Commentary

For our Commentary segment, JAC invites one of our readers to discuss a significant book or to explore an important topic in our field. In this issue, Victor Vitanza discusses Susan Jarratt’s Rereading the Sophists.

A Feminist Sophistic?

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As my title suggests, I am going to interrogate Susan Jarratt’s notion of a “feminist sophistic” (Rereading the Sophists). When I was invited to write a review-essay, I was also asked to discuss my own work in terms of a Third Sophistic. In dis/order “to do” both Jarratt (Feminist Sophistic) and Vitanza (Third Sophistic), I will read both semiotically across the other, that which we-Sophists would both attend to. To begin with, however, it is problematic for anyone to discuss Sophistic-anything today, since Edward Schiappa has recently told us that the Sophists do not exist (“Sophistic Rhetoric: Oasis or Mirage?”). By now, those of us who are interested in the Sophists are aware of the Schiappa-Poulakos exchanges (debates?) on the Sophists (Schiappa, “Neo-Sophistic”; “History and Neo-Sophistic”; and J. Poulakos, “Interpret­ing”). My purpose is not to add to those debates, but to listen to what is not being said, to recall what has been deflected more importantly here by Jarratt, and then to attempt to report it and to rethink the conditions for the possibilities of hearing what, heretofore, still remains ever silenced when we-Sophists talk about the “Sophists” or Sophistic-anything. I am going to pass over Schiappa1 who is more philological and philosophical and less sophisticated than Jarratt. Again, my purpose is to listen with an ear not yet attempted in our deliberations on the Sophists. Derrida says, “The ear is uncanny. Uncanny is what it is; double is what it can become...” (Ear 32-33); I say, I desire to listen by way of neither right nor left ears but by way of a third ear. Sara Kofman says that a third ear is what Nietzsche calls a “feminine” ear (“Nietzsche,” 48). This third ear is not essentially-biologically nor is it strategically female. It is a Third Dionysian ear, neither male nor female, but beyond disjunctive thinking altogether (see Kofman).
I. A Feminist Sophistic

*The Liberal Temper:* In an earlier characterization of Jarratt’s historiographical principles, I interpreted Jarratt as a “liberal” (“Taking A-Count” 207), by which I mean that her reading of the Sophists is somewhat comparable to Eric Havelock’s reading; to wit, the Sophists express “a liberal temper,” or a penchant for democracy (see ch. 7). It can be productive to see Jarratt in this tradition of thinking, for she is an advocate of a radical democracy, that is, for the inclusion of the excluded, yet exclusively women. Jarratt’s liberal pedagogy is linked up with what is labeled today as “critical pedagogy,” that of Paulo Freire, Henry Giroux, Stanley Aronowitz, and Ira Shor (*Rereading* 107-12), which appears to pay its due to women as well as men.

If Jarratt’s expressing a liberal temper, how specifically so? There are any number of ways, but I would concentrate on two: The first is by way of a middle term, *nomos,* to be placed between the present-day extremes of *mythos* and *logos,* or orality and literacy; the second, by way of strategic misreadings.

**A Middle Term:** The search for a middle term—though, not the excluded middle—is crucial for an understanding of Jarratt’s goal of emancipation. Instead of attempting to choose sides in the *mythos/logos* or orality/literacy debate, Jarratt situates herself historiographically by way of a middle term, *nomos.* Starting with social-political history, Jarratt argues, from Jean-Pierre Vernant, for an event that can be described as the historical refiguring of “political space” during the Mycenaean period. Instead of being determined by way of king to council to warriors and landowners, another political locus came about. Jarratt/Vernant say, “villagers, each holding under a feudal arrangement a section of land called a *damos,* met in a common space” for the purposes of “negotiating” (Jarratt 40; Vernant 32-34). They continue: “It was clearly not the interior of the palace but rather a ‘middle space,’ in which ‘those who contended with words ... became [even] in this hierarchical society a class of equals’” (40; Vernant 46). This space, Jarratt suggests, “created contexts for rhetorical discourse” (40). Eventually, statutes (*thesmoi,* from the gods) are replaced by democratic reform (*nomos*) (41), which can be followed linguistically. An older form of the word, *nomos,* meant “pasture,” then “habitation,” and most importantly “habitual practice, usage, or custom” (41). *Nomos* becomes the locus of *homologia.* As *nomos* is refigured as middle space, so is the agent refigured. Jarratt now has a budding ethical subject.

*Strategus* (Greek): Office or command of a general, generalship. (*OED*)

It’s always clearly a question of war, of battle. If there is no battle, it’s replaced by the stake of battle: strategy. Man is strategy... (Cixous)

**Strategic Misreadings:** At this point, Jarratt moves us from ancient Greece to our contemporary scene of *logo/phallocentrism,* which still favors a binary (machine) and hierarchical way of structuring society and language.
Males are privileged over females; logic over emotions; history over fiction; mind over body; philosophy over sophistics; substance over style. (And oasis over mirage.) It is necessary still today not only to include women but also to rethink *logos* as "discourses of the ‘other’" (63). In an attempt to further expose these exclusions, Jarratt turns to the work that "has gone on under the names of rhetoric in Nietzsche, of post-structuralist theory, which also claims Nietzsche as a forerunner, and of feminism" (*Rereading* 66). Jarratt ignores Nietzschean texts and concentrates on Derrida's reading Nietzsche's reading (*Spurs*) on the feminine, and on Gayatri Spivak's ("Displacement") reading Derrida's reading Nietzsche. This is all done very exclusively, as we will hear. What Jarratt is questioning through Spivak's reading is both deconstruction and poststructuralism—whether or not they can be helpful to feminists, or to a reclamation of women and a female-sophistic style of discourse that would be appropriate for writing histories of rhetoric and for political discourse (in the middle space, *nomos*). Jarratt's answer is that deconstruction and poststructuralism cannot be helpful (66-69). There is, in Jarratt's and many other feminists' understandings, the problem of undecidability in deconstruction.

Jarratt calls on Spivak's critique of Derrida in "Displacement and the Discourse of Woman." About deconstruction, Spivak writes: "A deconstructive discourse, even as it criticizes phallocentrism or the sovereignty of consciousness (and thus seeks to displace or ‘feminize’ itself according to a certain logic), must displace the figure of the woman twice over" (173). About Derrida, she writes:

I learn from Derrida's critique of phallocentrism—but *I must then go somewhere else with it*. A male philosopher can deconstruct the discourse of the power of the phallus as "his own mistake." For him, the desire for the "name of woman" comes with the questioning of the "metaphysical familiarity which so naturally relates the we of the philosopher to ‘we-men,’ to the we in the horizon of humanity." This is an unusual and courageous enterprise, not shared by Derrida's male followers. (emphasis mine 173)

What I take Spivak to be saying is that deconstruction in the hands of a man, even Derrida, can only uncover for a man "his own mistake" (173). It is important to note—for Jarratt does not point this out—that Spivak is quoting Derrida's own *autocritique* in his own words. For Spivak, however, to "go somewhere else with it" (she does not say, without it) does not necessarily mean she must abandon deconstruction, as Jarratt would have us hear Spivak. I take the phrase "go somewhere else with it" to mean Spivak says that she must do something other than what Derrida does with deconstruction in relation to the feminine. While deconstruction will not remove a male from his own history but only make him aware, Spivak does not need to be made aware. (That is, until a few years later, when she writes a sequel to this article!) Therefore, if Jarratt calls on Spivak's proper name here, we need to be aware that Spivak is not saying No to deconstruction. (It is understandable that many feminists do not want to be Derridairughters[8]; hence, the political necessity to reverse such a familial linkage and to displace it altogether. But let us hear it as such a strategy, namely, the putting of words in someone's mouth so that we might hear by way of the dividing practice of either right or left ears.)
But there is more at stake here than Spivak’s attitude toward deconstruction, and that is how what she says in this 1983 article on displacement is to be heard—either as a ground upon which to read in a feminist way or as one deconstruction before yet another or as both. Yes, I’m bringing up the issues of appropriation and undecidability. After all, as good Sophists, we should all insist on the virtues of *dissoi logoi*. Therefore, I want to focus on Derrida’s notion of *relever*, or turning the lever, so as to promote interpretations that serve readers’ interests (see Derrida, *Margins* 88-108; 123-36). It is a matter now of learning how to hear what else is becoming-said. And yet, in dis/order to hear by way of not just two ears but a ‘third,’ we have to realize that the interests to be attended to are vaster than either female or male. Hence, my interests in going beyond simple *dissoi logoi* toward *dissoi paralogoi*. In relation to the question concerning undecideability, I want to turn a lever, showing how Spivak in a later article turns a lever so as to resituate herself via Derridean deconstruction and its reading of the question of woman.

