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An Autobiographical Turn:
Uses of the Self in Cultural Theory

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of
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Abstract

An Autobiographical Turn: Uses of the Self in Cultural Theory

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Concordia University, 1989

The project of this thesis was to examine the positivity and the conditions of possibility of uses of autobiography within cultural theory. It is argued that autobiographical statements within theoretical contexts operate at different analytic levels. The concept of the self is proposed as a theoretical construct that articulates epistemological and ontological levels of abstraction. The different domains examined for their usages of the self include: British Cultural Studies and the work of Raymond Williams, American feminist literary criticism, theories of autobiography, the 'new' ethnography, poststructuralism, postmodernism, theories of the Author, and Michel Foucault's theory of "the care of the self". A positivity emerges from these theories that enables an analytic conception of the self.

While this thesis elaborates a set of criteria for the evaluation of uses of the self in current cultural theory, it also proposes the concept of the self as a condition of possibility for the construction of feminist enunciative positions within theory. It is argued that the concept of the self avoids the equation of the autobiographical as a guarantee of an authenticity within criticism, and that this concept provides a critical tool for the analysis of social

and political conjunctures. In making the distinction between epistemological and ontological levels in analysis, the foregrounding of the concept of the self allows for an extended critical interpretive practice within the human sciences.

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I dedicate this thesis to the love and memory of
my mother, Calista Probyn.

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Introduction

Several years ago I had the temerity to open a fairly theoretical conference paper with a brief example of how my biography engaged with my understanding of theories of ideology and subjectivity. While hardly a new approach, a member of the audience subsequently stated that this type of remark made him 'nervous'. The paper in question was a reworking of my master's thesis which dealt with anorexia nervosa as a mechanism of control for women. My thesis didn't mention the fact that I had been anorexic, in part because I felt that this might 'drag it down' to the personal and that it might make people awkward (myself included). Since then I have become increasingly interested in the limitations and possibilities of 'speaking the self' in theoretical contexts. Can the 'nervousness' provoked by the use of the autobiographical voice serve to question established categories of knowledge and the procedures by which they are maintained within the human sciences?

Conceptions of the self are at the centre of debate in several different theoretical domains at the moment. I will use two questions to immediately indicate what I think the critical issues concerning the concept are. Jane Gallop raises "the necessarily double and . . . urgent questions of feminism: 'not merely who am I? But who is the other

woman?'" (Gallop, 1988: 177). The second is contained in a collection of essays announcing the end of post-structuralism: Après le sujet: Qui Vient? (Cahiers Confrontations, 1989). From Gallop, I take the specificity of "thinking through the body" (ibid.: 1) within a critical feminist project. Her elegant argument ends with projections for a theoretical space which could embody feminism's involvement in the everyday without suffocating feminist analyses of the ways in which practices and statements are regulated. It is this ground, between the everyday and its regulation, that needs to be grasped and theorized in the formulation of a feminist enunciative position in cultural theory. Where to speak from has become, of late, a difficult question both for feminists and for other critical theorists. Speaking from the body is now a less self-evident proposal; even beyond the problematic of whose body, "thinking that truly passes through the body only occurs in brief intervals" (Gallop, ibid.: 8).

I propose the concept of the self as a site of experience and of theory; for me, this site is a possible place where one can "catch and hold on to those moments when something else occurs" (Gallop., ibid.: 9). As such, as something felt, thought, and enacted the self reminds us of the specificity of how and why selves get located in certain ways. The self is, as I will argue, an epistemological concept that shows up the perils of the "effacement of the difference between women in view of some feminine essence"

(Gallop, *ibid.*: 177). In other words, we can take from Gallop's twin questions of 'who I am?' and 'who is she?' and forge new questions about the use of the self within feminism. Rather than guaranteeing a feminist essentialism or privileging some women's selves over others, theorizing the self and the use of the autobiographical within feminism promises the possibility of new avenues of critique. I will argue that the concept of the self combines an epistemological level of analysis with an ontological one. This tension allows for a reappraisal of the positivity of the experiential. Therefore, the self as an analytic concept can be used to rearticulate the critical, the experiential and the political within feminism.

The question of 'who is coming after the subject' locates the concept of the self in relation to post-structuralist theories of the subject and subjectivity. I propose the self as the theoretical domain that 'is coming after the subject'. It is less a question here of attacking conceptions of the subject than of thinking about the self as a concept emerging from the positivity of post-structuralist debates. Gilles Deleuze, one of the eminent philosophers to whom this question of "après le sujet, qui vient?" was put, states that: "il n'est jamais très intéressant de critiquer un concept: il vaut mieux construire les nouvelles fonctions et découvrir les nouveaux champs qui le rendent inutile ou inadéquat" (1989: 89)¹. In theorizing the use of the autobiographical voice within

cultural theory, I am concerned with "constructing new functions and discovering new domains" occasioned by the use and the conceptualization of the self.

Neither the use of the autobiographical nor the concept of the self is immediately evident as 'the new domain' within cultural theory. Both autobiography and the self have been around for quite some time. However, my interest is not in autobiography as a literary genre, nor will I be concerned with philosophical conceptions of the self. Instead, I will articulate the autobiographical voice in theory as an "image" (to use Michèle Le Doeuff's [1989] term) that operates within critical discourses. As an image, the self indicates a level of affect as it questions its own historical effectivity. These two levels of the 'I' operate in space that Deleuze describes as 'left over' after the subject: "le 'Je' universel et le 'moi' individuel, sont-ils necessairement lies? Meme s'ils le sont, n'y a-t-il pas conflit entre eux, et comment ce conflit peut-il être resolu?" (Deleuze, *ibid.*)². It would be hasty to say that the concept of the self that I propose can resolve these conflicts; its elaboration does, however, depend on the positivity of some of the key debates within critical theory. The domains that I will analyze include British Cultural Studies and the earlier work of Raymond Williams, American feminist literary criticism, theories of autobiography, poststructuralist and postmodernist

constructions of 'the feminine', theories of self-reflexivity in ethnography, feminist uses and critiques of autobiography, and Michel Foucault's theory of "the care of the self". In reading across these domains, I specify different articulations of the relation between the critic's experience and use of the self and his or her object of inquiry.

In Chapter 1, I examine the emergence of an autobiographical voice within contemporary cultural studies. The use of the autobiographical in the texts that I consider is an implicit move toward acknowledging the effectivity of the self. Certain articles by Stuart Hall, Dick Hebdige, Lawrence Grossberg, and Gail Valaskakis are of interest precisely because they are not overtly 'autobiographical'. Their usage of the autobiographical serves to highlight critical and not primarily, experiential dimensions within their different arguments. I discuss Hall's theory of articulation and use it to reveal how seemingly incidental autobiographical remarks work to articulate epistemological and ontological analyses of race and social identity.

I am extending the concepts of epistemological and ontological levels of analysis beyond their more traditional location within philosophy. Their specific sense is developed throughout the thesis to indicate the way that the self can be made to operate analytically. At an epistemological level, the self raises the historical conditions of knowing; that is, that the self is made

possible at any given time by a set of previous discourses about what constitutes 'knowledge'. Thus, putting forward a self can be rendered part of the critical enterprise of examining how we know what we know. While this level of analysis is crucial, at the same time we must keep in mind the way in which the self works ontologically. This is to say that a modality of being is posed in the use of the self. I argue that this moment of the self cannot be simply dismissed as ideological. However, it cannot be allowed to reinscribe notions of transcendence; constructions of the self are always socially known and implicated within the structures of the social formation. Nevertheless, in articulating epistemological and ontological levels in the analysis of concepts of the self, we can arrive at a better understanding of the ways that we know ourselves. This tension between the ontological and the epistemological is then seen as the key to an extended practice of interpretation.

In Chapter 2, I use the theories of Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault on authorship to examine traditional literary theories of autobiography. I emphasize the different perspectives of Barthes and Foucault in order to pry out the function of the autobiographical 'I' within theories and historiographies on autobiography. One of the major theorists, Georg Misch, depicts autobiography as the unfolding of Western history in a singular man's story of

himself. Autobiography takes on a central epistemological importance; in Misch's formulation, it serves to guarantee a true knowing of history. In other more recent approaches, the autobiographical self is understood as an ideological and linguistic effect. Both of these types of interpretation of the effectivity of autobiography seem to me to be lacking in analytic reach. I argue that we can better understand the historical function of the author-effects and the effectivity of the self in history through the doubled perspectives of Barthes and Foucault. From the latter we can take an analytic frame which emphasizes the ways in which certain forms of the self have been historically required or enabled. From the former, we can acknowledge that autobiography, like all writing, is an instance of "the hand that writes" but that there is the possibility of the 'third I' which intrudes into the text. This is the point at which we can begin to argue for the effectivity of the self that is not wholly captured by an insistence on the ideological. This then sets the stage for an analysis of the effectivity of the self within theoretical texts.

In Chapter 3, the different ways that Raymond Williams and Elaine Showalter use the experiential in the interpretation of texts are examined for their positivity in conceiving of a critical self. Williams' concept of "the structure of feeling" is a crucial articulation of the experience of the structural determinants of the social formation. Beyond this accepted acknowledgment, I argue

that Williams used experience conceptually to reach the individual level at which the social formation is lived. He combined this analytic of 'feeling' with the critic's own experience and made them critical levels within the practice of interpretation. In other words, Williams made experience the key articulation of the epistemological and ontological levels of criticism.

If Williams introduces the critic's experience as a crucial aspect of criticism, Showalter serves to demonstrate the way in which experience has always being primary in American feminist literary criticism. Taking Jacqueline Rose's term, "the literary self", I examine the importance of gynocriticism as an ontological line of analysis connecting critic, writer, and reader. I argue against subsequent critiques of gynocriticism as essentialist, and propose that the conception of the self within that project is capable of an epistemological analysis of the conditions that produce women's writing. Thus, the self can be understood as articulating the ontological grounding of gynocriticism with an epistemological understanding of the conditions that produce a 'literary self'.

In Chapter 4, I examine positions that have rejected experience's claims. In particular, I examine certain poststructuralist and cultural studies critics who use 'the feminine' as a preferred term within their analyses. My argument concerns the way that 'the feminine' has been constructed at the expense of a feminist articulation of

experience. Paul Smith, for example, considers feminist theory as another version of poststructuralism but finds himself blocked from "penetrating" feminism because of the opposition of feminine and masculine imaginaries. The ontological ground of feminism within women's experiences here gets translated into 'the feminine imaginary'. In the rather different case of John Fiske, 'the feminine' is a privileged term for subcultural 'resistance'. Fiske constructs 'Woman' as the 'resisting reader' par excellence. The theoretical capacity of experience is lost in these uses of 'the feminine' because feminist tools of analysis are separated from any connection to selves: either the critic's or the resisting 'feminine masses'. In order to restore a theoretical reach to 'the feminine', the autobiographical impulse within feminism to connect the ontological and the epistemological must be more fully acknowledged.

In Chapter 5, I examine the recent debate about self-reflexivity in ethnography. I use this debate to consider the operations of the self in a discipline which has traditionally constructed itself as 'scientific'. This site is of interest because it highlights the ways in which the self has been constructed in opposition to 'objective' scholarly study. Moreover, I examine the arguments of the proponents of self-reflexivity for the ways that the self/other relation is re-constructed. I critique ethnographers, like Jean-Paul Dumont, who attempt to construct the ethnographer's self and the informant's self

as existing outside the historical, social, political and economic constraints of the fieldwork situation. I contend that this understanding of the ethnographer's self forgets that the field is dependent on the physical presence of the ethnographer. In other words, the ontological construction of 'being there' in the field is necessary for ethnography's epistemological truth claims. In a more positive way, I take from Paul Rabinow's discussion of his fieldwork experience and argue that the concept of the self can be used to problematize the two senses of 'representation' that operate within ethnography and in other interpretive projects. Thus, the self can be used to question both the possibility of 'Darstellung' (in the sense of presenting a portrait) and 'Vertretung' (the political project of being a proxy for others).

In Chapter 6, I use Michèle Le Doeuff's concept of the philosophical work of the image. I extend her argument and apply it to the operations of the self within feminist uses of the autobiographical. Building on my previous analyses of how the differential functions of the self work within specific projects, I contend that the autobiographical voice can be made to question its own conditions of possibility. In the case of women writing their "testimonios" in situations of danger, a self is put forward to help other women and to allow the writers ways of thinking about their situation. I also examine the work of Carolyn Steedman as an example of the use of the

autobiographical to bring together the discourses and the experiences of an historical period and mother-daughter relations.

In Chapter 7, I propose Foucault's theory of "the technologies of the self" as a further framework for analyzing the operations of the self. I argue that the last two volumes of The History of Sexuality extend Foucault's epistemological project as he questions historical formulations of the self. "The care of the self" is a model of the self that combines sexual practices in the construction of the citizen and his community. In opposition to the later proposition of "knowing thyself", the care of the self can provide the conditions of possibility of a more viable speaking position. I articulate Foucault's concept of the self with Le Doeuff's analysis of the "faire" of the analytic image in order to specify the theoretical and political criteria for critical uses of the self in cultural studies. I then apply these criteria in an analysis of the autobiographical voice in the cultural criticism of Dick Hebdige and Valerie Walkerdine.

Notes

1 "it is never very interesting to criticize a concept: it is better to construct new functions and discover new domains which renders it useless or inadequate."
(Translation mine).

2 "the universal 'I' and the individual 'me', are they necessarily connected? Even if they are, isn't there a conflict between them, and how can this conflict be resolved?" (Translation mine).

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Chapter 1:

Theorizing the Conjuncture: the Problematic of Speaking Positions

One can detect a certain hesitation about the project of cultural analysis in the current writings of several cultural theorists. More specifically, one can hear doubts about where the cultural critic is to put him or herself. Postmodernism names these doubts and in the 1980s it has constituted one of the major challenges to cultural analysis. While postmodernism does not constitute a unified project, its various 'refusals'¹ do render problematic some of cultural theory's assumptions. I will concentrate here on one of the problematics raised by postmodernism: that of the cultural critic's speaking position. This is to say that I will attempt to theorize an enunciative position in the wake of postmodernism's refusal of the possibility of the critic representing others; the seeming impossibility of formulating a 'we'. As Dick Hebdige argues, "[t]his 'we' is the imaginary community which remains unspeakable within the Post--literally unspeakable in Baudrillard who presents the myth of the masses as a 'black hole' drawing all meaning to its non-existent centre" (1986: 95). This then entails that "there is no space to struggle over, to struggle from (or . . . to struggle towards)" (Hebdige, *ibid.*: 86). Faced with this dilemma Hebdige turns to Gramsci: "the 'we' in Gramsci has to be made and re-made, actively articulated in the

double sense that Stuart Hall refers to . . . both 'spoken', 'uttered' and 'linked with', 'combined'. (It has to be at once 'positioned' and 'brought into being')" (ibid.: 95).

One current strategy that I see as an attempt to deal with this problematic of 'we' is, ironically, an insistence on the 'I'. There is, as Laura Marcus says, "something of a vogue in autobiographical writing within the left and feminism at present" (Marcus, 1987: 77). This vogue in autobiographical writing has been largely untheorized. While autobiography as a genre is going through a 'boom' period as an object of inquiry within literary criticism, the use of an autobiographical voice within cultural theory has, to date, received little critical comment. While I do not want to draw a causal relationship between a set of discourses (postmodernism) and a particular practice (incorporating the autobiographical), I do want to argue that there is a particular theoretical conjuncture within cultural studies at the moment which can be characterized by uses of the self within theoretical writing. The most evident manifestation of the self can be seen in the foregrounding of the autobiographical voice within cultural theory. I contend that the appearance of the autobiographical is indicative of an intersection of several discourses: feminism, postmodernism, 'new' ethnography, and critiques of poststructuralism. I'll argue that this intersection can be more adequately described as a 'conjunctural' moment.

Taking, for the moment, Althusser's description of a 'conjuncture' will help to emphasize the stakes at hand. In clarifying the ways in which conjunctural moments emerge within the social formation, Althusser states that "it is only in the specific unity of the complex structure of the whole that we can think the concept of these so-called backwardnesses, forwardnesses, survivals and unevennesses of development which co-exist in the structure of the real historical present: the present of the conjuncture" (1970: 106). The use of the autobiographical in a theoretical context therefore must be seen as dependent upon the 'backwardnesses and forwardnesses' of the discourses that have formed the apparatus of cultural theory over the last decades. In other words, in describing the autobiographical voice as conjunctural, I am arguing that current uses of the autobiographical within cultural theory must be understood as emerging from the positivity of several discourses. The recognition that the autobiographical voice in theory cannot be separated from previous discourses is a first step in theorizing its positivity. This is to go beyond naive notions of the autobiographical as unmediated presentations of the self. It is also to extend what Marcus is getting at in her description of the "paradoxical" nature of the contemporary use of the autobiographical:

How can autobiography's emphasis on the individual, the development of the self and the confluence between author and textual 'I', be reconciled with political and

theoretical perspectives skeptical of traditional concepts of subjectivity, individualism and textual authority? (ibid.).

The use of the self must therefore be understood in its historical situation; it stands upon and amidst the debates over the subject, subjectivity, the agent, and in the 'confluence between author and textual 'I''. The effectivity of the autobiographical goes beyond Marcus' answers to the question of why the autobiographical now: "[t]he defensive answer is that the forms of autobiography being published . . . escape all charges of bourgeois and/or masculine individualism"; the positive answer is "that they serve a political function in articulating histories previously silenced" (ibid.). Both of these answers sound rather defensive formulated as they are in the shadow of an equivalence of the individual and ideology. However, the theoretical and political potential of the use of the autobiographical is diminished by equating it with an automatic marginality or as a sign of subaltern histories. The autobiographical may certainly fulfill both of these uses but it would be erroneous to assume that it necessarily works in this way. As Gayatri Spivak has argued, autobiography does not necessarily allow the subaltern to speak (Spivak, 1988). To formulate the autobiographical as a means that guarantees that 'the other' may immediately speak is a naive assumption in the face of the historicity

of the discursive and non-discursive factors that silence others.

Thus, an explanation of the autobiographical as 'non-masculine' or as the voice from below does not go very far in clarifying what is at stake in critical uses of the autobiographical. These descriptions of the autobiographical do not approach the ways in which the use of the self is tied into a wider problematization of a speaking position within current cultural theory. Against realist notions of autobiographical representations, I will focus on permutations of the autobiographical: its conditions of possibility; the positivity of using the self (what it enables); the articulation of the critic's own experience with an analytic project of interpretation; the 'faire' (Le Doeuff, 1989) of the self as a philosophic 'image'; and the productivity of 'technologies of the self'. This first chapter projects an initial theorization of the autobiographical voice as an attempt to establish a speaking position, a foray into a conjunctural moment within cultural theory.

From Marcus' description of the autobiographical as measured by "the extent to which it addresses . . . the relationship between the individual and the social" (ibid.) we can immediately (and in the most general of terms) identify a loose affinity between the autobiographical and cultural studies. To begin with, there has always been an

autobiographical moment within cultural studies. The use of the autobiographical voice figures as an attempt to both embody and question the mediations at work between the individual and the social. But as a sophisticated theoretical project, cultural studies goes well beyond this common point of departure. As Martin Allor describes the emergence of cultural studies' objects of inquiry, following the work of Raymond Williams "[t]he domain of cultural has come to designate the relations between levels of the social formation, as well as the relations between the human subject and the social field" (1987: 135). 'Culture' was the key analytic site composed of the different orders of the social formation in which the individual found and experienced him/herself. As Allor argues, culture was used "epistemologically as well as ontologically" to reveal "the connections between experience and institution" (Allor, 1984: 9). As an analytic tool, culture designated the structure of the social formation as well as the experience of it. For Lawrence Grossberg,

[t]he problematic of cultural studies was defined by the mediating role of culture between social position and cultural identity, a role that was understood--because it had already been located within the uncertainty of their own experience of participation--in terms of the relation between community and communication (Grossberg, 1988: 15).

As Grossberg emphasizes, and as I will discuss in detail in chapter 3, "the specific shape of cultural studies can be seen in the extremely personal form . . . [as] the problem of culture was defined in terms of the problematic of

participation" (Grossberg, *ibid.*: 14). Thus the experiences of Richard Hoggart and Raymond Williams as "scholarship boys" came to mark early cultural studies: "Caught between two worlds, two incommensurable languages, systems of social relations and values, they struggled to make sense of their experience of belonging to neither fully" (Grossberg, *ibid.*).

While this early articulation of the critic's personal experiences as a way of making sense of the mediations between the individual and the social formation is obviously not to be seen as full-fledged autobiography, this moment can nonetheless be considered as a condition of possibility for one mode of speaking within cultural studies. This early moment (up to the beginning of the 1970's) was, however, checked by the arrival of structuralism. The structural Marxism of Althusser altered the link between the critic, his or her experience and the object of inquiry. Thus, the centrality of the critic's own experience was repressed on both poles of the culturalist/structuralist divide. On the 'culturalist' side, experience is displaced as attention turns to what Allor calls "the sociological pull". The underlying problematic becomes one of social location of actors rather than the critic's own experience of the social. As Allor states,

Shop-floor culture or punk style were read off as privileged sites of the negotiation of social identity within a capitalist social formation in decline. (*ibid.*: 136).

On the structuralist side, experience becomes an impossible term within the logic of subject positions

:"'[s]tructuralist' approaches conceptualized mediation as a kind of social epistemology . . . as positionalities [were] constructed in discourse and inhabited by subjects" (Allor, *ibid.*). Grossberg describes this theoretical shift as a move to "the communicative model of a relationship between subjects and texts" (*ibid.*). The move to a 'communicative model' thus denies the possibility of Williams and Hoggart's close integration of personal experience within an analytic model. While culture remained the key problematic, it was defined in the relationship of texts and subjects, not in a logic of participation and community. The category of experience becomes problematic within culturalism and bankrupt within structuralism. As Stuart Hall describes this moment:

[w]hereas, in 'culturalism', experience was the ground--the terrain of 'the lived'--where consciousness and conditions intersected, structuralism insisted that 'experience' could not, by definition, be the ground of anything, since one could only 'live' and experience one's conditions in and through the categories, classifications and frameworks of the culture. (1980: 66).

This fundamental questioning of experience shifted the critic's stance and as Grossberg argues, it produced a rather uncomfortable position for the critic:

[i]t is this fundamental dichotomy (and its refusal of other sites and sorts of effects) which has, as well, dictated the contemporary voice of cultural studies and its appropriate forms of reflexivity: the cultural critic must refuse participation in order to reaffirm a reflexive distancing. (Grossberg, *ibid.*).

Thus the introduction of structuralism into cultural studies provided the conditions of possibility that produce the critic and critical practice that Grossberg problematizes. As we can see from Grossberg's description, the integration of both culturalism's and structuralism's claims make for a rather difficult speaking position. Of course, individual writers were not mirrors of this theoretical juncture of culturalism and structuralism. Nonetheless, this critic can be seen as an ideal type whose impulse to put forward his or her own experience is overwhelmed by an insistence on the ideological nature of experience: experience 'as effect'. In fact, the 'affirmation of distanciation' captures the 'push me-pull me' aspect of the debate over the subject; as either "'spoken by' the categories of culture" or as contained in the categories of culture "speaking them" (Hall, *ibid.*). Of course, as Hall points out, in a strict Althusserian sense "these categories were, however, not merely collective rather than individual productions: they were unconscious structures" (*ibid.*). The fact that the critic as well as everyone else lived his/her existence in 'unconscious' structures', in 'the imaginary relation of people to their real conditions of existence', renders even 'a reflexive distanciation' rather problematic.

The position of the critic is then a displaced aspect or an absence in this problematic of culture as the relationship of subjects and texts. Unable to ground him or

herself in an experiential position in relation to the structures of the social, where does the critic speak from? Jennifer Daryl Slack and Laurie Whitt frame this situation in relation to Althusser:

structures reduce individuals to an instrumental status, from which they can never escape: even those who would use "ideology purely as a means of action, as a tool, find that they have been caught by it, implicated by it, just when they are using it and believe to be absolute masters of it [Althusser, 1970: 234]. (Slack and Whitt, forthcoming).

It would, of course, be wrong-headed to represent cultural studies as completely captured within this theoretical position. There were modifications in the structuralist position long before postmodernism. The feminist critiques which emerged alongside sub-cultural studies (McRobbie, 1980; 1982, Women's Studies Group, 1978) can be seen as providing (among other things) a return to an experiential tone in cultural studies. Ethnographic and textual analyses of women's structural oppression as well as the everyday representation of women allowed for a more 'lived' understanding of ideology. In a sense this feminist position was also caught between what Grossberg describes as the "twin pulls of textual and sociological research" (ibid.: 17). However, in the 'intertextuality' of the loosely defined 'feminist cultural studies' we can see glimpses of the possibility of a speaking position which sought to escape the bifurcation that he depicts: "the effort to read experience off of texts . . . or the effort to read texts through experience" (Grossberg, ibid.: 17).

While Grossberg's theorizing of these two epistemological levels is compelling, I want to pose a parallel epistemological question about the speaking position of the cultural critic. Without reifying Williams' concept of experience as an ideal to be returned to, we can see that the way in which structuralism was taken up excluded the experiential moment in early cultural studies. In other words, the experiential aspect of the critic's involvement in theorizing tended to get displaced into a question of the experience of the (research) subject. As Grossberg says of cultural studies' turn to "a communication model":

it was assumed that cultural studies had to address the question of the actual interpretations made (or at least offered) by various audience fractions, and that these differences were to be explained by the determining effects of already constituted social differences which constructed the experiential context into which individuals appropriated the text, and from which they constructed their own meanings. (ibid.: 16-17).

In this formulation of cultural studies, experience becomes an understood 'context' which allows individuals to 'negotiate' their own meanings of the text. It is, of course, an important element in the 'decoding' process; it is that which works against the masses being taken as 'cultural dupes'. Thus, 'social differences' allow for an 'experiential context' which is where 'texts' are 'read'. This experiential context is then the result of 'already constituted social differences' and as such it is an effect

of the social. This sense of 'experience' is, however, located in the realm to be studied, as the critic looks on. It is this shift in perspective which differentiates an understanding of 'the experiential context' from Williams' 'structure of feeling'. Thus the former is an important *a priori* in the theorizing of how individuals come to interpret texts; the latter, however, also describes the active relations within the structures of the social. In other words, in the former the experiential context is a domain separate from the critic--he or she must take it into account but is not necessarily implicated in it. The role of experience within the concept of structure of feeling, however, places more importance on the critic's implication--it situates where the critic stands. Thus, for Williams, the structure of feeling designates relations between the text and the overall structure of the period as it implicates the critic's experience of reading the text.

The difficulties that experience as a concept and as a category presents to cultural studies have recently resurfaced in discussions about reflexivity. Grossberg argues that the turn to reflexivity and biographical forms of writing is being offered as a response to the "postmodern collapse of critical distance and the increasing uncertainty about the authority of intellectual and political voices/positions" (*ibid.*: 66). He sees these reflexive writing strategies as inherently flawed:

reflexivity demands that the author reveal his or her

determining biographical and sociological conditions . . . such epistemologically reflexive writing forms assume that any text is ultimately a description of the author's subjective experience of whatever he or she is writing about. Consequently, the author must either offer an interpretation of the limitations of that experience, or incorporate the voices of other experiences. This merely reinscribes, not only the privileged place of experience, but the privileged place of the author's experience (ibid.: 67).

Here Grossberg foregrounds the epistemological limitations of reflexivity. Reflexivity cannot be separated from the ways in which experience has come to be defined in cultural studies. Grossberg's theorizing of the history of cultural studies does not allow for a 'naive' use of experience; experience as a category cannot be separated out from its historical and discursive context. Thus experience is either unknowable (the determining biographical and sociological conditions cannot be known), or misleading (the interpretation becomes a subjective one with the author interpreting the limitations of his or her voice). These limitations will remain in effect as long as experience is understood as an ontological category, an essential 'beingness' that is offered up to reflexivity. Thus, if we take experience to be (as in Hall's description of it within structuralism) unable to be the ground at all, then reflexivity can only result in "an endless and inevitable deconstruction of the communicative relation between text and subject" (Grossberg, ibid.). Reflexivity as an epistemological strategy must remain ineffective as long as experience remains a repressed and untheorized term.

Grossberg's analysis of reflexivity as one dominant mode of the autobiographical within cultural studies correctly focuses on the tendency toward solipsism. I want to ask, however, a parallel set of epistemological questions about the positivity of other modes of using the autobiographical within cultural analysis, as I focus on the possible enunciative positions that uses of the self may allow to emerge. Thus, I will take from Grossberg's account a theorizing of the history of cultural studies which situates the problematic of experience. If, for him, the earlier use of experience in cultural studies was displaced by structuralism and the move to a communicative model of subject/text relations, he nonetheless emphasizes that speaking positions remain possible. As the present history of cultural studies reminds us, experience has been incorporated into critical practice and continues to be despite the lack of theoretical justification. Located in an autobiographical voice, experience may be seen as a practice and not simply as an ontological category. As Grossberg points out, "the connection between a particular cultural practice and its actual effects may be a complex multiplicity of lines or articulations . . . [a] text may, in some or all contexts, have meaning effects, but it also may have others" (1987: 37). In conceiving of experience formulated within an autobiographical practice, we are also brought to consider the ways in which its effects must be 'struggled' over. To recall Hall's definition of the ways

in which articulation is an active mode of making connections is also to remember the conjunctural nature of articulation:

[a]n articulation is thus the form of the connection that can make a unity of two different elements, under certain conditions. It is a linkage which is not necessary, determined, absolute and essential for all time. You have to ask, under what conditions can a connection be forged or made? So the so-called 'unity' of a discourse is really the articulation of different, distinct elements which can be rearticulated in different ways because they have no necessary 'belongingness'. The unity which matters is a linkage between that articulated discourse and the social forces with which it can, under certain historical conditions, but need not necessarily, be connected. (1986: 53).

Reconsidering experience and the use of the autobiographical within critical practices in the light of articulation theory forces us beyond the culturalist/structuralist dichotomy of understanding experience. That is to say, experience may be made to work beyond either its romantic sense of 'authenticity' in the former, or its sense as an epiphenomenal product in the latter. Conceived of as an element of an enunciative practice, experience may, 'under certain conditions', make 'a unity of two different elements'. This is to emphasize, then, that the autobiographical cannot be understood as a fixed condition; it may work as 'a linkage' which is not 'necessary, determined, absolute or essential for all time'. Moreover, taken within the frame of a theory of articulation, the experiential may be prised from its common-sensical location in 'belongingness'. Seen from the perspective of

articulation theory, it becomes possible to distance the autobiographical from a representational logic. Instead of representing a 'truth', a 'unity', or a 'belongingness', a critical use of the autobiographical may come to emphasize the 'historical conditions' involved in its speaking. As an active articulation of discourses within an historical conjuncture we can move away from a celebration of the autobiographical in and of itself and consider the affective and discursive effects that it may entail. However, I again stress that in order to see the positivities of the autobiographical as a momentary condition of possibility for an enunciative position requires a "necessary detour through theory" (Marx cited in Grossberg, 1988: 68).

In this 'detour through theory' I will have to consider the autobiographical at "higher level[s] of abstraction in order to transform the empirically taken-for-granted" (Grossberg, *ibid.*). It is quite common to consider the autobiographical as constituting an ontology (Olney, 1980). Traditional approaches to autobiography stress the personal uniqueness of the (usually male) individual who write his life, thereby guaranteeing his existence. In some feminist critiques of autobiography, it is the unique communality of women which is guaranteed by the female autobiographer. In taking the autobiographical form as a representation of that which can be said to exist, these approaches severely limit the critical usefulness of experience, the autobiographical

or the self. However, this tendency can be struggled against as we work to show, through theory or as a critical practice, that autobiographical experience has 'no necessary belongingness'. In working against a notion of experience as the possession of an entity, we can begin to recognize and theorize the different effects that an autobiographical enunciative practice may allow. In so doing, I will argue that the autobiographical works at an epistemological level as well as an ontological one. This analytic distinction is crucial in constituting the autobiographical as a practice and as a speaking position. Speaking the self may set in motion ontological effects; it strives to posit a special realm of being. This ontological level can be checked, however, by articulating it with an epistemological level.

To illustrate these two levels at work I'll briefly consider some current examples of autobiographical voices in cultural studies. Gail Valaskakis situates a range of epistemological questions about how the Flambeau were 'known' by anthropologists with a clear reference to herself: "[w]e were very young when we began to live the ambivalence of our reality. . . Later I realized . . . that I was both an Indian and an outsider" (1988: 268). Within Hall's (1985) article on Althusser, his "concrete lived" voice tells of teaching his son that he was 'black', not 'brown' (1985: 108-109). In It's a Sin (ibid.), Grossberg remembers his Chassidic grandparents: "I understood that

when my grandfather chose to risk my grandmother's life rather than let her travel (i.e., work) on the sabbath, he was acting on the basis of their shared absolute commitment to a center they could only name--Jaweh--but never explain" (ibid.: 63). In "Some Sons and their Fathers" (1985), Hebdige recounts a moment in his nervous breakdown when: "[b]raving like an ass at the moon on that mild Easter night I felt convinced that at last I'd found my voice." (1985: 37).

Now, to the state the obvious, Valaskakis, Hall, Grossberg and Hebdige are writing of other things as well as of their selves. While their projects vary, nonetheless their voices have certain effects. At one level, there is an ontological projection; their memories figure a realm of being that we can only know through their self descriptions. Lodged in their theoretical arguments, these voices convince us of another level of abstraction: of their beings, their individual selves. However, we can also see that that these uses of the self are not solely contained within the ontological; the point is not to construct an ontology of origins, nor to guarantee 'authenticity'. Rather, these images of the self are articulated with epistemological projects: Valaskakis' examination of the political and historical 'fixing' of the Indian as 'other'; Hall's argument for a marxist account that could specify a "recognition of the self within ideological discourse"

(1985: 107); Grossberg's use of the difference between "fans and fanatics" as a way of formulating political and cultural critical practices" (1988: 63); and Hebdige's theorization of ways of effecting change in an articulation of new forms of masculinity (1985: 38). Thus as a realm of being is proposed, it is grounded in an historical conjuncture. Images of the self arise from the 'livedness' of the interaction of individual and social and then return as a critical tool to analyze and cut into the specificity of the social formation. As an active articulation of ontological and epistemological levels, the autobiographical thus may enable an enunciative position which puts forward a level of being as the conditions of that being are problematized. This mode of speaking is analogous to Meaghan Morris' use of anecdotes; the autobiographical is put forward not to guarantee a true referent but to create a 'mise-en-abyme' effect in discourse (Morris, 1988). In distinguishing these two levels at which the autobiographical may be made to work, I want to enable a use of the self which neither guarantees itself as an authentic ground nor necessarily rejects the possibility of a ground. The articulation of the ontological and the epistemological together then enables the autobiographical to have other effects; effects that within the framework of a critical speaking practice may be "re-inflected, detoured, re-routed and even hijacked" (Grossberg, *ibid.*: 34)--in short, effects that can be worked with.

Theorizing the autobiographical therefore brings us to a recognition of the conditions of possibility for constructing the positivity of the critic's voice and experience. In other words, in articulating the levels engendered by the autobiographical, we can begin to consider the effects, the statements and discursive configurations that may be brought into play. Using Michèle Le Doeuff's (1989) concept of the 'faire' of a philosophical image, we can conceive of ways in which the image of the self can work against its traditional location in the discourses of individualism. As the individual again resumes its ascendancy in the programs of the New Right, it becomes all the more necessary to struggle over more emancipatory uses of the self. As Michel Foucault's last work on the self makes clear, in certain historical conjunctures, the self has had very different meanings. Following Foucault, we can recognize a form of caring for the self which has been superseded by a confessional mode of regulating the self. While we cannot return to an historical period, we can articulate strategies of the self which allow for transformations to be effected upon ourselves and the political body (Foucault, 1988). Again, it is crucial to emphasize that this Foucauldean use of the self is articulated out of different discourses, reminding ourselves that what we take as universal (the things about the self that we take for granted) are the result of very precise historical changes. But it is in articulating the

autobiographical that we may, in Foucault's words, "show which space of freedom we can still enjoy and how many changes can still be made" (cited in Martin, 1989: 17).

Thus, the stakes involved in theorizing critical uses of the the self are high. First and foremost, the theorization of the autobiographical sets out the conditions of possibility for the construction of a new, empowered speaking position within cultural theory. Far from being a self-indulgent affirmation, the autobiographical can be made to articulate both ontological and epistemological levels of analysis. In so doing these levels are opened up for analysis as they can be made to speak of, and cut into, the conjunctural moment. This articulated mode of analysis emphasizes the social distinctions and differentiations of gender, class, ethnicity, race, sexual preference, economics, and age. However, none of these distinctions necessarily dominates the workings of the autobiographical. In other words, the move toward a construction of a self as woman and as all women is checked by the epistemological insistence precisely on the theoretical and social conjuncture from which the self is spoken. As we can see from the examples previously cited, emphasizing the self does not have to lead to an ontology of origins, nor does that self come to stand in for all other Blacks, Jews or Indians. Thus the critic's experience may be turned into an articulated position which allows him or her to speak as an

embodied individual within the process of cultural interpretation. This does not mean that critical activity becomes focused on a reflexive account of one's experience of oneself; this is not a proposal for an endless deconstruction of the subject/text relation. Taking Hebdige, Grossberg, Valaskakis, and Hall as exemplars, we can see that speaking the self can occasion other critical relations as it repositions the subject and text in different ways. As an enunciative position within cultural theory, the autobiographical can be used to produce a radical rearticulation of the relationship of critic, experience, text, and the conjunctural moments that we construct and in which we live.

Notes

¹ Dick Hebdige argues for three postmodern negations: "against totalization", "against teleology", "against utopia" (1986: 81-93). For other postmodernist 'refusals', see Kroker and Cook (1986).

