



"Hybrid with Cage"
by Susan Hetmannsperger

Autobiography as a Politics of Metissage: A Pedagogy of Encounter

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In making sense of the worlds that we inhabit as students, teachers, parents, researchers, autobiographies and narratives provide an aperture through which it becomes possible to develop a reflexive pedagogy of encounter. Critical inquiry of our lives and educational experiences opens us to the challenge of reknowing the world in attempting to refigure the social relations of knowledge. Working in concert with students educators can expedite the articulation of how systems of power and constraint, both social and familiar, saturate and compose languages of self, positioning each of us.

Autobiographical writings participate in a mutable and mixed genre that Smith clusters as 'life writing.' For Smith, concerned with biography, life writing includes the distinctive genres of portrayals, portraits, profiles, memoirs, life stories, case studies, autobiographies, journals, and diaries.¹ As a mixed genre it is capacious enough to present a medium in which "liberation, oppression and multicultural themes get writ large." The generation and revisioning of stories of the self are potential conduits for the critical retrieval of community values and knowledge. Autobiographical, 'life writing' genres provide authors textual channels for composing aspects of experience through agentive memory in the articulation of relational selves and knowledge. Smith asserts that "autobiography in its changing forms is at the core of the twentieth century paradigmatic shifts in the structures of thought." Aspects of memory and descriptions of family and community histories are mediated through linguistic selections and strategies in the fabrication of what can be considered 'autoethnographies'² through which can be read the complex and contingent intersection and interplay of raced, gendered and classed discourses.

My intent here is to indicate the potential life writing strategies represent in assaying specific constellations of contemporary subjectivity. Indications of how experiences are gathered and named through specific socialization in particular discourse communities emerge in productive abundance within life writing practices. The particularities of place, gender, ethnic, racial and national affinities are woven into expressive texts that often afford a sense of the contingency and complexity of what otherwise could be

essentialized and reduced to demographic and socioeconomic ascriptions of identity.

Life writing as a pedagogical practice presents contexts for reflexive inquiry into the conditions and constitution of the limits to subjectivity as the flexible convergence and intersection of gendered, raced and classed positions. My concern for autobiographical writing is premised on an appropriation of the primacy of reflexive inquiry in a critically motivated pragmatism that makes agency and the possibility of collective revision its project. Dewey's concerted emphasis on the articulation of possibilities and conceptual linkages deriving from everyday 'situations' bridge contemporary, postmodern pedagogical concerns for anti-essentialist expressions of pluralism and difference. Recent analyses of racial inequities in education provide a starting point for the use of life writing as a critical rhetorical practice. In particular, 'non-synchronous parallelist' critiques present a useful framework in which life writing and autobiographical work can be implemented. My purpose in this paper is twofold: first, I contend that life writings, generated through the tactics of Francois Lionnet's 'metissage,' a writing and weaving of plural, often contradictory aspects of identity and subjectivity, offers a critical intervention through which narratives of identity may be composed and revised. My second purpose is to indicate how a pedagogical practice committed to the irreducible differences and possibilities of change in subjects' relations to the world, and one that is grounded in reflexive inquiry, revisioning and critique, sustains a non-foundational ethics and justice compatible with the meliorative tenets of pragmatism.

This inquiry has developed from an ethnographic project concerned with the various textual representations of positioned selves developed through distinctive autobiographical strategies. I have been concerned with how the processes of writing autobiographical portraits might allow for agentive expression and portrayals of differently gendered, classed and raced subjects.

I believe these forms of expression are vital in the full sense of the word in animating our often myopic and standardized concepts of 'self' and relation. In the contemporary

educational tableau, I do not believe we can afford any longer to be limited to social science's explication of students' self-awareness, agency and educational visions. Life writings offer a concrete practice in the interest of catalyzing the potential students and educators imagine for themselves in a climate of both inequity and pluralism. As Molloy claims, autobiographical writing offers a method that represents the "tension between self and others, of generating reflection on the fluctuating place of the subject within its community."³ Interpretive positions are potential sites of intervention from and through which subjectivity is renegotiable and permeable to resignification.