Q: How have you changed in the last twenty years?
A: I ask less of deconstruction and I value it more. (Spivak 10)

*Spivak Reconsidered:* The essay that is a sequel is published six years after “Displacement and the Discourse of Woman” and is entitled “Feminism and deconstruction, again: negotiating with unacknowledged masculinism.” The article is difficult to summarize because often Spivak’s meaning comes from juxtaposition and quick reversals that are only reversed once ever again. We are fortunate because Spivak abstracts her own article:

*Argument.* It is not just that deconstruction cannot found a politics, while other ways of thinking can. It is that deconstruction can make founded political programs more useful by making their in-built problems more visible. To act is therefore not to ignore deconstruction, but actively to transgress it without giving it up. . . . Feminism has a special situation here because, among the many names that Derrida gives to the problem/solution of founded programs, one is “woman.” I explain in the essay why feminism should keep to the critical ways of deconstruction but give up its attachment to that specific name for the problem/solution of founded programs. . . .

This is a more charitable position on the usefulness of deconstruction for feminism than I have supported in the past. It is a negotiation and an acknowledgement of complicity. This is the result of my recent teaching stint in India, which persuaded me that the indigenous elite must come to terms with its unacknowledged complicity with the culture of imperialism. Patriarchy/feminist theory is standing in for imperialism/post-coloniality here. (206)

What comes through in Spivak’s summary and article is that deconstruction is a way of reading and examining (political) programs and not a program in itself. To discard deconstruction because it does not have a political program in itself, or because it cannot found such a program, would be pointless; for deconstruction, in its strategies of reversal and displacement, in its various conditions, makes a politics possible, and yes, a
materialist politics against the dominant discourse (see Spivak, *Post-Colo-
nial* 46-47; 104-05). Those of us in rhetoric im/proper need to understand
that the argument to reject deconstruction would be comparable to the
argument to reject rhetoric itself because it has no content, truth, and
politics! It is also important to understand, however, why Jarratt does not go
to rhetoric to establish the conditions for the possibility of a feminist
liberation, and why, instead, she, by way of an exploratory analogy, goes to the
Sophists-as-alien (other) to rethink the conditions for a feminist refiguring
of The History of Rhetoric. Both deconstruction (reversal and displace-
ment) and especially sophistic rhetorics (*dissoi logoi*, parataxis) determine,
deretermine, and overdetermine content. We may displace deconstruction
and traditional rhetoric but will have to replace either or both with the return
of the different-yet-same.

That some writers slavishly imitate deconstruction and sophistic rheto-
ric for the sheer performative play for play's sake is inexcusable. However,
some of us examine, by way of performance, our colleagues' political-
theoretical-performative activities. Let me claim in nested-boxes that some
of us (men and women) examine the conditions of the conditions for the
possibilities of becoming political. Having said as much, however, I am
persuaded that a man such as V.V. cannot be a male feminist, if for no other
reason than on provisionary ethical grounds: Women should determine their
own past and destiny. It may very well be that the only way that we-men can
"help" is to self-de(con)struct the idea of masculinity in dis/respect to writing
The History of Rhetoric. Spivak's strategic essentialism suggests that this is
the case. I recall her advice to a male student:

I will have in an undergraduate class, let's say, a young, white male student, politically-
correct, who will say: "I am only a bourgeois white male, I can't speak." In that situation
... I say to them: "Why not develop a certain degree of rage against the history that has
written such an abject script for you that you are silenced?" Then you begin to investigate
what it is that silences you, rather than take this very deterministic position—since my
skin colour is this, since my sex is this, I cannot speak. (Post-Colonial 62)

In suggesting the possibility of a male speaking, Spivak goes so far as to
attack *topoi* that would exclude as "pernicious position[s]" (62; cf. Fuss).
Spivak does not mince terms: "I don't have any problems with starting from
the position that 'Women are universally oppressed by men.' ... but when it
becomes a door-closer, that's when I begin to have trouble" (Post-Colonial
117). Spivak's sophistic brilliance lies in recognizing our means of saying No
to both M/F and F/M ways of excluding.

Spivak in her summary of her argument points out that deconstruction
is not a program in itself, but the *means* of perpetually investigating such
programs. (I would remind us that Spivak places faith in Derrida's search in
*The Ear of the Other* for the means of a "new politics of reading" that does
"not excuse a text for its historical aberrations," and expects us to "admit that
there is something in the text which can produce these readings" [Post-Colonial 107; Derrida Ear 3-38].) The other thing that Spivak's summary points out is the necessity to negotiate with structures of violence and, therefore, her own complicity. Negotiation is a word that Jarratt herself identifies with (Rereading 40-42), though perhaps she does not wish to negotiate by way of, or to admit that she is complicit with, Derridean deconstruction, but a Spivakian deconstruction, whatever that difference might be. Male or Female? Mirage or Oasis?

Spivak Reconsidered (again): What is it that Spivak now understands about Derridean reading practices? She says that it is the concept-metaphor woman. This understanding is crucial, for Spivak is concerned in this article as usual with female sexuality—specifically, its pre-ontological, ontological/epistemological, and axiological conditions. (Again, it is such conditions of possibility that deconstruction uncovers and examines.) What Spivak acknowledges is that whoever deals with female sexuality at the level of the pre-ontological—again, whoever, which, I take, to include both males and females, for Spivak is speaking of Jacqueline Rose and of herself, too—whoever deals with female sexuality must inevitably use this pre-ontological notion of female sexuality, or concept-metaphor woman, and must use it "inside male-dominated historical narratives of propriation" ("Feminism" 210).

Spivak offers no alternative to rethinking woman outside of this narrative. This concept-metaphor woman in male-dominated narratives contributes, she claims, to "the emergence of woman as 'catachresis,' as a metaphor without a literal referent standing in for a concept that is the condition of conceptuality" (211). What Spivak suggests here is that narrative per se is "masculine" and consequently creates the effect/supplement of woman as catachresis. However, what Jarratt and few critics bother to point out—and yet Spivak does—is that in Derridean thinking the critique of phallocentrism, in search of The Truth (of the end of man), began with a critique of anthropomorphism. Spivak says, "Derrida ... see[s] that anthropos is defined as 'man' as a sign that has no history. So Derrida then begins to worry about the history of 'woman' " (Post-Colonial 14; cf. 53; see Derrida, Margins 109-36).15

Spivak continues: "Any programme [feminist(s) or otherwise] which assumes continuity between the subject of epistemology/ontology and that of axiology (the assigning of values) must also assume that the latter is a referent for the former" ("Feminism" 211). In more Derridean-Nietzschean terms, now, Spivak says:

According to Derrida, if one looks at propriation in the general sense in Nietzsche, one sees a question that is "more powerful than the question, 'what is?'" ... because before one can even say that there is being, there must be a decision that being can be proper to itself to the extent of being part of that proposition. ... [T]he irreducible predicament ... is that the ontological question cannot be asked in terms of a cleansed epistemology, for propriation organizes the totality of "language's process and symbolic exchange in general." (211; see Derrida, Spurs 111, 113)
To ask the question What is X (Sophist, woman)? is already to have answered it, because the pre-ontological terms predetermine the answer to the question. Hence, the violence of negative dialectic! Similarly, as Althusser/Spivak say, we think ideology first, history second (Spivak, *Post-Colonial 54*). We must attend to the naming of Sophist and woman and others, but how we attend is always already predetermined, no matter who we are, by way of structures/narratives of violence. (Is it more clear now that liberation requires more than a middle space! and that, according to Spivak, there is no getting away, at least in negative essentialism, from structures of violence!)

At this point in the article, therefore, Spivak deconstructs her previous position. Pulling another lever, she says:

I believe that in “Displacement and the discourse of woman,” I missed the fact that in Derrida’s reading of Nietzsche in *Spurs*, there is an insistence that “woman” in that text was a concept-metaphor that was also a name marking the pre-ontological as propriation in sexual difference. [...] I hope [that I] will make clear how crucial it is not to ignore the powerful currents of European anti-humanist thought that influence us, yet not to excuse them of their masculinism while using them. This is what I am calling “negotiation.” (Spivak’s emphasis, “Feminism” 211)

Therefore, again, the question: Can deconstruction be used in naming of woman? Spivak says Yes, because it is best suited for negotiating with structures/narratives of violence. The strategy is misreadings or essentialism. The steps are reversal and displacement. Their source? Jarratt claims Spivak (*Rereading 70; Spivak, “Displacement” 186*). Spivak, Derrida,16 who claims Nietzsche and Heidegger.1

Having taken note of Spivak’s reversal of her earlier reading, let us look at how Spivak returns to and refigures Derrida’s reading in *Spurs* of Nietzsche’s proposition concerning “woman.” (Jarratt rejects Derrida’s reading outright [see *Rereading 66-67*].) Spivak says that we-men and we-women can “read Nietzsche’s text in a way that suggests that the name of woman makes the question of propriation indeterminate.” (Here, to make it indeterminate is good, at least, initially.) Spivak continues: “Let us look at the Nietzschean sentence: ‘there is no truth of woman, but because of that abyssal self-apartness of truth, this non-truth is “truth”’” (“Feminism” 211). This passage from Derrida’s Nietzsche is Spivak’s translation. Barbara Harlow’s translation is different: “There is no such thing as the truth of woman, but because of that abyssal divergence of the truth, because that untruth is “within. Woman is but one name for that untruth of truth” (*Spurs* 51). This last sentence, “Woman is but one name for that untruth of truth,” allows us to hear that “woman” is a concept-metaphor, which Spivak did not earlier recognize.

