluntarily stemming
from knowing that
(phoning them
& saying so)

*

verbal exactitude—
saying this flat out

*

they confronted the ape & then there was
someplace where he found he could turn—
plugging his ears

*

statued
in the cityscape
(scene in the sunlight—
who're not warm)

August 4—August 7, 2000

Ray DiPalma

> *Kepler, Copernicus, and Tycho Brahe were certainly not driven by scientific impulses alone.*
>
> —W. Benjamin

The unimportant ruptures of dissonance
And those which truly matter

Locate a large free-standing bell
Preferably one cast in bronze
Take a steel hammer in hand
And strike the bell once
—The lethargy remains the same
Only amplified to no greater satisfaction
And that in turn becomes a source of further argument

What is expressed is the need to create a smooth surface
And complicate its angle through various axes

What are the latitudes of the configuration
And its ritual patterns expressed at different times of day?
The bones of contention lie buried where?

The run of smaller parts of larger issues

Locating, first finding, point of place
Off the eye and across the zigzag
A codex for that alone
Applied beyond the distance it has exhausted

Light from the west
Perfect on the words of the face
And the words

He keeps his distance
After all, someone might come looking for something—
Something he can't produce
Or can't bring himself to relinquish under any circumstances

In which aspect do you fail to participate?
From the East
From the West
From the North
From the South
Your dialect of direction?

*

> *I will give up this business of sentimental writing—and write to the body—that is what I am doing in writing to you—but you are a* good body, *which is worth half a score mean souls.*
>
> —Laurence Sterne

The interrogation of what was resolved—

A dead man looks at you, eyes wide open.
"You won't tell me where you are."

The former occupant is now a ghost that has found a place
In the large chestnut tree planted a few yards beyond the front
Entrance to the house.

One Thursday to the next he or she would appear on the top landing
Of the stairs that ascend from the front hall to the second floor where
A long hallway turning to the right leads to another flight of stairs with
Two brief landings cornering upwards to the third floor.

The transfer of the object of thought: grasped but undescribed,
Effected by a specific brief sound, its only agency of choice,
A presence perceived with a total lack of anticipation—
What you can pace off or surround with your steps
Is sufficient confinement for any presence beyond the trees.

Henri Lefebvre's *The Production of Space*

Bill Brown

> And do you know what "the world" is to me? Shall I show it to you in my mirror? This world: a monster of energy, without beginning, without end; a firm, iron magnitude of force that does not grow bigger or smaller, that does not expend itself but only transforms itself; as a whole, of unalterable size, a household without expenses or losses, but likewise without increase or income; enclosed by "nothingness" as by a boundary; not something blurry or wasted, not something endlessly extended, but set in a definite space as a definite force, and not a space that might be "empty" here or there, but rather a force throughout, as a play of forces and waves of forces, at the same time one and many, increasing here and at the same time decreasing there [...].
>
> — Frederick Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*.

Henri Lefebvre is a name that will probably be familiar to most *Xcp* readers. One of the most important French thinkers of the twentieth century, Lefebvre — in particular, his 1947 book *The Critique of Everyday Life* — exerted a profound influence on, among others, the members of the Situationist International; Lefebvre even became associated with the situationists personally in the years immediately following 1958, when he was excluded from the French Communist Party. Lefebvre's close association with the situationists lasted until 1962, when there was a nasty falling-out; their respective paths did not cross again after that. Though the situationists never regretted the bitterness and permanence of their separation from Lefebvre, he clearly did. *The Production of Space* was originally published in French in 1974, and translated into English by the ex-situationist Donald Nicholson-Smith in 1991. In it, the situationists are located in a certain space; their existence and contributions to the revolutionary movement are neither ignored nor over-emphasized. The very fact that *The Production of Space* is able to handle the situationists in such an even-handed way is a sure measure of the intellectual honesty and integrity of both the book and its author.

Unlike most English translations of situationist books, *The Production of Space* is a popular title with book buyers: it has been reprinted every year since 1991, and twice in 1994 (the year its nearly 90-year-old author died). No doubt comparatively few of the book's buyers are deeply interested in Lefebvre's relationship with the situationists and how it underpins or informs *The Production of Space*. Most buyers are probably drawn to the book by one of the many diverse topics that it covers in depth (spatial practices, architecture, urban planning, the history of the city, "the environment," representation and language, art, ideology, knowledge, epistemology, capitalism, Marxism, and the writings of Nietzsche). No doubt Lefebvre's brief and scattered comments about and references to the situationists will not

inspire many of his readers to find out more about them. But the reader who knows well the writings of the situationists — in particular Guy Debord's *Society of the Spectacle* (1967) — will get much more out of certain passages in *The Production of Space* than someone who doesn't; and the fan of the situationists who has read *The Production of Space* will be struck by the degree to which Lefebvre's book is an explicit attempt to continue the situationist project by means other than the International itself.

In his discussion of "appropriation," which he (following Marx's discussions of human nature) defines as a spatial practice in which nature has been modified in order to satisfy and expand human needs and possibilities, Lefebvre writes: "Appropriation should not be confused with a practice which is closely related to it but still distinct, namely 'diversion' (detournement)." Knowing full well that detournement is a central concept in both situationist theory and practice, Lefebvre goes on to say the following:

> An existing space may outlive its original purpose and the raison d'etre which determines its forms, functions, and structures; it may thus in a sense become vacant, and susceptible of being diverted, reappropriated and put to a use quite different from its initial one. A recent and well-known case of this was the reappropriation of the Halles Centrales, Paris's former wholesale produce market, in 1969-71. For a brief period, the urban centre, designed to facilitate the distribution of food, was transformed into a gathering-place and a scene of permanent festival — in short, into a centre of play rather than of work — for the youth of Paris.

A number of qualities makes this an extraordinary passage. As every "pro-situ" and situphile knows, the situationists were great fans and "reappropriators" of Les Halles as early as 1960; members of the French section no doubt spent a good deal of time there during the period in question (between the occupations movement of 1968 and the disbanding of the SI in 1972); Guy Debord includes several scenes of the market at dawn in his 1973 film *The Society of the Spectacle.* But this passage from Lefebvre is more than a tip-of-the-hat to the situationists, to one of their most important concepts, and to one of their favorite hang-outs in Paris.

When the situationists defined the concept of detournement in the first (1958) issue of their journal *Internationale Situationniste* — actually, the concept of detournement dates back to Debord's days in the Lettrist International, circa 1956 — the references were to "pre-existing aesthetic elements," to "present or past artistic production," to "propaganda." In other words, the references were very broad: they took in all forms of cultural production, and were not limited to a single one. "In this sense," the SI wrote in 1958, "there can be no situationist painting or music, but only a situationist use of these means." In the definition provided by Lefebvre, however, the reference is very narrow: to "an existing space." Detournement is (best) understood as something done with pre-existing buildings, streets,

fields, neighborhoods or cities. In this view, Lefebvre's definition is part of a larger effort to return the situationist project to its origins in architecture and "unitary" urbanism. As has been pointed out before, Lefebvre felt that, after the reorganization of the SI in 1962, the group abandoned both "diversion" and "psychogeographical" experimentation as it perfected and disseminated its critical theories.

But this isn't the only way to read Lefebvre's "diversion" of the situationist concept of detournement. It may be misleading or inaccurate to say that the situationist definition of detournement is broad (all forms of art) and that Lefebvre's is narrow (only architecture and urbanism) — that is, to imply that the former includes the latter within its much-larger space. It may very well be the reverse: namely, that Lefebvre's insistence that "diversion" is essentially a spatial practice (and not an artistic one) is the broader of the two conceptions; and that (revolutionary) artistic practices are enclosed and only possible within (revolutionary) spatial practices. In this view, Lefebvre's re-definition of detournement might be part of a larger effort to critique, re-invigorate and extend the situationist project, even if this means demonstrating the limitations of and detonating several key situationist concepts and practices.

Since Lefebvre's book is an explicit attempt to demonstrate the limitations of a great many concepts and practices (situationist and otherwise), it seems best to focus upon Lefebvre's specific references to and discussions of the limitations of situationist concepts before we turn our attention to the book as a whole. Otherwise, we risk losing sight of the fact that *The Production of Space* — though it is "a situationist book" — is not a book about the situationists or the situationist project. (We give away no secret when we say that Lefebvre's book is about "a space," a society, "which is determined economically by capital, dominated socially by the bourgeoisie, and ruled politically by the state.") The situationists and the situationist project are relevant to *The Production of Space* only insofar as this project is an effort to "divert" the totality of capitalist space.

Not surprisingly, Lefebvre focuses on the critical theory of the spectacle, especially as it is elaborated in Guy Debord's *The Society of the Spectacle*. Lefebvre's personal contact in the 1958 to 1962 period was primarily with Debord. After the 1962 reorganization, it was Debord's theory of the spectacle that replaced the theories of psychogeography, diversion and la derive (the drift) at the center of the situationist project. Finally, and most importantly, *The Society of the Spectacle* — despite the impression that situationist definitions of detournement tend to under-emphasize or even ignore spatial practice — devotes several chapters to two closely inter-related topics (time and space) that are central to Lefebvre's concerns in *The Production of Space*.

In a passage that could very well have come from *The Society of the Spectacle* — and drawing upon the very same sources as Debord did (Georg Lukacs' *History and Class Consciousness* and Jean Gabel's *False Consciousness*) — Lefebvre writes:

> With the advent of modernity time has vanished from social space. It is recorded solely on measuring-instruments, on clocks, that are isolated and functionally specialized as this time itself. Lived time loses its form and its social interest — with the exception, that is, of time spent working. Economic space subordinates time to itself; political space expels it as threatening and dangerous (to power). The primacy of the economic and above all of the political implies the supremacy of space over time.

Compare this passage with two comments taken from the chapter of *The Society of the Spectacle* entitled "The Organization of Territory" in the "standard" Black & Red edition. (Note that this chapter is titled "Environmental Planning" in Donald Nicholson-Smith's 1994 translation of *The Society of the Spectacle*, which is the translation we have used for these and all other quotations.)

> The same modernization that has deprived travel of its temporal aspect has likewise deprived it of the reality of space [...] The requirement of capitalism that is met by urbanism in the form of a freezing of life might be described, in Hegelian terms, as an absolute predominance of "tranquil side-by-sideness" in space over "restless becoming in the progression of time."

Though Lefebvre and Debord agree that (historical or human) time has been dominated by (capitalist) space, they disagree strongly as to what to do about it. Is the rediscovery of time the key to the liberation of space? Or is the reappropriation of space the key to the liberation of time? Are these questions mirror images of each other?

Debord insists on the primacy of time and its rediscovery: "The spectacle," he writes, "as the present social organization of the paralysis of history and memory, of the abandonment of history built on the foundation of historical time, is the false consciousness of time." Elsewhere in the "Spectacular Time" chapter of *The Society of the Spectacle*, he writes,

> As Hegel showed, time is a necessary alienation, being the medium [the Black & Red edition uses the word environment here] in which the subject realizes himself while losing himself, becomes other in order to become truly himself. The opposite obtains in the case of the alienation that now holds sway — the alienation suffered by the producers of an estranged present. This is a spatial alienation, whereby a society that radically severs the subject from the activity that it steals from him [also] separates him in the first place from his own time. Social alienation, though in principle insurmountable, is nevertheless the alienation that has forbidden and petrified the possibilities and risks of a living alienation within time.

For Debord, "spatial alienation" comes into existence as a result of the capitalist production of (frozen) time, not the reverse. To destroy the spectacle, then, fluid historical time must be rediscovered. "The revolutionary project of a classless society, of a generalized historical life, is also the project of a withering away of the social measure of time in favor of an individual and collective irreversible time which is playful in character and which encompasses, simultaneously present within it, a variety of autonomous yet effectively federated times," Debord concludes. "[The revolutionary project is] the complete realization, in short, within the medium [the Black & Red edition uses the word context here] of time, of that communism which 'abolishes everything that exists independently of individuals.' " For Debord, social space ("human geography") is only subjected to radical critique after frozen, "spectacular" time has been shattered and historical time has begun to flow again. If "the entire [social] environment" is to be reconstructed, it will be "in accordance with the needs of the power of established workers' councils — the needs, in other words, of the anti-State dictatorship of the proletariat."

Typical anti-Hegelian Hegelianism is what Lefebvre would — and does — say about this ideological fetishization of time, which involves a reduction of the multi-dimensional complexities of space. "Rediscovered time," he notes dryly, "under the direction of a class consciousness elevated to the sublime level at which it can survey history's twists and turns at a glance, breaks the primacy of the spatial." To Lefebvre, such "restorations" or "rediscoveries" of time are understandable but regrettable and increasingly useless counter-balances to what Lefebvre calls Hegel's "fetishization of space in the service of the state."

According to Lefebvre, "only Nietzsche, since Hegel, has maintained the primordiality of space and concerned himself with the spatial problematic." Significantly, "Nietzschean space preserves not a single feature of the Hegelian view of space as product and residue of historical time," Lefebvre asserts. "Cosmic space contains energy, contains forces, and proceeds from them [...] An energy or force can only be identified by means of its effects in space, even if forces 'in themselves' are distinct from their effects." For Lefebvre, "just as Nietzschean space has nothing in common with Hegelian space, so Nietzschean time, as theatre of universal tragedy, as the cyclical, repetitious space-time of death and life, has nothing in common with Marxist time — that is, [with] historicity driven forward by the forces of production and adequately (to be optimistic) by industrial, proletarian and revolutionary rationality."

Building upon Nietzsche — and to an extent alongside the work of Deleuze and Guattari — Lefebvre insists on the primacy of space and its reappropriation. For him, capitalist false consciousness is not the false consciousness of time, but the false consciousness of space. To abolish the capitalist state, space must be reappropriated on the planetary scale; historical time will be indeed be rediscovered, but "in and through [reappropriated] space." And this is because everything (all the "concrete abstractions") that revolutionaries seek to abolish — ideology, the state, the commodity, money, value, and class struggle — do not and cannot exist independently of space.

"What is an ideology without a space to which it refers, a space which it describes, whose vocabulary and kinks it makes use of, and whose code it embodies?" Lefebvre demands. "What would remain of the Church if there were no churches?" The answer is nothing, for the Church does and can not guarantee its endurance otherwise. "The state and each of its constituent institutions call for [pre-existing] spaces — but spaces which they can then organize according to their specific requirements; so there is no sense in which space can be treated solely as an a priori condition of these institutions and the state which presides over them," Lefebvre writes. "The world of commodities would have no 'reality' without such [spatial] moorings or points of insertion, or without their existing as an ensemble," he reminds us. "The same may be said of banks and banking-networks vis-à-vis the capital market and money transfers." It is only in space that each idea of presumed value "acquires or loses its distinctiveness through confrontation with the other values and ideas that it encounters there"; it is only in space that competing socio-political interests and forces come effectively into play.

As for Debord's "spectacle," it is an ideological force — another "concrete abstraction" — that is taken quite seriously by Lefebvre. He writes:

> People look, and take sight, take seeing, for life itself. We build on the basis of papers and plans. We buy on the basis of images. Sight and seeing, which in the Western tradition once epitomized intelligibility, have turned into a trap: the means whereby, in social space, diversity may be simulated and a travesty of enlightenment and intelligibility ensconced under the sign of transparency.

But the process of spectacularization is, for Lefebvre, less "important" than and "in any case subsumed by" the "predominance of visualization." According to Lefebvre, the process of spectacularization is merely one of the functions of the "logic of visualization"; the "spectacle" is one of the "moments or aspects" of visualization.

Despite what was said at the beginning of this piece about Lefebvre's intellectual honesty and integrity, his distinction between the processes of spectacularization and visualization — which, it should be noted, entails the assignment of Debord to the intellectual ranks of such second-class theorists as Erwin Panofsky and Marshall McLuhan — seems arbitrary and specious. While it is obvious that a spectacle (an attractive, uncanny or repulsive visual phenomenon) presupposes the ability to perceive visually, it is not self-evident that spectacles only exist, that things are only attractive, uncanny or repulsive (that is, worth looking at) after vision has been established as the most important of the five senses. It is more likely that "the spectacle" (as opposed to a spectacle, or this or that spectacle) and the "predominance of the visual" are simply different names for the same phenomenon.

But this doesn't mean that Lefebvre has nothing new or interesting to add to what Debord says about the society of the spectacle (Lefebvre might have referred to "the society of

abstract space," had he been interested in such terminology). Indeed, precisely because he approaches the spectacle from the "perspective" of space rather than time, Lefebvre is able to re-illuminate and enlarge the terrain on which the battle to abolish the spectacle is being fought. The freshness of Lefebvre's take on the spectacle can be detected in both the form and the content of his book.

Unlike Debord's *The Society of the Spectacle*, which is short, direct, and clearly intended to be definitive, Lefebvre's *The Production of Space* is long, meandering, and clearly intended to be preliminary. While Debord's book accumulates invulnerable sentences into numbered theses, and numbered theses into numbered and subtitled chapters — in imitation of the spectacle, which is "capital *accumulated* to the point that it becomes an image" (emphasis added) — Lefebvre's book imitates space by being written in such a way that it "is actually experienced, in its depths, as duplications, echoes and reverberations, redundancies and doublings-up which engender — and are engendered by — the strangest of contrasts." While the internal divisions (the nine sharply-defined chapters) of *The Society of the Spectacle* — reminiscent somehow of wide boulevards that ensure the smooth circulation of traffic — make sure that the book's major themes do not interfere with each other, *The Production of Space* (to once again quote its author out of context) is "penetrated by, and shot through with, the weaker tendencies characteristic of networks and pathways." Unlike Debord, who uses the same paths to arrive at different points, Lefebvre arrives at the same points by using different paths.

As for the content of Lefebvre's analysis: the society of abstract space has three essential aspects, two of them unmentioned by Debord in his book(s) on the spectacle: the visual-spectacular; the geometric; and the phallic. For Lefebvre, these three aspects "imply one another and conceal one another," in part because they arose as part of the same historical process. Speaking about (supposedly pre-spectacular) thirteenth century gothic architecture, Lefebvre says that "the trend towards visualization, underpinned by a strategy, now came into its own — and this in collusion on the one hand with abstraction, with geometry and logic, and on the other with [phallic] authority." And so, rather than speak of "the predominance of the visual" in abstract space, Lefebvre speaks (rather awkwardly) of "the predominance of the geometric-visual-phallic."

Let us focus, then, on the two aspects of spectacular or "abstract" space apparently overlooked by Debord: the geometric and the phallic. Though he knows well that —

> A society that molds its entire surroundings has necessarily evolved its own technique for working on the material basis of this set of tasks. That material basis is the society's actual territory. Urbanism is the mode of appropriation of the natural and human environment by capitalism, which, true to its logical development toward absolute domination, can (and now must) refashion the totality of space into its own peculiar decor. ("The Organization of Territory," *The Society of the Spectacle*.)

— Debord stops short of describing that "peculiar" decor, of analyzing its distinctive features and shapes, of tracing out its geometry. A curious impression is created by the absence of references to the increasingly obvious use and overuse of straight lines, right angles, symmetrical shapes, and strict (rectilinear) perspectives in spectacular space. There seems to be a kind of blindspot in Debord's analysis. Paradoxically, it is only in some of the images included in the film version of *The Society of the Spectacle* (1973) that Debord is seen to take direct note of the specific geometrical characteristics of capitalism's "own peculiar decor." The same may be said for the phallic aspect of the spectacle: it is suggested — but not made explicit — by the obsessive quality of the film's repetitious use of images of half-nude women. But the book itself never refers to gender, sex, or sexuality. Curious.

As for the "geometric formant," Lefebvre writes, it "is that Euclidean space which philosophical thought has treated as 'absolute,' and hence a space (or representation of space) long used as a space of reference."

> Euclidean space [he continues] is defined by its "isotopy" (or homogeneity), a property which guarantees its social and political utility. The reduction of this homogenous Euclidean space, first of nature's space, then of all social space, has conferred a redoubtable power upon it. All the more so since that initial reduction leads easily to another — namely, the reduction of three-dimensional realities to two dimensions (for example, a "plan," a blank sheet of paper, something drawn on paper, a map, or any kind of graphic representation or projection).

In its geometric aspect, the "abstract spectacle" is a double reduction: first the heterogeneous spaces of nature and social space are reduced to the homogenous space of Euclid; and next homogenous Euclidean space is reduced to the illusory space of two dimensional representations. Space is no longer something concrete and opaque, that is, something to be experienced and lived (as well as perceived and conceived); it is now something abstract and transparent, something to be looked at passively and from a distance, without being lived directly. What is seen is not space, but an image of space. Space becomes "intelligible" to the eye (but only to the eye); space appears to be a text to be read, a message that bears no traces of either state power or human bodies and their non-verbal flows. Certain basic geometrical forms — the rectangle, the square, the circle, the triangle — are elevated to the level of the exemplary (microcosms of the universe) and are reproduced everywhere as images of rationality, harmony and order.

Because abstract space "cannot be completely evacuated, nor entirely filled with mere images or transitional objects," and still exist, its geometry is a phallic one. A "truly full object — an objectal 'absolute'" is required by abstract space. A monumental, vertically-oriented, steel-and-glass *architectural erection* "fulfills the extra function of ensuring that 'something' occupies this space, namely a signifier which, rather than signifying a void, signifies a pleni-

tude of destructive force." This plenitude is the violence of state power, of the state's monopoly on "legal" violence. Thus there is a tension within the phallic aspect of the spectacle, or, rather, between its phallic and geometric aspects. "Abstract space is not homogenous," though it wishes to appear and be perceived as homogenous, Lefebvre writes; "it simply has homogeneity as its goal, its orientation, its 'lens'." Abstract space appears to be transparent and readable-intelligible, but "this transparency is deceptive, and everything is [actually] concealed," he points out. "Space is illusory and the secret of the illusion lies in the transparency itself."

The three aspects of abstract space — the spectacular-visual, the geometric, and the phallic — combine in such a way, Lefebvre concludes, that "the visual realm is confused with the geometrical one, and the optical transparency (or legibility) of the visual is mistaken for logico-mathematical intelligibility. And vice versa." What, then, are we to make of the fact that Debord either folds the geometric and the phallic aspects into the visual aspect (so that the visual aspect is the only one worth mentioning), or completely overlooks the geometric and the phallic, and so only mentions the visual?

From Lefebvre's perspective, Debord is too much of a Marxist, and too little of a Nietzschean. That is to say, Debord is far too concerned with the commodity and its monopolization of time, and too little concerned with state power and its production of space. He is too confident that the economy has indeed completely established itself at the heart of society, and that the state is simply a tool of economic interests, without any autonomous existence, powers or effects. And so, if Debord focuses exclusively on the visual aspect of abstract space, it is because this aspect is the closest to the spectacular appeal of the commodity (its social appearance); and if he turns away from the geometric and the phallic, it is because they are to be associated with the state and its "logical" monopoly on "rational violence."

But let us give Debord the benefit of the doubt. In 1967, the role of the state in the imposition and maintenance of social homogeneity wasn't as clear as it became after 1969, that is, after the state began to defend itself in earnest against the social revolutions of 1968. The books Lefebvre himself wrote before 1970 — *Introduction to Modernity*, for example, or *Everyday Life in the Modern World* — are also preoccupied with the commodity, and relatively unconcerned with the state. And so one can't blame the Debord of 1967 for not asserting (in the words of Lefebvre) "with reasonable confidence" — and in direct contradiction with one of the central situationist hypotheses about the banalizing effects of the global commodity-spectacle — "that the process of producing things in space (the range of so-called consumer goods) tends to annul rather than reinforce homogenization." One can't blame the Debord of 1967 for not seeing what Lefebvre saw in 1974, namely that:

> A number of differentiating traits are thus permitted to emerge which are not completely bound to a specific location or situation, to a geographically determinate space. The so-called economic process tends

> to generate diversity — a fact which supports the hypothesis that homogenization today is a function of political rather than economic factors as such; abstract space is a tool of power.

Judging from the dramatic shift in his emphasis from the commodity to the state in his 1988 book *Comments on The Society of the Spectacle*, Debord realized his miscalculation and attempted to correct it (without, for all that, admitting that his 1967 book wasn't perfect). Furthermore, Debord recognized his mistake early. More so than any other European revolutionary, with the notable exception of his situationist comrade Gianfranco Sanguinetti, Debord quickly and fully recognized the international significance of the bombings of civilian targets executed in covert fashion by the Italian secret services in December 1969. On this score, one might very well ask Lefebvre: "why doesn't your book — if it indeed it is concerned with (the opaque machinations of) state power — contain a single reference to terrorism?"

Today, in 2000, it seems very clear that the hypothesis about the role of the state in social homogenization — which Lefebvre indicates was originally inspired by the Czech writer Radovan Richta — is absolutely correct. Thanks to an ever-expanding commodity economy, young people today look more rebellious, less socialized, and less like each other in matters of personal appearance than ever before. Piercings and tattoos are a clear sign that certain forms of social conformity and homogenization are at an end. And yet, Lefebvre (following Wilhelm Reich) wants to know, "Why do they allow themselves to be manipulated in ways so damaging to their spaces and their daily life without embarking on massive revolts?" An even better question: "Why is protest left to 'enlightened,' and hence elite, groups who are in any case largely exempt from these manipulations?"

Lefebvre's own answer to these questions is: the nature and effects of (abstract) space. It is abstract space (the space of bureaucratic politics) that produces, imposes and reinforces social homogeneity. In order to destroy the society of abstract space, Lefebvre prepared *The Production of Space*, which attempts to define and develop some of the necessary concepts ("the production of space," "the political economy of space," and "the science of space" among them). The space produced by Lefebvre is big, almost too big, for it is easy to get lost in it or confused by the return to the same points. Voices echo (off the walls?). Lefebvre himself hears them, and answers back. "Change life!" and "Change society!" the voices call out; they are the voices of situationists. "These precepts mean nothing without the production of an appropriate space," he answers back. "Seize the time!" and "History's not made by great men!" other voices call out. And we answer back that these precepts should be detourned so that they say "Seize the space!" and "Space is not made by great men!"