Non-synchrony and Race

Questioning and testing the limits of current perspectives on the reproduction of racial inequality in education, Cameron McCarthy specifies the guiding premises of mainstream approaches.⁴ McCarthy situates this tradition's concern for depoliticized 'values', 'attitudes' and 'opportunity' for and by responsible individuals, as one that reflects how liberal theory "lacks a theory of power" to ground their dynamism. In avoiding an approach that questions the constitution of structural differences in education, McCarthy (1990) claims that liberal theorists are often unable to articulate "what motivates certain attitudes and what types of organizational assets and capacities influence educational outcomes" (p. 30).

The nature of ethical relations is fundamental for a praxis that resists consolidation or appropriation to any form of essentialism. The reduction of the complexity of injustices to single structural sources must be actively suspended, whether economic forces of production and the alienation of labor in classical Marxist 'reflection' correspondence models, to gendered selves in object relations theories. According to Cameron McCarthy, race as a transhistorical category, permeates both mainstream and radical writings. As an inscription of race as a historical given McCarthy critiques race essentialism and 'origin' analyses for their insufficient historicization:

The major methodological problem of all of these 'origins' arguments is that they presume the eternal existence of racial distinctions and incorporate them into the analysis of racial antagonism as though such distinctions were functional social categories that have remained stable throughout history. In both mainstream and radical writings, then, 'race' is historically given. The historical variability associated with racial categories and the social purposes that racial distinctions serve are consequently undertheorized. (p. 75)

The formulation of a critical praxis indicated here is one that works the potential of a theoretical position that is

situated in the relations of knowledge and power suggested by McCarthy's argument for a non-synchronous parallelist analysis of social inequality. McCarthy's position argues for an appreciation of the contingent, temporally differential relations and imbrication of gender, race and class positionality. McCarthy's position, reformulating Emily Hicks's original analysis, is a critique of an earlier 'parallelist' position of Apple and Weis,⁶ conveying an anti-foundationalist and discursive 'situating' of subjectivity in ideology. Hicks's germinal statement was founded on a critique of parallelist positions' symmetry and reciprocal analyses. Hicks perceived these as too macrolevel and abstract to explain complex and systematic contradictions at institutional level—middle level recommended by Hall (1986). In this view, daily practices and ideological commitments are contradictory and nonsynchronous, varying between subjects who purportedly share some affinity as raced, classed and gendered subjects.

McCarthy claims that for multiculturalists a mere reversal of these values and attitudes is all that is required for effective school reform. She locates this traditional analysis in the view that "school reform and reform in race relations depend almost exclusively on the reversal of values, attitudes and the human nature of social actors understood as 'individuals.' Schools, for example, are not conceptualized as sites of power or contestation in which differential interests, resources and capacities determine the maneuverability of competing racial groups and the possibility and pace of change" (p. 56). This myopic stance affords for a depoliticization of the complex of historical bases for inequality and, as McCarthy points out, a professionalization of the language and policies that, whether emerging from reformulations of various deficit models, cultural ecology or folk theories is usually focused on the ameliorating 'minority achievement.'

A foundational premise that McCarthy detects as grounding liberal and multicultural approaches is the adherence to notions of a stable and coherent Cartesian subject, an identity that resists in large measure the influences and impact of socioeconomic structures and practices. What is central in making assumptions of subjectivity explicit is the effects such a priori understandings of identity have in educational theory and policy. The representation of individuality in the confines of an unquestioned liberal modernism accounts for the limits placed on social transformation and the possibilities of collective change. McCarthy observes that the effect of this primary form of representing subjects is "that such an emphasis on individual agency also results in the undertheorization of the effectivity of social and economic structures in the determination of racial inequality" (p. 72).