After reading this proposition on the question of propriation—Spivak suggests, as Nietzsche does—that the concept-metaphor “woman” can be displaced/replaced with another concept-metaphor.18 It can be replaced
with "man," which had always already been replaced with "woman," because of the impossibility of *anthropos*"man." What was previously privileged becomes supplementary. Other terms that "truth" can be replaced with, besides "man" and "woman," are "power," "writing," and "différance." (We have nothing but concept-metaphors.) Now that it is understood that "woman" is another concept-metaphor, all is interchangeable. Such is simple negative deconstruction. And yet . . .

While such a deconstructive move might be good for we-men, Spivak argues, it is not good for we-women, or many feminists, because such indeterminism (lack of substantial woman) makes it impossible to be political. In this way, apparently, once the truth of "woman" becomes a concept-metaphor and no longer a fixed concept, it must be reclaimed and restabilized for strategic, political purposes. While we-deconstructionists-men, then, would be indeterminate, we-feminist-women would be strategically determinate. Hence, the theater of a Feminist Sophistic!

Or so it might seem, for as I have been pointing out Spivak is not necessarily marking this point about deconstruction and strategy in this later article. She writes: "My previous position on this essay of Derrida's [*Spurs*] was polemical. I suggested that it was not correct to see the figure of woman as a sign for indeterminacy. . . . But today negotiating, I want to give the assent for the moment to Derrida's argument" (emphasis mine, "Feminism" 212). "For the moment" is a typical Spivakean qualification made even about strategic feminism: "I must say I am an essentialist from time to time" (emphasis mine, *Post-Colonial* 11; cf. 32-34, 117-118; and "in a Word"). This qualification is typical of deconstructive processes. Spivak always has to put into question the name of the name (see Derrida, *Margins* 27), which is guarding the question, whatever the question of being or becoming might be.

Now comes Spivak's very different move. While she admits deconstruction cannot be done without and is willing to negotiate with it, she announces that the concept-metaphor "woman" must be done away with! (We are now a long way from where Jarratt begins and ends with Spivak! Are you, Dear Reader, hearing something different yet?) While Spivak will continue to use other such metaphors as "power" and "writing," she will no longer here employ "woman." Why? Because couched in the midst of structures of violence, the term begins to take on masculine characteristics. Spivak says: "We must remember that this particular name, the name of woman, misfires for feminism. Yet, a feminism that takes the traditionalist line against deconstruction [comparable to Jarratt's?] falls into a historical determinism where 'history' becomes a gender-fetish." She continues: "Guarding this particular name for the graphematic structure is perhaps the most essentialist move of all. . . . If we lose the 'name' of woman for writing, there is no cause for lament." (Spivak's emphasis, "Feminism" 217).

Ironically, therefore, it is the un/name of "woman" that challenges not just men but women themselves. Losing the name of woman (in both senses)
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does not mean, however, losing deconstruction. Spivak writes: “Let us say ... that we have to deconstruct our desire for the impasse, neutralize the name of ‘woman’ for deconstruction and be deconstructive feminists in that sense. If we want to make political claims that are more useful all round than the general bourgeois academic feminist toothsome euphoria this seems now to be the only way” (218). To recapitulate: What must be lost is both a naive notion of woman-as-real and a deconstructive notion of “woman”-as-concept-metaphor. Spivak is displacing anything known as “woman” or “feminine,” and yet is not, for she engages in a replacing (a negotiating and a sublating) of something, so that she might continue the struggle against sexisms.

Spivak/Derrida and Derrida/Spivak: Now, let us ask, What does it mean for Spivak (and not Jarratt) to negotiate? Or as Spivak also puts it, say Yes to the text twice? As I have tried to suggest—at times, in terms of Jarratt’s language; at other times, in my own—to negotiate is to situate ourselves in the middle space of such concept-metaphors as difféance, though not as “woman.” This is important: For to say that any of us does not negotiate in this way, but practices strategic misreadings in another way, and without “différence,” such as Jarratt claims must be done, is to forget where the conditions of such possible misreadings come from, unnamely, différence. (Noms, as a middle term, is not différence, which is the excluded middle!) Therefore, it may be possible to forget the concept-metaphor “woman” but not that of “différence” (or “writing,” “power”). Spivak does not forget, for she is well aware that to forget is finally to fall into being determined by conditions in some prior but nameless sense. Spivak writes: “Différence is . . . only one name for the irreducible double bind that allows the very possibility of difference(s) . . . Différance as the ungraspable ground of propriation is . . . sexual difference” (“Feminism” 214). Sexual difference? How many? One, Two, or Countless?

What I do not understand in Spivak’s discussion and revision of her former article, however, is Why it is not equally possible to throw away the concept-metaphor “man,” which Derrida states is being replaced? I again have in mind Derrida’s closing discussion in “the Ends of Man” (in Margins). It is here that he speaks of “The strategic bet” and “A radical trembling [that] can only come from the outside” (134). He points to two possible strategies that we-men might dis/engage in: One being “To attempt an exit and a deconstruction without changing terrain. . . . Here, one risks ceaselessly confirming, consolidating, relifting (relever), at an always more certain depth, that which one allegedly deconstructs”; and a second, “To decide to change terrain, in a discontinuous and eruptive fashion, by brutally placing oneself outside, and by affirming an absolute break and difference” (135). To realize these ends, Derrida calls for “A new writing [that] must weave and interlace these two motifs of deconstruction. Which amounts to saying that one must speak several languages and produce several texts at once” (135). Derrida
speaks of "a change of 'style'; and if there is style, Nietzsche reminded us, it must be plural" (135). Toward the end of this discussion, Derrida begins to speak in terms of a passing beyond outside of sexual identity altogether.

The first of these strategies is negative deconstruction; the second, affirmative deconstruction. While the first stays in the binary, the second calls out to the other so as perhaps to pass out of the binary to countless genders and sexes (see Derrida and McDonald; cf. Derrida "Law").

At this point, let us re/turn to the question of exactly Why Spivak is willing to negotiate with structures of violence? For Spivak it is impossible not to, for the pre-ontological reasons demand so. And yet, What might she additionally mean by this impossibility? To answer this secondary question, let us first take another look at what Spivak has in mind in negotiating, and then align it with Derrida's strategic bet. I am most concerned about Spivak's attitude toward affirmative deconstruction. While she will engage in it, she will not disengage by way of it. (Which is where I cum we are going!)

Explaining Derrida's notion of saying Yes to the text twice, Spivak describes the first step as "keeping the question alive" or "guarding the question" (or "the question of the difference between the epistemological/ontological, and the axiological"); and the second as "calling to the absolutely other" (or "if sexual difference is indeed pre-comprehended by the ontological question then, miming Derrida's Nietzsche, we might think 'philosopher,' by way of the same historical narrative that gave Nietzsche 'woman,' as our wholly other. And thus we 'women' might indicate, or even figure forth and thus efface, that call to the wholly other as taking the risk of saying 'yes' to Heidegger, Nietzsche, and Derrida") ("Feminism" 212). Let us recall, however, that in the second instance saying Yes to Heidegger and others is only saying Yes semiotically across a new protocol of reading politically. While Spivak will engage in negative deconstructions and affirmative ones, she will not disengage in or by way of the latter. (Will not, in other words, dis/engage herself from narrative, the structure of violence, which she would negotiate with!) The reasons, obviously, are political.

