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**Gender, Space and the Academy:
An Interview with Doreen Massey
The Open University**

**Conducted by B. Weber Ijams, J. Popke, and K. Urch
disClosure Editorial Collective
March 6, 1994**

Doreen Massey visited the University of Kentucky as part of the Committee on Social Theory's spring lecture series. Her lecture, entitled "Unbounded Spaces", focused on two interrelated points. First, Massey suggested that space and time have traditionally been conceived as a dualism; while time has been considered dynamic, space has generally been equated with the static, with the absence of the temporal. She suggested that space and time should instead be considered inseparable. Space is formed out of social relations which cannot be static; it is comprised of "dynamic simultaneities", and therefore cannot be separable from time (see also Massey 1992a).

Massey's second point, following from this, was to argue for a more 'progressive' conceptualization of place. For Massey, place is, like space, defined by social relations. It should be seen then, not as a bounded entity, but as "a particular articulated moment of the complexity that is social space". Place is formed through (inter)connections with other places, and hence it becomes impossible to separate the local from the global, the 'outside' from the 'inside'. This new conceptualization of space and place has important implications, then, for how we construct the spatial 'other' and accordingly, how our own identities are formed. (see for example Massey (1992b)).

In this interview, we explore the relationship between these ideas and other types of 'boundaries'. In the first section, we discuss the boundaries between the academy and society, and the role of the intellectual in social life. Part two focuses on the nature of identity in an era where Marxist categories have dissolved in favor of a more complex and interrelational analysis. In the final section of the interview, we explore the gender implications of Massey's work, and links with more general debates within 'postmodern' social theory.

Part I: Power, the Academy and Society

JP: One of the things we wanted to explore in this issue of *disClosure* is the issue of boundaries between the academy and society and between different disciplines and types of knowledge. This is something you have discussed in your work, particularly in your reactions to the work of David Harvey and Ed Soja (1991a). You've also written about your involvement with the Greater London Council (1991b), and it seems from your discussions with us this weekend that this involvement, and also perhaps your position at a nonstandard academic institution, have impact upon your work and your writing.

Massey: That's true, and actually that is very important to me. I think there are lots of ways that I find that whole area very important. In many ways, I do feel like a nonstandard academic, and I'm glad that I am to some extent. I do feel that both my history and my present situation have been very beneficial, as well as doing things like working at the G.L.C.

JP: Have these experiences shaped your ideas about space and place? For example, Harvey seems to concern himself much more with the global, and he even suggests, as you have pointed out, that the local is necessarily reactionary. Is this perhaps the basis of your suggestion that Harvey elides place-based politics with place-bound politics?

Massey: Yes. Perhaps it's worth spending a moment on that because it links up also to this business about being an academic and being something else as well, or being an *intellectual* and being something else as well. I was particularly worried by that, partly because of the theoretical ways I think about space and place anyway. It's not that I seek to dissolve the difference between local and global, but that I want to complicate the relationship and look at the mutual constitution of those terms. I worked for a while in the Greater London Council, when it was as left-wing as it's ever been, in a general sense. And, it was an extremely difficult situation to be in, not just politically—because Thatcher was about to abolish us or anything—but also intellectually/politically. Because we had spent ten years, a lot of us who were working there, arguing that you can't do anything about the city without taking on the whole of global capitalism. You can't explain the city, any city, by the city itself, you can't solve the problems of the neighborhood without thinking more widely. In the Sixties and the Seventies, I don't know about here, but in the U.K., this certainly needed saying. Because it is true that you can't solve the problems of Lexington by only looking at Lexington. Neither can you understand the character of Lexington by only looking at Lexington.

And the same goes for London. We had, as kind of grounded structuralist Marxists I guess, for years been arguing this. It was one of the contributions we, as intellectual Marxists, had made to the political debate. For instance, the regional problem is not just a problem of geography—regional inequality—it's a problem of the whole way in which we organize the economy. And then suddenly, there we were, in charge of the economy of the city (or in charge as far as any local authority can possibly be in charge). And we had to think, "How, from a position of having some levers of influence and control over the local, can we make any difference . . . after we've been arguing for all this time that the local is always embedded in the wide structures of capital accumulation."