The Politics of Metissage

A criticalist approach to the uses of autobiography requires what Bergland, examining immigrant women's autobiographies, calls a theory of the subject.⁷ An adequate theory of the subject for Bergland "must posit the existence of multiple and contradictory subjectivities as the effect of multiple discourses at a particular historical moment" (p. 161). In her view, the theoretical working of subjectivity does not imply a loss of agency, but requires that we make a distinction between the "humanist self" or subject and human beings in "rethinking our notion of the human" (p. 161).

Acting on this disposition is a commitment to a dispersal of tactics, maneuvers and the means of working reflexivity. To adopt a non-synchronous position toward the raced, gendered and classed nexus of inequity in American education, is a commitment to make place for local interventions, eruptions, protests and provocations, all manner of combined collective effort drawing from existing and reinvented ways of embedding and shedding identities, identifications and positions. This making of place also involves a renegotiating of pedagogical practices in terms of temporal relations outside of modernist representational and chronological reference including determinist causation.

The autobiographical act works to double the self as an object of awareness and intentionality through the author's engagement of a complex conjuncture of cognition, affect and memory, and also works as an often complexly played, coy dialectic of private and public subject positions. Renza views autobiography as inherently involving a "split intentionality," dualistic, in that "in the heat of writing, the autobiographical enterprise occludes the writer's own continuity with the 'I' being conveyed through his narrative performance."⁸ It is a form of writing that is constructive, a mediating act that strings along on its narrative thread disparate identities and temporal disjunctures with their recontextualized memories and referents.

I draw upon the work of Françoise Lionnet⁹ who depicts autobiographical production as 'metissage,' a complex weave of linguistic, racial and gendered selves. Metissage serves as a way of describing textual practices that deliberately braid the multiple and composite identities intentionally drawn from experience in acts of self authorization. It is a way of acting and reflecting upon multiplicity without essentializing any aspect. This is particularly applicable to the experience of exile, physical, emotional or political, and the plight of immigrant populations. The term derives from Martinican poet and novelist Édouard Glissant,¹⁰ who sought an identification without Eurocentric connotation, a mutable term for the racial complexity of African-Caribbean peoples, one that would resonate with the linguistic, cultural and ethnic

superimposition of multiple identities. It is a metaphor of fluidity and mixtures of race, class and gendered identities of postcolonial subject positions. It is intended as an affirmation, actively reenvoicing histories of derided, subjugated names: mestizo, meti, half breed, mestizo, mixed race.

Defying reductive, essentializing categories of race, ethnicity and gender, metissage represents differences as generative linguistic historical figurations. Lionnet traces metissage as a rhetorical figure, serving as a cardinal trope in ancient Grecian culture's conception of practical thinking. In the Greek tradition, metis refers to the figure of elusiveness itself, of the refusal to allow finalization or dichotomization. For Lionnet metis is "the site of undecidability and indeterminacy," and "a form of savoir faire which resists symbolization within a coherent or homogenous conceptual system since it is also the power to undo the logic and clarity of concepts" (p. 14).

Metis is also the figure of chiasmus, etymologically comprised of the two lines of the Greek letter.¹¹ Emmanuel Levinas explicates the chiasmus as a marker of double reading and dialogic opposition.¹² At the center of the figure, its crux, is a point of convergence that allows for a double writing, the interleaving of differences. It is at once a point of appearance, a groundless ontological space that provides for the productivity of being and agency, the cognition of an irreducible difference. It is the recognition of limit as relation. As finite beings, we express singularity, the possibilities of becoming, of 'beings-in-common.' In a pedagogical context, it is what Trinh Minh-Ha (1986) calls the 'moving about' of an "inappropriated Other" who jars "every definition of otherness arrived at."¹³

For Lionnet, who summons Nietzsche's perspectivism and critique of values, the significance of metissage is found in its ability to elude categorization, disclosing that difference is itself a function of ideology and language. I contend that autobiographers' constructive patternings of identity signify participation in material intersections of gender, race and class through which the possibility for emergent forms of an oppositional or resistance subjectivity arise. In disclosing the rhetorical construction of subjectivity in autobiographical and life writing texts, metissage is a way of speaking and sustaining agentive, heteroglossic momentum, as well as resistance and solidarity within hybrid, creole states of postmodern identity.