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Chapter 2:

Author-Effects and the Effectivity of the Self

The idea that stories are ordered around the figure of their teller is a fairly common-place one. The notion that scholarly accounts are also told from the perspective of a writer is slowly gaining recognition within the human sciences ¹. Another way of putting this is to say that the ideology of a universal and authorial perspective has been deconstructed, leaving the Author dead. While 'the death of the author' has become an academic cliché, theories of the self are currently enjoying a 'boom' within scholarly publications. In this chapter I want to use the theories of Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault on the author as an historical effect to consider the ways in which the self as author is constructed within theories on autobiography. My interest here is not autobiographies *per se*, but rather the ways in which the effects of the author as self are circumscribed within historiographies of autobiographies. I see this as a first step in thinking through the insertion of a self in theoretical contexts; a necessary first pass in the theorizing of an enunciative position in cultural theory. I will, therefore, investigate the conditions of possibility that allow for the construction of autobiographical statements.

Following Benveniste, Barthes has said that,

"[l]inguistically, the author is never more than the instance of writing, just as I is nothing other than the instance saying 'I'" (1977a: 145). At the level of language it may indeed be this simple. However, following Barthes himself and Michel Foucault, we must ask how these 'instances' come into to being. I'll construct the instance of 'saying 'I'' as an historical operation which is formulated within specific epistemes to allow for certain selves and certain statements. As Catherine Hall reminds us, "the modern individual is claimed as universal--a gender-and class-neutral category--and yet one which contains within it a series of systematic exclusions" (cited in Steedman et al., 1985: 4). These 'systematic exclusions' (of class, gender, and race) are the absences within the problematic of the self as author. These historical absences are, however, what makes the autobiographical statement of interest. As Foucault has said, [n]othing in man . . . is sufficiently stable to serve as the basis of self-recognition" (1977a: 153). Given the instability of the related concepts man, author, and self, the assurance of the autobiographer as the 'historian of himself' (Georges Gusdorf, cited in Hart, 1970: 486) merits consideration.

In recent critical theory there have been two notable 'deaths of the author'. It is, of course, Barthes' phrase, "the death of the author" that is taken as a generic label for various poststructuralist arguments about textuality.

Separated off from its location in Barthes' argument, this phrase has become a handy whipping-post for critics of abstract or 'high theory'. Barbara Christian uses 'the death of the author' as a starting point in her critique of what she calls "the race for theory":

Now I am being told that philosophers are the ones who write literature; that authors are dead, irrelevant, mere vessels through which their narratives ooze; that they do not work nor have they the faintest idea what they are doing--rather they produce texts as disembodied as the angels (Christian, 1988: 72).

In her attack on 'high theory', Christian misses the epistemological implications of both Barthes' argument and that of Foucault. In that she also blurs Foucault's "What is an Author?" (1977) with Barthes' "The Death of the Author" (1977), opening up the condensation in Christian's argument allows me to examine the analytic differences between the two arguments. Both of 'the deaths of the author' arguments hold important theoretical implications for theorizing the self in autobiographies.

In "Death of the Author", Barthes succinctly pushes the concept of the Author away from centre stage, as he puts it: "the Author diminishing like a figurine at the far end of the literary scene" (1977a.: 145). In Barthes' argument, the working of language ("language knows a 'subject', not a 'person'" [ibid.]) denies any notion of 'interiority'. Barthes' critique of the Author works to highlight the ways in which ideology works through this concept. Thus, "the epitome and culmination of capitalist ideology . . . has

attached the greatest importance to the 'person' of the author" (ibid.: 143). In the terminology of Mythologies (1972), the first order significance of the sign 'Author' is supported at the level of myth. Thus the connotations of 'Author' are secured by the second order myth, and it is here that 'author' finds its meaning within the same mythological level as 'Man', 'Self', and 'Individual'. Barthes' task is then to disarticulate the two orders and denaturalize the concept of 'Author', allowing language to express its multiple subjects. In this way, Barthes frees writing from its position within the mythological system of the Author. In Barthes' words: "we know that to give writing its future, it is necessary to overthrow the myth: the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the author" (1977a: 148). In separating Author from writing, Barthes attempts to free writing from the 'personal'. The myth of the author is not replaced by the myth of the reader; neither author nor reader is a psychological being. The reader, according to Barthes, "is simply 'someone' who holds together in a single field all the traces by which the written text is constituted" (ibid.).

For Barthes, the autobiographer has no special license to write the truth of him or herself. In writing the self, he or she is not in any sense a privileged 'historian of the self' but rather produces endless stories of multiple selves. Divorced from the myth of Authority, the

autobiographer is written by language. This is precisely Barthes' strategy in Barthes by Barthes; as he writes on the frontispiece: "[i]t must all be considered as if spoken by a character in a novel" (1977b). If we can call Barthes by Barthes an autobiography, then the figure of the autobiographer here serves only to hold together three functions. The first two functions are readily put forward by Barthes: from the figure of the autobiographer comes "the image-repertoire" and "the hand that writes" (ibid.). The third is the 'I' which enters into the text: "[t]he intrusion, into the discourse of the essay, of a third person who nonetheless refers to no fictive creature" (ibid.: 120). It is this 'third person' which is most troubling to Barthes because it is the figure which most resembles himself-as-author:

What I write about myself is never the last word: the more 'sincere' I am, the more interpretable I am, under the eye of other examples than those of the old authors, who believed they were required to submit themselves to but one law: authenticity. (ibid.).

Thus, one of the ways that Barthes attempts to escape this authorial trap is to refer to himself in the third person and to never let that self 'have the last word'. Throughout his account of himself, Barthes uses (at least) three different tones or levels of the self. To illustrate this, consider the following:

To begin with, some images: they are the author's treat to himself, for having finished his book. His pleasure is a matter of fascination (and thereby quite selfish) (ibid. preface).

Once I produce, once I write, it is the Text itself which (fortunately) dispossesses me of my narrative continuity. (ibid.: preface).

Though consisting apparently of a series of 'ideas', this book is not the book of his ideas; it is the book of the Self, the book of my resistances to my own ideas (ibid.: 119).

These three levels (of the image, the text which writes the writer, and the book which resists the writer) are the conditions of possibility for Barthes' account of himself. The point is, then, to "liberate the sign 'I'" (1989: 17), and it is in writing across these levels that the sign is liberated.

Foucault's question of "What is an Author?" differs substantially from Barthes consideration of the author. The former directs us to the historical functions of the author. Foucault deals with the author as a "function of discourse". If the author is a discursive function rather than a linguistic one, then in the words of Foucault "we must consider the characteristics of a discourse that support this use and determine its difference from other discourses" (1977b: 124). The author in this way must be seen both as necessary to and the product of the historical movement of discourse. Against Barthes' claim that 'the author' is in part the result or culmination of one particular set of discourses (capitalism), Foucault places more emphasis on the 'positivity' of discourses that allow for the emergence and particular articulation of the author. The author is an effect of discourse but always carries with it a certain

effectivity. As Foucault argues, the author-function "is situated in the breach, among the discontinuities, which give rise to new groups of discourse and their singular mode of existence" (ibid.: 123). The author-function will vary in relation to the particular configuration of discourses within different epistemes. Foucault therefore frames the functions of the author in relation to the specificities of historical conjunctures. The author's name was required on scientific texts in the Middle Ages: "Statements on the order of 'Hippocrates said . . . ' or 'Pliny tells us . . . ' were not merely formulas for an argument based on authority; they marked a proven discourse" (ibid.: 126). By the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, however, the author's name was no longer required as the sign of scientific truth because these texts were "positioned within an anonymous and coherent system of established truths and methods of verification" (ibid.). This movement to another system of verification was dependent on the construction of knowledge in the sixteenth century: "Knowledge therefore consisted in relating one form of language to another form of language; in restoring the great, unbroken plain of words and things; in making everything speak" (1973: 40).

In this way, we can see that the author function shifts according to the 'historical aprioris' which Alan Sheridan defines as "a condition of reality for statements . . . the group of rules that characterize a discursive practice-- rules not imposed from the outside, but inherent in its

operation" (Sheridan, 1980: 102). The author function was no longer necessary for the validation of scientific documents because these circulated within a system of complementary verification; scientific texts 'spoke' against and regulated each other. At the same time, Foucault identifies a shift of the author function as "literary discourse was acceptable only if it carried an author's name" (1977b: 126). We can see that the requirement of literary authorship would be necessary in an episteme in which "the particular existence and solidity of language as a thing inscribed in the fabric of the world were dissolved in the functioning of representation" (1973: 43). At one level therefore, "from the seventeenth century, one began to ask how a sign could be linked to what it signified" (ibid.). At another level, Foucault identifies the literary author function as "tied to the legal and institutional systems that circumscribe, determine, and articulate the realm of discourses" (1977b: 130). Thus the question in the seventeenth century of 'how a sign could be linked to what it signified' is the historical apriori that underpins "a system of ownership and copyright rules [that] were established (toward the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth century)" (ibid.: 125). The literary author function therefore indicates a profound shift in the operations of language as it heralds the possibility of possessing discourse.

We can begin to see how this phrase, 'the death of

the author', articulates the different projects of Barthes and Foucault. Their different projects can be used as two analytic perspectives from which to examine the ways in which the self is said to operate within autobiographies. Following Barthes, authorship can be seen primarily as an effect of language. His analysis therefore engenders reflection on the movement between the 'I' produced in writing, and the ideology of authority which supports this spoken 'I'. Foucault, on the other hand, directs our attention to the workings of discourse, to the conditions of possibility and historical apriori that allow for the author function to be articulated with other discourses of the moment. Nevertheless, I do not want to set Barthes and Foucault in opposition. In problematizing the relation of author to text, 'the death of the author' works both at the level of history and of language. Bearing in mind this problematic will enable me to situate the ways in which the self operates within theories of autobiography.

The historiography of autobiography is an ever-expanding field; I do not want to review this corpus in its entirety, rather, I will read across it, taking certain critics as exemplary of different perspectives. The point, then, is to question the boundaries of the operation of the self proposed by theories of autobiographies. Within literary criticism, it is commonly agreed upon that autobiography as a genre is going through a recent expansion. Due to its recent entry into literary criticism

one can, through reading the debates around autobiography, see 'canon-building' in action. Questions of how autobiography 'fit' into literary critique are common: "[w]hat are the consequences of criticism's organisation of writing into the 'literary' and the 'non literary,' and into traditions? Such questions are particularly pressing in any discussion of autobiography." (Dodd, 1986: 1). Questions about the relations of class, race and gender to autobiography are also prevalent: "[m]any of the most celebrated autobiographies are written by individuals who see themselves as outsiders" (Finney, 1986: 29). Philippe Lejeune asks: "[l]'autobiographie est-elle un genre 'bourgeois'?" (Lejeune, 1983: 209). Philip Dodd replies that:

to become an adequate criticism, we must reject the Autobiographical Tradition and its implicit division of autobiography into the literary and the non-literary. The variety of autobiographical traditions and their determinants--of, for example, class, race, and gender--will have to be identified (Dodd, *ibid.*: 11).

Thus the state of autobiography within the discipline of literary studies is mired in questions. Sidonie Smith asserts that "an absence of models and rules [has] characterized autobiographical practice". She points out that "autobiography criticism has been riddled by a flurry of competing and complementary typologies" (Smith, 1987: 182). She further contends that no one is in agreement about when the first autobiography was written. Thus, on the one hand, we see an emergent canon (for some, already

entrenched in Tradition), and on the other, we have a loose grouping of texts without a solid history. While these questions of form and of genre are important (as Smith says, "[t]he designation of the first true autobiography will depend on the generic definition and typology that motivate a particular critical study" [ibid.]), I am more interested here in the parameters imposed on the operation of the self within various autobiographical paradigms.

Georg Misch's two volume A History of Autobiography in Antiquity (1950; 1951) serves as the measure against which subsequent works are positioned. It is concerned with the possibility of reading history through various autobiographical selves. For Misch, "the progressive unfolding of Western history can be read in the representative lives of the people who participated in its unfolding" (cited in S. Smith, *ibid.*: 4). Misch thus sees the representation of others' lives as key to understanding 'our' common history; histories of selves thus allow us to read the history of civilization. Furthermore, the possibility of writing the self only appears at certain moments of history:

For it is under an inner urge, confirmed by the part autobiography played in the more modern times, that in a ripened civilization, when the individual man discovers himself as an independent and responsible person, self-scrutiny becomes an integral part of his personal life . . . Man is driven to make visible to himself the unity of his life . . . (Misch, 1950: 404).

In Misch's description autobiography connects the man with his times. The autobiographical act, in turn, is synonymous

with a particular stage of a society's 'development'. Thus the historical moment allows for a textual formation as that text then comes to be positioned as a mirror of the times. For Misch then, autobiography articulates man and history as bound within a teleological moment of maturity and self-reflection.

Misch's reading of autobiography is surprisingly congruent with Hayden White's much later theorizing of the tropes involved in historiography. In White's terms, we could say that Misch "tropes" the emergence of autobiography through metaphors taken from organic development: 'ripened civilizations allow for self-scrutiny'. Taking from Vico, White argues that "the four ages of a culture's evolution (the ages of gods, heroes, men and decline, or 'ricorso') correspond exactly to the four stages of consciousness reflected in the dominance of a given trope: metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, and irony, in that order" (1978: n80). In this model, autobiography would be the form associated with the final phase:

the structure of any sophisticated, i.e., self-conscious and self-critical, discourse mirrors or replicates the phases through which consciousness itself must pass in its progress from a naive (metaphorical) to a self-critical (ironic) comprehension of itself . . .
(White, *ibid.*: 19).

White, then, formulates the discourse of history as mirrored in the history, and the psychic development, of 'man'. This typology of history constructs 'man as history'. This reading of history then echoes what Gusdorf saw as

autobiography's primary function: that is, that the autobiographer is the historian of the self. Thus, history can be read off individual autobiographies, and those autobiographies (in Misch's words, "of the people involved in [history's] unfolding" [ibid.]) then serve as a guarantee of history. In other words, this mode of autobiographical historiography constructs the autobiographer as the author function of history. This is especially evident in Misch's theorizing of autobiography which blurs the distinction between one's own history and that of a given society.

Against Misch and Gusdorf who construct an equivalence between individual selves in autobiography and the stages of Western history's development, more recent theories of autobiography concentrate on the textual activity of writing the self. To play on Paul Valery's famous statement: "je est un autre" (cited in Lejeune, 1980), one could say that the more traditional approaches to autobiography (Misch, Gusdorf) construct autobiography as 'je est l'Autre'. The 'I' here represents or stands in for History and Civilization. More recent theories, however, insist on the pure textuality of writing autobiography, and the ways in which the 'I' becomes an 'other'. In other words, in the more traditional approaches to autobiographical writing the autobiographer serves as the author function and posits different stages of civilization. In the turn to a more textual understanding of autobiography, the role of the

autobiographer becomes more problematic. Thus, Louis Renza considers that "Autobiographical writing . . . entails a split intentionality: the 'I' becoming a 'he'" (1977: 9). Renza takes this as a sign of autobiography's interiority and hence he sees it "guilty of Barthean 'bad faith'" (ibid.: 7). His interpretation of Augustine's Confessions raises the possibility of a complex ordering of the relation of the written 'I' to the experiential self. Renza tells us that through his Confessions, Augustine was able "to 'confess', to be a witness or (in the older sense of the word) a 'confessor' to his brute 'I am'." (1977: 8). Augustine's 'I am' is projected onto history, allowing the self and history to be written simultaneously. This simultaneity differs from Misch's conception of history as contained by individuals. As Renza states, Augustine "write[s] of his own existence as if it were not radically grounded in his own existence" (ibid.: 9). Augustine "desires to interpret his own personal existence as a self-experienceable sign of this Creation" (ibid.: 8).

This interpretation of autobiographical writing allows for the possibility of creating a third being that is neither the present nor the past tense of the self that writes. Augustine's famous statement "I'm not what I was" (cited in P. Smith, 1988: 105) illustrates the tension between writing and being. Through the written account of himself, Augustine attempts to change his existence into "a self-experienceable sign" of God. In being a witness to himself, Augustine

postulates himself as a sign. This sign then exists on another level and entails other than purely textual operations. As Barthes tells us, "writing is that neutral, composite space where our subject slips away" (1977a: 142). Thus, we can say that Augustine's written 'I' slips away, allowing for another being in its place. In other words, through writing and in the tension set up between a self and an historical other, Augustine constructs himself as a sign that is separate from his personal self. This sign carries another order of effects, most particularly, it allows for transcendence over both the written self and the personal being. As Paul Jay says, "In its role both as prodigal son and confessing writer, the subject in and of the Confessions is thus presented as a transcending being" (1982: 1048). To Jay's interpretation, I would add that there is a tension between these two selves ('the prodigal son' which is already the transformation of the self in the face of authority, and the 'confessing self' which is already marked by the act of the 'I' witnessing 'I am'). This tension between selves then produces the autobiographical Augustine as a "self-experienceable sign of God's existence" (Renza, *ibid.*). This sign is the accomplishment of a set of operations performed upon the self: the written 'I'; the authority of Creation; and the experiential self that writes. The result of these operations is a separate sign, or another self, which in James Olney's words is produced by "the special order of reality that autobiography can make

claim to" (1980: 237).

For Olney, that special realm is the ontological order entailed by autobiography. In describing the "ontology of autobiography" (1980), Olney charts an interesting path. He first cites Plato on Heraclitus: "Heraclitus somewhere says that all things flow and nothing remains still, and comparing existing things to the flowing of a river, he says that you would not step twice into the same stream" (Plato cited in Olney, *ibid.*: 237-8). Olney then steps back to consider the etymology of the key words "the existing things":

now the phrase translated 'existing things' is 'ta onta' and 'onta' (whence we derive the word 'ontology') is the neuter plural present participle formed from 'einai--'to be'. Hence, 'ta onta' signifies 'those things that are' or 'those things that exist' (ontology is thus a theory of the nature of being or existence), and it is 'ta onta' that Heraclitus compares to the flowing of a river (*ibid.*).

"'Ta onta' therefore designates "an ongoing 'process'--the process of being, the process of existing" (Olney, *ibid.*).

Taking from Olney's discussion of 'ta onta' we can begin to consider the ways in which autobiography calls forth an ontological self. This self may be recognized in Augustine's 'self-experiential sign'. This ontological self exists and is produced in the tensions created by positing oneself as an autobiographical sign: in the movement between the 'I', the act of writing, and the experience of re-creating oneself. As Jay says, there is here "the double ontological displacement that occurs as the subject of perception is perceived, and then represented" (Jay, 1982:

1048). We may, however, go beyond Jay's description and specify an historical dimension to this process. As Foucault reminds us, the displacement that Jay invokes has been used to "transpos[e] the empirical characteristics of an author to a transcendental anonymity" (1977: 120). At one level, therefore, writing (after Barthes) necessarily involves an ontological displacement. However, this level of analysis does not entirely capture the autobiographical movement between historical and textual levels. In other words, in paying attention only to the fragmentation of the self in language, we lose sight of the specificity of autobiography's "self-experienceable sign" which is located in a particular historical conjuncture. In collapsing the experiential and the historical aspects of the autobiographical self into the textual operations involved in (any) form of writing, the positivity of other functions of the self are neglected.

The analysis of author functions precisely works against any such notion of a one-dimensional self. The analytic concept of the function of the self is equally divorced from any simple reference to the person of the author. Following Foucault we can begin to enumerate possible selves: writing allows for "a 'second self' whose similarity to the author is never fixed" (ibid.: 129). Before his death, Foucault outlined the possibility of more selves: "I am more and more interested in the interaction between oneself and others and in the

technologies of individual domination, the history of how an individual acts upon himself, in the technology of the self" (1988: 19). This mode of analysis then begins to allow for an understanding of selves which would extend beyond the limitations of conceiving of the self as complexly textual or even empirically historical. These levels of analysis, of course, are not left behind in the move to more fully grasp what Gilles Deleuze formulates as the Foucauldean question: "quels sont les processus modernes qui sont en train de produire de la subjectivité?" (Deleuze cited in Bellour and Ewald, 1988: 24). This attention to "the modern processes of subjectivity" obviously cannot be conceived outside of the ground of historical operations. As Foucault says, "if one wants to analyze the genealogy of the subject in Western civilization, one has to take into account not only techniques of domination, but also techniques of the self" (1988: 367). We cannot understand the functions of the self without taking into account the historical aprioris that position a self "in relation to a set of practices in late antiquity" (ibid.: 19). Thus the self that circulates in the Confessions is not a prototype of the modern autobiographical self, but exists only in relation to a particular historical ground. The fact that this Augustinian self then allows for other autobiographical selves to be positioned in relation to it does not render that accomplishment ahistorical; it in turn shapes the historical ground of subsequent autobiographical selves.

In considering the autobiographical self as historical and inhabited, we begin to extend poststructuralist models of subjectivity that portray the self as either encaptured within the suture of writing or celebrated as the (impossible) multiplicity of jostled subject-positions. In other words, the effectivity of the autobiographical self requires more than a textual analysis. We can, therefore, use the concept of the autobiographical self to specify present relationships within the social. As Foucault reminds us, this theoretical project also entails the consideration of other modes of living: "We have to promote new forms of subjectivity through the refusal of . . . [an] individuality which has been imposed on us" (1984: 424). An insistence on the author functions that have historically allowed for certain forms of expressed subjectivity precisely works to show the ideological underpinnings of fixed individual selves. We can therefore accept the historical functioning of the author position as a ground that provides for the theoretical opening for the questioning of the self.

Deleuze recently captured the relevance of Foucault's later thinking for a theory of functioning selves:

La dernière voie ouverte par Foucault est extrêmement riche: les processus de subjectivation n'ont rien à voir avec la 'vie privée', mais désignent l'opération par laquelle des individus ou les communautés se constituent comme sujets, en marge de savoirs constitués et des pouvoirs établis, quitte à donner lieu à des nouveaux savoirs et pouvoirs. C'est pourquoi la subjectivation vient en tiers, toujours en 'décroche', dans une sorte de pli, repliement ou

plissement (Deleuze cited in Bellour and Ewald, *ibid.*)

Deleuze here provides us with an extremely provocative and generative reading of Foucault. We can take a number of directions from his description. First, the self (or rather, Deleuze's term of 'subjectivation' which operates in distinction to a conception of interpellated subjects, and for which I, following Foucault, use the word 'self') is not a personalized entity. As with Barthes' reader who is "simply someone" (1977: 143), there is here an immediate break with psychological conceptions of the self. The functions of the self ("les processus de subjectivation") are precisely operations that constitute selves in various places and at given moments. "Subjectivation" precisely emphasizes that the self is not an object but rather is the accomplishment of historical processes. This concept of the self, then, requires levels of analysis that recognize both the process of the construction of selves as well as their historical effectivity. Second, individuals or communities are constituted as selves in relation to previously established knowledges and powers. Constituted as selves, they then give rise to new knowledges and powers. I want to stress here the positivity of the self; specific constructs of the self then allow for other concepts to emerge. At this level, we could specify the emergence of individualism as being one effect of the self at a particular moment of time. Following Foucault's writing on the prison, madness and

sexuality, we know that the 'gaze' required a certain conception of the self in order to regulate society. In turn, a certain notion of the self is constructed in relation to those excluded by the gaze. Third, Deleuze describes Foucault's conception of subjectification as arriving "en tiers" and "en 'décroche'". Translated, this tells us that the function of the self is not teleological: it arrives unexpectedly as an 'interloper', out of sequence and without warning. In this way we can conceive of the historical ground of the self as being a series of folds and pleats ("une sorte de pli") which will produce and allow for a specific functioning self at various uncoordinated moments.

While the haphazardness of this third register of the function of self seems to go against Foucault's previously well-arranged construction of epistemes, it in fact only deepens our understanding of the formation of selves. In recognizing that selves are multiple and their formation both historical and haphazard, we fracture the unitary subject and thus displace (without denying) its power. Obviously, certain historical strictures and formations of knowledge are still at work (the Christian edict of 'know thyself' continues to have effects on selves long after the supposed 'death of God'). Within an analysis of the self, therefore, we can question why discourses continue to have effects long after they have been theoretically embalmed. Recognizing that discourses on subjectivity are necessarily

folded and pleated against and along with others then permits a closer political examination of the ways in which various exclusions continue. The self as 'interloper', 'as someone who has no business being where she is' (of being 'en tiers') raises new possibilities of speaking at different uncoordinated moments. In other words, conceptualizing the self as interloper means that the effects and articulations of autobiographical voices can not be known and fixed in advance.

This haphazardness of the self's operations is particularly promising for the use of the autobiographical by historically marginal groups. As Deleuze reminds us, "ce ne sont pas les maitres, mais plutot les exclus sociaux qui constituent des foyers de subjectivation" (ibid.) ³. This has been implicitly recognized by feminists, women of colour, and black literary theorists. Thus, following Deleuze, we can state that it is not the exemplary male lives which render autobiography of interest as a form; rather, it is the 'socially excluded who form the focus of the processes and the functions of the self'. In other words, we may be able to gain grater insights into the working of the self in studying the 'excluded' rather than Misch's representative male lives who encouraged the unfolding of history (Misch, 1951). While, of course, marginal voices do not take up as much space as those 'official' ones (indeed, they are given no space in most traditional historiographies of autobiography), Deleuze draws our attention to the ways in

which voices can break out of the sequence, and out of the silence, in which they have been arranged:

La plainte a une grande importance non seulement poetique, mais historique et sociale, parce qu'elle exprime un mouvement de subjectivation ('Pauvre de moi') . . . le sujet naît dans les plaintes autant que dans l'exaltation (ibid.)⁴.

Historical lamentation and reproach, therefore, express a movement of the self, a production and functioning of subjectivity from within the folds of history. This description is especially important as the historical voice is first recognized, and then given back its specificity: its gender, class and race. We can therefore begin to conceive of and use the autobiographical self strategically. Feminist theorists have already started to critique the male domination of historiographies of autobiography. As Sidonie Smith says, it does make a difference how you define autobiography. Mary Mason describes the situation of autobiographies of women as being historically different than that of men:

the autobiography of imprisonment, represented in women's writings . . . shows the grim tale of a woman's claustrophobia when she cannot get out of the prison of the self or of her nightmare when she is kept from coming into her own self through the proximate existence of another or others (Mason, 1980: 234).

Mason concludes that "the history of autobiography is largely a history of the Western obsession with the self . . . (ibid.: 237). What we can hear here is precisely the lament, 'pauvre de moi'. Mason, and others, thus provide us with a history of those laments, the history of those 'grim

tales'. The next analytic move must towards a more gender-, class- or race-specific conception and use of the self. The problem, as Foucault and then Deleuze have argued, is not the obsession with the self but the obsession with a particularly limiting and politically limited form of the self. Women's lamentations in the form of historical autobiographical voices can be taken as evidence of this limited self; and their cries signal the birth of other possibilities of the self. Without denigrating the suffering that is testified through the lonely examples of women's written selves, feminist analyses of the historical self can now go beyond rectifying male historiographies. In conceiving of other functions of the self, we can take the historical lamentations of women writing of themselves as the sounds of new forms of selves emerging in the folds of autobiography.

At the beginning of this chapter I discussed the two 'deaths of the author' and their joint relevance in thinking about the use of the autobiographical self. In conclusion, I will contend that the 'death of the author' directs us to questions of the self. An obvious example of the circulation of different figurations of the self is to be found in theories of autobiography. While I stress that autobiography 'per se' is not my object of inquiry, in analyzing the use of the autobiographical self in 'authoring' cultural theory, I am drawn to the interpretation and categorization of autobiographies.

Taking from Foucault and Barthes, we can consider these moves as, in turn, author functions in the authorization of this genre. In reading across exemplars of theories of autobiography, I identified two major ways in which the author function of autobiographies operate. On the one hand, we can say that, following Misch, autobiographies have been viewed as indicating the 'unfolding of man and history'. A particular organic model of the self is then the condition of possibility for such conceptions. On the other hand, in the aftermath of poststructuralism we find a strictly textual conception of the self which supports the theorizing of autobiography as "the ideological assertions of the writing self" (Renza, 1977: 5). I argue here against both such encapsulations of the self. That is, either as the full guarantee of knowledge and history, or as simply an ideological or linguistic effect. Taking from the recent writings of Deleuze and Foucault, I have begun an elaboration of a concept of the self which would emphasize the historical a priori that allow for different selves at different times, the effectivity of such concepts, and the political functions of a self that emerges from the particular folds of discourse.

In the next chapter I consider the conditions of possibility of selves within the human sciences. I take the specific cases of early cultural studies and feminist literary criticism not as exemplary of 'normal' academic work, but rather for their political agendas. While I have

concentrated here on the operations of the self in the theories of a genre noted for its connection with the self, I will next consider the use of the self in academic practices that have problematized and used notions of experience. In turning to the critical and political practices of Raymond Williams and Elaine Showalter I will examine the directly epistemological and ontological possibilities of the figuration of an experiential self within the human sciences.

Notes

¹ At the moment, it is the 'new ethnography' which is most noted for its critique of the researcher's position within the scholarly production of knowledge. I would argue that feminist theory preceded and provided the conditions of possibility for this debate. These issues are dealt with in more depth in Chapter 5. For an interesting discussion of the intersection of ethnography and biography, see James Clifford (1978). From another perspective, Richard Harvey Brown (1987) uses rhetorical theory to examine the "Western grammars of the self" (1987: 28).

² "The final (analytic) path inaugurated by Foucault is extremely rich: the processes of 'becoming a self' ['subjectivation'] have nothing to do 'private life', rather [they] designate the operation by which individuals or communities constitute themselves as subjects, on the border of constituted knowledges and established powers, on the chance of giving grounds to new knowledges and powers. This is why 'becoming a self' comes unexpectedly, always as an interloper [unattached], in a kind of pleat, re-folding or crease." Translation mine (it should be emphasized that Deleuze's use of language renders an exact translation impossible and that I offer here only a rough approximation of the original).

³ "it is not the masters, but rather the socially excluded who constitute the central focus of [the processes] of becoming a self [subjectivation]." Translation mine.

⁴ "The complaint has a great importance not only poetically, but historically and socially, because it expresses a movement in the [processes] of 'becoming a self' [subjectivation] ('oh poor me') . . . the subject is born in complaints and reproaches as much as in exaltation." Translation mine.

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Chapter 3:

Experience and Criticism

Following from the previous discussion, it is clear that certain forms of the self are privileged in historiographies of autobiography. In this chapter, I will consider how the concept of experience is articulated with that of the self within cultural criticism. I will elaborate upon my previous initial discussion of the ontology of the self and propose ways in which experience works at ontological and epistemological levels within criticism. As a starting hypothesis, I'll contend that experience operates ontologically when it is used to posit a separate realm of existence. At an epistemological level, experience designates the condition of possibility of the critical interpretation. In specifying these two levels, we can identify two autonomous elements in cultural criticism: the experiential self, and the textualization of experience. This initial distinction is important in considering the ways in which experience can be made to function as a condition of possibility for alternative speaking positions within cultural theory.

I will specifically focus on the function of experience in the early writings of Raymond Williams and in the feminist literary criticism of Elaine Showalter. While I make no claims to undertake a history of early cultural

studies nor of feminist literary criticism, these two theoretical domains were instrumental in articulating the realm of personal experience to political practices of interpretation. In reading these authors together I am concerned with the ways in which experience is made to function. Furthermore, I will argue that the experience of the critic is central to both authors' projects. The foregrounding of experience in the work of Williams and Showalter could be seen as serving an ontological function; that the critic's experience of his or herself in some way guarantees a larger 'authenticity'. It would be too easy, however, to conclude that the ontological is simply an ideological articulation in these projects, or that it reveals a transcendent 'will to authority'. I argue, instead, that the implications of the insertion of an experiential self within criticism are, to an extent, checked by the ways in which experience is used epistemologically to locate the conditions that allow for criticism. This chapter, therefore, interrogates the connections between the epistemological and ontological functions of experience within particular theoretical projects. Furthermore, I will argue that a tension is created between these two levels which in turn allows for a more productive use of experience in cultural interpretation.

From the standpoint of the late nineteen-eighties, and in light of the various theoretical interventions that have

occurred since the early sixties, Williams' abundant and seemingly unproblematic references to 'experience' are quite shocking: at times they produce an almost innocent immediacy. At the same time, his use of experience (notably in The Long Revolution) tends to be underplayed by interpreters of his work. In the interviews which form Politics and Letters, for example, the questioners are more concerned with establishing the parameters of Williams' rearticulation of historical materialism than with coming to terms with the ambiguity of his use of experience (1979: 139). In other critiques of Williams' work, his use of experience is implicitly acknowledged but it is rarely the central focus; experience is displaced into an epiphenomenal role ¹. Typically, as in Martin Allor's account of Williams' early work, 'culture' takes centre stage:

'Culture' was rescued from a morass of multiple uses, and it was located as a key term: epistemologically as well as ontologically. The relations between text and social life were reframed in terms of the connections between experience and institution (1984: 9).

The richness of Williams' work cannot, of course, be reduced to one term, and it is precisely the explicit connections between 'text, social life, experience and institution' that make his work so productive. For Allor, the term 'culture' operates epistemologically and ontologically. It works epistemologically because it designates the relations (or to use a later term, the mediations) between individuals and social formations; it works ontologically because 'culture' also refers to the lived experience of the social formation

over and above the structural elements of the social. Allor critiques Williams for this ambiguity and argues that Williams' "cultural materialism . . . covers and collapses much of the theoretical and critical space that it opens" (ibid.: 19). Allor argues that in using 'culture' epistemologically and ontologically, Williams collapses the distinctions in analysis suggested by these levels.

Alternatively, by focusing on experience as a keyword, I want to map the productive tension that Williams constructs between the ontological and the epistemological. In other words, while experience describes the everyday, or "the way of life", it is also the key to analyzing the relations that construct that reality. Moreover, as a third term located within an epistemological/ontological tension, the critic's experience can provide the grounds of an alternative mode of intervention.

To evaluate the theoretical weight that experience can carry, I'll now turn to a central passage in The Long Revolution:

We are used to descriptions of our whole common life in political and economic terms. The emphasis on communications asserts, as a matter of experience, that men and societies are not confined to relationships of power, property and production. Their relationships, in describing, learning, persuading and exchanging experiences are seen as equally fundamental (1979: 137).

We can see here Williams' unwillingness to fully subscribe to any simple version of the 'base/superstructure' metaphor. In questioning the primacy of the economic, Williams uses

'experience' in two ways: first, the materiality of day-to-day observations serves to show that 'men' are not only affected by the operations of the base; second, the structure of the relations of production become apparent when individuals converse about their experiences. In other words, the critic's experience is that there is something above and beyond the base's organization of everyday life, and that this something can be gauged within the exchange of individuals' experiences. What is even more striking about this passage is the tone of the first sentence: 'we are used to . . . '. Here, academic awareness of traditional Marxist analyses mingles with a sense of the very lived conditions of these descriptions. At the same time that we sense the necessity of those 'economic and political terms' as theoretical thresholds, the actuality of the economic and the political is made clear in the following sentences. It is therefore 'as a matter of experience' that individuals know both the extent and the limitation of these elements to define their lives.

Of course, Williams admitted that his use of experience was problematic. However, he continued to maintain that there was a connection between the organization of the social formation and the lived experience of it. In fact, he went so far as to state that experience of the social formation allows us (as critics and/or individuals) to recognize that we are not solely confined to a relationship to power and production. It is then a small step to assert

that the various structures of society are interrelated, that, for example, the family and the economic are not separate realms. From an analytic level, this articulation of structures allows for the realization that ideology is precisely effective because of the interrelations of the base and the superstructure. Moreover, the experience of the articulation of structures seems to precede theoretical analysis: as Williams states in Politics and Letters, "What I said in effect was that we know this [inseparability] to be so about our own lives--hence we can take it as a theoretical assumption" (ibid.: 138). Here experience is seen as directly epistemologically productive; it is that which justifies Williams' theoretical assumption. Used epistemologically, experience provides evidence of the interrelation of structural determination and individual relationships which compose the social formation. Experience is thus put to work as a theoretical first principle for the critic.

An ontological aspect of experience is, however, not far behind this statement. Elaborating on his previous use of experience, Williams adds another dimension to the term: "in certain epochs it is precisely experience in its weakest form which appears to block any realization of the unity of this process, concealing the connections between the different structures" (ibid.). Used in this way, experience is revealed as a blockage: circumscribed modes of existence occlude the connections between structures. At this point, a

second, quite different function of experience emerges. Previously, individuals' experience of "the inextricable interrelations between politics, art, economics, family organisation" is fundamental to the recognition (and hence, theorizing) of the "indissoluble social-material process" (ibid.: 138-9). Here experience is the basis on which any analysis of the social is made possible. But now we see that experience ('in its weakest form') may also mask the construction of that ground.

Williams' fundamental realization is that humans do indeed live and potentially recognize "this sense of overall connection" (ibid.: 138). This insight then allows for three analytic possibilities: first, that experience itself speaks of the composition of the social formation; second, that experience can be overwhelming and work to conceal the connections between the different structures; and third, that the critic's experience can allow (or, even impel) him or her to analyze the relations between the levels of the social formation. It is this last implication of experience that Williams raises when he discusses the goal of his early work: "the project of my books was precisely to force back, against the conclusions of experience in its simplest allusive sense . . . a renewed awareness of the indissolubility of the whole social-material process" (ibid.). This project thus experience can be seen as a hinge; it works against an 'allusive' and solely individual

sense of experience, in order to analyze the social-material process in its 'indissolubility'. This awareness is only possible because experience has already told us it is so.