In her post-colonial interviews, Spivak explains that when Derrida moved from his negative to his affirmative phase, "I think what he began to realise is not that you have to say no to whatever positive stuff you're doing, that is to say 'keeping the question alive.' But that deconstruction obliges you to say yes to everything. You have to say yes to that which interrupts your project" (emphasis mine, Post-Colonial 46-47). Consequently, "you can't have a political program which doesn't say no to something. So, a political program cannot base itself upon affirmative deconstruction, because then it will very quickly come to resemble pluralism, and I think pluralism, as a political program, has already shown its dark side, especially in the United States" (47). She continues:

On the other hand, when you are within the political program, choosing from among the yeses the possibility of saying yes to something which interrupts you does bring an end
to the vanguardism of theory. . . . It’s a responsibility to the trace of the other in the self. But then you haven’t based yourself on affirmative deconstruction. Politics is asymmetrical, it is provisional, you have broken the theory, and that’s the burden you carry when you become political. (47)

I agree with Spivak, as far as her logic goes. From a more practical point of view, however, this kind of activity will not get the job done. The job? A radical reassessment and change in our attitudes toward what most interests Spivak, namely, sexism. And for me, sexism in The History of Rhetoric. My sense is that in Spivak’s argument, the reference to “pluralism” only displaces the issue. It is one thing to refigure The History and quite another to destroy and then perpetually to deterritorialize it. Spivak understands this difference, for she as much admits it toward the end of her 1989 article, when she quotes Thomas Nagel, who writes: “‘It certainly is not enough that the injustice of a practice of the wrongness of policy should be made glaringly evident. People have to be ready to listen, and that is not determined by argument’” (Nagel xiii; Spivak, “Feminism” 219-20).26 To listen? To hear? Not by argument, but by . . . ?

What am I saying? Neither argument nor polite, logical philosophical redescriptions will change the writing of The History of Rhetoric! But there is terrible power in saying Yes to everything. Especially, to all that has been systematically excluded. (To the trace. To everything in the outside of the excluded middle!) Especially to the incomprehensible. Terrible powerful re-Juvenalizations in the perennial return of the ever-repressed. If someone follows logic, as Spivak insists on here, s/he wins (i.e., loses). If someone cum a radical many desires change, it is necessary “to Yes” everything. Even and especially the incomprehensibles. The heretofore disposables. To Yes the excluders by saying No to their No. By saying No to all reactionary thinking and acting. In another word, by denegating the excluders’ No. So as to let flow that nonpositive-affirmative desire imminent in all of us. I say: Yes ‘em to death!

Nothing is more powerful in bringing about change than a universal YES. I, too, would negotiate with structures of violence, but by way of parodic YESs. YESs. YESs. Not Yes in any submissive way. But in the most disruptive, farcical way. YES is uncountable!27 YES is neither masculine nor feminine, both of which are (signs of) NOs. Yes to everything, therefore, must run along side Yes and No as Spivak believes she must employ negation in the particular case. Major revolutionary force (desire, will), however, must be brought to bear on sexism—and all the other conditions of exclusion—so that eventually the more normal force of argument—again, No in Spivak’s particular case—might seek out its secondary ways. If such ways are even necessary!

Change is not a matter of “evolution” as Jarratt suggests (Rereading 19),28 nor is it a matter of saying “let us non the less name (as) ‘woman’ that disenfranchised woman whom we strictly, historically, geo-politically cannot
imagine, as literal referent” (“Feminism” 220). This is all too inconsequential in the short and long run. Change, call it revolution, is brought about because of massive campaigns of tactical disruptions against the dominant, strategic discourse. By way of massive redescriptions. Change is brought about by reintroducing “the excluded third.” The trace. The excluded middle, which some NOers would call the (ludic) muddle. And yet, this is not to say enough, for it must also be said that change must be perpetual. Change can be not just in the form of No, which, given the structures of violence, can mean Yes, but also in the form of Yes, which can mean No. Nes/Yo.

There is a time for trickery—not just historical deception (apate)—so as to cut up and scatter The History. The Narrative. Tmesis. Tmesis. Tmesis. Not just parataxis. Which falls inevitably back into hypotaxes. But Tmesis today; Tmesis tomorrow. Tmesis will have been. The History of Rhetoric, just as Foucault says about knowledge (Language 154), is for cutting up. Laughter?! As Nietzsche says, Yes, “Even laughter may yet have a future” (Gay Science 74). As Deleuze in Nietzsche’s im/proper names says, Yes, “Laughter—and not meaning. Schizophrenic laughter or revolutionary joy, this is what emerged from the great books” (“Nomad Thought” 147; cf. Deleuze and Guattari, Anti-Oedipus 316-18).

(I am getting ahead of myself). Let’s get dizzy and topple ahead: Cixous writes, “I make a point of using the qualifiers of sexual difference here [masculine and feminine] to avoid the confusion man/masculine, woman/feminine: for there are some men who do not repress their femininity, some women who, more or less strongly, inscribe their masculinity” (Cixous and Clément, Newly Born 81). Musical genders?

Lest I be (too) misunderstood, I have not argued throughout the foregoing, nor in what is to come, that Jarratt has not done her homework. Such an argument would be rather here nor there; for I am persuaded, given my understanding of a feminist’s necessity to determine (or over- and under-determine) her own terms, that Jarratt is warranted in her performances to stretch casuistically her terms whatever way and wherever she so desires. Let flow, flow, freely flow y/our ship of fools. (We all do it; some of us, however, simply are not aware of it or will not acknowledge it. And perhaps for political un/reasons!) As Cixous says: “Thanks to a few [writers] who were fools about life” (99). Thank you, Susan! I would, therefore, say Yes to your text. Yes. And then, continue to give (gift) my own foolish redescriptions and stretchings. And How would I continue? By way of Georges Bataille’s general economy, not a restricted one, that is, by way of a libidinal economy (see The Accursed Share).

Whose degrading do you like better, the father’s or the mothers? ... We are pieced back to the string which leads back, if not to the Name-of-the-Father, then, for a new twist, to the place of the phallic mother. (Cixous)

I inhabited Jean Genèt. (Cixous)

Strategic Misreadings, Once Again: Jarratt turns now, as a “case,” to
Hélène Cixous. Jarratt's turn is very brief (Rereading 71-74) and then highly selective. I will not spend as much time with what Cixous variously says as I did with Spivak, but will only refer to a few passages in The Newly Born Woman and later books to qualify and problematize (re-open, for a new hearing) Jarratt's refiguring. But a caveat: From here/hear on the music, not from the sirens but from the excluded middle or third, might drive you schizo. The seduction will have been to sublime to avoid!

In introducing Cixous, Jarratt compares Cixous's writing style to that of the Sophists, then, qualifies this analogy by saying, "I would like to argue that the way she situates her practice rhetorically—within a cultural, political, historical context—tempers the charge. Cixous describes women's writing as bisexual, partaking in the heterogeneity of bisexuality. Right now, she says, it is only women who are capable of such a performance" (emphasis mine, Rereading 71). This is the passage that Jarratt quotes from Cixous and Clément: "For historical reasons, at the present time it is woman who benefits from and opens up within this bisexuality beside itself, which does not annihilate differences but cheers them on, pursues them, adds more: in a certain way woman is bisexual—man having been trained to aim for glorious phallic monosexuality" (Newly Born 85; cf. "Laugh" 254).

Again Jarratt reads this passage as saying "it is only women who are capable of such a performance." This is quite a stretch. Only women! Jarratt indirectly acknowledges that Cixous is not a naive essentialist and, therefore, speaks of her in terms of custom, convention (local nomoi). Cixous does say, "[men have] been trained to aim for glorious phallic monosexuality." I will not quibble with this statement's meaning as to whether it intends some or all men. Obviously, it is some men. How many? I suspect less than (some) more. I would argue with Jarratt, however, over Cixous's meaning as to whether she intends all women or some women. For Cixous speaks of women as also being under the sign of negation, castration. The real question here, however, is not degree but kind (sexuality, gender). Cixous does not say here or anywhere else that I can locate only women and not men. Against the charge only women, Cixous would say:

There are some exceptions... Men or women: beings who are complex, mobile, open. Accepting the other sex as a component makes them much richer, more various, stronger, and—to the extent that they are mobile—very fragile. It is only in this condition that we invent. Thinkers, artists, those who create new values, "philosophers" in the mad Nietzschean manner, inventors and wreckers of concepts and forms, those who change life cannot help but be stirred by anomalies—complementary or contradictory. That doesn't mean that you have to be homosexual to create. But it does mean that there is no invention possible, whether to be philosophical or poetic, without there being in the inventing subject an abundance of the other, of variety: separate-people, thought-people, whole populations issuing from the unconscious, and in each suddenly animated desert, the springing up of selves one didn't know—our women, our monsters, our jackals, our Arabs, or aliases, our frights. (Cixous and Clément, Newly Born Woman 83-84; cf. Deleuze and Guattari, Anti-Oedipus 295-96)
But let us not lose sight that Jarratt's interpretation is a casuistic stretching! If Jarratt would not have Spivak learning affirmatively from Derrida, she would not have Cixous learning affirmatively from "men." This would be part of Jarratt's negative deconstructive (essentializing) strategy. Part of her forgetting!