The abiding question of the materiality of power remains suspended, and perhaps it strategically needs to remain suspended, in an indeterminate and cunning practice. Any knowledge claim, including the valorization of specific, ontic subject positions in autobiographical projects, is materially produced. The materiality of language use and self-reflexivity in no way guarantees a recognition of ways to transform

the materiality of power and domination. But is precisely an authorial conjuring that works the ground and provides the seedbed of uncertain possibilities, including the formation and recomposition of relational identities. Coming to terms or in Cixous' memoir, 'coming to writing' reconfigures the form and content of former, delimited subject positions. There is a considerable refiguring at work in textual reappropriations, acts of inclusion and relation. In Deleuze and Guattari's¹⁴ terms, these acts deterritorialize and reterritorialize the materiality of concepts, activities and relations.

Materiality is specifically the contested terrain of the 'social mapping of the body' identified in feminist criticism of autobiography. Shirley Neuman discloses the historical effacement of the female body, an effect of an androcentric image inherent to the autobiographical genre.¹⁵ Citing Sidonie Smith, Neuman identifies a recoding in which "to write autobiography a woman must enter the arena of public, intellectual/spiritual discourse, which is to say that, historically, she has had to transgress the cultural norms that defined her womanhood in terms of the private sphere" (p. 294). In this analysis, as in Foucault, the body is the site of ideological inscription and codification but is also a place of resistance. Neuman adopts Elizabeth Grosz's position in considering "bodies as produced by and productive of ideology and social power" (p. 295).

Neuman's critique¹⁶ of autobiography's erasure of the female body and of materiality applies to the ideological mapping and creation of sexuality and gender as observed by Foucault. Neuman extends the analysis of ideological mapping and situates the specific differences converging in multiple and non-synchronous subject positions. For Neuman the ideological codifications emerging from the epistemological values of Western modernism constitute a writing of bodies that are not "inscribed by and resistant to ideologies of gender alone, rather, their inscriptions produce and are produced by any number of intersections between gender and other ideologies, such as those of race and class" (p. 295).

Metissage is a complex practice, placing and displacing the question of materiality. The figure of metissage is an engendering like that of Cixous' writing and loving, mothering and being mothered. It is also akin to her 'third body' in Audre Lorde's *Zami* the 'third designation.'¹⁷ The intersections and tensions of gender, race and class, constitutive of metis are convergences of the body and the mind, of ontology and epistemology, making for the existential possibilities of the strategic, dialogic hybrids represented in the very acts of authoring and writing selves. Julia Watson, disclosing the tactics in Christa Wolf's work, discerns the paths of writers working outside the mainstream and 'new model' approaches, whose intent is to write against the metaphysics of presence and 'bias-bias' in autobiography. Watson situates Lionnet's work signal in a new orientation, "at once a kind of culmination of feminist

positions on theorizing autobiography and a beginning gesture toward theorizing multiple, non-symmetrical differences."¹⁸

Consideration of the temporal construction of subjectivity as provided by Ermarth, Williams and Bakhtin helps develop a working sense of the inseparability of subject positions from their immersion in multiple and convergent chronologies. The expression and recognition of varied senses of multiple times and concurrence of 'events' and the features of narrative, 'rhythmic' (Ermarth, 1990) non-teleological time(s) are important in a pedagogical practice commitment to abandoning a priori notions of subjectivity and agency. Bergland indicates the value of adapting Bakhtin's chronotopic analysis to autobiographical projects.¹⁹ Chronotopes In Bakhtin's anatomy of the novel, chronotopes are "the place where the knots of narrative are tied and untied."²⁰ They are the temporal-spatial materializations and conduits of ideology where

time becomes palpable and visible, the chronotope makes narrative events concrete, makes them take on flesh, causes blood to flow in their veins. It is precisely the chronotope that provides the ground essential for the showing-forth, the representability of events. And this is so thanks especially to the special increase in density and concreteness of time markers—the time of human life, of historical time—that occurs within well-delineated spatial areas. . . . Thus the chronotope, functioning as the primary means for materializing time in space, emerges as a center for concretizing representation. (p. 259)