And that posed me with a problem, which is about political honesty. I mean, it's great to have power, but after what I'd said, was that power real? And what were we really going to do? The problems—this was in the early '80s—of London at that point were utterly devastating. It was being crushed under a combination of international recession and Margaret Thatcher's policies which resulted in industrial decimation. So, the situation was dire. And I think my thoughts about place, even if I don't know it, probably come from a lot of that. Partly because it made me think, "There isn't such a simple distinction: local/global and the global's here in the middle of London" and clearly it was—it's got the financial sector and all the rest of it.

But also in the sense that we were able, as a local place, not only to have some impact on the local itself, but also to have an impact on the wider scene. In part, just by the threat of a good example. Part of the reason they [the conservative government] hated us was that we were saying things that shouldn't be said and doing things which shouldn't be done, and that other people might start doing this. But also because the policies that we adopted were very self-consciously *place-based* but not *place-bound*. We had industrial studies of particular sectors, which we tried to do in coordination with other areas that also had those sectors. There were structures set up and money given to trades unionists to organize their plants within the London region, *in cooperation* with their plants in France or Brazil or wherever else it was. There was the attempt to link the struggle in London with the struggle of the miners going on in the regions. So, the whole thing was an engagement in the problem of how do you work locally and not just *think* globally, but actively bring into play the way in which the global is implicated in the local.

I'd say two things about that. One: yes, that is partly why I am so adamant that the local isn't necessarily reactionary and that place-based does not mean

place-bound. But also: as an intellectual and an academic, some of the toughest questions were posed to me by that very practical situation of having to decide where we were going to put investment money, having to decide which groups we were going to support, having to decide what to do when a firm went bankrupt. Those decisions ask much tougher questions about your theoretical work than just working as an isolated intellect; I really do believe both that you shouldn't separate theoretical work from empirical work, and that the engagement in the rest of life is part of being an intellectual. A real intellectual isn't just somebody who sits in the library all day or even just talks to other intellectuals. It's hard to think that through, but I really believe it.

It might help us then, to separate out different kinds of inter-relations between being academic and being intellectual. I do see them as very different. I see myself as being an intellectual in the sense that I am very interested in the kinds of intellectual ideas I am working in and working around, and my particular take on things is one which is often biased in that direction. That is where I would see I have developed particular skills, enjoy operating, and can contribute. But I think that is utterly different from being an *academic* which is to be bound up in the institutions, competitions, and the career structures . . .

BWI: The mythos of the academy?

Massey: Exactly. And I find myself very uncomfortable with that at times, and so my position at the Open University allows me to feel not so caught up in that as maybe I would in another place.

JP: You've also written about the notion of "undemocratic writing" (1991a) — writing which can only be understood by a small group of people. Is that something that you see stemming from the academic side as opposed to the intellectual?

Massey: I think it does to some extent, though I don't know that I could separate them that easily. But I do find myself very annoyed by the 'great figure, the great intellectual' kind of syndrome. I find it irritating at a personal level because I don't want to behave like that and you find yourself being put into situations where you start to behave like that, and you watch yourself and think, "Oh Doreen, this isn't you. What are you doing here?" But I also object to it because other voices don't get heard. To some extent I feel my voice doesn't get heard like some others do, but also that I'm in a very privileged position compared with many others.

BWI: Do you find that there are strategies which can be used to make your own and other voices heard?

Massey: I think in a way I've tried to do something different. It's not to speak exactly as I would have liked to have spoken, had the context been different. I can't speak like some of these big guys do. If you are five foot one, and you are fair-haired, and you are female, and quite often you can barely see over the podium, then just physically and materially you cannot be imposing in the same way that you can when you are six foot five and have a big male deep voice. The very physicality and materiality of it, as well as the fact that they just take those people more seriously than they take us, starts you off in a different situation. So what I've tried to do is just carry on being different.

BWI: Even though you may feel that your physical stature or your appearance or the fact that you are a woman are in many ways a disempowering situation, the fact that you are rocking these hierarchies of knowledge must be very threatening to people. I wonder how you deal with some of this resistance among the more entrenched academy, either here in the U.S. or with your colleagues in Great Britain—someone who might say, "I've been in the geography department my entire career, and I don't like the idea of not having identity and not having a coherent space and place."