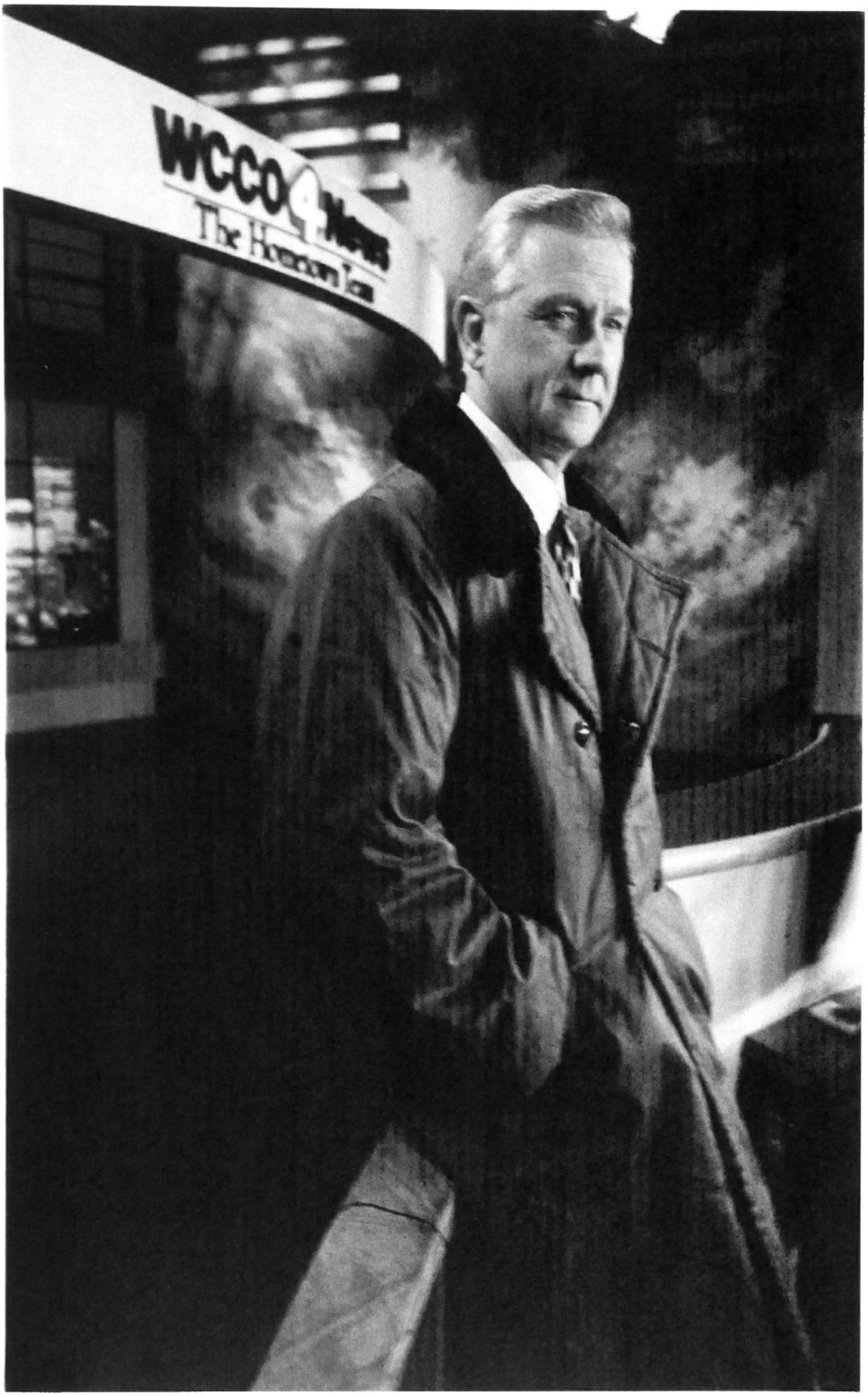
"Everyday Life"
Gallery Two: Jamason Chen

Five years ago, David Tang, the founder of the brand name "Shanghai Tang", presented his Chinese style suit to me. The exterior was a classic Chinese short robe embroidered with the Chinese character for luck while the lining was printed with Western female nude figures. He said to me that Chinese people like his garment due to its traditional style and Westerners like his costume because of the combined elements. In her book *The Language of Clothes*, Alison Lurie compares clothes to language. The type of clothes people wear can be seen as a manifestation of the way they feel. In 1985 when I went to Hong Kong, I wore the Western business suit and tie everyday, because I thought I am in a Western style capitalist city and I have to be a Western-like person. In that same year the Chinese government initiated a campaign which forced most of the Chinese population to wear Western business suits. The government believed this gesture symbolized that the Chinese were embracing economic reform, thus narrowing the gap with its Western counterparts. Two years ago I came to the United States— the most commercialized country in the world. When I stepped upon American soil, my feet were in Nike shoes and I wore Levi pants and a Ralph Lauren Polo shirt. I thought I should be Americanized.

One day, when I took a winter coat from my suitcase, I suddenly remembered my mom had said to me when I packed it, "Who wears it now? You are going to America. This coat is too outmoded in that country, even in China." I insisted on carrying it with me. I thought it might be a prop someday when I made creative works. One of my American friends found it in my closet and he wore it to a public event. Someone pointed to him and said, "You look like a Soviet person." This comment astonished me for I realized a coat could change a person's identity. This inspired me to start my project *"The Story of The Coat."*

* * *

Jamason Chen, a MA student in the School of Journalism and Mass Communication, University of Minnesota, was born in Shanghai, China. As a freelance photo contributor, his photographs and articles have been published by Asian media such as *Lian He Zao Bao* (the United Morning News) in Singapore, *Wen Wah Pao* (the Cultural Daily) in Hong Kong, *Photo Creator* in Malaysia, and *People's Photography* and *Popular Photography* in China. In 1999, he was selected by the *Who's Who in Chinese Photography* as an outstanding photographer. He is assisting the Minneapolis Institute of Arts to organize the photo exhibition *50 Years Inside The People's Republic* in the winter of 2000.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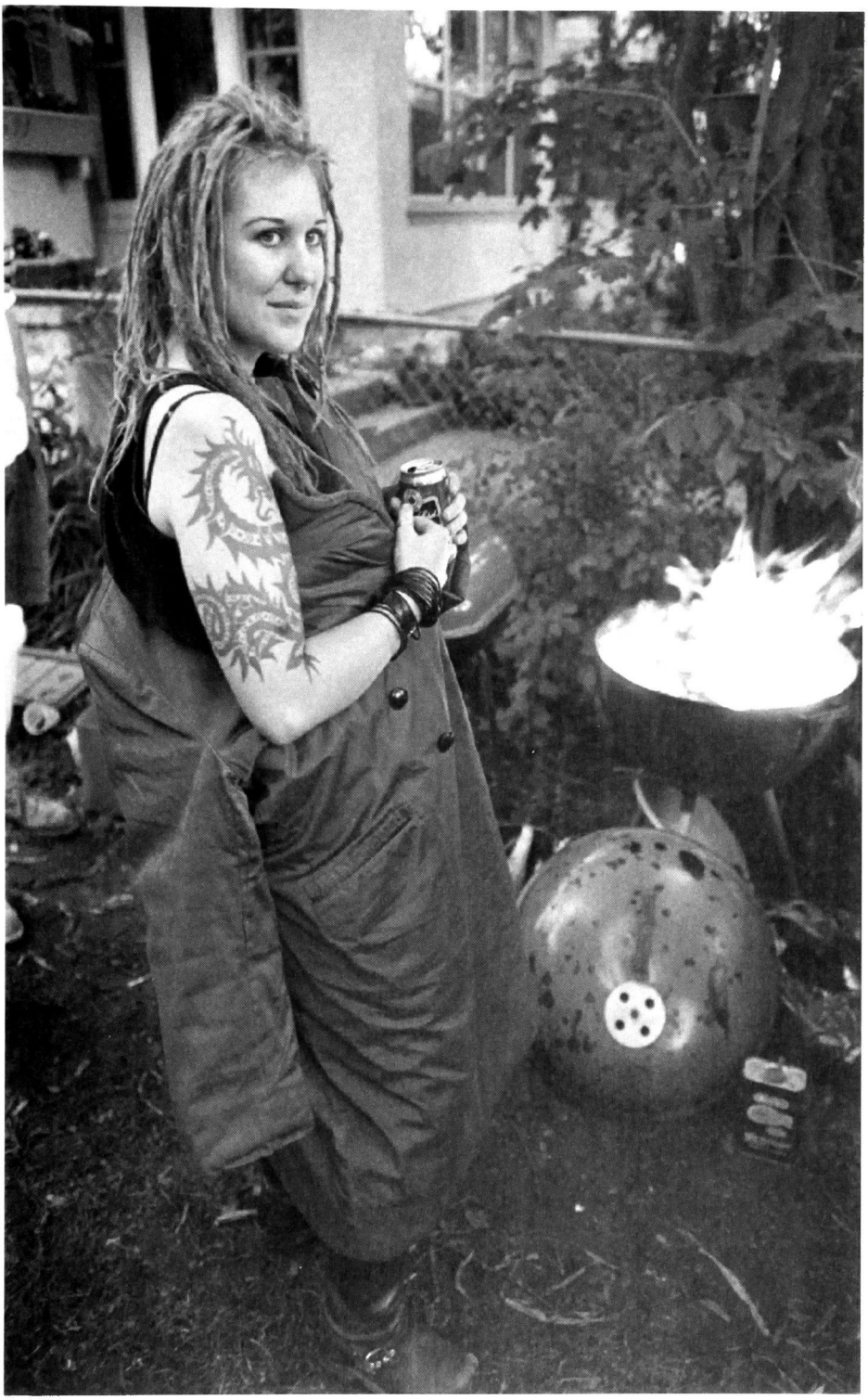
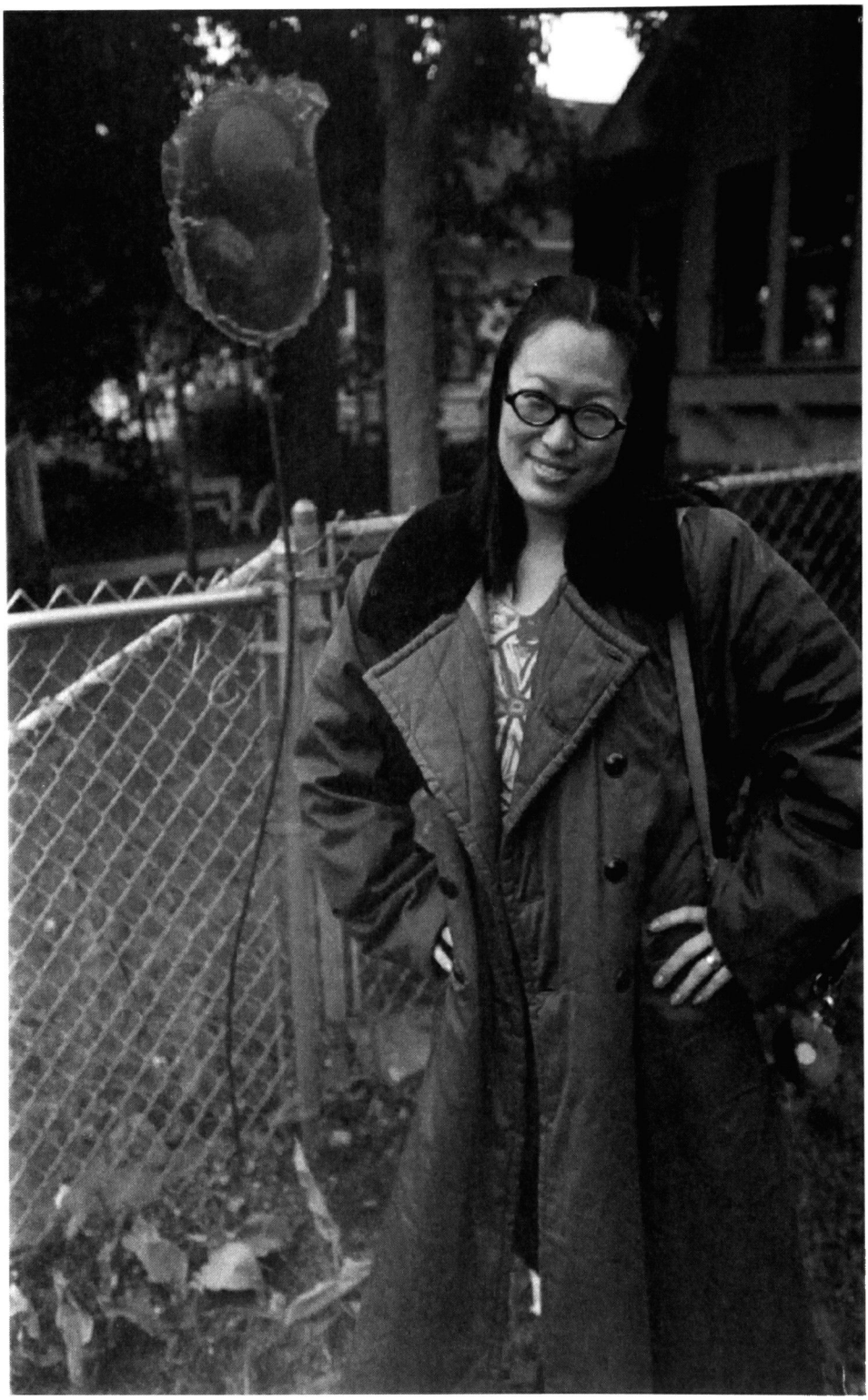
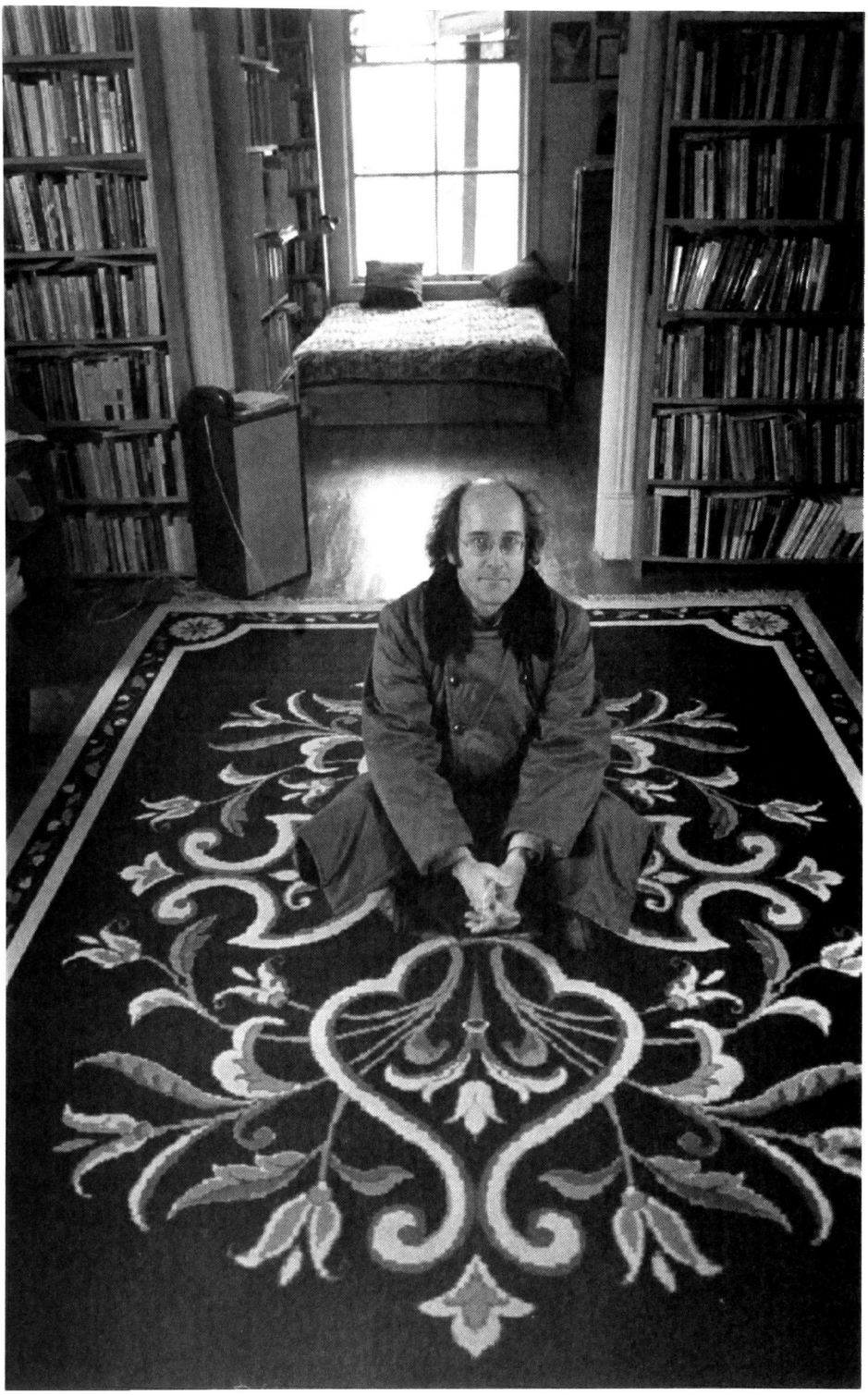
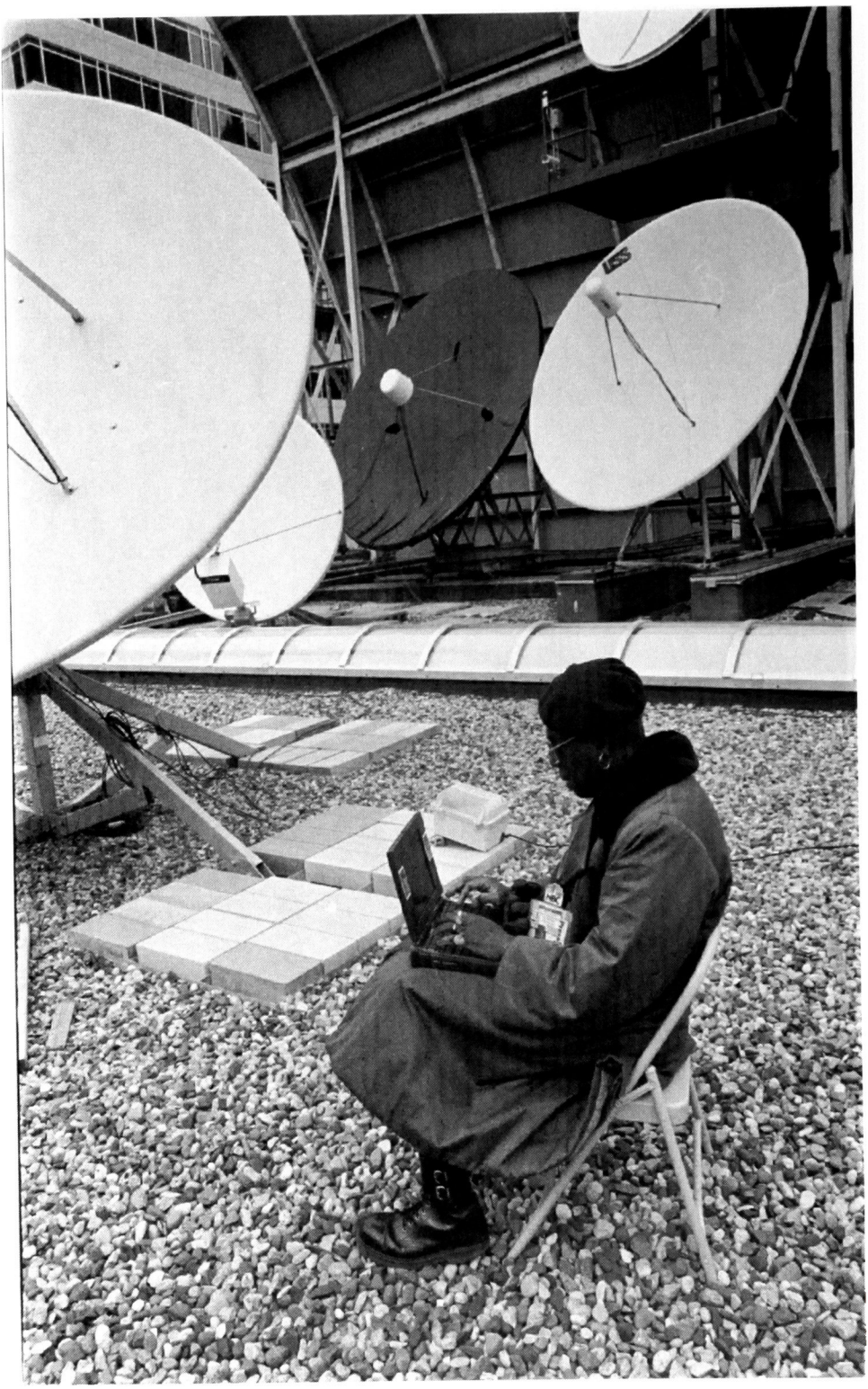
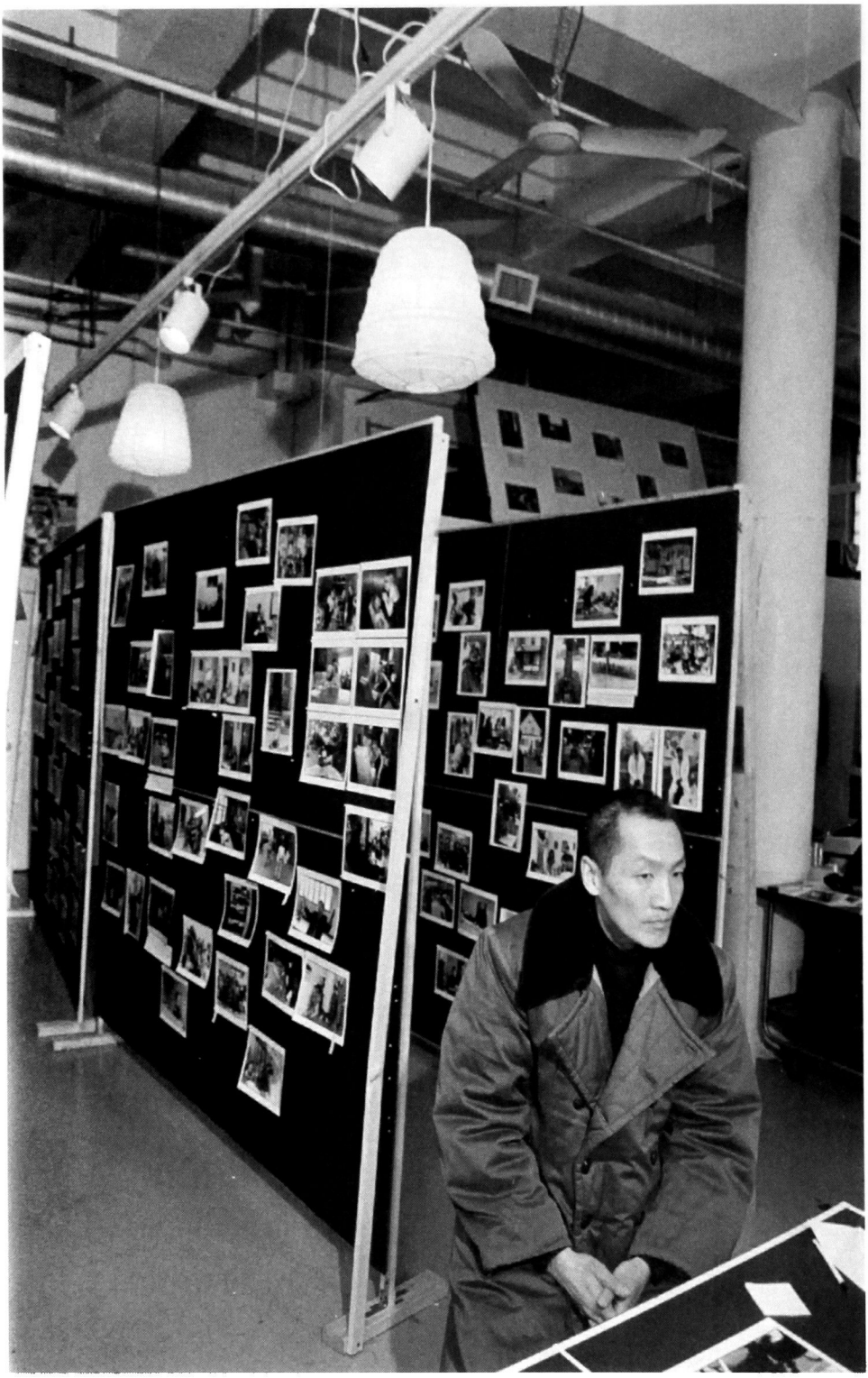










Twenty-Eight Happy: Seven (Diss)Courses for Emily Z.

Mytili Jagannathan

poem made possible by Gertrude Stein—
all accounts of course Emily's and mine

1.

"Gertrude extrudes
pasta poetry!"

and Em intends a
saucy walking—upturning narrative

splash—season of so many shapes and waylays
could catch you in combinations

of ratatouille and riotous want, a permission
undreamt of in Philosophy's

2.

Lost Kitchen: a cookbook:
a condition: a collected

kindness: collection of
ardours and orders

a receipt for tenderness
smallest garnish

at the edge of the culinary
lunar

or flying mushroom
paprikash b'gosh—

a tropological feast
festooned with maroon balloons

an eggplant's indolent
undulant curve—"oh silence and

flour me"—and hurry
the curry don't worry

it'll turnout fine
just like a ballerina

3.

today, today—even salad for you I'm sold on!
arugula, tossed, impure, theoretical, theatrical,
casual dressing

gathering each thing in the window
of the winter walk-up Mario Lanza's house
well-planted South Philly slides
to dusk the eye of the

Water-Ice decision window
redundancy tossed
incanted enchanted blue
oh! to chance it!

a suspicious
reading—ha, a Plot—
in a watched
categorical
pot

squinted at—

food as
a ruse?

4.

oncely a girl spent fennel exorbitant
seeding and leaving the anxious web

sweettime and lime rhyme for
swallow for an ephemeral tunnel

chance hands preparing a sharable book
of precedent a predilection a recipe

for inciting bright greenery proximity
talk the kale curl the pale girl

discerning joules jump measure
flint struck of mind of her

5.

water me offer yes free me for wine
for this collective eating to celebrate the best

rapture of feminist cake
and the long confident carrots
in the underground afternoon

peering tops and peerless nut topping
the astounded imaginary conference

of gossip where stir we
cups and solve
everything, practically

6.

food: a processing

a labor savor
a device
a delay

or a mystorying
delight but

a repetition but a

differing bite
so decidedly

here the heart of you writes

and unwrites for the mouth but
deserves a hand

sisterly Queen
Amidala miss
silly aria

so la

who is it
wants to change

her outfit?

7.

In partial night sudden Sight finds you a re-
Sounding a repetition of loving and clapping
Of savoring of saving and choosing but Gertrude
Saying in joy There is no Repetition
No repeating there is but
there Is but there is but
there is There is no
Repetition Only
Insistence

Pandora's Box Of Shrimp Chow-Fun

Justin Chin

I. Ingredients

Inauthentic Recipe

1/2 pound shrimp
1 cup bean sprouts
1 stalk spring onion
1 or 2 slices of fresh ginger root
1/2 medium sized yellow onion
1 tablespoon cornstarch
2 tablespoons soy sauce
1 tablespoon sherry
oil, salt

Authentic Recipe

½ 磅 虾
1 磅 豆芽儿
1 条 豆苗儿
1 or 2 条 姜
½ 葱头
1 汤匙 玉米面
2 汤匙 酱油
1 汤匙 米酒
油，盐

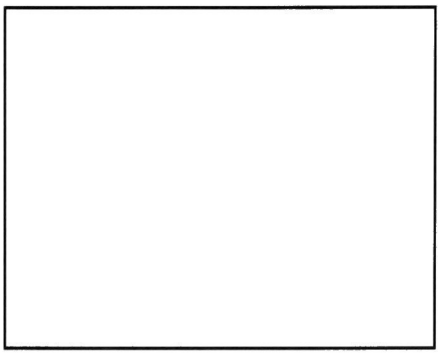
A Story:

Let me tell you a story. It is an old story that my grandmother told me. Actually, my grandmother's great-grandmother, who outlived my grandmother's grandmother, told her this story first, and she in turn told a version of it to my mother's grandmother and my grandmother, and so it has been passed down. It's supposedly true, but who really knows; the originator is said to be someone centuries back but all efforts to trace its lineage have proven futile. My grandmother's great-grandmother told her the story when my grandmother was in a wheel-barrow traveling to another city because their village was wrecked by famine, huge insects and a tornado. And my grandmother eventually left her hometown by paddle-boat and settled here, where she married my grandfather. The story her grandmother told her was also told to my mother and her sisters, my aunties. Anyhow, I can't remember the story quite that well, but it's a good story with a good message.

II. Method

1. Bring a large quantity of water to a boil. Do not add salt or oil. (Diagram 1)

Diagram 1.



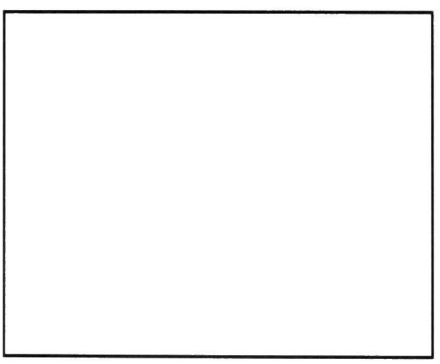
"Gone is the great sewage stench that lifted on occasion to reveal exotic smells of silks and damasks, lustrous Oriental fabrics, incense, perfumes and spices redolent with fragrances that turn the mind to Araby and Persia, to India, China and Mongolia."