A chronotope can be discerned in the first volume of Maya Angelou's autobiography *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*,²¹ in which Momma's general store in Stamps, Arkansas serves as a defining context, locator of an emerging self. Personified, the William Johnson General Store, was the crucible of Angelou's first transformations. She describes it on several occasions. "Until I was thirteen and left Arkansas for good, the Store was my favorite place to be. Alone and empty in the mornings, it looked like an unopened present from a stranger" (p. 13). The Store embodies intersubjective aspects and qualities of the rural, segregated life that young Maya is internalizing. "Whenever I walked into the Store in the afternoon, I sensed that it was tired. I alone could hear the slow pulse of its job half done" (p. 13). And at nighttime, she feels the "promise of magic mornings returned to the Store and spread itself over the family in washed life waves," a place where the oppressed, metonymically identified, are transported to an alternate space in which "it seemed that the peace of a day's ending was an assurance that the covenant God made with children, Negroes and the crippled was still in effect" (p. 13).

The uses and misuses of figurative language are vital to life-writing projects. As Raymond Williams²² notes, forms

of figurative language and thought give entry into the production and identity of discourse, elements he calls 'complex notations of source' (p. 170). Williams includes features such as "reported speech and dialogue; indications of explicit and implicit thought processes; indications of displaced or suspended monologue, dialogue, or thought; indications of direct or of 'characterized' observation" (p. 171), all indications

of the identity of the writer, in all its possible senses. Such notations are often closely involved with indications of situations, the combinations of situation and identity often constituting crucial notations of part of the relationship into which the writing is intended to enter. (p. 170)

Through the conscious selection and use of subjective linguistic indices like these and scrutiny of Bakhtin's chronotopes as suggested by Bergland for autobiographical critique, students can affirm and mark themselves while signifying their own personal or collective values. Articulation of these variations are signifiers of alternative, even rival values to the dominant discursive practices. Their expression can assist in the formulation of individual and collective definition, becoming instances of reflective self-inscription.

Postmodern narratives, autobiographies and memoirs implicate their writing in their reading and their writing is not a single act of authorship deriving from a coherent self-present writing self. Quoting Robbe-Grillet, Ermarth²³ accents the pedagogical potential of postmodern narrative reading practice: "to participate in a creation, to invent in his turn the work—and the world—and thus to learn to invent his own life" (p. 79). Postmodern practices such as metissage are textual relationships, labile, ludic and irreducible to the representational (logocentric) logic of non-contradiction. Ermarth claims that "postmodern reading experience does not turn into knowledge or information, or, in other words, into capital" (p. 72). They reject and supersede modernism's denial through objectifying, abstracting analytic and referential procedures and rationality. "In postmodern narrative invention is no longer the discredited cousin of 'reason' (that elaborate invention) but instead the main activity of conscious adult life. The trick is learning to invent well" (p. 71). Postmodern narrative readings affirm the essentially aesthetic, constructed and figural nature of a world without essences and sociocultural processes that do not want for foundational premises.

