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Geographies of the Body and the Histories of Photography

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Contents

Context Pages 1 – 61

Selected Publications

- 1997 'Surplus Bodies: The Real, the Virtual and the Work of Witkin', *Variant*, Volume 2, No3
- 1996 'Natural Magic and Science Fiction: Instruction, Amusement and the Popular Show 1795-1895', C. Williams, (Ed.), *Cinema: the Beginnings and the Future*, University of Westminster Press
- 1993 'Deviance and Difference: The Representation of HIV and AIDS', V. Harwood et al (Eds.), *Pleasure Principles*, Lawrence and Wishart
- 1992 'A Museum for our Times: The Kodak Wing, National Museum of Film, Photography and Television', *Ten:8*, No.35
- 1990 'Dangerous Liaisons: Health, Disease and Representation', T Boffin and S Gupta, (Eds.), *Ecstatic Antibodies*, Rivers Oram
- 1989 'Is The Future of Photographic Education Female?', *Ten:8*, No.29
- 1988 Catalogue essay, 'Looking Hard: The Male Body', *Behold the Man*, Stills Gallery, Edinburgh and The Photographers Gallery, London
- 1986 'Feminism, Photography and Psychoanalysis: The Work of Edward Weston', *Ten:8*, No.27
- 1984 'Medical Police', *Ten:8*, No.14

Book: *Seeing Her Sex: Medical Archives and the Female Body*, Manchester University Press, 2002

Abstract

Geographies of the Body and the Histories of Photography

Informed by feminist epistemologies, cultural theory and social history, the thesis takes as its primary focus discourses of gender and sexuality in the field of photographic culture. The accompanying contextualisation reflects the shifting theoretical and methodological terrain of visual cultural studies over the historical period in question (1983 - 2003). Earlier articles cover the project's initial development and subsequent essays navigate the work into a more historical context culminating in *Seeing her Sex: Medical Archives and the Female Body* (2002).

This book draws forms the main body of the submission. It draws upon theories of feminism and sexual difference, the histories of mass-reproducible visual technologies and the philosophy of science in order to understand how human generation became female reproduction. Thus it places photography within a longer historical framework of visual technologies (engraving, lithography, stereoscopy, radiography and microscopy) that amalgamated to produce new kinds of objects and observers. It offers vertical 'deep' studies of particular historical images, and also more lateral, horizontal connections across disciplines. Its approach is therefore interdisciplinary and engages in an argument about the historical and geographical boundaries of knowledge, about what comes before and after and about what gets to lie inside and outside the discursive field of photography.

This work examines and develops arguments that are always located in, but also move beyond, the archive. The essays included here re-think questions of visual representation

and discursive formations in order to foreground the inter-connected relationships between institutional, cultural and embodied aspects of scholarship.

Within the field of visual cultural studies the question of agency and the relationship between theories, histories and politics became urgent in the political climate of the 1980s and 1990s. Increasingly questions of the subject's participation, cultural location and perspective in constructing any 'field' or 'terrain' became important and the relationship between experience and theory has consequently been re-thought. In the later publications the body is therefore discussed as both subject and object of visual knowledge. The work argues against an essentialist understanding of what any 'body' is, and for an understanding of the body in its material and historical corporeality, rather than its biological specificity.

Understood as subjective and embodied, situated and partial, this more phenomenological, intersubjective approach to visual cultural studies acknowledges the sensory, emotional and imaginative dimensions of looking. Knowledge here is conceptualised not as possession, but as empathy. What we see as observers depends not only on where we stand but also on how we position ourselves within any given historical field. Moreover, this is a political question; not all perspectives are equal.

This work has grown out of an antipathy to the disembodied approach of the humanities within which the human body had become alienated, suspect, denigrated. In its drive for fixed standards, the human sciences subordinated body to mind, emotion to reason thus foreclosing crucial sensory aspects of knowledge and creating an incapacity to acknowledge the wide diversity of our different modes of knowing.

Historically, photography certainly does have an ignoble history as a technology of ethnographic domination and control (imperial, colonial, racial or sexual), but it is also, equally, a form of counter-memory. Images are a question of human rights and here visual cultural studies has a key role to play.

'History is Past Politics and Politics Present History' [Adams cited in Smith 1998: 110].

'One can do very many important and valuable things without theory, such as talking and listening, loving and hating, fighting and making up... but thinking is not among them' [White 1999: viii].

1. PAST

The Emergence of the Project

This contextualisation has three parts: the first section, *Past*, provides an account of the content of the submission and traces the project's genesis within an institutional framework and political context. The second section, *Past and Present*, aims to situate the work within what I term 'visual cultural studies', the outcome of changing theoretical, methodological and historical debates that have taken place over the last thirty years. Lastly, in section 3, *Past, Present, Future*, I conclude by discussing current developments, and possible directions in modes of interdisciplinary research and practice. The trajectory I trace is deliberate. I want to emphasise the inter-connectedness of material (institutional), symbolic (cultural) and sensual (embodied) aspects of scholarship.

The PhD submission comprises essays, journal articles and a monograph. Informed by feminist epistemologies, cultural theory and social history, the work takes as its primary focus the discourses of sexuality in the field of photographic visual culture. The initial research for this project was presented in conference participation and publication (see accompanying CV) and reflects changing debates in both the theories and histories of photographic visual culture over the period in question (1983 - 2003). The earlier articles that are presented cover the project's initial development. The subsequent essays navigate the work into a more historical context culminating in *Seeing her Sex: Medical*

Archives and the Female Body published in 2002. This book forms the main body of the submission.

Seeing her Sex

Seeing her Sex: Medical Archives and the Female Body, focuses on gender and visibility. The work represents a sustained historical, archival project, which takes developments in the period 1750–1910 as key to modern visual technologies and the framework within which photography emerges as science and art. This same period also marks the rise of biomedicine and of the reproductive female body as an object of medical scrutiny.

Through an historical investigation of obstetric medicine's visual culture I aimed to show how such images have over a relatively short period taken women, literally, out of the picture of human reproduction. The book traces this process of visualisation in order to place photography within a longer historical framework of visual technologies: engraving, lithography, stereoscopy, radiography and microscopy, which produced new kinds of observers [see Crary 1995]. It examines the ways in which historical images are absolutely crucial in understanding how the previously hidden, pre-modern subject of human generation has become the highly visible corporate science of post-industrial reproductive biotechnology.

The ambition to bypass the female body in reproduction has a long history. From the late eighteenth century onwards the undefined, privately experienced interior of the womb becomes a space opened up to public scrutiny. Popular treatises, clinical anatomical atlases and, later, stereographic and radiographic manuals were produced. Such works are of primary importance in tracing the ways in which the modern female body, and the womb in particular, was increasingly *visualised* and subsequently reconfigured as the container for a collection of detachable and interchangeable parts. Female ova can now be 'harvested' from any female body and any uterus can be used to 'grow' any embryo manufactured in a laboratory. And while the part of the ovum outside the nucleus is essential for development (and therefore women are still necessary as providers), ova can now be enucleated and replaced with a cell nucleus (the part of the cell that contains 'genetic information') from another person, male or female. The disappearance of the

maternal body in modern medical imaging is the result of much longer historical processes of visualisation, and of scientific and technological ‘improvements’ [McGrath 2002].

Photography was one of the select scientific apparatuses of the nineteenth century. As Arago suggested in 1839, it would join the thermometer, barometer, hygrometer, telescope and microscope as one of the latest scientific instruments [See Eder 1972: 237]. However, these supposedly objective and consistent instruments, designed to check human error and augment vision (and other senses) have, in fact, diminished them. Less than a hundred years after photography’s invention, Horkheimer described it thus: ‘As their telescopes and microscopes, their tapes and radios become more sensitive, individuals become blinder, more hard of hearing, less responsive’ [Horkheimer cited in MacDougall: 17]. We need reminding of this now.

There are two main arguments presented in *Seeing her Sex*. Firstly, I argue that the history of photography must be conceptualised as part of a much broader, and historically longer, visual economy. This includes objects, drawings and prints, scientific instruments and human bodies. Secondly, I argue for an understanding of the female body in its historical corporeality rather than its biological specificity. While the body may well be a constant throughout history, understandings of what a body is, the practices, institutions, theories and images that emerge from those understandings, are not; they change over time. Consequently, as Joan Scott suggests, citing Jacques Ranciere, ‘the alternative to the universalisation of difference must be the historicization of identity. If instead of asking how were women treated in some former time, we ask how and in what circumstances the difference of their sex came to matter in their treatment, then we have provided the basis for an analysis of “women” *that is not a rediscovery of ourselves* [See Scott 2001: 98, my emphasis]. I discuss questions of history and identity further in Section 2, pages 34–39.