The issue here I will claim is that for Cixous—men and women, male and female—are not fixed biological or cultural categories. Moreover, for Cixous the words "men/male" and "women/feminine" are not exclusively biological; they are, instead, concept-metaphors. I agree with Cixous when she exclaims: "There is phallocentrism. History has never produced or recorded anything else—which does not mean that this form is destinal or natural. Phallocentrism is the enemy. Of everyone. Men's loss in phallocentrism is different from but as serious as women's. And it is time to change. To invent the other in history" (83). The issue, as Cixous says, is not whether is someone is biologically-essentially either male or female but whether someone is "dispersible, desiring and capable of other" (89). Or whether someone is capable of One cum Radical Multiplicities. Of entering difference. Cixous is playing around with libidinal economy, which she refers and alludes to repeatedly. She, as I spoke of Bataille earlier, is interested in a general economy and not a restricted one (see 78-83). She is, like Deleuze and Guattari, interested in "becoming-woman" (85), interested also in women becoming-woman, "the other woman she will be" (89). Interested in woman becoming-animal. Many men and fewer women, in one sense, are both fixed, that is, determined semiotically across the sign of negation/lack. Women, as well as men, must become sovereign, sublime subjects-that-would-not-be-subjects. Cixous—no doubt about it—is influenced by Bataille. Her novel Portrait du soleil is predicated on Bataille's notion of a general, libidinal economy as put forth in his first volume of The Accursed Share (see Shiach 81-82).

Again, these women are not biological women, but a concept-metaphor for a general, not a restricted, economy excessively becoming. If women must disengage by becoming-women, so are men, by becoming-woman. For it is in Kleist or Shakespeare or others that we find some radical multiplicities or elsewheres opened by men who are capable of becoming women... who let something different from tradition get through at any price—men who are capable to love love; therefore, to love others, to want them; men able to think the woman who would resist destruction and constitute herself as a superb, equal, "impossible" subject, hence intolerable in the real social context. Only by breaking the codes denying her could the poet have desired that woman. Her appearance causing, if not a revolution, harrowing explosions. (Cixous and Clément, Newly Born Woman 98)

The Case of Kleist: Cixous recalls, "I said I owed my life to Kleist. For a long time I lived on the knowledge that he had existed. I owed him not only the will to live but the will to live several lives. To be more than one feminine
one and one masculine one, to catch fire and burn, to die of life because he caught fire, took on body, pain, and death for me” (112). The references to catching on fire are to Cixous’s earlier comment about and allusion to Bataille’s image of the sun, as a denegated sign of excess, as a general, instead of a restricted, economy.36 This is her image of being “a bit vulture, a bit eagle” (perhaps a phoenix), being consumed in flames and rising out of the ashes (99; cf. 88).

The Case of Genêt: It is after this earlier description of men who are capable of becoming woman that Cixous writes, “I inhabited Jean Genêt” (99). Verena Andermatt Conley points out, the newly born one [from ashes?] is also a female version of the then much discussed writer Jean Genêt. “La jeune née” or “la Genêt,” especially evokes Derrida’s Glass that erected contrastive readings of Hegel and Genêt in 1974... The title can also be read as là je-une-nais, there I am being born as one, là, always in movement, une, not as castrated. The title does not crown the work but, through poetic tone, remains undecidable... The text welcomes others who dare to open themselves to sexual uncertainties, or who dare to identify with women. These men [Cixous] finds in artists like Genêt, but also Kleist, even Shakespeare. (37)

What is especially valuable about this reading is that the title of Cixous’s and Clément’s book, La jeune née, roughly translated as The Newly Born Woman, while it is about woman/”woman” crossing borders, it is also about man crossing borders. The title gives entitlement to both woman and man! This possible reading is validated by Cixous herself, who in Three Steps on the Ladder of Writing says in characterizing Genêt’s “crossing borders between sexes, between species,” being born: “‘I was born in Paris...’ That’s the beginning, that’s how autobiographies begin. But then The Thief’s Journal begins with: ‘Convicts’ garb is striped pink and white.’ Je nais later. There is phonetic play between je nais (I am born) and Genêt. This is the theatrical setting up of everything connected with passing, with the frontier, birth, transition, descent, ancestry. He exists, he enters” (124; cf. 130; also see Newly Born 166).

The case of imund: As Cixous recalled, “I owed my life to Kleist,” I in turn can recall: I owe my life to Cixous.37 And I-man again can produce discourse. It is one thing to rage against the masculine discourse that has silenced women (as Spivak argues we should do), and quite another to be “‘imund,’ [i.e.,] to be unclean with joy” (Cixous, Three Steps 117), to write this imund as Cixous suggests.38 To come un/clean when writing? However, I cannot stress enough that what Cixous is saying comes from Clarice Lispector, her novel The Passion According to G.H., in which the consuming of the unclean is the means of misidentifying with, attending to, the other. But this other is not the beggar in the street who would exist in our minds as the object of our charity, but this other is the nonhuman: Lispector is calling for the de-negation of the human species, of species-analytics, of differentiation altogether. (We will return so that we might hear all this somewhat better in terms of a Third
Sophistic, for Cixous has very little, if any, to do with a Feminist Sophistic, as limited by Jarratt, and more to do with a perpetual moving toward a Third.

In Cixous's references to Kleist and Shakespeare becoming-women, she says, "Her appearance causing, if not a revolution, harrowing explosions" (Newly Born 98). At the end of the Spivak section, I raised the question of Evolution? or Revolution? or Explosion? An answer? It is in Cixous, in her writing, that we find radical multiplicities saying Yes to everything else. To traditional Sophists who would write histories of rhetorics, she says, "We have no woman's reason to pay allegiance to the negative" (85). Oh, to be sure!, Cixous says No to the negative (to "He-Bible"), which allows her, thereafter, to say Yes to everything else: By which I mean, she says Yes to The Excluded, The Abominable, The Repressed. The un/clean. The Unhuman. She writes:

When "The Repressed" of their culture and their society come back, it is an explosive return, which is absolutely shattering, staggering, overturning, with a force never let loose before, on the scale of the most tremendous repressions: for at the end of the Age of the Phallus, women will have been either wiped out or heated to the highest, most violent, white-hot fire. [The Bataillean sun.] Throughout their deafening dumb history, they have lived in dreams, embodied by still deadly silent, in silences, in voiceless rebellions. (Newly Born 95)

This Repressed will have returned to The History of Rhetoric. The Third Dionysian, general economy, must, shall, will have returned.

What I have tried to indicate, thus far, about Cixous is that she has not locked out males. She does not say "only women." Moreover, I have suggested and will continue now to suggest what Cixous is up to as she explores the body and the imund, the unclean, or that which is excluded, because forbidden. Cixous moves to a consideration of a third (beyond subject/object) positions.

Threes: Women more than men, Yes. Women and Men and the "feminine," "becoming-woman," Yes. A Woman's body, a man's body, "the third body," Yes. Cixous is moving in threes, moving toward what will have been. Her movement is neither toward One nor Two but a 1001. Her movement is toward desiring machines; toward the future-anterior; downward toward death, dreams, and roots (see Three Steps). Toward a Third Dionysus.

In The Third Body (Le troisième corps, 1970), written five years before La jeune née (1975) and "Le rire de la Méduse" (1975), there was and will be (will have been) a reading as writing. As Verena Andermatt Conley explains: "A third body is synthesized from biography and quotation, self and other, writer and reader. Writing is not born as much from 'experience' or the description of a pre-existing reality." Instead, "it is invented from reading, from the investment of affect in living and textual 'scenes'" (17). The writing, drawn from many sources (Jensen, Kleist, Freud, Kafka, Poe, Joyce, Lispector, Genêt, and others) is a pastiche effect of third bodies of literature.

Still in Révolution pour plus d'un Faust (1975), Cixous is playing with
threes, a paralogic of nonsynthesized thirds, to shatter mirrors and theaters of representation. Cixous writes:

The joker says to me: "Here, listen with your third ear, and if you have it, open your third eye, and think with the third thought, because here the first wisdom and the second wisdom which adjust through joining like flower that the water binds and two eyes for sight and ears for opinion and belief, they will not suffice. The ear has to be invented for the third wisdom and the armoured eye for him who sees the invisible and who dresses his head in the full sun. . . . And I develop a third language here, inaudible and audible and neither audible nor inaudible. (emphasis mine, qtd. in and trans. by Conley 27-28).

The joker invites the "me" to become thousands. That is, to become "feminine," that which is not subject to the law of being, that which moves toward perpetual becoming, crosses borders. From this Cixous begins a new language for a new politics. Hers is a libidinalized economy, exploding a fixed Marxist community, Conley argues, a libidinalized economy "made up of a polyphony of voices who write their stories and history, interminably" (30) This new—or the most ancient—ethos has to have a new space in which to become.

Space (locus) for Cixous, as Conley argues, is a search "for passages, doors or exits to the female's imprisonment. . . . 'Sorties' is written in medias res. It locates moments of exclusion in various discourses of the past and projects openings toward the future. History is not a discourse of abstraction but is comprised of personal, singular stories" (38-39; cf. 41-42; also see Shiach 78-79; Cixous, Coming to Writing 1-58).

