19. Aida Hurtado, "Relating to Privilege," p. 853.
20. Hazel V. Carby, *Reconstructing Womanhood*, pp. 6–7; bell hooks, *Ain't I a Woman*; bell hooks, *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center* (Boston, Mass.: South End Press, 1984).
21. Hortense Spillers, "Mama's Baby," p. 80.
22. Rosalind Coward, *Patriarchal Precedents: Sexuality and Social Relations* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1983), p. 265.
23. Gerda Lerner, *Black Women*, p. 371.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 372; Olive Gilbert, *Narrative of Sojourner*.
25. Edith Blicksilver, "Speech."
26. Quoted in Bettina Aptheker, *Woman's Legacy*, p. 34.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 34.
28. Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera* (San Francisco: Spinsters, 1987).
29. Teresa de Lauretis, *Feminist Studies*, p. 145.

6

Postmodern Automatons

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for A . . .

Modernism and Postmodernism: Restating the Problem of "Displacement"

If everyone can agree with Fredric Jameson that the unity of the "new impulse" of postmodernism "is given not in itself but in the very modernism it seeks to displace,"[1] exactly how modernism is displaced still remains the issue. In this paper, I follow an understanding of "modernism" that is embedded in and inseparable from the globalized and popularized usages of terms such as "modernity" and "modernization," which pertain to the increasing technologization of culture. I examine this technologization in terms of the technologies of visuality. In the twentieth century, the preoccupation with the "visual"—in a field like psychoanalysis, for instance—and the perfection of technologies of visuality such as photography and film take us beyond the merely physical dimension of vision. The visual as such, as a kind of dominant discourse of modernity, reveals epistemological problems that are inherent in social relations and their reproduction. Such problems inform the very ways social difference—be it in terms of class, gender, or race—is constructed. In this sense, the more narrow understanding of modernism as the sum total of artistic innovations that erupted in Europe and North America in the spirit of a massive cultural awakening—an emancipation from the habits of perception of the past—needs to be bracketed within an understanding of modernity as a force of cultural expansionism whose foundations are not only emancipatory but also Eurocentric and patriarchal.

The displacement of "modernism" in what we now call the postmodern era must be addressed with such foundations in mind.

Generally speaking, there is, I think, a confusion over the status of modernism as theoretical determinant and modernism as social effect. The disparagement of modernism that we hear in First World circles—a disparagement that stems from the argument of modernism as "mythical," as "narrative," or as what continues the progressive goals of the European Enlightenment—regards modernism more or less as a set of beliefs, a particular mode of cognition, or a type of subjectivity. The rewriting of history by way of the postmodern would hence follow such lines to say: such and such were the governing *ideas* that characterize modernism which have been proven to be grand illusions in the postmodern era, and so on. If "modernity" is incomplete, then, postmodernism supplements it by shaking up its foundations. Therefore, if one of the key characteristics of modernism is the clear demarcation of cognitive boundaries—a demarcation that occurs with the perceptual hegemony of physical vision in the modern period—then postmodernism is full of talk about boundaries dissolving, so that that which sees and that which is seen, that which is active and that which is passive, and so forth, become interchangeable positions. The profusion of discourse and the illusion that every discourse has become permissible make it possible to associate postmodernism with a certain abandonment, such as is suggested in the title of a recent anthology edited by Andrew Ross, *Universal Abandon?*[2]

Once we view the modernism-postmodernism problematic not in terms of a succession of ideas and concepts only, but as the staggering of legacies and symptoms at their different stages of articulation, then the "displacement" of modernism by postmodernism becomes a complex matter, and can vary according to the objectives for which that displacement is argued. For instance, for the cultures outside the Berlin-Paris-London-New York axis, it is not exactly certain that modernism has exhausted its currency or, therefore, its imperialistic efficacy. Because these "other" cultures did not dominate the generation of modernism theoretically or cognitively, "displacement" needs to be posed on very different terms.

On the one hand, modernism is, for these other cultures, always a displaced phenomenon, the sign of an alien imprint on indigenous traditions. In Asia and Africa, modernism is not a set of beliefs but rather a foreign body whose physicality must be described as a Derridean "always already"—whose omnipresence, in other words, must be responded to as a given whether one likes it or not. On the other hand, the displacement of modernism in postmodernity as it is currently argued in the West, in the writings of François Lyotard, Jürgen Habermas, Jameson, and so on, does not seem right either, for modernism is still around as ideoelogical legacy, as habit, and as familiar, even coherent, way of seeing. If the First World has rejected modernism, such rejection is not so easy for the world which is still living through it as cultural trauma and devastation. In the words of Masao Mioshi and H. D. Harootunian:

> The black hole that is formed by the rejection of modernism is also apt to obliterate the trace of historical Western expansionism that was at least cofunctional, if not instrumental, in producing epistemological hegemonism. Thus a paradox: as postmodernism seeks to remedy the modernist error of Western, male, bourgeois domination, it simultaneously vacates the ground on which alone the contours of modernism can be seen. Furthermore, colonialism and imperialism are ongoing enterprises, and in distinguishing late post-industrial capitalism from earlier liberal capitalism and by tolerating the former while condemning the latter, postmodernism ends up by consenting to the first world economic domination that persists in exploiting the wretched of the earth.[3]

In the Third World, the displacement of modernism is not simply a matter of criticizing modernism as theory, philosophy, or ideas of cognition; rather it is the emergence of an entirely different problematic, a displacement of a displacement that is in excess of what is still presented as the binarism of modernism-postmodernism. It is in the light of this double or multiple displacement that a feminist intervention, in alliance with other marginalized groups, can be plotted in the postmodern scene. If what is excluded by the myth-making logic of modernism articulates its "existence" in what looks like a radically permissive postmodern era where anything goes, postmodernism (call it periodizing concept, cultural dominant, if you will, after Jameson) is only a belated articulation of what the West's "others" have lived all along.[4]

Because vis-à-vis the dominant modern culture of the West, feminism shares the status with other marginalized discourses as a kind of "other" whose power has been the result of historical struggle, the relationship between feminism and postmodernism has not been an easy one. Even though feminists partake in the postmodernist ontological project of dismantling claims of cultural authority that are housed in specific representations, feminism's rootedness in overt political struggles against the subordination of women makes it very difficult to accept the kind of postmodern "universal abandon" in Ross's title. For some, the destabilization of conceptual boundaries and concrete beliefs becomes the sign of danger that directly threatens their commitment to an agenda of social progress based on the self and reason.[5] While I do not agree with the espousal of humanistic thinking as such for feminist goals, I think the distrust of postmodern "abandon" can be seen as a strategic resistance against the dismantling of feminism's "critical regionalism" (to use a term from postmodern architectural criticism[6]) and its local politics.

In the collection *Universal Abandon?*, Nancy Fraser and Linda Nicholson voice this understanding of the conflict between postmodernism and feminism in terms of philosophy and social criticism. While they criticize the essentialist moves feminists have had to make to stage the primacy of gender in social struggles, they are equally distrustful of the abstract philosophical frameworks in which theorists of postmodernism often begin their inquiry. Lyotard's "suspicion of the large," for instance, leads him to reject "the project of social theory *tout court*"; and yet "despite his strictures against large, totalizing stories, he narrates a fairly tall tale about a large-scale social trend."[7]

The conflicts as to what constitutes *the social* amount to one of the most significant contentions between postmodernism and feminism. *Poststructuralism* plays a role in both's relation to the social. For those interested in postmodernism, the decentering of the logos and the untenability of structuralism as a mode of cognition provide the means of undoing modernism's large architectonic claims. Once such claims and their hierarchical power are undone, the meaning of the "social" bursts open. It is no longer possible to assume a transparent and universal frame of reality. Instead, "tropes" and "reality" become versions of each other,[8] while aporias and allegories play an increasingly important role in the most "natural" acts of reading. And yet, precisely because the subversive thrust of poststructuralism consists in its refusal to name its own politics (since naming as such, in the context of political hegemony, belongs to the tactics of doctrinaire official culture) even as it deconstructs the language of established power from within, it does not provide postmodernism with a well-defined agenda nor with a clear object of criticism other than "the prison house of language." Instead, the persistently negative critique of dominant culture in total terms produces a vicious circle that repeats itself as what Jean Baudrillard calls "implosion"—the "reduction of difference to absolute indifference, equivalence, interchangeability."[9] Since positions are now infinitely interchangeable, many feel that postmodernism may be little more than a "recompensatory 'I'm OK, you're OK' inclusion or a leveling attribution of subversive 'marginality' to all."[10]

The difficulty feminists have with postmodernism is thus clear. Although feminists share postmodernism's poststructuralist tendencies in dismantling universalist claims, which for them are more specifically defined as the claims of the white male subject, they do not see their struggle against patriarchy as quite over. The social for feminists is therefore always marked by a clear horizon of the inequality between men and women; the social, because it is mediated by gender with its ideological manipulations of biology as well as symbolic representations, is never quite "implosive" in the Baudrillardian sense. With this fundamental rejection of indifference by an insistence on the cultural effects of sexual and gendered difference,[11] feminists always begin, as the non-Western world must begin, with the legacy

of the constellation of modernism *and* something more. While for the non-Western world that something is imperialism, for feminists it is patriarchy. They must begin, as Fraser and Nicholson put it, with "the nature of the social object one wished to criticize" rather than with the condition of philosophy. This object is "the oppression of women in its 'endless variety and monotonous similarity.'"[12]

Visuality, or the Social Object "Ridden with Error"[13]

One of the chief sources of the oppression of women lies in the way they have been consigned to visuality. This consignment is the result of an epistemological mechanism which produces social difference by a formal distribution of positions and which modernism magnifies with the availability of technology such as cinema. To approach visuality as the object of criticism, we cannot therefore simply attack the *fact* that women have been reduced to objects of the "male gaze," since that reifies the problem by reifying its most superficial manifestation.[14]

If we take visuality to be, precisely, the nature of the social object that feminism should undertake to criticize, then it is incumbent upon us to analyze the epistemological foundation that supports it. It is, indeed, a foundation in the sense that the production of the West's "others" depends on a logic of visuality that bifurcates "subjects" and "objects" into the incompatible positions of intellectuality and spectacularity.