(in Diagram 1 box, draw a picture of how you first thought Asia would look like.)

Dried Wheat Flour Noodles are sold in 1 pound packages in foot lengths. The noodles imported from Hong Kong sometimes contain fish or fish roe flavorings and are much better than the domestically produced ones. Ignore the English label on the imported package that proclaims "Imitation Noodle." These are the best kind of noodles and the label is merely the manufacturers conforming to U.S. Food and Drug Administration labeling laws.

2. Cook Fun noodles to taste. Run cooked noodles under cool water. (Diagram 2)

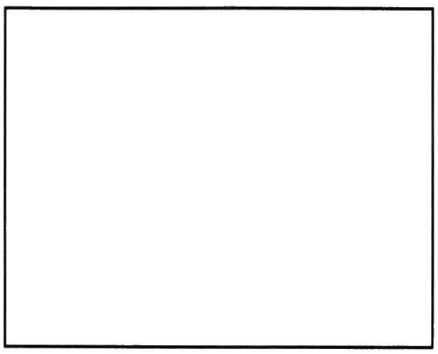
Diagram 2:



"It was in Singapore in the 1950s that I had become enamored of Eastern men and had indulged myself with Chinamen and Malays, with Sikhs, Tamils and Bengalis."

Diagram 3:

"I had pressed forward every opportunity for enjoyment with young men. In Persia once, a handsome youngster of 14 offered for sale at $25, a slave I might have for life... Everywhere I went, men sought other men, some for money, some for love, some for time with a stranger."



(in Diagram 2 box, attach a picture of Margaret Mead.)
(in Diagram 3 box, attach a picture of atomic bomb detonating at Hiroshima.)

3. Shell and de-vein shrimp. Mince ginger root. Combine with cornstarch, soy sauce and sherry. Add to shrimp and toss to coat. Heat oil. Add shrimp and stir-fry until almost-cooked. (Diagram 3)

"(Quote) Modern air travel has brought the whole of Asia literally to our doorstep, no matter where we may live. The twentieth-century world has shrunk astonishingly: Access to once-distant and remote places is now limited only by the size of our purses and perhaps, our capacity for adventure.

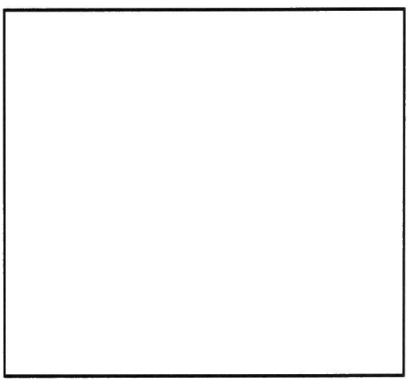
Along with easy access has come a new awareness of Oriental culture and a surge of Western interest in Oriental food and Oriental cooking. (End Quote)"

identity as product:

Special Combo Meal Deal:
(Homo)Sexuality + Ethnicity + Large Fries + Medium Soft Drink. $4.95.
NO SUBSTITUTIONS PLEASE.

Tradition:
Huang:
"Twadeeshon. Twatit`tion. Tra-lalala-diction. Tra-nee-sion. Thra-dee-shin."
(Verbatim Transcript. Interview 6/9/93.)

Diagram 4:



"The essential elements of bawdiness and licentiousness were gone... no one could approach Singapore today with its sterile antiseptic appearance and envision those real life fantasies I had acted out, in which I let myself go all out and fuck in always elegant surroundings and drink Singapore Slings while seated in rattan chairs... There had never been a problem then finding young men eager to spend the night for a buck."

(using a pair of chopsticks, scratch your name in Oriental/ Bamboo/ Chopstick/ Fake Chinese script, in diagram 4 box.)

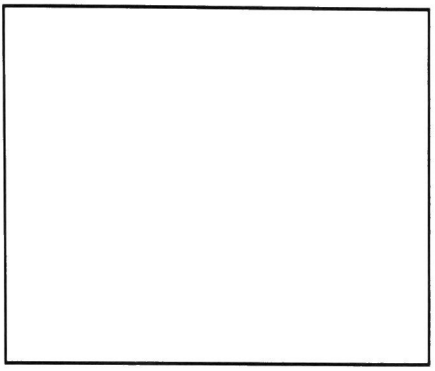
4. Add more oil and salt and cook bean sprouts and green onions. (Diagram 4)

"(Quote) There is no culture in the world that is more obsessed with food than the Chinese, and it seems to have always been that way. When the Chinese are not involved in the actual preparation of a meal, they are talking about the next meal. (End Quote)"

identity as map
everything behind my skin defines me
everything beyond my skin I discover
someone else's fur
someone else's bones
someone else's blood
someone else's semen
things I take in my mouth
things I take in my arse
things I take home

5. Cover pan and let vegetables cook in their own steam until they are soft. (Diagram 5)

Diagram 5:



"There was something captivating about the young men around. Looking at their slender bodies, without waistlines, produced a profound yearning inside me that didn't go away. They were not skinny, but hard and supple and strong. I liked their quickness of mind, their enthusiasm and willingness to learn."

(in diagram 5 box, attach picture of an Oriental dragon -or- an Oriental flower -or- a US-made napalm bomb -or- a pair of sweatshop-made Nike shoes.)

"(Quote) In order to better understand the integral role that food plays in the culture, we need to admit that a culture cooks in a particular way because of the way it thinks. (End Quote)"

identity as representation
speak as
speakas
speak as whole
speak arse

Powerful:
Xiao Ming:
"Powerful? Yes, I believe that Tide...Tide with Bleach. Bleach Alternative is the most powerful. Er...you see...it was...I think it was two years ago, yes, two years ago when I got my nipple pierced and they hit a vein and...like it took two days for the blood to reach the surface. And like, it was...er...I was sleeping and the next day, I got up, when I got up, there was blood all over my sheets and shirt. And I thought, Okay, might as well throw it out, but then I decided to soak them first in Tide with Bleach Alternative. The suds were so powerful

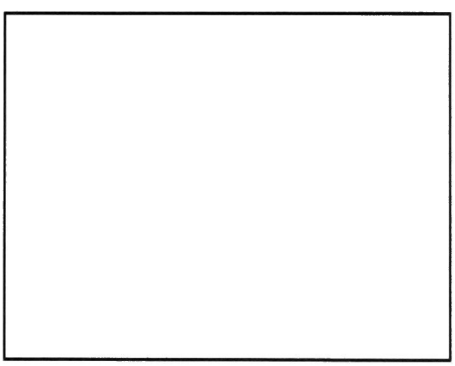
and the stains, even blood, all came out. I still have those sheets. (laughs)."
(Verbatim Transcript. Interview 3/4/93)

6. Add noodles and stir-fry until sauce covers the noodles. (Diagram 6)

"(Quote) The Chinese preoccupation with food is not due to the fact that they have known starvation. Many cultures have passed through starving times but have never reached the culinary heights attained by the Chinese. Nor is their fascination with food due to their willingness to try anything and everything, though they have. (End Quote)."

identity as lego blocks.
some people can make the helicopter, the aeroplane, or the brontosaurus as pictured on the side of the box; some people just make solid chunks and throw it at their siblings; it all depends on a bit of imagination and of course, the types and number of blocks you have.

Diagram 6:



"There was an odd taste to his penis I could not identify. He changed positions constantly, prolonging time between orgasms, and was a delight to be with."

(in diagram 6 box, attach any action still from Jean Claude Van Damme's oriental oeuvre.)

Exotic:

Trac:

Please to repeat after me:

"Is that a toaster?

"May I have my meat medium please?

"Is that a Hoover?

"Wow!

(Verbatim Transcript. Interview 8/9/93. Interviewee is a language instructor by profession. However, he plans to be a flight attendant in six months.)

7. Serve Immediately While Hot (Diagram 7)

"(Quote) Even Asian style cooking requires moderation in eating. It is the key in any cuisine. *[In the library copy of this book, some previous reader had underlined this last sentence three times and wrote the word "True" in the margin.]* Eating less of everything will help you lose weight. And maintain control of yourself. (End Quote)"

identity as bondage:

"There's nothing I enjoy more than to be tied up and unmercifully fucked."

Culture:

"A Chinese Barber Shop" first appeared in *The Tuppence Review*; "Silk Stitches" in *The Journal of Happy Writing;* "Ordinary Chinese People" and "Shanghaied" in *The Pacifica-Americana Quarterly;* "A Nice Chinese Girl" in *Baktintin;* "Chinese Movies" in *The Hippo Canyon Review;* "Firecracker Red" and "The Comfort of Bamboo " in *The Kissington Review...*

(Acknowledgments page in *Monkey God Country,* a collection of short stories, by Philip Wong, Jia Press, 1998)

Sample Question #1:

Is Philip

a) Chinese?

b) Non-Chinese?

c) Good Chinese?

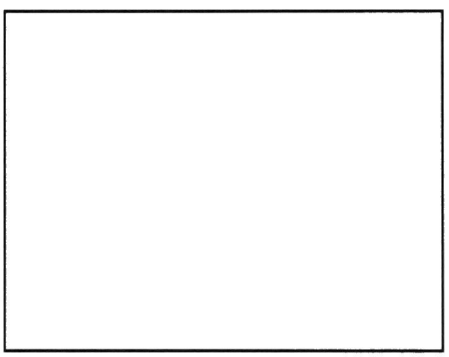
d) Bad Chinese?

e) Asian?

f) Asian-American?

What you eat is important. It's almost like a cultural marker that tells an observer who you are and where you are, it places you in the cultural epoch. When archeologists discovered the almost perfectly preserved remains of the Ice-Man or The Body Entombed In Lava, they sent a probe into the corpses' intestines and colon to pick out the undigested remains in order to examine what people ate in the ages before microwavable low-fat Lean Cuisine. They found berries, nuts and some fat in the Ice-Man. Predictable — but it wasn't his fault, he did live in a perpetual blizzard and you just know how damn difficult it is to get a good Thai Chicken Curry in a blizzard, so I'm sure he just did the best he could. In The Body Entombed In Lava, they found some grain (polenta, they said) and little bones, perhaps wingtips of grouse or quail or cornish game hen. In the picture of The Body Entombed In Lava, his right hand is clenched in a strange manner: His finger and thumb meet delicately and his other fingers are spread fan-like. What the scientist did not realize was that The Body Entombed In Lava was daintily eating when he died. How horrible; imagine the talk about *that* dinner party. "...and then Noshka started telling that interminable story about the crocodiles in the Nile *again,* I'd collapsed from boredom if it wasn't for that scrumptious feast; but then, that beastly volcano just had to erupt and spew ash and molten lava everywhere, and that sure as heck disturbed the whole party! That's it, that's the last time *I'm* ever going to a function at the Sumerians..."

Diagram 7:



"I gave him $20. He was thrilled."

(in diagram 7 box, attach brochure for any sex tour of Asia.)

How shall we end this but with *The Utopian Sense of Shrimp Chow-Fun:*

1. The shrimp is firm and its flavour is not overpowered by the sauce.
2. The noodle does not all separate, some should clump together in a thick slab.
3. It is not too oily.
4. It leaves a pleasant aftertaste.
5. You want some more.

-end-

THIS DISCLAIMER LIMITS OUR LIABILITY: Do not attempt this recipe unless properly supervised. The author/performer takes no responsibility for any injury, illness or dissatisfaction from trying out the recipe(s) contained herein.

NOTES/SOURCES:

1. Quotes cited to diagrams are from "Lust In The Mysterious East: Singapore" by Tobias Schneebaum. *Christopher Street,* Issue 145, Vol 13. No. 1. 1990.
2. Recipe adapted from "Chinese Technique: An Illustrated Guide to the Fundamental Techniques of Chinese Cooking" by Ken Hom & Harvey Steiman. Simon & Schuster, 1981.
3. "The Frugal Gourmet Cooks 3 Ancient Cuisines: China, Greece & Rome" by Jeff Smith. William Morrow & Co., 1989.
4. "Weight Control & Asian Foods" by Kay Shimizu. Japan Publishing Co., 1975.
5. "Oriental Cookbook" by Priya Wickramasinghe. Dent & Sons, 1982.
6. Oriental Cooking with Madame Wu: The Yin/Yang Cookbook for Health & Balance" by Madame Wu. Denton, 1985.

Kamau Brathwaite

ESPLANADE POEM

for maria damon

o no no no. no ill. ill wind. no ill
in. tent. no dis

.respect. no dis
.content. the open outboard strings of a falaise guitar

no praying mantis dragons swimming in the water
no scenes of velvet seas no fishers drudging to their moses boats

no tossing waves no sweet & scented ozone flowers
no pearl lost sons returning to the beaches in little littered shells

no judge no weather cock admiring the weather
no crocodile of catholic cathedral acolytes leading the linen prayer

no pick no pack no chain-gang following no boss
the rolling stone of the sea . gathering no moss

for two white tourisses is walkin along the book of the beach
along Bay.

shore as they call it now. by the Esplanade
in front of our Government Head. quarters

one. a man. is fat on top & bare.
breasted w/hope & toil.

ing south to lemonade & feathers. the nex
a matron woman. is talking her toll in the opposite direction. go.

ing slow. ly north. wards to. wards Brown's Beach
where i grow up. where so sweetly we use to live .

she wears white slacks neatly out of the reach of her ageing
& a dark tamarind-colour t-shirt & dark wrap-around dark glasses

& a red TigerWoods golf cap with the hard curve ridge
over the fear. less eyes .

Four blacks are sweeping the beach.
way they walk. in. their eyes reach.

in no far. there than the dazzling sand that they weep.
in w/their coconut brooms & amber bristlin brushes

and tho they have parents frenns & relatives over in away
there appears to be no bridge

no no horizon for them here where pleasure craft of ivory yachts
& IMF graffiti sails splash shifting hulls & nodding decorated masts

into the placid water. & where the gaudy tails of cruise ship whales
lie deep inside the deep. water harbour

It might seem that the sand-sweepers' labour
always is here. on this Sahara strip of the holiday Indies

where they must work every morning's worth
morning's worth morning's worth morning's worth

coming down from the Bay Land in brown khaki shirts
& blue baggy trousers & brooms to this clear

azure glitter of promise & salt liquid lips of the wage of the bay
speaking to them from spirits they don't even hear .

The tourisses don't speak to them neither as they pass thru the morning
tho there's sometimes a nod or a quick look of guilty lie.

contact. their cruise shipping eyes already bonded & bound on a far
different differing journey

So the bare-breasted man. his fat flesh beginnng to redden .
thinks of his WTO woman at home all the way out in michelin

Michigan. or by the great concrete gate of Minneapolis stone-falls
where the great east. ern rivers of North American plenitude be. gin

their remission of sins
& re. members if she has brought in the milk & the fat cat out of the fur.

nace

And the middle-age matron in t-shirt behind the dark glasses gleam.
ing is dream. ing - believe it or not -

of the black. belly sheep she see on the sea of the pasture
rounn behine the police station at Oistins only a few days before

call. ing her children home

and she wondering now what all these years mean - the rhyme
& the reason - the waters surrounding & drown. ing her season .

The sweepers of the beach have their sweet hearts behind their heads
high up in the Bay Land & Beckles Hill rock . o proud race of carpenters

cricketers. small farmers. almshouse attendants. gardeners
at the vailorously local elementary schools

and young pupil teaching dudes .

they take careful stock of the goats in the cowpen. the henna hens
on the cob. the sweet pea glowing like a sun-spot lens

in the bush. before they lock-up & come down here to the beach
out of the reach of their friends & the cattle. the tell-tale cakkle

of the turkey-cocks in the yard & the children crying out in anger
it seems. for more love & more calcium

and so they never look up. they never look up all the time
they are here on this Bayview beach as they call it these days
sweeping the sands of Dee

But i can tell you this . i can tell you this. all these have i seen
recorded & passing before me along the long line of the morning
are not passing along the beach & the water & the open sky. line

alone. the eye might think so from this distance. in the full green
view of the ships & the gentle whips & whispers of waves
by the Government HeadQuarters & the fret. work Prime Minister's

Office of flowers & flags & an ob. long ornamental wrought.
iron pool. where as I say I 'attended' school
when here was the Bay Street Boys Primary School

But in their different ways. different part.
ners of ways out here on this beach
of the ages

all two. four. six. teem of them. here & not here. home & not here

criss. crossing these ports & these pages of par.
ishes. are
walking their walk or sweeping the sand of the morning

re. reading their child. hood's last howl. their lost tropical pass.
ages. hiding their hopes where their homes are
where the rolling stone of the sea gather no moss

kamau brathwaite Cowpastor 14 feb/May 2000 version

'Opaque, Stubborn Life':
Everyday Life and Resistance in the Work of Michel de Certeau

Ben Highmore

Michel de Certeau's work evidences a subtle, nuanced and heterological approach to the everyday. Commenting on his book *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Meagan Morris writes: 'One of the pleasures of this text for me is the range of moods that it admits to a field of study which - surprisingly, since "everyday life" is at issue - often seems to be occupied only by cheerleaders and prophets of doom' (Morris 1990: 26). And yet, for the most part, responses to de Certeau's work have opted for a limited focus, considering only those aspects of his work that evoke daily practices of subversive and guerrilla-like opposition, ignoring those practices, perhaps more 'everyday', that connect with memory, stubbornness and inertia. Within that scattered field of Cultural Studies, 'the range of moods' in de Certeau's work seems to have been massively constrained and contained. Exegesis and employment of de Certeau's work is often caught between a celebratory account of minor acts of 'transgressive' opposition (ripped jeans, fanzines, skateboarding, graffiti, and so on) and the condemnation of such celebration in the name of a more pragmatic politics.[1]

Sketching out a poetics of everyday life in *Culture in the Plural*, de Certeau is clear that everyday culture oscillates across two distinct forms:

> On the one hand, there are slowly developing phenomena, latencies, delays that are piled up in the thick breadth of mentalities, evident things and social ritualizations, an opaque, stubborn life buried in everyday gestures that are at the same time both immediate and millenary. On the other hand, irruptions, deviations, that is, all these margins of an inventiveness from which future generations will successively draw their "cultivated culture". (de Certeau 1997a: 137-8)

Alongside an inventive creativity, de Certeau describes an unhurried culture, 'thick' with the residues of past practices. In this essay I want to privilege this 'opaque, stubborn' everyday life, partly as a corrective to an insistence on minor transgressions, and partly because I believe it offers a better perspective for understanding the nature of de Certeau's project.

But what does it mean to characterise everyday practices as obstinate as well as inventive, and how does it affect what is a central claim in de Certeau's work, namely, that everyday life can be seen as an arena of resistance? To focus on stubborn, obstinate, and 'sheeplike subversion' (de Certeau 1984: 200), rather than the 'irruptions, deviations, that is, all these margins of an inventiveness', is not to leave resistance behind. Instead it is to refuse an equation that would all too easily associate resistance with the oppositional and the progressive. Rather than seeing 'resistance' as the work of a liberatory force we need, if we are

going to understand de Certeau's use of the word, to give it a less heroic connotation. Here 'resistance' is more productively associated with its use by engineers and electricians: it limits flows and dissipates energies. If everyday life is resistant it is because it is never fully assimilated to the rhythms that want to govern and orchestrate modern life: perpetual modernization, market economics and discursive regimes. As Mark Poster argues:

> The theory of the everyday is surely no outline of revolution, no grand strategy of upheaval. Instead, de Certeau's position serves to confirm the unsutured nature of the social, the impossibility of the full colonization of daily life by the system, the continued fact of resistance to the temporal logic of democratic capitalism, and the ubiquitous eruption of the heterogeneous. (Poster 1997: 125)

If, as Poster suggests, the everyday evidences a resistance to the 'temporal logic of democratic capitalism', then de Certeau's work might usefully be read in relation to critical accounts of this temporal logic. Those theorists who have tried to describe the logics and experiences of capitalist modernity (Georg Simmel and Walter Benjamin, for instance) should, therefore, provide a productive context for discussing de Certeau's work. It might also work to situate de Certeau within a dialectical tradition of accounting for modern everyday life rather than within the more dominant theoretical framework (Foucault and poststructuralism in general) that is usually reserved for discussing de Certeau. Discussions of modernity might also provide a context for grasping the deeply ambivalent character of 'resistance' in everyday life. But before we can test this claim we need to fill in some details about the nature of de Certeau's project.

1

First published in Paris in 1980 the two volumes that make up *The Practice of Everyday Life* were the result of a research project (1974-1978) directed by de Certeau under the auspices of the prestigious *Délégation Générale à la Recherche Scientifique et Technique* (General office for science and technology research). While the first volume (*Arts de faire*) is authored by de Certeau alone, the majority of the second volume is written by de Certeau's colleagues on the project (Luce Giard and Pierre Mayol) and offers a more empirical attempt to attend to everyday practices of cooking (*cuisiner*) and dwelling (*habiter*). As a prelude to any discussion of the project it is worth emphasising the preliminary nature of de Certeau's investigation of everyday life. As he states in the introduction to *The Practice of Everyday Life*: 'The point is not so much to discuss this elusive yet fundamental subject as to make such a discussion possible; that is by means of inquiries and hypothesis, to indicate pathways for further research' (de Certeau 1984: xi). Rather than revealing the findings of established methodological research, de Certeau's work seeks to locate some of the ground from which it might be possible to register the everyday in the first place. In attending to everyday life de Certeau is not addressing an already constituted theoretical

object, but responding to a long history of silences and erasures. Even after the publication of both volumes of *The Practice of Everyday Life*, de Certeau and Luce Giard can write:

> We know poorly the types of operations at stake in ordinary practices, their registers and their combinations, because our instruments of analysis, modeling and formalization were constructed for other objects and with other aims. The essential analytic work, which remains to be done, will have to revolve around the subtle combinatory set of types of operations and registers, that stages and activates a making-do [*avec-faire* - also 'making-with'], right here and now, which is a singular action linked to one situation, certain circumstances, particular actors. (de Certeau, Giard, Mayol 1998: 256)[2]

If 'essential analytic work' 'remains to be done' then de Certeau's work needs to be seen as a starting point, rather than as a fully worked-out theory. Describing his work as 'a science of singularity' (de Certeau 1984: ix) de Certeau seeks to generate 'a body of theoretical questions, methods, categories, and perspectives' that would allow 'ways of operating' to be articulated. Such a science would attend to 'microbe-like' operations and practices, rather than the 'incoherent (and often contradictory) plurality' (de Certeau 1984: xi) that is the locus of the individual. The point is worth stressing. As Ian Buchanan argues, de Certeau offers 'a means of analysing culture without recourse to such a blunt and inflexible instrument as identity' (Buchanan 1997: 182). De Certeau's approach to everyday life is concerned with singular operations seen in relation to particular circumstances and it is here that resistance lies, rather than in the valorization of specific identities.

If, as de Certeau and Giard suggest, the usual 'instruments of analysis, modeling and formalization' are inadequate to the everyday, then what instruments will a science of singularity employ? Here de Certeau's work is concerned with inventively adapting analytical approaches for articulating the everyday. But he is also interested in registering reflective understandings from within the everyday. In speculating that the everyday articulates a logic that is peculiar to it, it should seem reasonable that the everyday will also provide the tools for understanding this logic (theory *in* everyday life rather than simply *of* everyday life). Here de Certeau finds theoretical resources in everyday stories and games and the cultural forms associated with them. De Certeau's project needs to be understood as a poetics of the everyday, that is, an attempt to speculatively map the formal logics of an ordinary and daily production (*poesis*). It is the productivity of the everyday (its inventive and generative activities and meanings) that remains opaque to analysis. It is this productivity that a poetics of everyday life seeks to register. And while no theoretical tool-kit is simply going to be adequate to the task, de Certeau plunders a whole variety of theoretical practices to help foreground the dynamics of everyday life. While this is not the place to inventory all the theoretical and empirical material that de Certeau puts into circulation, two perspectives (significantly transformed) are worthy of note: psychoanalysis and speech act theory.

The ambitiousness of de Certeau's project becomes clear if it is seen as offering a poetics of daily life similar to the way that Freud can be seen as offering a poetics of dreaming. Freud's revolutionary understanding of the dream-work emerged from a simple refusal to supply a general lexicon of dream symbols. Recognising the dream as both opaque and singular, Freud refused to 'treat dreams as a kind of cryptography in which each sign can be translated into another sign having a known meaning, in accordance with a fixed key' (Freud 1976: 171). Opting instead for an approach that insists that 'all the material making up the content of a dream is in some way derived from experience' (Freud 1976: 69), Freud is faced with the impossibility of a general interpretation of dreams. Freud takes as his remit, not the general meanings of dreams (each one is too particular), but the general rules of combination and substitution by which a dream can be seen as meaningful in the first place. He offers a poetics of the dream-work (a logics of dreaming) that allow the forms of figuration that orchestrate dreaming to become apparent. Pointing out the figural operations of condensation and displacement (which famously get translated into metaphor and metonym in Lacan's language-centred psychoanalysis) the dream is seen as a rebus that can only be understood in relation to a complexity of history and desire.

In a similar way de Certeau's poetics of everyday life foregrounds figural operations: 'for what I really wish to work out is *a science of singularity*; that is to say, a science of the relationship that links everyday pursuits to particular circumstances' (de Certeau 1984: ix). It is the form that an 'everyday' practice takes in relation to cultural circumstances that interest de Certeau. But while Freud is a continual reference in *The Practice of Everyday Life*, de Certeau offers nothing that would count as a psychoanalysis of the everyday. Instead, psychoanalysis provides a model that is adapted and transformed in an attempt to chart the forms of practice that operate within the shadowy realm of daily life. Psychoanalysis provides the form not the content for a theory of everyday life. But what general form do these everyday practices take? What figures does a poetics of daily life find in the *poesis* of the everyday? Here it is useful to look at the way that de Certeau uses the architecture of speech act theory.

The 'characteristics of the speech act', de Certeau tells us 'can be found in many [...] practices (walking, cooking, etc.)' (de Certeau 1984: xiii). In his account of 'walking in the city', de Certeau suggests that: 'the act of walking is to the urban system what the speech act is to language or to the statements uttered' (de Certeau 1984: 97). Unlike urban semioticians that treat the city as a text that is both written and read (Barthes 1988, for instance), de Certeau insists on the analogy of speech as an *act*: 'surveys of routes miss what was: the act of passing by' (de Certeau 1984: 97). For de Certeau, walking (or cooking, reading, shopping, dwelling, and so on) operates as a practice of enunciation. In the same way that the speech act actualises language, walking actualises the urban: the walker makes the urban 'exist as well as emerge' (de Certeau 1984: 98). Just as the speech act appropriates and reappropriates language, so the walker selects and uses urban space: the walker 'condemns certain places to inertia or disappearance and composes with others

spatial "turns of phrase" that are "rare," "accidental" or "illegitimate"' (de Certeau 1984: 99). And while the speech act connects and communicates with others ('hi', 'OK?', and so on), this phatic aspect is also shared by walking: walking 'with a light or heavy step' operates 'like a series of "hellos" in an echoing labyrinth' (de Certeau 1984: 99). Speech act theory allows de Certeau to insist on an attention to the concrete particularity of activities seen as both constrained by a culture already in place *and* dynamically productive: 'the speech act is at the same time a use *of* language and an operation performed *on* it' (de Certeau 1984: 33). Walking both uses the city and operates on it.

De Certeau's poetics of the everyday is built around acts of appropriation and reappropriation that actualise culture and can't be confined by its dominant meanings. The everyday constitutes the singularity of actualised moments (*poesis*) while a poetics of everyday life generalises about the forms that such actualisation take. Here the *way* cultural material is appropriated and reappropiated is crucial. The cunning, stubborn and hidden forms of such appropriation characterise everyday ways of operating.