Pragmatism's Critical Legacy

The limitations McCarthy observes within mainstream, liberal and multiculturalist approaches to theorizing racial and

social inequity in contemporary schooling are pertinent to broader trends in American philosophy and education. A major influence in social theory in general and educational foundations for many years has been the abiding presence and, perhaps appropriately, significantly various interpretations of pragmatism. The influences of pragmatism have been appropriately manifold and divergent. From its inception in Peirce's formulation to Rorty's apparent reductive analyses,²⁴ pragmatism has been conceived of in diverse, often incompatible terms. Peirce rejected the derivations of his earlier positions and deliberately renamed his theory 'pragmaticism,' a name 'ugly enough to keep it from kidnapers' to distinguish it from what he perceived to be the subjectivist psychologisms with which his friend and supporter William James had appropriated it.²⁵ Dewey's own distinctive and compelling commitment to the articulation of pragmatism in an emergent industrial American society, the most influential force of intellectual current in contemporary pedagogical theory and practice, has fared and continues to face hosts of critics.

Dewey attacked the entire metaphysical enterprise which has served to uphold doctrines of fixed essences. Sleeper's critique provides a compelling argument for Dewey's intention to resituate the foundations of philosophical inquiry and its relation to culture.²⁶ Arguing against 'apart thought' Dewey wished to ground ontological claims in his logic of experience, rather than the reverse, as found in traditional scientific and formalist analyses which derived ontology from forms of logic detached from the currents and conditions of human cultural experience. The logic of experience for Dewey would be capacious enough to include all manner and vagaries of human cultural conflict and change, articulating a worldview that emerges from the contingent and local sociocultural forces and strivings of specific 'situations.' The situatedness and contexted nature of knowledge as transactional in nature, mutually constitutive and transformative for human communicative agents, granted Dewey a naturalist basis for reclaiming the purposes of philosophical and social inquiry, and the indissolubility of knowledge and specific kinds of pedagogical and intersubjective experiences, brought together to ameliorate and expand human possibility.

The ethical commitments of critical praxis are clearly not neutral. Critical pragmatism is action in the specific domains of power that suffuse and constitute subjectivity. The materiality of power, an issue in part derived from Foucault and his critics, is of decisive importance in specifying the conditions under which pedagogical practices are understood to operate and the relational matrix in which theories are embedded. They are not equivocal with regard to forms of tyranny and oppression. Critical praxis must be in Anyon's phrase, a 'socially useful theory'²⁷ in a historical framework

in which national and genocidal chauvinism returns, and forms of neo-fascism ascend to political office, often informed by a postmodern rhetoric and appropriations of deconstruction, as Slavoj Žižek²⁸ points out with regard to publications in Slovenia, and in which nativist fusillades against the limited liberal welfare state are couched in psychometric and technicist armature as evidenced by the public consumption of a vitriolic race (and intelligence) essentialism in Murray and Herenstein's *The Bell Curve*.²⁹

What has been absent from some of the educational debates regarding the possibility of change and collective agency has been a way to think through again how Freire's generative call for cultural action for freedom can be practiced. This will certainly require more than, without abandoning the value of textual strategies of readings and interceding in through co-authorization of the meanings of received 'texts' and otherwise abstract and decontextualized bodies of knowledge. The kind of practice I am suggesting entails an appreciation of the radical heterogeneity of experience and positionality, as suggested by a politics of *metissage*, by Derrida's notion of justice and as articulated in the premises of a non-synchronous pedagogical analysis. In Blanchot's formulation "there is experience in the strict sense only where something radically other is in play."³⁰

Histories, even when considered in their plurality and contingency, are relational and appropriated through the tacit commitments of their readings by always interested participants. To found a critical historical sense of acting and making meanings is to theorize and situate theory to resistances and patternings of power that suffuse the discourse of reflexivity and critique. In this reflexivity as a process of contingent action, critical praxis is dispersive, operating within distinct communities of time and space, in local alliances and ways of encountering 'objects' of action.