To illustrate my point, I will turn briefly to Chaplin's *Modern Times*, a film which demonstrates by its use of cinematic technology the modernist production of the space of the other.

There are, of course, many ways to talk about this film, but what makes it so fascinating to watch (and this is a point that can be generalized to include other silent movies) is the way it exaggerates and deconstructs prefilmic materials, in particular the human body. What becomes clear in the film is how a perception of the spectacular cannot be separated from technology, which turns the human body into the site of experimentation and mass production. No audience would forget, for instance, the scenes in which the Chaplin character, an assembly line worker, is so accustomed to working with his lug wrenches that he automatically applies his twisting motions to everything that meets his eyes. This *automatizing* of the human body fulfils *in a mechanized manner* a typical description about a debased popular form, melodrama, that its characters are characters "who can be guaranteed to think, speak and act exactly as you would expect."[15] Cinema, then, allows us to realize in an unprecedented way the mediated, that is, technologized, nature of "melodramatic sentiments." The typical features of melodramatic expression—exaggeration, emotionalism, and Manichaeanism—can thus be redefined as the eruption of the machine in what is presumed to be spon-

taneous. Gestures and emotions are "enlarged" sentimentally the way reality is "enlarged" by the camera lens.

In Chaplin's assembly-line worker, visuality works toward an automatization of an oppressed figure whose bodily movements become excessive and comical. Being "automatized" means being subjected to social exploitation whose origins are beyond one's individual grasp, but it also means becoming a spectacle whose "aesthetic" power increases with one's increasing awkwardness and helplessness. The production of the "other" is in this sense both the production of class and aesthetic/cognitive difference. The camera brings this out excellently with mechanically repeated motions.

What these moments in *Modern Times* help foreground in a densely meaningful way is the relationship between the excess of spectacle and the excess of response that Freud explores in his discussion of the comic in *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*. Freud's question is: why do we laugh in the face of the comic? Similarly, in *Modern Times*, how is it that the automatizing of "the other" in the ways we have described becomes the source of our pleasure?

Early on in his essay, Freud indicates that the problem of the comic exists "quite apart from any communication."[16] For him the chief interest of the comic lies in *quantitative* terms. The comic is the "ideational mimetics" that involves "somatic enervation." The expenditure of energy that occurs constitutes the origin of culture in the form of a differentiation or division of labor:

> The comic effect apparently depends . . . on the difference [*Differenz*] between the two cathectic expenditures—one's own and the other person's—as estimated by "empathy"—and not on which of the two the difference favors. But this peculiarity, which at first sight confuses our judgement, vanishes when we bear in mind that a restriction of our muscular work and an increase of our intellectual work fit in with the course of our personal development toward a higher level of civilization. By raising our intellectual expenditure we can achieve the same result with a diminished expenditure on our movements. Evidence of this cultural success is provided by our machines.[17]

Although Freud's statements are ostensibly about the comic, what they reveal is the hierarchical structuring of energies which are distributed between "spectacle" and "spectator" in the intellectual endeavors which form the basis of culture. If the comic as such makes apparent a human being's dependence on bodily needs and social situations, then it also means that the moment of visualization coincides, in effect, with an inevitable dehumanization in the form of a physically automatized object, which is *produced as spectacular excess*. Freud's ironic remark that this is "cultural success" which is evidenced by our machines suggests that this process of dehumanization is accelerated by the accelerated sophistication of intellectual culture itself.

In *Modern Times*, the "increase of intellectual work" does not involve psychology in the popular sense of an interiorization of dramatic action. Rather, it involves a confrontation with the cruelties of industrial exploitation through our laughter, the response that Freud defines as the discharge of that unutilized surplus of energy left over from the difference between the two "cathectic expenditures." If the body of the assembly-line worker is seen in what Freud calls its "muscular expenditure," it is also seen in a way that was not possible before mass production, including the mass production that is the filmic moment. The "human body" as such is already a *working body automatized*, in the sense that it becomes in the new age an automaton on which social injustice as well as processes of mechanization "take on a life of their own," so to speak. Thus, the moment the "human body" is "released" into the field of vision is also the moment when it is made excessive and dehumanized. This excess is the *mise-en-scène* of modernity *par excellence*.