Massey: Partly what I was saying about physical stature and being female is: it is dis-empowering in a sense, but you can turn that around, precisely by talking completely differently. Instead of coming in like 'the authority,' you come in like a guerrilla almost. You can be subversive by talking directly to people rather than informing them from on high. By doing it differently, you can have a power which is a different kind of power. It is not an authoritative power, but you do have an impact. What you want to do is set up a dialogue, have some influence, get people thinking.

I was really constrained during the talk we had yesterday because there was a microphone. What I really wanted to do was pick up the mike and walk to the front. I prefer to think I am talking to people. But yesterday, I was very much aware that I was doing a presentation. That has to happen sometimes. But I did feel that the form constrained the style quite significantly and made me behave more like the standard "here I am to tell you what I've been thinking about" type academic. For me that's a huge issue.

KU: How does that compare with your teaching? How do you use media with

your teaching? You have 800 students in your geography course, and they see you, but you don't see them?

Massey: Well, we see them at summer schools and weekend schools and day schools, but we have different methods. One of the things being at the Open University does is to make you think about the relation between what you are saying and the means by which you are saying it. So we write books and write units which are a week's work—18-20,000 words—and it is written directly in a pedagogic style. It has to be motivated by empirical questions because our students range from 18 years old to 80, with and also without academic experience, so they are not necessarily going to take on trust that they need to know about Great Theory X; we need to convince them that it is useful to know about it, which is wonderful. So that kind of writing is done one way. But then we also make TV programs. In a 25-minute TV program, what you can say is very different. You can give a whole set of visual images far more richly than you ever could on paper, but on the other hand you can probably only get three serious intellectual points (at most!) across in the theoretical sense. We also do radio talks where sometimes we have debates. We just give the students twenty minutes of us having an argument about 'what is an economic structure?' or something like that.

This makes you think about what is suitable to be said through this medium and how one delivers it. I think I've benefited from being put in a situation where I've had to think that way, and I've enjoyed it. Because our students have a whole variety of academic and intellectual backgrounds right down to zero, we have to be able to catch the attention of a whole range of people. We have to think about pitching things—not just saying what you want to say but linking into where people are coming from. This is not to say we always do it right, but it at least makes you think about it.

BWI: In many ways that must be very freeing to you because you can't assume that there is a common base of knowledge. So the very statement that you are making about multiplicity of identities finds a compelling analogue in your working situation.

Massey: Yes. You've got to confront that. You cannot assume this is a conversation we've been having already, that we are just about to carry on.

Part II: History, Identity and Marxism

BWI: Frederic Jameson, in his discussion of postmodernity, has suggested that history has become flat. How does this relate to the more ambiguous relationship that you propose between time and space?

Massey: I think one of the responses would have to do not with time and space. It would have to do precisely with these issues of power. I think some of the reasons some of these 'big guys' are discomfited at the moment is because there are more voices. They have been used to being able to know what to say and when to say it. That was the truth, and theirs was a fount of wisdom. A friend of mine ages ago said, "It's terrible. You used to know exactly how to get an opinion across—you wrote to the *Times*." Nowadays, there is this multiplicity of outlets. There is no one place where you can make the authoritative statement. I don't find myself discomfited by time-space compression and by this multiplicity of voices. Fragmentation for me has been not the fragmentation of something which was previously solid, but the emergence into view and into voice of things that were previously sat upon. I've found the whole thing absolutely empowering, and that's partly why I get angry with the lamentations for a lost past.

KU: The white male voice just becomes another minority voice. Particularly in the U.S. where you have a Hispanic population rising so quickly that we'll all be in a different racial mix. And white males, if this special power which they have gotten over the years is being eroded, are really just a minority voice. These guys don't know how to speak as a minority voice.