While Williams' use of experience certainly evolved over the years, both its centrality and its autonomy remained constant. In response to structuralist-marxism and to what he termed "linguistic theory and a certain kind of semiotics", Williams refused to give up on the immediate importance of experience to the project of a political cultural interpretation. He warned against an "epistemological [which] wholly absorbs the ontological", and accused "a certain kind of semiotics" of claiming that "it is only in knowing that we exist at all" (ibid.: 167). This statement is somewhat misleading in that it could be taken as an outright refusal of epistemology. Of late, there have been several calls to reject epistemology in the name of postmodernism (Rabinow, 1986; Clifford and Marcus, 1986). The basis for these claims is an articulation of epistemology as the key to modernism's teleology; epistemology is taken to ensure the hierarchical ordering of knowledge. For example, in Paul Rabinow's argument for going "beyond epistemology", epistemology is taken in its strictest nineteenth-century sense: as the "equation of knowledge with internal representations and the correct evaluation of those representations" (1986: 234). This postmodern refusal differs from Williams' caution against a wholly epistemological undertaking: "[to those] who affect

to doubt the very possibility of an 'external' referent, it is necessary to recall an absolutely founding presumption of materialism: namely that the material world exists whether anyone signifies it or not" (ibid.).

Against the tendency towards a position that "it is only in knowing that we exist at all" (ibid.), Williams counters with what I am calling an ontological level in his analysis. From his own experience, he states that one finds "a certain kind of disturbance or unease, a particular type of tension, for which when you stand back or recall them you can sometimes find a referent" (ibid.: 1680. At an ontological level, there is "disturbance, tension, blockage, emotional trouble [which] seems to me precisely a source of major changes in the relation between signifier and signified" (ibid.). Again, it is experience that speaks of this 'disturbance'. However, before we "make a god out of an unexamined subjectivity" (ibid.), Williams specifies a level of analysis which would locate "the possibility of comparison" (ibid.) between the articulated and the lived. It is at an epistemological level that one investigates the 'possibility of comparison'. The question then is what are the conditions of possibility that allow for equivalences to be made between the articulated and the lived?

Thus, at one level, experience speaks of a disjuncture between the articulated and the lived aspects of the social, and, at another level, experience impels an analysis of the relations formulated between the articulated and the lived.

These two levels are then necessary for a project of analyzing peoples' contradictory involvement in practices that go against their own (class, gender, or racial) interests. While, of course, Williams later uses Gramsci's understanding of 'hegemony' to describe the processes through which consent is won, it is experience which at this time ontologically and epistemologically described the actual involvement in contradiction.

The desire to more thoroughly account for experience should be seen as at the heart of Williams' insistence upon the ontological as well as the epistemological. Put another way, these two levels of analysis intersect within the concept of experience. This dual role of experience is expressed more clearly in Williams keyword: "the structure of feeling". He used this term to describe this interrelation of the structural and the experiential:

it is as firm and definite as 'structure' suggests, yet it operates in the most delicate and tangible parts of our activity. In one sense, this structure of feeling is the culture of a period: it is the particular living result of all the elements in the general organisation (ibid.: 48).

The analytic importance of this term lies the way that 'the lived' is stipulated as a theoretical ground posited by the structure of feeling. This is to denaturalize 'the lived', and to put it to work as a theoretical construct. Thus the bifurcation of experience (as both epistemological and ontological) is the condition of possibility that allows for structure of feeling. Thus the ontological and the

epistemological are central to the specific functioning of the structure of feeling. As the interviewers in Politics and Letters state, "[t]he concept then tends to become an epistemology for gaining a comprehension of a whole society." (1979: 164). However, before the structure of feeling is understood as solely epistemological, it should be remembered that Williams also uses this term at an ontological level to locate "those specific and definable moments when very new work produces a sudden shock of recognition" (ibid.). Thus, as an analytic construction, the structure of feeling allows us to see the articulation of moments of being within structural determinations.

While the structure of feeling captures the epistemological and ontological implications of experience in general, it also raises the question of the critic's own experience. There may be "no natural seeing" (ibid.) but there is a constructed point of view implicit in Williams' structure of feeling. Consider the following lengthy but crucial explanation by Williams of the operation of the structure of feeling:

In the study of a period, we may be able to reconstruct, with more or less accuracy, the material life, the social organization, and to a large extent, the dominant ideas. It is not necessary to discuss here which if any, of these aspects are determining; . . . To relate a work of art to any part of that observed reality may, in varying degrees be useful, but it is a common experience, in analysis, to realize that when one has measured the work against its separable parts, there yet remains some element for which there is no external counterpart. This element, I believe, is what I have termed the structure of feeling of a period and it is only realizable through experience of

a work of art itself, as a whole (1954: 21-2).

Here we can readily see that an epistemological analysis would intervene at the level of 'the social organization'. That is, the structure of feeling designates the epistemological relations that articulate, at any moment, 'the material life', 'the social organization' and 'the dominant ideas'. While it may not be necessary to weigh which, if any, element is determining, it is necessary to determine the particular configuration formed by these three elements. However, in addition to this analysis, there is still more to be accounted for: there 'remains some element for which there is no external counterpart'. The structure of feeling, then, acts to articulate the determination of the structure with how the structure feels. Given the dual perspective of the structure of feeling, it is not surprising that the critic should recognize, at the moment of analysis, that there is 'something else' going on. Thus, the critic's experience is integral to the structure of feeling.

To more fully explore the implications of the critic's experience in the analysis of a social text, I'll now turn to one particular example of Williams' analysis; this example, from "The Welsh Industrial Novel", is of particular interest to my argument, not only because it identifies a certain form that centres on the expression of experience, but also because the analysis is clearly marked by Williams' own biography. Williams saw the emergence of 'the industrial

novel' as a particular historical development proper to the Welsh situation in the late nineteen- and early twentieth-centuries. This form, which was anchored in autobiographical accounts of the time was, for Williams, a prime example of the expression of the experience of the industrial social formation of Wales. As Williams describes it, this form of expression brought together the economic and political factors underlying the Welsh industrial expansion and the experience of the profound changes that it brought about. As Williams more eloquently put it:

The movement towards the industrial novel is then, in this phase, a movement towards describing what it is like to live in hell, and slowly as the disorder becomes an habitual order, what it is like to get used to it, to see it as home (1980: 214).

Williams argued that autobiography was the most accessible form for the Welsh working-class because of its "central formal features . . . which correspond[ed] to this situation: at once the representative and the exceptional account" (ibid.: 219). Thus, the autobiographical account, in this specific historical situation, speaks of the social landscape as it is simultaneously a part of it. The experience of 'hell' both describes changing structures and it raises what it is like 'to see it as home'. This double recognition of the construction of the lived indicates, in Williams' words, "a specifically Welsh structure of feeling" (ibid.: 221). Thus, the structure of feeling exhibited in the autobiographical industrial novel articulates the ontological and the epistemological: "the lives of

individuals, however intensely and personally realized, are not just influenced but in certain crucial ways formed by general social relations" (ibid.). Moreover, this essay, raises the question of Williams' position in relation to the structure of feeling that he describes. One sees very clearly here a certain matching of experience as Williams, the critic, elucidates central figures in this form; figures which are also the ground of his own experience. Thus, at one point, he raises the very materiality of Wales: "there is a structure of feeling which has one of its origins in the very distinctive physical character of the Welsh industrial areas" (ibid.: 222). The experience of 'the whole work of art' (or, in this case of a form of art) is implicitly tied in with the critic's larger experiences:

These familiar experiences of the hills above us are profoundly effective, even when they are commonplaces, in so much Welsh feeling and thought (ibid.: 223).

The direct intervention here of Williams' experience of 'the hills above us' is far from simple; the physicality of the Welsh experience is used by Williams the critic to point to the basis of the structure of feeling. In other words, he can present the structure of feeling because he already assumes its presence to him--it is that within which he lives. This structure of feeling then impels Williams, the critic, to construct an analysis that would be "not only a consciousness of history but a consciousness of alternatives" (ibid.). The articulation of the critic's

experience and written accounts of experience thus allow for new insights about the emergence of a specific textual form. This movement between experience in the text and of the text is certainly part of the structure of feeling, but it is most productive when it is set in the overall context, within a broader tracing of the structure of feeling. In this particular case, the experience of Williams the critic works to articulate both the conditions of possibility of a particular form as well as the local need for that form:

Against every difficulty--and the weight is shown to be crushing--the accents of a fidelity at once both visionary and historical are precisely achieved. It is a novel of voices and of a voice, and that voice is not only the history, it is the contemporary consciousness of the history (ibid.: 229).

This recognition of a certain 'fidelity' does not to reify the critic's experience of the text and context as some sort of guarantee of the authenticity either of the text or of the critic's reading. Rather, it directs us to look at the ways in which the critic's experience of what he or she describes is a crucial part of an overall critical intervention. Hence, the critic's experience mediates between an ontological pull to define experience as primary and transcendental and an epistemological tendency to privilege structural determinants of knowledge. In this way, experience takes on a wider positivity.

In opening experience onto its ontological and epistemological functions, Williams works against the degraded usage accorded to it. As he puts it in Politics

and Letters, [e]xperience becomes a forbidden word, whereas what we ought to say about it is that it is a limited word" (1979: 172). Its limitations are, however, what make experience analytically useful. Experience is therefore neither the metaphysical key to interpretation, nor is it the blackhole of false consciousness. As Williams rightly put it, there is "a kind of appalling parody" which claims that "all experience is ideology, that the subject is wholly an ideological illusion" (ibid.). Rather than dismissing experience out of hand, we can begin to see the potential that it carries both to designate the various levels of the social and to point to possible sites for critical intervention.

If Williams allows us to see the potential that experience carries for analysis of the lived, feminist American literary criticism has always accorded a central role to experience. More specifically, the experience of the reader has been an important critical principle. As Jean Kennard recently noted, "If feminist criticism has demonstrated anything, it has surely demonstrated the importance of the reader to what is read" (1986:63). In a more complex argument about the institutionalization of feminism, Jacqueline Rose identifies the key role that literature played in the early history of American feminism: "Literature served as a type of reference point for feminism, as if it were at least partly through literature that feminism could recognise and theorise itself" (1987:

10). In this way, Rose, a British psychoanalytic feminist, immediately makes explicit the political possibilities of American feminist literary criticism. In stressing the 'American' here, she argues that literary studies had a greater impact on the women's movement there than elsewhere; as she states, American feminist criticism had constructed an "historically attested link between writing and the domain of the personal" (ibid.: 12). This articulation of the personal, the political and literary is, for Rose, both problematic and productive:

What has come to be known as the Anglo-American account of literary selfhood originally had a crucial reference point to the outside of the institution (the link between feminism and the politics of civil rights), even as its largely individualized and normative aesthetic base has gone hand and hand with a contraction into an increasingly academic base (ibid.).

In contrast to Williams' struggle with the political limitations of literary critique within the Cambridge English Department, Rose, and others, fear the loss of a political project as feminism increasingly comes to be situated within the academy, and in particular, within departments of English. However, the founding principle which articulated the political and the personal was quite different than Williams' and the experience of reading has, in American feminist literary traditions, been seen as the point of departure. As Rose points out, the notion of a 'literary selfhood' operated first and foremost between the 'lay reader' and her book. It was to the text that she supposedly turned in the hopes of better understanding her

personal situation.

Elaine Showalter's work is exemplary in its theorization and attention to the woman reader, writer and critic. As an early advocate of the 'lost' history of women's writing, Showalter developed an interpretive project that centred on the relation of women reading women. Although she has been called a 'separatist' (Ruthven, 1985), her work is better described as gender-specific rather than gender-exclusive. If Williams emphasizes the working-class, Showalter analytically privileges the circulation of gendered meanings. But while women's writing is the object for Showalter, her concern is also with how this writing is, in part, structured by male contexts. Showalter emphasizes the ways in which women's writing and reading takes place within patriarchal institutions (within the university, or even, 'at home'). In her article, "Women's Time, Women's Space: Writing the History of Feminist Criticism", Showalter gives a history of the development of American feminist literary criticism that is interwoven with her own biography and development as a critic. It is an historical account that is powerful precisely because it is clearly grounded in experience: Showalter's; a movement's; and, potentially, her readers'. Furthermore, these disparate experiences are articulated in the history of a theoretical project of analysis. Situating this history as one which "takes in events on many levels of women's daily lives" (1987a: 33), Showalter highlights the connections between the politics of

the women's movement and the study of literature:

While feminist criticism could not have existed without the galvanizing ideology and power of the women's movement, the women's movement would not have occurred without a generation of women who liked books--graduate students, assistant professors, faculty wives, highly educated products of the academic expansion of the 1960s--whose avid, devoted, socially-reinforced identifications with fictional heroines were coming into conflict with the sexist realities they encountered everyday (ibid.: 35).

Showalter here firmly locates the intersection of a larger political movement and the beginnings of feminist criticism. This historical backdrop is crucial to understanding the moment of conflict and contradiction that was the condition of possibility that allowed for the academic study of women's writing. The 'everyday' for Showalter designates both the wider historical time and the immediate and ontological experience of that history. Situated between these two historical levels, women readers (the 'highly educated products') then experience the contradictions of their existence. In other words, through their literary experience, individual women came to recognize the 'sexist realities' (in all their multiplicity) of their everyday lives. In contrast to Williams' emphasis on the immediate experience of the interrelation of structures, Showalter privileges the reading experience that then allowed women to realize certain aspects of the social formation. Showalter does not elaborate, however, on the middle-class determination that produced 'a generation of women who liked books', and this lack of historical specificity is

unfortunate ². Showalter places the experiential within a certain determined relation of text and reader. It is this mediation that then allows for an ontological recognition of the structure of the everyday. This ontological moment is situated in the immediacy of the text's relations to the social formation and is central to Showalter's elaboration of 'gynocriticism'. Showalter explains that she invented this word (and sanctioned it by saying that it was a translation of 'la gynocritique') to "describe the feminist analysis of women's writing" (1986: 218). The project of gynocriticism can be seen to directly issue from women's daily experience as articulated through literary or critical practices:

The interest in women's writing . . . that is crucial to gynocritics preceded theoretical formulations and came initially from the feminist critic's own experience as a writer and from her identification with the anxieties and conflicts women writers faced in patriarchal culture (1987a: 39).

In this way, gynocriticism can be seen to be grounded in an implicit realization of the ontological moment of writing and reading. In reading women's writing, women could connect with the written experiences; or as critics, the experience of writing about women's writing allowed for the recognition of the conflicts of patriarchal culture. Showalter tells her own story: as an isolated graduate student/faculty wife/mother, she could connect with other women through reading women's experiences. It is in this sense that we can see the construction of a 'literary self',

which was a mediation between the everyday structure of life and the textual experiences of others. Produced in the interaction of 'real life' and diegesis, this reading being operates ontologically. While the experience gained through reading can then become the ground for an epistemological analysis of the ways in which gender discounts certain knowledges from being sanctioned as such, there must also be an ontological moment of recognition of oneself as gendered. The term, a literary self, thus describes the ontological operation whereby women recognized themselves in the experience of reading.

The ontological priority of this gendered reading self has recently been raised as problematic. As some men begin to consider the import of feminist criticism, questions are being asked about the necessary gender of the critic. While I do not want to overshadow feminists by invoking male critics, I raise here the current debate over men in feminism because of the ways in which the various misunderstandings on the part of some of the men involved serve to clarify key tenets within Showalter's project. Moreover, the movement of 'men into feminism' has been most obvious within literary critique, as several well-known male critics have taken up, in various ways, feminist critical tools. In "Critical Cross-Dressing; Male Feminists and the Woman of the Year", Showalter quotes one of Jonathon Culler's attempts to come to grips with feminist criticism:

For a woman to read as a woman is not to repeat an identity or an experience that is given but to play a role she constructs with reference to her identity as a woman, which is also a construct, so that the series can continue: a woman reading as a woman reading as a woman (1987b: 125).

Showalter's response is that "Culler's deconstructionist priorities lead him to overstate the essentialist dilemma of defining the 'woman' reader, when in most cases what is intended and implied is a 'feminist' reader" (ibid.). More to the point is that Culler misses the centrality of women's experience in reading. The ontological construction of the gendered reading self which is created in the experience of women reading women is deflected by Culler. He denies here the possibility of women's experience outside of the social construction of 'woman'; the woman reader is inevitably 'playing a role'. Culler wants to subsume this ontological level in favour of a purely epistemological reading. In other words, his emphasis is on 'identity' as an overdetermination that can be located in the structures of the social. He therefore loses the analytic insight that these structures are presented experientially through reading. This drastically reduces the effectivity and scope of Showalter's argument, as it simplifies the political import of her critical intervention. "The sudden shock of recognition" (Williams, 1979: 164) of oneself as gendered is crucial to Showalter's analysis. It is, of course, also a central tenet in much feminist discourse and one that is often confused by critics as essentialist. However, it is

clear that this ontological literary self is produced in the interaction of the experiential and the text; it does not, however, define a feminine essence. The key to understanding Showalter's elaboration of a literary self is the articulation of the immediate experience of being a woman, literary experience, and experience of the wider (patriarchal) social formation.

If Culler misses the way in which the ontological moment in Showalter's work highlights the construction of a gendered reading, Terry Eagleton misses the theoretical and epistemological potential of the way in which gynocriticism articulates experience. In his response to Showalter's "Critical Cross-Dressing" article, Eagleton prefaces an account of his own working-class experiences at Cambridge with a caveat: "In seeking to address these issues not in the first place abstractly or theoretically (thus risking one form of appropriation), but in terms of my own experience, I shall inevitably appropriate the issues into that experience" (1987: 133). Eagleton here pits experience against experience, but his tales of trials with the upper-classes at Cambridge carry little theoretical insight. Rather, Eagleton's experience proves a moralistic point: that one shouldn't spurn potential allies. In this way, experience is underestimated as mere personal anecdote. Showalter's close and generative critique of Eagleton's use of feminist criticism is thus subsumed in the name of experience. At best, Eagleton's response to Showalter is

evasive; he does not reply to Showalter's remarks. At worst, Eagleton dismisses feminist work which has theorized and problematized the role of experience. Once again, experience is reduced to a lower realm, outside the boundaries of knowledge. When Showalter says that what she wants to find in The Rape of Clarissa "is any sign from Eagleton that there is something equivocal and personal in his own polemic" (1987: 130) she is asking for a lot. She is asking for a concept of experience that can extend the very notion of what texts mean. In Showalter's project this question entails another: how do we experience texts. This then stipulates that experience has to be understood and theorized on several levels; its validity and its analytic usefulness always tested, as she says, "on our own pulses" (ibid.).

If experience is made to work ontologically in the construction of a reading and analytic self, it also has an epistemological function which needs to be more clearly emphasized and developed. To my mind, the potential of an epistemological level goes back to one of the founding tenets of gynocriticism. Showalter identifies this early impulse: "gynocritics has been linked from the beginning with the enterprise of getting women into print" (1987a: 39). This material concern articulated with the theoretical focus on "the difference or specificity of women's writing" (ibid.). While the availability of women's writing may seem merely reformist, it is important for (at least two)

reasons. First, publishing unknown or historically 'lost' books by women allows for the circulation of 'submerged' knowledges. With the proliferation of women authors, the reification of the few is diluted. In this way, "the Great Authors" (Austen, Sand, Woolf, etc.) are placed in a context of female writing. Second, the literary canon is shifted by the availability of women writers. While this may sound like liberal pluralism, sheer numbers also have a material consequence. The project of circulating submerged women writers, then, takes on an epistemological edge within the academic institution; a different canon constitutes itself as "a new object that can be charted by new laws" (ibid.).

Thus, gynocriticism's insistence on circulating women authors can be seen as causing an epistemological rupture within, and outside, the discipline. More importantly, and more in line with my previous discussion of the epistemological, gynocriticism also centres on the experience of women doing criticism within the structures of the institution. In the last several years Showalter's articles have consistently raised the question of feminist literary criticism's place in the academy. This work has shifted from a blanket condemnation of "patriarchal literary authority" to an investigation of what it means when feminism goes mainstream (1986). With the (limited) recognition of the possibilities of feminist criticism within institutions and with the gradual increase of women teaching in the university, theorizing the specificity of

women's experience in the critical process becomes both more complex and more pressing. Showalter's emphasis on the critic's experience reveals two levels of analysis: first, experience can describe the material conditions of the reading process (the position of the woman critic within the structures of the university) and second, it designates relations among gendered selves that the text enables. Showalter's response to male feminists begins to lay out these two levels of experience: "The way into feminist criticism for the male theorist, must involve a confrontation with what might be implied by reading as a man and with a questioning or surrender of paternal privileges" (1987b: 127)³. This demand can be rearticulated to argue for a recognition of the critic's experience as both ontological: the immediate experience of 'reading as a man'; and epistemological: an analysis of the ways in which 'reading as a man' would entail a disruption of the prescribed categories of knowledge.

We can see that experience has implicitly operated both ontologically and epistemologically within gynocriticism. The latter is quite evident within the very roots of gynocriticism in its insistence on the reading self. At an ontological level, the experience of reading calls forth a literary self which articulates the experience of the text with the daily experience of the reader. The political force of this equation should not be minimized; it was a crucial and generative moment which articulated and

recognized the potential of women's everyday existence. This ontological impulse, however, needs to be limited as a privileged transcendent moment, with an epistemological index of the material conditions of women's reading and writing. In other words, experience should be explicitly located within these two levels of abstraction. This means that women's experience of criticism and as critics within the academic institution must be recognized as an index of the calculus of experience, gender, knowledge and structure. Gynocriticism's early insight into the conditions of possibility that structure women's written production is equally an initial recognition of the relation of experience to structure. In privileging epistemological and ontological uses of experience we can, therefore, clarify the stakes involved within feminist literary criticism: at an ontological level, the literary self is revealed as a key analytic construction which articulates the experience of the text with the recognition of oneself as gendered; at an epistemological level, an analysis of women's experience reveals certain conditions of possibility of categories of knowledge.

At one point, Williams commented on the process of writing his novels: "I found that what I was writing was an experience of uncertainty and contradiction, which was duplicated in the problem of discovering a form for it" (1979: 272). This description can also be applied to the quest for theoretical tools capable of articulating the ways

in which the lived is experienced with an analysis of the structural determinants of that experience. In this chapter, I have focused on the potential of experience as a way of expressing, without collapsing, these two levels. In considering the generative ways in which experience operates within the quite different interpretive projects of Williams and Showalter, we begin to see that the critic's experience (of the text and the social context) can be used to specify two levels of analysis. I argue, therefore, that experience can be made to work both ontologically and epistemologically, and that both of these levels are critical within cultural interpretation. Ontologically, experience foregrounds the experiential recognition of the lived; for Williams, this is key to cultural-materialism's attention to the lived nature of the social formation. In his cultural analysis, the ontological nature of experience serves as the ground for his political interpretation of social texts. For Showalter, this ontological moment reveals the reader in a recognition of her gendered specificity. Epistemologically, experience designates the interrelations of structures. Williams' concept of the structure of feeling then expands on these two levels of experience, and situates the critic's own experience as fundamental to the analytic project. Showalter, on the other hand, starts with the critic's experience of the text and works out to the structures which locate that experience. Thus, gynocriticism places a primary importance on the

ontological role of the experience of reading, as it constructs a literary self. However, an epistemological use of that experience would enable gynocritics to specify the material conditions of the textual experience. This, then, would work to emphasize the insight of gynocriticism into the difference between women and men reading without reducing experience to an essentialist effect, or criterion.

I have argued that experience functions in (at least) two ways. In arguing against the equation of the critic's experience with transcendental abstraction, we can begin to see the theoretical capacity of experience. In putting experience to work, we see the outlines of a critical analysis which seeks to articulate the mediations between the social text's insertion in the lived, the structural constitution of the social formation, and the critic's intervention. In the next chapter, I will examine the operation of the concept of the feminine within current cultural analyses.

Notes

- ¹ For other discussions of Williams see: O'Conner (1989); Grossberg (1975); Green (1975); Eagleton (1978); Lovell (1989); Samuel (1989); and Higgins (1986). Eagleton and Higgins discuss the role of experience in Williams' work in relation to theories of ideology. A conference on Williams was held in April, 1989 at Warwick University to commemorate his death. It is hoped that the papers will be published, thus augmenting the limited material on Williams.
- ² Debates about the historical dominance of heterosexual, white middle-class women in feminism have been growing since the 1970's. Some key texts which examine the specificity of being 'other' within feminism are: Moraga and Anzaldúa (1981); Rich (1980; 1986); Segrest (1985); hooks (1984); and Freedman, Gelpi, Johnson and Weston (1985). The example of women of colour and lesbians in charting the specificity of their development as feminists should inspire a closer historical study of the development of Showalter's "generation of women who liked books".
- ³ Craig Owen's critique of Showalter's position on the 'men in feminism' debate is important for the way in which he raises the question of gay male feminists. Arguing that their position in oppressive structures cannot be read in the same way as straight men's, Owens raises the question of homophobia in feminist criticism. Owens does not, unfortunately, elaborate on the ways in which gay men's experience might extend gynocriticism's insights about the relation of experience, text, and reader. He does, however, raise a crucial weakness in Showalter's article "Critical Cross-Dressing": Showalter not only lumps together independent gay films with Hollywood's use of 'cross-dressing', but she also quotes Robert Stoller approvingly. Owens points out that Stoller, a psychiatrist, "regards homosexuality as a 'gender disorder'". As Owens rightly argues, "In aligning herself with the notoriously homophobic North American psychiatric establishment . . . Showalter uncritically perpetuates its biases" (1987: 222). For his compelling argument, see Owens' article, "Outlaws: Gay Men in Feminism" (1987).

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Chapter 4:

Writing off Experience: Constructions of the Feminine

In the previous chapter I examined uses of the category of experience in two critical practices. In considering the work of Williams and Showalter as exemplary historical moments in cultural studies and American feminist literary criticism, I argued that the critic's experience of the interaction between texts and the social formation may have both ontological and epistemological implications. In this chapter I will examine several current constructions of 'the feminine' as a critical figure within cultural criticism. I will argue that the use of 'the feminine' in cultural theory belies and erases the productive tension between ontological and epistemological levels of analysis. I contend that the figure of the feminine serves to displace a certain theoretical impasse located historically within poststructuralist debates over the subject¹. Thus, certain uses of the feminine serve to erase, without resolving, the problematic relation of the self and experience within the practice of cultural theory.

It is by now quite commonplace to read about the troubles of the unitary subject. As Lisa Appignanesi remarked in her introduction to the Insitutute of Contemporary Arts' series entitled: "The Real Me: Post-Modernism and the Question of Identity", "The self-assertive

'I' finds its solidity and unity being eroded. At the same time it becomes the site for a feverish shoring-up operation" (1987: 2). Thus, at the same time that the authority of the 'I' is critiqued to death, there is a plethora of personal narratives, as theorists (like Frank Mort) ask, "But where do I stand in all this?" (Mort, 1988: 194). Indeed, the subject of the subject has become a favored topic. Perry Eagleton recently charted the state of the subject, and remarked that "the subject has been alternately liquidated, relocated, dislocated and inflated, slimmed down to an alarming Lacanian leanness only to be blown up again to bulging Bakhtinian proportions" (1987: 47). In contrast to the question 'but where am I in all this?', the rather jocular tone of Eagleton's remarks on the changing contours of the subject can be read as reassuring. However, I will argue here that questions about the constitution of the subject are being (hastily) resolved in current cultural theory by substituting the concept of the feminine, or in some cases the marginal and decentred self, for the subject. The irony of this substitution, of the problematic category of the subject with the supposedly straight-forward feminine, is that it puts the joke on women. From Freud and others, we know that the dirty joke, the 'regard oblique', falls precisely on women. As Mary Ann Doane has argued, "in order for a dirty joke to emerge in its specificity . . . the object of desire--the woman--must be absent and a third person (another man) must be present

as a witness to the joke" (Doane, 1982: 85).

This feminizing of the subject is far from being a feminist accomplishment, although it is often propped up by appropriations of feminist arguments. In fact, the appearance of the feminine in critical texts displaces a feminist concern with the historical construction of women. As such, the feminine more often operates as "a polite code word of postfeminism, meaning 'Let's not talk any more about women'", to use Elaine Showalter's critique of 'sexual difference'. (1986: 222).

In considering the feminine as a move away from the complexities of the subject, I'll look at two major theoretical slides that are accomplished in the name of the feminine. The first concerns the way in which the feminine is taken up as a critical figure because, in part, it supposedly has fewer humanistic liabilities; its claim to universality is weaker than the subject's. The result, however, is that the problematic nature of the subject's agency has been obscured in the shift to the feminine. The second is the way in which the feminine has become synonymous with the concept of resistance within certain projects in cultural studies. Here the feminine is used to posit resistance to the 'patriarchal', or in subcultural terms, the dominant culture.

Both of these uses of the feminine revolve around, even as they displace, the extremely problematic articulation of agency, everyday practices, the self and experience. The use

of these rather subjective categories poses considerable difficulties to many variations of critical analysis. Within a Marxist tradition, for example, the question of how to integrate these concepts into critical theory without falling into 'ideology' or 'subjectivism' has always created problems. Similarly, an Althusserian logic of the subject could not encompass notions along the lines of an individuated self or agency. My point is that the feminine as a term can be used to articulate ideas of the experiential, the self, and agency in the everyday partly because it is not implicated within the vocabularies of Marxist or poststructuralist criticism. However, the questions that this use of the feminine raises about the possibility of political agency within cultural practices and its relation to individual senses of self need to be thought through. The project of elaborating a concept of local agency is an important one which cannot be achieved through a condensation of agency and resistance performed in the name of the feminine. Indeed, far from providing insights in the possibility of such a project, I will argue that critical levels of analysis are lost in the use of the feminine as a theoretical figure.

The feminine has recently become very apparent within certain discourses on postmodernism. It is rather ironic that the feminine should be lauded within postmodernism when that discourse has, until very recently, been the exclusive bastion of male critics. As Meaghan Morris has pointed out,

a "very curious 'doxa' emerges from texts by male critics referring primarily to each other commenting on the rarity of women's speech" (1988: 11). Morris cites Jonathon Arac, the editor of Postmodernism and Politics, as saying:

Yet almost no women have figured in the debate, even though many analysts include current feminism among the figures of postmodernity. Nancy Fraser's important feminist critique of Habermas ('What's Critical') stands nearly alone (see also Kristeva), although Craig Owens and Andrew Ross have effectively situated feminist work by women in relation to postmodernism (Morris, 1988a: 11; Arac, 1986: xi).

Morris' argument here concerns the construction of a feminist speaking position. Thus for her, the discourse of postmodernism presents an instance of the contemporary silencing of women: "In addressing the myth of a postmodernism still waiting for its women we can find an example of a genre, as well as a discourse, which in its untransformed state leaves a woman no place from which to speak, or nothing to say" (ibid.: 15). While I agree with Morris' argument, I first want to look at the conditions of possibility for this silencing and examine the ways in which certain critical figures can be used to silence women.

It is safe to say that, within certain circles in North America at least, it was Craig Owens' article, "The Discourse of Others: feminists and postmoderism", that first overtly raised the possibility of a meeting, or an "intersection" between feminism and postmodernism. At the time, Owens' argument seemed quite optimistic, as he pointed to "an apparent crossing of the feminist critique of

patriarchy and the postmodernist critique of representation" (1983: 59). He continued:

if one of the most salient aspects of our postmodern culture is the presence of an insistent feminist voice (and I use the terms 'presence' and 'voice' advisedly), theories of postmodernism have tended either to neglect or repress that voice (ibid.: 61).

In holding up Woman as (once again) the Enigma, Owens takes certain psychoanalytic arguments as phenomenological descriptions of women, collapsing women as historical individuals into Woman as figure:

In order to speak, to represent herself, a woman assumes a masculine position; perhaps this is why femininity is frequently associated with masquerade, with false representation, with simulation and seduction. Montrelay, in fact, identifies women as the 'ruin of representation': not only have they nothing to lose; their exteriority to Western representation exposes its limits (ibid.: 59).

With the privileging of sexual difference in Owens' argument, one might imagine that he would cite and discuss feminist debates over difference. However, with the exception of certain privileged French theorists, this doesn't happen. Instead we are presented with the images of feminist artists which are then backed up with a certain understanding of feminism, brought to us by reference to Irigaray, Montrelay, and Cixous. Apart from the questionable use of these women to represent feminism when all but the former repudiates the label, Owens constructs (some) theory and (some) artistic work as the defining instances of feminism. However, even more problematic is the way in which feminist artists such as Martha Rosler, Barbara

Kruger, and Sherry Levine are seen embodying sexual difference. These artists are conflated with their work as artistic practice is set in a dichotomy with theory. These two domains are then assigned a gender as Owens dismisses theory as masculine: "What is at issue, however, is not simply the oppressiveness of Marxism, but its totalizing ambitions, its claim to account for every form of social experience" [ibid.: 63]). He then goes on to argue that "what [women] challenge is the distance that it maintains between itself and its objects--a distance that objectifies and masters" (ibid.). Thus, Owens argues that theory is rejected because of the distance it creates. This goes against what much of feminist theory has attempted to do, "to manufacture a distance" so that women may manipulate, produce and read their own image (Doane, ibid.: 87). The urgency of theoretical abstraction and distancing within feminism has precisely been to counter "the entire elaboration of femininity as a closeness, a nearness, as present-to-itself" (Doane, ibid.). In reinscribing women as the Enigma, Owens inflicts "epistemic violence" (to use Gayatri Spivak's term) upon women as he silences them into merely constituting sexual difference. Thus men, like Owens, do theory, while women merely exist in their difference. This difference may, at times, seem troublesome to men, but Owens manages to deal with it; in his theorizing of Cindy Sherman's work, Owens remarks that "while Sherman may pose as a pin-up, she still cannot be pinned down" (ibid.: 75).

Thus, Woman becomes the other, the difference that allows certain theorists to keep on theorizing.

This particular use of Woman is certainly not confined to Owens' argument. As Jacqueline Rose has argued, (male) identity in the postmodern state is formulated as a precarious construct which needs Woman as other as never before. She cites Fredric Jameson's plaintive words: "if he has lost a self--himself--he cannot know it, because he is no longer there to know it" (in Rose, 1987: 31). Rose correctly points out that while 'he, himself' is lost, he knows where to find Woman:

Like the pre-mirror child, Jameson wanders the new city space and cannot find, or know himself, there. Which does not prevent him from knowing the woman . . . he refers to 'Marilyn herself', named on an earlier page as Marilyn Monroe, but offered here with all that familiarity which makes the woman so available for intimacy, so utterly 'knowable' one might say (Rose, *ibid.*).

In her discussion of Oliver Sack's book, The Man who Mistook his Wife for a Hat, Rose considers the transition from the modern to the postmodern. Central to her argument is the way in which, from Freud to Sacks, a "problem of representation" is turned into a problem "of knowledge around women" (*ibid.*: 30). As Rose states, there is a joke implied in Sack's title which is:

clearly at the expense of the woman who finds herself caught in a perpetual crisis which flouts the limits of anything recognisable or knowable as a world, while also undermining the very site of knowledge itself (*ibid.*).

Rose's insights can be further extended if we consider

the role of sexual difference within some postmodern projects. Rose critiques Jameson and others for the ways in which their "model [of the postmodern] seems to become strangely divested of some of the most difficult aspects of the psychic itself . . . [and] the glaring omission of any question of sexual difference" (ibid.: 31). However, it's not so much the problematic psychic which worries me here, as it is the devalorization of difference as a key epistemological term. Like Owens, Jameson needs and renders woman as an object, or an ontological category; as Rose states, following Hanna Segal, "The symbol first 'represents' the object and then 'becomes' it" (ibid.: 30). Thus Woman as Sexual Difference becomes that which can allow for the masculine decentred and postmodern self. The joke is again on women as they are presented as both 'utterly knowable' ("so available for intimacy") and also as the guarantee of 'the limits of knowledge'. This two-step move from woman as metaphor to woman as an ontological category that guarantees the postmodern obviously doesn't leave women much room as subjects.

The construction of the feminine as metaphor is dependent upon a certain articulation of sexual difference. As such, difference is condensed as a description of Woman's being. This elision of differences is important to my argument because it precludes an epistemological investigation of the historical construction of Woman. The use of sexual difference to describe a certain psychic

formation of femininity then limits understanding of how that category is actually negotiated and lived. Difference, of course, has long been crucial to feminist theories and practices because it can designate mediations between the individual and her social formation. In an expanded sense, difference describes the relations between individual subjects and the social. Used differentially, difference can designate levels of analysis. In other words, it can designate two different objects of inquiry: the level of the lived; and the historical structure of the social formation. As Williams' "personal structure of feeling" was crucial to his historical, economic and social location of the Welsh industrial novel, difference potentially designates the critic's implication within the social. This use of difference can be seen, for example, in Morris' project of articulating a feminist speaking position. However, in the accounts of Owens and Jameson, difference is only located in the feminine as the critic ignore his own position of difference. This replays the old notion that 'man' constitutes the norm while others differ from him. This closing down of difference then belies the deconstruction of a unitary subject. If difference is located in Woman, then there is (somewhere) a stable point of view that allows that difference to be 'knowable'. Thus for Jameson, Marilyn Monroe as the very icon of Woman is 'so available in her intimacy', and Owens can chose and name certain women as postmodern. One of the privileges,

therefore, of the knowing subject (Jameson, Owens) is a speaking position unproblematized by difference. To say that this position is built on the backs of others may be overly dramatic; to say that a self-denial of difference on their part creates ontological categories is not. As Rose says, this is the "point indeed at which the political floats off, but only because the issue of representation has detached itself so cleanly from the sexual dynamic of the sign" (Rose, 1987: 32). In this way, the feminine as difference is posited as a sign with no referent, and it is at this point that any sense of epistemological analysis 'floats off'. Woman as the sign of the postmodern is taken as an ontological category; an essence of femininity ensures the limits of the postmodern.