If Freud's reading captures formally the capacity and the limit of the camera's eye, this formalism is itself a symptom of the modern history to which it tries to respond. This is the history of the eruption of "mass culture" as the site both of increasingly mechanized labor and of unprecedentedly multiplied and globally dispersed subjectivities. As Freud analyzes the comic as a spectacle and in quantifiable terms, he is reading human "subjectivity" the way a camera captures "life." The automatized mobility of the spectacularized "other" happens within a frame of scopophilia.

That this scopophilia is masculinist becomes clear when we turn to another one of Freud's texts, "The Uncanny."[18] In this essay, Freud wants to talk about emotions that pertain to inexplicable patterns of psychic repetition. Central to his argument is his reading of E. T. A. Hoffmann's tale, "The Sandman," in which the student Nathaniel falls in love with a doll, Olympia. For Freud, the interest of the story does not so much lie in this heterosexual "romance" as it does in the Sandman and the "father series" in which Nathaniel's tragic fate is written.

But Freud's emphatically masculinist reading—that is, a reading that produces a cultural and psychic *density* for the male subject—becomes itself a way of magnifying the visual object status in which woman is cast. Hoffmann's tale, of course, provides material for Freud's camera eye by highlighting two elements in Nathaniel's fall for Olympia. One: that he first sees her from afar, whereby her beauty, blurred and indistinct, takes on a mesmerizing aura. Two: when they finally meet, the collapse of the physical distance which gives rise to his pleasure at first is now replaced by another equally gratifying sensation—her mechanistic response to everything he says

in the form of "Ah, ah!" The combination of these two elements—visuality and automatization—leads to Freud's reading: "Olympia . . . the automatic doll, can be nothing else than a personification of Nathaniel's feminine attitude towards his father in his infancy. . . . Olympia is, as it were, a dissociated complex of Nathaniel's which confronts him as a person. . . ."[19]

Freud's two arguments, the comic and the uncanny, are arguments about mass culture even though they are not stated explicitly as such. The two arguments intersect at the notion of the automatized other, which takes the form either of the ridiculous, the lower class, or of woman. The meaning of woman here is inseparable from the meaning of intellectual class struggle by virtue of the fact that woman is "produced" the way the lower class in Chaplin is produced. The sight of woman is no less mechanized than the sight of the comic, and both embody the critical, indeed repressed, relationship between modernist scopophilia and the compulsive and repetitive "others" which confront Modern Man.

As the ruin of modernism, mass culture is the automatized site of the others, the site of automatized others, the site of automatons. Automatization as such is the "social object" which defines the critical field for feminism. But it is not an object which exists in any pure form; rather, its impurity as cultural construct with historical weight means that feminists need constantly to seize it and steer it in a different direction from other types of politics which can lay equal claim to it. The struggles here are among (1) the perpetuation of masculinist modernism, (2) *feminized* postmodernism, and (3) *feminist* postmodernism. To understand this, let us discuss the term "abandon" in Andrew Ross's title.

"Abandon" belongs to that corpus of concepts which are explicitly or implicitly associated with the devaluation of women since the eighteenth century. If the certainty of a masculinist culture can only be erected by policing the behavior of men's conventional sexual other, women, then any suggestion of women's "misbehavior" amounts to a threat to the dominant culture's foundational support. Traditionally, any departure from the virtues demanded of females becomes the occasion both for male moralistic pedagogy (which asserts social control) and for male romantic musings (which celebrate acts of social transgression). The notion of "abandon" belongs to an economy in which male hegemony relies on the "loose woman" and its cognates of "looseness-as-woman" and "woman-as-looseness" for a projection of that which is subversive, improper, marginal, unspeakable, and so forth. Teresa de Lauretis has called this the "violence of rhetoric" and criticized the masculinism which informs Nietzsche's and Derrida's appropriation of the feminine for their deconstruction of established power.[20] What Nietzsche and Derrida accomplish in philosophy, others accomplish through the notions of mass culture. This historical inscription of the feminine on

the notion of mass culture, Andreas Huyssen argues, is problematic primarily because of "the persistent gendering as feminine of that which is devalued."[21] The case of Emma Bovary, that "avid consumer of pulp,"[22] is the most paradigmatic. In Huyssen's argument, the equation of woman with mass culture is a threat to the serious purity of high modernism.