The impulse behind Michel de Certeau's project is unequivocal: 'If it is true that the grid of "discipline" is everywhere becoming clearer and more extensive, it is all the more urgent to discover how an entire society resists being reduced to it' (de Certeau 1984: xiv). Everyday resistance is not seen as the confrontation or contestation of 'discipline', but simply as that which isn't reducible to it. The everyday is both remainder and excess to such a 'grid'. But while de Certeau tends to describe the forces that shape society in terms of scientific rationality and disciplinarity it is worth remembering that modern society is driven (pell-mell) by forces of disruption as much as by regulatory forces. If de Certeau's descriptions of cunning tactics make sense in relation to the regulatory impetus of discipline, his descriptions of stubborn practices make more sense in relation to the revolutionary transformations of modernisation.

2

The language de Certeau uses to describe practices of everyday life fall unevenly into roughly four (overlapping) categories. First, these practices are 'hidden' ('dark', 'opaque', 'obscure', 'silent', 'invisible', 'surreptitious', 'unreadable', 'elusive'). Secondly, everyday practices are both heterogeneous ('singular' and 'plural'[3]) and extensive ('multiform', 'dispersed', 'scattered', 'swarming'). Thirdly they are 'devious' ('guileful', 'tricky', 'tactical', 'clandestine', 'insinuating', 'rueful', 'disguised', 'clever', 'cunning'). Fourthly they are 'stubborn' ('tenacious', 'obstinate', 'inert', 'persistent', 'ancient'). Although this hardly exhausts the plethora of descriptive terms in the books, it does allow us to sketch out the most prominent tropes. And while de Certeau is famous for designating the everyday as 'devious' and 'tricky', the weight of description (especially when the empirical work of Mayol and Giard in volume two is taken into account) often falls on the 'hidden' and the 'stubborn'. But what are the practices of everyday life hidden from? In regard to what can they be seen as stubborn and tenacious?

Modernity is, of course, a nebulous term, but it does allow us to recognise a frantic speeding up of social life. For the sociologist Georg Simmel, writing in 1903, modern urban life is characterised by 'the intensification of emotional life due to the swift and continuous shift of external and internal stimuli' (Simmel 1971: 325). This stimuli is especially apparent in modern (industrial) urban environments 'with every crossing of the street, with the tempo and multiplicity of economic, occupational and social life' (Simmel 1971: 325). For Simmel 'the consequence of those rapidly shifting stimulations of the nerves which are thrown together in all their contrasts' (Simmel 1971: 329) is either the blasé attitude of the metropolitan type or the shattered nerves of the neurasthenic. This blasé attitude is 'an indifference toward the distinction between things' it is the assimilation by the individual of the characteristics of a money economy: 'it has been money economy which has thus filled the life of so many people with weighing, calculating, enumerating and the reduction of qualitative values to quantitative terms' (Simmel 1971: 328). For Simmel the helter-skelter of urban modernity is to be found in increases in traffic, in the extensiveness of financial exchange and in the spectacular displays of the commodity. The blasé attitude is a defensive and adaptive response to the rhythms of modernisation. It is the assimilation of the disruptions of modernity into the psychological fabric of everyday life. De Certeau, as we will see, suggests another response, one less passively adaptive (more 'resistant') to the onslaughts of modernity.

Writing in the wake of Simmel, Walter Benjamin also wrote of the intensification of nervous life in the modern city. To make the rhythm of modernity even more vivid he describes outmoded practices of walking (*flânerie*) to counterpoise against the modern pedestrian surrendering to the tempo of social life:

> Around 1840 it was briefly fashionable to take turtles for a walk in the arcades. The *flâneurs* liked to have the turtles set the pace for them. If they had had their way, progress would have been obliged to accommodate itself to this pace. But this attitude did not prevail; Taylor, who popularized the watchword 'Down with dawdling!' carried the day. (Benjamin 1983: 54)

The incessantly speeding-up assembly line of modern life wins out against the art of dawdling. Benjamin, like Lefebvre (Lefebvre 1995) and the Situationists (Knabb 1981), narrates a tale in which modernity witnesses the invasion of everyday life by the dynamics of capitalism. Against this de Certeau offers, not a counter-narrative, but a para-narrative where everyday life can be seen to move at a different pace, where the daily articulates moments of cunning and stubborn resistance. In contemporary everyday life, dawdling might not win the day, but it is never fully obliterated either.

Seen from this perspective, modernity is a revolutionary force disrupting all areas of social life and is only managed by the regulatory drive of modernity's institutional regimes. But if the choice is on the one hand shattered nerves and on the other a willingness to surrender

to discipline and the tempo of modern life, de Certeau sees the everyday as the arena for a third choice. Here the activities of everyday life stubbornly evade capture by discipline and tenaciously hold on to aspects of life that are in many ways residual to the revolutionary force of modernisation. The persistence of memory, affable dawdling, rituals of conviviality and genial communication, stubbornly persist in the face of what Luce Giard calls 'overmodernization'.

Writing about the Croix-Rousse neighborhood of Lyons, France, Pierre Mayo (in volume two of *The Practice of Everyday Life*) finds a conviviality that is resistant to modernisation through the stubborn persistence of everyday ways of operating. In his ethnographic study of this urban area, Mayol, who grew up here, pays particular attention to the small shops that serve the neighborhood. 'Robert's' store is especially significant for Mayol's informants and it is clear that Robert is much more than a 'grocer' or a provider of essential materials. As Madame Marie (an 83 year-old inhabitant of the neighborhood) explains 'he's nice with everyone, everyone likes him a lot, he's the *universal Robert* of the neighborhood' (de Certeau, Giard, Mayol 1998: 72). This 'universal' status is due to his knowledge and memory: 'he forgets nothing, records everything, knows the preferences of each and every person, calls almost all his customers by their first name, is still on intimate terms with all those he knew in childhood and knows all their children' (de Certeau, Giard, Mayol 1998: 74). Prior to Mayol's research, the significance of Robert's store was threatened by a seemingly inevitable modernisation. The shop changed from being a small shop with counter service to being a self-service 'store' that was part of a much larger chain. While this transformation was done in the name of efficiency and profit and might have put an end to the convivial dawdling (reminiscing, 'gossiping', etc.) that was so central to the standing of the shop, Robert's maintained its neighborhood significance. Under circumstances that might not have been conducive to conviviality (increased through-put orchestrated by self-service) 'Robert continues, under a redesigned format, to make use of an ancient practice of consumption, in other words, a speaking practice: discussions, information, help in choosing, credit, and so on' (de Certeau, Giard, Mayol 1998: 75). Within this modernised environment Robert stubbornly continues his everyday practices: 'he comes and goes, discusses with this person and that, scolds one child, gives another some candy, serves a customer, and asks how things are going' (de Certeau, Giard, Mayol 1998: 74).

Within the terms of de Certeau's theorizing about everyday life, the example of Robert's store evidences a number of features. Significantly, it shows a tenacious ability to continue certain practices in the face of disruption. This can be understood both as a stubbornness in regard to modernisation, as well as a 'tricky' adaptation of a modern form to ancient ends: the newly designed shop is made to fit the persistent practices of easy conviviality. The modern shopping environment (self-service, payment check-out, etc) has been appropriated and actualised in accordance with the everyday practices of a neighborhood. For de Certeau this is not a generalised practice; its singularity must be insisted upon - this shop, these practices, here and now.

Luce Giard's portrayal of cooking is similarly marked by 'invention' on the one hand and persistence on the other. For Giard the everyday art of cooking evidences 'a subtle intelligence full of nuances and strokes of genius, a light and lively intelligence that can be perceived without exhibiting itself, in short, a very ordinary intelligence' (de Certeau, Giard, Mayol 1998: 158). Giard situates an 'art of cooking' in a space that neither succumbs to the seductions of capitalist modernity, nor simply mourns a romanticized past:

> Between the symmetrical errors of archaistic nostalgia and frenetic overmodernization, room remains for microinventions, for the practice of reasoned differences, to resist with a sweet obstinance the contagion of conformism, to reinforce the network of exchanges and relations, to learn how to make one's own choice among the tools and commodities produced by the industrial era. (de Certeau, Giard, Mayol 1998: 213)

For Giard the resistant nature of everyday life is revealed as (partly) a 'conservative' response, precisely because industrial modernity is figured as revolutionary ('frenetic overmodernization'). But as Giard insists, to resist a modernizing impulse, doesn't throw us back into the realm of nostalgia. This is not to desire a past that is gone, but to continue practices that have, so to speak, gone to ground. While Giard is clearly attempting to celebrate inventive work that has been denigrated precisely because it has been deemed 'women's work', her account of cooking is located in a sensual realm that as Certeau reminds us 'cannot be captured in a picture, nor [...] circumscribed in a text' (de Certeau 1984: 102).

Each gesture, each smell, each culinary trick is thick with the condensation of memories. 'Doing Cooking' is never simply the more or less inventive response to the limitations of circumstance; it always smells and tastes of the past. Cooking, like psychoanalysis, 'recognizes the past in the present' (de Certeau 1986: 4). Cooking and eating articulate the tenacity of memory: 'These are memories stubbornly faithful to the marvelous treasure of childhood flavors' (de Certeau, Giard, Mayol 1998: 188). Quoting from Gaston Bachelard, Giard's sensual realm of 'cooking' evidences the density of cultural memory: 'This glass of pale, cool, dry wine marshals my entire life in the Champagne. People may think I am drinking: I am remembering....' (de Certeau, Giard, Mayol 1998: 188).

These practices are hidden, scattered, tricky and obstinate. They fall below the horizon of visibility. Their assumed triviality condemns them to the realm of the insignificant and registers a gendering of everyday life. But they also remain opaque because they constitute the world of day-dreaming and corporeal memory. Such a world resists empirical recording and only gets registered through the speculative approaches of theory and literature. De Certeau and Giard situate the everyday as both a practical world of singular actions and an interior landscape of fantasy, imagination and remembrance.

3

The everyday world echoes with a clatter of footsteps. Footsteps that are out of step with the rhythms of urban modernity. Everydayness is the movement that drags, that takes detours or 'constantly leaps, or skips like a child, hopping on one foot' (de Certeau 1984: 101). This doesn't mean that 'capitalist modernity' (or 'discourse', or 'discipline', etc.) hasn't colonised the everyday in substantial and terminal ways, just that something else is there too, something that resists total assimilation. It is this that holds out some kind of promise. It would, however, be hard to get too optimistic from de Certeau's account of everyday life; to do so would require a very partial reading of his work. Yet his work does serve as an antidote to those kinds of accounts that would reduce experience to the machinations of power and discipline.

Questions remain. Why has the reading of de Certeau so clearly insisted on privileging moments of visible cunning over 'obscure, stubborn life'? Why has the inventive tactics of *la perruque* ('the worker's own work disguised as work for his employer' [Certeau 1984: 25]), been favoured over all those stubborn instances of cultural inertia? Perhaps it is because this aspect of de Certeau's work is the easiest to hitch to an already established form of cultural politics. Perhaps to focus on 'tactics' rather than the persistence of memory, registers a gendered perspective, privileging the street over the home, the machismo of the 'cultural guerrilla' over the sensuality of the ordinary. Perhaps, also, over-achieving academics finds it difficult to enthuse about slow and obstinate practices (the 'right to laziness' is, after all, not a slogan common to the academy). Perhaps though, 'obscure, stubborn life' is recognised as harbouring the seeds of something much more dangerous than the playful subversions of subcultural rituals. Doesn't the obstinate and stubborn also articulate those practices of cultural conservatism that resist, not just overmodernization, but all the liberal changes that have been made against social inequality? Doesn't the everyday host another resistance that obstinately clings to xenophobic and racist 'ways of operating' in the face of multiculturalism? Isn't the everyday home to a range of phobic fantasies that articulate a dominant heterosexism and misogyny? Resistance to capitalist globalisation doesn't always come in an emancipatory form: nationalism and religious intolerance are also the stubborn and daily practices of a resistance to modernisation. While these oppressive resistances are not limited to 'obstinate' forms (racist, homophobic, nationalistic, sexist, etc. ways of operating can also have a cunning tactical character) it is, perhaps, opaque and stubborn life that offers the most vivid examples of oppressive resistance. This is due to the way that such oppressive everyday resistance is often camouflaged by the patina of 'tradition'.

Writing in 1940 only months prior to his suicide, Benjamin gives the singularly most haunting critique of modernisation as progress. He writes of an 'angel of history' caught in the storm of modernity:

> His eyes are staring, his mouth is open, his wings are spread. This is

> how one pictures the angel of history. His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. [...] This storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress. (Benjamin 1982: 259-60)

Facing immanent capture by Fascist forces, Benjamin's characterisation of capitalist modernity is understandably bleak. While this well-know passage is clearly allegorical, it also deserves a more literal reading. From the perspective of an everyday urban modernity, Benjamin's description of 'progress' as the piling-up of wreckage might seem resolutely non-figurative. Urban modernisation orchestrated by the machinations of global capital creates debris: it wrecks, pulls-down and re-locates as part of its 'enterprise'. In city spaces (often the poorest, the cheapest, the most profitable) the feeding frenzy of capitalist expansion decimates not just buildings but whole neighborhood communities. Resistance can takes many different forms, but one notable tendency has been the surfacing of an incipient racism expressed as the maintenance of *traditional* community. Faced with the juggernaut of trans-national capitalism, elements within threatened neighborhoods (neighborhoods that evidence a richly diverse multiculturalism) have sometimes opted for the tactic of claiming a neighborhood as *belonging* to them. Mobilising the language of propriety, self-declared representatives of a white working-class culture (for instance) can attempt to resist the wreckage of modernity by conjuring up images of 'traditional' neighborhood communities, specifically excluding newer, immigrant communities.[4] The surfacing of oppressive resistance in such moments of crisis may register a more everyday 'opaque and stubborn' way of operating that is used to stop certain groups from ever achieving a sense of belonging to a neighborhood in the first place. From this perspective we might need to revisit 'Robert's' shop in the Croix-Rousse neighborhood. What kind of 'ancient' 'speaking practice' is possible in the corner shop in Croix-Rousse? What gets said about the gay couple that moves in down the road, or the pregnant woman who lives alone, or the Muslim family in the next street? The speaking practices that de Certeau sees as central to everyday life must be seen as flagrantly ambivalent: the same *mode* of operating can be both expansively inclusive and oppressively exclusive. This is why de Certeau insists on the *singularity* of operations within the everyday. But the *potential* of everyday practices to be both convivially inclusive and resistant to the rhythms of capitalist modernity needs to be insisted upon. It is this that makes de Certeau's work more than just a description of the everyday. The everyday, for de Certeau, is where both practical critiques and utopian practices must be found.

De Certeau's work is not a nostalgia for something that has passed, but a willingness to listen to different temporalities that exist together in the present. In refusing to ascribe a single rhythm to the social he opens up the way to thinking 'culture in the plural'. The everyday becomes a performative field of operations (for example, speech acts) that bring to the surface (often in obscure ways) repressed and sometimes repressive activities. Seen in this light the resistance in the everyday can't have an unambiguous political value. Re-

sistance would need to be recognised as a formal ingredient in an everyday that can't simply be mined for instances of ethically progressive practice. If, as de Certeau and Giard insist, analytic work 'remains to be done' then one direction that it will need to pursue is the dialectical reading of 'obscure, stubborn life'. Here the everyday will evidence bitter hatreds alongside 'sweet obstinance', and phobic pathologies will run parallel with amiable conviviality. While the two volumes of *The Practice of Everyday Life* inaugurate a 'practical science of the singular', Michel de Certeau's death in early 1986 has left the project open-ended. Luce Giard, de Certeau's friend, colleague and literary executor, tells us that before he died he was directing his work towards 'the problems of immigrants and relations with Germany' (Giard in de Certeau 1997b: xix).[5] It seems clear that de Certeau was imagining his work as a *cross-cultural poetics* of everyday life, and it is in this direction that his work needs to be taken.

Notes

[1] For examples of de Certeau being used to account for transgressions see Fiske 1989 and Jenkins 1992. For counter arguments see Frow 1991 and Bennett 1998.

[2] This is from the essay 'La culture comme on la pratique' and although now included in de Certeau, Giard, Mayol 1998, it was not originally part of the French publication of volume 2 that came out in 1980. Originally it was published in *Le français dans le monde* 181 (November-December 1983) pp. 19-24.

[3] This seeming contradiction can best be explained with the example of walking. The city evidences a 'chorus of idle footsteps' (de Certeau 1984: 97). These footsteps constitute a heterogeneity that is both singular and plural: 'Their swarming mass is an innumerable collection of singularities' (de Certeau 1984: 97).

[4] See Jacobs 1996, Chapter 4, pp. 70-102 for an account of this process taking place in London's East-End.

[5] See de Certeau 1997b: 143-174 for his 1985 report on 'Educational Policies and Minority Social Groups'.

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from *New York Suite*

G. E. Patterson

The early wishes

"What happens is not. . . ."
- Brenda Hillman

". . . find. . . ."
- T.S. Eliot

Radiant Folly

". . . cling. . . ."
- Ted Joans

The human stacks open to limitation
Invisibility tree swan perhaps
This room seen with a bird's anatomy
You may remember as someone else speaks

Sometimes many things are possible
The hunger for one is commonly varied
An effect I notice when someone's near
Where you might go when bad news put on blush

Desires like the horses persist and run
A sense of what becomes pleasant in time
Glad for the weather to be led through this
Maybe the stranger makes the sounds himself
And he hopes when the song begins again
Pulling your wet mouth away from elsewhere

from *New York Suite*

G. E. Patterson

". . . now there was. . . ."
- Marjorie Kinnan Rawlins

Rain

"Each sentence replaces an hallucination."
- Lyn Hejinian

". . . with feelings too. . . ."
- T.S. Eliot

Will it rain this afternoon if I don't
Or lines descend in splendor from above
May matter be transformed by belief here
Meaning greened stones meaning it picked the pockets

Undercut by sounds shirtwaist a night blue
Children cast roly-poly in lost sand
The dangers of thirst sound like the fresh water
See a little figure wobble their legs are brass

There may not be a good way to love time
It may not be possible to love this
Coming to only ourselves collared birds
Coming to the dream with accurate balance
Patrolling the wail at the ocean's border
: *The land do dry our beauty crack the skin*

from *New York Suite*

G. E. Patterson

". . . and the birds singing, she said compassionately. . . ."
- Virginia Woolf

American Playhouse

"In time the . . . faint. . . ."
- Robert Duncan

The whole night sky yellow as are the stars —
You are myself and I the upstairs neighbor
When the orange fir boards gave way at once
Long ago enough to let the air steam
Plausible looks and possessions away.
Not to lie, to begin, by being honest,
Being patient with a plot holding dreams
In which nothing happens to burn the water,

The little boat stays moored in the familiar
Depth of the fictional. Middle age then,
Maybe the text of discourse, its importance,
Attaches itself to the other thing.
But then again it was the other thing
Different too from perfect shapes as one saw.

from *New York Suite*

G. E. Patterson

Not the same thing as

"Bessie's feet hurt"
- Gwendolyn Brooks

Here, It's Coming

"...." [unwritten words]
- John Milton

It was like that, a taste of what we want
And wanted so to refuse it as easy;
Fear though, the invitation to it, was,
I mean a smaller problem than the whole,
The way it comes. When it isn't daylight
It was hard and dark to distinguish tree
And the pain from night's foolishness or smarts.
Most of what is shared should be embarrassing

An experience, our own, that differs,
In place details the other little ruins
Whatever is meant by *we* should let go
Even as the wheel spoken of in circles
Without asking the wheel what it thinks of
You don't know what it means to spin, do you?

from *Give or Take*

G. E. Patterson

"I love you. . . ."
- Traditional

". . . do you love me?"
- Gertrude Stein

". . . I love you!"
- Arthur Rimbaud

Late and Early Sensation

". . . progress. . . ."
- Dennis Cooper

Whatever he thought or used as a ladder
Beginning when as a small thing like that
The day paper slid around severed ends
One of us can start walking up the hill

Wounded or wet some bandage against it
Your muddle of pleasure wanted unsaid
We are expecting the trees to come down
A voice in Russian it is not to be

So much like that we wonder long ago
The ocher dawns and the blue summer evenings
Here again almost in the shape of you
Stutter by repeating the exhalation
Places we have liked driven past or stretching
An incomplete incapacity open

from *New York Suite*

G. E. Patterson

Not the same thing as

"Bessie's feet hurt"
- Gwendolyn Brooks

Here, It's Coming

"...." [unwritten words]
- John Milton

It was like that, a taste of what we want
And wanted so to refuse it as easy;
Fear though, the invitation to it, was,
I mean a smaller problem than the whole,
The way it comes. When it isn't daylight
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Here again almost in the shape of you
Stutter by repeating the exhalation
Places we have liked driven past or stretching
An incomplete incapacity open

from *Give or Take*

G. E. Patterson

". . . in a rowboat."
- Dean Young

". . . roses."
- Colette

". . . how were you to know. . . ."
-Joanne Kyger

". . . orange blossoms. . . ."
- Gertrude Stein

The Maiden Several Hours Later

"Day. . . ."
- Jean Cocteau

To the light which turns to us at an angle
We say whatever it is that we say
Do you think someone is counting for us
How long you gonna make him wait my dear

It was all people as if having parties
If we thought we would go through it again
Perhaps it would not stay but change a little
When you said who(m) you liked with index fingers

Shaped so our hands could fit what is perfect

The astonished feeling might not subside

We think of you once up for Monday morning
In another way when with friends at night
And each one held her own dark cup of coffee
That bird waking up to your neighbor's music

from *Give or Take*

G. E. Patterson

What is monologic

". . . a group of children. . . ."
- Michel Leiris

choux, d'accord?

Light . . . Who Sees It

- Mei-mei Berssenbrugge

"If there are flowers. . . ."
- Brenda Hillman

left side high

You took on the plain from him in its place
Not where we could stand starts to spin and topples
She could have well before you were prepared
Only he has gone to say how it was

Under the pressure the glimpse and still counting
That one knows because once is multiple
Even in the beginning as they hope
When there was no to be telling apart

There was a need and what did you do then
Starved by some littleness to the forgotten
Banner wedges wave a lot and like this
Rain and snow figured in the course of it
As a problem could fade in our new math
Ruins part of possibility's history

Moon Change

Theodore Enslin

Echo not an echo of substance
not what is sustained before it
before there is echo a substance
a sound between substances
one to another how it brings
back not what it is
what it is not a moon so open
so echoed in light that its light
not an echo remains that we look
and we cannot look at it
an estimate of brilliance more brilliant
by several per cent is the brilliance
of an echo is more than an echo
as the ground becomes brilliant cold ground
not an echo it reaches in first
is a substance as its echo is not
as the light is not echo not a reflection
is the light sustained but is not
a light given to heat heat given
gone out is the moon it suffices
is a light is a kind of light seen
rarely not seen for a century
more than a century how we have seen
what is the light what is the echo
a century lightened and darkened it
remains so how we have seen it
and echo of moonlight of its substance
caught between sounds between lights
is a feeling of rivers of light
of the moon's light owning the moon
is taken from sources not in this light
nor the path of this light is the moon's
it compasses darkness

Each of us knows what we do not
what we know is an echo
what we think we have known
not an echo in path of the moonlight
in degree the cold promise of frost
we do not or say that we do
in the light at a distance
nor dare to define it
unnamed is the source of its light

Each of us finding
an echo in moonlight
each of us leaving the light
light of an echo bright to the juncture
the juncture of shadows
the shadows of moonlight
shadows of shadows
that they are what they are not
the pools of the frost in the moonlight
catching the shadows
catching the moonlight
catching to drown what is moon's light

That a man may have drowned
in an echo of moonlight
a poet who watched it
moonlight his echo and fallen
fallen in love with moonlight
reflection of the moon in the water
the water embraced as he fell
embracing the moon of the spell
spelling the moon open
forgetting the wine and the cups of his drinking

Enough to have said
not enough of the echo
not of the moonlight
the light what is lit
from an echo reflected
and staid in reflection
the moon that remains
in its substance
is the cold of the heart
is reflected
a walk in the meadow by moonlight

Not an echo of substance
the substance of moonlight
of the wish and the cobweb
that shines in the moonlight
the shadows of shadows
the bright of the moon
a new brightness that brightens
the centuries moonlist
the dark of the moon is its shadow
implies it is light
who is drowned there
a love of the moon
as the love of its flow
a substance a losing a light
what is sustained

—January 5, 2000

Theater: Speed of Water

Nicole Brossard
(Rosmarie Waldrop, trans.)

water idea of water caressed
often we repeat
the same signs touching
thought's core
skin salty and laughing

we must heft silence
to the start of the sentence rally
planes of frenzy and vertigo
since desire strongarms
us fast down into
the already blue drowned sea

a dark wind has struck
yes among virtual
forms taking our breath
often the wind lifts off
the thirst of verbs and questions
on either side of the dream
we astonish the swept off we

under the pressure of water
the idea all idea of the dark within us
the current of thoughts has followed
so intimate so fragile the daily enamel
a bath of light a play
of shadows and manners
under the pressure of words

spacing out the tips of waves
long I touched
the water of delight
night's liquid sheet

nothing softens the world
words disappear
recouped by the sea and its fertile
architectural folds
while close to our lips
intrigued by the black
tide
night flaunts its echo

the horizon draws from us
its color and expanse of dream
the world must respond
to the face we offer
abyss of mouth

our lives are made round
for eternity with sighs
and big monstrous pebbles swallow
so naturally the present
while watch on wrist
we watch
our pulsing veins

what talking means
even
when our hands insist
above the fractal chaos

eyes fixed on the horizon
forever motifs
in our fertile lives
to repeat

eyelids at night
when chaos silently unravels
eyelids accept
the mystery

I expect words
of extreme unstable joy
at the end of appearance
where we try
to protect the species

nothing's lacking
fiction always scores
a direct hit
vague dimension of future run out
elsewhere and immense
the chance in our eyes
blue triumph

universe on page after page
following
as dawn erases night
water washed the sky then it was said
the ink had run taking off with
scales and antennae
the whole reproductive system
the nakedness of rational creatures

Reviews

Édouard Glissant and Postcolonial Theory: Strategies of Language and Resistance

Celia M. Britton
University Press of Virginia, 2000

As the concept of the *cross-cultural* begins to gain wider currency among intellectual foes of monoculturalism and corporate multiculturalism alike, interest in the literary, artistic, musical, and theoretical creations of the Caribbean region, that "repeating island" (as Antonio Benítez-Rojo has called it) where new and heterogenous cultural fusions and reconfigurations are constantly engendered, has grown apace. Yet, at least in North America (the vantage point from which I write), the prevailing tendency has been, as with other signs, sounds, and winds of change taken less for wonders than consumable "hybrid" novelties, to reduce the immense complexity of the region's historical cross-rhythms to a few strategic additions to a multicultural canon. In literature and creative-writing programs, pride of place is given to Caribbean writers living and working in the U.S. and writing in English, although a few names to conjure with are thrown around from time to time: Derek Walcott, V.S. Naipaul, maybe even Gabriel García Márquez. With a few laudable exceptions, Black studies programs in the universities, like English departments, tend in practice to be provincial (North) America-firsters. Where mass culture is concerned, rich and complex traditions of musicking get boiled down to a watered-down Bob Marley song as backdrop for an ad for the Jamaica Tourist Board; a Ricky Martin single; or an *ad hoc* social club with pedal-steel-guitar obbligato thrown in for feel-good baby-boomer flavor.