This creation of an ontological category should be differentiated here from what I have called an ontological level of analysis. While the former exists in order to guarantee the 'truthfulness' of a theory, the latter insists on the effects entailed when a being is posited. To put this in relation to Owens' and Jameson's accounts of the postmodern, we can see that while sexual difference is posited as the category of the other, their theories remain unaffected by any difference that this might make. One can especially see the lack of an operation of ontology as a level of analysis in Owens' description of 'his' feminist artists. Owens remarks that Kruger's work "demonstrate[s] that masculine and feminine are not stable identities"

(1983: 77). However, he fails to recognize that Kruger's art is a comment on, and the beginning of an analysis of, the ontological category of Woman. A broader use of difference is to be one of the conditions of possibility for both an ontological and epistemological critique of the function of Woman in postmodern accounts.

Barrett (1987) schematically considers the theoretical possibilities of difference and she raises important differences in the use of difference. Barrett indicates the different objects of inquiry that difference can describe by outlining three senses of difference:

- (I) a sense of difference effectively to register diversity of situation and experience between women;
- (II) difference as an understanding of the positional rather than absolute character of meaning, particularly as developed in Derridean terms, and (III) modern psychoanalytic accounts of sexual difference (1987: 30).

Here we can immediately see the range that difference may cover. As she says: "for the moment, the ubiquitous use of 'difference' for a such a variety of meanings is confusing. Sexual Difference, positional difference and experiential diversity are best identified separately" (ibid.). Moreover, since theoretical concepts produce specific knowledges about the objects that they posit, it is crucial to recognize the distinctness of their objects and to map out the relations among these produced knowledges. It is, then, perhaps more useful to conceive of difference as a set of theoretical tools, or at least, as an articulated set of concepts.

These different uses of difference identify the objects

of inquiry of quite different discourses. Even if one were to limit 'sexual difference', 'positional difference' and 'experiential diversity' to the frame of feminism, one would find disagreements over their meanings. These different senses of difference must then be seen as articulating different realms of meaning. A genealogy of feminist uses of difference would find that these differences enable distinct theoretical projects. Thus, the concept of sexual difference enables psychoanalytic film theory, that of the experiential has served as a ground within liberal feminism, and positional difference can be seen at work within feminist analyses of the institutionalization of feminism itself².

While Barrett's warning to keep the different senses of difference separate is well-taken, I think that we must also take into account the very different relations to the real that difference creates within theoretical discourses. We must consider the ways in which various conceptions of the real are constructed through theoretical practices. The epistemological usefulness of difference lies in the ways in which it differentially articulates the relationships among objects of inquiry: the lived body; social distinction; identity; politics. If indeed an epistemology seeks to "specify the relationship between knowledge and its object" (Larrain and Thompson quoted in Barrett, *ibid.*: 34), and if epistemology "is the question of the basis of knowledge . . . and the theoretical status of the social world" (Barrett,

ibid.), then it is the range of knowledges and objects posited through difference that is important. Following from this, using difference as an epistemological tool would allow for at least three levels of analysis: first, difference can posit distinct knowledges and objects; second, the relations between these knowledges and objects are many and are articulated in particular ways; and third, difference constructs certain conceptions of the real, of the social world. Against Barrett's account of difference as either 'experiential', or 'positional', or 'psychoanalytic', we can construct difference as enabling analysis of each of these levels. This in turn goes beyond Barrett's overgeneralizations of these categories. For example, in Barrett's critique, difference as experiential is condemned because "it presupposes a somewhat optimistic confidence in empirical method and ontological reality" (ibid.: 33). According to Barrett, "[e]xperience becomes taken for granted in this moralistic discourse and the identities that people construct from their experience are never seen as problematic" (ibid.: 32). This, however, is a rather reductive articulation of experience. It closes down more generative ways of considering experiential difference. For example, Barrett ignores the ways in which experience has been problematized even within the feminist projects that she critiques, such as that of Adrienne Rich.

Gilles Deleuze once said that theories should be local and be "treated as a pair of glasses directed to the

outside" (1977: 205; 208). We can apply this to difference as an articulation of several levels of the real, without falling into what Barrett calls "epistemological realism" (which would posit difference in an unmediated relation to an immanent and knowable real) and difference does not have a precise relationship to an unmediated reality. Instead, different and precise uses of difference allow us to conceive of the real in critical ways. In recognizing the relation of the articulation of these levels of the real, we come closer to figuring the ways in which individuals are both constructed in and live across these differential levels.

This positivity of difference, however, is dependent upon the recognition of the capacities of ontological and epistemological levels of analysis. Two recent remarks by Stuart Hall can be seen as exemplary of the distinction between ontological and epistemological lines of analysis enabled by concepts of difference. Hall states:

Thinking about my own sense of identity, I realise that it has always depended on the fact of being a 'migrant', on the difference from the rest of you. So one of the fascinating things about this discussion is to find myself centred at last (1987: 44).

Here we can see that Hall's theorizing of his identity moves out from the experiential category of 'migrant' to consider the ways in which this difference partially constructed his identity; by including the difference it makes where one stands, Hall positions himself in relation to the

ontological site of 'being a migrant' ('difference from the rest of you'). He then maps the difference this continues to make. At an ontological level, this difference then has shifted his sense of self: "Now that, in the postmodern age, you all feel so dispersed, I become centred" (ibid.).

The specificity of this level of analysis can be more clearly recognized when compared with an earlier statement by Hall. Talking about the relations of constructions of colour, race and identity, Hall uses a small but telling anecdote to illustrate the importance of categories of knowledge:

I tried to teach my son that he was 'black' at the same time as he was learning the colors of the spectrum and he kept saying to me that he was 'brown'. Of course, he was 'both' (1985: 109).

Here, Hall's analysis of colour as a discursive/ideological system is conducted at an epistemological level. The relation between knowledge and its object is contested as he contrasts a commonsensical knowledge of colour ('brown') with a theoretical and political category ('black'). The movement between 'brown' and 'black' thus questions the basis of knowledge, and recognizes the different knowledges proposed by these terms. Of course, as Hall says of his son, 'he was both', and it would be reductive to insist that this account is only epistemological. However, one could argue that Hall's remarks about colour do designate a certain relation between a theoretical framework (the importance of the construction of black) and an experiential moment of

difference (his son insisting that he was 'brown').

Of course, both of his remarks cover roughly the same ground, arguing the connection between race, identity and a physical sense of self. At the same time, they articulate that ground differently. In the first, Hall differentiates himself from an ontological category; he then positions himself experientially, and finally constructs a position of difference in relation to 'difference'. The second quotation contrasts an experiential moment in relation to a category of knowledge (an epistemological category), and then posits a position of both differentiation and being. There is, admittedly, a fine distinction to be made here, but one that is important in that it reveals two possible levels of analysis. Difference designates here both a lived state and as the basis for the production of certain knowledges. Hall then uses the experience of difference to the question the epistemology of that difference. Using difference both ontologically and epistemologically can therefore extend analysis of the levels of mediation between lived knowledges and the theoretical status of the social world.

In expanding the theoretical possibilities of difference, we can see that sexual difference cannot subsume other theoretical uses of difference. It is only in relation to difference as 'experiential' and as 'positional' that 'sexual difference' can be epistemologically useful. In other words, the domain that sexual difference refers to cannot be taken as constituting all difference, nor can it

be used to adequately investigate the gamut of lived differences. As Rose reminds us, the use of sexual difference, or of the psychic, as a metaphor for the postmodern state is reductive at best (Rose, *ibid.*: 31). At worst, sexual difference comes to stand in for Woman as it constructs her as the postmodern horizon.

To clarify these points, I'll now consider the uses of the feminine in the projects of Paul Smith, Alice Jardine, and John Fiske. I'll take these three theorists as exemplary of current arguments that articulate poststructuralist problematics with the figure of the feminine. All three of these contemporary uses of the feminine have different effects and distinct liabilities. Smith wants a theoretical construct that can carry the weight of both an interpellated subject and an active agent. Jardine's feminine is marked by the legacy of poststructuralism's privileging of language. In concentrating on the feminine, she focuses on the way in which Woman is put into, and produced through, discourse. Fiske, on the other hand, uses the feminine as a bridge between subcultural analysis and a textual positioning of the 'resisting' reader.

To start with perhaps the most difficult of the three, Paul Smith's work represents an uneasy articulation of poststructuralism and a nearly desperate need to be included within feminism. To be quite clear about the parameters of Smith's project, I will call him post-poststructuralist than 'postmodern', given his emphasis on the 'agent' and the

'subject', and his insistence upon a certain notion of resistance. It is the dual (if not schizophrenic) nature of his theorizing of the subject and feminism which merits attention. As the male editor of the book, Men in Feminism, Smith has been a rather easy target to criticize. Much has been made, sometimes rightly so, of his characterization of men "entering feminism, actively penetrating it" (1987: 33). While Smith's choice of words is bewildering, I want to consider his arguments in conjunction with his recent book, Discerning the Subject. Smith wants to find a "discerned" subject, one freed of epistemological 'baggage' and simultaneously "the agent of a certain 'discernment'". A person is not simply the 'actor' who follows ideological scripts, but is also an 'agent' who reads them in order to insert him/herself into them--or not" (1988: xxxiv-v). Following my critique of the feminine and my concern to articulate a line of analysis which can comprehend notions of the self, I want to look at the tension created between Smith's articulation of two objects of inquiry: feminism and agency.

If Owens sought to create the feminine as the optimistic term within postmodernism through a body of feminist artists, Smith presents feminist theory as the last hope of the academe. Just as Owens' manoeuvre necessitated the rearrangement of certain feminists, Smith's relocates feminism:

the area known as feminist theory (that is, the area concerned with poststructuralist and deconstructionist theorizing) might come to be seen as the bearer of whatever further political promise feminism offers in the academe (1987: 33).

The immediate trouble with this definition is the way in which feminism becomes, in Smith's terms, feminist theory, which is a translation of poststructuralism. Given Smith's stated concern with 'discerning' the 'subject's' embeddedness in different epistemological projects, this sleight-of-hand which produces feminism as poststructuralism is problematic; it serves to collapse feminism's differences and to reassure us that feminism is, after all, quite knowable and even passe within theoretical circles:

The intellectual task of understanding feminist theory is not a problem since feminist theory is situated within the array of poststructuralist discourses with which many of us are now perhaps over-familiar (ibid.: 35).

This position is, however, more difficult to deal with than Jameson's creation of Woman as intimately knowable. For Smith, it is theory and not historical and mythologized figures that are at stake. Nonetheless, there are certain common threads to be found here: both want certain knowable bodies.

One first has to ask why Smith needs feminism and needs to formulate it in this way. Smith hesitantly sketches out his project, as he positions himself in relation to other men:

Perhaps the suggestion is that males who would be feminist need to undertake to write and speak as if they were women, to explore their relation to the

imaginary, to mime the feminist theoretical effort of undermining the male economy by deploying the very excess which that economy has neglected (ibid.: 37).

We can sense some anxiety here: men can know feminist theory, yet they cannot know that which fuels it. This anxiety seems to be caused by a conflict constructed in Smith's argument; that there is an ontological implication in feminist theory that is not accessible to Smith. The feminine emerges as the monstrous barrier to Smith's access into feminism. It is Smith's construction of the 'relation to the imaginary' as central to feminist theory which causes him the most trouble. He quite rightly claims that men writing and speaking 'as if they were women' has been overplayed by theorists such as Derrida and Jonathan Culler. As Smith says, "One of its effects has been to absolve men feminists from the responsibility of speaking their own bodies" (ibid.). The question of men's relation to the imaginary still remains, and Smith answers with a rhetorical question: "is our imaginary anything but a pornographic defense against the mother's body?" (ibid.).

What is interesting here is Smith's construction of feminism as a certain articulation of poststructuralism which is, in turn, founded in the imaginary and the feminine. In tying feminism to the feminine as an ontological category, Smith then finds that as a man he can't get 'in feminism'. However, at the same time, he desperately wants to because feminism "has been perhaps the most effective and sustained contestatory discourse of the

last twenty years or so" (1988: 152). In his search for a theory of the 'subject' which could go beyond Althusserian interpellation and articulate a more productive sense of 'agency', Smith thinks that he has found his lost cause in feminism. He states in his conclusion to Discerning the Subject that

[t]he 'subject', in the widest catchment of feminist discourse, has been formulated both in terms of its experience as dominated 'subject' and also as an active and contestatory social agent (1988: 152).

The irony, of course, is that feminism is lost to him precisely because of the way he has constructed it. In setting up the male imaginary as pornographic, Smith implicitly creates opposing masculine and feminine ontological categories. The feminine is thus seen as an ontological category within feminist theory which then blocks men's entrance. In so doing, Smith loses the productive tension of feminism which makes possible both epistemological and ontological analyses of the social. At the same time, he sets up laws to define what is feminist theory, thereby doing immense disservice to any who fall outside. Perhaps most ironic of all, Smith sets himself up as the good guy (like Owens before him) because he engages with a discourse (that he has named) "whose laws I can never quite obey". (1987: 38).

If Smith wants to construct feminism as 'the lack', the desired object which recedes before him, Alice Jardine locates male theorists as central to feminism. At one point

in her experimental piece called "in the name of the modern: feminist questions 'd'apres gynesis'", one of the female voices is scripted to say:

Wouldn't male intellectuals be upset if they knew the extent to which feminists read their texts--'how' they write--as symptoms of patriarchy, regardless of or perhaps in tension with, 'what' they write (1988: 180).

Jardine is certainly one feminist who reads 'their' texts carefully. Her attention on the circulation of the feminine within the work of certain French philosophers is at the expense of other possible uses of the feminine. Jardine's "performance in five parts" reads as an apologia for her earlier book Gynesis: Configurations of Woman and Modernity. She describes that work in an appendix to the 'performance':

Th[is] project grew out of my earlier work on what I called 'gynesis' ('gyn'--for woman; -'sis' for process): the seemingly necessary and inevitable putting into discourse of the 'feminine' and 'woman' by those writers and theorists (especially in France) exploring the epistemological configurations of modernity in the West (ibid.: 184).

Jardine's book is a fairly uncritical appraisal of the French 'Masters': Lacan, Derrida, Deleuze. Her stated intent was to bridge the Atlantic, to bring them over here. Her project, to my mind, has quite a lot to answer for in its general inflation of the feminine in North American theoretical circles. Gynesis suffers from a strangely teleological pull in its insistence on "the seemingly necessary and inevitable" and "perhaps unavoidable . . . new kind of discursivity on, about, as woman" (1985: 26).

Jardine's neologism focuses upon what I have called the

ontological category of Woman. She states that the postmodern's "crisis-in-narrative" has brought about "a vast self-exploration" which includes a "reincorporation and reconceptualization of that which has been the master narrative's own 'nonknowledge'" (ibid.: 25). Jardine argues that the feminine, as one of the 'nonknowledges', is now located within the narrative-in-crisis:

This other-than-themselves is almost always a 'space' of some kind (over which the narrative has lost control), and this space has been coded as 'feminine', as woman. It is upon this process that I am insisting . . . the transformation of woman and the feminine into verbs at the interior of those narratives today experiencing a crisis in legitimation (ibid.).

Jardine describes the feminine without examining the traces left by its operations. Thus, the feminine as the 'other-than-themselves' is coded as woman. However, coding does have effects. Jardine's account of the feminine in modernity is problematic precisely because of the absence in her argument of the discursive (and non-discursive effects) of being coded as other. What indeed does it mean to be transformed into a verb? While verbs may be more active than nouns, these textual operations remain silent within the discursive constructs of others. Jardine locates Derrida's 'devenir femme' as disrupting narrative but she does not specify whether it is the feminine which has precipitated the crises in narrative, or whether it has necessitated the questioning of modernist epistemology. The feminine here merely describes a certain theoretical turn to be found in the work of some male theorists. Thus the

feminine is not investigated for any of its possible effects within its new discursive home. The feminine is not examined for any epistemological possibilities; rather "the valorization of the feminine" comes with "her obligatory, that is historical connotations, as somehow intrinsic to new and necessary modes of thinking, writing, speaking" (ibid.). The feminine then reappears as other, and as Owens said through Montrelay, 'she' exposes the limits of Western representation.

Jardine subsequently states, in her performance piece, that she wanted to understand "what makes feminists so suspicious of these male theorists' ever-expanding 'feminocentric' logic--a logic posited by them as necessary to break out of Western ethnocentric definitions of identity, representation, and truth" (1988: 184). One would have thought that feminist hesitations would have been quite easy to grasp: using the feminine as the edge against which to think the immutable truths of the West reinscribes Woman as other. In Jardine's own words, the "'obligatory connotations' [of the feminine are put] into discursive circulation" (1985: 24). Her hope then was that these connotations (the feminine as the passive other to a whole set of dualisms) would be questioned. In light of this aspiration, her conclusion in 1988 must be read as a disappointment of those wishes: "woman and the feminine (let alone women) are now disappearing from the debate altogether within a larger, violent reaction against all forms of

otherness" (1988: 184).

It seems to me that this conclusion was assured in advance by the use of the feminine as an ontological category. As such, the feminine cannot trouble epistemological assumptions grounded in a necessity of an other. The use of 'the feminine' (in all her historical connotations) does little to disturb the basis upon which men have historically spoken. The figure of the feminine, of Woman, allows for the recuperation of some feminists (Owens), or stands as a fixed position against which a decentred self can be constructed (Jameson), or stands in for the difficulty of feminism (Smith). In none of these ways does the feminine actually advance new critiques of the social. In fact, in many ways, it works against the formulation of new ways of analyzing the mediations between categories of knowledge and the lived status of the social. As a critical term, the feminine serves to replay a status quo grounded in sexual difference as Woman and the masculine as the norm. In this way, the feminine works against the positivities of either an ontological or epistemological analysis. Both Smith and Jardine construct rather unyielding and unwieldy notions of the feminine. Given Smith's own attention to his position in (or near) feminism, one would have hoped for an analysis of the feminine conducted at an ontological level. In other words, what are the effects of this posited being, the feminine, upon his own construction of self? Given Jardine's project of documenting the

feminine in philosophic texts, one would have expected an epistemological analysis of the feminine or, at least, an analysis of the relations between the feminine, as a category of knowledge, and other posited knowledges. However, untied as their uses of the feminine are to any extended theoretical analysis, the feminine merely exists as the shell of other (poststructuralist) arguments.

John Fiske's use of the feminine emerges from a rather different theoretical legacy than either Smith or Jardine. There are, then, different liabilities in his formulation of the feminine. At one level, Fiske's feminine is indicative of a larger impasse within contemporary cultural studies, one that revolves around a lack of precise and critical terms. In a recent article, Meaghan Morris critiques the paucity of theoretical vocabulary and of the "level of 'enunciative' practice" of some cultural studies' practitioners (Morris, 1988b: 19). In particular, she characterizes the way in which some versions of subcultural analysis now tend to turn out rather "banal" descriptions of cultural resistance as

people in modern mediatized societies are complex and contradictory, mass cultural texts are complex and contradictory, therefore people using them produce complex and contradictory culture (ibid.: 19).

Morris argues that this "voxpox style" in cultural studies tends to automatically point to areas of "redemption" (ibid.: 21). The redemption that such cultural studies offers is that of resistance, and nowhere is resistance as

automatic and as all-consuming as in the work of John Fiske. Fiske's project has recently taken a gendered turn as the feminine becomes the epitome of resistance within his particular reading of cultural studies. In Television Culture (1987), Fiske discusses gendered uses of television: men watch The A Team while women watch (and resist) soap operas, rendering soaps as a "feminine narrative" and "the action series as a masculine narrative" (1987: 179). Fiske's analysis is actually more of a secondary reading of viewing habits, as he constructs his argument through other people's research. His construction of the feminine also comes from elsewhere (mainly from the work of Shere Hite and Nancy Chodorow) which is then articulated to this research on viewing habits. The rather peculiar construction of the feminine that emerges from his particular and limited pastiche of feminist arguments then becomes the point of articulation for resistance.

The underlying framework that supports his analysis of the feminine is the classic subcultural model of resistance. Thus the text of the soap opera is more open to subcultural readings because it is unlike the realist narrative. The latter, according to Fiske, makes sense of the world in relation to "the ideologies of the reader, and through them, to the dominant ideology of the culture" (ibid.: 180). Contrary to realist narratives (e.g. men's action series), the genre of soap opera, "with no ending lacks one of the formal points at which ideological closure is most

powerfully exerted . . . their world is one of perpetual disturbance and threat" (ibid.). Thus the textual system of soaps is, for Fiske, more amenable to subcultural readings. Here Fiske ignores the fact that this mode of analysis was concerned with the potential readings generated through (mainly) class position. As Angela McRobbie's (1980) critique of subcultural analysis succinctly pointed out, this model tended to overlook other determinants than class, such as ethnicity and gender. Fiske's use of a feminine, however, does not extend this critique of gender into television analysis but merely posits an equivalence of gender and genre.

Fiske's segregation of genres into masculine and feminine should logically work against his argument of the feminine as resistance. In constructing these texts as quintessential feminine narratives he negates the ability of women as readers to find feminine meanings in the face of texts that are not specifically 'gendered'. In other words, soap operas become the site of simply found pleasures. These texts construct their feminine readers, rather than women making sense of them: "the soap operas show how . . . power may be achieved by feminine values" (ibid.: 188). The emphasis is placed on the creation of an ontological category, the feminine, at the expense of an analysis of the effects of that category. Thus Fiske names various practices as inherently feminine which then produce a feminine being: "Feminine work, feminine viewing practices

and feminine texts combine to produce decentered, flexible, multifocused feminine subjectivities" (ibid.: 196). This feminine way is, for Fiske, imbricated within women's sexuality, defined in opposition to men: thus, while men 'come', women,

have no such final achievement. The emphasis on seduction and on its continuous pleasure and power is appropriate to a contemporary feminine subjectivity, for that subjectivity has necessarily been formed through a constant experience of powerlessness and subordination (ibid.: 187-8).

Fiske's creation here of a psycho-sexual category is at the base of his claim for women's resistance. Just as he privileges a 'deferred' resolution over the realist text's ending as inherently more resistant to 'dominant ideology', women's supposed deferral of sexual climax is seen as oppositional. To risk stating the obvious, this argument is slippery at best and hopelessly heterosexist at worst. Fiske's argument for feminine resistance, is based on an equivalence posited between texts and subjectivities. So-called feminine texts betray the same characteristics as his fabrication of female sexual subjectivity. This articulation allows him to identify resistance with the feminine:

Feminine genres, because they articulate the concerns of a gender whose interests are denied by the dominant ideology, must, if they are to be popular, be open enough to admit of a variety of oppositional, or, at least, resistive readings (ibid.: 222).

Fiske can only make the argument that genre reflects gender by keeping within an extremely fixed notion of the feminine, not to mention a rather restricted understanding of

television. At one point, he cites M. E. Brown's list of 'gendered' oppositions. Among the twenty-five dualisms offered, we find that the feminine is "passive", "absence", "scattered", "imagination", "soft", and "night" (ibid.: 203). Constructed in these terms, the feminine offers little analytic potential. Indeed, Fiske's feminine does not even provide much conceptual reach as a simple descriptive device. More importantly, Fiske implodes any semblance of distinct ontological and epistemological levels of analysis into an ontological category. In overcoding the feminine as the site of 'pleasure' and 'plentitude', 'polysemy', 'disruption', and 'deferment', Fiske loses the epistemological capacities that these terms may possess. In making the feminine the reflection of a posited feminine text, Fiske obscures any way into an analysis of women's possible enjoyment of popular texts.

I am attempting to formulate a mode of analysis, and a speaking position within it, that would allow for both ontological and epistemological analyses of the social formation. As a female and feminist theorist I find 'the feminine' limiting as well as limited to a metaphorical mode of describing the social. In conclusion then, I want to expand upon the liabilities of this term for feminist theorists of both sexes. The immediate difficulty in using 'the feminine' concerns its historical connotations. While Jardine raises the 'inevitable connotations' of the feminine, she then proceeds to ignore them. Fiske, on the

other hand, supports his use of the feminine with some of those connotations: 'passivity', 'absence', 'the earth'. Now while I don't want to simply write off some words because of their connotations, I do think that one needs to take them into account before constructing a theoretical project upon them. As Morris states 'meanings' are not (purely) in words, "meaning is produced in specific contexts of discourse" (1988: 32). Theoretical projects are 'specific contexts of discourse' and as such, one needs to be vigilant in the use of words. Thus, the use of the feminine as a key term must also be accompanied by an analysis of its historical traces. For example, the other of the feminine that floats through the various usages of the feminine in Owens, Smith, Jardine and Fiske is that there is (as Morris says of Mary Daly) an "original truth of our female integrity which we re-member during the process of going back" (ibid.: 30). While I won't suggest that any of the writers that I discuss use the feminine in quite this way, this is an important discursive connotation that extends into other positions. If the feminine is to be used as a critical term, its discursive effects must be taken into account. Unless an analysis of the feminine is implicated within its use as a critical term, the figure of the feminine obscures, when it doesn't actively oppose, ontological and epistemological analyses of the social.

To be more specific about the ways in which I think that these uses of the feminine occlude investigation into

the nature of social mediations, I'll cite a brief example from Morris' discussion of Daly. It concerns Daly's rewriting of an argument by Monique Wittig. Wittig writes:

the 'I' (Je) who writes is alien to her own writing at every word because this 'I' (Je) uses a language alien to her; this 'I' (Je) experiences what is alien to her since this 'I' (Je) cannot be 'un' ecrivain . . . 'J/e' poses the ideological and historic question of feminine subjects" (cited in Morris, *ibid.*: 31).

As Morris points out, Wittig articulates several levels of analysis: the historical, the ideological, the experiential, and even, potentially, the economic. In Morris' words:

Wittig is talking about the 'relationship between' the 'Je' and the 'un', between the 'I' of a woman writer and the rest of the discourse process; and in posing her split 'J/e', she connects the question of this relationship to the question of the constitution of femininity in ideology and history (*ibid.*).

The potential of this argument is the way in which "J/e" (a feminist 'I') begins to articulate ontological and epistemological of women's conditions. At an ontological level, we can connect the 'I' and 'the relationship between a woman writer and the rest of the discourse process'. This level can be made to intersect with the epistemological question of 'the constitution of femininity in ideology and history'.

Now, the feminine in the projects I've critiqued is often inherently good, oppositional, political; and in or as the name of the postmodern, it guarantees the limits of knowledge. However, these qualities and functions are to be found in its very name, not in any theoretical operations to which it might be put. In this way, a fundamental

opportunity is lost, an opportunity to precisely map out the changing relationships between identity, ideology, and gender, within the historical moment in which we live. As an ontological category, the feminine as other blocks such analyses.

In the next chapter, I will consider the self-reflexive mode of analysis now emerging, most particularly within debates on ethnographic practices. In examining self-reflexivity as a mode of clarifying who speaks, I'll consider the ways in which the speaking position of the reflexive researcher may create other categories of Otherness, and therefore silence once more those who provide the ground for self-reflexivity.

Notes

¹ Both Stuart Hall and Richard Johnson identify this culturalist/structuralist split within cultural studies. See Hall, 1980, and Johnson, 1979. Martin Allor has more recently positioned this impasse in relation to theories of postmodernism and the context of Canadian cultural studies (Allor, 1987).

² Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, in particular, has articulated Derrida's position and feminism to work through questions of race and class within feminism (see, Spivak, 1987).

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Chapter 5:

The Researcher's Self: Ethnography's Ontological Dilemma

The self has recently emerged within ethnography as a major site of discussion and reflection. This theoretical movement is particularly interesting framed as it is within an academic discipline that has long been concerned with representing other cultures. Historically, ethnography has relied upon science in this task of interpreting other cultures. Thus in 1922 Bronislaw Malinowski could state that:

The time when we could tolerate accounts presenting us the native as a distorted, childish caricature of a human being are gone This picture is false, and like many falsehoods, it has been killed by science (Malinowski cited in Pratt, 1986: 27).

While I will not enter into a critique of Malinowski's work, I will use his remarks to draw out some key problematics now resurfacing within ethnography which pertain to my own project. The central problematic emerging within ethnography is the question of the relation of the self and representation: the question of true or false pictures and the question of who is representing whom in the name of what. As I argued in the previous chapter, 'the feminine' is currently being used in some critical circles as a short-cut through the theoretical terrain of the subject. Thus the feminine operates as the other within certain critical interpretive projects, and as Stuart Hall reminds us, this

state of 'being other' is now a desired one Hall, (1987). In this chapter I will trace out the tensions between the ontological and the epistemological constructions of the self and other as they are represented within contemporary ethnographic theory. Following from this I will examine the limitations of self-reflexivity as a mode of writing which attempts to overcome an ontological/epistemological tension. Generally one could say that the use of the self in ethnographic accounts and theory is motivated by the postmodern claim that science, along with other meta-narratives, is no longer sufficient to the task of describing the world. If, however, self-reflexivity has replaced science as the answer to ethnography's problems, one has to ask if the question remains the same. In other words, can a privileging of the researcher's self kill Malinowski's 'false pictures' or does it merely reproduce others?

Recently there has been a great deal of interest in ethnography's 'problems' both within the discipline of anthropology and from other fields of study. This critical interest from outside is motivated partially because of the very postmodern nature of ethnography's problems: the (im)possibility of representing others; the increasingly unstable construction of the white male as expert; and, as previously mentioned, the eclipse of science as a ruling meta-narrative. More specifically, ethnography is of particular interest because of the ways in which notions of

the self, experience, and science have historically been articulated as its object of inquiry. Ethnography's current self-reflection also highlights the constitution of this discipline: its ontological basis (the world presumed and constructed through its practices); and its epistemological claims (the process of rendering various knowledges as natural or normal). As Janice Radway has pointed out, there is

An extensive literature . . . elaborated by anthropologists attempting to theorize, among other things, the nature of the relationship between culture and social behavior, the epistemological status of 'data' gathered in the field, the nature of 'experience' itself, and the status of explanatory social theories imported from the ethnographer's own cultural universe . . . (Radway, 1988: 367).

From Radway's description we can say that there is now an awareness within ethnography of the conflict between the epistemological issues raised by its research practices (what qualifies as 'data') and the ontological complications of fieldwork (competing experiences). These difficulties can, of course, be found in other disciplines, and indeed the anthropological critics who have formulated ethnography's crisis borrow heavily from other paradigms. Thus writers such as James Clifford, Paul Rabinow, and others have taken their tools of critique from diverse disciplines: "ethnography is moving into areas long occupied by sociology, the novel, or avant-garde cultural critique" (Clifford, 1986: 23).

Nonetheless, the current widespread academic attention

to ethnography is ironic. While Clifford describes the ethnographic crisis as "the predicament [of] ethnographic modernity" (Clifford, 1988: 3), practitioners in other disciplines seem to be drawn to ethnography because of its promise to describe the 'concrete'. Thus in a minor backlash away from poststructuralism's privileging of the textual, and away from Continental high theory, cultural critics have turned to ethnography in hopes of finding real people living real lives. As Radway puts it:

"anthropologists have at least aimed through ethnography to describe the ways in which day-to-day practices of socially situated individuals are always complexly overdetermined by both history and culture" (ibid.). Here the lessons of overdetermination vie with an attention with the individual. Ethnography then is seen as a possible way into the personal, a potential grasping of the individual's specificity. Gail Valaskakis thus conceives of ethnography as a way of considering "anew the significance of the relationship between personal experience and authority, accuracy and objectivity, narrative and understanding" (Valaskakis, 1988: 267-8). In these ways and others, the pull to ethnography is strong. However, in the rush to discover the reality of the self and the other, certain distinctions between ontological constructions and epistemological justifications are lost. I will therefore use this self-reflective moment within ethnography to consider the operations of the self in theory and in

practice.

Self-reflexivity is in fact a rather global term used to describe quite different operations. On the one hand, self-reflexivity is used to describe a meta-theoretical reflection upon the activity of writing texts. On the other, it also is employed to name a phenomenological or experiential moment of interacting with others in the field. In Clifford Geertz' terms we can distinguish these two self-reflexive modes as "self/text" and "self/other" (Geertz, 1988: 11). While there are authors that engage in both of these modes, I think that it is useful to separate for the moment the theoretical speculations about the textuality of the self within ethnographic writing from self-reflexive accounts of ethnographers' experiences within the field. In other words, there is a differentiation here between the function of a self within the production of a purely textual document (the problematic of the sovereign 'I' in the text), and the difficulties of working through and around interactions with subalterns, people who for very concrete reasons have been placed historically below you (the wider problematic of the Western subject meeting his 'other'). These two types of encounters with selves are obviously intertwined in complex ways, however there is little theoretical ground to be gained by confusing the two. In fact, it is quite misleading and damaging to say that the sovereignty of the textual self is the same as that authorial figure who is in place to guarantee (to take but

one instance) the smooth running of Western interests. Simply put, both the self/text and self/other are certainly part of the same apparatus; however, they denote different relations within the apparatus. Thus, they differ in their modes of operation and in their effects. It is important to draw out the different functions of the self at work within ethnography's self-reflexivity. I will therefore raise the ways in which the self in ethnography currently operates at several registers as I emphasize the specific and different theoretical implications of using the self.

I want to turn first to what Geertz identifies as the "self/text" movement within ethnography. This textualizing of the self actually can be more precisely characterized as a meta-theoretical analysis of the changing constitution of ethnography (and more widely, interpretive anthropology) as a discipline. George Marcus and Michael Fisher have documented the shift away from "a regime of 'grand theory'" as it applies to anthropology:

the most interesting theoretical debates . . . have shifted to the level of method, to problems of epistemology, interpretation, and discursive forms of representation themselves, employed by social thinkers. Elevated to a central concern of theoretical reflection, problems of description become problems of representation (Marcus and Fisher, 1986: 9).

Here we can clearly see a move to render central the textual activity of ethnographers. Marcus and Fisher want to 'elevate' the anthropologist as they locate post-structuralist "literary theories of interpretation" as "a source of inspiration for theoretical and self-critical

reflection" (ibid.). Self-reflection (turning the critical gaze upon the self) is therefore key to their project of rendering "anthropology as cultural critique". This project is, however, weakened by a tendency to solve all of anthropology's problems by invoking a self-critical stance. This stance is an ironic one and for Marcus and Fisher irony is the name of the day: "Periods of heightened irony in the means of representing social reality seem to go with heightened perceptions throughout society of living through historic moments of profound change" (ibid.: 15).

This rather large claim about society and their naming of it as ironic then serves to legitimate their proposals for "self-conscious writing strategies" (ibid.). Here Marcus and Fisher take Hayden White's 'troping of history' a little too literally. While White's (1978) account of the historiography of the West does indeed insist upon a four-fold schema of tropes as modes of fashioning history, White's project remains firmly within a meta-description of the relation between the story of history and the Piagetian story of human consciousness. Thus for White, ". . . self-conscious and self-critical discourse mirrors or replicates the phases through which consciousness itself must pass in its progress from a naive (metaphorical) to a self-critical (ironic) comprehension of itself . . ." (White, 1978: 19). Although White's formulation of historiography is heavily metaphorical, he does not go as far as making concrete equivalences between modes of description and

actual historical moments. In other words, within White's project historical times are not automatically 'ironic' merely because irony seems to be in use; a certain tendency within a contemporary society will not play out as a certainty for all contemporaneous societies. However, in their rush to elevate their discipline, Marcus and Fisher seem to lose sight of the specificity of ethnographic activity as it is situated within a certain time and place. In other words, they lose sight of the differences involved in social formations, means of representation, and academic epistemologies.

In resorting to the ironic to explain and equate various disparate cultural elements, Marcus and Fisher seem to underplay the very specificity they argue for. In making no differentiation between the writing of a novel and the execution of a fieldwork report, there is little sense that who is writing what where might matter. Thus, in their formulation:

Intellectually, then, the problem of the moment is less one of explaining changes within broad encompassing frameworks of theory from a concern to preserve the purpose and legitimacy of such theorizing, than of exploring innovative ways of describing at a microscopic level the process of change itself (ibid.).

It is therefore at the 'microscopic' level that self-reflexivity presumably occurs. However, Marcus and Fisher have effectively condensed a number of issues in their move to privilege the textual activity of description. In privileging 'microscopic description', or self-reflexive

writing of ethnographies, the ethnographer's self is free placed outside of the restraints of the wider epistemological implications of his or her activity. Thus Marcus and Fisher want to constitute self-reflexivity as an "antigenre [in order to] to avoid the reinstatement of a restricted canon like that of the recent past" (ibid.: 42). With this move Marcus and Fisher veer away from an epistemological critique of the conditions that allow for certain anthropological knowledges, as they privilege the ontological self-construction of the knowing subject. In other words, self-reflexive anthropology posits a self-reflexive, a self-knowing ethnographic author. This, however, does not entail a critical examination of the discourses that enable the ethnographer to write 'innovatively' of the other.

In contrast to Marcus and Fisher, James Clifford begins his elaboration of the need for ethnographic self-reflexivity from an explicitly epistemological point of view. Thus Clifford asks: "When is a gap in knowledge perceived, and by whom? Where do 'problems' come from?" (Clifford, 1986: 18). Clifford finds "a discursive partiality" in several ethnographic texts which he then equates with 'gaps in knowledge'. In Writing Culture (1986) Clifford expands upon two examples to illustrate this discursive partiality. The first concerns a three-volume anthology of Lakota society, the second, the question of gender. Following Clifford's string of questions, it appears

that these particular cases of discursive partiality were made visible through the insistence of the excluded. As Clifford states, "The first involves the voices and readings of Native Americans, the second those of women" (ibid.: 15). We can therefore answer Clifford's questions about who perceives a gap in knowledge by saying that in the cases he cites it was the Lakota who wanted a more complete account of themselves, and women who queried the totality of 'man'. This, however, is to stay within Clifford's description of two 'events'. To stray from his story is to begin to consider seriously some other 'problems'. Clifford needs these 'marginal' voices to continue with his formulation of self-reflexivity and partial discursivity; in his account, these manoeuvres locate "cultural interpretations in many sorts of reciprocal contexts, and [they oblige] writers to find diverse ways of rendering negotiated realities as multisubjective, power-laden, and incongruent" (ibid.). While this attention to the power relations involved in describing is indeed a necessary basis from which to investigate 'gaps in knowledge', Clifford stops half-way. In other words, he does not follow through on where larger problems stem from, and indeed he unwittingly adds to them himself. Thus while he lauds the Lakota ensemble of texts as opening up "new meanings and desires in an ongoing cultural poesis" (ibid.: 16), the fact that the Lakota's lives, myths and beliefs are authored by a dead ethnographer does not overly trouble him:

Western texts conventionally come with authors attached. Thus it is perhaps inevitable that Lakota Belief, Lakota Society, and Lakota Myth should be published under [James] Walker's name (ibid.: 17).