The work presented here, as I will show, has become increasingly interdisciplinary in its scope and aims not only to provide vertical ‘deep’ studies of particular historical objects,

but also to make more lateral, horizontal connections across disciplines. I adopt an interdisciplinary approach precisely in order to resist an anatomisation of knowledge. For writers such as Roland Barthes, interdisciplinarity is not a question of ‘surrounding an already existing discipline with new methods, but of creating an object that belongs to no one’ [Barthes cited in Clifford and Marcus: 1]. This has been one of the primary aims of feminism and the work presented here consequently draws on theories of feminism and sexual difference, the histories of mass-reproducible visual technologies and the philosophy of science. To use interdisciplinarity is to engage in an argument about both the historical and geographical boundaries of knowledge, about what comes before and after, and about what gets to lie inside and outside specific fields of discourse. Thus the outcome of interdisciplinarity is unlikely to be known in advance and cultural (as well as historical) analysis is, in any case, intrinsically incomplete [See Geertz cited in Renov 1993: 30].

Montage

Interdisciplinarity, I want to argue, has a visual kinship with modernist montage as a method that simultaneously acknowledges both connections and distinctions. Montage allows for re-arrangements and re-alignments; it enables us to shift images around and to produce differing sequences that can be spliced together. I want to emphasise the extent to which the approach to theory and history I present here draws upon this visual technique as a model for its methodology. Montage is not a jigsaw where there is only one predetermined arrangement. But neither are the arrangements entirely arbitrary. In montage the pieces never resolve into one image on a single, smooth surface; rather its aim is to produce a different, disjunctive image that makes us aware of contingency. Moreover in the face of globalisation, creating concrete connections across time, (historically) and space, (geographically), become important as a means of navigating a disassembled world in which rapid circulation and constant displacement are facts of life. There is no single, privileged point from which to look, or indeed to speak. Modernist montage employs the fragment as its theory; it opposes narrative. Such an approach has an affinity with photography as a quintessentially modern visual technology. Photographs, too, are fragments uprooted and disembedded from time and place.

Montage is therefore a theory of relationships. 'When making films', Alexander Kluge says, 'I am always confronted with the problem that whatever I see does not actually contain these relationships' [1981: 218]. As I argue in section 2, these relationships, like histories and identities, have to be made and the processes through which we make them matters.

The Politics of the Polytechnic System

My approach is, in large part, a result of the situation in which the work emerged. The essays presented here, bits and pieces produced in the 1980s, appeared in marginal journals or in exhibition catalogues. I viewed my writing then as a form of critical, cultural activism. In that period it was a means of intervention; a way of straddling academic theory and political practice in order to emphasise the use-value of both theory and history as politically necessary. With the decline in these relatively cheap, critical, and crucially, publicly funded periodicals devoted specifically to photography, and the subsequent market expansion in academic publishing fuelled, in part, by the introduction of Research Assessment Exercises in the mid 1990s, the later works presented here have largely appeared as essays in academic journals or chapters in books.

Recruited into the polytechnic system prior to its ideological conversion to that of the University in 1992, my first ten years of teaching and writing took place within institutions that were not constrained by the 'canon' of the University. From the late 1960s onwards courses had emerged that embraced photography, film and experimental video. These provided a space in which the boundaries between making visual work and doing theory could be actively challenged and this location informed my own critical practice.

As I argue in 'Natural Magic and Science Fiction' [1996], these institutions have a particular history as the spaces in which the technical practices of photography and film had been taught since their inception. The Polytechnic Institution (which became The Regent Street Polytechnic and later The Polytechnic of Central London) opened its doors in 1838. By 1840 it was exhibiting daguerreotypes and a year later it opened a

commercial studio. It was also here on February 20, 1896 that the first moving picture was exhibited in Britain.

In my essay I attempted to trace, historically and geographically, the epistemological foundations of photography and film as part of complex corporeal and social shifts in modernity. Through archival research I was able to uncover the fact that photography studios and film houses in central London came to inhabit spaces that had previously been the display rooms of anatomical museums. Such institutions fostered an appetite for exhibition and performance which was then welded to the promotion of new technologies. These were innovative institutions in which the boundaries between arts and sciences, instruction and entertainment (or amusement as it was then called), theory and practice had yet to be drawn.

During the early period of industrialisation, mechanical inventions blurred the boundaries between the real and the artificial, the human and the mechanical, thus fostering a long held desire to enter into other sensory worlds. Such desires were signalled in the 1850s by the giant papier maché eye and ear that dominated the great hall of manufacture of the Regent Street Polytechnic. 'Natural Magic and Science Fiction', written in the 1990s, in a period of a so-called second technological revolution, was born out of a desire to comprehend historically the institutional and intellectual ground of the theatres in which I quite literally stood, day in day out, teaching students and learning from and with them.

That history has to be placed within a wider understanding of the establishing of the Polytechnic system in England in the nineteenth century. The Polytechnic Institution in Regent Street was the first to open its doors in of 1838 and the system was expanded in England in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Polytechnics were designed 'to promote the industrial skill, general knowledge, health and well-being of young men and women belonging to the poorer classes' [Lawson and Silver 1973: 347]. Many of the Polytechnics went on to develop higher level technical and scientific work which brought them into association with the University of London [ibid.]. Polytechnics pre-date the

expansion of the universities in the nineteenth century (most of which were founded in the 1880s) and it is important to emphasise this history. Their development, and also that of evening and adult education, was part of the late nineteenth century belief in social justice. Writing at the turn of the century John Gorst suggested that 'every boy or girl showing capacities above the average should be caught and given the best opportunities for developing these capacities', but as Lawson and Silver state, he did not believe it right 'to scatter broadcast a huge system of higher instruction for anyone who chooses to take advantage of it, however unfit to receive it' [1973: 340]. These debates seem pertinent in the present climate of rapid expansion.

For many years the Cinderella of higher education, the Polytechnic had at its very heart the ideal of cultural and visual practice as both social and political, and when it was expanded after 1945 the Polytechnics became, once again, the sites of innovative programmes of study. In 1968, under the Labour government, The Council for National Academic Awards replaced The National Council for Technical Awards, and the Polytechnics began to award degrees. It was in this political climate that students on photography and film courses increasingly began to engage with a politics of visual practice. Any retrenchment behind the lines of individualism, creativity, high culture and art theory, on which much photographic theory and criticism had been predicated within fine art departments, was therefore resisted. In their place theories of ideology, subjectivity, sexuality were introduced. Within such critical practices questions of history and identity were central: new courses emerged and differing modes of pedagogy rejected aesthetic autonomy and facilitated an engagement with the social and political realities that shaped society [Simon and Giroux 1992: 13]. Here both students and staff actively worked to 'create the institutional, political and discursive conditions in which power and privilege were not merely exposed and eliminated but consciously rendered reciprocal and put to good use within the curriculum' [ibid.]. bell hooks reminds us that for writers like Paolo Freire, 'education can only be liberating when everyone claims knowledge as a field in which we all labor' [Freire cited in hooks 1994: 14].

Central to what I viewed as a political project, I aimed from the start to make connections within and beyond the school walls and I taught across practice and theory, both within the academic institution and outwith, in evening classes and in schools and prisons. Precisely because the Polytechnic system existed outside the established disciplinary confines of the universities, it was a realm in which it was possible to develop a nascent politics of visual cultural studies and to define not only 'what it is to see, but what there is to see' and to raise questions about 'who is allowed to look' (and who is looked at) [Latour 1986: 10 and Rogoff 1998: 21]. Here visual culture and the wider social sphere, were understood not as opposites, but as inter-related, as part of our lived experience. Polytechnics sought to create a more democratic idea of knowledge, its application, use-value, worth and purpose despite (and in the face of) a relentless emphasis on its exchange-value.

Feminism as a theory of difference

My project was also informed by wider debates within the theories of feminism and sexual difference. Those debates necessarily acknowledged both the social construction and psychic formation of sexed subjectivity. As these debates unfolded through the 70s, theories of sexual difference were vital in resisting the overdeterminations of marxist/socialist (with its emphasis on class) and radical feminism (with its emphasis on biology). With regard to the former, as Terry Lovell suggested, 'Marxism permits feminist history, but without necessarily permitting it to *make a difference*. While psychoanalysis', she argued, 'is every bit as male-centred as Marxism, because it theories sexual difference and sexed subjectivity, then feminist intervention here *must* make a difference' [1990: 25].