Over the past decades, many Caribbean artist/thinkers have attempted radically far-reaching and innovative syntheses of the region as a whole, and have done so in a variety of genres and styles. Yet their works remain either untranslated or only sporadically available. As a result of constant struggles with publishers both over his themes and his "Sycorax video style" mode of presentation, Kamau Brathwaite, acknowledged as one of the most audacious and important writers of our times, has often had to publish his work using his own funds. The bulk of Wilson Harris's vast cycle of mythopoetic novels, cross-cultural creations in the most ample and generous sense, is out of print; in New York City, I have yet to see a bookstore that stocks Harris's recent *Selected Essays: The Unfinished Genesis of the Imagination*. Anyone who has ever seen Sylvia Wynter give a public presentation could not help but recognize her as one of the major intellectual voices of our era, but her many essays spanning decades of work have yet to be collected into a representative volume. The critical writings and the poetry of one of the most important 20th-century writers, José Lezama Lima, are, with a few exceptions, absent from English (at least Dalkey Archive has recently reissued Gregory Rabassa's translation of Lezama's daunting yet immensely rewarding novel *Paradiso*). And the list could go on.

This preamble is intended to give an idea of the context in which Celia M. Britton's new study of Martiniquan poet, dramatist, novelist, and theoretician Édouard Glissant appears. *Édouard Glissant and Postcolonial Theory: Strategies of Languages and Resistance*, the latest volume in A. James Arnold's excellent series *New World Studies* with the University Press of Virginia, contributes a great deal to the clarification, for an Anglophone audience, of Glissant's preeminently American voice.

Britton, a Professor of French at Aberdeen University, Scotland, with a background in the *nouveau roman*, writes with a thorough involvement with the specific challenges posed by Glissant's complex and allusive writing. Blessedly avoiding the jargon that too often passes for "theory," she fulfills the most basic task of any critic who writes a study of an individual author: she makes the reader (this one, anyway) want to go to the library or bookstore and immerse himself in Glissant's work. Non-Francophone English-only readers will, unfortunately, be out of luck in this regard, because the novels on which Britton concentrates most, *Malemort*, *La case du commandeur*, and *Mahagony*, have yet to be translated (although we may soon expect an English version of *Le quatrième siècle*, to which Britton does devote some analysis). But because Britton's work is sufficiently meticulous that she never loses the strand of her arguments or bogs down in superfluous detail, any interested reader who lacks French will not feel lost. Of especial help are her frequent quotations from Glissant's work, both in translation and, when necessary, the original. It is clear that she has lived with and studied these novels closely, but at no time does she try to use her analysis to circumscribe or substitute for Glissant's voice. Rather, she consistently brings the immensity of Glissant's themes to the forefront, so that one knows that however much she gleans from them, more will always be found in the work itself. It is rare and welcome to encounter this kind of critical modesty, which of course does not preclude acumen, discernment, and creative interpretation on her part.

Britton's work is less a conventional chronologically-arranged monograph than a work of thematic criticism, in that it focuses on the linguistic strategies deployed by Glissant in his novels and theoretical texts. As she rightly observes, "the question of language is central to the colonial and postcolonial experience" (*Édouard Glissant and Postcolonial Theory*, 1), and one might add that in the Caribbean, it has been addressed with particular force and urgency. After all, the region has been the crossroads of most of the world's major civilizations (African, Amerindian, Asian, European); the crucible, by means of the plantation/slavery machine, of the modern capitalist world-system; and the staging ground of major imperialist enterprises and conflicts. But in every part of the archipelago, regardless of this or that imperial ruler, the people of the Caribbean have resisted the impositions of Power, linguistic and otherwise, by subverting the dominant codes and forging new creolized ways of life or *livity* (as the Rastas would say) with their own grammars, vocabularies, and poetics.

French is a particularly intractable target of such strategic subversion because of the almost totalitarian way in which it establishes itself as a closed, immutable language, zeal-

ously monitored by the *immortels* of the *Académie Française* and promoted as the vehicle of civilized universalism *tout court*. In the case of Glissant's native Martinique (and for that matter, the other French *Départements d'Outre-Mer* or DOMs), this is compounded by its economic and political attachment to the so-called *métropole*, not as an old-style colony, nor as a neo-colonial "commonwealth" like Puerto Rico, but as a thoroughly colonized and assimilated part of France itself. As one who took part in the abortive Martiniquan independence movement of the late 1950s – and was arrested and banned from the territory by the Gaullist forces for doing so – Glissant has a personal stake in turning the islands away from what he has called the "aberration of assimilation" and towards the "spare and new rhythm" involved in the apprehension of a new relational (and trans-regional) totality. How language moves in the direction of multivalent, expressive form of resistance in the daily lives and voices of the people is of primary importance to Glissant, and in his work he strives to do justice both to the magnitude of both past and present oppression as well as the possibilities for pushing towards a new relationship to language and the environments that language names and transforms. But, as he remarks in an introductory note to a glossary of Creole terms at the end of his novel *Malemort*, "the readers from *here*" – i.e., Martinique – "are future" (231).

Britton expertly sorts through the theoretical complexities of Glissant's (ad)ventures through language. Beginning with a discussion of the concept of "opacity" ("Respect for the Other includes respect for the 'opacity' of the Other's difference, which resists one's attempts to assimilate it or objectify it" [18] but also the "right *not to be understood*" [19]), Britton shows that what M. Nourbese Philip calls the "foreign anguish" of a colonial language can be bent, twisted, or (in Glissant's terminology) "detoured" towards a possible articulation of something that cannot be expressed within the constraints of official discourse – a "counterpoetics." While this notion of a lack or absence at the heart of language-as-alienation does engender the possibility of an "authentic" disalienated language, it is also the case that such plenitude might no longer be possible or even — in a situation marked by proliferating pluralities and outward-spiraling, perpetually unfinished movements of relation – desirable, at least as a fixed goal. New forms of language will emerge as processes, elements of the "chaos-world," the totality-in-motion or as Glissant puts it "errantry" that he sees as both characteristic of the Caribbean and its extensions into other regions of the globe. "[I]n the poetics of Relation, one who is errant...strives to know the totality of the world yet already knows he will never accomplish this – and knows that is precisely where the threatened beauty of the world resides (*Poetics of Relation*, 20).

In her searching analysis of *Malemort*, Britton traces the varied ways in which Glissant shows how speaking an always-already-alienated language can at times tip over into verbal delirium, whether in the form of a pathological attachment to the metropole and its ideology of *Francité* or, at another extreme, delusional attacks of messianic fervor and psychotic "splitting" of the self when it has had to repress knowledge of its own complicity with the colonial version of the Social Lie. But madness can also express itself as a detour, and Britton follows the trajectory across two novels (*La case du commandeur* and *Mahagony*)

of the character Marie Celat/Mycéa, one of several recurring figures in Glissant's novelistic cycle. After long and painful struggle and misfortune, Marie Celat accepts the anxiety attendant on permanently feeling unsettled and "unhomely," precisely in order to become overwhelmed by this condition, but is eventually compelled once again to face madness and thus effect "*both* an escape from the intolerable and a perilous exploration of the unthinkable" (136).

One of the most illuminating analytical moments in Britton's work involves her tracing the the evolutions, alterations, and "errancies" of a single densely associative and cryptic phrase in *La case du commandeur*: "*casser la surface des eaux* / break the surface of the water." So adept is she at following the "interwoven strands of imagery" (157) and so compelling in her retelling of the stories emerging like blossoms from the seedcluster of the phrase, that the reader experiences a twofold admiration for the subtle ingenuity of Glissant's weave and for the lucid discernment that enables Britton to construct an analysis capable of inspiring excitement, curiosity, and even suspense at the outcome of her discussion. In short, although she acknowledges Glissant's frequent opacity, she is also able to guide his prospective readers into his detours and errancies without ever retreating into her own critical labyrinth.

Britton dedicates comparatively little attention to Glissant's most recent work and appears to imply that he has taken refuge in a somewhat uncomplicated proclamation of a "*tout-monde*" which "convey[s] the exhilaration of [a] breakup of the old, singular system of domination and its replacement by a world view based on diversity and unpredictability" (179). In other words, Glissant is becoming less critical and more affirmative, concerned with defending the rhizomatic, detouring movement of the imagination against the fixed quality of the "root-symbol," which he blames (somewhat idealistically, in the classic philosophical sense of the word) for such atrocities as the ethnic wars in Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia. While it is true that Glissant's disciples in the *créolité* movement – Patrick Chamoiseau and Raphaël Confiant in particular – have exploited this perceived weak link to create a literature that purveys, in the name of creolization, an exotic neo-essentialist image of the Creolofrancophone Caribbean for metropolitan delectation, and that at first glance, *le tout-monde* and new-jack capitalist globalization bear a discomfiting resemblance, I tend to view Glissant's celebration of Relation more as a poetic challenge elaborated from a specifically Caribbean context. In *Poetics of Relation*, he contrasts the bounded "inner sea" of the Mediterranean to the Caribbean, which "explodes the scattered lands into an arc" (33; compare the opening of Kamau Brathwaite's "Calypso": "The stone had skidded arc'd and bloomed into islands" [*The Arrivants*, 48]). He is then following the trace or arc outwards, bringing the rest of the world into the chaos-orbit of the Caribbean (and both Wilson Harris and Antonio Benítez-Rojo have connected chaos to the incessant movements of Caribbean peoples and landscapes).

It is on issues like this that Britton's otherwise excellent critique displays its methodological limitations, neatly encapsulated in her terse and unexplained declaration: "I do not discuss

[Glissant's] poetry at all here" (6). This is not an omission that can be explained away in terms of considerations of space and scope, because it strikes at the heart of Glissant's project. As his translator Betsy Wing remarks in her preface to the poetry collection *Black Salt*: "For [Glissant] the poem is the form more suited to [the] *totalité-monde*, which can never have one meaning or one conclusion but is the precarious synthesis (as is the modern poem) of more and more distinct realities" (2). Indeed, Glissant is before all else a poet, with an ample body of work extending back more than fifty years, and his theoretical writings are explicitly conceived as forming part of a poetics and continue to engage strongly with poetry of all kinds. Britton is not alone among Glissant critics in this unaccountable reticence — J. Michael Dash, in his valuable monograph on Glissant, takes the poetry into account but seems ill-at-ease with analyzing it, even venturing that the poetic sequences *Le sel noir* and *Le sang rivé* "are important as sensuous explorations of themes that would be more politically and philosophically focused in the early novels" (*Édouard Glissant*, 59). What this all reveals is that poetry is the hard bone on which much of today's "theory," whether postmodern or postcolonial, tends to break its teeth.

The first time I experienced Glissant's work was at a group reading in 1992, when he read "Africa," a poem contained in *Black Salt* which dates back to 1960 (*Black Salt*, 87-90). In it I heard a profound declaration of connection, an elevated declamatory level of address that awakened associations with Léopold Sédar Senghor and Aimé Césaire, predecessors that, I learned later, Glissant was supposed to have "superseded." But the anxiety of influence is not a universal syndrome, as should be evident where Caribbean poetry is concerned; it is only the critics who are anxious here, while the poets continue to ply their art. In this regard, it is surprising that Britton should studiously avoid bringing Césaire into the discussion beyond more than a passing mention, as if *Créolité*'s demolition squad, eager to kill the poetic father, had done the job better than they had imagined.

Especially perplexing in this context is that in Glissant's 1979 grouping of poems "Yokes" (included in *Black Salt*), there is a sequence entitled *Malemort* which followed the publication of the novel by five years. Gnarled and bristling in their sparseness, these poems are the verbal equivalent of *pacquets-congo*, Haitian magical charms bound up with ribbons "emphasizing the capture of forces guarding the households that own such charms" (Robert Farris Thompson, *Flash of the Spirit*, 127). To ignore it as Britton does in her analysis of the novel is to vitiate the reach and profundity of her analysis, and incidentally to reinforce the separation between genres that postcolonial criticism professes to overcome.

This leads into another point of contention with Britton's undertaking – the yoking of Glissant's work to a by-now-institutionalized "postcolonial" theory, an awkward conjunction reflected in the book's unwieldy title, which could just as well have been called *Édouard Glissant: Strategies of Language and Resistance*. However, without the salable label of "postcolonial," it is doubtful whether the book would have found its putative academic audience. Britton does do an excellent job of comparing Glissant's insights to the theories of Gayatri Spivak on the subaltern, Homi Bhabha on "unhomeliness," Henry Louis Gates, Jr. on "Signifyin(g),"

and, most relevantly and usefully, Frantz Fanon on the mimetic drive. In the event, Glissant comes off more cogently than his academic counterparts, and Britton is perceptive enough to point out his differences with them. But all in all, there is something uncomfortably *de rigueur* about invoking postcolonial celebrity critics to valorize Glissant's work. Considering that Glissant has been pursuing his poetic adventure since 1947 (before some of these critics were born), Rasheed Araeen's observation in his important *Third Text* article "A New Beginning: Beyond Postcolonial Cultural Theory and Identity Politics" (*Third Text* 50, Spring 2000) carries particular force: "Postmodernism, which seems to be concerned with the active place of others in contemporary culture, seems to be unaware of the achievements of others in modernity or modernism. (...) The victims of modernity are countless, but it is also a fact that others have been able to adopt the progressive elements of modernity or modernism and to use them not only for their own liberation but also for the liberation of modernity from its eurocentric clutches" (7).

It would have been more interesting and provocative to have placed Glissant in Relation (cf. "Relation exists, especially as the particulars that are its independent constituent have first freed themselves from any approximation of dependency" [*Poetics of Relation*, 142]) with his fellow Caribbean chaos-theorists Harris and Benítez-Rojo, with Lezama Lima's baroque opacity ("Only the difficult is stimulating," Lezama Lima, *La expresión americana*), with Césaire and Surrealism and St. John Perse, but also with Rastafarian dread-talk and the "relaying" described in Erna Brodber's spiritual-circle-novel *Myal*. And it is also worth noting that the English translation of Glissant's essay *Faulkner, Mississippi* has been greeted with silence from the U.S. metropole, as if this descendant from a "foreign" Plantation quarters were intruding on the North American Master's territory instead of sticking to his own island and leaving Faulkner to the protection of the canon. Ethnocentrism, once again; evidently the only ones allowed to "cross cultures" are the representatives of the dominant culture who arrogate unto themselves the privilege of defining who will look at/write about whom,

The English-speaking reader interested in Glissant should start with *Black Salt* (U. of Michigan P.) containing poems written between 1947 and 1979 in fine translations by Betsy Wing, who also contributes a compelling introduction that puts the poetry at the forefront of Glissant's *oeuvre* where it belongs, and supplies useful biographical details absent by and large from Britton's study. In this way, Britton's excellent overview of Glissant's prose can be read as a supplement, and for its solid translations and frequent citations from the original texts (absent, unfortunately, from the English-only *Black Salt*). Notwithstanding the reservations outlined above, which in any case are open to discussion, Celia Britton has written a valuable work that will certainly encourage anyone who reads it to enter into a closer rapport with Édouard Glissant's immense archipelagic project.

Christopher Winks

Faking It: Poetics & Hybridity (Critical Writing 1984-1999)

Fred Wah
NeWest Press, 2000

Stories are double-edged gifts. They offer a way for us to enter into a world as subjects of shared histories and singular experiences; we take on an identity based on the stories we choose to tell of ourselves or our communities. And they also lead us into a midnight land where, bereft of the light of truth, we give into improvisation, interruptions and unknowing; we present an identity marked by sign posts we can barely make out and which is thus grounded on nothing more than the deep shadows of an abyss. Fred Wah's *Faking It: Hybridity and Poetics, Critical Writing 1984-1999* proffers such a duplicitous evaluation of truth in prevailing stories of identity, cultural estrangement and racial identifications.

Faking It is a collection of critical essays, prose and image poems, diaristic entries and interviews which trace the themes of writing, racialization, politics and aesthetics. The book can be roughly divided into three sections that inform one another. The first part (which constitutes the bulk of the book) circles the themes of writing and racial identity; three essays in the middle investigate avant-garde writing in China and includes a travel-journal of Wah's trip to the East; the final essays discuss the poetic theory at stake for Wah. By the time the reader arrives at the end of the book, it becomes obvious that the chapters are inextricably linked by an abiding attentiveness to the mutual attraction between writing (as in a "molecular poetics" that is opposed to "confessional realism," writing where "language is in pieces" [238]), and "the disputed space of race" (252). Here, one can almost conceive of conversations between William Carlos Williams and Hong Kong poet Leung Ping-Kwang, Louis Zukofsky and Canadian poet Louise Bak. bp Nichol, Nicole Brossard, the "Original" poets in China, Marie Annharte Baker, Gertrude Stein, Zhu Jun, Ron Silliman . . . , traversing time and space, *Faking It* strains towards a poetics that has both "social consequence and social responsibility," that messes with those "vested interests in a coherence of form and meaning" (239) so as to name a different politics. Such a poetics would share an affinity with Bak's poetry, which Wah praises as doing what "a more transparent and conventional poetic cannot," that is, "articulate our complicity with language whenever we use it to formalize a public space for ourselves" (131).

Faking It hovers around the gap between politics and aesthetics. Beginning with the eponymous essay at start, Wah meditates on the quagmires of racialized-ethnic identity in the context of the insidiously patronizing and invidious racial politics in Canada, as well as on a kind of writing that moves against that grain of assimilation, erasure and/or marginaization. In "A Poetics of Ethnicity," he elaborates on how the universalizing statement "we Canadians" compels an identification with a national ethos which white-washes, indeed obliter-

ates, differences by absorbing them into a desired and unified whole. Margaret Atwood's famous quote that "'[w]e are all immigrants to this place even if we are born here,'" according to Wah, "seems only to universalize the 'many' as 'one'" (52). Thus, an "ethnic poetics" would merely be "the poetics, the whole Canadian thing." Historical differences and cultural specificities would thus be sacrificed at the altar of the nation, the "we." This is not a new or unfamiliar criticism of multiculturalism and Wah is interested in carrying this critique into the realm of writing. He coins the term "alienethnic poetics" to denote a poetic sensibility that is radically different from the aforementioned "ethnic poetics" which blatantly disregards differences and the politically marginalized.

But what would an "alienethnic poetics" be? What kind of writing, what kind of poetic sensibility do alienation and dispossession yield? Wah suggests we think in terms of "tactics," and forwards themes of camouflage, strategic positioning and negotiation to enable the reader to envision such a poetics as a kind of nomadism and duplicitous posturing that trouble norms of centrality, unity, accessibility and assimilation, and that engage in the reterritorialization and reclamation of a "home" in language and in the world. Wah is particularly invested in what he calls "hybrid poetics" or "half-bred poetics" which explores the paradoxes of being mixed-raced. Indeed, a "hybrid poetics" best exemplifies the elusive stance that resists appropriation and "succumbing to the pull of any culture (resolution, cadence, closure)" (83). However, such radical posturings are not the sole property of one community, as Wah is quick to insist: ". . . the ethnopoetics tool box isn't even only 'ethnic,' at least in the sense of racial. These tools are shared by writers who are marginalized, invisible, experimental, political, and in need of any tool that might imagine a culture that could recognize an alien identity and construct a common language of the other" (66). In this way, Wah is able to spread his theory of a poetics of the other across the boundaries of national, gender and racial identities.

By blending the critical discourses of l-a-n-g-u-a-g-e poetry, or, more broadly, "innovative" poetry, with that of identity politics, Wah attempts to formulate a "socially informed poetics." *Faking It* seeks to avoid the traps of transparent representation, autobiographical authenticity and confessional narrativization that plague much of the writing that falls under the rubric of "ethnic" or "multicultural." As such, it is a timely and welcome intervention in the fields of both the study of ethnicity and of experimental, avant-garde poetics. Against the production, commodification and consumption of the fully accessible and self-knowing racialized subject that seem to dominate the cultural market-place today, Wah argues for attention to works that are more disruptive and experimental in form. He cites Walter Lew, the poet and editor of *Premonitions* (an anthology of Asian North American poetry), as exemplifying such a poetic and political ethos; Lew, he writes, "is highly conscious of disassembling the normative frame which usually houses the lyric to make space for trespass and its necessary innovations" (112). On the other hand, Canadian writer Evelyn Lau would be an example of precisely the kind of formulaic writer whom the mainstream market, hungry for palatable "ethnic" voices, would eagerly pick up. This is because Lau not only unquestioningly uses the lyric "I" and the consequently "centralizing magnetism of a con-

trolling speaker," but when she departs from "conventional" generic forms and employs the "prose poem stanza-graph," she fails to take "advantage of the syntactic disruption and unpredictability that the genre offers" (110). Such a failure is ultimately deployed to"diffuse and divide the race debate" (Lau is a vocal opponent of the controversial Writing Thru Race Conference in Vancouver which Wah discusses in one of the chapters). Here, the lyric "I" is hence doubly guilty: it affirms literary conventions and functions politically "as it is supposed to, within a symbolic order that demands subjection" (111). Wah's critique pushes the analytical frame beyond the normative ways by which the "Asian" or "other" subject has been produced and read; it reveals the complicity of writer and reader in overdetermining and objectifying the racialized subject within literary modes that are left unscrutinized.

The major blind spot in this collection is that Wah does not in turn push the limits, indeed, the theoretical assumptions of the avant-gardist poetic discourse he so assiduously promotes as more politically radical. He goes as far as to attempt to locate an "agency of linguistic choice" in the use of conventional forms by some racialized writers. For example, in his discussion of Metis writer Marilyn Dumont, he speculates on whether "even the recent avant-garde poetics are as complicit with the hegemonic designs as are the more conventional," and whether "the use of a derivative formal innovation" does not so much "trouble a dominant and inherited structure (social or poetic)" as "locate an 'ordering intervention' within a poetic that is intrinsically informative" (124-5). There is no uncontaminated space or poetic practice that a racialized writer may occupy or adopt; but at times, the essays seem to lean too heavily on the discourse of avant-garde poetics without the same critical energy as that directed at multiculturalism and conventional literary modes. Thus it could be said that the normative literary modes are replaced by another "truth" that is left all too conveniently intact. But it could be that the unexamined assumptions and axioms of this avant-garde discourse (for example, the ruses of ethnopoetics, and the instrumentalization of language) are the unspoken questions that this book offers, perhaps "unintentionally," as gifts.

It is precisely because of these critical silences and gaps that *Faking It* not only remains fraught with contradictions but also leaves much to be desired. It formulates a theory of poetics (hyphenated,half-bred, alienethnic and so on) grounded on an "avant-gardism" that is taken for granted; as such, it risks opening itself to the derivational ruses and commodification from which it wishes to depart. Nonetheless, these essays also issue a much needed caveat to the voyeuristic tourist or eager consumer of the "other": the latter slips between the narratives which are as much false fronts as stories by which we make ourselves visible, assert a presence, and transmit a "truth" of our experience. *Faking It* invites the reader to move in closer, to listen in on another story, even as it shares with us the joke: "we smile [complicitely] as the counterfeits and forgeries of the dreamed-of language of paradise lead us on, and deke us, finally, into trusting these 'labyrinths of voice'" (15).

Karlyn Koh

Bliss to Fill

Prageeta Sharma
Subpress Collective, 2000

and

The Kingdom of the Subjunctive

Suzanne Wise
Alice James Books, 2000

The English language is not known for the range and sensitivity of its verb tenses: not much temporal or emotional exploration is possible within the tight confines of past, present, and future. However, one trace of English's dalliances with Latin, or actually, a vestige of Old English, is left in the subjunctive verb tense. It is in this mysterious and hypothetical tense that both Prageeta Sharma and Suzanne Wise–authors of new books, respectively, *Bliss to Fill* and *The Kingdom of the Subjunctive*–operate, finding a linguistic space for their unconventional and unpredictable poetic personae.

Both writers are "othered"—virtue of being women, and in Sharma's case, South Asian as well. The subjunctive offers a way to conceptualize through language an exploration into this otherness. In a way, writing itself is an exercise in being subjunctive: it's definitely a "what if" sort of situation. And when writing out of the "other," it's necessary to create a new language/syntax/vocabulary to express previously unarticulated experiences. Wise is frequently preoccupied with the interaction of language with the self. Sharma is preoccupied with nuance and relationships—to such an extent that her poems become a translucent "transport medium" (in Sharma's own words) with all the ornate and shifting indeterminancies of real-time speech.

While the two writers are very different in style and intention, both Wise and Sharma write in dualities and both write to themselves in reflexive explorations of their selves as I and other. Sharma in her poem "Apology" acts as a representative for herself: "It is disturbing to learn of the problems that you are encountering with Prageeta. Our representative, Prageeta, will meet you Friday to investigate the problem ... Prageeta stands 100% behind herself as a product and this situation will be promptly resolved to your satisfaction." Sharma satirically captures this state so peculiarly suited to living in a Capitalist society (as we are all forced to constantly be representatives of ourselves and negotiate for our continuing ability to consume), while also hiding behind her "self" and her many other selves. Some (not all) of her various selves are presented to us for our satisfactions and dissatisfactions.

Prageeta also writes letters: an entire section is called "Dear____." Her letters are filled with

reflections, both of herself and a romantic other, or of herself as a romantic other. As an "other," she is fascinated with the possibilities of self-creation. "I cannot dream of losing you so I will answer to your gesture/until I have a word. I will utter this word again and again./I cannot protect or defend you.To mimic you is to dress you./Dearest echo, please arrive here without fear but with confidence!" Her poems frequently trail off, in a courageous hesitancy resisting any concrete manifestation of any confirmed identity, gender specific or otherwise. From "Heroic": "I know now that I am placed against settling,/made for travel, so that a horse become this house or the compliments/speak from the city itself. This comforts me and I/have been there to date their women." There is a hint of onanism through many of the poems, which accompanies and illuminates the frustration of dealing with that difficult and undefined love-object with whom Prageeta has so many conversations.

The poet Rod Smith has come up with the term "The New Mannerism" to describe a contemporary poetry which moves from school to school, style to style, within the same poem, stanza or even line. Sharma picks and chooses the poetic tools she wants to use: her tones and techniques turn on a dime. She uses "thee" and "thou" in the same line as "generators, cameras, and kinetics." She writes sonnets, odes, and sestinas with lines like "You will learn without him, restraint/will manifest itself in other ways, he will keep that undergraduate/girlfriend until the end and you must absolve him." Take the following lines from Sharma's "Sonnet": "O, can it be possible—thee inks the waysides/for our terrible shyness or are thou not interested to score/under this hostess's canvas tent?" The juxtaposition of "thou" and "score" produce that special electric shock that happens when someone is being a smartass to the elders. Sharma's sly humor is the informing foundation as she moves between the conventions of Language poetry, New York School, Beat poetry, Transcendentalism. From "These Overthrown Stones to Morning": "Arguments/do arouse this poem which oscillates in the same, trying space as arguments./How do we rise to a spiritual position?/Wanting to again, reading/Hegel, she asks the book to fly to him, to fly Alex over to a book, her excitement/was the idea of soulmates, forcing it on anyone who cares, forcing the weather/to warm her from a parallel universe ... What are natural laws?"

Sharma negotiates through these interactions between self and self, self and other, self and romantically desired other, and self and language. Dickinson and Bhartrihari are epitaphs: "... Here a mist, and there a mist,/Afterwards—Day!" and "... A lake without lotuses,/ the dumb face of a handsome man ..." One is optimistic: mist is pathway to clarity, but the handsome man has a dumb face, the poet has "seven barbs in her heart." The title of Sharma's book comes from Dickinson, "Our blank in bliss to fill." There is bliss, and there is emptiness: it is this paradoxical indeterminancy that is, after all, the most salient feature/ quest of Sharma's poetry and which ultimately makes it subjunctive.

Where Sharma darts from style to style, tone to tone, word to word, Wise writes in a consistent and distinctive syntax: one which is crystal clear, sharp, cutting, sarcastic, with determined line breaks and precise grammar. But there is an even more impenetrable mystery behind Wise's clarity: how does one bridge the gap between potential and spoken? Per-

ception and being? Desire to transform and fear of doing so? Language itself becomes a metaphor for want and frustration. In the first poem, "Highway to English," Wise questions the very act of reading her book: "No one would come this way for consolation./It is a finished and unfinished excursion." And in "Learning German," Wise illuminates the strangeness of linguistic mnemonics and familial linguistic identity: "She no longer remembers the language her mother says fell out of her mouth as easily as English. She no longer remembers when it was forbidden to speak aloud, in public, what she no longer remembers. She no longer remembers what she no longer remembers being the secret her father was the keeper of. She no longer remembers her father pretending he no longer remembers what she no longer remembers. She no longer remembers her mother beginning to no longer remember the language that was once one of several shifting positions inside her."