In a similar move, Clifford credits feminism for showing that "[a] great many portrayals of 'cultural' truths now appear to reflect male domains of experience" (ibid.: 18). Indeed, he cites feminist theorizing as engaged in a very close parallel to what he recommends for ethnography:

It [feminism] debates the historical, political construction of identities and self/other relations, and it probes the gendered positions that make all accounts of, or by, other people inescapably partial (ibid.: 19).

However, neither Clifford nor his co-editor George Marcus, thought fit to include feminist accounts into their "advanced seminar" which then formed their book (ibid.: 20). Clifford does, however, repeatedly gesture to 'the other':

From this perspective, issues of content in ethnography (the exclusion and inclusion of different experiences in the anthropological archive, the rewriting of established traditions) became directly relevant. And this is where feminist and non-Western writings have made their greatest impact (ibid.: 21).

While we may understand the practical problems that Clifford and Marcus faced in putting together their book, it is also important to remember Clifford's earlier question of 'where do problems come from?'. The fact that Clifford grounds his notions of 'partial discursivity' and self-reflexivity with examples of writings that he then rejects has to be taken seriously; it indicates both an ethical and an epistemological weakness in Clifford's argument. In this case, problems arise when some selves are more important

(invited to seminars, published, and cited) than others. Clifford's editorial rejection of certain voices is all the more surprising because of his critical insistence on the textual operations involved in ethnographic writing. However, Clifford's privileging of the textual can be seen as a strategy for avoiding the more problematic aspects of ethnography. For example, in his article "On Ethnographic Allegory" (1986), Clifford argues that "A recognition of allegory complicates the writing and reading of ethnographies in potentially fruitful ways" (1986: 120). In describing some ethnographies as allegories Clifford wants to stress that they are textual productions; that these are not truths. As he points out, "Allegory prompts us to say of any cultural description not 'this represents or symbolizes, that' but rather, 'this is a (morally charged) story about that" (ibid.: 100). In emphasizing that allegories are stories, that they denote "a representation that 'interprets' itself" (ibid.: 99), Clifford critiques as he circumvents an articulation of ethnography as scientific. Thus,

The specific accounts contained in ethnographies can never be limited to a project of scientific description so long as the guiding task of the work is to make the (often strange) behavior of a different way of life humanly comprehensible (ibid.: 101).

On the one hand, considering ethnographies as allegories denies any scientific prerogative, and on the other, it renders the authority of the researcher unstable. Thus, for Clifford an insistence on the allegorical nature of

ethnographic texts highlights two problematic tenets of the discipline:

Anthropological fieldwork has been represented as both a scientific 'laboratory' and a personal 'rite of passage'. The two metaphors capture nicely the discipline's impossible attempt to fuse objective and subjective practices (ibid.: 109).

Here Clifford raises the historical tension within ethnography: the 'impossible' articulation of science and the self. Thus, as Malinowski posited science as an antidote to the false and presumably personal early ethnographic representations, Clifford emphasizes that ethnographies should make 'a different way of life humanly comprehensible'. Even as he acknowledges the objective/subjective tension within ethnography, in rewriting ethnographies as allegories Clifford displaces the importance of this split. Traditionally then, a scientific model served to diminish the centrality of the ethnographer's self as a set of ethnographic practices ensured objectivity. For Clifford, however, allegory is stronger than science. Thus, Clifford takes up Derek Freeman's (1983) attack on Margaret Mead's account of the Samoan. Clifford argues that Mead's ethnographies were "fables of identity"; that she constructed "a foreshortened picture, designed to propose moral, practical lessons for American society" (ibid.: 102-3). More importantly, he argues that Freeman's "empirical overkill" is equally allegorical: "as Freeman heaps up instances of Samoan anxiety and violence, the allegorical frame for his own

undertaking begins to emerge" (ibid.: 102-3). Thus Clifford contends that scientific accounts establish "a privileged allegorical register", however, "once all meaningful levels in a text, including theories and interpretations, are recognized as allegorical, it becomes difficult to view one of them as privileged, accounting for the rest" (ibid.: 103). In this way, Clifford dethrones science and renders the ethnographic split between the lab and the personal into merely two possible levels of meaning within the text.

At this point one needs to ask whether Clifford's insistence upon the allegorical solves the epistemological and ontological tensions within ethnography. Clifford wants to argue that the "valuing of multiple allegorical registers" allows other voices to participate in ethnographies (ibid.). Thus he states that a recognition of allegory has "meant giving indigenous discourse a semi-independent status in the textual whole, interrupting the privileged monotone of 'scientific' representation" (ibid.). Clifford's move here is admittedly an elegant one; in shifting the whole ethnographic activity to the level of writing (and ultimately, reading), he has displaced attention away from local fieldwork practices. In other words, he has turned the normal order of things upside down. Instead of the usual procedure of fieldwork research followed by the ethnographic text, the text takes prominence. While Clifford hopes that this arrangement will ensure the inclusion of other voices, it seems more likely

that further emphasis will be placed on the ethnographer.

The recognition that ethnographies are stories, with several levels of possible interpretations is an important one. This recognition, however, can not be taken as necessarily indicative of a lessening of the ethnographer's power. On the contrary, the emphasis on textual operations may further centre the researcher's self in relation to the text. Whose stories are being told to whom?

Clifford concludes his argument on allegory by setting out a relationship of writer/text/reader:

Finally, a recognition of allegory requires that as readers and writers of ethnographies, we struggle to confront and take responsibility for our systematic constructions of others and of ourselves through others. This recognition need not ultimately lead to an ironic position--though it must contend with profound ironies. If we are condemned to tell stories we cannot control, may we not, at least, tell stories we believe to be true (ibid.: 121).

While there is a gesture here to acknowledge the epistemological implications of ethnographies (that 'we should struggle over the systematic construction of others'), a privileging of allegory will not get him there. Certainly, as Clifford argues, "Allegory draws special attention to the narrative character of cultural representations" (ibid.: 100). This, however, merely reinforces the notion of the ethnographer as the central story-teller, who renders the 'strange' familiar for his readers back home. The ethnographer thus constructs ontological truths that can be understood in terms of a shared (mainly Western) perspective. As Clifford himself

states, "ethnography's narrative of specific differences presupposes, and always refers to, an abstract plane of similarity" (ibid.: 101). Thus, in the final analysis, Clifford can only say that we tell stories that we can't control; as he has stressed earlier in citing Coleridge, "allegorical writing [works] to convey . . . either moral qualities or conceptions of the mind that are not in themselves objects of the senses, or other images, agents, fortunes, and circumstances" (Coleridge cited in Clifford, ibid.). In short, what Clifford is arguing is that ethnographers' stories present the 'fables of identity' of either the person or the culture to which he belongs. Thus, we cannot control them, we can only describe the foreign object in familiar terms. If this is so, then Clifford's final remark becomes tautological; we must believe these stories to be true in that they belong and operate within our own terms. In other words, Clifford has no criteria to judge, or even question, 'the truth' of these stories; he describes ethnographies as ontological constructions built around the figure of the ethnographer. Ultimately then, Clifford has elaborated a careful argument to prove what the marginal has known for a long time--he who pays the piper chooses the tune.

Against Clifford's determined move to render ethnography a purely discursive activity, constructed through the figure of the ethnographer but emptied of bodies, Geertz is quite emphatic about the actuality of the

ethnographer. His Works and Lives (1988) places the ethnographer in his or her doubled setting: a physical being in the field who then writes up his or her experiences at home. As Geertz puts it:

However far from the groves of academe anthropologists seek out their subjects . . . they write their accounts with the world of lecterns, libraries, blackboards, and seminars all about them. . . . It is Being Here, a scholar among scholars, that gets your anthropology read . . . published, reviewed, cited, taught (Geertz, 1988: 129-130).

In contrast to what he calls the 'meta-ethnographers', Geertz maintains that there is "the un-get-aroundable fact that all ethnographical descriptions are homemade, that they are the describer's descriptions, not those of the described" (ibid.: 145). In response to Clifford's privileging of the self/text, Geertz sees ethnography as a fairly straightforward enterprise. Thus ethnography adds to "our understanding of what it is to open (a bit) the consciousness of one group of people to (something of) the life-form of another, and in that way to (something of) their own" (ibid.: 143). Embedded in this 'opening up' of cultures onto others is the ethnographic account which for Geertz rests upon:

[the anthropologists'] capacity to convince us that what they say is a result of their having actually penetrated (or, if you prefer, been penetrated by) another form of life, of having, one way or another, truly 'been there' (ibid.: 4).

This then is a clear description of the necessary ontological moment of the ethnographic endeavour. The ethnographer exists in his or her ability to convince us of

another 'form of life', of the fact that their beings have been in contact with others. In turn, the ethnographic text is part and parcel of the ethnographic experience. It is the record of 'penetration', and describes "a present--to convey in words 'what it is like' to be somewhere specific in the lifeline of the world" (ibid.: 143).

This description of the ethnographic project is obviously quite different than those of Marcus and Fisher, or Clifford. Both the ontological and epistemological requirements of ethnography are summed up for Geertz in the words of Baron Munchausen, "Was you dere, Sharlie?" (Geertz, ibid.: 5). In other words, ethnographic knowledge depends upon the fact that the ethnographer is 'there' and that he or she then conveys that special order of reality that constitutes 'being there' ¹. The strength of Geertz' critique of the ethnography-as-discourse camp is that he distinguishes between two necessary moments in ethnographic production: "no matter how delicate a matter facing the other might be it is not the same sort of thing as facing the page" (Geertz, ibid.: 10). Here 'the other' is not merely on the page, or in the text; the figure of 'the other' is inherently bound up with the ethnographer's being 'over there'. 'The other' then comes to exist in the ethnographer's act of remembrance. Geertz succinctly describes the task of the ethnographer as "the oddity of constructing texts ostensibly scientific out of experiences broadly biographical" (ibid.). Thus, here again Geertz

weaves together the contradictory requirements of ethnography--moments of being have to be rendered into texts and knowledges.

While Geertz' insights are relevant, I think that we may go beyond them. Taking from his depiction of the discipline, we can say that ethnography's object of inquiry includes the lived and the experiential. Thus ontological moments (those 'experiences broadly biographical') are a necessary condition of possibility within ethnography. One could argue that Geertz is mainly concerned with the ethnographer's being, over that of the other. The only way to know 'the other' is in relation to ourselves; as Geertz wrote in The Interpretation of Cultures (1973): "We begin with our own interpretations of what our informants are up to or think they are up to, and systematize these" (cited in Rabinow, 1983: 65). Thus, the informant is conceived through the figure of the ethnographer. While Geertz' own particular structural/semiotic project of interpretation then 'systematizes' what 'the informant thinks he is up to', it is obvious that the ethnographer is the nodal point here. Ethnography, then, is a "person-specific" endeavour (Geertz, 1988: 6) and needless to say, that person is the researcher. In contrast to Clifford's conclusion that we finally have to rely on a belief that some stories are truer than others, Geertz puts the onus on the ethnographer's ability to convey his "close-in contact with far-out lives" (ibid.). As he states, "[u]nable to recover the immediacies of field work

for empirical reinspection, we listen to some voices and ignore others" (ibid.). It is then the ability to convey that special order of reality, the hermeneutical reconstruction of the experience of being in the field, that will get you listened to. Thus, for Geertz, the ethnographer's self is constructed both in the field and at home in his or her texts, but s/he must have 'been there' before facing the page. As Geertz puts it, "[g]etting themselves into the text . . . may be as difficult for ethnographers as getting themselves into the culture" (ibid.: 17). Difficult as these two representations of the self may be they are, for Geertz, what ethnographers do: "But one way or another, however unreflectively and with what ever misgivings about the propriety of it all, ethnographers all manage nevertheless to do it" (ibid.).

Putting forward the self is, therefore, essential to the production of ethnographies. However, Geertz does not consider either the experiential or the textual self as problematic. Indeed, because both are necessary, he tends to collapse the writing of the self with its position in the field. Although he devotes his opening chapter of Works and Lives to Foucault's and Barthes' theories of the author, the ethnographic author does not overly worry Geertz. Ethnographers thus 'author' ethnographies; as the subtitle of his book straightforwardly proclaims: "The Anthropologist as Author". Geertz' bottom line on the author question is that "the burden of authorship cannot be evaded, however

heavy it may have grown" (ibid.: 140). One of the few points that Geertz takes from Foucault is the question of 'author-functions' which he translates as: first, a question of "signature", "a matter of the construction of writerly identity" (ibid.: 9); and second, as "discourse", "a matter of developing a way of putting things . . . that it connected to that identity in such a way that it seems to come from it" (ibid.). Geertz thus uses Foucault in order to formulate questions that he already has the answer for. That answer concerns the fact that the 'greats' in ethnography (Levi-Strauss, Evans-Pritchard, Malinowski, Benedict) all took on 'the burden of authorship' and thus laid out styles in ethnographic writing. The 'greats' then constituted different rhetorical strains within the ethnographic vocabulary ("Radcliffe-Brownian Functionalism", "Levi-Straussian Structuralism"). These ethnographic 'authors' consequently fathered "some family resemblances" in following generations of practitioners (ibid.: 8). Thus Geertz privileges some ethnographic accounts on the grounds that they convincingly reveal 'person-specific' relations in the field. Geertz tends to brush over the fact that these 'authors' may also serve to constitute what the field is supposed to look like and how one is to act within it. That a Levi-Straussian might arrive with quite different questions and hence describe the field altogether in a different manner than a Meadian is subsumed within 'person-specificness'.

In his rather sketchy reading of Foucault, Geertz omits certain key Foucauldean tenets which might problematize his discipline. One might, for example, ask if there are historical conditions of possibility that allow for certain descriptions. In his haste to put the discipline right, Geertz constructs rather limiting parameters for his questions. Thus, to ask if there are historical reasons that enable certain persons to construct themselves in the field and the effects that 'person-specific' accounts might have, is, for Geertz, to subscribe to an articulation of anthropology as imperialism. Any questions about whether "The end of imperialism . . . will mean the end of what has been anthropology" are characterized by Geertz as "crude" (ibid.: 134). While automatic equations of historical economic systems and changes in an academic discipline are indeed rather 'crude', Geertz' insistence on the 'being there' necessary to ethnography would seem to be compatible with a recognition that ethnographic practices do actually take place in the 'real world'. The centrality of 'being there' immediately differentiates ethnography from the more nebulous nature of other disciplines (indeed, part of Geertz' rancor with Clifford's 'meta-ethnography' is that Clifford is rarely anywhere but here in the 'ivory tower'). Given this formulation of the field, Geertz' refusal to consider the wider issues entailed by 'being there' is surprising. It would seem to follow that a privileging of 'being there' would raise questions about what happens to

'the there' when the ethnographer arrives, stays, and leaves.

Edward Said has argued that historically the entrance is easy:

the scientist, the scholar, the missionary, the trader, or the soldier was in, or thought about the Orient because 'he could be there' . . . with very little resistance on the Orient's part (Said, 1977: 7).

While Said's argument proposes a deconstruction of the historical grounds that allowed for the economic and discursive appropriation of Asia, his attention to the physicality of 'being there' is important. Here the fact that one 'could be there' is a necessary condition for 'being there' and also stresses the 'was there'. In other words, the discursive possibility of the Orient (the ways in which it is figured as a knowable entity) is articulated with the fact that it has been physically known, visited, and appropriated. As he points out, knowledges are bound up with bodies and authors with effects:

if it is true that no production of knowledge in the human sciences can ever ignore or disclaim its author's involvement as a human subject in his own circumstances, then it must also be true that for a European or American studying the Orient there can be no disclaiming the main circumstances of his actuality" (ibid.: 11).

While one can image what Geertz would say of Said's overall argument ('crude'), the latter's remarks can be used to problematize the former's 'person-specific' accounts of the field. Thus, one of the hidden grounds of ethnography's possibility is that ethnographers can 'be there'. Although

Geertz does describe quite closely the written entrance scenes of various ethnographers, his analysis is concerned with the different textual styles they employed--"Dickensian exuberance and Conradian fatality" (ibid.: 13). Two major questions are never raised: first, what other factors were necessary (economic, historic, social, etc.) for the arrival, for getting and staying 'there', and second, what were the 'main circumstances of the ethnographer's actuality'. In contrast to Geertz' use of 'person-specific' to designate a mainly textual authorial function, it must be emphasized that ethnography has always demanded its share of bodies, and has choreographed them in particular ways. We can, therefore, assert that there is a certain articulation of historical practices that allows for the possibility of 'person-specific' accounts, and that those accounts are attached to real bodies which then spawn effects that are both textual and non-discursive. In addition, there are reasons other than rhetorical choices that result in some accounts being heard, while other voices are ignored. One way to analyze this complex situation is to look at the tension and intercalation of experiential and textual levels within ethnography. In other words, 'being there' necessitates ontological moments within the truth statements of ethnography. Moreover, knowledge relations that are produced through 'being there' must also engage an epistemological level of analysis. These knowledge relations are organized around and through the figure and the actual

experiential self of the ethnographer. Just as in Said's argument colonialism depends on the fact that the soldier, missionary, or scholar could be there and actually was there, ethnography's twin conditions of possibility are the potentiality of having been there and the ability to convey this fact. Of course, the movement between these two requirements of ethnography has a wider significance. As Ian Hacking reminds us, "although whichever propositions are true may depend on the data, the fact that they are candidates for being true is a consequence of an historical event" (cited in Rabinow, 1986: 237). Thus the rendering of the fieldwork experience into 'data' and the ways in which some 'biographical experiences' become 'candidates for being true' are both epistemological and ontological issues.

Before turning to a consideration of "self/other" ethnographic texts, I want to be specific about why it is important to keep ontological and epistemological analyses of the self separate, or in tension. As I have argued, the 'new ethnographers' such as Marcus and Fisher and Clifford want to elevate the ethnographer and his subjects into a realm of pure discursivity. While Geertz critiques this move he avoids, without rearranging, the hierarchical ordering of knowledges that has historically operated within the discipline. Thus while the former advocate a 'polyphonic' text as a way of ensuring that the voices of the informant are on an equal footing with that of the ethnographer, Geertz argues that the burden of authorship cannot be

displaced "onto 'method', 'language', or . . . 'the people themselves'" (ibid.: 140). Neither of these moves, the acceptance or the deferral of ethnographic authority, come to grips with the ontological status of the ethnographer and the actual effects on ethnography's subjects and objects both within the text and outside. As Paul Rabinow has remarked, "meta-ethnographic flattening . . . makes all the world's cultures practitioners of textuality" (1986: 250). Rabinow further says that Clifford "is not talking primarily about relations with the other, except as mediated through his central analytic concern, discursive tropes, and strategies" (ibid.: 251). One needs to ask then what ethnography is reflecting upon.

There are, of course, several issues that circulate within the recent reflective debates: the constitution of the discipline; the problematization of us/them constructs; the role of the ethnographer within a changing geo-political world. These are important questions, unfortunately they are more often than not posed in relation to the ethnographer's self. They are thus questions which for all their "rhetorical earnestness" (Geertz, ibid.: 15) recentre the ethnographer as the site of inquiry. It is as if ethnography's historical anxieties about subjectivity have been shifted onto an obsessive concern for the researcher's own self. A confirmation of this trend can be seen in the way that the figure of the other is avoided except as a tropical or allegorical entity. This is then to remark upon

the way in which 'the other' has disappeared within ethnography's reflection upon itself. However, at an ontological level of analysis, we can look at the ways in which Clifford's textualizing of ethnography serves to constitute the ethnographer's self at the expense the of actuality of 'the other'. In interrogating the ethnographic subject he ignores ethnography's traditional objects: the lives of the individuals and the communities under study. Furthermore, it cannot be assumed that a privileged inquiry into the ethnographer's self will shed light upon the wider effects of that self. In a recent comment upon ethnography's developments, Ien Ang remarked that:

the distinction between epistemological and ontological self-reflexivity should not be seen as an absolute dichotomy, but as a difference in emphasis, as the two are intricately related to each other: the production of knowledge about the other cannot be separated out from the construction of a self-other relationship (forthcoming).

While Ang's recognition of the distinction between the epistemological and the ontological is important, her subsequent characterization of 'post-modern ethnography' as a practice directed at 'the other' is a misreading of the centrality of the researcher's self. In many ways the position of the contemporary self-reflexive ethnographer works to obscure knowledge about 'the other'. As a history of stereotypes produced through various 'us/them' constructions attests to, knowledge of 'us' can be built on ignorance of, and active hostility to, 'them'. However, analyzing both the ontological and epistemological

implications of the self may rescue some of its usefulness. Indeed, an emphasis on the self may serve as a salutary reminder that academic practices also deal in lived bodies and that levels of analysis are to reveal changing conditions in the 'real'. In turning now to a consideration of how the self plays out within the field, I will be concerned with tracing out the functions of the self as it operates both as a warrant of the validity of ethnographic accounts and as a necessary condition of possibility of ethnographic texts. That is to say, I propose an analysis of how the self operates at both ontological and epistemological levels.

A notable and common element in self-reflexive ethnographies is the return to a field previously visited and described. This return rarely constitutes a physical voyage, but rather constitutes a 'second look'. If, as Geertz pointed out, one cannot go back and check the immediacy of the empirical data, it seems that nothing gets in the way of recalling the field across the miles and years. Thus the self-reflexive move starts with a distancing of the experiencing self within the field from the 'I' who rewrites that experience. While Geertz makes it clear that ethnographies are composed of two separate but necessarily articulated moments; being in the field and writing at home, several recent ethnographies add a third term. Thus, Jean-Paul Dumont's The Headman and I: Ambiguity and Ambivalence in the Fieldworking Experience (1978), comes after the

fieldwork and its textual rendition, and asks "Who (or what) was I for the Panare?" (1978: 4). Dumont describes this three-part situation as a developing relation between "'I' and 'they'" which for him proceeds in "progressive-regressive stages: a confrontation, a search for meaning, and, optimally, a recognition" (ibid.: 5). Thus, Dumont's "anthropological reflection" constitutes the final stage (or in Dumont's terms, "the synthesis") "at which point the other is recognized in his/her otherness" (ibid.). However, the context for this recognition is Dumont himself: "the anthropologizing subject is the occasion, the pretext, and the locus of a drama that he/she is to reflect upon" (ibid.: 12). The gaze is turned inwards because "The studied people are not there, passively waiting for me to take their picture" (ibid.). However, the anthropologist is there and as the 'locus' of reflection poses for Dumont, "the necessity of using myself as a discovery procedure" (ibid.). Dumont situates his work within the larger post-colonialist era, and proposes self-reflection as "the path toward listening to what 'the rest' are telling us with voices that are no longer faint, despite their progressive depletion" (ibid.: 13). With a fervor that would cause Geertz to cringe, Dumont constructs self-reflexive ethnography as an antidote to the articulation of anthropology as imperialism. He takes his motto from an Oglala Sioux's remarks: "Custer died for our sins indeed, but from now on, you talk, we listen" (ibid.).

Dumont then proceeds to talk about himself. He attempts to escape or displace the burden of (ethnographic) authority through a welter of confessional statements. As he describes his interaction with the Panare, Dumont willingly tells of his "objective as well as objectionable view of [them]" (ibid.: 131). His 'objective' stance turns 'objectional' when he loses control:

When I thought that I could take advantage of the situation--that is, that I could ultimately control it--I greatly underestimated the capacity of the Panare to outfox me. I overlooked the ability of the 'objects' to remind me that they were 'subjects' indeed and that I had no manipulative monopoly (ibid.).

However, it is in retrospect that Dumont relinquishes his 'manipulative monopoly' as he steps back to look at his actions. Self-reflexivity is the mechanism that Dumont uses to separate his period in the field from this written account of his time there. Recalling his three-part "progressivo-regressive stages", one can say that this account presumably represents "the synthesis". In retelling the moment of "confrontation", in hindsight Dumont can produce "the recognition". It is at this point that, as Dumont previously stated, "the other is recognized in his/her otherness" (ibid.: 5). In another passage, Dumont again relates this moment of 'recognition' to himself:

My existence had finally emerged. They and I were now in a new situation, being involved in a new relation of compatibility that neither the extremes of subjectivism nor of objectivism, with the relations of dominance that they imply, could have brought forth. I had finally entered Panare culture (ibid.: 66).

This moment of recognition, this supposedly free relationship, is Dumont's recollection of having been adopted by the Panare. What Dumont calls his "new and faked adoption" resulted in the fact that "the whole kinship terminology of the Panare was up for grabs for the avid anthropologist" (ibid.: 65). Through this adoption Dumont finds himself within the kinship network: "since Domingo Barrios was my 'son', Marquito was my 'yako', my 'brother'" (ibid.). Dumont argues that this adoption was mutually beneficial to himself and to Marquito:

It was equally evident to everybody that my fictive consanguinity with him was a powerful symbol. Even though its power was limited to the duration of my fieldwork, as long as it lasted, it was manipulated as much by Marquito as by me (ibid.: 130).

Dumont thus wants to portray his dealings with the Panare as a two-way relationship. He specifies what the Panare got out of him: "There is no doubt that in [Domingo's] opinion I was what in the U.S. would be called a fat cat" (ibid.: 132). As such, Dumont's worth to the Panare was as a provider of goods. It is a situation that Dumont does not relish:

His [Domingo's] constant and somewhat childish demands, always articulated in a kinship idiom, truly exasperated me. . . . Trapped as I was in this situation, I stood as firm as possible, miserly as ever, but that did not discourage his requests (ibid.).

To take Dumont at his word, one might ask what type of 'recognition' is going on here; which 'other' is being recognized in his/her 'otherness'? It is clear from Dumont's account that he is recognized as someone with

something to give (and presumably his reluctance to give is also recognized by the Panare). He is not so candid about what they offer to him. In other words, the Panare have recognized Dumont in 'his otherness', but what is their 'otherness' for him? It becomes obvious through his account (the only one of that particular encounter that we can have access to) that the Panare offer what the objects of ethnographies have traditionally offered to ethnographers; that is, their culture, themselves. The Panare thus present their 'otherness' to him in the form of (that most traditional of ethnographic prizes) their kinship network. This fairly normal ethnographic situation (the ethnographer trades some material goods for a close look at 'the other's' existence) is rendered self-reflexive in Dumont's second version of his visit. However, the self-reflexivity of this account only serves to render Dumont more visible (a picture of the anthropologist with warts and all). While he does move the ethnographer in the text from behind a veil of objectivity onto centre stage, this manoeuvre does not enhance 'the other's' position.

In fact, as Dumont-the-author emerges within the text, the Panare seem to disappear. This evacuation of the other is surprising in that Dumont has critiqued this tendency. In his introduction Dumont talks about the confessional nature of unconventional ethnographies of the sixties and finds fault with their representations of 'the other' on the grounds that: "The human group that the anthropologist

studied became the pretext for his/her lyricism, and by the same token almost disappeared" (ibid.: 9). Given this critical acknowledgment of the dangers of "self-indulgence", Dumont's own entrapment within his self is intriguing. However, the trouble stems less from Dumont's 'lyricism' than from his model of how the ethnography should proceed and what it should achieve. Dumont posits that "[t]he search for meaning corresponds to the dialectic process in which an exchange takes place, one in which they figure me out and I figure them out, so to speak" (ibid.: 5). This dialectic is based, for Dumont, on the self-reflexivity of the ethnographer as he proceeds towards a mutual 'otherness'. The problem here is that 'otherness' is constructed as an ontological moment. In other words, he posits a separate realm of reality that is contingent on the mingling of selves (self/other). This attention to the self is grounded in Dumont's manoeuvre of exposing himself, however this self is only revealed to us in his textual account. While it is possible that the Panare may later read this account of Dumont's self and realise that he had more to give than tobacco and other material objects, it is unlikely. The point here is two-fold: first, self-reflexivity emerges through the textual rendition of the encounter--it comes after 'being there'; second, Dumont has more at stake in constructing his self within the otherness of the Panare than they do within his. Dumont calls this, 'I' becoming 'they' (ibid.), an equation which makes perfect

ethnographic sense; but it doesn't quite work (carry the same meaning and odds) as 'they' becoming 'I'.

What we can see in Dumont's The Headman and I is an ontologizing of the ethnographic process. His insistence on the self obscures the epistemological weakness of his proposed dialectic of otherness. This dialectic then aims at producing new selves within the field, the goal is that of ontological moments freed from ethnography's stake in science. However, this rendering of the ontological moment of ethnography (the gaining of "insight about 'me' and 'them'" [ibid.: 4]) paradoxically can only be achieved after the fact. Thus self-reflexivity enters at the point of the text, not in the field: "The interpretation of the relationship between the Panare Indians and myself requires what I would like to call a return to the text" (ibid.). Here then the 'self/other' equation meets that of the 'self/text' with a resulting emphasis on the ethnographer's self in relation to the other and the text. Dumont thus uses both the category of 'the other', and the text to reproduce the ontological validity of his ethnography. In so doing he impresses upon us that he indeed was 'there'; thus the ontological imperative of ethnography is articulated with the ontological supremacy of the ethnographer's self.

Paul Rabinow's Reflections on Fieldwork in Morocco (1977) is one of the earlier examples of the new wave in self-reflexivity. Rabinow is, however, more circumspect in his claims than Dumont. In fact, Rabinow immediately pokes

fun at the grandeur associated with 'being an anthropologist':

I left America with a sense of giddy release. I was sick of being a student, tired of the city, and felt politically impotent. I was going to Morocco to become an anthropologist (1977: 1).

This opening immediately gives us a sense of Rabinow's self before he enters the field. Unlike Dumont, Rabinow is not going to construct his self suddenly upon entering the field, or in relation to an encountered 'other'. Being in the field does not solely define Rabinow. The 'field' is also set against a 'here' (America) where Robert Kennedy has just been murdered. 'Getting there' includes 'leaving here' and arriving in Paris in June of 1968 (too late, but meeting up with other people also fleeing the States), before finally reaching a very "ethnographic" Morocco (ibid.: 1-10). In other words, Rabinow's self is clearly not dependent on the ontological moment within the field. The ethnographic experience is articulated here with other experiences and thus has other dimensions. This perspective is then extended to include the other parts of his informants' lives. 'The other' does not come to life upon meeting the ethnographer; he too is fully formed before the ethnographic encounter. As Rabinow describes it, a partial contact is all that is possible. There are no miraculous moments of ontological togetherness here:

I could understand ben Mohammed only to the extent that he could understand me--that is to say partially. He did not live in a crystalline world of immutable Otherness any more than I did. He grew up in an

historical situation which provided him with meaningful but only partially satisfactory interpretations of his world, as did I. Our Otherness was not an ineffable essence, but rather the sum of different historical experiences (ibid.: 162).

Thus against Dumont's attempts to delineate an ethnographic self through 'otherness', Rabinow sets the goal of ethnography rather closer to earth. In clearly setting out that Otherness is the necessary result of different historical experiences, he sets the stage for the possibility of two sets of 'otherness' that can articulate in partial ways.

For Rabinow the ethnographic process consists in jostling these two separate sets of historical experiences that constitute 'otherness'. Through this process 'naturalized' notions are challenged; as Rabinow says, "my common-sense world was also changed" (ibid.: 38). This self-reflexivity is described as part of the ethnographic practices of "highlighting, identification, and analysis" (ibid.). Everyday occurrences in the field require a heightened level of awareness on the part of the ethnographer; "they focused and dominated my consciousness" (Rabinow, ibid.). While this is not surprising, Rabinow also emphasizes the ways in which the informant is brought into this process of rendering his familiar world into description. Thus, in his role as informant 'the other' actively dissects his "usual patterns of experience" (ibid.). Rabinow brings out the obvious but rarely stated fact that it is not directly the ethnographer who affects

'the other', but rather it is the process of describing his own world that brings about a difference in perspective. This is not to say that the person of the ethnographer does not affect the situation. It is precisely the process of description that the ethnographer initiates (the informant is chosen by him, spends a lot of time with him, is paid by him, etc.) which then begins to alter the informant's world. As Rabinow says of one of his informants:

He was constantly being forced to reflect upon his own activities and objectify them. . . . the more we engaged in such activity, the more he experienced aspects of his own life in new ways. Under my systematic questioning, Ali was taking realms of his own world and interpreting them for an outsider (ibid.: 38-9).

In contrast to the dictate of 'making the strange familiar' which informs much ethnography, Rabinow here concentrates on the ways in which, for the informant, the familiar is rendered strange. It is the informant's reality that is restructured in the process of telling. Thus instead on emphasizing the ethnographer's interpretations, Rabinow focuses upon the informant, 'the other', as performing a difficult task of interpretation. This process has the effect of creating a sense of the strange in both ethnographer and informant:

he [Ali, the informant], too, was spending more time in this liminal, self-conscious world between cultures. This is a difficult and trying experience--one could almost say that it is 'unnatural'--and not everyone will tolerate its ambiguities and strains (ibid.:39).

Thus, for Rabinow reflection upon one's self and one's world

is a major component of the ethnographic experience. It is not then an effect of the textualization of the field. This is not Dumont's 'recognition of the other', but rather a process of denaturalization. Self-reflexivity is therefore an integral element within ethnographic practices and not an object to be reified. As a practice it produces certain knowledges; in Rabinow's words: "[a]s time wears on, anthropologist and informant share a stock upon which they hope to rely with less self-reflection in the future" (ibid.). In this way, self-reflexivity and the jarring denaturalization of one's sense of self can construct a mutual ground between the ethnographer and the informant. This mutual ground is then the limit of the ethnographic endeavour, a partial articulation of two sets of historical experiences. In Rabinow's words, "[t]he common understanding they construct is fragile and thin, but it upon this shaky ground that anthropological inquiry proceeds" (ibid.).

To step back and compare Rabinow's construction of the ethnographic project with those of Marcus and Fisher, Clifford, Geertz and Dumont, we can immediately see a difference in emphasis. In spite of the differences in their projects, in contrast with Rabinow, they are united in their use of ethnography as a means of depicting the fundamental similarity of the world's cultures. For Geertz the ontological necessity of 'being there' operates to validate the truthfulness of this claim. For Clifford,

"ethnography's narrative of specific differences presupposes, and always refers to, an abstract plane of similarity" (1986: 101). In Marcus and Fisher's words, ethnography is of interest because, "[e]levated to a central concern of theoretical reflection, problems of description become problems of representation" (1986: 9). This description of ethnography gets played out in Clifford's and Geertz' attention to the mechanics of writing ethnographies. Though they differ substantially, both are concerned with the hermeneutical project of 'making the strange familiar', and thus with the ways in which things (people, cultures, themselves) are re-presented in meaningful (and hence for them, similar) ways. The self in this sense of ethnography is the ontological ground which will ensure a certain similarity. In other words, this ground is dependent upon the articulation of the ethnographer's projected self and that of the informant. Dumont takes this to extremes as he posits the possibility of a mutual self/other being. These projects therefore tend to reinforce the centrality of some selves over others. More importantly, self-reflexivity is fundamentally, in these textual ethnographic projects, a practice that occurs at the moment of writing up the account, when you have returned from 'there'.

However, in Rabinow's account of Morocco a different use of the self emerges. Here we have selves involved in everyday practices:

Most of the anthropologist's time is spent sitting

around waiting for informants, doing errands, drinking tea, taking genealogies, mediating fights, being pestered for rides, and vainly attempting small talk--all in someone else's culture (ibid.: 154).

That one may do these commonplace activities at home does not point to a larger plane of similarity. Rather it emphasizes the fragility of a potential but partial articulation of separate selves. For Rabinow, self-reflexivity is performed on both sides. It is a process that he calls 'intersubjectivity': "mean[ing] literally more than one subject, but being situated neither quite here not there, the subjects do not share a common set of assumptions, experiences, or traditions" (ibid.: 155). The ground on which these separate selves meet is "a public process" (ibid.); it is not a textual recreation or representation. Rabinow's construction of this process than points to the other sense of 'representation', that people stand in for others and represent their ways of life. Recalling Marx's two senses of 'representation', we may remember the German distinction of 'Darstellung' ("the staging of the world in representation--its scene of writing") and 'Vertretung' ("representation in the political context")². As Gayatri Spivak, among others, has pointed out, 'representation' can mean both "a proxy and a portrait" (Spivak, 1988: 276). These two very different sense of 'representation' are blurred together in English. However, for all their attention to the problems of representation, Marcus, Fisher, Clifford, et al., focus

their attention on 'Darstellung', and the 'correct' way to render a portrait of themselves and 'the other'. While Rabinow does not explicitly raise the question of 'Vertretung', of the nature and question of being a proxy, his description of partial selves meeting to discuss their historical experiences and differences does raise this sense of representation. Indeed, the difficult tension between these two senses of representation could well explain Rabinow's recent shift to 'studying up' (studying a peer group)³. In his current study of "a group of elite French administrators" Rabinow states that: "By 'studying up' I find myself in a more comfortable position than I would be were I 'giving voice' on behalf of dominated or marginal groups" (1986: 259). Here then is a more explicit recognition of the problematic nature of 'representing others', of putting one's self forward to speak for others. This, however, seems more apt as a description of ethnography's traditional mode than as an auto-critique of Reflections on Fieldwork in Morocco. However, we can see Rabinow's insistence on the partiality of selves as a first step towards recognizing the twin sense and the double dangers of representation for the discipline of ethnography.