Space as Writing (unnatural, forbidden writing, as consuming and identifying with the ugly, despicable, the other) is what Cixous rethinks. (Actually, what Lispector thinks.) Why do Lispector/Cixous want to write in this way? They want to write the "imund," to be unclean with joy" (Cixous, Three Steps 177; cf. Lispector 63-65). It is a space outside, yet paradoxically inside. As Lispector's G.H. says: "The cockroach is inside out. No, no, I don't mean that it has an inside and an outside; I mean that is what it is. What it had on the outside is what I hide inside myself: I have made my outside into a hidden inside" (69). G.H. takes within herself "the cockroach mass" (163). Yes, she eats the unspeakable creature (172). But when she consumes the ugly—the other, that which is now on the outside of the roach—she breaks "the law" (the negative) and says "I should live with person-matter and not cockroach-matter" (163). Now with libidinal matter. And when eating it, experiences a release into a sublime, ugly-but-not-ugly "vastness" (97), into "nonperson" (165), and experiences an "attentiveness to living" (43). G.H. undergoes absolute denegation and experiences life in a general economy, un/namely, that of becoming animal. She leaves her species to be with an Other: "life is divided into qualities and species, and the law is that cockroaches will be loved and eaten only by other cockroaches; and that a woman, at the moment of her love for man, that woman is experiencing her own species" (163).

Dear Reader, How do you respond to such writing/thinking? Do you
laugh Hollywood's laughter? Snicker the cynical laughter? Laugh (Bataille's) laughter. Kafka's "Metamorphosis" is also humorous. Poor Gregor Samsa, poor Gregor. And Mark Amerika's *The Kafka Chronicles*? Yes, we are supposed to laugh. A minoritarian literature is humorous (see Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka*). But laugh a laughter as affirmation without reserve. There is no irony here (or should not be), but humor (see Irigaray, *Speculum* 349; Deleuze and Parnet 68-69). Kafka's prose is filled with human beings becoming-Other-beings. Cockroach, dog, ape. Are you repulsed at the thought? Good. For then you have experienced your negative relationship with the other. G.H. says that attending to the other is not even comparable to "kissing a leper" (Lispector 162). It is more despicable than such. It is a joining with the absolute other:

In such a metamorphosis, I lose everything I have had, and what I have had has been myself—all that I have is what I am. And what am I now? I am: a standing in the presence of fear. I am: what I have seen. I don't understand and I am afraid to understand, the matter of the world frightens me, with its planets and its cockroaches. (59)

Listen, in the presence of the living cockroach, the worst discovery was that the world is not human, and that we are not human. (61)

Dear Reader, does this mean that in losing our identity as human beings that we can no longer be political? No longer have talk about identity politics? No longer employ the alibi of being-political as a cover for being-reaction-ary? For dishing and shoveling out heavy loads of punishment so as to reform everyone? [THERE SHOULD BE REALMS OF LAUGHTER IN RESPONSE TO THESE QUESTIONS!!]

Let us return to Cixous, who wants to reclaim the unclean, and reclaim with joy. (Pessimistic joy; joyful pessimism.) She wants to know *how to give.* What is it that "woman" wants? Cixous wants to know *how to attend to the other.* Not woman. She does not make the stupid mistake that Freud or Lacan makes. She wants to know How to give. And without expected return. Her answer is Go to the nether (Hell) world (cf. Lispector 113, 119, 124). She takes us there and teaches us (*all of us*), with the help of Kafka-Lispector, how to give, without expecting a return. This is the giving of Bataille's sun: "an economy without reserve" (Cixous and Clément, *Newly Born* 86). This is the giving of a general, libidinal economy:

The purpose of *Those Bible* [the book of NOs] is to forbid the root [the unfixed world, the world of the excluded, the filthy, the abject, the leper, the AIDS sufferer, or more so any of these people who are made to feel like a cockroach]. This is want I wanted to bring to the surface, though we will not remain here; instead our ladder will grow down into the earth.

Writing ... comes from what Genêt calls the "nether realms," the interior realms. We'll try to go there for a time, since this is where the treasure of writing lies, where it is formed, where it has stayed since the beginning of creation: down below. (*Three Steps* 118)
Being more specific, Cixous continues:

it is deep in my body, further down, behind thought. Thought comes in front of it and
closes like a door... Somewhere in the depths of my heart... Somewhere in my stomach,
my womb, and if you have not got a womb—then it is somewhere "else." You must climb
down in order to go in the direction of that place... I know besides that what also
prevents us in our society from going there is not our inability—because all of us are able-
—but our cowardice, our fear. Our fear, since we know perfectly well that we will reach
the dangerous point where those who are excluded live—and we hate exclusion. (118).

Having, said, quoted, and read all this, we must now keep two points in mind.
Becoming-animal is a way of attending to the other, but it is also a way of
escape. It is a way of becoming-minoritarian, the most sublime (not beautiful
but apparently ugly) parapolitics. Pagan politics. And the place of such a
politics?

Space as nature (phasis) is what Cixous primarily reclaimes, but it is a space
(locus) thoroughly denegated. In Three Steps, Cixous speaks very directly
about her view of nature and culture (nomos):

The natural word, the word nature, has a sad fate: it was taken up in the great disputes,
aimed in particular people like myself who work on the sexual scene and who have been
accused by a certain group of unenlightened people of using this word to mean a feminine
or masculine nature—something I have never been able to conceive of—as if "nature"
existed in opposition to "culture" [nomos], or there were such a thing as pure nature.
These disputes come from continents newly plunged in darkness. For a while, to flee the
field of these sterile disputes, I no longer used the word nature, even though I adore it.
Then I adopted it again. As soon as I use it in the domain of writing it begins to move,
to twist a little, because in writing this is what it's all about. As soon as there is writing,
it becomes a matter of passage, of all kinds of passages, of delimitation, of overflowing.
We cannot forget Ovid's Metamorphoses. There are metamorphoses of all kinds and
genders here. Writing runs through the other world, which is the world of writing. The
primitive civilizations that preceded us, our mothers, believed in trance, in transformation,
in transition, in transfer: one species passed into another, one realm became
another, from the human to the mineral to the vegetal, in a generalized, infinite,
magnificent, and unbounded way. By the word nature I don't necessarily mean the
concept. I don't want to return here to philosophical thinking... I prefer to remain in
the poetic space. (128-29)

This space is reclaimed not only by climbing the ladder down but also by
a rapid crossing of borders (switching of codes). Outside, while paradoxically
inside. Yet denegated. Cixous writes: "we [we-creatures] could go back ten
thousand years, before the time of 'country,' and imagine the birth of borders.
... Who invented borders? Borders [species + genus, the negative] don't exist... They are as incredible as unicorns. Thus we might enter [crossing
borders, switching codes] History, which is always a History of borders.
Today... People are swollen with home-neid (home envy)" Cixous
continues: It is primarily a need for the proper, for a proper country, for a
proper name, a need for separation and, at the same time, a rejection of the
other... I want the word dépays (uncountry); I'm sorry that we do not have
it since the uncountry is not supposed to exist. ... People like Genêt or Clarice are inhabitants of the uncountry, of the incountry, the country below, the country underneath" (*Three Steps* 131).

It is in this space (the zone of a denegated nature, or as I have signified it elsewhere as physis, nonpositive affirmation) and this dépays/"uncountry" (recall Lyotard's *pagus*) that Cixous writes and reclaims histories. Reclaims the excluded. First, however, she must negate the excluded force. She must undergo self-denigration. Far from Spivak, Cixous does not take the risk of strategic essentialism; instead, she risks:

In the beginning, there can only be dying, the abyss, the first laugh.

After that, you don't know. It's life that decides. It's terrible power of invention, which surpasses us. Our life anticipates us. Always ahead of you by height, a desire, the good abyss, the one that suggests to you: "Leap and pass into infinity." Write! what?

Take to the wind, take to writing, form one body with letters. Live! Risk: those who risk nothing gain nothing, risk and you no longer risk anything.

In the beginning, there is an end. Don't be afraid: it's your death that is dying. Then: all the beginnings. ("Coming to Writing" 41)

*Her Politics?* As Conley explains, a politics of the end of the necessity of politics, which would be "located beyond the exclusions" (47; cf. Shiach 6-37). Is this space beyond the *nomos*? Yes!, for such is ever a locus of exclusion: the modes of cooperation are modes of being co-opted and excluded. Consensus is cohesive. The *nomos* perpetuates the principle of excluded middle/muddle! Then, where is this non-Euclidean space? As stated previously, it is nature (physis), but Ovid's *dépays* (uncountry) and not the nature of the binary *physis/nomos* (see *Three Steps* 129-31), both of which are constructed under the sign of the negative. Ovid's nature—"uncountry" is the nonpositive—affirmative, a "third" (or radical infinity) beyond negative/positive. It is becoming without the traditional philosophical principles of identity, non-contradiction, and the excluded middle. It is *praxis* (praxis) of the *imund*.