Marxist/socialist feminism and radical feminism shared a common ground in recognising that women were discriminated against on grounds of sex. Where they differed was on the causes of that oppression. Unlike marxist/socialist feminism where class was more fundamental than gender, in radical feminism, gender was more fundamental than class. The roots of women's oppression lay in biology, not in capitalism and the domination of women by men preceded any form of class society. Differences amongst women of class

or race for example, were repressed. Consequently, just as marxist/socialist feminism was a form of fundamentalism, radical feminism was a form of essentialism. Radical feminism was also weak in terms of history, for even if one accepts that biology is a constant, the institutions and practices that stem from that difference are historically contingent [See Scott 2001].

The route out of this double-bind was provided by psychoanalysis and its argument that femininity was neither socially constructed, nor biologically determined. The publication in 1974 of Juliet Mitchell's *Psychoanalysis and Feminism* was therefore timely. It had become apparent by then that women's liberation, or 'Valhalla' as Jan Grover called it, was not going to arrive, either in society at large or in enclaves, whether marxist or separatist [Grover 1989: 173]. As Laura Mulvey suggests, in the 70s, Marx needed Freud [1996:1]. But just as Marx needed Althusser, Freud needed Lacan. Unlike Freudian psychoanalysis, perceived as sexist since it appeared to rest upon a visible, biological difference, Lacan's materialist theory of sexed subjectivity and the unconscious was based upon structural linguistics as a system of difference [see Mitchell and Rose 1982]. Arguing that there can be meaning only through reference to other meaning, sexuality was re-conceptualised not as something added to the subject (just as the sign's meaning is not some substance contained within the sign) but produced. Consequently, sexuality, like meaning, is neither intrinsic, nor essential. For Lacan, the unconscious, structured as a language, gives birth to desire. Desire, by very definition is unable to be fulfilled and so moves ceaselessly from object to object. Subject positions, whether of masculinity or femininity, are fragile; they are precarious and tentative. They are not fixed and are open to both sexes, even if it is to a limited extent. The effort to collapse gender onto sex, to render subject positions stable and fixed through stereotyping, for example, is testament to such instability. Lacan's supposedly non-essentialist and materialist theory of sexuality, attractive to sexual difference theorists, also came into question. While Lacan claimed that the phallus, a privileged signifier, or 'the signifier of signifiers', was not to be confused with the penis because it merely represented symbolic power, the symbolic phallus seemed perilously close to the literal penis of Freudian theory. As Jane Gallop

put it, feminists found ‘that central, transcendental phallus particularly hard to swallow’ [1988: 125].

The productive outcome of these debates has meant that feminism has remained an open field, a decolonised territory. It has argued that ‘critical strategies must be developed within a range of diversely occupied territories where the temptation to grant any single territory transcendent status is continually resisted’ [Trinh cited in Borden (et al) 2001: 12]. As an academic field feminism has never been confined to one discipline and, as a political movement, it has resisted the idea of a common, unchanging and shared experience amongst women. Instead feminism favours political alignments with specific aims. It is, both of necessity and from desire, a terrain of interdisciplinarity.

Feminism has had to think across established fields, academic categories and levels of experience in order to understand women’s oppression. As I suggest in *Seeing her Sex*, it has creatively re-thought ‘the relationship between language and the body, discourse and experience, academic theory and political practice’ [McGrath 2002: 8]. Feminism has refused to ignore the relations between these very different registers, as it has refused to ignore differences amongst women. It aims to bring together life, labour and language, the stories of people, work and their lives. In this sense the work presented here is genealogical combining dominant, legitimate knowledge with what Foucault calls ‘disqualified, illegitimate knowledges’ [Foucault 1977a: 83]. This non-institutionalised, unofficial knowledge is crucial to an understanding of genealogies as a politically informed counter-memory (see page 17 for a further discussion of genealogy). Feminism has argued for a different understanding of what constitutes knowledge and has had to struggle hard to articulate the relationship between differing forms of knowing in order to resist both a totalising theoretical imperialism and a naïve political practice.

Feminism, I argue, must be understood as a politics committed to making a difference, to overcoming relations of domination. It has therefore linked the oppression of women to the oppression of others and provided a trenchant critique of the price that is paid for separating public from private, mind from body and sex from gender [see Flax 1993:

111]. Moreover, sexual *difference* must, of necessity, be both attentive to, and able to theorise other differences. The sexual is only one such difference within much wider powerful interlocking systems of oppression and subjugation. Race, gender and class were, from the start, as Haraway suggests, 'dangerous rickety machines for guarding the chief fictions and powers of European civil manhood. To be unmanly is to be uncivil, to be dark is to be unruly. These metaphors mattered enormously in the constitution of what counts as knowledge' [2000: 30].

The contention of feminist epistemology is not simply that patriarchal capitalism has trapped women in all too narrow definitions of what it means to be female, but has trapped us all, men and women, within too narrow definitions of what it means to be human. It has therefore refused to fall back on an essentialist, universal, humanist ideal of subjectivity and instead has sought to develop more adequate theories of human cultural diversity. As I argue in *Seeing her Sex*, 'within an anti-essentialist feminist politics, ontology can never be separated from epistemology. This is in itself is a form of essentialism. Feminism has had to think hard about the intricate and necessary relationship of life, thought and experience that cuts across comfortable intellectual categories and has suggested very different ways of thinking about how knowledge is produced and organised, and about what knowledge does to the objects it thereby produces; this necessarily includes ourselves' [McGrath 2002: 8].

Increasingly, within the Academy, feminism has moved from without to incorporation within disciplines it fought hard to resist. Yet, these disciplines have been transformed by feminist intervention. The challenge now is whether it can continue to transform them. Marginality, after all, did not guarantee anything; but nor, necessarily, does incorporation. As I argue in *Seeing her Sex*, although repressed within narratives of modernity, sexual difference lies at the heart of enlightenment thought [McGrath 2002: 1]. Joan Scott eloquently frames the paradox thus: 'would there be feminism without the discourse of individual rights that repress sexual difference? I think not. Can there be a feminist politics that exploits that tension without expecting finally to resolve it. I think

so' [1996: 175]. As I argue, such tensions have been vital to the liveliness of feminist theory.

Bodies, Art and Photography

It is within this institutional and theoretical context that my work emerged. Two main areas of investigation move between canonical fine art and popular or unknown images. First, there is an engagement with pedagogy and visual curricula and earlier articles dealt with the politics of photography as represented within the museum, the art gallery and the education system. This polemical work aimed to deconstruct an outmoded and longstanding gendered fascination with authorship, genius, self-referentiality and the fundamentally fetishistic and auratic approach to photographic history as the history of an art or as a completely dehistoricised celebration of technology. ('Is the future of Photographic Education Female' [1989], and 'A Museum for our times: The Kodak Wing at the National Museum of Film, Photography and Television' [1990]).

Other essays examined critically the inadequacy of hagiographic, art historical approaches to understanding photographs and sought to turn the lens away from prized aesthetic objects produced by master photographers. Instead, I emphasised the subjective and sexual politics of looking, as well as the relationship between the technical and the aesthetic in the production and consumption of images. ('Re-reading Edward Weston' [1987], 'Looking Hard: the male body' [1988], and 'Surplus Bodies: the real, the virtual and the work of Witkin' [1997]). For example my aim in 'Looking Hard' was to examine the popular male nude, produced for a homosexual audience, from a feminist perspective. In 'Re-reading Edward Weston', I discussed the example of the fine art female nude and the politics of the male (heterosexual) gaze by employing feminist and psychoanalytic theories. The article, 'Surplus Bodies', developed these ideas further within the context of electronic imaging and fine art photographic practice, arguing that as medical imaging has become smarter, more abstract, clean and less meaty, photography has become more literal, more visceral. The 'waning of affect' has led to an increase in the demand for butchered bodies and strong meat, as long as it is well hung

within the gallery [see Jameson 1984: 53-92]. These articles considered, from different perspectives, the observer's body, whether photographer or viewer, *in relation to* the body imaged.