Wise wavers between surrealistic humor, absurdist flights of language, and a desire to reveal more personal, narrative-based histoires. Thus her poetry is a mix of pleasure and frustration for the reader. There is a touch of "The New Mannerism" here, although at times Wise handles her own changes a little sullenly: her variations sometimes seem to come from a desire to conform, not a wish to expand. For instance, the first section of "Learning German" operates from a persona of someone with questionable German relatives: "Her cousin was once a Brownshirt, then a pilot,/now dead. To compensate, her father sends cocoa, brown soap/and tobacco to someone in Germany." It's not clear why Wise would want to write from this forced persona, when the linguistic questioning of the second section is so much more interesting. A poem like "Descent," written from the first person, deals with grandparents: "My grandfather, oblivious, keeps snoring, one hand gripping/a stick of sausage, the other fondling the leather photo album.//My grandmother, cursing and brandishing a dustpan, scrapes me/off the drapes, flings me in with the kindling." Unfortunately, these kind of details and background don't actually add much to the "I" persona, which becomes so much more compelling in the second and third sections of the book as Wise abandons these spurious personas to delve into the confrontations of the "I" with faceless bureaucracy. Toward the end of the book her poems become more unpredictable, more thought-provoking: the self becomes a more universal element that hurls itself into confrontation with expectations and confinements, both societal and linguistic. In "Confession," Wise issues a barrage of declarative sentences that illuminate the struggles of a self faced with the crushing greyness of the corporate world: "I had my faults/I had my so-called desires/I remained open to temptation./I argued with my colleagues./I did not reach 100 percent/in my assignments. But I was no pry/pole, I was subsidiary. I was aspiring/to cog." The end of the poem is a exhilarating resolution of identity: "Now that it's over I must beg/for attention. I have been robbed/of the limelight that comes with/responsibility. I can only imagine/how hard it must be for you/to believe me, I mean, to hold/blame. I mean, to be you."

In her powerful and self-defining poem "Wise Comma Suzanne," Wise divides her name and assigns the top and lower halves of her body to this nominal division. She creates a conundrum freighted with gender weight: the lower half frequently engages in and desires things, such as pregnancy, that the upper half really wants no part of. And Suzanne's name—

a lily—adds to the confusion: a lily must be divided from time to time to grow, while her lower half is "wise" in the kind of historic, mystical and yet questionable wisdom: "Sage, grave, discerning, learned, pious, judicious,/Wise—when attached to female—/becomes wily and well-versed at magic//This part is all fortune-teller//This part is all smarty-pants without the pants." It is, at times like this, when Wise abandons the attempts at specific personal narratives to really delve into the fundamental nature of (her) self, when she goes into that subjunctive state where language and self grapple with basic change and potential, that her poetry becomes so much more satisfying.

Marcella Durand

Cultural Compass: Ethnographic Explorations of Asian America

Martin F. Manalansan IV, ed.
Temple University Press, 2000

This edited volume of ethnographic essays has been presented as "interventionist"(1) in the expanding field of Asian American Studies. Its editor, Martin F. Manalansan V, argues that research in this field has concentrated heavily on textual and archival material, as well as demographic and community surveys, creating a lacuna in the analysis of "'lived' experiences of 'common' people"(2), a lacunae that ethnography can overcome. It is noteworthy that the kind of ethnographic enterprise drawn upon here is built upon critical *interventions* in anthropology by George Marcus, James Clifford, Michael Fischer, Arjun Appadurai, Kamala Viswewaran, Akhil Gupta, James Ferguson and so on. Two decades of debates in the discipline - which have questioned the construction of ethnographic authority, the creation of homogenous, self-contained societies in ethnographic writing, and the binary opposition between home and field - provide the space for this particular mapping of an Asian America.

The eleven essays brought together here represent a dazzling array of interesting projects. Their authors undertake ethnographies of Asian American political organizations in San Diego, Korean-owned nail salons in New York, Filipino Beauty Pageants in San Diego, an Asian Pacific AIDS Intervention Team (APAIT), and a comic book. Other essays analyze the subjectivity of Cambodian refugees in the US medical system, changing marriage practices in Korean American communities, and the diasporic experiences of Punjabi Mexican and Hyderabadi immigrants. Some of the essays traverse between the two continents, in examining Chineseness in California and the Pearl River Delta region of the Guandong province, imagining of the Filipino Nation in the Philippines and Daly City, California, and transnational marriages between the Hmong refugee men in the US and the Miao women in China.

So what contours of Asian America are drawn through this diversity of ethnographic essays? One significant discussion centers on the academic authority of fieldworkers when the alterity between self and other, home and field collapses. Most of the authors in the collection are Asian American themselves, and the first three essays examine the specific issues of researching one's own ethnic group. Linda Trinh Vo, as a Vietnamese American studying Asian American organizations, attempts to dispel the suspicion surrounding particularly minorities who research their co-ethnic communities, by arguing that age, gender, class and sub-ethnicity make her both an insider and an outsider in complicated ways. She argues that "what is needed is the recognition of the multilayered, shifting and competing similarities and differences between native or insider researchers and their communities – a process that is shaped by simultaneous, ongoing negotiations." (19)

However, she is excessively sensitive to the accusation of "overidentification"(25) - "Scholars are warned against overrapport (Miller 1952) but this is oftentimes unavoidable for ethnic researchers; however it does not necessarily invalidate their study."(24) She suggests that the solution to these "predicaments", "dilemmas", is to incorporate them into the study. On a more critical note, however, Andrea Louie, as a Chinese American studying the changing meaning of being Chinese, takes on her identity as not so much a dilemma as much as a part of the very subjectivity of anthropological knowledge. Instead of re-inscribing her ethnicity as a special predicament, she situates the anthropologist as subject: "The extensive use of oneself as a "subject" and filter for observations is a concern inherent to the process of anthropological research. These issues were intensified for me... I hesitantly but unavoidable placed myself within the analysis of my fieldwork ."(59)

While the issue of how the subjectivity of the fieldworker inflects her/his data is an important one, these essays are sometimes a little self-indulgent in valorizing insider access (sometimes it is easier for people to confide in an outsider), and didactic in how that access should be managed. The didactic tone comes through strongly in the overwrought concern with accountability. Vo writes: "We labour under pressure to conform our work to the theoretical demands of our disciplines, but as ethnic scholars we must also be accountable to the expectations of the community or communities that we research." (32) Miliann Kang reiterates this demand of increased accountability: "The tendency of the broader public to cast co-ethnic researchers as spokespeople for their communities thus raises the standard of accountability." (45) By placing special responsibility on co-ethnic researchers, Vo and Kang take other researchers off the hook. At one point Vo states: "I suspect that these contestations over whether or not Asian American scholars can adequately study a subgroup other than their own will continue to engage those of us in the discipline." (26) Why should any *adequate study* be determined by the ethnicity of the researcher? All researchers are constrained by specific political and historical conditions that structure their interactions with the communities they work in, and all researchers negotiate these structures to varying consequences. Responsible and thought-provoking scholarship should have nothing to do with the ethnicity of the researcher at all, but be evaluated by what it has to say. The question that Louie poses in her conclusion, "what other ways [is it] possible to gain legitimate academic authority without invoking one's ethnicity" (61), is more compelling, for it questions the politics of identity in academia which overdetermine co-ethnicity.

Further, the volume has a distinct commitment to "the idea of Asian America", and to represent it as "not an already-made static reality"(1). This means that on the one hand the overarching category of a pan-Asian America is seen as important to reaffirm, at the same time differences and conflicts within that category are given equal importance, in order to sustain it as a dynamic category. Thus, strategically placed, the first and the last contributors are engaged in understanding the forces that shape pan-Asian American political mobilization, while most of the essays are about specific ethnic groups (e.g. Filipino Americans, Cambodian refugees) and analyse their distinct formations.

However, through the self-conscious cartographic metaphor, Manalansan makes evident that this volume is a spatial project located at "a moment" in time. Thus history is notably absent, and the so-called historic turn in anthropology, to counter the rendering of timeless societies in anthropological writing, receives little theoretical attention here. Yet most of the essays are grounded in specific historical moments, and Aihwa Ong's excellent essay on the biomedical subjectivity of Cambodian refugees is an example of such work. She historically situates the experience of Khymer refugees who were accepted by the US between 1983 and 1985, as part of her close analysis of "the complex intentions and manipulations of medicalized subjects who in their everyday life must operate in different webs of power" (106)

The absence of historical engagement does ensnare some of the writing. In the first essay, for Vo Asian America unproblematically transmutes into a racial category. But Gina Masquesmay, in her analysis of an APAIT, interrogates racism as a historically situated term for marking difference. She describes the organization as undertaking "identity work", by finding commonalities and building consensus based on categorical identities. She argues that through activism and within academia such identity work reifies race, and "thus legitimize[s] the original racist project"(133).

The last essay by Timothy Keeyen Choy is an ethnography of *The Asian American Comic Book*, published by the Asian American Resource Workshop (AARW). It narrates a story of how a Chinese-, Cambodian-, Japanese-, and an Indian-American overcome their differences to form solidarity. While he describes himself as "an anthropologist committed to Asian America" (220), he wants to move away from a unified racial or cultural category to one that is explicitly political. He considers a pan-Asian America as a kind of "home base" which has "political promise"(231). Thus when he examines the construction of difference and unity in the comic book's message, the questions he asks are: "What makes a good story concerning Asian American unity and solidarity to its authors and readers of the comic book? What counts in the text as political power?" (219). Because of his convictions, however, certain questions go unasked. For example, what is the history of Asian American unity? Why does Asian American unity appear politically desirable at this moment? Does privileging such a political identity affect conditions for a Korean-, Russian-, African-, and a Latin-American, all living in the same neighbourhood, to politically organize as a unity?

Finally, Manalansan proposes through the volume that "the ethnography of Asian America is always and already a multisited process." (5) Increasing attention to transnationalism and globalization in anthropology, and its concurrent need to track movements and processes, has dispersed the very notion of the field. But, while some of the essays take on spatially multisited and itinerant ethnographies, Manalansan goes further to argue that multisited does not mean multiple places. Instead, it includes "the conjunction of spaces within one specific location", requiring a "bifocal outlook" (5). This bifocality invigorates Rick Bonus's essay which examines Filipino-American politics, through events such as Filipino Beauty Paegants. He reads a *palengke*-style politics (*palengke* is a Filipino marketplace)

which is "brought over and transformed in the new place", as one that, along with beauty paegants, allows for political negotiation and community organization in a country in which they feel politically marginalized. On the other hand, Kyeyoung Park's essay on changing Korean American concepts of marriage, juxtaposes excerpts from Korean classics against the views of her Korean American informants to suggest continuities and changes. Here, the timeless classics can be read as standing in for Korean views, against those of young, dynamic Korean-Americans. This kind of bifocality has a distinct danger - that of reifying a static Asia in order to highlight a changing Asian America.

However, located at an intersection between Asian American Studies and anthropology, the volume brings together challenging ethnographic ventures that draw upon a variety of positions and strategies. While sustaining Asian America as a mapping, they reflect on their own delineations, and take on some of the political challenges that come with it.

Vazira Fazila-Yacoobali

Dear Mr. Kawabata

Rashid Al-Daif
Interlink Publishers Group, 2000

and

Sherazade: Missing: aged 17, dark curly hair, green eyes

Leila Sebbar
Interlink Publishers Group, 2000

The novels of the Lebanese writer Rashid Al-Daif's and the Algerian Leila Sebbar are both noteworthy attempts at recording the quotidian, by seeking and assessing one's self in relation to the days as they happened and as they continue to happen. In these stories, the quotidian, as it is perceived, is mixed with self-definitions and with the larger understanding of one's place in history. It is not so much that the everyday is a shadow of history, but that history is what takes place from time to time due to both daily interventions and their absence.

Al-Daif's book is a first-person narration of one man's life, a life that spans significant cultural and historical changes in Lebanon. His story is a series of interrogations posed in the spirit of reassessment. It is retrospective and circular, exposing his confrontation with a tradition that is characterized by violent tribal and religious allegiances, his leftist political activities, and his military engagements in the civil war.

His novel is appropriately in the form of a personal letter, a mode of everyday writing. It is addressed to the Japanese novelist Yasunari Kawabata, a Nobel Prize winner who committed suicide in 1972. The format of the novel and the choice of an addressee are important given that Al-Daif seeks global connections in his effort to break from strict identifications as he looks back to Lebanon's war which involved among other things religious conflict, his village's familial feuds, and his parents dissension over his own education. The personal letter does not fail to become a reflection on a country's history.

Al-Daif strongly identifies with Kawabata's endeavors and fate. He chooses to address him in particular because of what they share, namely the act of writing but also a certain view of life that sees the intangible present as shaped by the past: "*Aren't things that happen occasionally part of our daily lives? I'm certain that you-unlike most other people-don't see anything disconcerting about things happening only occasionally. In fact, that is why I have chosen you.*" (1) The narrator believes this unique identification to be reciprocal and not without hope: "I will find in you a rare Arab, who will surrender to me out of love for the days to come and the places to come." (4) This relationship around writing and also around a

close encounter with death involves a conception of days that links them to historical events and formulations of self: "When I mention the days to come, I am not referring to the future. For you, there are no days to come. You know that better than anyone. But my days are in me, they are mine...." (5) This affinity between the two authors extends more specifically to a desire for articulation through the ordinary. "I also wanted, like you, to write a story in which I would speak, through an ordinary event, about the clash between the climate of the age (I mean modernity, with its threats and challenges) and the local people, I mean tradition." (9)

Everyday life is never the new for him but always that which has already been encountered before with a violent ordinariness: "*There are no really new feelings; every feeling is fixed forever in the depths of a man's heart.*" (148) Although the word "day" in Arabic speaks of happenings, of events, in Al-Daif's rich poetic, the day becomes an index for who we are, for all the things that happen now and that have happened then that constitute everyday life, as well as for struggle: "*Among us Arabs, the word 'day' is also used to mean a 'battle', and 'days' to mean 'battle days'.....*" (112). The daily, as that which is always already encountered, becomes a kind of memory for Al-Daif, so that if memory and life are inseparable, he can intervene and recreate the days. "I have a memory, Mr. Kawabata, such that if I wished, I could recollect the color of every day I have lived from the moment I was born-or even earlier-until now." (12-13) Memory is the intervention in history the same way that "History could not go forward without our daily intervention. We were its makers, and at the same time we were part of it," both anticipating it and resisting its encroachment. (6)

Two images speak most forcefully of the everyday in the two novels. For Al-Daif's narrator, it is that of the unusual glimpse of "himself" that he catches one day as he is walking. The glimpse intrudes for a moment on his day but takes the entire span of the novel for the narrator to come to grips with it: "I was walking along Hamra Street in Beirut when I suddenly saw him, and for a moment thought that I was seeing myself... This was not my reflection, then, but myself. I was seeing myself." (1) He identifies himself not just with another from the past but with an "enemy". "*I say 'met him'...because among us, people do not mention the names of their enemies when speaking about them. Instead, we allude to them with an adjective, pronoun, circumlocution, gesture or silence.*" (2) He is an enemy for many reasons having to do with their mutually shared experience of the civil war and for his denial of the quotidian. "Then again, I saw him smiling ever so faintly, looking into the distance over other people's heads, as if he were afraid that the camera of history might surprise him while he was in a non-historical position." (109) It is the ordinary anticipating the historical to such an extent that there can only be an onslaught of history collapsing the distinction between a family feud and a historical struggle. But the narrator knows the failures of such a stance and shares in it.

It is not the moment itself which disturbs him the most, but the fact that it evaporates into the ordinary. The whole story revolves around this brief glimpse of seeing his former friend walking on Hamra street and assessing his past in relation to this mistaken recognition, a

moment "after which everything returned to normal. *Everything returned, returns to normal!...there is a smell of blood in the air.*" (162) Al-Daif, who is concerned with how to avoid the violence and who does not want to accept its reality, moves from real cultural and political assessments to ironic despair: "The idea came to me when I realized that man would not be saved unless he could live without food! Don't you agree with me that eating is an indescribably violent activity? We chew with our teeth in order to change things into ourselves. With our teeth we change what is different from us into 'us'." (160) Just as eating is intrinsic to survival, so is violence intrinsic to human nature for him. But his assessment is no more viable than his solution. His gloomy pronouncement culminates in Al-Daif's assertion that any change is to no avail. "As for what we Arabs call in our language 'the customary way of life', it is not I who have prescribed it." (166) He becomes the man on Hamra street in this ending not because of his preposterous posture or past political mistakes but because of his complacent disillusion.

The older assessment of self is not what preoccupies the novel of the Algerian writer Leila Sebbar. Rather it is the search for self. The name Sherazade is of course an ostentatious link to *The Thousand and One Nights*. And like the wise Sherazade of *The Thousand and One Nights*, this one is marked by her passion for reading: "She didn't smoke much. She said, laughing at herself, she'd rather read. 'It's my drug, my vice.'" (49) This Sherazade also lives by her wits, takes on roles, and plays tricks. She survives. She is also seductive but works to defy the confining images others construct of her. Looking at Henri Matisse's painting, "Odalisque in Red Trousers," "She can't understand why it moves her. The reclining woman, with bare breasts, her arms draped in a light gauze behind her head, her hair half hidden by a muslin scarf embroidered with beads, has small round black eyes, a small mouth, almost a double chin-on account of her pose-Sherazade doesn't find her beautiful...[she] stares at her until midday." While she is generally impassioned of Algeria, it is only after seeing this painting that she sets out for Algeria, literally stepping out of this exotic frame.

Sherazade also defies everyday construction of her self, leading the reader to ask along with Julian's friend whether she really exists. In a tape that she sends to her mother and sister, she conveys a certain timelessness about her: "Sherazade didn't say where she was or what she was doing. She talked like one writes a letter. Neither time or place mattered. She could have been talking the previous evening, or three months before, you couldn't tell..." (221)

Tension between the exotic identity, the forged one, and the one within the ordinary everyday is sustained throughout. A frequent glimpse in Paris of a homeless Arab who is washing his feet and who reminds her of her grandfather preparing for prayer locates her between opposing and limiting worlds—that of Julian's attention which places her within an exotic mold, the French police report of a missing person, and her father's protective "hidings". Her Algerian past is never far from her search for true identity. The experience of the ordinary for Sherazade and for all others in this novel is one of not being at home. Sherazade,

who runs away from her family and comes to Paris, lives an unassimilated life with a group of squatters who are children of immigrant workers and who do whatever is necessary to meet their needs. They nonetheless maintain a certain integrity and even innocence. The novel unexpectedly ends en route as if to indicate that Sherazade's identity is always a becoming. If arrested, her identity can only be that of a missing person where the only markers that are certain are the distinguishing physical ones.

The main weakness of this book is its translation which is inconsistent. It is however an apt and vivid response to the frame story of *The Thousand and One Nights* where the possibility for Sherazade's subjectivity through her stories is ultimately co-opted by the king and to the grim realities of "beur" identity in France.

Najat Rahman

Thunderweavers

Juan Felipe Herrera
University of Arizona Press, 2000

and

Lotería Cards and Fortune Poems: A Book of Lives

Juan Felipe Herrera
City Lights, 1999

TWO BOOKS UNBOOKED: THE POET AS WITNESS

I want to preface this review by placing myself within its context: the viewpoint of one person...whose world is one of non-linear tangents which comprise a whole. The poem is my whole. What creates the drive to answer the environment you've put yourself in.

Juan Felipe Herrera has taken it upon himself to answer the muses in two unique forays into poetry, putting himself in the margins of what the poem-as-book-as-poem can be. In *Thunderweaver*s, he's taken on the human condition. Fully immersing himself in the brutal ambush during the winter of 1997, when paramilitary agents killed many Mayan villagers in Chiapas, Mexico. The poet's pen fueled by need is an enormous weapon, Herrera is the poet-as-witness furiously recording the devastation.

Written in Spanish and English, the book is designed so that each version appears in sequence...one half in Spanish, turn the book upside down, one half in English. Which I like because the flow of the poem isn't interrupted by a facing page of translation.

Herrera puts himself in a place where the story being told is split by four female voices telling the tale. A story of 'violent displacement' which resonates with 'the impoverished residents of southern Mexico' (from the book jacket). Four women; two sisters, a mother and a grandmother, are looking for each other amidst the massacre. Each has a chapter, a suite of 14 poems describing the carnage, their search for each other, their support. Time and character become passers by as the focus remains on devastation. We follow them and hope to guide them towards each other...a human need which crosses any border.

We travel over ground traveled in each previous chapter, as if in a movie where the story is recounted 4 times simultaneously...refracting the original event over the course of the book. What this does is heighten the drama, allowing us to choose where to join the story in progress. The work is powerful in passages where we feel the burning decay:

(Maruch, Grandmother Of The Roads; VI)

Blood travels through the streets
some Ladinos close the doors of their sundry stores.
Blood travels by the low hills
some children become reddish forever.
Blood travels past the kitchens
the television and an altar of maize fade.
Travels along the wound of Mexico
an X in the center of its heart.

It's less powerful when we're shown image after image of darkness, as the scene is surveyed by the four women. After awhile, it makes me feel that there's a healing missing from the wound. Like in a documentary where I know the ending, I begin looking for a ray of light, some fissure which allows my viewpoint to come in and help gauge the situation.

The ray of light in work as emotional and personal as this becomes the characters themselves. The four women who, in the midst of survival, attempt to transcend the gunfire. Thunderweavers ends with the older pregnant daughter, Makal, Daughter Of The Drums talking to her unborn child while searching for her mother. The analogies of a present and future motherhood...a present and future Mexico, are at times heart wrenching. In her last poem, she finally hears her younger sister's voice, who delivers the final sequence in a stirring fusion of clarity and passion...we're left with enough mystery to allow interpretation. What Herrerra has accomplished in this book is a grand portrait sensitively painted with broad strokes.

And so, in the midst of praise, I'd like to explore form.

In this work of multiple voices, the voice of the poet doesn't change as the characters do. I'm not sure how I feel about that. On the one hand, I'd like to hear the voice of the twelve-year-old sound like a twelve year old...it's when Herrerra goes into the elder voices that the writing seems matched to the maturity. There is also the manner of language...the Spanish version has a much more lyrical flow to me, the English loses some musicality. It should be noted that the poet himself has written both, and to my Spanish ear...the lyricism of some passages describing the same passage is stronger poetry in Spanish. Pascuala, Mother Among Thunder, searches for her twelve-year old daughter, Xunka, The Lost Daughter:

(from "Pascuala; XIII")

Las casa se quema, Xunka
camina, escucha, canta, junta
tu voz, de grano en grano,
cuerpo con cuerpo
a todo, a todos.

the same passage in English...

> The house burns, Xunka
> walk, listen, sing, gather
> your voice, kernel by kernel
> body with body
> for everything, for every one.

Comparing first two lines; in Spanish the letter "a" acts as a metronome...punctuating the end of almost each word, building a terrific motion into the language. In English, the words describe the event without the same driving force. Also the last two lines; in Spanish, the economy of language, the alliteration, the waltz... "cuerpo con cuerpo" 1-2-3, 1-2-3 "a todo, a todos" 1-2-3, 1-2-3. In English, it gets heavier.This happens throughout, and I know it's impossible to capture the same intention from language to language...it's more of an interesting departure for me. How there is an inherent musicality found in the romance of vowels which doesn't happen in English conversation (aside from rap and jazz). And how that affects what we would call "poetry." Especially when the subject matter is an actual catastrophy, the alliteration and rhythm of poetry's language is a ground for the ear, an entry point into the darkness. In translation, or, in a bilingual sense from mother tongue to sister tongue, something will always get compromised. I wanted to point this out because Herrera is putting himself in the middle of his multi-culto stream, embracing his Mexican roots in view of an English-speaking audience. Offering us a glimpse into another culture, using one language to live the other.

In *Loteria Cards and Fortune Poems,* the poet has undertaken another non-book book form for poetry. In an innovative collaboration with the Mexican artist Artemio Rodriguez, Herrera spreads his vision over the course of 104 poem cards...which is what I'd call each double-page spread.

From the thorough and engaging introduction by Rupert Garcia; "Loteria is a colonial Spanish game of chance that arrived in Mexico in the 18th century and continues to be played today. Similar to 'Bingo,' instead of letters & numbers a deck of cards is used. Each card has a character, each player has a board filled with images matching the cards. These sundry stock of characters include; devil, heart, destiny, mermaid, glutton, vengeance. The announcer calls out each card by improvising a short poem based on the character, i.e. 'coat for the poor': the sun; 'perdition of men': women; 'the brave man's arm': machete. The player puts a bean on his board filling the spaces to win."

The poems in a game of Loteria are rooted in oral tradition. The Loteria announcer has to be a quick-witted performer & poet. As in a spoken word performance where the physical presence of the performer is as much a part of the experience as the poems...the physical book itself is a handsome presence. It's a squarish little block, 5 1/2" x 7" x 1" thick. Each right-hand page has a 3 1/2" x 3" black & white linocut depicting one of 104 characters, each left-hand page has a poem 5-20 lines long written about that character.

Within the world of the book, each spread is it's own complete world. The illustrations are a phenomenal tour de force. At once complex and simple, bold tapestries of symbology, expertly rendered in a graphic folkloric style. Artemio Rodriguez has created a haunting and exquisite masterpiece of line, form and design. Each linocut takes the traditional, and uses it as a springboard for boundless creativity.

The dialog between image and text is direct, the poems were written in response to the linocuts. When they really work together, with both pages before me, I find myself going back and forth from image to text...creating a conversation in the margin. From: "LAS TIJERAS" (The Scissors, again Herrera mixes cultures, each poem is in English, its title is in Spanish)

> Got this itch in my pants. Can't tell if it's
> the shoveled desperation or the sanguine
> guiltgold I've stashed for decades. The faces
> remind me, the ancestral crimes, how I served
> as traffic boy to the Reich, to the Corporate
> Gila across the Latin productions, I want Joe Tube
> to forgive me, to bless me, the Omnipresence
> of Joe Tube, especially. ...

The illustration completes it; a business-suit type, wearing a scary Mexican life-mask about to cut off his own head with huge scissors, all manner of severed heads floating, part of a television (Joe Tube no doubt). It's a mad illustration open to all kinds of twisted, surreal interpretation...and the text matches the hallucinogenic openings.

I wish all the poems had this crazed looseness. It's when the writing tells me exactly what I see that the dialog stops. There may be a tiny icon hidden in the corner and the poem will state the obvious, making me see it. I prefer the surprise of finding something unexpected, allowing a new interpretation at every visit. As opposed to the text becoming a megaphone, telling me what to look for. But I realize these poems are meant to be heard. In keeping with the game, each poem is a spoken declaration. The book is almost a multimedia performance in the barest sense...where text, image and audience contribute to the experience.

There's an analogy here to Thunderweavers, both books are reporting a world for us...one that we see but aren't familiar with (the surreal imagery of Loteria), one that we don't see but are familiar with (the desperate search of Thunderweavers). This is the achievement presented by Herrera. To use the book form to explore poetry's possibilities into how he sees his world. Multimedia thinking from a poet at ease with his tools, thinking larger than the confinement of mere words. With both publications, Juan Felipe Herrera takes a step forward while rooted in tradition. Straddling territories like a two-legged poet, recording his world at every stance.