Massey: That's what interests me. We are not talking of all men, because we are not essentialists(!), but that kind of speaking, the people who have adopted that kind of speaking no longer know how to talk. Masculinity isn't only about men. Even women who behaved like that are being forced to reconsider. I used to think like that. I did know there was a truth. I was a confirmed, pretty fundamentalist Marxist for a period, and I did (I thought) have access to the objective truth. I floated above the world and thought I knew what I was about. Let's admit those things, but don't feel disconcerted by the fact that it's not any longer possible to believe that. I feel actually *enabled* by the change because the voice, the vision of the world I was putting out then as a fundamentalist Marxist, in many ways excluded me. . . indeed, I needed a multiple identity in relationship to that vision.

BWI: One of the things that I am really caught by is the response to the idea of fragmentation. Do you feel that it is possible to find identity in fragmentation? Is

it necessary? Are they mutually exclusive? Because it seems to me the bias is that you can only find identity through discrete and coherent understanding of a unity. So, can there be a fragmented reality and still have identity?

Massey: It all comes back, again (as ever), to what you mean by identity. Me sitting here doing this is different from me, say, watching a football [soccer] match back home on a Saturday afternoon with my sister. Is there some core kernel which is me? I think I have a working hypothesis that there is, but I have absolutely no notion of what it is.

KU: What about the difference between self representation and identity? The Doreen Massey we have here is probably going to be more relaxed with her sister—is identity more than self re-presentation?

Massey: Can I try something on you? Because this is something which I have just read which also has to do with boundaries between disciplines. One of the things I've been doing lately is reading physics and biology; part of the reason for that is that there are some brilliant people in the university who can talk across disciplines. I really dislike the social sciences/humanities *versus* science divide. There is this notion, which has entirely to do with their field of study as it stands (quantum mechanics), of a pure state. You know that in quantum mechanics, a photon can be either a wave or a particle. The notion of a pure state is that state in which the possibility continues to exist for the photon to be both of those things. As soon as an observer moves in, it is either the wave or the particle. Maybe it isn't the difference between an essence and a self-representation, but that I have within me all of the things about being with my sister or being here talking with you; that the particular situation equivalent to 'the physicist as observer' is social intervention, i.e.: me behaving in a particular situation. That operationalizes one of those potential states. Now you can either say then that the identity is the pure state which is the potential for being everything, which is nice because it makes it an inter-relational identity . . .

BWI: . . . which is also dynamic.

Massey: Absolutely. Or you can say it is fragmented, but either way it gives it a coherence.

JP: This sounds reminiscent of Mouffe and Laclau's notion that we all have multiple partial and transitory identities at work. For them, the idea is to articulate them together around certain issues. It is a version, I guess, of coalitional politics.

It seems that we all have different potentialities that are enacted based on the social situation. This provides a real base for different people coming together around an issue.

Massey: Alliances. Whole interconnections and networks of alliances which when put together can draw a lot of people together who may not even have direct alliances but indirectly found that they are involved in similar issues. One thing I would say about that way of looking is that it can end up—and this is perhaps where Jameson rightly gets worried—focused on the instantaneity of all the connections. It can be almost momentary—all you get is the fact of the moment when all of the potentials exist. Whereas, in fact that multiplicity has a history. The reason I am like this now has a history to it, it is a developing thing. That's why I was trying to talk about, in the materials on place, the notion of the building up of layers over time and that every new experience is actually interrelated with the results of the previous experiences. It's like Paul Gilroy's notion of "the changing same" where, yes, there's complexity, but I can't be just *anything*. I am not disembodied. Identities are grounded.

The reason we can't just be anything is that we have histories. We do come from somewhere, and we bear this with us. You know, I am white, I am English, ex-working class or whatever. You can *do* something with that (work on it), but it's still there, it's still a factor in the way in which one's become now. The trouble with talking about identities as alliances can be that it seems so free floating and disembodied—voluntaristic in a way. And it isn't as easy as that. It's much more embedded.

BWI: If we are wanting to talk about time-space, rather than time as separate from space, and we are willing to see time as something which is not always chronological, then those histories don't exist in layers which go back but events which are always present. This merging into an always-now situation is I think what Jameson really has trouble with, the flatness of history in postmodernity. He can't accept that, really, as a viable place.

Massey: That's an interesting way of putting it. Where are you coming from when you say that?