The second strand of writing, ('Medical Police' [1984], 'Dangerous Liaisons' [1990], 'Deviance and Difference' [1993] and *Seeing her Sex* [2002]) runs parallel with (and develops from) the previous essays. It represents the flip-side of the fine print, and of the gallery and academy. This work is drawn from ignoble archives. Such images represent the dark underside of civilisation that in large part makes up the photographic archive. In Benjamin's terms 'There is no cultural document that is not at the same time a record of barbarism' [1979: 359-360]. Such images are the 'other' of documents of civilisation, the records of barbarism that emerge within modern disciplinary institutions. From its inception, photography was pressed into service, not only producing honorific portraits, but in mapping a rapidly expanding underclass. Those who had remained beneath the threshold of vision were brought into view only to be consigned to the archive in what was an act of representational liquidation. However, the very existence of such archives means that they can become resources for producing counter-histories. I have argued that it is these anonymous and vast sites of evidence, previously inadmissible, that must be brought into the frame of photography's history.

Art history privileges certain locations, geographies and histories at the expense of others. My work did not fit easily into its disciplinary structure, nor did the discourse of visual cultural studies fully exist. With hindsight my aim here was, in Rogoff's words, 'to repopulate space with all the obstacles and all the unknown images which the illusion of transparency evacuated from it' [1998: 22]. Rogoff emphasises the way in which space (and I include here art historical space) 'is always differentiated, it is always sexual or racial; it is always constituted out of circulating capital' [ibid.]. Obstacles are designed to get in the way; they interrupt our view and we have to negotiate them; they do not negotiate us. The images under discussion here are those that are excluded when photography is viewed as simply, or only, a sub-discipline of art history. Moreover, it is crucial to 'make visible all those things that have been lost in an object; not in order to

make the other meanings disappear, but rather to make it impossible for the bottom line to be a *single* statement' [Haraway 2000: 105, my emphasis].

Bodies, Medicine and Photography

Broadly then, this part of the work takes as its focus the abject body. Here I looked to medicine for primarily two reasons. First medicine had a significant role in the early development and application of photography. Many early photographers were doctors who saw the potential of the new medium's application in promoting scientific medicine. Secondly, medical photography was, and remains, an under-researched archival visual resource. In this work I therefore sought to raise questions about the underbelly of art history, about what could not be spoken about, and had therefore been excluded from the discourse of photography as an art. This work ran parallel with developing feminist theories of the gaze which had begun to shift its view downwards, away from the fetishised female body, in order to address abject images, which, for historical reasons as well as by cultural convention had remained beneath the threshold of vision. Unseen, hidden away in the depths of the archive, such images have continued to exert, albeit often unconsciously, considerable power on how we think about and differentiate bodies. The historian Laborde, writing in second empire France, distinguishes between the library and the archive: 'a library is *something*, archives are *someone*' [Laborde cited in Smith 1998: 116]. Archives are the repositories of human life.

A number of essays ('Medical Police', 'Dangerous Liaisons', 'Deviance and Difference') therefore address both historical and contemporary images by examining the body within medicine and health education. 'Medical Police' sought to bring back into the history of photography the use of the medium within the newly established hospitals of the nineteenth century. My argument in this essay was that we should consider both the images that we look at and the framework in which we consider them. Visualisation played a fundamental role in distinguishing between what was conceptualised as normal and pathological. Such images have been central to narrowing the definitions of what it means to be human.

'Dangerous Liaisons' was a specific analysis of the Health Education Authority's advertising campaign on HIV and AIDS prevention in the late 1980s. Here, I argued that this campaign pathologised gay men, single women and drug users. Such work was part of a wider feminist theoretical imperative and political intervention to be both attentive to, and theorise, other differences. As I argue above, 'the sexual is only one such difference within much wider, powerful interlocking systems of oppression and subordination' [see page 11]. A subsequent essay, 'Deviance and Difference' written several years later, examined gay subcultural and political activist responses to State advertising campaigns that emerged in the intervening years. This offered an example of Foucauldian reverse-discourse in order to raise awareness of HIV and AIDS amongst a peer group. More generally such projects raised important political about the inequalities in health care provision when entire social groups are perceived as deviant and hence dispensable.

In both these essays I attempted to examine how the contemporary representation of the diseases of HIV and AIDS drew upon an already existing historical reservoir of images. This strategy ensures that older (particularly nineteenth century) residual ideologies of deviant sexuality, and of sexually transmitted diseases (which are patently unscientific, from the perspective of the present) can be re-mobilised within a contemporary medico-scientific framework.

I developed this idea further in *Seeing her Sex*, drawing upon Bruno Latour's concept of the 'immutable mobile'. The value of Latour's concept of the immutable mobile lies in its ability to account for the ways in which representations appear to change while simultaneously ensuring some continuity with older images. For Latour it is the 'clever alignment of immutable mobiles' that produces 'the circulating reference' [1999: 306–7]. By this Latour means that the aim is simultaneously to accelerate mobility and enhance the immutability of images [1986: 10]. Woman is one such circulating reference, and 'scientific' photographs of women's bodies, I have argued, can therefore only be understood within a far longer historical trajectory of print culture that incorporates

already existing perspectives into the highly mobile and rapidly circulating medium of photography. Thus, while the medical archival photographs of women's bodies which formed the basis for *Seeing her Sex* appear as seamless, self-evident and transparent, they are complexly constructed images that draw on already existing visual archives rather than upon recourse to transparent, external reality. Photographs are the discursive outcomes of very specific régimes of knowledge. Speaking of scientists, Latour makes the more generally applicable point that they only 'start seeing something once they stop looking at nature and look exclusively and obsessively at prints and flat inscriptions. In the debates around perception, what is always forgotten is this simple drift from watching confusing three-dimensional objects, to inspecting two-dimensional images which have been made less confusing' [Latour 1986: 16].

At the heart of these latter publications is the question of the body as both subject and object of knowledge. This is a body that is historically positioned by discourse, and at the same time, a body which must position itself, here and now, within discourse. Moreover, as I argue in *Seeing her Sex*, this is not simply 'the' body, whether male or female, black or white, hetero- or homosexual. Rather, I argue against an essentialist understanding of what any 'body' is, and for an understanding of the body in its material and historical corporeality, rather than its biological specificity. Biology is of course a discourse that emerges at a specific historical moment in the nineteenth century. In short, what a body is depends upon how it is discursively produced.

This part of the project was driven by feminist politics and post-structuralist theory within which questions of subjectivity, sexuality and difference have been central. Post-structuralism has been particularly important to feminism because both share in common a critique of the political and epistemological outcomes of Cartesian thought. Post-structuralism and feminism make us aware that the question is not only that of the 'political economy of bodies, but the libidinal economy of politics' [Ziarek 2001: 219]. This has had important implications for an embodied concept of subjectivity [see Section 3, pages 40 – 53]. Psychoanalysis as a theory of the formation of subjectivity through sexuality and the unconscious plays a fundamental role here.

Feminist genealogy: Bodies and Histories

Such work is, in Foucault's terminology, genealogical. Genealogies oppose the search for "origins" and instead trace lineages of dissent [Foucault 1977b: 140]. For Foucault, 'what is found at the historical beginning of things is not the inviolable identity of their origin; it is the dimension of other things. It is disparity' [ibid.: 142]. Not a body, but bodies understood as the 'inscribed surface of events (traced by language and dissolved by ideas) the locus of a disassociated Self (adopting the illusion of a substantial unity), and a volume in perpetual disintegration' [ibid.: 148].

Foucault argues that there are no origins or, indeed, continuities, whether of ourselves or history. Genealogy, he contends, is history at its most effective. Effective history differs from traditional history in being without constants. Moreover, as Foucault makes clear, 'nothing in man – not even his body – is sufficiently stable to serve as the basis for self-recognition or for understanding other men' [1977b: 153]. Foucault explicitly acknowledges the 'corporeal roots of subjectivity and the non-coincidence of the subject with his/her consciousness' [Braidotti 1994: 59]. He suggests that we are not coherent subjects detached from the objects we study and '[H]istory becomes "effective" to the degree that it introduces discontinuity into our very being – as it divides our emotions, dramatises our instincts, multiplies our body and sets it against ourselves' [ibid.: 154]. Thus, there is no singular body, and consequently, as I argue in *Seeing her Sex*, "'The" body is not the new holy grail of visual cultural studies' [McGrath 2002: 7].