In conclusion then, we can begin to see the problems that the self poses for ethnography. In problematizing the integral role of the self in ethnography I have argued that the difficulties that it raises cannot be solved by a move to pure discursivity. An emphasis on the concept of the self

does, however, draw attention to the ways in which ethnographers have traditionally used their presence in the field to validate the knowledges that they produce. In other words, the ontological construction of 'being there' is necessary for ethnography's epistemological claims of knowing. I have argued that a privileging of a textual self-reflexivity does not resolve the tension between ontological and epistemological levels operating within ethnographic practices. In many cases, attention to the ethnographer's self merely serves to turn the gaze upon the researcher, as it implodes epistemology into ontological necessity. This implosion is not, however, inherent to the concept of the self, but comes about through certain theoretical practices. If we keep in mind the double sense of 'representation' we may begin to consider the concept of the self as designating the tension between 'a portrait and a proxy'. As portrait and proxy, putting forward the self is both an ontological moment (an experiential instance of individual realization) and an epistemological operation (highlighting established forms of knowledge).

In turning next to an analysis of current feminist theory that incorporates the self, I will argue that both ontological and epistemological levels of analysis can be productively captured within certain uses of the self. Formulating and holding these functions of the self in a generative tension is, I'll argue, a necessary precondition in the establishment of a feminist speaking position within

cultural theory.

Notes

¹ A telling example of ethnography's requirement of 'being there' is the case of Florinda Donner's book, Shabono: A True Adventure in the Remote and Magical Heart of the South American Jungle (1982). As Mary Louise Pratt has documented, Donner's book was first lauded by anthropologists and then reviled as it became questionable as to whether Donner had actually 'been there' with the Shabono. See Pratt's (1986) investigation of the trope of travel writing and personal narrative in ethnographic writing.

² This specification of 'Darstellung' and Vertretung' is taken from G. C. Spivak's "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1988).

³ Janice Radway's recent work on The Book of the Month Club is a fascinating example of 'studying up'. See her (1988) "The Book-of-the-Month Club and the General Reader: On the Uses of 'Serious' Fiction".

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Chapter 6:

Implicating the Self

In the last chapter I looked at the limitations of self-reflexivity within ethnography. While a self-reflexive research strategy promises an epistemological critique of the establishment of certain forms of knowledge, it often ignores an ontological bias implicated in research practices. In other words, the field, or the research situation, is constructed around the researcher. In this chapter I will consider an autobiographical foregrounding of the self as a way of critically acknowledging the ontological and epistemological bases of knowledge formation. My interest here is feminist uses of the autobiographical as a tactic within the production of theory. This does not require us to return to textual analyses of actual autobiographies, but rather to think through a series of questions regarding the possible construction of a specifically feminist speaking position within cultural theory. Can a feminist insistence on the autobiographical sustain a critical and political speaking position without privileging an ontological category of 'femaleness'?

Angela McRobbie's (1982) article on feminist research was one of the first to explicitly tackle the problems inherent in feminist cultural studies research. McRobbie's point of departure was three-fold: she looked at women

researchers, the women researched, and the various relations among the two. The feminist researcher in McRobbie's account starts from a different point than her non-feminist counterparts:

Feminism forces us to locate our own auto-biographies and our experience inside the questions we might want to ask, so that we continually do feel with the women we are studying. So our own self-respect is caught up in our research relations with women and girls and also other women field-workers. (1982: 52).

Thus feminism's articulation of 'the personal is the political' reaches into feminist research practices. The research site is rendered 'political' largely because of the ways in which feminism has sought to "subvert" claims of objectivity within "this rampant academicism" (ibid.: 51). McRobbie states that "research is an historically-charged practice; that is it can never present more than a partial portrait of the phenomenon under study" (ibid.: 52). The importance of McRobbie's statement, however, is less the point that research is 'partial' and more that it is an 'historically-charged' project. It is the emphasis on the historical nature of the relations involved in research that refutes one of liberal feminism's more enduring claims:

feminism shouldn't be taken as a password misleading us into a false notion of 'oneness' with all women purely on the grounds of gender. No matter how much our past personal experience figures and feeds into the research programme, we can't possibly assume that it necessarily corresponds in any way to that of our research 'subjects'. (ibid.).

Thus, in arguing for the recognition of research as an historically informed practice located in, and carrying with

it, certain previously ascribed relations of power, McRobbie discards the fact that 'we're all women' as a basis of unity. Both the researcher's and the researched's 'past personal experience' are rendered all the more important because they are kept distinct. The self/other relation is here a vigilant one. Moreover, there are concrete differences involved in their relation. As McRobbie stresses, the researcher is tied most often to an institution and all sorts of cultural practices which are carried with her into the researched's sphere: "[f]unded by the state, representatives of higher education, well-spoken, self-confident and friendly as well, many women researchers might well on first impressions seem like Martians" (ibid.: 56). Moreover, "this unequal distribution of privilege" requires us to consider whether "women are often such good research subjects because of their willingness to talk, which is in itself an index of their powerlessness?" (ibid.: 56).

Following McRobbie's critique of research practices we can begin to see the historical and structural inequalities built into the research situation. The difficulties that McRobbie points to are not resolved when both the researcher and the researched are women. Indeed, focusing on women as research subjects carries an added problematic: "Is this kind of research parasitic on women's entrapment in the ghettos of gossip?" (McRobbie, ibid.: 57). Thus, constructing the researcher and the researched as equal, as

fellow selves, within historically unequal research relations is illusory.

Is then the only avenue open to feminists that which Rosalind Coward uses in Female Desires, namely "fieldwork on myself and on my friends and family"? (Coward, 1985: 14-15). The answer, I think, lies somewhere in between the vigilance advocated by McRobbie and the unproblematic way in which Coward constructs 'a field' around her friends and family. A potential way out of this morass is to sidestep for a moment the way in which fieldwork is positioned as coming first, as that which is 'done' and then analyzed. At one point in her article McRobbie raises the ways in which "[o]ur own subjectivity can often add to the force of research, just as our precise political position will inflect our argument" (ibid.: 54). Her "vital question [sic] of who we are writing for and why" (ibid.) has to be augmented with where we write from and how. While these questions may throw us back into an uncritical emphasis on the self, I will argue that they may also provide the conditions of possibility for constructing other paths of research, other but related "set[s] of involvements" (McRobbie, ibid.: 57).

Meaghan Morris argues that nothing is as real and as necessary, and at the same time as necessarily abstract, as theorizing the implications of a concept of the self in the formulation of a possible speaking position. Put another way:

transforming discursive material that otherwise 'leaves

a woman no place from which to speak, or nothing to say' . . . actively assume[s] that the movement of women to a position of power in discourse is a political necessity, and a practical problem (Morris, 1988a: 5).

The project at hand, therefore, is simultaneously a political, practical and theoretical one. In elaborating a concept of the self I am proposing a level of analysis which engages the political and the practical. The movement of women to a speaking position cannot be brought about through discourse alone, nor will simply privileging experience provide women with 'something to say'. As Morris says, the production of a speaking position can not be understood as the invention of "a 'personal voice' for 'me'" (ibid.: 7); it does not seek to recreate a transparent self who speaks from the heart, nor to excavate 'lost voices'. Instead, this project recognizes that "producing a 'position' is a problem of rhetoric, of developing enunciative strategies . . . precisely in relation to the cultural and social conventions that make speaking difficult or impossible for women" (Morris, ibid.). This attention to the conventions that, at specific points, make it difficult for women to speak discounts an essential and pre-symbolic 'women's space'. Rhetorics, and 'enunciative strategies' are always developed in reference to the historical conventions of the day. They are not tied into a primordial 'chora' (Kristeva, 1986), nor expressed in the primacy of female (physical) difference. It is important to stress, as Morris does, that we are talking about "strategies of reference" (ibid.) which should

throw us back into everyday conventions, and away from poststructuralism's privileging of 'subject-positions'.

In this way the production of a speaking position is always tied in with daily life which, as Roger Silverstone has said, is "a kind of guerrilla war" (Silverstone, 1989). Michel de Certeau distinguishes between strategies and tactics to illuminate different modes of procedure:

I will call a strategy the calculation (or manipulation) of power relationships that becomes possible as soon as a subject with will and power . . . can be isolated. It postulates a place that can be delimited as its own and serve as a base from which relations with an exteriority composed of targets and threats . . . can be managed . . . a tactic is a calculated action determined by the absence of a proper locus. The space of the tactic is the space of the other . . . In short, a tactic is an art of the weak. (de Certeau, 1984: 35-8, cited in Silverstone).

We can use de Certeau's distinction to elaborate on the ways in which the self operates at different levels. A feminist use of the self as a condition for a speaking position would resemble a 'tactic'. Given women's historical lack of an institutional 'locus', the self as a tactic emerges in "the practices and procedures of the management of daily life" (Silverstone, *ibid.*). De Certeau reminds us that tactics are not acquiescent but rather that "they are the expression of an opportunistic logic: the rhetoric, the conceits, the tricks of the everyday" (cited in Silverstone, *ibid.*). As Silverstone says of tactics, "[i]t is the world of the voice not the text, of the speaker not the writer" (*ibid.*). The concept of tactic therefore allows us to talk of an active voice, one that is actively implicated in everyday practices

and places. "The tactical rhetorics of everyday life" are to be found:

[i]n the occasions and locations when talk, of the past or the future, of commitments or interests, of self and other, is legitimated or required: in homes, canteens, pubs, at parties, family gatherings, political meetings (ibid.).

The concept of the tactic allows us to theorize the ways in which women put forward a self in common places; it engages with the taken-for-granted and underestimated ways in which women express themselves at home and in the family.

Considering women's uses of their selves as tactical manoeuvres, forces us to "confront questions of women's place within both linguistic and material reality"

(Treichler and Wattman Frank, 1989: 3). I think that we can take the concept of tactical rhetoric to shed light on women's sometimes hidden uses of the self, to think about how the self is 'legitimated and required' in some situations and locations. I do not want to categorize the tactical as the particular domain of women, but rather use this distinction heuristically to show up the traces of certain uses of the self. This is, therefore, to begin to consider the self along the lines that Silverstone outlines: "[t]actical rhetoric is language in action, mobilising both thought and feeling"; it is a way of talking about the self, "our language about ourselves" (Silverstone, ibid.).

While de Certeau's metaphors and Silverstone's extensions of them are useful I do not want to suggest that they exhaust the potential of what I am describing as the

self. What I do want to take from this brief discussion of tactics is a way of looking at certain articulations of the self. My concern here is to reveal the self as both the possession of experience and as a way of conceptualizing the effectivity of that possession. In other words, I contend that the self operates ontologically as an instance (or as an experiential sense) of being brought forth in certain locations: among friends, in certain gendered spaces, in some writing practices, and in theoretical contexts. The identification and insertion of one's self in differing contexts brings forth an order of effects. One need only consider how an academic audience reacts to personal revelations contained within a theoretical context. While one may argue that an academic context is not 'the place' for revealing the self, this would precisely be to recognize that the self can bring forth other consequences which don't 'fit' the location. Used tactically, the self may operate ontologically as it testifies to a separate order of affectivity. This of course does not exhaust the possibilities of the self and, indeed in academic contexts, it is more usually used at an epistemological level. Here the self is used to reveal the historicity of the discourses and structures of the social formation. For example, Foucault's (1980) discussion of the French nineteenth-century hermaphrodite, Herculine Barbin, is concerned with the ways in which she was named by the juridico-medical-medial discourses of the day. The affectivity of her

situation, of her tortured self, is left for others to bring out ¹.

However, I will not judge which level of analysis is the 'correct' one. Indeed, I am advocating an understanding of the self as operating at both ontological and epistemological levels. As both a description of the tension between these two levels and as an analytic tool to investigate the affectivity produced, the self carries with it a certain 'operative reasoning', to use Michèle Le Doeuff's term. In her analysis of Le Doeuff's importance, Morris states that "the question [Le Doeuff] poses of possible places for speech, places other than those prescribed by the Outside/Inside alternative, is an operational question for feminism" (Morris, 1988b: 76). Le Doeuff's notion of 'operative reasoning' cuts through the discursive and non-discursive arenas without privileging either. Hence it is not the 'Outside/Inside' model of discourse, ideology, or the liberal public/private dichotomy that interests Le Doeuff. Rather, as Morris says: "Le Doeuff passes from a concept of images as 'located' in relation to a given discourse (as lodged 'outside', 'at home', 'elsewhere') to a functional analysis of what they do--the 'faire' of images in discourse" (ibid.: 83). Thus, what we have here is a way of understanding the way in which an image or a concept works in relation to a set of discourses as well as what that image or concept 'does' (what meanings it allows or discounts). Taking the example

of the concept of the self, we must analyze it in relation to a given discourse (that of the individual, the Author, the masculine Subject of civilization) but we are also impelled to analyze it 'functionally', to consider how the concept of the self allows for and discounts ways of experiencing the self (e.g., how its 'faire' is 'lodged' within us). As Morris says of Le Doeuff, "her own method of reading draws attention to the importance of asking how philosophical discourses can work in particular contexts, rather than debating their (imagined) worth" (ibid.).

This 'method of reading' is clear in Le Doeuff's essay on Simone de Beauvoir, "Operative Philosophy" (1979). Here Le Doeuff reads de Beauvoir's philosophy as "transforming the existentialist problematic--transposing it from the status of a system to that of a point of view oriented to a theoretical intent by being trained on a determinate and partial field of experience (Morris, ibid.: 101). Thus Le Doeuff is less interested in whether de Beauvoir's existentialism is right (and in any case right to whom? Sartre?) and more concerned to consider her philosophic project as constituting 'a point of view'. As Le Doeuff says, "[m]y object here will be to show how the ethic of authenticity functions as a pertinent theoretical level, an operative viewpoint for exposing the character of women's oppression" (Le Doeuff, 1979: 48). Le Doeuff starts her analysis of de Beauvoir's The Second Sex with a pertinent question: "in what respect, if any, is the choice of this or

that philosophical reference-point a decisive factor in feminist studies?" (ibid.). She then moves through de Beauvoir's text to argue that de Beauvoir's 'viewpoint' of existentialism allows for an understanding of women's oppression that is unthinkable within Sartreanism:

But in strict orthodoxy, it would have been necessary to conclude that this oppression did not exist--unless in the bad faith of certain women . . . Simone de Beauvoir does not draw this conclusion, and I see in this the proof of a primacy of involvement in the real over the reference-point in philosophy. (ibid.: 55).

The conclusions reached from that viewpoint then have ramifications beyond a particular philosophical system. While Le Doeuff sees problems in existentialism, the fact remains that "Simone de Beauvoir made existentialism work 'beyond its means' because she got more out of it than might have been expected" (ibid.). De Beauvoir articulated 'an involvement in the real' with the reference-point of a certain philosophical project. Thus, one can argue that de Beauvoir viewed existentialism from a very localized point, and that this point of view changed the parameters of what she saw.

The point here is not that Le Doeuff argues that de Beauvoir somehow managed to overcome the limitations of a particular epistemology, although she does state that "one needs another problematic than that of the subject, and another perspective than that of morality" (Le Doeuff, ibid.: 56-7). Rather, what merits attention is the way in which de Beauvoir transposes "the status of philosophical

system to that of a point of view" (Morris, *ibid.*). Thus, images within the system are taken not as guaranteeing the system's validity; rather, they act "as a pertinent theoretical level, an operative viewpoint" (*ibid.*: 48). For example, de Beauvoir took the concept of authenticity (a concept within existentialism which serves to deny the oppression of women) and trained it on the oppression of women. Authenticity as an 'image' is shifted from its position within the philosophical system to where it ultimately 'lodges': within "the terrifying relation of men with women's bodies . . . [in the] ontological-carnal hierarchy of 'the masculine' and 'the feminine'" (*ibid.*). The point is not that de Beauvoir rejected the image and the system but that she used it as 'a viewpoint'; she fractured its sightline, bending its reach in order to consider the 'faire' of the image within the 'ontological-carnal relations' between men and women. In this way, the image is taken from its place within discourse and used, as a theoretical lever, to reveal its 'faire', its work within social relations. The image then becomes 'a point of view' focused on 'a determinant' ground. In the case of de Beauvoir, the theoretical viewpoint is articulated with 'a point of view' located in 'the real'. This particular case is exemplary of what Le Doeuff has called elsewhere, "the process by which a localized discovery can overthrow the philosopher's palace of ideas" (1981/2: 62).

In her analysis of the seventeenth-century philosopher, Pierre Roussel, Le Doeuff draws out "the drafts of specular objects in which the writer thinks himself, and thinks his relation to the Other" (cited in Morris, *ibid.*: 84). In testing the limits of Roussel's system, Le Doeuff concludes that:

if no regional knowledge can found a global world-view, a philosophy in the classical sense, regional knowledges are on the other hand quite capable of producing disabling arguments against such philosophies. (1981/2: 62).

The local citing of images can ultimately 'disable' a given philosophical system. In the case of Roussel, it is his use of 'woman' as image which supports his 'globalizing theory' and finally, in Le Doeuff's hands, proves to undo his system. As she notes, images "are not, properly speaking, 'what I think', but rather 'what I think with', or again 'that by which what I think is able to define itself'" (cited in Morris, *ibid.*: 83). Thus, at one level, the image is a fundamental epistemological vector, embedded in and allowing the production of knowledge; 'in which the writer thinks himself and thinks his relation to the Other'. At another level, however, the image is 'lodged' in 'the real' and in local situations. One may say that at this level the image may be lived, or a lived condition as in Roussel's image of woman. The localized image reveals 'regional knowledges' that then disrupt and 'produce disabling arguments' against the system in which the image discursively operates.

The importance of Le Doeuff's argument lies in the way in which the image's movement holds these two levels in tension. The image loses its stability within the discursive system and is made to move tactically; its 'action is determined by the absence of a proper locus'. Thus, philosophy can be made to work for feminists by charting and sometimes encouraging the image to move tactically, away from its place in any given philosophical system. One begins to see otherwise hidden configurations through using images within philosophical systems to indicate theoretical levels, and by training their viewpoints on a determinant ground. As Le Doeuff puts it: "oppression always also exists at points where it is least expected and where there is a danger that it will not even be noticed" (1979: 47). These points of oppression may be hidden by the operations of images in philosophical systems as well as in everyday uses. The point, therefore, is not to condemn philosophy as perpetuating oppressions, nor to idealize the regional. Rather, it is in the tactical use of images as points of view that a possible feminist speaking position emerges.

We can now begin to re-figure the self as an image. In this way, the self works at a discursive level, operating epistemologically within various systems of thought. The self is made to operate at an epistemological level designating and allowing for certain configurations of knowledge to proceed, and to concurrently function at (but

not necessarily indicating a correspondence to an ontological level. The point therefore is to formulate certain articulations between these two levels. The self as an image is 'that which what I think is able to define itself'. At the same time, as a lived moment, the self can be used to 'disable' global systems. A possible speaking position emerges in articulating these two levels, and in preventing the self from operating only at either an epistemological or at an ontological level.

To investigate the possibilities of the self as an active articulation between these two levels I'll turn now to some exemplars of feminist discourse of the self and the autobiographical, and then to an instance of a feminist incorporation of the self within a theoretical text. Much feminist literary criticism has, understandably enough, been concerned with identifying a female reader. Faced with the legacy of New Criticism's privileging of the text, or with the assumption of a universal (and male) 'reader', feminist critics have sought to reveal the specificity of women's interpretations. As Jean Kennard says, "the existence of the reader as 'self' is as problematic as the existence of the text" (1986.: n77-78). But however important the self may be in feminist literary critique, its operations are normally confined to the text which then gets read. Judith Gardiner starts her investigation "On Female Identity and Writing by Women" with the statement, "[a] central question of feminist literary criticism is, Who is there when a woman says 'I

am'?" (1981: 348). She goes on to define 'female selves' following her reading of Nancy Chodorow:

Thus I picture female identity as typically less fixed, less unitary and more flexible than male individuality, both in its primary core and in the entire maturational complex developed from this core. These traits have far-reaching consequences for the distinctive nature of writing by women (ibid.: 353).

Hence, for Gardiner, "female identity is a process" which then partially explains women's approaches to writing. "One reflection of this fluidity is that women's writing often does not conform to the generic prescriptions of the male canon" (ibid.: 355). Thus the roving female identity cannot be captured within one genre:

Women's novels are often called autobiographical, women's autobiographies, novelistic . . . Because of the continual crossing of self and other, women's writing may blur public and private and defy completion." (ibid.).

While Gardiner's rendering of a strict equivalence between a psychological model of feminine identity and women's forms of writing is especially blatant here, it is a fairly common trait among certain feminist literary critics. The move is to identify women's psychological being and then to apply it to a general process of reading or writing. In collapsing social conditions with this psychological rendition of 'woman' some rather large generalizations are bound to occur. Thus, Judith Fetterley posits a transhistorical condition for women which then agrees with how women read: women suffer,

not simply the powerlessness which derives from not seeing one's experience articulated, clarified, and

legitimated in art, but more significantly, the powerlessness which results from the endless division of self against self, the consequence of the invocation to identify as male while being reminded that to be male--to be universal-- . . . is to be not female (Fetterley cited in Schweickart, 1986: 42).

Conceived in a pervasive 'powerlessness', women's selves are posited as 'not male'. The absence of women's experiences in the text then leaves the woman reader nowhere. While this is a salient point, I'm not sure if it indeed leads to what Patrocinio Schweickart posits as the efficacy of "androcentric literature: "it does not allow the woman to seek refuge in her difference. Instead, it draws her into a process that uses her against herself" (Schweickart, 1986: 42). Powerlessness becomes a key image within this particular system. It is seen to operate both at the level of the text and have a corresponding existence in women's lives.

Some recent perspectives on women's autobiography within literary criticism expand upon the correlation of woman within the text and woman as writer of the text. For Sidonie Smith the genre of autobiography is especially interesting because of its 'maleness': "Autobiography is itself one of the forms of selfhood constituting the idea of man and in turn promoting that idea" (Smith, 1987: 50). Smith describes women's struggles against the dictates of the autobiographical canon². 'I am' is, for Smith, an impossible statement for women writers. As Smith says:

Since the ideology of gender makes of woman's life script a nonstory, a silent space, a gap in patriarchal

culture, the ideal woman is self-effacing rather than self-promoting, and her 'natural' story shapes itself not around the public, heroic life but around the fluid, circumstantial, contingent responsiveness to others that, according to patriarchal ideology, characterizes the life of woman but not of autobiography. (ibid.).

Thus women's stories of their lives are canceled out by the larger narrative of gender. 'Self-effacing' and 'self-promoting' become the two poles around which gender is articulated. There is, however, little movement here as women's lives are described as their state of being and not the stuff of art. Hence for Smith, patriarchy pre-empts any self-representation on the part of women; their 'meaning' is already assigned. This description functions as an ontological sentencing of women, based in the primacy of their posited being. The image of powerlessness is fundamental here and Smith goes on to characterize women's writing as 'impossible':

[If] she conforms totally to that ideal script, she remains bound (her book, her 'self') always in her relationships to men (and their progeny) and defined always in relationship to a life cycle tied to biological phenomena and the social uses to which those phenomena are put: birth, menarche, marriage, childbirth, menopause, widowhood. (ibid.: 54).

While Smith clearly puts the blame for women's condition on 'patriarchal ideology', she also holds onto a psycho-sexual model strongly influenced by Chodorow. She has no problem assigning certain qualities to women ('fluidity', 'contingent responsiveness to others'); the trouble is that patriarchy doesn't appreciate these virtues. The life cycle is what allows for these feminine attributes but, "her life

story is like every other female life story" (ibid.). This then is the only story women can write and one that no one (no man) wants to hear. Women (as historical subjects) therefore disappear into an ontological argument about their being. The very pervasiveness of the image of powerlessness flattens out any possible (epistemological) distinctions. Smith's landscape of equivalences ('book', 'self', 'life cycle') makes it difficult to conceive of any position from which a woman might speak. The problem with Smith's argument is that there is no 'point of view' other than the silence of the flip side of patriarchy. Rather than making the image of oppression work for women by locating its 'faire', its work, within the social, Smith paints woman into a corner leaving her no place to speak from. The pall of powerlessness is all we have as Smith brings forth a final silencing figure:

In all of the speaking postures examined thus far, the authority to speak as 'representative' man and 'representative' woman derives from the erasure of female sexuality; for the male-identified fiction commands the repression of the mother, and the 'good woman' fiction commands the repression of female eroticism (ibid.: 55).

For Smith then, women can only speak as a woman masquerading as a man (and repressing the mother) or into the silence of a patriarchal script (repressing the female). Thus the only speaking position for women is when "phallogocentric discourse has permitted women powerful life scripts" which may work if the writer shows "that she has successfully escaped the drag of the body, the contaminations of female

sexuality" (ibid.). To state the obvious, this doesn't leave one a great deal of room. In a move reminiscent of early psychoanalytic film theory, woman cannot initiate the 'gaze', she is the image³. Thus in Smith's argument, woman is her 'life script/cycle', there can be no distance between her self and her representation as women's existence is written by her historical and biological fate.

Her characterization of autobiography is therefore grounded in an ontological split:

privileging the autonomous or metaphysical self as the agent of its own achievement and in frequently situating that self in an adversarial stance toward the world, 'autobiography' promotes a conception of the human being that valorizes individual integrity and separateness and devalues personal and communal interdependency. (ibid.: 39).

Smith here performs a double articulation of genre and gender: autobiography necessitates a unique self, the masculine self is grounded in 'separateness', women's gender is constituted in 'interdependency', a woman's self is excluded on the grounds of gender from this genre. Women's very 'femaleness', her ontological state of being, then excludes her from speaking. The problem here is not that women's writing may be historically more 'personal' and involved in a community; it is rather that this situation is described under the sign of powerlessness instead of epistemological circumstance. In other words, Smith's argument is ultimately uninterested in the grounds that allow for some women to speak in certain circumscribed ways. Rather, she has insisted on the lack of women's enunciative

endeavours as an adjunct of their state of powerlessness. This psycho-sexual model of women is therefore seen both as evidence of and the basis for women's inability to speak. This mode of analysis closes down any avenue of investigation; various 'facts' may be inserted into this reasoning, but as a line of inquiry it cannot itself raise new questions.

The effects of women's uses of the self are known in advance. In contrast to this approach which broadly operates at an ontological level, other feminists have used the self as 'a point of view', opening up questions about the formation of knowledges. Again, as Le Doeuff characterizes this approach:

Le 'point de vue' n'est pas réputé créer ce quoi il porte; certes, il a à construire des questions et des modes d'analyse du pan de réalité qu'il considère, de telle sorte que ces questions rencontrent des données: on peut donc dire seulement qu'il pro-duit des choses (Le Doeuff, 1989: 105-6) ⁴.

Thus the 'point of view' doesn't create that which it describes, rather it has to construct questions from the level of reality that it is trained upon. It produces or provokes connections.

In her article, "'Not Just a Personal Story: Women's 'Testimonios' and the Plural Self" (1988), Doris Sommer discusses other ways than the traditional autobiographical account of using the self. Citing (and extending) Paul de Man's (1979) argument, she "shifts the focus from the portrait produced to the productive trope of self-reference"

(1988: 119). The self is used to provoke connections and produce new articulations. Sommer is particularly concerned with the operations of Latin American women's 'testimonios' (accounts of the self). She describes the use of the self in these accounts: "the singular represents the plural not because it replaces or subsumes the group but because the speaker is a distinguishable part of the whole" (ibid.: 108). Sommer identifies two different spheres of the self's operations:

In rhetorical terms, whose political consequences should be evident in what follows, there is a fundamental difference here between the metaphor of autobiography and heroic narrative in general . . . and metonymy, a lateral identification through relationship, which acknowledges the possible differences among 'us' as components of the whole. (ibid.).

This analytic perspective on the uses of the self is obviously very different from Smith's, for whom the self is "indistinguishable and always replaceable" [Smith, ibid.: 54]). In contrast to the latter's construction of a biological and self-same story, Sommer's emphasis on metonymy allows the self lateral movement. Remembering Jakobson's (1972) distinction between metaphor as paradigmatic and metonymy as syntagmatic, we can see that certain uses of the self may move away from a logic of substitution. However, while this qualification of metonymy may be an improvement on Smith's closing down of the self, it would be wrong to describe the self's effectivity as merely metonymical. The movement to construct a community

of people through one person's use of the self in this case has more to do with the 'pan de realité', the level of reality that the self is used to describe. Sommer is after all talking about texts that speak of actual suffering, and that are often written in dangerous circumstances. These circumstances bring forth particular styles of writing, as Sommer says, "these intensely lived testimonial narratives are strikingly impersonal" (ibid.: 109).

The 'strikingly impersonal' nature of these uses of the self may in fact have more to do with the concrete situations in which they are written than with linguistic notions of metonymy. Sommer's depiction of the testimonies of these Latin American women readily recalls de Certeau's sense of 'tactics'. The self can not operate from a position of stability or strength. As Sommer tells us, these stories speak of immediate and terrifying situations:

raped countless times by Samoza's National Guardsmen
. . . her mother's torture at the hands of the Guatemalan
army . . . the baby kicked out of her during torture in
a Bolivian prison . . . (ibid.: 120).

As Sommer says, these accounts of the self question the "academic pause we take in considering how delayed or artificial . . . reality is (ibid.). Given the danger of where they speak from, these voices become, as de Certeau says, "calculated action[s] determined by the absence of a proper locus" (ibid.). The abstraction of one's experiences into writing is a practical and a political necessity. These women need to tell of themselves (to help others) as they

need to avoid making that self into a locus (thus inviting retaliations upon themselves). The self here, because of specific historical reasons, takes on the tactical logic of guerrilla warfare. As Sommer says of the movements required:

As working-class or peasant women involved in political, often armed, struggle, the subjects of these narratives move about in a largely unmapped space. Or it is a space on which competing maps are superimposed, where no single code of behavior can be authoritative. (ibid.: 120-1).

These women then cannot afford the luxury of a stable and singular self. Working in this complex situation, these women are simultaneously "a mother, a worker, a Catholic, a Communist, an indigenist, and a nationalist" (Sommer, ibid.: 121). While one cou'd say that their location demands several contradictory 'subject positions', I think that it goes deeper than this. When Domitilia, a woman tortured in a Bolivian prison, is given the 'choice' of naming fellow revolutionaries or losing her children, her cell-mate tells her: "You shouldn't think only as a mother, you've got to think as a leader" (in Sommer, ibid.: 121). It is not that Domitilia is positioned both as mother and leader, but that she must (for her mental and physical survival) 'think her self' as mother and leader. These two points of view are not allowed to be contradictory; rather they must be used together in order to provoke ways of thinking through the situation, a way of producing knowledge about what to do.

I do not, however, want to extrapolate from this

particular situation and render some universal model of the self and its relation to textuality. We can nonetheless take from these instances ways of looking at the self that emphasize the levels at which the self actively works in given situations. The very situated responses of these women must deny a reduction of their selves into a psychological model of femininity. These 'testimonios' cannot be seen as just another replaying of woman's 'life script' or as merely a re-construction of the self within an endlessly repeated psycho-biological story. Rather than such universal abstractions, we need to see that the projection of various selves are ways of "expressing ourselves"; there is no one "immutable way" states a Guatemalan woman (cited in Sommer, *ibid.*). These very local uses of the self situate their locations at a conjuncture. In writing they produce a document that places both the writers' selves and the situation in relief. This use of the self thus entails an act which arises from the situation as it comments upon it. As Le Doeuff says of the movement of images:

il pro-duit des choses, au sens ou c'est tout un art, et un acte, de faire apparaitre quelque chose, de produire une pièce qui sera considérée comme un document, de faire sortir de l'ombre et de mettre en avant des 'données' qui, finalement, ne sont jamais données. (1989: 106) ⁵.

Thus the image of the self in the case of these Latin American women's testimonies produces something, makes something appear, which can be considered a conjunctural document of the self and of the times. The self comes out

of 'the shadows' to put forward 'the facts', facts which are never officially given. We can therefore take from these examples a sense of the self which moves metonymically to articulate experience, location and history without reifying an ontology of being. Sommer imprints the trope of metonymy as integral to the way in which 'testimonios' allow for a self to be simultaneously created within a community of selves:

Another part of the strategy is to pry open the process of subject formation, to rehearse it with the reader in a way that invites her to hook into the lateral network of relationships that assumes a community of particular shared objectives rather than interchangeability among its members. (ibid.: 109).

Sommer's point is that "the intentional difference in the writing goes far beyond a possible fallacy on the reader's part" (ibid.: 110). While she is quite right to insist on the 'intentional difference' involved in these writings, her emphasis on metonymy tends to push these 'documents of the self' into an sphere of abstraction wherein 'a community' is constructed. The important point to take from these writings is their very local and concrete nature, not that they 'rehearse subject formation'. These are women writing for immediate reasons, and it is precisely the immediacy of their selves that emerges from Sommer's frame of interpretation. As conjunctural texts these testimonies place versions of the self within a precise time and place. In placing too much emphasis on Western liberal feminist notions of community we may lose that conjunctural moment.

Susan Stanford Friedman, for example, constructs a frame for reading women's autobiographies which is destined to lose the local importance of writing the self:

Autobiography is possible when 'the individual does not feel herself to exist outside of others . . . but very much with others in an interdependent existence that asserts its rhythms everywhere in the community . . . [where] lives are so thoroughly entangled that each of them has its center everywhere and its circumference nowhere (Friedman, 1988: 38).

The testimonies of individual women tortured and raped challenges any notion of extrapolation to a global women's community. While the construction of the self in those writings may indeed reach other women, and touch us, they remain committed to their social and historical locations. As Bidy Martin says of the specificity of lesbian autobiographies:

the feminist dream of a new world of women simply reproduces the demand that women of color (and women more generally) abandon their histories, the histories of their communities, their complex locations and selves, in the name of a unity that barely masks its white, middle-class cultural reference/referent (Martin, 1988: 93).

Instead of the image of powerlessness that circulates in Smith's model of autobiography, or even Sommer's image of a generalized community, Martin emphasizes the conjunctural moment in constructing local selves: "The invocation of the sights, smells, sounds and meanings of 'the street' works to locate the author concretely in geographic, demographic, architectural spaces" (ibid.: 95). It is then in the 'sights and smells' of 'complex locations' that the images for

writing the self emerge. These images, taken from an everyday reality, can be used as a point of view into the lived. This point of view works against what Martin calls "the assumptions that there are no differences within the 'lesbian self' and that lesbian authors, autobiographical subjects, readers, and critics can be conflated" (ibid.: 83). In order to be analytically useful the self cannot be conflated with ontological notions based in a primacy of 'femaleness'. Moreover, as Martin points, out women marginalized through sexual preference or colour must seek out their difference and refuse to be generalized in the name of a globalizing politics.

In recognizing constructions of the self as specific points of view both derived from very local configurations and trained back onto a particular ground, we can begin to open up the analytic possibilities of the self beyond the literary problematic of autobiography. In moving away from autobiography as the object of inquiry as articulated within literary criticism, I now want to consider levels of the self as indices for an analysis of the social formation. Thus I want to question the ways in which the self can be used analytically. As Carolyn Steedman states in her analysis of a nineteenth-century soldier's memoir, The Radical Soldier's Tale (1988):

the point of analysing a document like that of John Pearman's 'Memoire' is that it allows the reader to follow the ebb and flow of a mind, to see an intellect engaged with theoretical problems that connect directly with lived experience. (1988: 21).

In locating the image of the self that is put forward in a document (or as a document), we can begin to analyze and articulate the specificities of the relation of 'theoretical problems' to 'lived experience'. This is not to reify individual selves nor to extrapolate from them into generalities; rather, it is to conceive of levels of the self as points of view that allow insight into the construction of particular conjunctural moments.

In Landscape for a Good Woman (1987), Steedman rephrases a statement "handed to her [mother] by the tradition of working-class autobiography" and says, "'[i]f no one will write my story, then I shall have to go out and write it myself'" (1987: 22). In her story about herself and her mother and "the places where we rework what has already happened to give current events meaning", Steedman insists upon the "social specificity" of the stories of ourselves (ibid.: 5). One of the central images that emerges and articulates several levels of Steedman's story of "two lives" is that of her mother wearing the "New Look, a coat of beige gabardine which fell in two swaying, graceful pleats from her waist at the back" (ibid.: 28). This is obviously a very literal 'image' of her mother, and one also that appears in a dream. However, the image of her mother in the New Look takes on wider functions in the text. Thus on one level: "[t]he connection between women and clothes surfaces often . . . in the unacknowledged testimony of many nineteenth- and twentieth-century women and girls" (ibid.:

24). On another level: "it was with the image of a New Look coat that, in 1950, I made my first attempt to understand and symbolize the content of my mother's desire" (ibid.).

Seen as a point of view, the image of her mother in the New Look coat is used to raise questions about the constitution of the social. Recalling Le Doeuff's qualification of the point of view, we can say that the image which provides a point of view constructs modes of analysis about the reality from which it is taken. In Le Doeuff's terms we can conceive of an image as a cultural product; and "regard[ing] an imaginary as a cultural product certainly involves looking for variations and differences as between epochs, social categories, and fields of knowledge" (Le Doeuff cited in Morris, 1988b: 89). Thus in taking up everyday images we can "reflect on scraps of the imaginary that do work in places where, in principle, the imaginary is not supposed to reside" (Le Doeuff cited in Morris, ibid.). It is important here to remember that these images must maintain their specific identity because "to collapse them back to the status of illustration . . . [is] to deny that they do work" (Morris, ibid.: 84). Images should not be seen as part of a system, they are not examples that prove a larger theoretical truth. Contrary to 'normal science' the image is not the proof but rather provides a point of view: "il s'agit d'explorer un pan de la réalité sociale et intersubjective, non de construire un système ⁶" (Le Doeuff, 1989: 105). Thus point of view seen from a particular image

is focused on and 'explores a patch of social reality'. The questions that the point of view raises will inevitably run into 'facts' that have been hidden or never constituted as such. In other words, the image as a point of view can be used to analyze facts that it has in itself brought forward.