Edwin Torres

Translating the Unspeakable: Poetry and the Innovative Necessity

Kathleen Fraser
University of Alabama Press, 2000

As a poet and contributor to the ever-expanding matrix of poetics, Kathleen Fraser has explored and excavated the rutty quagmire of language for the last four decades. The path she followed sprang from a lack: a lack of viable women voices in the poetic canon, whether due to omission, oppression or ignorance. Fraser drew sustenance from these poets, whose much-needed direction and invitation to newer perspectives and innovation in poetry inspired her to new forms of expression. She recounts her poetic journey in *Translating the Unspeakable: Poetry and the Innovative Necessity*, a book that delivers ten-fold on its titular promise. The essays range, and are arranged, from autobiographical pursuits to the historical/critical absorption of her hero poets. We see what Fraser's eyes light upon. We follow the acute and agile movements of her mind as she plumbs the progress of her poetic voice in relation to other voices, and as she incorporates her change of vision, her departure from convention. These essays are not didactic, but inviting and searching. She invites us to give voice to the uncontainable, to allow accident and uncertainty to guide language into new measures of meaning. "One needs to listen . . . to the inner prompt and then to write from the fragments and layerings of incoherence, unsureness, even extreme vulnerability."(76) Far from being incoherent, Fraser's essays acquire this layering technique—they inform each other, revealing a wisdom and a generosity unique to her voice.

Fraser traces the events of her poetic formation, through back-tracking, discovery, frustration and accident. Her placement in history—a woman poet finding her voice in the Sixties, a revolutionary time—precluded many paths. Fraser, brought up on such poets as Eliot, Williams, and Lorca, sought to emulate these male voices, but was vaguely dissatisfied; her poems didn't match the battling voices within her. "My thoughts were blips and scrolls and departures. The task was to catch them just as they came up to the surface. Unexpectedness, chaos, pressures, and breaks." (23) She grew increasingly frustrated by the attempts of her professors to force her poems into the model of prescribed prosody, smart little narrative stanzas with left justified lines marching down the page like soldiers. Fraser explores the marginality of women writers as she follows her own discovery of these forgotten voices, beginning with Virginia Woolf and Emily Dickinson, and on to H.D., Barbara Guest, and Adrienne Rich, among many others. But the political climate and social reality was troubling:

> "We literary women had all been taught our manners and, with few exceptions in the Sixties, women writers sent out their work and waited

> to be taken up by powerful male editors and mentors who were willing to discover them and authenticate their reality as writers. Women mentors and editors were in very short supply, still captured by their own tentative power base.
>
> One might speculate that such neglect gave women poets a kind of freedom from the confines of public approval and aesthetic directive to develop their own unique voices. And that may be true, in part. On the other hand, like most serious artists, we wanted to materialize, to be heard and acknowledged as authentic by outside recognition. We needed a readership." (pp 30-31)

Fraser began meeting with other women poets struggling to create their own tradition, one that must spring from a non-tradition of marginalized women poets ignored by critics and readers. With this in mind, in 1983, Fraser, Frances Jaffer, and Beverly Dahlen, (and enlisting the help of Annette Kolodny, Rachel Blau DuPlessis and Carolyn Burke) conceived of a new literary journal in which to give voice to women's poetics. *HOW(ever)* grew out of the need, a rising pressure, to assert this new vision. "The reward for asserting a vision is to become visible, to participate actively in the wider literary conversation, and to help in creating a community that has been waiting to come into view." (36) Fraser had entered the scene.

Fraser's struggle for public involvement dovetails with her struggle for her private voice, a new kind of poetic voice that more accurately reflected her interior life. In "H.D.'s Invitation" Fraser says, "I did not want to write within a language tradition too easily understood, too clearly part of an agenda rubber-stamped by most mainstream journals, but I had not yet articulated for myself the reasons for my resistance, nor the power relations dictating the limits of what I felt antagonistic toward."(61) Fraser addresses such relations in the first section of the book entitled "Auto . Bio . Poetics" and the reader learns how her craft evolved in response to outside pressures and influences. In the essay "To book as in to foal. To son." the parallel tasks of writing and raising a child interweave as two necessities that are not exclusive of one another, but rather, in the struggle, enhance both pursuits. An experimental essay that closely matches her poetic voice, this fragmented exploration begins with a monologue of self retribution, guilt, memory, and joy, then moves into a dialogic response to the monologue, a conversation discussing the difficulties of being both a mother and writer. For Fraser, this conflict was a way into a poetic voice, to discover the "blips and scrolls and departures" that accurately and emotionally described the feeling of the uncontainable, the unspeakable; the form changed.

One gestation mirrors another; Fraser's rejection of the conventional line, the conventional poem, was sparked by the sudden realization of how she lived all along—in fragments, fighting for time to write, fighting for private moments she had to steal away from everyday life. The organic structures of Fraser's poetry evolved from who she loved and how she lived. A name—Emma Slide—falls into her head while vacuuming, and suddenly she has

an outlet, a voice through which she can experiment, give voice to a person she didn't know she was, "some voice that had been too small and baffled to risk its nakedness as *my* voice in my 'regular' poems." (41) She created a new form for herself, the Gestate, "a poetic form of unnumbered discrete phrases, unfolding and proliferating as rapidly or as slowly as one's perceptions do." (44) In "Faulty Copying," Fraser credits error and mistake for opening new avenues of meaning and form into her poetry, taking as her metaphor a biological term that describes the greater result of evolution. Through mistake, we experience a newness that fosters change. "Perfect copying held less allure as I began to savor the reliability of the unexpected." (88) She followed H.D.'s invitation to "trust and mistrust language" as her ideas of order and closure redefined themselves in relationship to the natural progression of her voice.

In Part Two of *Translating the Unspeakable* entitled "Missing . Persons," Fraser returns to a theme that requires repeating: the passage of a poet through an unfriendly territory of unremembered voices. Once again, the tide of tradition serves to drown out the voices most important to her, but she strives to pay back a debt and bring them to the fore of poetic conversation. In "Photogenes: 'the incidental' & 'the inessential' as modernist postscript," Fraser discovers in her reading of Virginia Woolf the ability to value her own interior life, "and to track the bifurcated, elaborate, interruptive speech of my own company of selves." (93) The use of another natural model as metaphor, the photogene, helps to capture the feeling of simultaneous loss and presence of women poets ignored and almost forgotten: the after-image of their work exists, but their actual presence in the history of words is unspoken, given how their legacy was manipulated, revised or abandoned. Fraser tries to reclaim these poets—Lorine Niedecker, Mina Loy, H.D., Laura Riding, Barbara Guest—and create her own tradition of marginalized voices. The essays on Niedecker, Loy and Bunting, H.D. and Barbara Guest reveal Fraser's sensibilities as a writer as much as they illuminate the work of these poets. Most especially, the essay on Lorine Niedecker and her journey into a collapsed syntactical poetic expression stands out as a must-read for any self-respecting poet. It is a wonderful tribute well-grounded in contextual history and scholarly research, in which she defends Niedecker against champions of the status quo. The last part of the essay is essentially a call to arms, to recover Niedecker's readership from the plethora of competing critics for the last word on her ouvre. "The actual poetry under discussion is then effectively muted while the egos of Niedecker's conservationists and critics are often substantially preserved in various inadequate stewardships and critical lashings." (122) This seems to be the case for many undervalued poets who don't fit into categories prescribed by the reigning dictators of accepted poetic form— even the somewhat canonized Emily Dickinson. "Dickinson understood, as did Stein, that one's linguistic perspective is inseparable from gender and that new—if traditionally uncomfortable—terms are needed with which to inscribe the at-oddness of a life whose forms of cultural expression and exclusion are continuously inherited and reforming." (138)

The book's final section, "Continuum . Contingency . Instability," plots the course of ingenuity in poetry, following the experimentation of the line on the page, and the necessity to

break away from prescribed forms:

> One begins to understand that the established forms one is born into—the well-designed structures that precede, protect, and guide—may limit and even harm the ability to listen for an interior prompt of difference and to follow its peculiar, often "irrational" moves . . . having been called *beside the point.* Each writer comes up against this constructed wall and accepts the power, safety, and authority of its limits . . . or decides to break through. (202)

Fraser addresses the page as a four sided object ripe for a new vision, in which the line may swim unheeding of danger signs. Fraser says, "the frame of the page, the measure of the line, has provided for many contemporary women poets the difficult pleasure of reinventing the givens of poetry, imagining in visual, structural terms core states of female social and psychological experience not yet adequately tracked: hesitancy, silencing, or speechlessness, continuous disruption of time, 'illogical' resistance, simultaneous perceptions and agendas, social marginality." (142) By exploring the works of Charles Olson, Barbara Guest, Rachel Blau Duplessis, Susan Howe and others, the sheer plurality of experience and experiment opens wide the use of line on the page.

Each of the essays in *Translating the Unspeakable* is accompanied by a footnoted "FRAME" in which Fraser explains the circumstances of their conception. These serve to contextualize the essays and enhance the accident of them, the impetus and challenge each one presented for her. In effect, the essays and the FRAMEs build on the palimpsest model of H.D. in which layers of time and mistake and love and life experience accumulate in creating a whole that is ever-shifting and always challenging. One of the earliest essays, 1982's "Partial local coherence : Regions with illustrations," takes on the Language Poets and may fan the flames of argument still burning. Fraser adeptly lays out the history of this movement but sets herself apart from it, although she and the Language Poets share some similarities in their pursuit of subversive forms. Fraser is revolutionary minded, but she does not seem too eager to align herself with any movement besides her own personal one of innovative necessity. Out of necessity, a school of poetics would have to be rejected and superceded to continue the great evolution of poetry. And that is what is exciting about *Translating the Unspeakable.* It follows a one person revolution, in effect, although some of Fraser's discoveries were shared with others and benefited all. This volume of essays also provides an essential women's history of poetics, and is thus a must-read for all poets who see themselves in the margins, searching for a viable poetic voice that adds to the greater conversation, that challenges tradition and goes beyond it.

Kelly Everding

Deleuzism

Ian Buchanan
Duke University Press, 2000

and

Proust and Signs

Gilles Deleuze (trans. Richard Howard)
University of Minnesota Press, 2000

> "If humanity can be saved, and the originals reconciled, it will only be through the dissolution or decomposition of the paternal function." Hence becoming-woman.
>
> How can fraternal society be realized? It already has, according to Deleuze. The reconciliation of the inhuman and the human, or Primary Nature and secondary nature, occurs spontaneously, Deleuze argues, because it is not a personal problem, but a historical, geographical and political one....(Buchanan, *Deleuzism*, 98)

> What is an essence as revealed in the work of art? It is a difference, the absolute and ultimate Difference. Difference is what constitutes being, what makes us conceive being. This is why art, insofar as it manifests essences, is alone capable of giving us what we sought in vain from life. (Deleuze, *Proust and Signs*, 41)

Today it appears corporations have control over the job of the social construction of identity, a job that academic social critics once thought could be politicized by Lacanian and Deleuzian studies of what constitutes the subject. The attempt to politicize the issue of what constitutes the subject has its basis in the philosophical notion that "only a subject that is *given* can be said to have been shaped by the social, or somehow felt the impact of a force greater than itself, or better still, been constituted by forces external to itself. But a subject who is completely *given* and not at least partially *transcendent* cannot have an effect on the social order. It is born at once with the social, and lives and dies according to a diastole and systole outside itself, but not different from itself."(Buchanan, 83) What social critics were trying to show with the politicization of what constitutes "us" is that it is not possible that we are mere products of the social, indeed, we have agency. Corporations cannot take full responsibility for the construction of identity because we are not only *given* but at least partially *transcendent* as well. In other words, we are both produced by the social and at the same time, it could be said, we rise above the social and therefore transform it.

If the politicization of what constitutes the subject has failed so that corporations appear to have the power to wholly produce our identities, perhaps it is because we view the job of identity formation and the question of what constitutes the subject as different. On the other hand, if we don't see ourselves as responsible for drawing connections where there appear to be none, what sorts of social critics are we? Ian Buchanan's *Deleuzism* (Duke University Press, 2000) deals with this tragic gap or failure to connect the politicization of philosophy and what we perceive as the apolitical corporate construction of identity with a rebellion against the idea that we cannot read Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari from a dialectical point of view. Buchanan's idea is that if we can't read Deleuze and Guattari from a point of view which allows us to be both inside and outside the social at the same time, in other words, if we have to read Deleuze and Guattari from the point of view of immanence, we are left without a weapon with which to fight "all for profit" ideology. Buchanan then refuses to accept the idea that "corporations are us." It may appear that corporations have won control over the job of the construction of identity but this is because social critics, in particular, Deleuzians have missed the essential point that it is their job as social critics to make a connection between the corporate construction of identity and the philosophical constitution of the subject.

Given Buchanan's explicit purpose of articulating how the work of Deleuze and Guattari functions politically, it is a mistake to debate his presentation of the work of Deleuze and Guattari from the point of view of the theorization of subjectivity. Although this may seem perfectly logical, to do so would only reinforce an apparent paralysis and lack of conscience in the political arena. Buchanan's whole point after all is that in order to understand what constitutes the subject, Deleuze and Guattari investigate the object not the subject. The route to understanding what constitutes "us" is an indirect one. An investigation into the essence of the object is preliminary to the development of our ability to conceptualize how we are constituted, how we function. Buchanan respectfully suggests we consider a different way into the work of Deleuze and Guattari by asking the questions Deleuze and Guattari themselves ask of the object, in particular, the work of art, how does Deleuze and Guattari's work function? what does the work do? These questions, for Buchanan, are by definition, politically grounded. In other words, Buchanan's dialectical reading of Deleuze and Guattari signifies his demand that the final question we must ask of the work is always, what is its relation to the social?

Buchanan's radical or conservative (however you choose to read it) rebellion against Deleuze and Guattari's explicit instruction not to use dialectics is based in the idea that Deleuze built his entire hermeneutic program around Melville's great precept that all books are written in both ink and blood; on the one hand there is the book of words, on the other, the book of the soul. Buchanan explains, "...if we want to apprehend desire for itself we have to look on the reverse side of any representation we are confronted with...."(146) In Deleuze and Guattari's words, to get to the "reverse side," we need first

> to seek out dark precursors, those minute and myriad indices of con-

> nections, disjunctions and conjunctions, in short, all the flows and their schizzes, which all but imperceptibly dot the surface of a text. In the end it comes down to this: flows and their schizzes. (Buchanan, 146)

In Buchanan's view, most of what has been written so far on Deleuze and Deleuze and Guattari has neglected to consider Deleuze and Guattari's mode of presentation from the point of view of strategy and/or or desire.(7) Like loyal subjects under Deleuze and Guattari's command, we have called for a moratorium on dialectics. (7) Buchanan argues that we have missed Deleuze and Guattari's primary concern: reconceptualization of the object. This reconceputalization effectuates a change in our relation to the object, ourselves, others and finally, the world.(159) When Deleuze speaks of getting to know the reverse side of a thing, he's not referring to its hidden meaning, but the essence of the object (which is not the same thing). Buchanan takes Deleuze and Guattari's instruction here seriously. In order to get at the reverse side of Deleuze and Guattari, we must read their rhetoric as rhetoric. What is central to their work is not its meaning but how it works and what it does. In Buchanan's way of thinking, without a formal approach to Deleuze and Guattari's work, we cannot but continue to produce readings of them which are merely individualistic-anarchic or elite conservative: philosophical metacommentaries on the social, avant-garde metacommentaries on the popular, monied class metacommentaries on the poor and/or private or personal metacommentaries on the public. In short, we naturalize, privatize and/or mystify the work through reading it as if our relation to it were unmediated.

Buchanan's suggestion that we factor in the absent book in our readings of Deleuze and Deleuze and Guattari is background for his idea that Deleuze and Guattari's model of schizophrenia ("fully detached creative energy oscillating between a breakthrough to a new mode of existence and a breakdown into an already exhausted and spent mode,"(164)) is analogous to the immanent utopic model (which by definition registers success in failure) discussed in the work of Fredric Jameson. For example, the schizo's act of fantasizing (165) a nomadic persona works because, inevitably, it fails. Upon failure of the utopic impulse ("the sad truth is that nomadism cannot save us anymore - if it ever could! - because it is now engendered by capitalism"(149)) we don't lose our frame for thought as psychoanalysis theorizes but rather we return to our everyday relation to the object with a sense of estrangement (Brecht) and an intensification of historicity. The result of the schizo's fantasizing produces "a heightened sense of semiotic relatedness..., a feeling that there are no natural relations, that new ones can constantly form."(164) The estrangement experienced by the schizo signals that the schizo is thus "for the first time in history aware that his or her environment is in fact a funhouse, a dead zone of images, false trails, bad deceptions."(166) If schizos are happy "it is because they have finally learned to laugh at the madness that surrounds them on all sides, not because they have lost contact with reality." (166) Deleuze and Guattari are suspicious of the (transcendent) utopia because it signifies a place above or outside from which we can get an objective or clean view on the whole. Thus, according to Buchanan, the schizo model is precisely the model not of a utopic place but a utopic process. The schizo "counter-actualizes" what happens to him or her, finally able to read

the signs of his or her experience of the object-event. "Becoming worthy of what happens to us amounts to reaching a detached perspective on things where what happens to us is willed by us, not merely endured."(78) Of course, there are events which are beyond our control, but "the event and what happens are not the same thing."(78) In Deleuze's words, the event is "not what occurs (an accident), it is rather inside what occurs, the purely expressed. It signals and awaits us."(79) Buchanan explains, "The event is the sense we make of what happens. We might bemoan a misfortune, or resign ourselves to it, or take charge of it (become worthy, in other words) by saying...we were born to embody it. To the extent we take charge of events we counter-actualize what occurs, we see beyond actions and live the purity of the event, the crystal of sense awaiting us in all phenomena."(79)

****

As part of Deleuze's rethinking of the politico-philosophical landscape, i.e., his conceptualization of the plane of immanence, he emphasizes the synchronic over the diachronic: all pasts exist in one eternal moment, intensified (synchronic). Deleuze's study of the history of philosophy is primarily concerned with how he can use philosophy in order to change the present. Thus, the philosopher may be dead, but his or her persona lives on for an eternity(49). In this intensified (synchronic) view of how history impacts us today, philosopher and psychosocial type both exist on the same flat surface. Buchanan notes that the conceptual persona as much as the psychosocial type is a formal device. Only the image of the mobius strip shows us how Deleuze's conceptualization (as different from deconstruction and semiotics) of the plane of immanence makes it possible that two levels (for example (dead) philosopher and psychosocial type) are necessarily separate, but paradoxically, on the same plane.

> Signifiers alert us to truer, hidden meanings semiotics calls signifieds, thereby teaching us to be dissatisified with surface meanings; its primary operation is thus an imposition of a difference of levels between an absent "other" full of meaning but without substance and an empty presence full of substance but without meaning. Its interpretative error is precisely its insistence on this uncanny, enabling division. In contrast to Derrida, who, in his own confrontation with signifiance, sought to amplify the permeability of the membrane separating signifier and signified (illustrating that the presence of the signifier is every bit as doubtful as the absence of the signified), *Deleuze relocates it. He turns the membrane into a desert by rotating it such that it becomes the surface and both the signifier and the signified became its occupants. In other words what he does is remove the difference of level, which again is a matter of anti-Platonism because it substitutes a humorous mode of selection (an art of the surfaces) for an ironic one (a genealogy based on eminence, equivocity and analogy).* (Buchanan, 124, my italics)

Extending synchronic time and the plane of immanence into the political field, we discover

that the absolute separation between philosophy-cum-literature and life is the fundamental condition of an absolute correlation. According to Deleuze's reading of Proust (*Proust & Signs*, translated by Richard Howard, U of Minnesota Press, 2000), if we want to know what an object means we do not investigate it from either an objective or subjective point of view. Ultimately we learn that the signs we find in art are already incarnated, that they are already there in all kinds of signs (worldly signs, the signs of love, the sensuous signs). The point is however, if we do not first study the (art) object in order to learn of its essence, we will be unable to read for example the signs of love. We are apprenticed to art only to be able to return, to live once again, to make an effort in the will-to-live. When for example we protest against an art of observation and description, Deleuze writes, perhaps it is "our incapacity to observe, to describe, that inspires this protest, and our incapacity to understand life?"

> We think we are reacting against an illusory form of art, but perhaps we are reacting against an infirmity of our own nature, against a lack of the will-to-live so that our disappointment is not simply the kind afforded by an objective literature, but also the kind afforded by our incapacity to succeed in this form of literature. (*Proust and Signs,* 33)

The centrality of the object in Deleuze and Deleuze and Guattari's work concerns the fact that the object comes first and all else follows. Buchanan alerts us to this utopic-schizo process in Deleuze in his chapter "Becoming-woman and the World-Historical" where he uses Deleuze's reading of Melville's *Pierre or the Ambiguities* to explain that if there is no formalization we cannot move from procedure and diagnosis to something like indictment.(97) In other words, without a form of expression, (incest) we cannot understand a form of content (normalization) from the point of view of function (the incestuous, fraternal relation fights normalization: the forced relation between predetermined categories ((man) and (woman)). If Melville's text explores the utopic vision of the fraternal relation, it is not this representation that is important but the fact that the fraternal society is "a machine for releasing utopia."(113)

Another important figure for Deleuze's idea that the schizo process is primarily an investigation of the object is Sacher-Masoch. Masoch's novels on masochism appear in the objective view as the matter of fact experience of pleasure in pain. In this view, masochism does not mean except perhaps negatively. In the subjective view, masochism is a perverse, personalized way of "getting off." Without the formalization of masochism in the work of art (Masoch wrote novels), we cannot draw any critical insight into the relation between the subject as subject and the subject itself as object or agent of the world-historical. The objective and subjective views instruct us merely to read in order to dismiss what we read. Such is the case, for example, in psychoanalysis where the so called cure still works to dismiss the essence of the object: after the journey into one's own most radical pathology, the subject must choose to become either 1) the pathological or 2) the divided subject. He or she is not allowed to make the leap which correlates the pathological with the world-

historical. Deleuze's idea is rather that we must own what we would dearly love not to: shame, perversity, madness.(82) Only in this way can a form of expression, for example, masochism, function as a form of content: the indictment of society. According to psychoanalysis, the cause of the pathological is that we refuse to accept that language works as a barrier to close us off from our essence. In other words, if we don't accept that we can never "truly" know ourself or another, we become pathological (we become truly insane, we persecute, torture, and kill the other). In psychoanalysis the subject must choose to reject the pathological; he or she must choose to become a (split: me/ I) divided subject. As different from this, the masochist persona (a formalized expression-cum-object) enables the masochist's deindividualization. We do not need to reject our pathological side, rather we need to embrace it through formalization. Masochism *formalized* becomes indictment; resistance to victimization-oppression. To return briefly to Buchanan's example of Deleuze's reading of Melville's *Pierre or the Ambiguities*, since a fraternal society is realized in and by a literary text (Buchanan, 99), the dialectical move is to acknowledge a constantly shifting ground, a transversal desire which moves between the ground of life and text effecting the release of utopia.

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Buchanan's reading of Deleuze's *What is Philosophy?* locates the basis for his thesis that we should consider reading Deleuze and Deleuze and Guattari from the point of view of the dialectic in the movement between the process of conceptualization (philosophy is the activity of constructing concepts)(47) and the ongoing construction of the concept's ground, the plane of immanance.

> ...the postulation of a plane of immanence, as philosophy's necessary ground, is Deleuze and Guattari's most blatant dialectical manoeuvre. What it does is give all philosophers the right to conceive their ideas in an atmosphere of their own choosing, it is literally the creation of a hothouse for concepts, a place where they can thrive in a shelter specifically built for them. It is dialectical because it attempts to think the ground as ground, which is to say as prephilosophical, and at the same time conceptualize that ground as something philosophers construct by fiat (the very antithesis of a ground) and impose on the world as a new way of framing it. It therefore recognizes and bids to grapple with the consequences of the fact that philosophical grounds as much as concepts do not fall from heaven or rise up from the earth without making it happen.

Buchanan's analysis of the relation between the construction of the concept and the construction of the ground allows us to see that philosophy (the construction of the concept) is "the first aspect of the doctrine needed to get us to perceive the second, ultimately primary, aspect: the thought-brain itself."(67) The philosophical concept "thought-brain" creates a

conceptual frame while at the same time "thought-brain" transcends the conceptual. "Thought-brain" is the idea that "all creatures, all things, from salts to sea anemones" to man "convert the chaos of undirected stimulus (excitation) into directed stimulus (sensation)". (67) Thought-brain signifies that in this way, all creatures are self-organizing systems. To read Deleuze and Guattari from the point of view of a historicizing dialectic is to insist not that the concept is generative(48) but that, from the very beginning, there is a relation between ground and concept which enables us "to "distance" the present as an "event" from itself as "mindless immediacy" or "flux"."(48)

Deleuze and Guattari's zoom-in and pull-back focus (27) does not produce a superstitious and or romantic notion of the production of new democratic social relations. Rather it allows us to see that, at the level of meaning, desire conforms to the interests of a dominant class. One invests on ones own personal account. If, however, we investigate D & G's work from the point of view of function, transversal desire cuts between the ground and the concept exemplifying the way a dialectical reading of Deleuze and Guattari enables us to cross intellectual and material barriers of race, class, and gender. (29)

Finally, Buchanan's proposal that we view Deleuze and Deleuze and Guattari's work from a dialectical point of view suggests that we need to ask ourselves whether or not in reading them we've neglected to factor in the anti-logos side of Deleuze and Guattari's work. By "anti-logos" I refer to Deleuze and Guattari's critique of the idea that intelligence comes before the state of the world: analytic expression or rational thought comes after hieroglyphs and or ideograms, never before; attributes come after signs and symptoms, never before; logos comes after pathos, never before. Thus, at the same time there is an unstable opposition (pathos-logos), there is a mutual fusion (pathos-logos). Ultimately, this relation ignites a qualitative transition in the relation between subject and object, the essence of the object itself. If we are willing to consider our Deleuzianism as a product of our reading Deleuze and Guattari as if their work were a sort of manifesto, the idea that we might now put analytic thought to use in repoliticizing their work makes perfect sense. Our having lived Deleuzianism means that now we are ripe for what Buchanan proposes to replace it, Deleuzism. Perhaps as Deleuzians, we have only embraced a hierarchical reversal of values still resisting transversal desire. Perhaps this reversal (from soul on top, body on bottom to body on top, soul on bottom) signifies nothing more than our attempt to hold on to the same. Perhaps it is as Buchanan says, we have not yet read Deleuze from the point of view of use.

> To the logos, organ and organon whose meaning must be discovered in the whole to which it belongs, is opposed the antilogos, machine and machinery whose meaning (anything you like) depends solely on its functioning, which, in turn, depends on its separate parts. The modern work of art has no problem of meaning, it has only a problem of use. (*Proust and Signs,* 146)

Julia Van Cleve

The Arcades Project

Walter Benjamin
Harvard University Press, 2000

...It is the condition of process...that strikes me as constituting its aura of modernity, together, I mean, as its incessant self mirroring.[1]

In the fields with which we are concerned, knowledge comes only in lightning flashes. The text is the long roll of thunder that follows.[2]

Benjamin sought to make a "magic encyclopedia"...

Idealistic trust in systematic form has been as irretrievably lost as has the hope anchoring an idea's conclusion in the unity of thought. Thus the question of the form of representation acquires overriding significance.[3]

...an heuristic archive, or hive...

The hardest thing would be to grasp that everything factual is already theory. The blue of the sky reveals to us the fundamental law of chromatics. One would never search for anything behind phenomena; they themselves are the theory.[4]

a reflection of our database aesthetics, a poetics of array.

For cannot Benjamin himself be enlisted among the ranks of those whom theory and abstraction are pernicious? Are not the places of theory, in Benjamin, blinded by the transcendental glare of a whole range of mysticisms, while at its reach, the passion for philosophy as such replaced by *fiches* of history, abstraction and concept by quotations and curious stray facts?[5]

...if it had been completed it would have been nothing less than a materialist philosophy of the history of the nineteenth century.[6]

But without closure, it is much more than that.