BWI: I'm having trouble pulling myself out of a book—Penelope Lively's *City of the Mind*. Part of Lively's contention, at least as I see it, is that our urban spaces are filled with language and time from places and people behind us, but that they are with us at all times in simultaneity. If you drive down Euston Road you pass

the British Library and you see Jane Austen staring at you (with a red nose for comic relief) and you also see Rastafarians walking by, and then you turn toward the city and you see Lord Nelson atop the column in Trafalgar Square. There are always these colliding associations happening, and language operates in the same way. History is not something which has happened and receded into something that is not here any more. It is continually present and continually acting upon us. And we are always aware of those 'many times at once.' We do not think in our own minds, "I am only in 1994." That 1994 is an accumulation and a condensation of all moments into this one that we are experiencing now.

JP: If we think of this spatially, this is very similar to your notion of place. That is, a place does not exist disconnected from other places, but there are always other places co-present which serve to define it. It sounds exactly like your description of Kilburn, for example (in Massey 1991c).

Massey: Absolutely. Put that description of Kilburn with all of the stuff on layering in *Spatial Divisions of Labour*. There, I was thinking of spaces very much in an economic sense. That was my concern at that point—layers as different kinds of investments and economic histories, but which interacted. It's the cultural equivalent of the way in which things get received; molding and reception in different places. When a Japanese factory goes to one place, it becomes something different because of the presence of the history which influences it. That was my idea about layering at the time—the mutual constitution of layers, the fact that there is a constant molding of the new by the fact of the continuing presence of the past.

BWI: I really like the distinction you make that the boundaries between those layers are porous, that things come in and go out. For instance, even though there may be a McDonald's in France, they call their french fries *pommes frites*, and they serve wine and beer. And in England and Scotland they serve trifles.

Massey: Yes, apparently in Athens, this may be apocryphal, but a friend from Athens told me, there can be real trouble with fast food outlets because there is no such concept as fast food. People in Greece spend four hours over a small coffee, and the turnover problem is tremendous. The whole thing has to be rebuilt because of the cultural context.

BWI: Right, so as soon as you move something into a new context, it transforms itself into a new shape and takes on characteristics of the new place.

KU: Do you think that's Jameson's problem because of his previous investment in

a more structured historical analysis, rather than the contextual one you're putting forward here?

Massey: There are so many things to say there. I think it's in part what I said before about his worry because there are so many voices. So there is not one authoritative voice. I think it's in part because of this multiplicity of the present, empirically rather than just through voices. But I think it is also that what he sees as an absence of history—I wouldn't see it that way, but let's accept that he does—is difficult in two ways: partly because it assumes that it used to be possible to tell one story, which has already been problematized, but also because he can't see any dynamic in the spatial. To see the spatial as simply a kind of pinball machine with the lights flashing on with no history behind it—simply things on the surface flashing across, rather than always coming from somewhere and going somewhere—is to deny that (however complex) present moment any possibility of being the product of a past or the basis of the future. He doesn't seem to have thought in those terms. I think the real thing that he is worried about is that it isn't so easy to tell one big story.

That may question a lot of what people think of as Marxism, but I don't think it means we have to abandon everything that Marxism said. I would still see myself as being . . . If someone were to ask if I were Marxist or not, my answer would entirely depend on who it was. If it was a total fundamentalist, I'd say I don't give a damn. If it was somebody on the right, I'd say yes. Because there is an awful lot about class relations and the way in which social relations structure the world in which I am still utterly influenced by decades of reading Althusser and Marx and Lenin and Mao.

JP: You suggest that you would retain the Marxist label, while rejecting many of the 'fundamentalist' claims. It seems precisely that kind of 'watering down' that someone like Harvey is reacting strongly against.

Massey: I know. Calling it watering down is the problem, because it isn't. It's enriching and complexifying, I think. Things have to grow. I'm not an archival Marxist. I'm somebody who wants to bring what Marx had to say into the situation that we have today. I'm much less worried about going back and really driving myself crazy wondering what this sentence really meant and why it contradicted something else. I'm not that kind of a Marxist at all. Partly because I've done it. I think my generation has an advantage there because we grew up in a time when it was all rediscovered. I spent the late 60s and the early 70s reading all of Marx, a hundred times. And that's not an easy job. But we did have an advan-

tage that we could read it when it was the first time, again, for everybody to read it. Then we could critique it. I think for you to go back in your generation is really difficult.