For Foucault, genealogies are situated 'within the articulation of the body and history' [1977b: 148]. It is this that interests me and the task at hand is 'to expose a body totally imprinted by history and the process of history's destruction of the body' [ibid.]. Thus:

'Effective history can also invert the relationship that traditional history, in its dependence on metaphysics, establishes between proximity and distance. The latter is given to a contemplation of distances and heights: the noblest periods, the highest forms, the

most abstract ideas, the purest individualities...effective history shortens its vision to those things nearest to it – the body, the nervous system, nutrition, digestion, and energies; it unearths the periods of decadence and if it chances upon lofty epochs, it is with suspicion – not vindictive but joyous – of finding a barbarous and shameful confusion...it reverses the surreptitious practice of historians, the pretension to examine things furthest from themselves, the grovelling manner in which they approach this promising distance....Effective history studies what is closest, but in an abrupt dispossession, so as to seize it at a distance' [ibid.: 153–156].

Foucault emphasises the very instability and implication of the subject in constructing any field of knowledge and unsettling our ideas about what we might or should be looking at or for. He suggests that it is not a question of replacing one viewpoint with another, seen from nearer at hand, but of simultaneously moving further back in order to disturb what might be described as correct distance, a stabilising position. Such a locus ensures that the object is neither too far away to be dangerously remote, nor so close as to render it overwhelming. Genealogy disturbs this configuration.

Foucault employs an approach that suggests the use of both optics and haptics (I discuss these terms in section 3, pages 41 – 42). He suggests that we can and must have both a measure of analytic distance and be closely engaged. Increasingly within theoretical debates questions of the subject's participation, cultural location and perspective in constructing any 'field' or 'terrain' have become important (note that the metaphors are geographical). Vision is now understood as subjective and embodied, situated and partial. What we see depends not just on where we stand but also on how we then position ourselves within any given field. What we find to see will depend on what we are looking for. Moreover, this is a political question; not all perspectives are equal.

Feminist cultural historians, amongst others, have argued that there can be neither news, nor views, from nowhere [See Scott 1996; Haraway 1997]. All knowledge is situated and begins at ground level. In my work I have argued (figuratively) against simply 'looking down', and in favour of a mode of knowing that does not privilege mind over matter. The heady atmosphere, the 'up here' of Cartesian thought with its other, a base 'down there' or dark continent of brute matter, with all its racial and sexual resonance, only makes sense from the elevated monocular and detached perspective of Enlightenment thought. It is not the only way of looking at, or being in the world. What I propose in my work are diverse, different knowledges that are more firmly grounded, both embedded and embodied. Being down here means having to face up to, rather than avoid; it means not standing back, but having an intimate engagement *with*, rather than distanced observation *of*. Moving *through* a terrain at ground level is a very different experience from casting one's eye *over* a field of study from above. Such an approach raises questions about who is above and below, what gets to be in and what is out. Thus it reminds us that theory must always be informed by history and, as I argue in *Seeing her Sex*, modern microhistory, with its vertical slice through time and its attention to detailed, focused, historical engagement is as necessary as the panoramic, horizontal, geographical travelling suggested by post-modernity [McGrath 2002: 6].

What I therefore propose in my work is a reconfiguration of both the subjects and objects of visual knowledge. This reconfiguration allows for the possibility of exploration and experimentation by a subject who is interested in a politics of location in a world of difference. I want to keep the notion of photographic discourse sufficiently open, arguing against the strong desire for closure in order to produce something that might be 'outside the realm of the known' [Rogoff 1996: 18]. The question, as Timothy Brennan puts it, is 'how to stop theory simply becoming a code word for relatively predictable positions in the humanities and related social sciences, most of which turn on the ideas of social transformation, historical agency, the disposition of selfhood (however understood), and the heterogeneity of cultures – all posed in the context of critique of Enlightenment thought' [2003: 337].

Mind and body, or nature and culture are best thought of as only having meaning in relation to each other. They can only be understood when we refute the pretension to examine those things that are furthest from ourselves and reject the separation of subjects and objects. Thus, many feminist writers have argued that the relationship between human subjects and their objects of knowledge is not clear cut, which is to say, not as separate or as distinct as we thought (or perhaps more accurately) have been taught.¹ This then is effective history as affective history; it is proximal and close, far-reaching and wide-angle. Once we stop distancing ourselves from our objects, things begin to look and (more importantly) to feel very different. The hierarchy between higher and lower senses is disturbed, as is the relationship between mind and body, self and other. Vision touches us, moves us; we feel *and* think simultaneously.

The distinctive aspect of the work presented here is therefore two-fold: Firstly, I argue against boundaries, whether disciplinary, theoretical or bodily. Secondly, I want to emphasise the extent to which the visual objects of my discussion are not secondary. Increasingly I have argued that it is not a question of bringing the full weight of theory to bear upon the visual object, as if it is merely a heuristic device that might allow further theoretical extrapolation. Academic theory can be a blunt instrument that, when used heavy handedly, chips away at the objects that art history seeks to elevate to the status of a fetish. In the work presented here, it is the reverse: it is precisely the objects under discussion that allow me to disassemble theories. I want the meeting between subjects and objects to be on a more equal footing. This is a reciprocal process through which both subjects and objects are constructed. ‘Things do not exist’, in Latour’s words, ‘without being full of people’ [2000: 12]. People, it follows, are also full of things – or in a psychoanalytic sense we internalise objects. For example, Henri Bergson defines intuition as ‘a kind of *intellectual sympathy* by which one places oneself within an object in order to coincide with what is unique in it and consequently inexpressible. Analysis, on the contrary, is the operation which reduces the object to the already known, that is, to elements common both to it and other objects’ [Bergson cited in Weiss 1999: 168–169].

¹ See Evelyn Fox-Keller, Jane Gallop, Sandra Harding

My critical writing emanates from such an intellectual sympathy, from an encounter and engagement with the image. Here, it is not that theory is 'applied' to an existing object, but that the theory flows like a current between the object and the viewing subject. The vital spark is one of connection and contingency. Such experiences cannot be captured linguistically in their entirety (although this should not prevent us from finding a more adequate language for doing so) but are multisensorial, made up of textures, colours, sounds and smells. In short, from the intricately woven from strands between subject and object, body and image that meet and make demands of each other. In our culture as Luce Irigaray has put it, the 'predominance of the look over smell, taste and touch and hearing has brought about an impoverishment of bodily relations' [Irigaray cited in Jay 1993: 493].

Photography, I therefore argue, might be better thought of as a medium in the sense of mediating *between* painting and film, *between* what has past, what happened then and there, exists in the present, here and now. Photographs are history and photography is a connective substance between subjects and objects. As I suggest in *Seeing her Sex*, photography, which offers us so much to see and is so vividly present, is in reality predicated on what is past, absent. It is perhaps best understood as 'the return of the departed, as a powerful medium haunted by a pre-modern spectral world that lives on in a post-modern electronic universe' [McGrath 2002: 8–9]. My approach, ultimately, is one that allows thinking across different, sometimes incompatible, registers in order to create different worlds in which we are made aware of the contingencies, the randomness of our histories, personal *and* political. My approach opposes narrative. In the last instance, history is an interpretive social science, 'rather than a program to follow, a faction to join, or a theory to celebrate, it is an ad hoc, post hoc business. First you do it, then you name it' [see Geertz in Scott and Keates 2001: 1].

2. PAST AND PRESENT

The Emergence of Visual Cultural Studies

In this section I want to trace a trajectory within what broadly might be termed visual cultural studies. In using this term I want to suggest that visual cultural studies lies between the history of art and the dominant history of photography with its specific emphasis on aesthetic value, and an over-expansive cultural studies which aims (as does media studies) to dissolve such notions of value. Photography, which as a discourse is highly undisciplined, unwieldy and dispersed, has never fitted comfortably into either discipline. This has been both its strength and its weakness as a discipline caught between, and extending beyond, category boundaries.

Other disciplines have more recently moved into the area of the visual and there are consequently a number of terms currently in circulation, particularly visual anthropology, visual culture, visual studies and visual methodologies. From the mid-1990s (and not before) books with the term 'visual culture' in their titles began to appear. These include Charles Jenks, *Visual Culture* (1995), Nicholas Mirzoeff's, *An Introduction to Visual Culture* (1998) and Jessica Evans and Stuart Hall's *Visual Culture: The Reader* (1999). Within these terms the visual comes first and so preserves the idea that there is a distinct area of 'the visual', however it is understood, that can be prefixed to another term. Moreover, while anthropology seems to suggest, again, a rather too expansive, generalised understanding of culture, visual culture is much too discrete. Moreover, much of this work has been a re-iteration of already existing material, drawing on the triumvirate of marxism, structuralism and psychoanalysis. These debates have indeed made a significant contribution to comprehending the power of the photographic image.