Once the implications of gender are introduced, it becomes possible to see how the twentieth-century debates about "mass" culture—what is now called postmodern culture—have been conducted over categories which bear the imprint of hierarchically defined sexual difference. For example, we can now view the classic case of Theodore Adorno and Max Horkheimer's devastating denunciation of American mass culture in terms of a politically astute and uncompromising masculinism. Adorno and Horkheimer define the "culture industry" as what "robs the individual of his function." This individual is the autonomous human being who holds a critically resistant relationship to the stultifying effects of undifferentiated mass culture. This critically resistant individualism is meanwhile extended to the work of art. The commitment to the possibility of autonomy and liberation is expressed negatively, in the form of an "in spite of": in spite of the deafening, blinding, and numbing powers of the mass, autonomy and liberation exist for the ones who remain sober, alert, and clear-sighted. This of course leaves open the question of how the impure nature of social history can even begin to be approached, and how social transformation can take place in a communal or collective sense.

The rigidity and pessimism of the Frankfurt School "stamp" on mass culture have been criticized on many fronts. My point in mentioning it is rather to emphasize that, precisely because Adorno and Horkheimer's argument has had such an indelible impact on our conception of the culture industry for so long, it paradoxically enables the equally problematic "postmodern" descriptions of mass culture given by Jean Baudrillard to have great seductive powers.[23] In Baudrillard, the nonresisting activities of the reputedly passive consumer now take on an "implosive" dimension. The mass(es), in its (their) stubborn, somnambulent silence, in its (their) simulated or simulating acquiescence to the media, become(s) abandoned and "feminine" in the ruin of representation. Baudrillard's theory does not reverse Adorno and Horkheimer's view of the masses; rather, it exaggerates it and pushes it to the extreme by substituting the notion of an all-controlling "industry" with that of an all-consuming mass, a mass that, in its abandon, no longer allows for the demarcation of clear boundaries, such as between an above and a below. Huyssen writes: "Baudrillard gives the old dichotomy a new twist by applauding the femininity of the masses rather than denigrating it, but his move may be no more than yet another Nietzschean simulacrum."[24]

From Object to Strategy

Be it the repudiation of or the abandonment to the feminized mass, then, the modernism-postmodernism problematic continues the polarized thinking produced by the logic of visuality. Visuality in Freud works by displacement, which makes explicit (turns into external form) what are interiorized states called "neuroses" and "complexes." The site occupied by woman, by the lower classes, by the masses, is that of excess; in Freud's reading their specularity—their status as the visual—is what allows the clarification of problems which lie outside them and which need them for their objectification. Beyond this specularity, what can be known about the feminized "object"?

The answer to this question is "nothing" if we insist that this object is a pure phenomenon, a pure existence. However, if this object is indeed a *social* object which is by nature "ridden with error," then criticizing it from within would amount to criticizing the social sources of its formation. Albeit in fragmented forms, such criticisms can lead to subversions which do not merely reproduce the existing mechanism but which offer an alternative for transformation.

For feminists working in the First World, where relatively stable material conditions prevail, criticism of the oppression of women can adopt a more flamboyantly defiant tone as the affirmation of female power *tout court*. The availability of food, living space, mechanical and electronic forms of communication, institutionalized psychoanalytic treatment, and general personal mobility means that "automatization" *can* turn into autonomy and independence. Hélène Cixous's challenge to Freud's reading of Hoffmann, for instance, represents this defiant automaton power: "what if the doll became a woman? What if she *were* alive? What if, in looking at her, we animated her?"[25]

These First World feminist questions short-circuit Freud's neurotic pessimism by rejecting, as it were, the reductionism of the modernist logic of visuality and the polarity of masculine-human-subject-versus-feminized-automaton it advances. It retains the notion of the automaton—the mechanical doll—but changes its fate by giving it life with another look. This is the look of the feminist critic. Does her power of animation take us back to the language of God, a superior being who bestows life upon an inferior? Or is it the power of a woman who bears the history of her own dehumanization on her as she speaks for other women? The idealism of First World feminism would have us believe the latter. The mythical being of this idealism is the "cyborg," that half-machine, half-animal creature, at once committed and transgressive, spoken of by Donna Haraway.[26]

For those feminists who have lived outside the First World as "natives" of "indigenous cultures" (for such are the categories in which they are put, regardless of their level of education), the defiance of a Cixous is always dubious, suggesting not only the subversiveness of woman but also the more familiar, oppressive discursive prowess of the "First World." The "postmodern" cultural situation in which non-Western feminists now find themselves is a difficult and cynical one. Precisely because of the modernist epistemological mechanism which produces the interest in the Third World, the great number of discourses that surround this "area" are now treated, one feels, as so many Olympias saying "Ah, ah!" to a Western subject demanding repeated uniform messages. For the Third World feminist, the question is never that of asserting power as woman alone, but of showing how the concern for women is inseparable from other types of cultural oppression and negotiation. In a more pronounced, because more technologized/automatized manner, her status as postmodern automaton is both the subject and object of her critical operations.

In this light, it is important to see that the impasse inherent in Freud's analytic insights has to do not only with visuality and the ontological polarities it entails, but also with the *instrumentalism* to which such a construction of the visual field lends itself. Because Freud privileges castration as a model, he is trapped in its implications, by which the "other" that is constructed is always constructed as what completes what is missing from our "own" cognition. But the roots of "lack" lie beyond the field of vision,[27] which is why the privileging of vision as such is always the privileging of a fictive mode, a veil which remains caught in an endless repetition of its own logic.