Part III: Space, Gender and Postmodernism

BWI: I'd like to ask you about some of your syntactical choices. In "The Political Place of Locality Studies," it seems to me that there is a privileging of the concept of progress and that you are setting up a dichotomous relationship between progressive and reactionary. I don't particularly see these as dichotomous terms, and I'm wondering if you intend it that way or if I am just perceiving it that way. Why should we privilege progress? Is progress the rationale behind determining the better move? If we are privileging progress, is it progress under the same terms as we have always understood it, or are we interrogating the term 'progress' and reinterpreting it?

Massey: I do have a notion of progress and a notion of things being reactionary. It's much more multidimensional than it used to be. I used to know (i.e., think I knew) what was socialist and what wasn't. I think it's far more complicated now. But I want to talk in terms which mean something political for the people I'm writing with, for. That's one of the ways of doing it. Also, I think I assume in the article an agreement about what would be progressive and not. I think using the terms is all right as long as one is arguing for why things are progressive or not. The back-up point would be that I would rather make that mistake than do without a political context, partly because I can't see how I would do it. The reason for all this reformulation of space and place came out of political understandings and worries, as I said before, and I wouldn't say that the way of looking at space and place that I'm arguing for is in some sense eternally true, but I would say it helps us perhaps to get to grips with some of the things that I find reactionary, i.e.: (at two different ends of the scale of awfulness) ethnic cleansing, certain kind of heritage parks, or whatever.

BWI: But you are also saying that if I encounter someone who is an extreme Marxist that as a reactionary measure I say "no I'm not". Or if you encounter a chauvinist sexist, then you say "I'm a feminist" as a way of jarring their comfort zone. By contrast, if you encounter an extremist feminist, then you are going to back up a little as well as a way of balancing the extremity of their position.

Massey: Yes, absolutely. It has to be argued.

BWI: So then there is a certain value in a reactionism that is not coming out in the dichotomy you have crafted in the article.

Massey: That's not what I mean by reactionary. By reactionary I mean anti-progressive in a political sense. So reactionary would mean . . . the closest we'd come in English—from somebody standing on the feminist left—would be conservative with a little c. But reactionary does have within it, as does progress, the notion of uni-linearity—not movement through time but method of association with political rectitude or not, of certain sets of ideas. That I agree is problematical.

BWI: What about the term progress? How are we understanding it? What does it mean?

Massey: I think it is very difficult to say anything that has an eternal truth to it. I don't know that I would make the same statement 50 years back or 50 years ahead. I think at the moment it would be to do with democracy in the broadest sense where human rights doesn't just mean what Clinton and Major think it means, but real empowering democracy—in some ways related to the things that Ernesto [Laclau] and Chantal [Mouffe] talk about. What I would question there is their assumption that democracy is always the ultimate value. I don't feel on strong enough grounds to say that I would *always* say that is what it is, but at the moment, progress is democracy in the broadest sense, which would include access to material well-being. Working in Nicaragua, it became clear to me that the prerequisites for democracy were actually also things like literacy and decent food. So I don't just mean democracy in a participatory voting sense.

BWI: In terms of democracy, you say that postmodernism in a lot of ways precludes democracy from happening. For example, you write: "The problem of course, is that postmodernism in its current guise, rarely lives up to the democratic potential opened by this move" (1991b:272). Also in the "Flexible Sexism" piece you suggest that the ideas of postmodernism have been an "unremittingly and tediously male . . . patriarchal hierarchy" (1991a:31). I think we'd be inclined to agree. I wonder if you could comment more on how postmodernism 'kowtows' to democracy?

Massey: In the new book that I've done, *Space, Place, and Gender*, I've addressed it at different levels—some of the issues that are going on there, because I think they are heavily gendered. I really think that the resistance to the local has a

lot of gender connotations to it.

KU: A woman in French studies, Naomi Schor, has a book, *Reading in Detail*, and her argument is that people don't want to look at specifics because they're feminine.