II. 'Some More' *Différences*
What I have been attempting to say—by way of rereading both Spivak and Cixous, though they are very different—is that there is always the danger in using words like "men" and "women," "male" and "female," in reactionary thinking, and in engaging in a dividing practice (diaeresis), that is, a form of negative essentializing, that would further drive a counterwedge between two sets of human species.

Yes, *strategic essentialism* is a form of *negative essentializing*! And yet, it is not always the case, for in great part *how* it is to be read is owing to what I would call the history of its use by a particular critic. I think that Spivak is careful and vigilant enough to interrogate herself perpetually; she is the most sincere and performative in attempting to look around corners, asking herself constantly What is it that I have subjectively invested in making such
a statement? Therefore, I think any expositor of what Spivak performs textually must make this as evident as possible; if not, then Spivak's name and constantly self-questioned intentions get appropriated as an alibi for only negative essentializing.

But let us return to the problematic of doubleness. The words—"men" and "women," etc.—are used in a double sense throughout much of the writing done by feminists. I would add now that this doubleness is a tactic and perhaps necessary confusion. (Spivak is very careful, however, to point out how Derrida uses these and similar terms in quotes, as cues to help readers from being confused; Cixous does not use such diacritical marks but nonetheless makes implicit and explicit distinctions. Both Spivak and Cixous intermittently call on their readers to be careful when they think that they might go astray in fixing these words into literal "things.") It is one defense among others in the war that women have been forced to fight against sexism, against their exclusion throughout what goes for (The) HISTory (of Rhetoric), yesterday and today. If this tactic/strategy were denied them, by any arguer, there would be nought.

I would now turn to a Third.

It is, therefore, a Third Sophistic that I espouse. A denegated essentialism. It is the risk of a strategic (nonpositive affirmative) essence that I espouse. Having re/announced such an espousal, however, I make no pretense that other theorists, paratheorists, pragmatists, historians/historiographers, magicians, freaks should or ought to follow. There is no following. There is only drifting. A fractal drifting. A folding and refolding into fractals, which is asubjectivity. I am not the fool of the epistemic-court, not of social-production (a binary-machine); I am the fractalized fools of desiring-production (a schizo-becoming). Which will have been. All outside. Is it happening? It is happening!

Conjugate yourself in the future exterior. Go ahead.
Do not let the interior past weaken you. (Cixous)

As I proceed through the Vastness of the future-anterior, which is now-coming, I would perform by way VVolfean waves of a general, libidinal economy. As I have said, it is not a matter of male/female or female/male; it is everything that has been excluded because of this silly disjunctive logic, which gives us congregation (consensus, community) by way of segregation. Instead, I would trek with the conditions of the possibilities put forth by Anne Fausto-Sterling: Five sexes and still counting. I am with Cixous. Je suis in Sick-zoo. (Unto the death of Death):

When I write, I become a thing, a wild beast. A wild beast doesn't look back when it leaps; doesn't check that people are watching and admiring. Those who do not become wild beasts when they write, who write to please, write nothing that has not already been written, teach us nothing, and forge extra bars for our cage. (“We Who Are Free” 218).
Notes

1 I have already dealt with Schiappa at great length in ch.1, "The Sophists?", of my recently completed book manuscript, *Negation, Subjectivity, and The History of Rhetoric*.

2 Unfortunately, the term "liberal" has negative connotations. My sense is that all of us—even those of us who would be against what goes for liberalism—are liberals. Similarly, though many of us are against modernism or postmodernism, we nonetheless are both simultaneously.

3 Jarratt's identifying herself with this group of theorists/pedagogues is especially curious. Why would she select a group of men instead of the numerous examples of feminists developing new pedagogies? And why would she align herself so forthrightly with a continuation of late Frankfurt school thinking?

4 There is a growing body of literature by men and women concerning Nietzsche as establishing the conditions of feminist theory. See, e.g., Graybeal; Patton; Burgard.

5 The text in question is from *Spurs*, in which Derrida writes about Nietzsche's understanding of woman: "There is no such thing as the truth of woman, but it is because of that abyssal divergence of the truth, because that untruth "truth". Woman is but a name of the untruth of truth" [51].

I find this particular interpretation of "Woman" as unacceptable, perhaps not for the same reasons as Jarratt, but because it is one more example of the master *topos*, *out of the impossible* [the negative] *comes the possible*. This *topos* is the problem! This is, indeed a *topos* to be found in Nietzsche, but it is one that he goes on to revalue in non-negative terms, and which the readers such as Deleuze and Guattari have denegated. My sense, here, is that Nietzsche is the messenger bringing bad news of the event of Nihilism; Nietzsche, however, goes on to attempt to revalue the sad condition that we humans, all too human species find ourselves in.

Nietzsche opens the preface to *Beyond Good and Evil* with "Supposing truth is a woman—what then? Are there not grounds for suspicion that all philosophers, insofar as they were dogmatists, have been very inexpert about women?"

Cixous speaks of another passage in Nietzsche that she objects to. In "The Laugh," she writes: "Woman is obviously not that woman Nietzsche dreamed of who gives only in order to. Who could ever think of the gift as a gift-that-takes?" (259). My response is that Nietzsche is not dreaming of any dream woman, but of woman as reactionary, just as man is reactionary. He finds in certain women, women who would be men, instead of dis/engaging in becoming-woman, just as men have to dis/engage in becoming-minoritarian, all of us have to dis/engage in ....

6 Jarratt does not mention Judith Butler and Donna Haraway, who are notable exceptions.


8 Spivak writes: "Women armed with deconstruction must be aware of becoming Athenas, uncontaminated by the womb, sprung in armor from Father's forehead, ruling against Clytemnestra by privileging marriage, the Law that appropriates the woman's body over claims of that body as Law" ("Displacement" 174).

9 *Dissoi paralogoi* is neologism of *dissoi logoi* and paralogy. See Vitanza "Critical Sub/ Versions" 52, 55-56.

10 This statement was made in 1988, published in 1990. See Spivak *Post-Colonial 133, 137*.

11 I am forced to make such a 'provisionary' statement, of course, because of the conditions of strategic feminism and strategic masculinism. Such a position is analogous with the argument about sovereign nations. It is, indeed, the thinking of the political. And yet our sense of ethics/morality, etc., call on us to intervene in the name of humanity when something goes wrong with a so-called sovereign entity. This is the condition of the negative: congregation purchased by way of segregation, which then reestablishes the conditions for intervention.

12 It is important to understand, however, that I take this advice only provisionally at this point in my discussion, for later I will trek more so with Cixous's advice, which is quite different.

13 To this point, I will eventually return and offer an explanation for why Spivak does not think there is a possibility outside of the narrative of violence.

14 It is not clear as to whether narrative means all narrative, or the narrative of the history of philosophy (thinking). See Cummings who suggests that tightly woven narratives are violent toward woman; also see Mulvey.
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15 Braidotti has written against "the becoming-woman of philosophy," specifically, against Derrida's *Spurs* and others' similar writings. Her discussion pales in comparison to Spivak's.

16 Spivak is very open about having learned from both Paul DeMan and from Derrida; and she, when calling on them, does not reverse or lower them to the supplementary position of less than herself (see *Post-Colonial* 107-08).

17 The best source for an exposition of such strategies is, I think, still Derrida's own description of them—which he calls, as I have said, a *reveler* or a "double gesture"—in the interview in *Positions* (esp. 27-96; also see Krupnick 10-15). The particular interview of the book's title, "Positions," was conducted, in part, by Jean-Louis Houdebine, a Marxist, who keeps urging Derrida in various follow up questions to say that *differance* is really another word for contradiction. As Krupnick points out, "although Derrida insists on the subversiveness of his method, he spends most of the interview distinguishing his 'positions' from the 'position' (dialectical materialism) of the single-minded interviewer" (13). Herein lies the difference between a wedding between deconstruction and Marxism and an orthodox marxism.

18 Derrida himself often substitutes the words "spur" or "differance" for whatever term is privileged such as "man." See Derrida's playful title and discussion of "the Ends of Man" in *Margins*.

19 E.g., having already destroyed the name of "man" in the article "The Ends of Man," Derrida turns in a punning (double gesture) on the word "eve" to both the eve-ning of man, his decline, and to the eve (Eve replacing Adam) of "the day that is coming." Derrida asks, "Is there an economy of eve? Perhaps we are between these two eves, which are also two ends of man. But, who, we?" (*Margins* 136). As I read this passage, Derrida not only problematizes man but also woman (eve) when he asks the question of the economy of eve. But then, it is not necessary for Derrida to problematize both, for they are already made problematic by Nietzsche, as Derrida acknowledges and explores later in *Spurs*. (The first was originally published in 1972; later in 1978.)