However, here I want to place emphasis upon Arjun Appadurai's use of the adjectival form, 'cultural', as opposed to the noun, 'culture'. Appadurai confesses a dislike of the noun culture, which for him, suggests some kind of 'object, thing, or substance' with all its notions of 'fixedness'. Appadurai suggests that 'cultural', on the other hand, builds on the context sensitive, contrast-centered heart of Saussurean linguistics'. He argues that

'Culture is not usefully regarded as a substance, but is better regarded as a dimension of phenomena, a dimension that attends to situated and embodied *difference*' [Appadurai 1996: 12-13]. For Appadurai, cultural is a 'useful heuristic that can highlight points of similarity and contrast between all sorts of categories, classes, genders, roles, groups and nations' [ibid.]. He suggests that 'we regard as cultural only those differences that either express, or set the groundwork for, the mobilisation of group identities' [ibid.]. This is close to James Clifford's suggestion that we need to historicize the concept of culture in order to produce an understanding of the term 'that can preserve culture's differentiating functions while conceiving of collective identity as a hybrid, often discontinuous process. Culture is a deeply compromised idea I cannot yet do without' [Clifford 1988: 10]. Yet clearly, 'there is no culture in and of itself [see Modood 1997: 4]. It is this sense of the indispensability of culture as well as its dynamic, mediating, and embodied understanding that I want to preserve here, 'the *mot*, not the *chose*' as Clifford Geertz puts it [2000: 11]. Geertz is clear: 'there is no *chose*' [ibid.].

I would argue that this is the terrain proper of visual cultural studies, and the arena within which photography is most usefully articulated. It must think 'visuality' (again a relational term which emphasises vision as process, not as accomplished fact) differently. Seeing is not simply physiological. It is a cultural, social, political, historical and unconscious process that is simultaneously embedded in specific discourses and embodied in human subjects; my argument within the work presented here is that it must be re-thought simultaneously both historically (in terms of its antecedents) and geographically (across disciplines).

The gradual emergence of visual cultural studies as a different discipline or, perhaps more accurately, an indiscipline of differences can be traced through three historical moments:

First, in the 1970s the dominant approach was structuralist semiotics, which offered the possibility of a science of signs through its close analysis of texts. Essentially, the emergence of structuralism marked 'the end of art theory' as a shift away from the

concerns of authorial agency and monography towards a close examination of texts [see Burgin 1986]. This was followed in the long 1980s (which extended well into the 1990s) by post-structuralism in which theory once again turned back towards the social and historical via the concept of discourse, as well as an intense, renewed interest in questions of subjectivity, sexuality and desire. Lastly, from the 1990s onwards there has been a move towards 'tender history' and 'sensual scholarship' [see Bruno: 2002 and Stoller: 1997]. This work recognises that vision is embodied and has sought to reinstate feeling alongside reason, arguing that vision is always in the realm of the other senses. The point here is that images inhabit the body; they move us, touch us, conjure up different times, places, smells and sounds as well as a flood of other images. They do not simply effect, but affect the subject.

It is, of course, important to emphasise that these moments are not easily separated; they do not have clearly defined boundaries. The edges of any discourse are frayed. This notion of a kind of unravelling undoes any idea of distinct boundaries, of both historical chronology (before/after) and geographical location (inside/outside). And indeed there are many texts that both slip between these categories and have a relationship to more than one of them. Instead, my aim is to present a broad schema and to suggest that they might define three particular moments, representing what Rosalind Krauss has called the dominant theoretical 'tool of choice', with all its connotations of addiction [1996: 83]. As writers like Raymond Williams suggest, each contains both residual and emergent theories [see Williams 1983]. One theory does not simply supersede the previous one, but refashions it, incorporating certain facets, while repressing others.

As I will argue, it is precisely at the edges of, and *between* such moments, that things start to happen. The development of these ideas is historically uneven, but broadly it effects a shift from a formalist textual analysis to more open and sensual embodiment; from closed structuralist methodology to a more open phenomenological approach. Structuralism was, in effect, a response to culturalist approaches which simply saw cultural artefacts as the products or outcomes of experience. Gradually throughout the seventies more structuralist approaches contended that cultural forms were not simply

the products of, but what produced, experience. Thus human experience became problematised. It was no longer simply the ground of culture, but its effect, and consequently individuals were thus not some originary source of meaning, but its outcome [see Hall 1981]. Structuralist approaches argued that all language, including visual language, pre-existed the subject's entry into the world. Through such critiques authors came under question [Foucault 1977c] or were rendered redundant [Barthes 1977] as emphasis shifted to a close examination of the formal, internal workings of the text.

Culturalist and structuralist approaches shared in common a questioning of cultural value and it was this that became important to marginalised groups: feminist, working class, gay and lesbian as well as black groups. However, these approaches can be seen as two extremes within definitions of culture: an attempt to stop an over-expansive idea of culture as 'a whole way of life' by narrowing it to a close and detailed analysis of specific 'texts' divorced from authors. Rather than meaning simply reflecting some already pre-given content that might be expressed by a fully fledged, well informed author, close attention was paid to the rules, codes, conventions that construct meaning. Emphasis was on the form, on how meaning was produced, rather than on the content, or on what was said (or envisaged).

Post-structuralism, the 'tool of choice' of the second of the three historical moments, provides a pivotal, mediating discourse between structuralist semiotics and sensual, embodied approaches to scholarship. Drawing on structuralist strengths and tackling its weaknesses, post-structuralism argued that while language is arbitrary, meaning certainly is not. Instead it is the outcome of very specific historical, social and institutional discourse. The balance of power shifted from texts to bodies, and from ideology to discourse.

Moreover, as Jane Flax contends, we never encounter a person without a body, or discursive practices without embodied practitioners [1993: 98]. Destined to return, the body of the subject (and telling history from the inside out) and the question of social

history (telling history from the bottom up) have been re-configured through the prism of geography (telling history cross-culturally). The cultural (for which read linguistic) turn in history and the historical turn in cultural studies was made through the passage of the subject's body who makes, quite literally, sense, meaning, within an historical, social and symbolic context that is not of her, or his own choosing.

As I argued in the previous section, post-structuralism has been especially useful to feminist theory. The linguistic turn within the humanities was a volte-face from the rough contours of history and, simultaneously, from the unruly, excessive human body, making both body and history merely an effect, an outcome of language and of texts. Post-structuralist discourse, with its emphasis on a reader-as-subject, mediated between the closed world of textuality and the open field of history, making it possible to rethink social, historical and psychic embodiment in a different register. Greater attention was given to readers or viewers as desiring and fantasising subjects who make meaning, as much unconsciously as consciously.

These three moments trace a trajectory that moves from language to flesh; from the high point of structural linguistics, a static, formal and closed system, to an understanding of visuality as socially and historically embodied and embedded. It marks a move away from 'language as the inaugural event of culture' towards 'embodiment as the inaugural event of culture' [Lévinas cited in Ziarek 2001: 53]. Embodiment renders cartesian dualism obsolete. Within phenomenological approaches language and flesh are non-hierarchically intertwined. As Haraway puts it, flesh is where 'materiality and semiosis join' [2000: 86]. We learn and think through and with our bodies as much as with our minds and consequently 'the obverse side of the linguistic construction of the body is the incarnation of language' [see Ziarek 2001: 53]. Language, of course, is just as closely related to the pleasures of the flesh as it is to the world of ideas. It is a skin which brings us into contact with others [see Barthes cited in Haraway 2000: 85].

This trajectory from the 1970s onwards has presented not so much a radical reversal, but more a challenge to rethink the complex relationship between the historical materiality of

the body and the symbolic power of language. The demand was to ‘think *through* the body’ and to emphasise how ‘thought and carnality are intertwined’ [Gallop 1988 and Ziarek 2001: 49]. Bluntly, bodies are not texts, and cannot fully be understood as such. And, bodily experience, previously disdained and mistrusted has, albeit rather belatedly, re-entered the theoretical frame. As I argue in my book, those others who have carried the burden of corporeality (in terms of class, gender or race), who in short have been reduced to elementary needs or base sexuality, have of course a far greater interest and investment in the re-embodiment of ideas.