Massey: That's exactly what's going on. The concrete, the local. In *The Condition of Postmodernity* what Harvey does is designate struggles other than anti-capitalist struggles as 'local.' And it's no accident that he's also against locality studies, as he was in that piece he did in *Society and Space* (1987), which inveighed quite heavily against things that he sees as 'only' local; instead we could just start the world revolution tomorrow. However, I don't think all this is intrinsic to what's being said within postmodernism. It's the social practice of academics and how academics get taken up. And you get a star system.

KU: Could you say more about why it's bad to have a star system? Because it reduces individual voices?

JP: Yes, your name would be included, presumably, amongst a list of influential geographers, and it allows you to do things like fly to the University of Kentucky and have a discussion with graduate students about postmodernism and democracy or what have you.

Massey: Why do I dislike it . . . ? Some people say things and don't get heard still. I guess I'm on the fringes of that in geography. But I wouldn't be here if I wasn't known, so you're right in that sense. And you can't have total equality of voices. But the problem is, if we admit (and I think we have to admit) that the establishment of received wisdom—rather than 'truth'—is done partly through the accepted modes of evaluation that we have established within academe, but also through the power of voices, then the star system cements and concretizes and reinforces already-established systems of power. More flexibility, more mobility, means of course that we can say things that catch moments, it's just that it seems to get rigidified. But I think one of the particular reasons I'm opposed to the star system in relation to postmodernism is that I think that quite a lot of the things that are being said under the guise of postmodernism actually have been said by black writers, in postcolonialist studies, they've been said by feminists, and yet . . . It's like it was a football match between Modernism and Postmodernism and you arrange the guys upon either side. And yet, if you read *Feminism/Postmodernism*, as one little example—an old book, one we know—there's so much in there which goes beyond, which is more considered, which says so many of the things which

are within that postmodernism/modernism debate. But they're not on the big podia, in the same way, the big stages . . . you see what I mean?

BWI: To get back to your quantum mechanics analogy. I'm wondering if perhaps postmodernism really can be delimited and discussed within the academy, or if, like the photon, once we see it, we've isolated it, and we decide that it needs to be particle or it needs to be wave. And we can't appreciate the dynamism which is included in it, which is something that seems to me contrary to the things that the academy is used to seeing and the ways of looking. That we almost need to pull it out of the context of our normal, scientific inquiry or logical, linear way we approach things.

Massey: As soon as you represent something, you fix it, and obviously then, you've lost it in that sense.

BWI: I presented a paper at a conference recently about expanding the canon in literature. . . one of the things I was contending is that to include alternate texts is not enough because we're still going about our method of inquiry in the same way. We're still reading the text in the same way, we're looking for patterns, we're looking for paradigms that relate to overall meaning, we're researching secondary sources, we're writing it up into a research paper and presenting it to each other in that kind of dialogue discourse manner. It seems to me that if we're truly going to expand the canon, we have to expand *how* we look at things, how we present it to each other, and how we evaluate what we've actually done.

Massey: Yes, I agree entirely. In fact I think it relates a bit to the history of feminism in why, at some points it was accepted by the great and the good and the established, and at some points it really got them annoyed. When what feminists were doing was saying "Hey, look at women," and they were doing all their studies of women's lives and the rest of it, that was fine. You know, you got a feminist onto the staff. And she went off and did her stuff on women. And, in a kind of patronizing way, that could even be quite happily accepted. It was another specialism; it didn't impinge on what 'they' were doing. It never challenged the way of doing things. And to the extent that feminists tried to talk about the way of doing things, it remained limited to what *they* were doing. So, for instance, they had interactive, caring interviews, and everybody else carried on doing the same old thing with a standardized questionnaire!

I think there's been a change in geography recently—people like Gillian Rose, I think is one example—and it's what I've been trying to do in looking at space and

place, that is to go for the heartlands, and to say, "Look at some of the basic concepts and the way we look at them: they themselves are gendered in certain ways." Now, that may not mean that we want to reject those concepts, but let's at least recognize their gendered character, examine them in that light and then decide whether we want to alter them or not. And I think that is why there has been such a strong and hostile response to more recent feminism in a way that wasn't true of the early stuff. You can't just have 'a little girl' in the department doing her own thing, which is I think how a lot of it was seen in the beginning.