20 Nietzsche's reasoning is rather simple: Men think that they have the Truth but it is not in Woman; then, when they discover that they do not have the Truth, that it is the History of an Error, truth becomes a woman, namely, that which is Untruth; and yet, "woman" is only one name for Untruth. Man is Untruth, woman is untruth, *differance* is untruth, power is untruth, etc. There is no proper name for Truth. It does not exi(s)t!

21 Which is again curious, for to be substantial is to be under negation (see K. Burke *Grammar*). Truth, even strategic truth or politics, is always under the sign of untruth, only masquerading as Truth, strategic or otherwise. Strategic masquerading? What's the difference?

22 Towards the end of her discussion, Spivak is very careful to insist that it is better in the long run to lose altogether the concept metaphor "woman," for when conceived of as one more nonword and nonconcept but a metaphor such as *differance*, on occasion, it will discover itself inevitably "open to traditional masculinism" ("Feminism" 217). One way that feminists can be open to traditional masculinism is to aspire to justice in the name of "woman" when not being aware that such justice can only be an alibi to punish. Spivak's explanation of this point is rather lengthy. She writes:

we have to bring our understanding of the relationship between the name "woman" and deconstruction into crisis. If we do not take the time to understand this in our zeal to be "political," then I fear we act out of the kind of play that Nietzsche figured out in *The Genealogy of Morals*: in the interest of giving an alibi to his desire to punish, which is written into his way of being, in other words in the interest of the survival game, man produces an alibi which is called justice. And in the interest of that alibi, man has to define and articulate, over and over again, the name of man. It seems to me that if we forget that we cannot have a deconstructive feminism which decides to transform the usefulness of the name "woman," itself based on a certain kind of historical anxiety for the graphematic structure, into a narrative, and thus take up arms against what we sometimes call essentialism, *then* we might be acting out this particular scenario, adequately contradicting and thus legitimizing it—by devising newer names of woman—in the interest of giving the desire to punish the alibi of justice. (217-18)

23 A reader of Spivak's may complain that all this is too philosophical; Spivak is well aware,
at least, twice in her discussion of being too "ethereal." And yet, states that even the other in her own way understand what she means and would not complain ("Feminism" 215, 218).

Spivak's understanding of preconditions as inevitable reminds me of K. Burke's acceptance of these conditions as well. See Grammar 21-58.

I am well aware of these articles against Derrida and McDonald's "Choreographies" (of more than two sexes). They are gathered in defense of only two sexes by N.K. Miller (78-90). But I am also well aware of Butler's and Haraway's work. And of course Cixous's work, which I will get to here.

The source, among others, is Derrida's "The Ends of Man" (Margins 135) and Ear.

See Feyerabend; Rorty.

I am alluding to Derrida's "A Number of Yes."

Jarratt's linking of Nietzsche and Darwin is innovative to say the least. As far as Nietzsche is concerned, he does not want to be interpreted as a Darwinist, or evolutionist. See The Will to Power 361-66, or nos. 684-687. Also, see Kaufmann. And yet, I admit to the possibilities of casuistic stretching!

It may very well be that the head of history itself must be severed. I am thinking of Bataille's acephalic (headless) man. See Bataille, Visions 199-201.

This is a highly questionable point made by Jarratt, for Cixous is quite explicitly against culture-nomos (see Three Steps 130-31). Cixous does not favor either a negated nature nor a necessarily negated nomos, but a denegated nature. Whereas Jarratt continues to work in binaries, Cixous does not. Cixous does not find liberation of the species by way of culture but by way of an Ovidian free-flowing nature. I will return to this point later.

There are women who are under the sign of the phallus or who are phallus-mothers (see "Laugh" 262-63); and there are women who are not in the feminine at all (see Three Steps 113).

Cixous writes: "I make a point of using the qualifiers of sexual difference here [i.e. masculine and feminine] to avoid the confusion man/masculine, woman/feminine: for there are some men who do not repress their femininity, some women who, more or less strongly, inscribe their masculinity" (81).

Conley also argues: "The term 'woman' is not a natural term. It is a 'trap-word.' Men and women have been caught in an historical configuration in a theater of representation. A word is never neutral just as the body is never natural but is always socially ciphered. Therefore, strictly speaking, there can be no essentialism. But, the question is slippery. The attributes 'masculine' and 'feminine' do not refer to men and women. Nouns solidity. They become objects to be studies. Although still used for historical reasons, 'masculine' and 'feminine' will hopefully, she argues, be replaced soon by others, by colour adjectives" (40). Also, see Shiach 17-20. Also see Cixous "Coming to Writing" 148-50.

Concerning the question of whether or not men are excluded automatically and women are included automatically: In Three Steps, Cixous speaks of birds as being associated with "woman"; birds represent the waste, abomination, the forbidden. She writes: "Those who belong to the birds and their kind (they may include some men), to writings and their kind: they are all to be found—and a fair company it is—outside; in a place that is called by Those Bible [the book of thou shalt nots], those who are the Bible, abominable. Elsewhere, outside, birds, women, and writing gather. Not all women however; quite a number of this kind linger inside, as we realize daily, and identify with 'those-He-Bible' and their kind. Outside we shall find all those precious people who have not worried about respecting the law that separates what is and is not abominable according to Those Bible" (113).

As Cixous says: "Difference would be a bunch of new differences" (Newly Born 83).

A Nietzchean concept, becoming-woman, is discussed at length by Deleuze and Guattari (A Thousand Plateaus 232-309), whose writings Cixous is familiar with.

Like Bataille and influenced by Bataille's discussion of the gift and exchange and the necessity for a general economy with expenditure and waste, Cixous writes: "every woman has known the torture of beginning to speak aloud, heart beating as if to break, occasionally falling into loss of language, ground and language slipping out from under her. . . . The logic of communication requires an economy both of signs—of signifiers—and of subjectivity. The orator is asked to unwind a thin thread, dry and taut. We like uneasiness, questioning. There is
waste in what we say. We need waste. To write is always to make allowances for superabundance and uselessness while slashing the exchange value that keeps the spoken word on its track. That is why writing is good, letting the tongue try itself out—as one attempts a caress, taking the time a phrase or a thought needs to make oneself loved, to make oneself reverberate” (Cixous and Clément, Newly Born 92-93). See Conley 32-39; Shiach 21-22, 81-82. 37 Actually, this should read “I owe my life to Lynn Worsham, who introduced me to Cixous many years ago.” 38 To write the imund would be to return all that which is unfit back into The History. I will practice Spivak’s suggested rage and Cixous’s writing the imund, but mostly the latter. This will become clear as we continue. 39 See Three Steps 113. 40 The parallels between Deleuze and Cixous are numerous. Their common indebtedness to Nietzsche perhaps binds them. In Coming to Writing, she writes: “Aren’t you the very demon of multiplicity? All the people I caught myself being instead of me, my un-nameables, my monsters, my hybrids, I exhort them in

She begins to sound more and more like deJeuze and Guattari and they, like her. They all mirror strongly, given what and how Grosz says it, that she is still enamored with Deleuze and Guattarius project. The first part of her article is an attack on them, the second part is an exposition of their basic ideas in A Thousand Plateaus; the final part is a provisional acceptance. Curiously enough, Grosz says some rather unqualified positive things about Deleuze and Guattari in her article “Nietzsche and the stomach for knowledge” (291). 41 Actually, this should read “differance,” “writing,” “power,” etc.). For even those of us who understand and theoretically inhabit this post-philosophical, post-humanist space, it is difficult. to complicate matters, there is very much the need, nonetheless, to think such a strategic space in terms of the real. As Spivak says nostalgically-ambivalently-ambiguously, “Incanting to ourselves all the perils of transforming a ‘name’ to a referent—making a catechism, in other words, of catechresis—let us none the less name (as) ‘woman’ that disenfranchised woman whom we strictly, historically, geo-politically cannot imagine, as literal referent” (“Feminism” 220). This “woman,”
however, is the "gendered subaltern" (220, 218), not a "high feminist," not white females who are concerned for the most part with tenure in the university or equity of numbers at conferences, but the subaltern, post-colonial woman, whom we-academic-women cannot imagine except as a new orientalism (see Post-Colonial 117-19). Spivak continues: "Let us divide the name of woman so that we see ourselves as naming, not merely named" (emphasis mine "Feminism" 220).

47 This distinction between social- and desiring-production is one made by Deleuze and Guattari in Anti-Oedipus (see 28-30 and chs. 3-4).

48 Virginia Woolf? or the Wolf-Man (Sergei Constantinovitch Pankeiev)? or ?

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