Critical Constructivism and Justice

Judith Butler presents a critique of constructivist positions in a discussion of the discursive constitution of gender and sex.³¹ With regard to the formulations and articulations of power, Butler dismisses interpretations of Foucault which cast his premises as a personification of power in which power has taken the foundational place of the subject. Butler's point is important for a critical analysis of the construction of gender, race and class as non-synchronic relations:

... in this second view, construction is not an activity, but an act, one which happens once and whose effects are firmly fixed. Thus, constructivism is reduced to determinism and implies the evacuation or displacement of human agency. This view informs the misreading by which Foucault is criticized for 'personifying' power; if power is misconstrued as a

grammatical and metaphysical subject, and if that metaphysical site with humanist discourse has been the privileged site of the human, then power appears to have displaced the human as the origin of activity. But if Foucault's view of power is understood as the disruption and subversion of this grammar and metaphysics of the subject, if power orchestrates the formation and sustenance of subjects, then it cannot be accounted for in terms of the 'subject'; which is its effect. And here it would be no more right to claim that the term 'construction' belongs at the grammatical site of subject, for construction is neither a subject nor its act, but a process of reiteration by which both 'subjects' and 'acts' come to appear at all. There is no power that acts, but only a reiterated acting that is power in its persistence and instability. (p. 8)

A notion of critical contingency and local intervention, the selection of actions and their consequences is located in the participatory construction of new meanings and subjectivities. It is a critical pragmatism in that it attempts to act within the connective tissue linking the theoretical and practical concerns of education within the situated frameworks of rival discursive claims to power, working the grain of politics of difference and equity. It is a relational practice whose critical edge intervenes in a poststructuralist and materialist sense, in which the activity of thinking is situated in the locality and contingency of the discursive terrain in and between disciplinary forms of knowledge/power.

A critical pragmatist position chooses to alter and amend, to implement steps and make footholds, toward an image of ethical relations premised in a sense of justice more primary than the juridical and legislative. In raising the issue of justice, a term so imbued with connotations and foundational in inaugurating discourses of the normative and the margin, I wish to bring the question of how critical notions of 'cultural action,' 'liberatory' or 'emancipatory' practices are instituted. On what claims can criticalists of any denomination intervene in the interests of the future?

Derrida has claimed that justice is one of the aspects of human ethical relations that is undeconstructable.³² For Derrida, justice is the force that animates deconstruction and the possibility of choosing, selecting, committing to alternatives. Emerging from the ethics proposed in the work of Levinas, in which the relation and responsibility to the other is the most fundamental of all relations and which philosophically precedes any consideration of ontology, Derrida stakes a place for situated action.

I realize the word 'justice' may seem equivocal. Justice is not the same as law, and it is broader and more fundamental than human rights; nor is it to be equated with distributive justice; nor is it the same as respect for the other as a human subject, in the traditional sense of that word. It is the experience of the other as other, the fact that I permit the other to be other, which presupposes a gift without exchange, without reappropriation, without jurisdiction. (p. 37)

For Derrida, justice and futurity are inseparable. The ethical bond established in this notion of justice is one that acknowledges the radical alterity, the otherness of the other as a basis for any human sociality. In this formulation, justice is invigorated with the temporal difference that constitute experience and relation and is committed to an openness to the "future itself, to otherness, to the priceless dignity of otherness, that is to say justice. It is also democracy, as the democracy of the future" (p. 36).

A critical pragmatist politics adapts this sense of justice as an openness to the writing of futurity. Commitments are genuinely situated, temporal and tempered by the multiplicity of 'events' that co-occur within the context of any possible intervention. Theory as continent and generative of multiple and contradictory formulations and consequences is also always an intervention.