In Steedman's book the image of her mother in the New Look articulates an historical fact that "[t]he post-War years were full of women longing for a full skirt and unable to make it" (ibid.: 32). . The texture of the image even meets the way in which Steedman's mother broke with a general economic trend of "girls in working class families north of Rochdale [who] would automatically go into the mill--usually into the weaving shed--when they left school" (Liddington and Norris cited in Steedman, ibid.: 103). The image of the coat brings forward biographical 'scraps'; Steedman's mother came "from a cotton town . . . [and] had a heightened awareness of fabric and weave" (Steedman, 1985: 108). Thus the pride and knowledge of a working class woman become clear through the point of view of an image of clothing. "My mother's black waisted coat with the astrakhan collar" serves to show the internal movements between class discourses and distinctions. Stitched into this image are points of view that are thrown back into the realities of work, economics, and a changing social formation:

From her job, supported by the magazines she brought home, and from her older skill of tailoring and dressmaking, we learned how the goods of the earth

might be appropriated, with a certain voice, the cut and fall of a skirt, a good winter coat; with leather shoes too, but above all by clothes (ibid.: 112-13).

Thus the 'cut and fall of a skirt' is used as a point of view through which the limited mobility of the lower-middle classes can be seen and measured. At the same time, this point of view brings out the immeasurably large gap between the fact that 'a girl can get ahead dressed right' and the actuality out of which this image is taken. It brings out the knowledge of the mother as it reveals the daughter caught within a reality wherein "dresses needing twenty yards for a skirt were items as expensive as children" (Steedman, 1987: 29). The image of this dress also then informs another reality:

We believed we were poor because children were expensive items, and all the arrangements had been made for us. 'If it wasn't for you two,' my mother told us, 'I could be off somewhere else'" (Steedman, 1985: 113).

Finally, the dress draws Steedman into her mother: "[w]hen I want to find myself in the dream of the New Look, I have to reconstruct the picture, look down at my sandals and the hem of my dress" (1987: 142). As an image and as a cultural product (in Le Doeuff's sense) the dress articulates several 'scraps' of reality; as a point of view it can be used to delve into the past and the present to present some rather fundamental questions. These are questions that potentially disable certain systems of thought, including certain tenets of feminist thinking. In using the dress as an image instead of the more taken for granted figure of 'the mother'

certain unsettling aspects of the real are brought forward: for example, the mother-daughter relationship is disarticulated from its historically romanticized position, and in a similar fashion, childhood is placed firmly within a discourse of economic calculations. Instead of painting women into the ontological position of 'nurturers', Steedman draws out "the social specificity of wanting and not wanting children in the first place, and wanting and not wanting them once they exist" (ibid.: 90). Children can be evaluated in terms of dresses and a mother's freedom 'to be off somewhere else'. The dress as an image then is used by Steedman as a point of view and articulates both Steedman as 'an expensive child' and Steedman the theorist looking back. The self here is not given an ontological primacy but emerges as a point of view in the articulation of several discourses. This point of view is therefore enabled not in direct reference to 'a self' caught in time; rather it is 'produced' through the use of images taken from specific moments.

Thus the image of the New Look dress and the point of view that it enables moves from the actuality of the ground to be described and then interrogates that ground and the description. We know that there is a dress (a photograph of her mother wearing one appears in the text) and we begin to know these selves of Steedman and her mother as they are depicted through the discourses of class, of gender, of the historical times, but most clearly through the longing bound

up in the image of the dress. Steedman describes talking with her sister after having visited her mother for the last time:

she insisted that the feeling of being absent in my mother's presence was nothing to do with the illness, was the emotional underpinning of our childhood. We were truly illegitimate, our selves not there (1985: 121).

The point of view of the dress also raises this absence, this feeling of being 'not there'. Further on, Steedman remarks upon the "feminisms, soft and sentimental, that would have my mother returned to me, and make us sisters in adversity" (ibid.: 125). However, in the use of the image of the New Look dress, separate selves emerge that a 'sentimental' image could not conceive of. The image of the dress is therefore located in relation to a given discourse (of the family, of gender) as it is deployed for its 'faire', what it does, enables, disarticulates. It is quite clear that Steedman does indeed have a reference-point in a feminist system (just not a 'soft' one). However her description of the various articulations that held her mother and her together derive from images that testify to "a primacy of involvement in the real" (Le Doeuff, op. cit.). The relationship between the image, a point of view and 'an involvement in the real' then problematizes any simple tale of the self. Giving a primacy to the real does not in any way cancel out the project of making images work; rather it fuels the efforts to make them work, to insert them ever more deeply into the real, revealing the

structures and knowledges of the real. Thus, in the introduction to Steedman's stories of her mother and her self, Steedman describes a moment when "a health visitor" chastises her mother. Steedman's response is: "I will do everything and anything until the end of my days to stop anyone ever talking to me like that woman talked to my mother" (1987: 2). Under the image of the well-cut dress lies a reality brought forward through the remembrance and use of that image:

I read a book, meet such a woman at a party (a woman now, like me) and think quite deliberately as we talk; we are divided: a hundred years ago I'd have been cleaning your shoes. I know this and you don't. (ibid.).

Steedman thus expresses her self in images that articulate the present and the past. Whether it is a dress, a memory of feeling 'illegitimate', the image of her mother being chastised, or the recollection of a conversation, Steedman uses these moments to bring forward a self grounded in the specificities of gender and class. These images, therefore, articulate an 'involvement in the real' and a reference-point within a larger system: they "raise central questions about gender as well as class, and the development of gender in particular social and class circumstances" (ibid.: 7). They are found interwoven throughout the historical, economic and affective discourses that inform the book. The often painful memories of her mother's and her own 'personal past' ensure a 'primacy of involvement in reality'. These registers within the story then are

articulated to allow for the self: in Steedman's words, "[c]lass and gender, and their articulations, are the bits and pieces from which psychological selfhood is made" (ibid.). However, I think that we can take from this account more than its construction of a 'selfhood'. What emerges from the articulation of reference-point, image and the real is a way of using the self, of putting the self to work in order to 'cut into the real'. The self here is both an object of inquiry and the means of analyzing where and how the self is lodged within the social formation.

In conclusion, I will sketch out the possibility and the implications of 'implicating the self' within cultural analyses. Responding to Morris' articulation of the problematic of a feminist speaking position, we can say that certain uses of the self work to figure the local sites and conjunctural moments necessary to the development of a feminist enunciative practice. As Morris makes clear, this project involves transforming discursive material to allow women 'a place from which to speak and something to say'. Neither of these requisites can be taken lightly: considering the places, we remember McRobbie's hesitations about entering into research practices that only allow certain women to speak. Thinking of certain feminist practices of globalizing the local should remind us that this too can take away the place from which other women speak. Formulating women's selves as monolithic and

impossible structures obviously leaves one little room and not much to say. What I have argued here is that we need an 'operative reasoning' (to use Le Doeuff again) which both figures a place and enables a point of view into the social construction of that place. The operation of images taken from that place can be seen as points of view that may disable and transform discursive practices that silence women.

In positing the self as an analytic level in the construction of a conjunctural site, I do not want to reify local sites. It is important to remember de Certeau's use of the tactic. If the self as a way of figuring different relations in the social formation is to be analytically useful, it cannot be condensed into a 'proper locus'. As I have argued, the self cannot be seen as an entity that binds women together in the face of racial, sexual, national, and other differences. The self must therefore be seen as a theoretical level, not as a unifying principle. Using Le Doeuff's theorization of the image and the point of view, we can say that the self can be made to work to articulate an epistemological critique of the discursive ordering of the social and an ontological recognition of the affectivity of discourse. The self as an image does not reveal the truth of an individual. Instead of speaking the self as an endless repetition of women's ontological being, the self as an image and images of the self comment on the conjuncture of discourses and everyday commonplaces. Within texts, the

self may not proclaim itself in any triumphant move; rather as a theoretical level, the self may simply and quietly enable yet more questions, yet more theoretical work. As Morris states: "[f]or the lovers of high-speed iconoclasm, the lowly labour of listening carefully to a text connotes the fussiness of housewives' psychosis" (ibid.: 95-6). This is not to say that a feminist speaking position is comparable to housework; it is to say that the work of formulating enunciative practices that can speak certain unasked questions may be equally never-ending.

Notes

¹ In contrast to Foucault's use of Herculine Barbin as a body upon which the discourses of the Church, the education system, and those of the medical and legal institutions are inscribed, René Feret's (1985) film Le Mystère d'Alexina takes up Herculine Barbin's life. Supposedly based on the memoirs that are contained in Foucault's (1980) analysis, Feret's rendition of the life of Barbin focuses on the individual, albeit in a rather 'soft porn' way. He portrays her as both a tormented 'soul' and as a sexually obsessed young man, rendering Barbin and her lover as thwarted heterosexual couple. Foucault includes in his volume a rather baroque short story ostensibly based on Barbin's life called "a Scandal at the Convent" by Oscar Panizza, first published in 1893. What these representations of Barbin show is that an attention to the individual does not necessarily reveal a self.

² I will not enter into the debate over what constitutes autobiography as a genre. It is, however, a rather heated one with most of the recent feminist theorizations of autobiography insisting upon the 'forefathers' of autobiography in order to point out women's exclusion from this genre. While it is, of course, important to raise the ways in which women are silenced in these accounts, the critiques tend to be repetitions of the larger 'canon debate' within literary criticism. For examples of this, see Smith (1987) as well as Gunn (1982), Jelinek (1986), and Doëd (ed.) (1986).

³ Mulvey's (1975) article is the one that is most often cited as the 'seminal' formulation of the problematic of 'woman as image'. Doane's (1982) article takes up Joan Riviere's (1929) concept of the masquerade and applies it to female spectators.

⁴ "The 'point of view' isn't concerned with creating that which it carries; of course, it has to construct questions and modes of analysis from the 'patch' of reality that it considers, in a way that allows questions to come to meet the facts: one can only say therefore that it 'produces' things." Translation mine.

⁵ "it 'produces' things, in the sense that it is quite an art, or an act, to make something appear, to produce a fragment that will be considered as a document, to make 'facts' come forward out of the shadows, facts that finally are never given." Translation mine.

⁶ "it's about exploring a 'patch' of social and intersubjective reality. not about constructing a system."
Translation mine.

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Chapter 7:

Of Anecdotes and Elegant Solutions: Modalities of the Self

One of Michel Foucault's more beautiful and cryptic passages is to be found at the end of The Order of Things:

As the archaeology of our thought easily shows, man is an invention of recent date. And one perhaps nearing its end. If those arrangements were to disappear as they appeared, if some event of which we can at the moment do no more than sense the possibility--without knowing either what its form will be or what it promises--were to cause them to crumble, as the ground of Classical thought did, at the end of the eighteenth-century, then one can certainly wager that man would be erased, like a face drawn in sand at the edge of the sea. (Foucault, 1973: 387).

While this passage may cheer the hearts and minds of feminists, it is not quite a corroboration of Elaine Showalter's hope that "in the critical histories of the future, these years will be remembered . . . as the Age of Feminism . . . we have all been living in women's time" (Showalter, 1987: 42). Foucault, of course, is referring here to the concept of man. Nonetheless, as we watch the cautious erasure of the universality of 'he' in language and as Showalter and others tell us about the increasing institutionalization of feminism, one may wonder what is emerging as 'man' fades away.

In this final chapter I shall consider Foucault's theorizations on the self and the theoretical and practical operations of various selves. In focusing on volumes two and three of The History of Sexuality (The Use of Pleasure

[1986] and The Care of the Self [1988]) I contend that Foucault's epistemological analysis of the self extends his previous work. We can take this epistemological model of the self's effectivity to elaborate ways in which to theorize the use of the autobiographical in contemporary cultural analysis. While it would be premature to hail this as the Age of Feminism, there are slight signs that may be seen as evidence of a certain crumbling of detached academic authority. The insertion of a personal voice into the research process, as well as the critique of the relations involved in that process, may attest to a small-scale establishment of some feminist tenets. At the same time we can also see a larger blurring of boundaries among academic disciplines as various 'structures' fall. As François Ewald sees it: [d]ans les années 80, brusquement, le paysage change. Les structures s'éfacent, le système ne mobilise plus. On assiste au retour de l'acteur, du sujet, de l'individu." (Ewald, 1989: 16) ¹. Whether these 'events' are directly linked to feminism or, more probably, located within a larger configuration of discourses and historical actualities, I think that we can see the re-emergence of the self as evidence of a distinct shift. What is unsure is whether this shift is to the Right (the more traditional home of the individual) or whether it points to a new and progressive recombination of politics and social tendencies. As Ewald says, the topography of the social is changing, and within cultural criticism one can see that wider horizons

are emerging (going beyond discrete research sites) at the same time as it becomes clear that the older political promises of criticism may have been overextended. This movement in the present and unease with the past has led to a reconsideration on the part of individual theorists of the political aims and results of cultural critique. As Carolyn Steedman says at the end of her "Landscape for a Good Woman":

I want a politics that will take all of this, all those secret and impossible stories, recognise what has been made out on the margins, and then, recognising it, refuse to celebrate it; a politics that will, watching that past say: 'so what'; and abandon it to the dark. (1985: 126).

However, what impossible politics can this be? Weary of the endless struggles of feminism's recent past and the increasing annulments of their gains in the present, Steedman's position is hardly a 'postfeminist' stance; the centrality of her need for a politics clearly distinguishes her from the defining anti-political constitution of 'postfeminism'. Hers is rather a call thrown up from the specificities of place and background (or class and gender). A call for a project that may recognise the conjunctural exigencies of the self 'out on the margins' as it refuses to celebrate that self as 'resistant', or even very special. Away from the aggrandizement of meta-narratives and their various 'deaths', this self that can be used and then consigned to darkness is a somewhat more modest project. Indeed, while the political and practical questions of

cultural analysis in the late twentieth-century are increasingly intricate, they are of necessity more limited in their focus. Given that no one discourse or academic field can provide a complete plan for 'redemption', of late the scope of some cultural criticism has turned inwards. As Sheila Rowbotham states:

[t]he clarity of vision in those early days of women's liberation has gone. It seemed possible then to order the past through the focus of feminism. It is less one-dimensional for me now. Feminism is a given--but I want more than the political outline. I want a culture that you can tug and shape with complexity. (Rowbotham, 1985: 211).

While feminism and socialism remain as 'givens', there is a need for something more than just a political outline to live by. Beyond the one-dimensionality of a given line, there is the hope for a politics which can include and work with lived complexities. This political project would be grounded in a more complex theoretical articulation of the gender and class marked practices involved in contemporary everyday life. As Angela McRobbie recently stated:

feminist theory has become more sophisticated and as Althusserian Marxism has become eclipsed it has become possible to bring into play the kind of subjective voice wherein one could admit to contradictory relationships (McRobbie cited in Collins, 1989: 22).

As theories become more 'sophisticated' and as certain 'hard lines' pass out of favour, the possibility emerges for a critical and subjective questioning about the relation of individuals to the social formation. This possibility is moreover grounded in the need to be precise about the local nature of the mediations involved in this relation of the

individual and the social. Outside and alongside of the guiding paradigms of the last decades and centuries, these questions take various forms as they articulate a particular historical subjectivity: for example, Dick Hebdige asks "What kind of sociology would take dreams as 'data'?" (Hebdige, 1987: 48), and Valerie Walkerdine wonders "[w]hat dream, what future, what here, what now?" (Walkerdine, 1985: 76). These 'subjective voices' are simple anecdotal evidence of people trying to make sense of the world in relation to certain theoretical levels of abstraction. These questions raise an unease with established political agendas as well as the need to theoretically formulate ways of getting on with the everyday activities of working, thinking, writing, and dreaming.

A while ago, a world ago, I wrote and spoke the following as an introduction for a public lecture on Foucault and the self:

[a]s a girl it always bothered me when my mother talked about how she would have preferred to live in another era. I didn't like this game as I couldn't figure out where I might be in her historical schema; I couldn't see how she could have had me. . . . At the same time it seemed like I was losing my mother into a past which logically couldn't hold me and one that I couldn't reach. Where was my self if her's was constructed partially in another time and space. (1989).

Since then my mother has died and in the midst of the pain of shattered bits of self that followed her death, I have wondered where to turn. The need to keep on going is evident; less evident are the ways in which one can 'keep on theorizing' while caught in the primacy of grief. In this

case, in my case but in others too, there is no line of demarcation between an academic self and a personal one. Thus, especially at this time, thinking and theorizing and feeling the various movements of selves is as Foucault said, "une forme de vie", 'a way of life' (1989: 150). Thus I propose here to draw out several modalities of the self that, in part, stem from some of the current questions about interpretation and from my own concerns 'to keep on theorizing'. I see these forms and uses of the self as responses to some of the fears and changes in the current social formation and my own life. The current 'turn to the self' also reveals of the position of cultural critics within the social as various individual theorists try to analytically integrate some of the personal and deep losses that our selves regularly sustain. Sometimes the personal is both a practical and political mode of interpretation; however it is in the modalities of its enunciation that we can begin to figure (in) new or different paths for cultural analysis.

In his analysis of the photographer Paul Strand, John Berger notes that:

[t]he present tense of the verb 'to be' refers only to the present; but nevertheless, with the first person singular in front of it, it absorbs the past which is inseparable from the pronoun. 'I am' includes all that has made me so. It is more than a statement of immediate fact: it is already an explanation, a justification, a demand--it is already autobiographical. (Berger, 1980: 47).

This description of the 'I' plays on the theoretical

centrality of the construction of an 'I' in language even as it departs from a poststructuralist privileging of an 'I' only in language. While Berger's remarks may be understood as emphasizing the historical conjuncture which formulates a specific identity, they can also be taken as a justification of autobiographical explanations. Indeed, the use of the past to show what is bound into 'I am' has become a fairly common trope. Thus in Walkerdine's article, "Video Replay", the past wells up into the present: "[t]he film brought me up against such memories of pain and struggle and class that it made me cry" (1986: 169). Hebdige's article, "Some Sons and their Fathers", tells of times when "[t]here was no 'I' to do the knowing" (1985: 37). While these remarks obviously do go beyond 'statements of immediate facts', one needs to question Berger's qualification of the autobiographical as 'the explanation, the justification, the demand'. Berger's omission of a direct object to accompany these acts raises the question of what is demanded, explained and justified through the use of the autobiographical voice. We need, therefore, to consider the conditions of possibility that can allow for an articulation of the personal as 'a justification' and as 'a demand'.

The most obvious historical example that coincides with Berger's emphasis on the demanding nature of the autobiographical is that of the confession. As Foucault states:

The obligation to confess is now relayed through so

many different points, is so deeply ingrained in us . . . it seems to use that truth, lodged in our most secret nature, 'demands' only to surface (1980; 60).

There is a common-sensical conflation of autobiographies and confessions. This is particularly evident in the biographies and autobiographies of the rich and famous which are read, not so much for their truth, but for what multiple and possible truths the star may reveal of his or her life. The confession of a public figure certainly works in many ways, but primarily it is uttered to counter other truths (or, gossip) that float in the public and popular sphere. Of course, this extra circulation of more information has economic benefits (to agents, ghostwriters, and to the stars themselves). To speak the self in these situations is to enter into certain relations and expectations. As Foucault says, "[w]e have . . . become a singularly confessing society . . . Western man has become a confessing animal" (1980: 59). In The History of Sexuality, Foucault identifies the confession as inherent to "scientia sexualis" and as the procedure "for telling the truth of sex geared to a form of knowledge-power" (ibid.). When applied to 'kiss and tell' star autobiographies, Foucault's description of confession as "the way in which sex is 'put into discourse'" (ibid.: 11) makes perfect sense. Similarly, Foucault's description of the nineteenth-century as a time when "[t]here was no deficiency [of sexual discourse] but rather an excess, a redoubling, too much rather than not enough discourse" (ibid.: 64) could be equally applied to the confessions of

stars and the numerous circulations of these discourses. Thus the relations of power which Foucault locates within the apparatus of confession can still be seen in operation in the general ways in which star autobiographies work. What is not so clear is how statements like the following work within a theoretical discourse:

Trying, crying, gaining, winning and, of course, ever present the barely whispered fear that I might not be good enough to avoid and evade failure and loss.
(Walkerdine, 1985: 71)

While these remarks are certainly confessional in tone, the effects entailed by this emphasis on the self are not quite contained by Foucault's formulation of confession as an instrument of power. This is not to say that the self here is not inscribed within relations of power, but as Foucault realized, the model of confession does not quite capture the wider productions of the self. He therefore turned to the question of "the ingrained modes of knowing the self" ("les modes instituées de la connaissance de soi" [Foucault, 1989: 133]). While there has been a rather surprising silence about Foucault's last writings (as Meaghan Morris says quoting a prospective publisher, "Ah Foucault . . . I'm very sorry, but there's no boom" [Morris, 1988: 5]), I will suggest that the projects of early, middle and late Foucault are deeply interconnected. More immediately, I see his theorization of the self as an alternative vector to the 'boom' that 'individualism' is experiencing in France and elsewhere at the moment.

Given Foucault's deep abhorrence of any notion of a transcendental subject and his lack of interest in individuals, his move to the the self may at first seem slightly strange. As the Italian historian, Carlo Ginzberg has characterized Foucault, "[w]hat interests [him] primarily are the act and the criteria of exclusion, the excluded a little less so." (Ginzberg, 1982: xviii). While Ginzberg is perfectly correct in his emphasis on the centrality of the 'acts and criteria of exclusion, there is a widespread notion that Foucault is uninterested in those bodies upon which the acts of exclusion are inscribed. In Herculine Barbin (1980), the ways in which the figure of the hermaphrodite is named and excluded are more important than the individual her/himself. In I, Pierre Rivière (1975), the case of a young nineteenth-century man who killed his mother, sister and brother and then painstakingly wrote about it, Foucault again surrounds and overwhelms the individual with evidence of the legal documents of the time. As with Herculine Barbin, Foucault leaves Rivière memoir untouched, uninterpreted. While one could say that this serves to illustrate his indifference to the historical individual, it can also be seen as testimony to the power of Barbin's and Rivière's own statements about themselves. In other words, to have interpreted the memoir would have been to impose another individuality and authority upon an historical figure. As Foucault later said of Rivière:

I believe that Rivière's own discourse on his act so dominates, or in any case so escapes every possible handle, that there is nothing to be said about this central point (1989b: 132).

Rivière's own discourse about himself and his crime is left to stand alone without any detracting commentary. As Foucault puts it: "I have said nothing about Rivière's crime itself, and once more, I don't believe anyone can say anything about it" (ibid.). While Foucault's method should not be romanticized as 'letting the individual speak', part of his procedure is aimed at showing the limitations of the professional discourses in interpreting the individual. By 'professional discourses', I mean, of course, psychology and psychiatry, two of Foucault's 'bêtes noires'. Thus he explains that part of the reason for publishing L. Pierre Rivière was:

for me a way of saying to the shrinks in general (psychiatrists, psychoanalysts, psychologists): well, you've been around for 150 years, and here's a case contemporary with your birth. What do you have to say about it? Are you better prepared to discuss it than your 19th century colleagues? (Foucault, ibid.: 131).

As it turned out, none of them actually did venture to "discuss the case of Riviere in their usual insipid language" (ibid.: 132). "Except for one fool, a psychoanalyst, who claimed that Rivière was an illustration of paranoia as defined by Lacan" they were "literally reduced to silence" (ibid.).

While Foucault's antipathy to 'the science of the unconscious self' (psych-ology/analysis/iatry) is readily apparent here, the way in which he accords a certain d.

of the knowledges of the time. One must also say that through their memoirs they 'affected an operation' upon their bodies and thought. We can therefore see here what Meaghan Morris, following Foucault, calls "double conditioning" requiring that we "examine the relations between 'local sites' and 'transformation schemas' on the one hand, and larger strategies with their global effects on the other" (Morris, 1982: 265).

.This is then to articulate the techniques of domination with those of the self. In volumes two and three of The History of Sexuality, Foucault moves from the workings of the confession as a key instrument in producing the truth through domination to an emphasis on the constitution and transformation of the self: "Que faire de soi-même? Quel travail opérer sur soi-même?" ² (1989a: 134). Instead of focusing on the economy of power which required the confession, Foucault turns to the operations of the self:

Perhaps I've insisted too much on the technology of domination and power. I am more and more interested in the interaction between oneself and others and in the technologies of individual domination, the history of how an individual works upon himself, in the technology of the self (1988b: 19).

In attempting a history of sexuality Foucault found that he had to also elaborate upon the ways in which the subject constituted itself. Foucault's first step in The History of Sexuality (Volume I) had been to deconstruct the 'repressive hypothesis' and to show exactly how sexuality was controlled not by repression but through the regulating effects of an

overabundance of discourse. The next step, however, was to shift from the attention to the 'techniques of domination' still evident in his first analysis. Thus if the first step concerned "a history of the experience of sexuality, where experience is understood as the correlation between fields of knowledge, types of normativity, and forms of subjectivity" (Foucault, 1986: 4), the next was to consider how individuals recognized themselves within this correlation: "the relation of self with self and the forming of oneself as a subject" (ibid.: 6)³. The focus of this analysis is on:

the practices by which individuals were led to focus their attention on themselves, to decipher, to recognize, and acknowledge themselves as subjects of desire, bringing into play between themselves a certain relationship that allows them to discover, in desire, the truth of their being (ibid.: 5).

His project on the self revealed two interrelated levels, both of which had to be confronted in order to understand how self-constitution came about:

[i]t was a matter of analyzing . . . the problematizations through which being offers itself to be, necessarily, thought--and the practices on the basis of which these problematizations are formed. (ibid.: 11).

In turning to the philosophical arguments of Antiquity, Foucault seeks to elaborate a "hermeneutics of the self" which would be concerned with the self, "non seulement dans ses formulations théoriques; mais de l'analyser en relation avec un ensemble de pratiques" ⁴ (1989a: 145). Thus this hermeneutic would be situated at the point where theoretical

formulations and practices intersect, or can be made to intersect. We can therefore begin to see here a double usage and performance of the self. The reason for Foucault's turn to the Greeks is to be found in the ways in which a theory and a practice of the self were articulated. Luther Martin explains that:

two differently situated technologies of the Hellenistic self may be identified. The first, which is characteristic of the Western ethical tradition, might be termed an epistemological technology of self. This tradition emphasizes the activity of self-disclosure always in terms of an other. . . . The second, exemplified by the Eastern Thomist tradition, might be termed an ontological technology of self. This tradition emphasizes the discernment or disciphering of what the self already is. (Martin, 1988: 60).

In Foucault's terms, we can contrast these two modes by characterizing the first as 'knowing thyself' with the second as 'taking care of the self', or, for Martin, contrasting an epistemological technology of the self with an ontological one. As Foucault points out, "'Know thyself' has obscured 'Take care of yourself' because our morality, a morality of asceticism, insists that the self is that which one can reject" (1988b: 22). In Martin's distinction, the epistemological and Western self is revealed in 'self-disclosure' and emerges in the activity of confession ('in terms of an other'), whereas we can say that the ontological self concerns a self already there ('take care of the self').

While these distinctions may be valid what is more important in Foucault's analysis of the Hellenistic

conceptions of the self is the way in which he draws out a certain articulation of theory and experience through the figure of the self. As he says:

comment l'expérience qu'on peut faire de soi-même et le savoir qu'on peut faire de soi-même et le savoir qu'on s'en forme ont-ils été organisés à travers certains schemas? Comment ces schemas ont-ils été définis, valorisés, recommandés, imposés? ⁵(1989a: 133).

The questions Foucault raises here are of a fundamental epistemological nature: how does the experience and knowledge of one's self, and the knowledge that is constructed between these two, get organized into certain patterns? It is therefore not the Greeks per se that draw Foucault; rather, it is the intricate formulation that he sees at work in their intercalation of theory and practice. It is the possibility of the self as an articulation of a way of life, a set of technologies, and a theoretical project that Foucault takes from Antiquity. Given Foucault's project, this concept is, of course, brought to the present day. As Wilhelm Schmid states: "[c]ertes il s'agit d'une pratique de l'antiquité. Mais Michel Foucault pense son actualisation comme l'ouverture d'une perspective: le Soi comme possibilité." ⁶(Schmid, 1989: 55). Thus the Greek concept of the self is 'actualized' and brought to light as a condition of possibility for the emergence of other knowledges, for the construction of "strategic knowledges" about ourselves.

The way in which the self 'opens up a new perspective' can best be seen in Foucault's description and

epistemological interpretation of a text by Artemidorous, a second century A.D. 'oneirocritic', an interpreter of dreams. What interests Foucault is that:

[Artemidorous] undertook to write a work of method, and this in two senses: it was meant to be a manual for use in daily practice; it was also meant to be a theoretical treatise on the validity of interpretive procedures (Foucault, 1988a: 4).

The emphasis in Artemidorous' text, The Interpretation of Dreams was on the quotidian nature and need to interpret one's own dreams: "[o]ne should bear in mind that the analysis of dreams was one of the techniques of existence" (Foucault, *ibid.*: 5). The point then was not to look for extraordinary dreams and their sources but rather for ways in which the dreams intersected with the real, to offer a "handbook-for-daily-living" (*ibid.*: 6). Thus one could say that Artemidorous' book was aimed at making dreams 'work' in the everyday: "[a]lmost entirely centered not on the prophetic marvels of dreams but on the techne that enables one to make them speak correctly, the work is addressed to several types of readers . . . to 'ordinary' individual[s]" (*ibid.*: 6-7). In more contemporary terms, dreams can be seen as levels of mediation between the (ordinary) individual and his reality. The trick then is to learn 'the techne' of matching up the dreams with the real. It is in this task that the "general reader . . . needs basic instruction . . . [he needs] a manual for living" (*ibid.*: 6).

Included in Artemidorous' work is a validation of his mode of procedure. First there is the 'ethnographic'

collection of data: "in the different cities of Greece . . . in Asia, in Italy and in the largest and most populous of the islands, I have patiently listened to old dreams and their consequences" (Artemidorous cited in Foucault, *ibid.*:

8). Then this data is tested and 'verified':

he will submit it to 'experience' (peira), which is for him the 'guiding principle' and 'witness' of everything he says. What he means by this is that he will verify the information by matching it against other sources, by comparing it with his own practice, and by subjecting it to argument and demonstration. (Foucault, *ibid.*).

In this way Artemidorous draws up a detailed text which "presents in connection with dreams a catalog of different possible acts and relations" (*ibid.*: 9). The dreams are divided into two broad categories: "enypnion, those that speak of the individual; and oneiros, dreams that speak of events in the world (*ibid.*: 10). Artemidorous is not concerned with the morality of the acts but in the relations to be formed between the dream and the waking world. Thus, the dream is intimately connected with a 'mode of being' but not with a normative evaluation of that being:

the dream 'tells what is real' . . . the dream tells the event, the good fortune or misfortune, the prosperity or sorrow, that will characterize the subject's mode of being in reality, and it tells it through a relationship of analogy with the mode of being . . . of the subject as an actor on the sexual stage of the dream. (Foucault, *ibid.*: 16).

The importance of Artemidorous' analysis of dreams is that it offers Foucault a concrete example of the way in which the self can be made to work upon itself: ordinary people take up their dreams and interpret them through a

theoretical and practical manual, and they are then, through analogy, equated with 'modes of being'. These modes are not ranked according to a set of moral principles but rather are linked to ways of stylizing oneself, to an art of existence. In drawing upon the work of Artemidorous as an exemplar of the period Foucault wants to establish that the self is constituted through practices; it is not an a priori ("Il n'est pas donné mais est à créer . . . n'est pas une substance mais une forme" ⁷(cited in Schmid, *ibid.*: 55).

One can therefore see various changes in the formation of the self. In one key example of these changes and the fundamental shifts entailed by them, Foucault works through the Greek debate over the love of boys versus that of women. If one recalls that Artemidorous founds his interpretation of dreams through the establishment of analogies to sexual states and positions, it becomes clear that the forms of 'aphrodisia' (lust, erotics) play an important part in the transforming of the self. Following the intricate debates of Plutarch and Pseudo-Lucian, Foucault raises the ways in which the debate over women versus boys is not "the conflict of two forms of sexual desire . . . It is the confrontation of two forms of life, two ways of stylizing one's pleasure, and of the two philosophical discourses that accompany these choices" (*ibid.*: 218). Thus the shift in sexual ethics that at this time began to formulate a self in relation to a monistic and conjugal form of love is intimately tied to the self:

It is not the accentuation of forms of prohibition that is behind these modifications in sexual ethics. It is the development of an art of existence that revolves around the question of the self, of its dependence and independence, of its universal form and of the connection it can and should establish with others, of the procedures by which it exerts its control over itself, and of the way in which it can establish a complete supremacy over itself. (ibid.: 238-9).

Here Foucault is quite definite that the shift from the love of boys to the conjugal containment of love and sex was not prompted by repression or 'forms of prohibition'. It is, rather, that the modifications in sexual ethics were intricately tied into a particular articulation of the 'art of existence' and forms of the self. Foucault's project then in The Pleasures of the Self and The Care of the Self is to specify the ways in which a new sexual ethics arose through a particular conception of the self. In other words, how were the relations between selves changed as they were positioned differently in regard to a new horizon of sexual ethics? In Foucault's own terms, we could say that the self as formulated in the discourse of Plutarch and others provided the conditions of possibility for this new priority of conjugal love. Thus the Greek "dilemma of passivity" (ibid.: 207) had long defined possible relations among men-- it was the key factor in relation to which any stylistics of the self could be formed. What we see in the discursive emergence of a heterosexual and monistic love was that passivity could be avoided in "the double activity of loving, by husband and wife" (ibid.: 208). Hence, Plutarch's "new stylistics of love" was founded in the need to avoid

passive relations among selves, resulting in the fact that "[t]here can no longer be a place for [boys] in this great unitary and integrative chain in which love is revitalized by the reciprocity of pleasure" (ibid.: 210). While it might be tempting to see in this moment the birth of our homophobic society, this would be precipitous. In tracing through the modifications of the self and its relations to sexual ethics, Foucault does not propose a causality of events resulting in the present: "some precepts emerge that seem to be rather similar to those that will be formulated in the later moral systems. But one should not be misled by the analogy" (ibid.: 239). What we do see is the establishment of analogies between the self and sexual behaviour which will then play out in:

other modalities of the relation to self: a characterization of the ethical substance based on finitude, the Fall, and evil; a mode of subjection to a personal god; a type of work upon oneself that implies a decipherment of the soul and a purificatory hermeneutics of the desires . . . a different way of constituting oneself as the ethical subject of one's sexual behavior (ibid.: 239-240).

The questions Foucault raises thus should not be seen as a break with his previous methods and mode of inquiry; they are rather a deepening of his concerns with apparatuses which produce the possibility of various 'subjectivities', of various 'truths' about ourselves. These 'truths' are not discrete but are the resulting positivities of multiple discourses and practices. As he stated in Power/Knowledge:

[i]t's not a matter of locating everything on one level, that of the event, but of realising that there

are actually a whole order of levels of different types of events differing in amplitude, chronological breadth, and capacity to produce effects. (1980c: 114).

His technologies of the self must, therefore, be seen as precisely designating 'a whole order of levels of different types of events'. In The Care of the Self, Foucault describes a complex economy of events that operates at different levels and which produces a wide-ranging calculus of effects. Thus he presents us with a method of interpreting dreams that specifies analogies with sexual practices: the interdiction of passivity seen in the types of sexual practices that allow a male citizen to stylize his pleasures with boys without 'losing face'; the debates over boys versus women which at first equate the love of women with natural (animal) needs and then rearticulate the meaning of 'natural'; and the establishment of the truth of conjugal love at the expense of the love of boys. These events all have to do with the self but there are not located on one level, nor are they of equal weight and 'chronological breadth'.

Artemidorous' interpretation of dreams has left little historical trace whereas we can find in the shift to monistic and conjugal love a condition of possibility for the establishment of the Western heterosexual contract. This possibility may be seen in Plutarch's rhetorical move as he "transposes to the married couple the traits that had long been reserved for the *philia* of lovers of the same sex" (Foucault, 1988a: 205). We also see the possibility of the

nineteenth-century naming of homosexuality as 'deviant' and 'inverse' in Plutarch's formulation of pederasty as "consented to by an individual who, because of his 'softness', his 'femininity', 'enjoys being passive' . . . which is a 'shameful', 'unnatural' thing" (in Foucault, *ibid.*: 206). What is important here is not a strict equation of an ancient discourse with a present state of affairs, but rather the way in which this statement of Plutarch enters into a discursive field which previously held the love of boys to be on a higher order than that of women. To repeat what Foucault said in Power/Knowledge, "it is a question of what governs statements, and the way in which they govern each other" (1980c: 112). The shift here from boys to women is not 'a distant mirror' of our present society, but the effects of these changed discourses will be felt in the possibility of other statements. One also clearly sees here that the shift away from boys has evident effects in the constitution of women's place within marriage. Thus the events involved in the care of the self, in the formulation of an art of existence, differ in their amplitude. Nonetheless, their intricate articulations enable other discourses concerning the relations of selves to each other and to society to emerge.

We can therefore see in Foucault's technologies of the self the extension of his previous epistemological analyses. The self is a figure which designates a particular conjuncture of practice and theory. Beyond the historical

interest of Foucault's description of the Greeks, his use of the technologies of the self implements a double analytic movement. As Foucault frames this analysis:

une histoire du 'souci du soi', entendu comme expérience, et ainsi aussi comme technique élaborant et transformant cette expérience. Un tel projet est au croisement de deux thèmes traités précédemment: une histoire de la subjectivité et une analyse des formes de la 'gouvernementalité' ⁸ (1989a: 134).