Consequently, tracing the roots of somatic mistrust, and the de-embodiment of ideas, become important. In the late eighteenth century, science (which originally simply meant knowledge) is redefined and a distinction is drawn between experience and experiment. Knowledge gained through the body, *experience*, increasingly came to be viewed as a question of *subjective interpretation* (and also, increasingly, as feminine), while *experiment*, knowledge gained through the mind was understood as simple *objective description* (and specifically masculine) [see Williams 1976: 233]. Since the aim of science was to produce a discourse that reflected logical, rational and disembodied thought, mind was placed above body and bodies, one’s own, and those of others, had to be mastered and controlled.

The body in this sense became at best a shell. At worst, it was a cage. However, more recently the body has come to be perceived not as imprisoning, as something to escape from, but something to be embraced; ‘[it is] not a vehicle to be cast off, it is part of the homeland to which we are travelling’ [Durham-Peters 1999b: 65]. In this sense, scholarship is of necessity a journey between the body and the world. It is a journey in two directions, geographical and historical; we enter into the space of the world and the world enters into the space of the body, producing a kind of sedimentary layering of memories and experiences. Bodies, fragile, breakable and evanescent, are simultaneously, stubborn, intractable and ineluctable. All discourse is embodied, and memory and history, experience and theory, have increasingly been re-thought not as

opposites, but in tandem. Brian Massumi calls this ‘that thinking feeling’, thus acknowledging embodiment as simultaneously psychic and somatic [2002: v].

The passage from textuality to embodiment is therefore not simply one from the static and rigid structuralist enterprise to embodied historical and social discourse. Rather it is a realisation of the need not to reject structuralism but to develop it further. Margrit Shildrick is right to point out, however, that in any case post-structuralism was ‘not an issue about whether a material world *really* exists, but that knowledge of it can only ever be constructed through specific discursive practices’ [1997: 95]. However, it is also recognition of the limitations of such an approach, for ‘linguisticity does not exhaust being’ [see Grosz 1994: 147]. There is always a supplement and there are other ways of knowing. Moreover, discourse with its privileging of language, writing or speech, is simply inadequate for understanding the complexities of human subjectivity. I discuss this further in Section 3. The question of bodies and histories, precisely what was repressed within semiotic and structuralist theories of representation, re-entered the framework of knowledge through post-structuralism.

The End of Art Theory

Thinking about photography, then, necessarily means thinking through bodies. Here I take two bodies of work published in Britain at the beginning and end of the 80s as a means of tracing these debates in theory and practice: Victor Burgin’s edited collection, *Thinking Photography* [1982] and Mitra Tabrizian’s monograph, *Correct Distance* [1990]. It is important to remember, however, that these must be placed within the wider context of books published both here and in the United States in that decade². The particular historical conjuncture which marked the publication of *Thinking Photography*, an ironic title to be sure, marked the emergence of a critical, theoretically informed photographic practice and history. The image on the cover, a Leica camera literally underpinned by theory, evoked what was then a radical approach to understanding

² Allan Sekula’s *Photography Against the Grain* [1984] and Abigail Solomon-Godeau’s *Photography at the Dock* [1991], for instance, although slightly different endeavours, mirror Tabrizian’s and Burgin’s work.

photography. For the first time, *Thinking Photography* made available to both photographers and cultural historians new perspectives that radically challenged traditional art historical and technical conceptions of photography and its histories. It argued that it was both possible and necessary, to 'think' photography, i.e. theorise its histories and analyse its images. The anthology, while acknowledging the importance of feminist contribution in its introduction, somewhat disingenuously excluded such work on the grounds that none of it quite fitted, or that it was not specifically photographic. This demonstrates the limitations of the debate at that particular historical moment where the objects of photographic discourse could be challenged, but the overall structure of the discipline could not. Burgin stated: 'It remains for me to explain an absence. There are no essays by women in this anthology. This is neither oversight nor prejudice. It is the contingent effect of a conjuncture' [1982:14]. The particular historical conjuncture that marked the publication of *Thinking Photography* was the post-68 emergence of a photographic practice, criticism and history that was theoretically informed by Marxism, structuralism and psychoanalysis. The book, broadly, took issue with the Left's commitment to documentary as the visual representation of politics, suggesting instead that a politics of representation itself must be developed. While lip-service was paid to the issues of gender and race, it ignored the specifically feminist contribution to these debates, with its emphasis on the question of the sexual politics of representation, as well as questions of the racial politics of representation. There were no contributions by black authors.

While *Thinking Photography* brought together a collection of essays by men, all of whom were white, published between 1970 and 1980, *Correct Distance*, by the Iranian feminist Mitra Tabrizian, published in 1990, comprised both photographic work and essays made between 1980 and 1990. A book of photographs and a book about photography; a book about the sexual and racial politics of representation, Tabrizian's work represented a significant development of the politics of representation from a feminist and post-colonial perspective. *Correct Distance* provides one map of the ways in which the debates on sexual difference and photographic practice took shape in the pivotal period of the 80s, with its emphasis on the sexual and racial politics of

representation and the questions of visual pleasure and human desire. In her introduction to the book, Griselda Pollock traced the significant shifts that had taken place during the 1980s. As she put it, the 'radical cultural practice of the seventies seemed to experience the weight of ideological power in culture and hence felt the need to practice a negative deconstructive aesthetic as a strategy of resistance' [Pollock in Tabrizian: np]. By the 1980s what emerged was work that had been theoretically informed by psychoanalysis. It was 'less disciplined by a practice of disidentification and negation and more willing to address the power of fantasy and destabilising force of pleasure' [ibid.].

Such questions, introduced by feminists, became increasingly important. In both theory and practice, these issues were primarily addressed through theories of sexual and racial difference, not as something to be simply wished away or, perhaps more accurately, repressed, but something to be understood and utilised in order to fuel new struggles for justice. This is a question of ethics. Moreover, the practice of constant vigilance, the hallmark of the 70s, had by the end of the 80s (as Laura Marks has suggested) become 'exhausting' and more importantly 'not much fun' [2002: 202].

My own work in this period focused on the politics of representation within the fields of gender and sexuality. From 'Re-reading Edward Weston' [1986] and 'Looking hard: the male body' [1987] to my essays on the visual representation of HIV and AIDS, 'Dangerous Liaisons' [1990] and 'Deviance and Difference' [1993], I sought to examine discourses of gender and sexuality, and régimes of representation from modernist art photography to popular culture. In all these essays I aimed to show how these visual practices were part of a wider and historically longer social and sexual economy. I therefore employed structuralist and post-structuralist theories which allowed a close analysis of the image and the observer, while simultaneously paying attention to the social and historical contexts in which both are produced. My argument is that images are places of hard *grafi*. Photography constructs a seamless rhetoric of reality that renders invisible labour, material and symbolic on the part of both producer and consumer. In this sense, images are not simply illustrations, but the sites where social,

sexual and other differences are constructed and, as I argue in 'Deviance and Difference', can therefore be contested [McGrath 1993].

As I suggested in Section 1, one of the most significant contributions of feminism has been the refusal to accept traditional disciplinary boundaries. Its task rather has been to trace the discourses of femininity as a means of understanding how the term 'woman' has no intrinsic meaning but is socially, culturally and psychically produced and thus has meaning only in relation to 'man', as black does in relation to white. Such distinctions, of course, come at a price. In her work Tabrizian places particular emphasis on the intersection of race and gender and upon the ways in which the other is ultimately unknowable. As in much feminist work of the period, psychoanalysis occupies a place of particular importance because of its resistance to the idea that femininity is either innate, natural and biologically determined or simply culturally and socially constructed. The unconscious, a space of 'difference', represented an opening between the biological and the social that is reducible to neither. Moreover, psychoanalysis explained the durability of ideologies as not simply a matter of false consciousness that might be overcome by consciousness-raising, but as profoundly unconscious. Tabrizian's work therefore drew upon the conventions of photography and film, on popular and mass culture, and on structuralist and post-structuralist theories in order to demonstrate how ideologies of gender and race have real effect.

Five pieces of photographic work were presented in Tabrizian's book. The first two, *College of Fashion* [1981-2] and *Governmentality* [1982-3], presented black and white documentary photography. The images were accompanied by text drawn from different discourses, which made the viewer/reader aware that it is in the space between these two symbolic systems that she or he produces meaning. For Tabrizian, 'representations are neither reducible to a referent outside . . . nor to an origin in a subject' [Tabrizian *Governmentality*, 1982: np]. The centrepiece, *Correct Distance* [1984-5], draws on the conventions of the underworld of film noir and the enigmatic femme fatale who must either be killed or submitted to the law, or as Tabrizian points out, occasionally she submits to patriarchal law and is reformed, to become a 'good woman'. The final two

works, *The Blues*, [1986–1987], on the complexities of the nexus of race, gender and class, and *Surveillance* [1988–89], a commentary on the (then) recent history of Tabrizian's native Iran, both raise questions of other differences and perspectives which challenge the dominance of the West's perspective.