On the other hand, Freud's analysis of the comic remains instructive because in it we find a resistance to the liberalist illusion of the autonomy and independence we can "give" the other. It shows that social knowledge (and the responsibility that this knowledge entails) is not simply a matter of empathy or identification with the "other" whose sorrows and frustrations are being made part of the spectacle. Repetition, which is now visibly recognized in the field of the other, mechanistically establishes and intensifies the distintions between spectacular (kinetic) labor and cognitive labor, while the surplus created by their difference materializes not only in emotional (or imaginary) terms but also in economic terms. This means that *our* attempts to "explore the 'other' point of view" and "to give it a chance to speak for itself," as the passion of many current discourses goes, must always be distinguished from the other's struggles, no matter how enthusiastically we assume the nonexistence of that distinction. "Letting the 'other' live" with a liveliness never visible before is a kind of investment whose profits return, as it were, to those who watch. Freud puts it this way:

> In "trying to understand," therefore, in apperceiving this movement [the comic], I make a certain expenditure, and in this portion of the mental

> process I behave exactly as though I were putting myself in the place of the person I am observing. But at the same moment, probably, I bear in mind the aim of this movement, and my earlier experience enables me to estimate the scale of expenditure required for reaching that aim. In doing so I disregard the person whom I am observing and behave as though I myself wanted to reach the aim of the movement. These two possibilities in my imagination amount to a comparison between the observed movement and my own. If the other person's movement is exaggerated and inexpedient, my increased expenditure in order to understand it is inhibited in *statu nascendi*, as it were in the act of being mobilized . . .; it is declared superfluous and is free for use elsewhere or perhaps for discharge by laughter. This would be the way in which, other circumstances being favorable, pleasure in a comic movement is generated—an innervatory expenditure which has become an unusable surplus when a comparison is made with a movement of one's own.[28]

The task that faces Third World feminists is thus not simply that of "animating" the oppressed women of their cultures, but of making the automatized and animated condition of their own voices the conscious point of deprture in their intervention. This does not simply mean they are, as they must be, speaking across cultures and boundaries; it also means that they speak with the awareness of "cross-cultural" speech as a limit, and that their very own use of the victimhood of women and Third World cultures is both symptomatic of and inevitably complicitous with the First World. As Gayatri Spivak says of the American university context: "the invocation of the pervasive oppression of Woman in every class and race stratum, indeed in the lowest sub-cast, cannot help but justify the institutional interests of the (female) academic."[29] Feminists' upward mobility in the institution, in other words, still follows the logic of the division of labor and of social difference depicted by Freud in his analysis of the comic. The apparent receptiveness of our curricula to the Third World, a receptiveness which makes full use of non-Western human specimens as instruments for articulation, is something we have to practice and deconstruct at once. The Third World feminist speaks of, speaks to, and speaks as this disjuncture:

> The privileged Third World informant crosses cultures within the network made possible by socialized capital, or from the point of view of the indigenous intellectual or professional elite in actual Third World countries. Among the latter, the desire to "cross" cultures means accession, left *or* right, feminist *or* masculinist, into the elite culture of the metropolis. This is done by the commodification of the particular "Third World culture" to which they belong. Here entry into consumerism and entry into "Feminism" (the proper named movement) have many things in common.[30]

By the logic of commodified culture, feminism shares with other marginalized discourses which have been given "visibility" the same type of

destiny—that of reification and subordination under such terms, currently popular in the U.S. academy, as "cultural diversity." As all groups speak like automatons to the neurotic subject of the West, an increasing momentum of instrumentalism, such as is evident in anthologies about postmodernism and feminism, seeks to reabsorb the differences among them. Our educational apparatuses produce ever "meta" systems, programs, and categories in this direction. Feminism has already become one type of knowledge to be controlled expediently through traditional epistemological frameworks such as the genre of the "history of ideas."

Awareness of such facts does not allow one to defend the purity of feminism against its various *uses*. Here, the Third World feminist, because she is used as so many types of automatons at once, occupies a space for strategic alliances.