The 'care of the self' is therefore to be understood both as 'experience' and as a technique to elaborate upon and transform that experience. Fundamental to the concept of the self are the practices that individuals engage in. These practices (which in The Care of the Self are shown to revolve around different forms of sexuality) then serve as the basis on which to form "problematizations through which being offers itself to be, necessarily, thought" (1988a: 11). Thus the theory, practice and use of the self are neatly interwoven, and they allow for other modalities of being. While "practices [are] the basis [on] which problematizations are formed" (ibid.), these resulting problematizations allow for other practices. Here we can see that no single state of being is offered; rather, being is in tension with the practices of being. Taking from Foucault, we can begin to envision a self produced in the articulation of problematization and practice: operating at an epistemological level to reveal the problematization of a ground, which at another level is constituted in the very practices and engagements of the self. To be sure, this self

is not a universal guarantee; rather, it is the combination of several levels of which allows for specific analyses. This conceptualizing of the self is not only an historical description of the self but also offers a mode of analysis that can "locate the connections and extensions of power, to build little by little a strategic knowledge" (Foucault, 1980c: 145). In other words, the self should be used congruent with Foucault's notion of how theory proceeds, as a "toolkit":

(i) The theory to be constructed is not a system but an instrument, a logic of the specificity of power relations and the struggles around them; (ii) That this investigation can only be carried out step by step on the basis of reflection (which will necessarily be historical in some of its aspects) on given situations. (ibid.).

Conceived of as a 'toolkit', technologies of the self both express the specificities of local power relations as they allow us to figure them in ways that can be analyzed. In that the self is seen as both practice and the problematization of practices, the investigation of power struggles and relations is undertaken through the self, thus ensuring that the analysis is both historical and reflective of the given situation.

I want to now consider how Foucault's elaboration of the self may help us in the formulation of an enunciative position within cultural criticism. The 'problems' that I referred to in the opening of this chapter may, I think, be grouped together under the rubric of 'the problematic of representation'. In other words, how can cultural studies

portray the increasingly complex and individuated mediations between and among individuals and their social formations? Can individual selves stand in as proxies for any constituency of class, race or gender interests? These questions obviously operate on two levels; within a Marxist distinction, *Darstellung* would describe the philosophical project of 'staging' relations in the social formation, and *Vertretung* signifies the political sense of representation (Spivak, 1988). The individual use of autobiography can be seen as an attempt to bring these two levels of representation together; one represents oneself as an historically formulated individual, as one then comes to stand in for other like individuals. The trouble with this manoeuvre is that it is largely untheorized and thus tends toward a realist epistemology: 'I know of what I speak because I am it'. This equation based in a fidelity of origins also carries rather strong ontological (as well as tautological) overtones: 'I can stand in for (women, the working-class, women of colour) because that's what I am'. However, in taking from Foucault's elaboration of the self we may be able to temper these tendencies. More importantly, we can begin to theorize the self as an enunciative position within cultural studies. Taking from Foucault, it is clear that the self is not an entity that can be represented; rather it is in the articulation of problematizations and practices that certain modalities of the self historically emerge. These modalities are ways in which 'being offers

itself to be thought'. The ontological pull of the self is disarmed because the 'care of the self' entails techniques that 'elaborate and transform' the experience of the self. No one aspect of the self can therefore be represented metonymically; no one practice can stand in for a whole. We also find that the 'care of the self' is "always a real activity and not just an attitude" (Foucault, 1983b: 24).

The practices of the self are bound up and carry over to the political realm: "[b]eing occupied with oneself and political activities are linked" (Foucault, *ibid.*: 26). 'Taking care of the self', as opposed to 'knowing thyself', involves practices which construct a self. These practices are sexual, political, and practical. It is in analogy with sexual practices that selves are known in the waking world; one takes care of the self through caring for the community, "the activity of a farmer tending his fields, his cattle, and his house, or to the job of the king in taking care of his city and his citizens" (*ibid.*: 24-5); and one writes about the self, "[t]aking care of oneself became linked to a constant writing activity. The self is something to write about, a theme or object (subject) of writing activity" (*ibid.*: 27). What we can take from these descriptions is a model of the self which operates at both ontological and epistemological levels in order to construct various modalities of the self. Against a model of organicity, we can see here a self that is not posited before the community to represent them on the basis of 'authentic origins', but

rather a self that is in part allowed to be thought through the articulation of sexuality, care for the community, and as an object of writing. Thus the 'faire' of the technologies of the self is to precisely emphasize the different operations and levels of the self. To clarify this, I'll consider more closely the enunciative position which emerges through 'the care of the self'.

Key to Foucault's last writings is the intersection of the self and sexuality; practices of the self are grounded in their analogous relations to sexual practices. The Greek male self in all his permutations must maintain a position of activity in regard to both sexual practices and in wider political dealings. Thus in Artemidorous' interpretation of dreams, signs of weakness in sexual encounters are correlated with the reality of losing face in everyday dealings. "To place oneself 'beneath' one's servant in a dream, thus overturning the social hierarchy, is ominous; it is a sign that one will suffer" (Foucault, 1988a: 19). It was then the interdiction against passivity that led the way to a reformulation of acceptable sexual practices. The equation of self and sex is in turn governed by this interdiction against passivity. "Concern for the self always refers to an active and erotic state" (Foucault, 1988b: 24). The love of boys, therefore, occupied a precarious legitimation, sanctioned if conducted with young boys who allowed the male citizen to be 'masterful'. As, in turn, these young boys grow up, in order to be 'masters'

themselves they had to dominate others, they could no longer politically maintain a position of passivity. Thus the 'new sexual ethics' which begins to emerge with Plutarch was founded in a situation which precluded passive male citizens. The way out of this dilemma was to elide boys altogether in favour of the 'naturally passive' sex: women. Thus the techniques of the self took place within a discursive field marked by a dichotomy of passive/masterful. The 'faire' of this image of passivity was then what caused a turn to heterosexuality from which the West has yet to recover. As a third term, homosexuality 'disappears' within the formulation of technologies of the self ruled by the image of mastery and the interdiction of passivity. In this way, the technologies of the self that are in place before Christianity constitute an 'elegant solution' to the problematic encounter of same sex selves. The love of boys is thus elided within the apparatus of "the economy of pleasures, conjugal fidelity, and relations between men" (Foucault, 1988a: 240).

In an interview conducted in 1982, Foucault remarks that: "[e]ach of my works is a part of my own biography. For one or another reason I had the occasion to live and feel those things" (in R. Martin, 1988: 11). Without overly privileging these remarks, I think that we can see Foucault's formulation of this elegant solution of the self as an attempt to think through the necessary groundwork for the formulation of a possible enunciative position. This

position is grounded in its relation to all those elided in the establishment of the heterosexual contract. For all his close attention to the technologies of the self, the question that emerges with a startling immediacy is, how does one speak when your self is ruled (out) by an image of interdiction? As Foucault puts it, rearticulating Weber's renunciation of certain parts of the self, "[h]ow have certain kinds of interdictions required the price of certain kinds of knowledge about oneself?" (in R. Martin, *ibid.*: 17). Thus knowledge of the self, and the uses of the self, exist in relation to certain kinds of interdictions. This formulation deepens and analytically enriches Foucault's earlier concerns with 'the excluded'. Asked why he is interested in social outcasts, Foucault replies that:

[t]he political and social processes by which the Western European societies were put in order are not very apparent, have been forgotten, or have become habitual . . . It is one of my targets to show people that alot of things that are part of their landscape--that people think are universal--are the result of very precise historical changes . . . and show which space of freedom we can still enjoy and how many changes can still be made. (in R. Martin, *ibid.*).

Here we can see a very concise statement of Foucault's historical project: to allow people to see that the ways in which they live, the concepts by which they organize their thoughts and feelings, the 'habitual order that they enjoy or suffer under--that all of these things are the results of 'very precise historical changes'. In other words, the relations that individuals maintain in society can be 'de-naturalized', their historicity shown. Furthermore, in so

doing we may be able to approach those small 'spaces of freedom' and begin to think of the historical possibilities of change. Using the technologies of the self as a way of analyzing the self's different levels and its work in the historical arrangement of the present adds an important and essential critical perspective to this overall project. What emerges from this concern with the self is a way of formulating an enunciative position in the interstices of self/social relations. In Foucault's case, we may catch glimpses of his speaking position in the ways in which his project runs along the elision of 'the love of boys'. His work in Volumes two and three reveals a definitive moment in the accomplishment of a heterosexual and homophobic society. While it would be ridiculous and vain to search for direct correspondences between the historical work on the self and Foucault's 'Inner self', what we may take from his last writings is a way of conceiving of a position fully integrated into the articulations of the self, practices and political involvements in the community.

Notwithstanding his extensive theorizing of the self, Foucault's own speaking position was reticent⁹. There is, in any case, no reason to assume that everyone who writes speaks from an evident and unique position. A good example of this can be seen in his inaugural lecture at the College de France:

I would really like to have slipped imperceptibly into this lecture At the moment of speaking, I would have like to have perceived a nameless voice, long

preceding me, leaving me merely to enmesh myself in it, taking up its cadence, and to lodge myself, when no one was looking, in its interstices as if it had paused for an instant, in suspense, to beckon to me. (1976: 215).

While Foucault's wish to 'lodge himself' in the interstices of a nameless voice when no one was looking, may on the surface seem to equate with a wish to avoid a speaking position, in the background he evokes the voice of Molloy saying: "I must go on, I can't go on, I must go on" (ibid.). Situated in front of the rather austere body of the College as he takes over the Chair from Jean Hyppolite, this voice certainly does more than just state the facts. It is a calculated manoeuvre which will find itself more fully developed in the later theorizations of the technologies of the self. Indeed, The Care of the Self demonstrates that enunciative positions may be mobilized in diverse ways; that they emerge in different and localized articulations of practices and problematizations. Thus, Foucault's last writings demonstrate clearly the historical shift away from a society that privileged homosexuality and an integration of sexual practices in concepts of caring for the self. He therefore provides us with a theoretical framework that demonstrates the fallacy of universal heterosexuality. Within the concept of caring for the self, Foucault provides a basis for an enunciative position that can integrate sexual practices with other political articulations of selves.

In turning to the analysis of the autobiographical

voice in the work of contemporary cultural studies' theorists, I want to draw out the importance of theorizing modalities of the self. The naive and untheorized use of the self may entail a string of insalubrious effects. Writers as different as Richard Hoggart, Paul de Man and Gayatri Spivak have raised the ways in which the autobiographical voice may subvert 'the good intentions' of the individual writing. As Hoggart points out, the autobiographical often slides "unconsciously across a lot of social assumptions" (1963: 82). De Man does not hold out much hope either: "[a]utobiography veils a defacement of the mind which is itself the cause" (1979: 930). Spivak is the most adamant about the pernicious effects of autobiography: "for whole groups of people, [it] has only been possible through the dominant mediation of an investigator" (1986: 229).

Valerie Walkerdine's article, "Video Replay: families, films and fantasy" is a recent and problematic case in point. Walkerdine puts forward a level of the self which works to subsume others. Walkerdine's intentions are good:

My argument is that such observation [in cultural analysis], like all scientific activity, constitutes a voyeurism in its will to truth, which invests the observer with 'the knowledge', indeed the logos. The observer then should be seen as the third term, the law which claims to impose a reading on the interaction. (Walkerdine, 1986: 167).

Walkerdine's argument in part concerns the way in which 'scopophilia' operates both at the level of the spectator and also describes the theorist/observer's relations to

his/her research subjects. Her article is therefore an attempt to use the autobiographical as a way of self-consciously raising the scopophilic mechanisms in play as she interviews a family ("the Coles"). She closely describes her insertion as a middle-class professional (studying 6-year-old girls and their education) into a working-class family. The entry moment occurs when the family, and most especially, the father, are watching a video of Rocky II. The obvious object of inquiry is the young daughter of the family ("Joanne") and her relations within the family structure. Another object, however, emerges: that of the observer, and more particularly, the figure of Walkerdine herself. As she states at the outset, she is concerned with "the voyeurism of the theorist--in whose desire for knowledge is inscribed a will to truth of which the latent content is the terror of the other who is watched" (ibid.). Thus her project is two-fold: "to understand the act of watching"; and, "to challenge the 'intellectualization of pleasures' which seems to be the aim of much analysis of mass film and television" (ibid.: 168).

These arguments are indeed important and, as I've argued in previous chapters, the relation between researcher and researched needs to be a vigilant one. Furthermore, considerable difficulties arise when analytic and paradigmatic interpretive models are forced willy-nilly upon people's experiences. However, the sight of "Rocky" and "the gut-churning horror of the constant replay" (ibid.: 169) as

Mr. Cole goes over and over a particularly violent scene sends Walkerdine off on another track. The vector that she follows leads quite quickly to a discussion of herself and her past. Alone in her office, she "cried for grief for what was lost and for the terrifying desire to be somewhere and someone else: the struggle to 'make it'" (ibid.). Walkerdine's present detached and middle-class self dissolves into her past: "Rocky's struggle to become bourgeois is what reminded me of the pain of my own" (ibid.). This pain is located in Walkerdine's displacement, in the remembered need to 'escape' upwards--out of the working classes, and in her particular mode of escape: "for the majority of women and men, the escape-route open to me, that of the mind, of being clever, is closed" (ibid.). However, Walkerdine is adamant that this route, while somewhat cleaner than the more usual one of "the body" ("all those women, starlets, beauty queens and 'kept' women" or "the conquering champion" (ibid.: 169-171), carries with it problems similar to Rocky's. As she says elsewhere, "embedded in it is the necessary fear of giving up, the terrifying doubts that very soon they will find out that you have no talent" (Walkerdine, 1985: 66).

While I have no doubts about these fears (the present circumstances of my own writing certainly corroborate them), there are problems with Walkerdine's string of equivalences: researcher-Rocky; the Coles-the body; the mind as an out for the few-fighting for the male working-class majority.

However, when we get back to the Coles things get even more murky. Mr. Cole, who has had control of the remote-control while the family watches Rocky, is, we are told: "physically very small" (1986: 180). This small man who is "the 'big man' at home" (ibid.) has nicknamed his daughter Joanne, "Dodo". Walkerdine posits that "[i]n this instance, although 'Dodo' might relate to an infantile mispronunciation of Joanne (Jo-Jo: Dodo), it also has links with infantilization and death" (ibid). The big/little man, Mr. Cole, then identifies with Rocky and fighting and, "the necessity for a fighting masculinity might therefore relate here to a terror of femininity (invested in Dodo?)" (ibid.). This rather particular equation is linked to another, as Walkerdine tells us: "my father had a nickname for me, itself clearly related to the fairy fantasy. This was 'Tinky', abbreviated from Tinkerbell" (ibid.: 186). As 'Tinky' Walkerdine's femininity was also rendered less terrifying: "Tinkerbell is feminine, but she is safe . . . [s]he is a sexual object and yet totally safe" (ibid.). Walkerdine further argues that Tinkerbell, and 'Tinky', represent "a sexualized childhood . . . but it seems to be a narcissistic image of the femininity of man . . . the female constructed in man's narcissitic image" (ibid.). She then constructs a link between the photographs of her as 'Tinky' and argues that:

when I examine these representations of myself, they are the site of an anxiety that I closely resemble my father. But is not the bluebell fairy saved by her feminine charms? The fairy is unattainable, not quite human, charming. Desire, passion and incest are thereby displaced and hidden. (ibid.).

Here Walkerdine's self is constructed within the figure of the fairy and in relation to her father. She depicts her childhood self as constructed in the gaze of her father: "it may be relevant that it was my father who manufactured the wand, precisely that which is waved to cast a spell--a fairy with a phallus?" (ibid.: 187). Thus Walkerdine's takes Lacan's famous dictum to heart: 'le non/nom du Père' is in operation here. Created in the sphere of Lacan's 'symbolic' and confined by 'the name of the Father', Walkerdine conceives of her childhood as evidence of the validity of the claims of psychoanalytic theory: "[a]s in Lacan's 'God and and the jouissance of The Woman', the gazing, watching Other provides safety--the child who never grows up and, as in Lacan's vision, the moment of jouissance is the moment of death" (ibid.).

While, of course, Walkerdine is free to construct herself in any manner and within any model she might chose, there are political and theoretical complications when this story is used to 'explain' a 6 year-old child who is under Walkerdine's surveillance. In constructing 'Dodo's' self in relation to the image of her own self-fabrication, Walkerdine deeply belies her (stated) objectives. Thus she says that she has tackled the question of: "how do we reassert the importance of the creation of subjectivity as active, even if the subject is caught at an intersection of discourses and practices?" (1986: 188). The problem is that the only 'active subjectivity' which emerges from

Walkerdine's article her own. Moreover, this subjectivity is only 'activated' by an appropriation of certain Lacanian tenets. Walkerdine sums up her aims in stating that:

My account of how the Coles (and I) watched Rocky II is an attempt to show the effectivity of filmic representations within the lived relations of domestic practices--signifying and discursive practices which are historically constituted and regulated" (ibid.: 189).

It is, however, the use and the particular construction of herself which precisely prevents Walkerdine from approaching the way in which this family lives those 'discursive and historical practices'. To be quite clear, it is not the fact of Walkerdine's self within the text which is troublesome; rather, it is its work there which causes problems. Against Foucault's modalities of the self which would give us a landscape of selves through the practice and problematization of 'domestic relations', Walkerdine's self cancels out any other possible selves (her own and those of the Coles). Walkerdine posits a three-fold analytic in her article: the Coles, Walkerdine-as-Tinky, and Walkerdine-as-social scientist. By doing so she hopes to avoid the researcher's 'will to truth', her 'voyeurism'. However, what happens is that Joanne (Dodo) is created in the image of Valerie (Tinky) and that the action turns around Walkerdine's present and childhood selves. The supposed object of inquiry, the Coles and their daughter, thus disappear.

In her conclusion, Walkerdine again attacks a social

science marked by "the desire to know the masses":

The crusade to save the masses from the ideology that dupes them can obscure the real social significance of their pleasures and, at the same time, blind us to the perversity of radical intellectual pleasures (ibid.: 196).

While this is a repetition of a fairly well-known argument, it is striking in this context. Walkerdine's construction of a singular self through a Lacanian model denies both her pleasures as a child dressing-up, reducing herself to an entity formed in the shadow of a Lacanian Father (as opposed to that historical individual, her actual father) and she imposes this same model of the self on Joanne, again constructed in a psychological composite of Mr. Coles. Strangely enough, in a text marked by an overt autobiographical voice, it is the real absence of selves that in the end 'obscures the real social significance of pleasures'. The self used here cancels out all but a certain type of exchange between Walkerdine and herself and therefore actually constitutes what Walkerdine calls 'the perversity of radical intellectual pleasures'. While it may be fun to play with yourself in this way, it does not provide much of a ground from which to understand how individuals may get pleasure from, as well as question, their practices. The erection of a monolithic self founded in an psychoanalytic abstraction then works against the analysis of how the Coles might take Walkerdine's surveillance as a problematization of both their own practices and those of 'the watcher'. In other words, the

family may have used Walkerdine's presence to problematize their family relations. Even given the little non-psychic details that we can garner from Walkerdine's piece, it seems that in the case of Mr. Cole there are several modalities of the self in play that may have been accentuated by the problematic presence of Walkerdine. Thus, his care for the self is expressed through his 'fighting for the family' as well as in the sexual position of 'being on top' that he is shown to maintain. In the case of Mrs. Cole one may see technologies of the self expressed in her family relations and in her position in the family. These are, of course, merely tentative glimpses of different modalities of the self at play within a particular situation.

Against Walkerdine's 'truth' of the self in, and as guaranteed by, a psychoanalytic model of subjectivity there are other more modest uses of the self which come closer to Foucault's technologies. Meaghan Morris describes a certain autobiographical usage of experience as "first-person anecdotes". She distinguishes her use of anecdotes from what she perceives of as an American sense which understands these statements as "primarily oriented towards the emotive-conative functions, in Jakobson's terms, of communication: that is, towards speaker-expressive . . . or an I/you axis in discourse" (1988: 6-7). In contrast to this mode, American or not, that emphasizes personal truthfulness, she uses anecdotes in their referential function. This is to say that:

they are oriented futuristically towards the construction of a precise, local, and social discursive context, of which the anecdote functions as a mise en abyme. That is to say, anecdotes for me are not expressions of personal experience, but allegorical expositions of a model of the way the world can be said to be working (ibid.: 7).

We can apply Morris' argument and analyze the effects of putting forward a self. In this way, a self is posited but also acts as an analytic construct to problematize 'the way the world can be said to be working'. Thus the self works as a 'mise en abyme' throwing into relief its own landscape, its own construction. My point is that the autobiographical statement (the setting forth of the self) works to show up the conditions of the statement (the enunciative position). From Foucault's model of the technologies of the self we may say that the self is posited as a ground for its problematizations, and in so doing the self may be transformed in order to allow for other statements.

An example of this type of investment in the modalities of the self can be seen in Hebdige's "Some Sons and their Fathers"¹⁰. There Hebdige moves from his breakdown to the actual historical situation in Britain, to the death of a friend, to the public mourning of Diana Dors, to his own father. As he explains: "[b]y trying to speak in more than one dimension--by using different voices and images--I am trying to explore certain possibilities which a more straight-forward approach would, I think, ignore" (1985: 31). Hebdige's point is not the construction of a picture of fragmented subjectivities, but rather to the ways in which

selves struggle with themselves in order to say something. In Hebdige's description this is to try to find ways to speak in different voices, to put forward different modalities of the self without falling apart. As he puts it:

It is so difficult to resist our own construction, to build constructively on what's already there. It is so difficult to peel back the shifting layers of images and words through which we have been made and within which we go on making and remaking ourselves so that we can stand up and say this is who I am and this is where I come from (ibid.: 34).

This process that Hebdige describes can also be taken as a depiction of the work of the technologies of the self: a continual process in which the self is practiced and problematized. It is in and through these struggles that an enunciative position, a place to speak from, emerges: "we want to own ourselves at last. To own our own voices" (Hebdige, ibid.).

Hebdige's use of the autobiographical illustrates a double-articulation of the self: on the one hand, to speak of and to one's self thereby transforming the self; and on the other, to put forward voices and selves in relation to a theoretical and actual horizon, thereby transforming the practices which constrict selves. This move can then be said to be operating within Foucault's technologies of the self, and as instances of caring for the self they articulate the practical business of getting on with life, the social relations in which one lives, and the sexual practices which seek to define us. In his conclusion, Hebdige restates these levels as:

what counts now as always is collective action . . . finding ways of linking with and expressing emergent and residual forms of masculine identity, [and] tracing out how these forms are related to and shaped by institutional pressures and broader social and economic forces. (ibid.: 38).

The possibility of articulating these levels lies in the construction of different modalities of the self. Lodged in specific situations and conditions, the self must be used epistemologically to reveal the nature of the articulation, and ontologically to acknowledge the affectivity of the articulation. Thus, "[w]e have to go on making connections, to bear our witness and to feel the times we're living through." (Hebdige, ibid.: 39).

In conclusion then, we can situate the use of the autobiographical voice in theoretical writings somewhere between the two poles of the individual and the social formation. As yet, this voice tends to oscillate between the two senses of representation. At times and in certain texts, this voice veers towards the project of 'Darstellung' in the construction of an image of an individual. At other times and in other instances, it moves towards 'Vertretung' as the image of the individual takes on the responsibility of representing the interests of various constituencies. In charting the movements of the autobiographical voice we see two poles (re)emerging within cultural criticism which need to be struggled and worked against. The first is a tendency is to use the autobiographical as a guarantee of authenticity, a reworking of the self in the face of the

acknowledged difficulties of representing 'the other'. This theoretical pull can be historically located in the aftermath of Baudrillardian arguments about the 'impossibility of (representing) the masses (Baudrillard, 1980; 1983; Lipovetsky, 1983). In positing the impossibility of any project of *Vertretung*, the theorist's self is free to roam, to turn back to itself. As Baudrillard puts it: "tout à découvrir, tout à effacer" (Baudrillard, 1986: 25). In a mood of 'discovering everything, effacing everything' the self becomes an end in itself. The uses of the self that gravitate towards this pole can be said to work primarily on an ontological level; the use of the self guarantees a special order of reality located in a personal 'truth'.

The second tendency is towards a return to the individual. This move can be seen as a loosely articulated response to the centrality of the subject within poststructuralism. As the 'subjectivity' debates wear thin (a measuring yard-stick of their waning can be seen in Screen's shift away from its 'high theory' moment), there is a decided turn away from 'the subject' in theory to an individual self. While the influence of Althusserian formulation of the interpellated movements of the subject cannot be underestimated, nonetheless its analytic reach is limited.

The problem of how to integrate the 'high theory' of poststructuralism into a workable politics led to something of a stalemate with individual theorists turning elsewhere

for their inspiration. This may be seen in the shifts of certain writers. For example, we need only compare Walkerdine's 1984 article in Changing the Subject (Henriques et al, 1984) with her "Video Replay" article to see a very different sense of theoretical work. Another example of this shift away from the centrality of poststructuralism can be seen in Rosalind Coward's move from Language and Materialism (1977) to the more 'fun' site of analysis of consumerism, and to the more immediate concerns of how women live with cultural representations (Coward, 1985). Her latest book is on the myth of alternative health (Coward, 1989).

This 'greening' of old-style politics calls attention to individual exigencies. What it lacks, however, is an analysis of the relations of the self to the social within this altered climate. This is not to call for a 'théorie d'ensemble' of the self to replace that of the subject; it is to turn to a analysis of the modalities of the self that can articulate new relations between theory, individuals, and daily practices. Whether the world is better or worse, more or less complicated, right now is not the point; the need for careful and critical cultural analysis remains acute. As individuals (theorists or not) living in a time when things get better only to get worse (when women in general may advance to higher positions while poverty becomes a more real and statistical likelihood for women, when the right to abortion is again questioned in Canada and

the United States) we do indeed need to use ourselves in concrete political ways. As we have recently seen in Canada, a woman's self can be laid out for public scrutiny if she decides to have an abortion against her boyfriend's wishes. Against the Right's increasing success in rearticulating women's selves in the traditional home and the family, we need critical strategies of the self. Implicating Foucault's emphasis on the care of the self as a critical practice within the community can counter the reinscription of women as the unique nurturers. An analysis of the self implied in this equation reveals its ideological conditions.

I've argued for ways of understanding the self as an analytic tool. In bringing together the practices that we live and the problematizations of those practices, the self can provide a place to speak from. In other words, we can think of the 'work' of the self; grounded in 'the primacy of the real' the self must also be made to move analytically, revealing the character of the mediations between individuals and social formations. The 'faire' of the self describes the location of the self in everyday practices as well as the capacity of the self as an analytic tool to 'cut into that real'. This double articulation of the self then provides the necessary basis for, and the beginning of an elaboration of, an enunciative position in cultural studies. This means that one cannot simply 'speak out' and shoot from the heart; without a theoretical model of that speaking there is no ground for an enunciative position. While we

cannot always guarantee the politics of individual voices, we can work to elaborate a speaking position that is formulated through and stitched into the larger political articulations of feminism and socialism. In speaking from there and in speaking our individual selves, we begin to see the ways in which we can 'bear witness' to ourselves as theorists and to the times in which we live. The self that is uttered from a theorized speaking position is not an ontological moment (though it may contain it); rather, it works at an epistemological level to analyse its own 'mise-en-abyme'. This 'mise-en-abyme' puts the cultural landscape into relief and allows new vectors to be seen, to be created. This is, then, a social and a very personal landscape, dotted with past and present losses as it is bounded by theories and history. Seen from the position of the self as an enunciative strategy, this landscape contains the possibility of new ways of living within the social, of constructing theoretical accounts, and of experiencing oneself.

Notes

¹ "suddenly in the 80's the landscape changed. One is witnessing the return of the actor, the subject and the individual". Translation mine.

² "What to do about one's self? What work to effect on oneself?". Translation mine.

² Gilles Deleuze's (1986) book on Foucault contains an especially interesting chapter on Foucault's construction of subjectivity. Deleuze describes Foucault's arguments on subjectivity as integral to the rest of Foucault's work. Deleuze uses the metaphor of "le pli" (which translates as both 'pleat' and 'fold') to describe the double operations of the self: the inside and outside; the ontological and the epistemological; the practice and the problematization.

⁴ "not only in its theoretical formulations; but to analyze it in relation to a set of practices". Translation mine.

⁵ "how has the experience of the self and the knowledge of the self, and the knowledge that gets formed of the self, been organized in relation to certain schemas? How have these schemas been defined, valorized, requested, imposed?" Translation mine.

⁶ "certainly it concerns a practice from Antiquity. However, Michel Foucault conceives of its actualization as an opening of a perspective: the Self as possibility." Translation mine.

⁷ "it is not given but is to be created . . . it's not a substance but a form." Translation mine.

⁸ "a history of 'the care of the self' understood as experience and then also as a technique that elaborates and transforms this experience. Such a project is at the intersection of two themes previously dealt with: a history of subjectivity and an analysis of the forms of

governmentality" Translation mine.

⁹ Foucault's speaking position is notoriously difficult to pin down. He is often taken as an exemplar of 'high theory' and as promoting a positionless point of departure. In other words, Foucault is commonly taken as an advocate of the text over the author. This misunderstanding is principally due to the way in which anglo-american theorists took his article "What is an Author?" (1984). His argument there concerned not a denial of authority but rather an exposition of the 'functions of the author'. This is to say that Foucault raised the way in which historically various knowledges have required the sign of an author. Gayatri Spivak's (1988) critique of Foucault's position on authority is slightly different. Taking from an interview of Deleuze and Foucault (Foucault, 1977), she states that "[t]he much-publicized critique of the sovereign subject . . . actually inaugurates a Subject" (Spivak, 1988: 272). Interesting as these debates are, they do not quite correspond with the question of the enunciative position that emerges from Foucault's work.

¹⁰ Here I am concentrating on Hebdige's article "Some Sons and their Fathers", however Hebdige's experimentation with speaking styles and positions can be seen in other articles. For example, see the introduction in Hebdige, 1989; as well as Hebdige, 1987a; 1987b.

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Conclusion

The project of this thesis has been to analyze the positivity and the conditions of possibility of usages of the autobiographical self in cultural criticism. The stakes involved in this project are important in both political and epistemological terms. For a start, there is an increasing use of the autobiographical voice in cultural theory which is often problematic. Speaking the self in a theoretical context may reinscribe forms of essentialism as the autobiographical is formulated as a guarantee of authenticity. The autobiographical can also be used as a guarantee that one speaks for others; that, for example, my experiences as a woman will allow me to speak for all women. We can also see the growing usage of the autobiographical as a retreat from theory; that speaking experientially represents an unmediated truth about a knowable 'real'. I have argued that in order to be of analytic use, autobiographical statements must be theorized in the larger frame of the operation of the concept of the self.

The increased interest in the autobiographical occurs at a moment when there is a general rise within the human sciences of epistemological and political questions about the human subject. As the project of the collection of essays "Après le sujet: Qui Vient?" (1989) makes clear,

there is little consensus as to what form the new individual subject should take. Other recent works, like Alain Renaut's L'Ere de l'individu (1989), look for an individual situated beyond humanism. Renaut goes back to Kant and others, like Foucault and Jean-Pierre Vernant, return to the Greeks. Paul Smith (1988) wants a subject freed of epistemological 'baggage' and endowed with agency. This intellectual movement around the individual takes place concurrently with postmodernist denials of the concept of the masses. Jean Baudrillard (1983; 1985) and Gilles Lipovetsky (1983) (among others) contest the viability of the political project of 'representation' (Vertretung). They argue that the break with modernity can be seen in the shift from social power rooted in the masses to a location within an autonomous informatic society. At the same time, other postmodernist writers celebrate the fragmentation of the human subject within "the society of the spectacle" (to use the Situationist, Guy Debord's term). One can also find a return to the individual in a 'post-feminist' discourse where the emphasis is on 'choice'. The possibility of choice, of course, depends on a concept of the individual freed from any social determination. 'Post-feminism', like the New Right organization, R.E.A.L. Women, relies on the testimonies of individual women to persuade others that 'the choice' to stay at home and raise a family is the right one.

My project has been to raise a theoretical, epistemological and political set of criteria with which to

evaluate usages of the self within current cultural theory. If we are not to fall into a realist epistemology and construct the autobiographical voice as the unmediated truth of the social or of women's conditions, then we must theorize the different effects of the autobiographical. Thus, I have analyzed several current examples of the autobiographical voice in cultural theory in order to examine their effectivity and to raise the assumptions that allow them to circulate.

In a more positive vein, I have theorized the conditions of possibility for enunciative positions in feminist cultural analysis. This involves steering between the evacuation of the self in postmodernism and poststructuralism and the dangers of a politics guaranteed through the use of the autobiographical. In examining the epistemological and the ontological functioning of the concept of the self, I argued that the self as an analytic image can be made to work at two levels of abstraction. At an epistemological level, the concept of the self checks the impulse to formulate the autobiographical as an ontological guarantee, or as a demonstration of political authenticity. The ontological possibilities of the usage of the self restores the effectivity of the experiential denied in poststructuralist conceptions of the subject. Building on my analyses of the different uses that Williams and Showalter give to experience, I argued that an ontological level of analysis empowers the analytic reach of the

experiential. In critiquing the reduction of the term 'difference' to the one level of sexual difference, I argued that the use of 'the feminine' as an analytic concept denies the epistemological value of feminist uses of experiential difference.

The questions that I have raised focus two sets of concerns. The first centres on the written 'I'. Criticism obviously most often circulates in written texts, and my project concerns autobiographical discourse within theoretical texts. While this is quite evident, the effectivity of that written 'I' is not always immediately apparent. Taking from Barthes and Foucault, I have analyzed the author-effects entailed by autobiographical statements. As with Foucault's "author-functions", these effects operate within historical and discursive conditions of possibility. The effectivity of the autobiographical thus extends beyond the purely textual. As Barthes himself says, an 'I' intrudes into the autobiographical text which "nonetheless refers to no fictive person" (1977: 120). When Augustine posits himself as a sign of God's creation, the effects are felt beyond the text. As I argued in my critique of some practitioners of self-reflexivity, reflexivity must occur beyond the pages of the book in order to raise epistemological and political issues. The inner monologue of the ethnographer does not help the other, nor does it stop him or her from being again reinscribed as the Other.

A second set of questions running through the thesis

concerns the knowledge effects produced by uses of the autobiographical voice. By this I mean that uses of the self can be used as critical tools in the analysis of social and political conjunctures. Extending Le Doeuff's use of the image, we can talk about the 'faire' or 'the work' of autobiographical discourse. Seen from this perspective, the autobiographical image articulates an epistemological realm with the place of the image in 'the lived'. In other words, the autobiographical self exists in relation to other concepts, and it is also 'lodged' in what Le Doeuff calls 'an involvement in the primacy of the real'. One can begin to measure the productivity of autobiographical usages of the self in relation to how it articulates these two analytic levels. As I argued, Gail Valaskakis' use of the autobiographical locates herself as "Indian and outsider"; at one level, this then entails an epistemological inquiry about what constitutes 'Indian' as knowledge. Her autobiographical account details the ways in which her grandparents (and especially her grandmother) were measured by different waves of ethnographers. Her past then has, in part, been produced through a scientific rendition of the 'meaning' of Indian. At the same time, the meaning of Indian is concretely lodged in her remembrances of everyday practices that are lived out in the shadow of ethnographic and State knowledges. This use of the autobiographical is quite clearly political and geared to a present battle over landclaims; a site which powerfully represents the

articulation of the epistemological and the ontological levels involved in 'the real'. Lawrence Grossberg uses an autobiographical image of his grandparents to argue the difference between 'fanaticism' and 'fan'. Both are, of course, theoretical concepts but their 'work' in the everyday is secured through the autobiographical. Stuart Hall brings out the theoretical, political and affective issues that intersect in the concept of 'Black'. He does this through the use of an image of his son faced with the distinction between 'black' and 'brown'. Like Dick Hebdige's description of his loss of self during a nervous breakdown, these autobiographical images are used to articulate different realms of the social and produce knowledge effects about the specificities of the social formation.

Conversely, I argued that Valerie Walkerdine's use of her self ultimately fails because the articulation of levels does not occur. Walkerdine uses her understanding of herself as a model to be applied to others. In privileging a psychoanalytic construction of her autobiography and encompassing her research subject within it, the movement of the autobiographical image is impeded. There is no 'mise-en-abyme' here as the autobiographical image stays at one level; it lacks a sense of where it is 'lodged' that would produce specific knowledges about Walkerdine's self and those of her research subjects. As these different usages of the autobiographical suggest, and as Foucault

demonstrates, various concepts of the self produce very different effects. In analyzing the concept of the self as enabled by the articulation of different levels of analysis, I have also argued that as an analytic construct, the self allows us to distinguish between productive and unproductive uses of the autobiographical.

This is not a proposal for a single enunciative strategy. Functions of the self are framed within different apparatuses and are localized at different historical, theoretical and political moments. A single strategy would run the risk of essentialism, and a different theoretical conjuncture would produce quite different conceptions of the self. For example, the recent concepts of the self that I analyze owe much to a wider legitimation of feminism. They are also produced in the aftermath of different theoretical discourses and in the ground left behind after the various 'deaths'. This is not to say that the autobiographical is a passing fad, even if it is a 'boom' industry at the moment. Rather, it is to recognize that recent critical uses of the self are produced in relation to specific conjunctures. It is also to use the concept of the self as an analytic tool to conceptualize and work in these political and theoretical conjunctures. Its analytic use is in the way that it may capture the 'backwardnesses and forwardnesses' that Althusser called 'the conjunctural'. Making the distinction between epistemological and ontological levels, and foregrounding the self as a condition of possibility for

enunciative positions, allows for the production of theoretical and political questions necessary for a productive critical practice. It also allows us to put ourselves to work in theorizing how we want to live, love, dream, mourn, and write.

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