This form of critical pragmatism must move beyond a defensive position with regard to claims of textual reductionism, and dilettantism in the mazes of deconstructable action and intentionality. As Derrida's comments suggest, this is a movement out of arrest before aporiae, undecidability, and the loss of the subject present to itself in humanist pedagogy. It is also a position that does not claim a place situated on a margin or edge of power. As Butler's reconsideration of the reiterations of power throughout the webs of subjectivity and agency indicates, this requires a reflexivity that is not immobilized by the realization of its immersions in discursive and disciplinary regimes. A critical pragmatist position is not unitary, it is non-synchronous in its own multivocality, vitalized by contradictory and differential motivations that ripple through its always partial demarcation of its own avowal of a coherent praxis of resistance and critical action. In making these claims, a critical pragmatic praxis delimits and diverges from any core definitive 'values' yet remains ethically and epistemologically motivated in the heterogeneity and potentials of cultural experience of agents in situated social relations which, in Dewey's phrase, we infer from an 'unfinished world.'

Notes

1. Louis Smith, "Biographical Method," *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, ed. Norman Denzin, Yvonna Lincoln (Sage, 1994), 288. Michael Beaujour, *Miroirs d'encre*, (Paris: Seuil, 1980). Beaujour distinguishes autobiography and self-portraits, defining self-portraits as "texts which are self-contained rather than being the representation of past actions," 348.
2. The term is from Francoise Lionnet, *Autobiographical Voices: Race, Gender, Self-Portraiture*, (Cornell University Press, 1989), 99. Lionnet uses the term with regard to her analysis of Zora Neal Hurston. See also Mary Louise Pratt's use of the term in her discussion of 'contact zones' in her *Imperial Eyes, travel writing and transculturation*, (Routledge, 1992).
3. In D. Jean Clandinin, F. Michael Connelly, "Personal Experience Methods," *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, Norman Denzin and Yvonna Lincoln (Eds.), (Sage, 1994), 421. Molloy also takes a constructivist position with regard to autobiographical writing as a "re-presentation, that is, a retelling, since the life to which it supposedly refers is already a kind of narrative construct. Life is always, necessarily, a tale." S. Molloy, *At Face Value: Autobiographical Writing in Spanish America*, (Cambridge University Press, 1991), 5.
4. Cameron McCarthy, *Race and Curriculum: Social inequality and the theories and politics of difference in contemporary research on schooling* (Falmer Press, 1990).
4. Emily Hicks, "Cultural Marxism: Non-Synchrony and Feminist Practice," in Linda Sargent (Ed.) *Women and Revolution*, (Boston: South End Press, 1981), pp. 219-238. Hicks's germinal statement of non-synchrony was founded on a critique of 'parallel positions' symmetry and reciprocal analyses. Hicks' perceived these as too macrolevel and abstract to explain complex and systematic contradictions at the institutional level. In this view, daily practices and ideological commitments are contradictory and nonsynchronous, varying between subjects who purportedly share some affinity as raced, classed and gendered subjects.
5. Michael Apple, Lois Weis (Eds.), *Ideology and Practice in Schooling*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press. See also Cameron McCarthy and Michael Apple, "Race, Class and Gender in American Educational Research: Toward a Nonsynchronous Parallel Position" in *Class, Race and Gender in American Education*, ed. Lois Weis (Albany: State University of New York, 1988), 9-39.
6. Betty Bergland, "Postmodernism and the Autobiographical Subject: Reconstructing the Other," p. 161.
7. Louis Renza, "The Veto of the Imagination: a Theory of Autobiography" In J. Olney (Ed.), *Autobiography: Essays theoretical and critical*, (Princeton University Press, 1980), p. 274.

8. Françoise Lionnet, *Autobiographical Voices: Race, Gender, Self-Portraiture*, (Cornell University Press, 1989).
9. Édouard Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse*, (University Press of Virginia, 1989).
10. M. Detienne and J. P. Vernant *Cunning Intelligence in Greek Culture and Society* (University of Chicago Press, 1978) explicate the centrality of metis in ancient Greek thought and culture. Their work delineates the multiple meanings of metis as a guiding principle of practical thinking. Their largely philological inquiry also focuses closely on the primacy of metis in themes and mythic character, as well as its serving as a developmental paradigm in the 'skillful' and 'cunning intelligence' in the practices of hunting, fishing, athletics and various other forms of craft.
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