One such alliance is worked out by foregrounding the political significance of theoretical feminist positions, even if they may have ostensibly little to do with politics in the narrower sense of political economy. The refusal, on the part of many feminists, to give up what may be designated as "feminine" areas, including the close attention to texts, can in this regard be seen as a refusal to give up the local as a base, a war front, when the cannon shots of patriarchal modernism are still heard everywhere. Although this base is also that "social object" which feminists must criticize, to abandon it altogether would mean a complete surrender to the enemy. Naomi Schor puts it this way:

> Whether or not the "feminine" is a male construct, a product of a phallocentric culture destined to disappear, in the present order of things we cannot afford not to press its claims even as we dismantle the conceptual systems which support it.[31]

Elizabeth Weed comments:

> Schor's insistence on the need for a feminine specificity is political. It represents a recognition on the part of some feminists . . . that much of post-structural theory which is not explicitly feminist is simply blind to sexual difference or, in its desire to get beyond the opposition male/female, underestimates the full political weight of the categories.[32]

Thus the "social object" for feminist discourse in general—the oppression of women—becomes both object and agent of criticism. Vis-à-vis postmodernism, the question that feminists must ask *repeatedly* is: how do we deal with the local? Instead of the local, accounts of postmodernism usually provide us with lists that demonstrate what Jean-Françcois Lyotard says literally: "Not only can one speak of everything, one must."[33] The impossi-

bility of dealing with the local except by letting everyone speak/everything be spoken at the same time leads to a situation in which hegemony in the Gramscian sense always remains a danger. But with this danger also arises a form of opportunity, which feminists take hold of by way of situating themselves at every point in a constellation of political forces without ever losing sight of women's historical subordination.

Pressing the claims of the local therefore does not mean essentializing one position; instead it means using that position as a parallel for allying with others. For the Third World feminist, especially, the local is never "one." Rather, her own "locality" as construct, difference, and automaton means that pressing its claims is always pressing the claims of a form of existence which is, by origin, coalitional.

By contrast, the postmodernist list neutralizes the critical nature of such coalitional existences. The list allows "the others" to be seen, but would not pay attention to what they say. In the American university today, the rationale of the list manifests itself in the wholehearted *enlisting* of women, blacks, Asians, and so forth, into employment for their "offerings" of materials from non-Western cultures. Those who have been hired under such circumstances know to what extent their histories and cultures manage to make it to significant international forums, which are by and large still controlled by topics such as "modernism" and "postmodernism." Those who want to address the local must therefore always proceed by gesturing toward the forum at large, or by what we nowadays call, following the language of the market, "packaging." One knows that as long as one deals in First World abstractions—what Fraser and Nicholson mean by "philosophy"—one would have an audience. As for local specificities—even though such are buzz words for a politics of abandonment—audiences usually nod in good will and turn a deaf ear, and readers skip the pages.

It is in resistance against postmodernist enlistment, then, that various strategies for coalition between feminism and postmodernism, which all partake of a "critical regionalism," have been explored. Donna Haraway and Teresa Ebert define postmodern feminist cultural theory as "oppositional" practice;[34] Craig Owens argues the necessity to genderize the formalisms of postmodern aesthetics and to revamp the substance of postmodern thought;[35] Jane Flax speaks of "the embeddedness of feminist theory in the very social processes we are trying to critique."[36] Perhaps what is most crucial about the meeting of feminism and postmodernism is that, after refusing to be seduced into abandonment, feminists do not put down the "pulp novel" that is postmodernism, either. Instead, they extract from the cries of abandonment the potential of social criticism that might have been lost in the implosions of simulacra. The careful rejection of postmodernist abandon as a universalist politics goes hand in hand with its insistence on the need to *detail* history, in the sense of cutting it up, so that as it gains more ground

in social struggle, sexual difference becomes a way of engaging not simply with women but with other types of subjugation. The future of feminist postmodern automatons is described in this statement by Weed: "If sexual difference becomes ever more destabilized, living as a female will become an easier project, but that will result from the continued displacement of 'women,' not from its consolidation."[37]

NOTES

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1. Fredric Jameson, "Postmodernism and Consumer Society," in *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*, edited and with an introduction by Hal Foster (Port Townsend, Washington; Bay Press, 1983), p. 112.

2. Andrew Ross, ed., *Universal Abandon?: The Politics of Postmodernism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988).

3. Introduction to *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, Special Issue on Postmodernism and Japan, 87, 3 (Summer 1988), p. 388.

4. I argue this in the context of modern Chinese literature in "Rereading Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies: A Response to the 'Postmodern' Condition," *Cultural Critique*, 5 (Winter 1986–87) pp. 69–93.

5. See, for instance, Daryl Mcgowan Tress's response (*Signs*, 14, 1, p. 200) to Jane Flax's "Postmodernism and Gender Relations in Feminist Theory" (*Signs*, 12, 4, pp. 621–43): "Postmodernism, with its 'deep skepticism' and 'radical doubts' is not the medicine required to cure intellectual and social life of the afflictions of various orthodoxies (e.g., Marxist, Enlightenment, Freudian). What is sorely needed instead of theory that denies the self and integrity or reason is theory that permits us to achieve appropriate and intelligent trust in the self and in its various abilities to come to know what is real."

6. See Kenneth Frampton, "Towards a Critical Regionalism: Six Points for an Architecture of Resistance," in Hal Foster, pp. 16–30.