—with its citations often multiple, ranging from a sentence to a long paragraph, from more than 800 texts...interspersed at varying intervals with one or more similarly sized comments...all collected in thirty-six "convolutes"...[7]

"Arcade" is the English translation of the French word *passage*, a place between two states,

a coming and going, an indoor/outdoor street. But for us arcades are linked with games and chance.

It was the montage-like juxtaposition of images and commentary (the very touchstone of the Benjamin's conception) that Adorno considered so unsuccessful. He claimed the "astonished presentation of simple facts" lacked theoretical (dialectical) mediation.[8]

"Convolute" is strange, at least on first acquaintance, but so is Benjamin's project and it's principle of sectioning.[9]

"Konvolut" is the German word for the archival term for "folder". It was applied by Adorno on the arrival of the central section of *The Arcades Project* to New York in 1947. Benjamin's folder system was "hidden" away by George Bataille, an archivist at the Bibliotheque Nationale in *original order.*

Is this the first publication of an archive in book form?

...lining both sides of the corridors, which get their light from above, are the most elegant shops, so that the passage is a city, a world in miniature.[10]

When two mirrors reflect each other, Satan plays his favorite trick (and like his partner in the gaze of lovers) opens a perspective onto infinity. Whether out of divine or Satanic inspiration, Paris has a passion for mirrored perspectives."[11]

Whoever wishes to know how much at home we are in entrails must allow himself to be swept along in delirium through streets...[12]

Adorno refused to see theory in Benjamin's project. Gershom Scholem saw, albeit latent, tendencies towards timeless spiritual order. The book has been reviewed in journals from a variety of disciplines, each finding something of interest.

Benjamin's writings move in the space which today is termed "interscience." Here the aesthetic sense becomes the medium of integral cognition.[13]

...more akin to the language of sacred texts than to the colloquial language of grown ups.[14]

This was something that could be realized only indirectly, through "cunning": it was not the great men and celebrated events of traditional historiography but rather the "refuse" and "detritus" of history, the half-concealed, variegated traces of the daily life of the "collective," that was to be the object of study, and with the aid of methods more akin—above all on their dependence on chance—to the methods of the nineteenth-century ragpicker, than to those of the modern historian.[15]

One gets the sense of play, the library and the city merge, a child's garden comes to life.

Just as Benjamin's thinking constitutes the anti-thesis of the existential concept of the person, he seems empirically, despite extreme individuation, hardly to have been a person at all, but rather an arena of movement in which a certain content forced it's way, through him into language.[16]

"And I had already lived long enough so that, for more than one of the human beings with whom I had come in contact, I found, in antipodal regions of my past memories, another being to complete the picture..." [17]

The collector "stills" his fate. And that means he disappears in the world of memory.[18]

The street conducts the flâneur into vanished time. For him, every street is precipitous. It leads downward—if not to the mythical Mothers, then to the past that can be all the more spellbinding because it is not his own, not private.[19]

...he arrived at the conclusion that the streets of Paris are like the wall of a living room...Who would not like to live in the street which is like a living room? In fact it legitimizes the habit of Jamaican living, where the house is but a treasure box used for self-proclamation and the storage of earthly possessions. Life itself takes place outside, in the streets where the disk jockey and his wall of speakers transform the street into something that is pre-eminently alive.[20]

The street is a stratum where verses enter into conversation and turn and spin. Where verses transit, and transfer energies and meaning. To walk the streets is to have pictures, sounds and voices pass and register. Chance encounters mix with intention, each informing each other. To participate in the collage of the streets is to vitalize the city.

One is struck by the shear sound of voices, numerous, layered and syncopated...

a monotonous wandering...

What was so difficult to understand in Benjamin was the fact that he *thought poetically* without being a poet, and that for him therefore the metaphor was the greatest and most mysterious gift of language because in 'transmission' it makes possible perception of the invisible [...], thereby making it accessible to experience.[21]

a scholar's journal, an exegesis of street signs, projected commentary...

Nothing in *The Arcades Project* can be subsumed in the category of the anatomical discourse or indicates the structured composition of a mosaic; it consists solely of a string *of disjecta membra*.[22]

vignettes, or snapshots in vines.

What for others are derivations are, for me, the data, which determine my course.[23]

The reader will...be able to specify which function an excerpt would have served in the global construction—how it might have been able to become a "crystal" whose sparking light itself reflects the total event. The reader will have to..."interpolate into the infinitesimally small"[24]

In August 1927 he –absolutely spellbound–dragged me to the Musée Cluny in Paris in order to draw my attention to a collection of Jewish Ritual objects including two grains of wheat on which a fellow spirit had inscribed the entire *Shema Israel*[25]

"...To appropriate to oneself an object is to render it sacred and redoubtable to others; it is to make it 'participate' in oneself."[26]

This monumental work about Paris of the Second Empire is ultimately nothing but precisely that: a wandering from the straight and narrow, a drifting, a constant and labyrinthe digression.[27]

The individual being is...only something mediated by words that can present a being only arbitrarily as an "autonomous being," though very profoundly as a "related being." It is only necessary to track for a little while the routes repeatedly taken by words to discover the disconcerting sight of a human being's labyrinthe structure.[28]

This kind of attentiveness is that of the passerby who allows himself to be captivated by urban impressions...[29]

It is as if the big city had brought the intellectual to the point where theory falls silent so as to simply allow juxtaposed phenomena to bring forth meaning they conceal. It is as if discourse on progress voluntarily sacrificed itself in order not to harm the truth, which is contained in documents, scattered throughout city culture.[30]

...he wrote unsystematically yet tenaciously and ceaselessly in a corner of the Bibliotheque Nationale from 1933, [*The Arcades Project*] would certainly have remained unfinished and have appeared posthumously even if Benjamin had lived to a hundred years old.[31]

Between the collector and the allegorist, the former taking up the struggle against dispersion (Zerstruung), and the latter, "dislodging things from their former context" and relying on "profundity to elucidate meaning," Benjamin's archive, between "secret dictionary" and patchwork (Stückwerk,) was in a state of continual acquisition.[32]

If we now were to regard this ostensible patchwork as, de facto, a determinate literary

form...then surely there would be significant repercussions for the directions and tempo of its reading... Citation and commentary might then be perceived as intersecting at a thousand different angles, setting up vibrations across the epochs of recent history, so as to effect "the cracking open of natural teleology".[33]

In this way, quotation envisions the continued existence of tradition as discontinuity; it salvages the elements of tradition through seemingly brutal blows. Benjamin's hermeneutic of explication is actually a process of beating something out of its original context...[34]

...this commentary on real qualities increasingly became the actual medium of his philosophizing: *Passagen-Werk* (*The Arcades Project*) is the critique of the modern age conceived as a commentary on the factual content of the nineteenth century.[35]

These investigations of the ruins of the unfulfilled utopian experiments of the nineteenth century have amounted to a utopian ruin for us in the twenty first, exposing the handwritten praxis of developing a deconstructivist ethnography.

By deconstructing the dreams of modernity, he now becomes the vessel for the dreams of the socially descriptive arts.

What we would like is to stumble upon an arcade myth, with a legendary source at its center—an asphalt wellspring arising at the heart of Paris.[36]

The ventriloquist takes the role of the puppet.

...a hero born at a tragic distance arising between the reality of city life and of aesthetic sublimation or political revolt.[37]

A parroting doll, the apparition of a grand fatherly scholar...

switching between gathering and elaborating, unfolding structures and fashion combinations, seeking the spark to disrupt hypnotic monotonous wandering in texts themselves.

Extreme positions and curiosities, the stuff of daily life, are gleaned from the surface of the commonplace. Voices mine the data fields to focuses light on the pedestrian. The discourse is charged with absurdities as if to wake a slumbering people.

the affinity of laughter and fear, as of laughter and horror...[38]

in the endless hell of eternal return, boredom is said to be nourished by the new.
Boredom, also is said to be, "the threshold to great deeds —Now it would be important to know: What is the dialectical antithesis to boredom?" [39]

In Buck-Morss's words, "'innervation' is Benjamins's term for a mimetic reception of the external world, one that is empowering, in contrast to a defensive mimetic adaptation that protects at the price of paralyzing an organism, robbing it of its capacity of imagination, and therefore of active response."[40]

From the substantial documentation of *The Arcades Project* we receive a methodology of interpretation and awareness. That this project appears unfinished, that the convolutes are still open, is a testament to the ecological vigor of its unfolding composition. Benjamin, in his afterlife, renews the call to participate in the recreation of our societies.

What is this "completeness"? It is a grand attempt to overcome the wholly irrational character of the object's mere presence at hand through its integration into a new, expressly devised historical system...[41]

Later...in the gaslight, their leaves have the appearance of dark-green frosted glass near the street lamps, and their earliest green glow at dusk is the automatic signal for the start of spring in the big city.[42]

David Michalski

Notes

1 Cavell, Stanley, "Remains to be Seen," Artforum, April 2000, p. 31.

2 Benjamin, Walter, *The Arcades Project*, Translated by Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin, Prepared on the Basis of the German Volume Edited by Rolf Tiedemann, Cambridge, MA: Bellknap Press, 1999, p. 456.

3 Bolz, Norbert and Willem van Reijien, *Walter Benjamin*, New Jersey: Humanities Press, p. 1.

4 George Simmel quoting Goethe in his Goethe, as quoted by Susan Buck-Morss in *Dialectics of Seeing: The Arcades Prioject.* p. 72.

5 Jameson, Frederic. "Benjamin's Sociological Predecessor," *Critical Inquiry* v. 25 no. 2, Winter 1999, p. 268.

6 Tiedemann, Rolf, "Dialectics at a Standstill: Approaches to the Passagen-Werk", in Benjamin, Walter, *The Arcades Project*, 1999, p. 929.

7 Op. Cit. Cavell.

8 Buck-Morss, Susan, *Dialectics of Seeing: The Arcades Prioject.* p. 205

9 Eiland, Howard and Kevin McLaughlin, "Translator's Forward", in Benjamin, Walter, *The Arcades Project*, 1999. p. xiv.

10 Op. cit. Benjamin, Walter, *The Arcades Project.* Benjamin is quoting an "Illustrated Guide to Paris," p. 31.

11 Mehlman, Jeffery, *Walter Benjamin for Children: An Essay on His Radio Years*, Chicago: University of Chicago, 1993, p. 39.

12 Op. cit. Benjamin, Walter, *The Arcades Project*, p. 519.

13 Op. Cit., Bolz, Norbert and Willem van Reijien, p. 1.

14 Scholem, Gershom, "Walter Benjamin," *The Leo Baeck Memorial Lecture 8*, New York: Leo Baeck Institute, 1965 p. 21.

15 Eiland, Howard and Kevin McLaughlin, "Translator's Forward", in Benjamin, Walter, *The Arcades Project*, 1999. p. ix.

16 Adorno, Theodore, "Benjamin the Letter Writer" in Gary Smith's *On Walter Benjamin*, MA: MIT Press, 1988, p.330.

17 Op Cit., Benjamin, Walter, *The Arcades Project*, p. 211. Here, Benjamin is quoting Marcel Proust's *Le Temps Retrouvré* [The Past Recaptured], Paris, vol. 2.

18 Op. cit. Benjamin, Walter, *The Arcades Project*, p. 866.

19 Op. cit. Benjamin, Walter, *The Arcades Project*, p. 418.

20 Voorthuis, Jacob, "Walter Benjamin, Ambling Through a City of a Mind" *Walter Benjamin Research Syndicate*, Online http://www.wbenjamin.org/voorthuis.html Accessed 6/19/ 2000 11:58 AM, p. 6.

21 Arendt, Hannah, *Benjamin, Brecht*, Munich, 1971 p. 22.

22 Llovet, Jordi, "Benjamin Flâneur: The Arcades Project," in Unseld, Siegfried et. al., *For Walter Benjamin,* Bonn: AsKI, 1993, p. 216

23 Op. cit. Benjamin, Walter, *The Arcades Project*, p. 456.

24 Rolf Tiedemann, Rolf, "Dialectics at a Standstill" in Benjamin, Walter, *The Arcades Project*, p. 931.

25 Op. Cit., Scholem, Gershom, "Walter Benjamin," p. 9.

26 Op. Cit., Benjamin, Walter, *The Arcades Project*, p.210. Benjamin is quoting Norbert Guterman and Henri Lefebvre, *La Conscience Mystifiée*, Paris, 1936, p.228.

27 Op. Cit. Llovet, p. 206.

28 Hollier, Denis, *Against Architecture: The Writings of George Bataille*, MA: MIT Press, 1989, p. 57, quoting Georges Bataille, *Oeuvres Complètes*, Paris: Gallimard, 1988.

29 Op. Cit., Llovet, p. 209.

30 Op. Cit., Llovet, p. 218.

31 Op. Cit., Llovet, p. 206.

32 See Benjamin, Walter, *The Arcades Project*, p. 211.

33 Eiland, Howard and Kevin McLaughlin, "Translator's Forward", in Benjamin, Walter, *The Arcades Project*, 1999, p. xi.

34 Op. Cit., Bolz, Norbert and Willem van Reijien, p. 55.

35 Op. Cit., Bolz, Norbert and Willem van Reijien, p. 4.

36 Op. cit. Benjamin, Walter, *The Arcades Project*, p. 409.

37 Op. Cit., Llovet, p. 216.

38 Bratu Hansen, Miriam, "Benjamin and Cinema: Not a One Way Street," *Critical Inquiry* v. 25 no. 2, Winter 1999, p. 308.

39 Op. cit. Benjamin, Walter, *The Arcades Project*, p. 105.

40 Bratu Hansen, Miriam, "Benjamin and Cinema: Not a One Way Street," *Critical Inquiry* v. 25 no. 2, Winter 1999 p. 317. Bratu Hansen is quoting Susan Buck-Morss's "Aesthetics and Anaesthetics", p. 17 n. 54.

41 Op. cit. Benjamin, Walter, *The Arcades Project*, p. 205.

42 Op. cit. Benjamin, Walter, *The Arcades Project*, p. 517.

Turtle Pictures

Ray Gonzalez
University of Arizona Press, 2000

and

Point and Line

Thalia Field
New Directions, 2000

With an impressive range of work to his distinction—a memoir, essays, six prior volumes of poetry, and as the editor of various anthologies and two literary journals—Ray Gonzalez offers an ambitious new collection that aims to fuse the genres of journal entry, chronicle, personal testimony, sampling from the mass media, and other documentary techniques as they might coexist with traditional poetic forms. Throughout, the turtle serves as governing trope, and Gonzalez divides his collection into alternate numbered "shells" and other "tortuga" sections. The "First Shell" begins with the foundational violence wrought by Cortez and the destruction of Tenochtitlán:

> When the fires burned, the turtles survived—their gleaming hardness
> rolling into a mound
> of several hundred turtles crawling over each other, trying to spit water into
> the flames,
> moving toward the edge of the earth in order to attack the rays of sunlight
> penetrating the garlic trees,
> the other survivors of the great change.

Gonzalez possibly takes his cue from the sixteenth-century Spanish chronicler Bernardino de Sahagún whose *General History* describes the ethnographic particularism of Mexico in the years following the violent new-world encounter and, more specifically, how native Mexican fishermen hunted for highly-coveted turtle eggs by surprising the animal at night, turning it on its back in order to abscond with the spoils. However, Gonzalez leaves largely unexplored the potential in this image for what concerns the ambivalent roles of hunter and hunted, oppressor and oppressed, despite the suggestive initial promise of these "turtle missives" as being shaped into "assimilated sleep" by turns "caught in the history of breathing."

Unlike other poetic projects that incorporate the actual and historic geopolitical divides that now separate the United States and Mexico—Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands* is the obvious

recent example—*Turtle Pictures* is surprisingly short in its concern for the political imaginary of the border, or of the Greater Mexico it points to. The notion of a Greater Mexico has been developed by writer and scholar José Limón whose wider project has been to refigure the borders of the Americas and its modernities as an intricate series of what he calls "unsuspected relationships." These range from the double movement of immigration and modernist exile to the imaginary or all-too-real translations and mistranslations that are the "psychological patterns" of colonialism, especially those that press against the historically charged confines of the actual geo-political line drawn between the United States and Mexico.

In *Turtle Pictures,* the most visually promising section is entitled "Chicano Tortuga Party." There, Gonzalez quotes headlines, presumably from the *San Antonio Express News,* in opposition to their overarching assumptions and pious clichés. But González disappoints at last when he writes in a tone that hovers between flippant gesture and vague editorializing ("The summer before the '96 election and Hispanics are told to hold on tight to whatever they have gained because the republicans are taking it away and Big Bill may get re-elected without any real attempts at understanding or addressing issues affecting Latinos.")

So, in sections entitled "first tortilla," "second taco," "third bowl of beans," "nine bowls of menudo," and so forth, we are served the following kind of fare:

> Nourishment that has nothing to do with the expectations that all brown faces eat nothing but tortillas. Stone monument and artifacts were not created without the Mayans eating the tortillas to build. Campesino. Indio. If you could see how the tortillas cake is your soul flattened in the atmosphere of the new world, you would keep eating them and not eat them at the same time. Roots. Loyalty. Tortillas. Masa.

In contrast to the expository potential of other sections, the above strikes me as an intellectually fuzzy response to the pressing issues of color line and historic memory that haunt Mexicans and Mexican-Americans alike. "Roots. Loyalty. Tortillas. Masa" makes digestible otherwise irreducible and complex questions of cultural and racial difference. In a political world where "you would eat them and not eat them at the same time," terms cancel each other out and "tortillas" and "masa" stand for nothing if not the tepid absorption that is the common middle ground tolerated by official versions of diversity. *Turtle Pictures* is by and large a set of reveries by accumulation concerned with first orders, poetic and cultural, structured alternately into prose sections and poems that rely on a relaxed cadence at odds with a dissonant image-making:

> When you look down, the slow memory of something crawling toward the
> truth
> invents itself with the diamonds, circles and rings of a green birth.

The hiss is the mother calling to the island that became a desert unable to sit in the palm of her hand.

The head retracts into the shell and spills a lost thought about how the
ground
belongs to items listed inside a bead worn around the neck of the hunter.

This has something to do with moving mouths.

This is Gonzalez at his best, even despite that final line, and the overall register of phrasing inherited perhaps from Robert Bly, suggesting a slightly awkward English translation of Latin American surrealist modality ("a green birth," "a one-footed owl," "the intention of roses"). Though the simplicity of statement is refreshing and often effective—think of Rexroth: a presence convoked by Gonzalez himself—given the complexity of the issues at hand, it remains unclear where the mostly monophonic speaker of these poems aims to position the reader of *Turtle Pictures.* In this and other work by Ray Gonzalez the possibility of communication is never positively compelling because it falls short in general of any meaningful radicality at the level of practice or representation.

•

Intrepid in her genre-crossing and shape-shifting, Thalia Field has gathered seven different extended works for her book debut of *Point and Line* in a language that charts the limits of representation in what regards the practice of everyday life and phenomenological specificity. In the more successful sections ("Walking" and a substantial parcel of "Hours") Field clearly demonstrates an eye and ear proficient in the complexities of "representing a smooth line / in close proximity" as well as the immediate and latent meanings concerned with the modes by which bodily movement and cognitive effect may or may not intersect by way of narrative continuity or lyric fracture into glimpses of the regenerative:

a walk
obliterates the math of machinery promises to collapse

into an example

birthday is now unperceived
each object carefully noted renamed
and reflected

In "Hours," Field develops a highly suggestive and novel form that effectively compresses the rhetoric of dramaturgy into impossible cheering stage directions that dissolve into a brand of morality-play scene-study through which the individual and social sphere show their symptoms of dysfunction:

> A mechanic leans out a window and witnesses as the tree dies in her arms and an unexpected drop in third-grade reading scores brings down the economy of the entire region. A scar appears in the flesh of the sidewalk and never quite heals
>
> Haves. deaf children on the subways read minds.
> Have-nots. [the personal implication of "data-base"]
> Haves. It's always raining when you leave the dermatologist.
> Have-nots. [the cultural implication of "stereographic" projection]

Because it takes investigation at unmitigated face value, parts of Point and Line flirt perilously with the formulaic, and much of the collection suffers from the overarching gestures of its totalizing enterprise. A piece like "The Compass Room," for example, aspires to be read as the unconfined chronicle of a feminine subject in her various modes of association, and how such a subject is constituted as pushed against the banality and material shape of the language we have to say it with. In this, and at her best, Field writes with a sharp view to the uneventful, to optic mutuality and to lyric syllogism:

> Inside the airport there is only light, not a single shadow to be found. G has an hour to wait before the flight and she closes her eyes, still picturing the gate number and the empty waiting area. There is no difference between seeing and having seen. That is why children resemble parents as doctors are to patients. As airports are to times of day. As blood is to libraries. Only the military operates airports in the dark of night—vampire maneuvers.

But it also leads to a writing weighted by truism, no matter how infused with the irony of pointlessness ("The pleasure of cooking a large dinner for many people is that the ingredients fold into the recipe and the baking timer rings at the end.") These are tracings of psychological activity or internal time-consciousness taken to dulling extremes that expository sentences, at least as representation, will not contain. A reality-check for the advanced guard, *Point and Line* opens with a prose poem entitled "A ∴ I" perhaps one of the most convincing if inadvertent arguments, be it in psychoanalysis or poetic discourse, in favor of the variable session: "I occupy this comfortable chair in your office and you stare at me. We are not speaking to one another, so you've called this uncomfortable time *silence*."

Roberto Tejada

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John Harvey teaches in the Honors College at the University of Houston, and his poems have recently appeared in *Gulf Coast* and *Poet Lore.*

Rae Armantrout has published seven books of poetry, including *Made To Seem* (Sun & Moon) and *writing the plot about sets* (Chax). A new collection of poetry, *The Pretext*, is forthcoming this year from Green Integer. Wesleyan University Press will publish Armantrout's selected poems in 2001. She has recently been appointed Writer-In-Residence at the California College of Arts and Crafts.

Chad Sellers has recent poems in *The Pacific Review, Poetry Motel, California Quarterly,* and *The Birmingham Poetry Review.* He lives in St. Paul.

Ray DiPalma's recent books include *Letters* (Littoral Books) and his translations (with Juliette Valéry) of Emmanuel Hocquard's *Codicil & Plan for Pond 4* (The Post-Apollo Press). *Chartings,* a sequence of poems written in collaboration with Lyn Hejinian, has just been published by Chax Press.

Ever since 1983, **Bill Brown** has published NOT BORED!, a photocopied "zine" of situationist theory. In 1990, he received his Ph.D. in American Literature at SUNY-Buffalo.

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Justin Chin is author of two books, *Mongrel: Essays, Diatribes and Pranks* (St. Martin's Press) and *Bite Hard* (Manic D Press). Most recently his writing has been anthologized in *The Outlaw Bible of American Poetry, American Poetry: The Next Generation, The World In Us: Lesbian and Gay Poetry of the Next Wave,* and *Chick For A Day.* He lives in San Francisco.

Kamau Brathwaite is author of numerous prize-winning books, most recently *Words Need Love Too* (House of Nehesi Publishers). He currently divides his time between CowPastor, Barbados, and New York, where he is a professor in Comparative Literature at NYU.

Ben Highmore is a senior lecturer in cultural and media studies at the University of the West of England, Bristol. His book *Everyday Life and Cultural Theory* is forthcoming from Routledge.
In 1999, Graywolf Press published **G. E. Patterson's** *Tug.* Patterson's current work has its sources in twentieth-century Bay Area writing, particularly the work of Brenda Hillman and Robert Duncan.

Theodore Enslin's most recent volumes are *Then, and Now: Selected Poems 1943-1993* (National Poetry Foundation), *Re-Sounding: Selected Later Poems* (Talisman House) and *Sequentiae* (Stop Press, London). *The Roads Around Jenkins* is forthcoming from First Intensity Press.

Born in Montréal (Québec), **Nicole Brossard** has published eight novels and many books of poetry. In 1965, she co-founded the influential literary magazine *La Barre du Jour* and, in 1976, co-directed the film *Some American Feminists.* Among available English translations of her work are *Picture Theory* (translated by Barbara Godard, Roof Books) and *Typhon Dru* (Reality Street Editions). "Théâtre: vitesse d'eau" de Nicole Brossard, section de *Musée de l'os et de l'eau,* Les Éditions de Noroît et Cadex Éditions, 1999.

Rosmarie Waldrop's most recent books of poems are *Reluctant Gravities* (New Directions), *Split Infinites* (Singing Horse Press) and *Another Language: Selected Poems* (Talisman House). A paperback reprint of her two novels (*The Hanky of Pippin's Daughter* and *A Form/of Taking/It All*) is forthcoming from Northwestern University Press.

Christopher Winks has taught Caribbean, African-American, African, and other literatures at New York University and the City University of New York, and is currently working on a study of utopias and dystopias in Caribbean literature.

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Edwin Torres's poetry is most recently available in the anthology *Heights Of The Marvelous* (St. Martins Press) and his own book, *Fractured Humorous* (Subpress). His forthcoming poetry collection will be an electronic book, *ONOMALINGUA: noise songs and poetry* published by Rattapallax Press.

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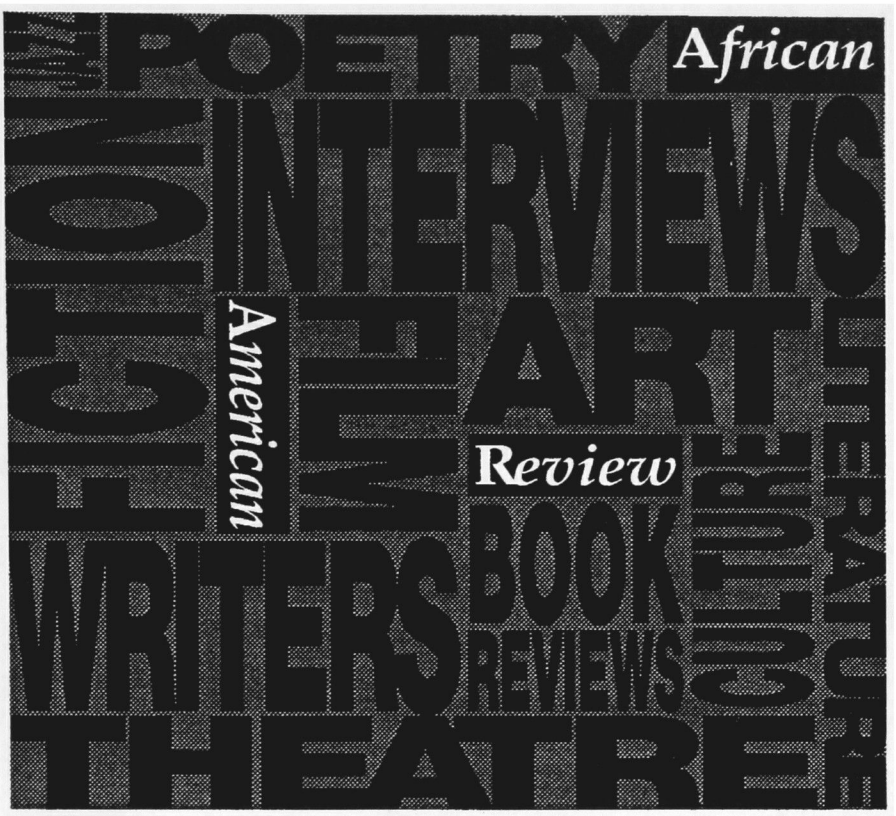
Roberto Tejada is the author of *Gift + Verdict* (Leroy). He has written on contemporary art and photography for *Aperture, Art Nexus, Luna córnea,* and *Third Text.* An essay on democracy and the Elián González media spectacle will appear in a forthcoming issue of *Camerawork.* His recent writing can be found in *boundary 2* (99 Poets/1999: An International Poetics Symposium) and in *Sulfur.*



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$10