BWI: It's a matter of posing challenges to epistemologies, and realizing we can't formulate them along the same lines.

Massey: And it would mean, if it were taken seriously—and this comes back to the star thing—I haven't worked it out, but it does mean something other than a simply authoritative voice. Some of the challenges that are being made methodologically through things like feminism, but by no means only feminism, are challenging the status of the academic and the intellectual in ways which are not comfortable, and therefore are producing more hostile responses than some of the earlier ways in which feminism's voice was heard in geography. And I think that's been quite important in the recent reaction. Certainly within our discipline.

JP: One of the ways that you're obviously going about this is through the notion of place. I wonder if you could elaborate a bit on how that reconceptualization of place does open up space for other groups, such as women. You suggest at one point that we need a 'politics of mobility' and presumably again, that means something more than just having mobility as an object of inquiry, as an empirical data set.

Massey: Yes. There are lots of ways in which the place stuff is linked to gender. Some of the critiques of space and the dualism of space/time relate back to gender. Some of it's about conceptualizing space in terms of interrelations, which relates into wider debates about identity, which feminists have talked about. Some of it's more particularly geographical about, you know, the place as mother, as I mentioned in the lecture. The longing for home, which I am very, very suspicious about.

I'm not sure about the category 'women,' but in a more general sense, I think what I'm trying to do at this point is to think through spatiality as power. To think through very clearly the very different ways in which we are embedded in it, inserted into the spatialities we create and how the different spatialities which we

have and that we can construct for our lives intersect with other people's, are constrained by other people's, maybe constrict others' in turn. There's a whole area of politics there, mobility's just perhaps one impoverished word for saying it, but it's that whole arena of the spatiality of our lives, which is an arena that isn't actually looked at that much. And I mean it ranges from very basic things like lack of public transport, to violence on the streets, to international migration—all of those issues. And I do think for certain women—I just don't know culturally how wide a statement I can make—I don't know what other people feel, but I really do think that part of the oppression of women is trying to stabilize us, both in terms of space—tying us down—and in terms of identity. I really feel that our being mobile both spatially and in terms of identity is quite threatening to men who are patriarchal.

JP: Well, exactly. Harvey has one contention that opposition groups have been much better at inhabiting a place, but in no way have been able to affect space. This is something I presume you would want to question.

Massey: That's a brilliant connection, of course, yes. Because he says that about working-class groups.

JP: I think he's thinking of space in this sense as the grand space of capitalism, rather than the spatiality of our everyday lives.

Massey: He is, and of working-class communities as located.

JP: Right, but that notion of space ignores all the 'power geometries', as you put it, that exist, and that women and other groups are in fact oppressed in very real ways by their own spatiality or the spatiality that's around them.

Massey: Absolutely. And it is a way of oppressing. One of the things I find most oppressive, simply as a woman—regardless of class, regardless of other things—is that one of the things I love most doing in life is traveling. Highly questionable activity in current days, but just accept it for a moment. And I go to São Paulo and I can't walk out on those streets at night on my own. Men must feel this too, but not to the same extent we do. I feel it even in the French countryside. And I so bitterly resent that, because it deprives us of the possibility of solitude—and particularly solitude in a big city or in wide open spaces. I resent that with a kind of passion that is hard to explain because I'd love to go and walk across mountains by myself, but you just might once meet one guy, and that would be it.

BWI: I think it also presents women with the impossibility of having closure. In a lot of ways I think that women, because of the awareness of things happening in our bodies, come to the realization that we always have to be aware of when we might be vulnerable to someone, that we can never have closure. And so we (though certainly not all women) look to more openness. It seems to me that we are more—physiologically, if you want to put it that way—inclined to looking at things that way.

Massey: See, the openness is enforced upon us. But in principle it would be good if everybody could be open. The problem is fear, and this is perhaps primarily a heterosexual male phenomenon. Somebody might actually "get to you," and that could mean a million things. It might just mean they touch your emotions, but for some that's problematical.

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