7. Nancy Fraser and Linda Nicholson, "Social Criticism without Philosophy: An Encounter between Feminism and Postmodernism," in Andrew Ross, pp. 88, 90.

8. Hayden White's argument about history in *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978) remains exemplary in this regard.

9. Craig Owens, "The Discourse of Others: Feminists and Postmodernism," in Hal Foster, p. 58.

10. George Yúdice, "Marginality and the Ethics of Survival," in Andrew Ross, p. 215.

11. See Naomi Schor's argument in "Dreaming Dissymmetry: Barthes, Foucault, and Sexual Difference," in Alice Jardine and Paul Smith, eds., *Men in Feminism* (New York: Methuen, 1987), pp. 98–110.

12. In Andrew Ross, pp. 91, 102. The phrase "endless variety and monotonous similarity" is from Gayle Rubin, "The Traffic in Women," in *Toward an Anthropology of Women*, edited by Rayna R. Reiter (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975), p. 160.

13. This notion is Walter Benjamin's.

14. A similar point can be made about pornography. Attacks on pornography that focus only on its abuse of women cannot deal with the question of why pornography always exists.

15. James Smith, *Melodrama* (London: Methuen 1973), p. 18.

16. Freud, *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*, translated and edited by James Strachey (New York and London: Norton, 1963), p. 193.

17. Freud, *Jokes*, p. 195.

18. Freud, "The 'Uncanny,'" *Collected Papers*, vol. IV, trans. Joan Riviere (London: The Hogarth Press, 1946), pp. 368–407.

19. Freud, "The 'Uncanny,'" p. 385, note 1.

20. Teresa de Lauretis, "The Violence of Rhetoric: Considerations on Representation and Gender," *Semiotica*, 54, 1–2 (1985), Special Issue on "The Rhetoric of Violence," edited by Nancy Armstrong; rpt. in *Technologies of Gender: Essays on Theory, Film, and Fiction* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), pp. 31–50.

21. Andreas Huyssen, *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1986), p. 53.

22. Andreas Huyssen, p. 46.

23. See especially Jean Baudrillard, *In the Shadow of the Silent Majorities or the End of the Social and Other Essays*, translated by Paul Foss, Paul Patton, and John Johnston (New York: Semiotext(e), 1983), and *Simulations*, translated by Paul Foss, Paul Patton, and Philip Beitchman (New York: Semiotext(e), 1983).

24. Andreas Huyssen, p. 62.

25. Hélène Cixous, "Fiction and Its Phantoms: A Reading of Freud's *Das Unheimliche* (The 'uncanny')," *New Literary History*, VII, 3, p. 538; emphasis in the original.

26. Donna Haraway, "A Manifesto for Cyborgs: Science, Technology, and Socialist Feminism in the 1980s," *Socialist Review*, 80 (March-April 1985); rpt. in Elizabeth Weed, ed., *Coming to Terms: Feminism, Theory, Politics* (New York and London: Routledge, 1989), pp. 173–204.

27. De Lauretis deals with this problem by reintroducing narrative. See especially her chapter on "Imaging" in *Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1984). Neil Hertz makes a similar argument about Freud's reading of Hoffmann by showing the necessity of "literature" for "psychoanalaysis": "we know that the relation between figurative language and what it figures cannot be adequately grasped in metaphors of vision. . . ." See "Freud and the Sandman," in *Textual Strategies: Perspectives in Post-Structuralist Criticism*, edited and with an introduction by Josué V. Harari (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1979), p. 320.

28. Freud, *Jokes*, p. 194.

29. Gayatri Spivak, "The Political Economy of Women As Seen by a Literary Critic," in Elizabeth Weed, p. 220.

30. Gayatri Spivak, p. 221; emphases in the original.

31. Naomi Schor, *Reading in Detail: Aesthetics and the Feminine* (New York and London: Methuen, 1987), p. 97.

32. Elizabeth Weed, "Introduction: Terms of Reference," in Weed, ed. *Coming to Terms*, pp. xvii–xviii.

33. Jean-François Lyotard, "Presentations," in *Philosophy in France Today*, edited by Alan Montefiore (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 133; quoted by Warren Montag, "What is at Stake in the Debate on Postmodernism?," in E. Ann Kaplan, ed., *Postmodernism and Its Discontents: Theories, Practices* (London and New York: Verso, 1988), p. 91.

34. See Donna Haraway, "Cyborgs," and Teresa Ebert, "The Romance of Patriarchy: Ideology, Subjectivity, and Postmodern Feminist Cultural Theory," *Cultural Critique*, 10 (Fall 1988) pp. 19–57.

35. ". . . women's insistence on difference and incommensurability may not only be compatible with, but also an instance of postmodern thought." in Hal Foster, pp. 61–62.

36. See Jane Flax, p. 638.

37 Elizabeth Weed, p. xxiv.