These two books by Burgin and Tabrizian provide useful markers in the emergence and development of the project of visual cultural studies in theory and practice, and the importance of photographic discourse within it. For those working in the field of visual cultural studies the question of agency and of the relationship between theories, histories and politics became increasingly urgent in the political climate of the 1980s and 1990s. Post-structuralism, with its double emphasis on historical discourse and human desire, provided a means of resisting the rigid division of 'theoretical sophistication versus historical description, attention to historical text versus social context, imaginative, subjective interpretation versus objective, true description' [see Spiegel cited in McGrath 2002: 8–9].

History and Discourse

Discourse offered a more fluid understanding of the relationship between such dichotomies. 'Discurrere', as Martin Jay reminds us, literally means 'a running around in all directions' [1993: 16]. It can be internally contradictory and it is dispersed; it is both systematic and unsystematic and resists the fantasy of a narrative logic. The study of discourse aims to link previously unconnected cultural sites. Discourse cuts across comfortable boundaries and is not totally coherent. However, as Kluge puts it (speaking of film) understanding completely is a kind of cognitive, conceptual imperialism that colonises its objects. 'If I have understood everything then something has been emptied out' [1981–82: 211].

Meaning and knowledge are, of necessity, incomplete, not scientific. Discourse allows for direction without a predetermined destination; it enables us to blur boundaries without burning our bridges [see Braidotti 1994: 1–39]. The question is one of how to

keep the notion of discourse sufficiently open, attentive to contingency and inconsistency and to argue against the desire for closure. This demands that we look both beyond and beneath the threshold of the already visible. It means abandoning safety nets and taking the risk of producing something that we do not already know.

In this sense I wanted to utilise both structural and post-structural approaches within a reconfigured historical and geographical context. In *Seeing her Sex*, my intention was to examine how a cluster of scopic régimes bring language across in order to produce a new visual rhetoric. I attempt to negotiate a space between the social and the cultural, the real and representation in order to understand discursivity not as the opposite of reality, but simply as reality as we know it [Shildrick 1997: 95]. As Joan Scott argues, when the ‘reality effect’ is either dispensed with entirely, or offered as incontestable truth, we have reached the end of history [2001: 88]. The problem, Antoinette Burton suggests, will not be solved by ‘recourse to the redeeming power of the social’. For her, the important question is ‘when and how the social in social history gets ascribed to the “archive”, by which historians tend to mean “hard data”, whether in the form of national repositories’ institutional records or some kinds of “documentary” evidence, while the cultural is identified in very general terms with the linguistic turn, which is taken to mean the realm of language and/or the symbolic’ [2001: 65]. However, as she points out, the archive does not contain raw data, only objects that are always, already textual in nature. The binarism of either/ or must be resisted and replaced with a more dynamic both/and. The point is to re-think the relationship between the terms. Burton continues, ‘[T]hat the archive and the linguistic turn are presumed to be antithetical points to the considerable limitations of the debate, as well as a certain fashionable willingness to use postmodernism as a whipping-post for all that is allegedly “wrong” with contemporary scholarship’ [2001: 65–6].

The concept of post-modernity is to be thanked for lessening our often misplaced over-confidence in the truth, the fact, the real; for casting radical doubt on a conceited belief that we can grasp things as they really are, when the plain truth is, however, that we cannot. History, in the last instance, is not knowable in its totality. It is the inaccessible

Real, an absent cause [see Ziarek 2001: 96]. And while the archive must not be dispensed with, it is not the source of absolute, final truth either. What it contains are the textual traces of material lives which are then fashioned, by people, into narratives that are necessarily incomplete, fractured. It is in the spaces between objects and words, and through contextualisation, that historical meaning is created. In this sense I take documentary study to be the place where ‘imagination encounters and tries to come to terms with reality’ [Coles 1992: 267]. And in most languages, as Le Goff notes, the term history ‘denotes both historical science and an imaginary story’ [1992: 120].

The articles and essays, as well as my book, examine and develop arguments that are always located in, but also move beyond, the archive. These essays are attempts to try and imaginatively re-think questions of representation and discursive formations, in order to foreground how identities are forged culturally and historically. As feminist and social historians know only too well, history is not simply waiting to be discovered but must be made, brought into being, created. Moreover, as I demonstrate, identities are both made and destroyed through history. Yet the unknowability of history, or indeed of identity, of where we have come from and who we are, is not simply problematic, but a passionate resource for a journey towards a future that might be different from the present.

History and Identity

In an important essay, ‘Cultural Identity and Cinematic Representation’ [1982], Stuart Hall offers some directions for embarking on that journey. Although speaking specifically of Caribbean identity, he makes clear a generally applicable point about the crucial relationship between history, identity and representation. In the opening pages he states that there are at least two different ways of thinking about *cultural* identity (note the adjectival form). The first, he says:

‘defines cultural identity in terms of one, shared culture, a sort of collective “one true self”, hiding inside the many other, more

superficial or artificially imposed “selves” which people with a shared culture and ancestry hold in common. Within the terms of this definition, our cultural identities reflect the common historical experiences and shared cultural codes which provide us, as “one people,” with stable, unchanging and continuous frames of reference and meaning, beneath the shifting divisions and vicissitudes of our actual history’ [Hall 1989: 69].

The second, he describes as ‘a related but different view of cultural identity which qualifies, even if it does not replace, the first’ [Hall 1989: 35]. This distinction is crucial. Hall, rightly, will not dismiss the importance of the first for those groups who have been dispossessed of their history. However, for Hall, imagination is equally as important as experience, and here he means more specifically imagination that is fuelled by, but not only confined to, experience:

‘[Cultural identity] belongs to the future as much as the past. It is not something which already exists, transcending place, time, history and culture.... Far from being eternally fixed in some essentialised past, cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories, but like everything which is historical, they undergo constant trans-formation. Far from being fixed in some essentialised past, they are subject to the “play” of history, culture and power. Far from being grounded in a mere “recovery” of the past, which is waiting to be found, and which, when found, will secure our sense of ourselves into eternity, identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past.’ [Hall 1989: 70].

History is that process of narration, and our agency matters. Identities are not outwith history, but embodied in a particular time and place. Hall’s point is that identity is not

natural and unchanging, but cultural and contingent. It does not pre-exist its invocation in the present. Thus the formation of any identity is a political *process*. We are positioned by discourse but, equally, we can, and indeed must, position ourselves; we must both claim our histories and simultaneously make our identities.

Feminism and post-colonialism, as both political practices and theoretical activities, have re-thought the relationship between language and the body, discourse and experience, theory and politics. Both have refused to separate out a politics of practical engagement from a more theoretically driven, academic debate. Neither can afford to ignore academic theory, or reject political practice. And while experience is not, in Annette Kuhn's words, 'the trump card of authenticity', it cannot, and indeed should not, be perceived as something to be suspicious of, or that needs to be overcome [2002: 33]. Only those groups who have a relatively secure knowledge of their past, who have not been dispossessed of their history and who see their experiences being re-iterated and re-presented, can afford to ignore experience. As Luce Irigaray puts it, 'to deconstruct certainly, but that already represents a luxury for whoever has not built a world' [Irigaray 2002: 4]. For those who have to construct their own history from the ashes of the past, experience cannot, and must not, be ignored. It is vital to survival. The task, Hall suggests is not over-privilege one or other side of the equation, but to recognise the limits of each and leave room for the interplay of both. Theoretical deconstruction should, and must, be brought together with the material reality of experience. Paul Connerton states, 'our experiences of the present largely depends upon our knowledge of the past...our images of the past commonly serve to legitimate a present social order' [1989: 3]. Yet, as I have tried to demonstrate, it need not be so.

The past, as Hall knows, is not recuperable; it is not common, unchanging, stable, and, moreover, neither are we. All meanings are of necessity post-meanings, meanings after the event and historical events are themselves, arrested moments, caesura [see Cadava 1997: xx-xxii]. There are simply no originary moments, no essences, no identities without difference, whether of history or of ourselves [see McGrath 2002: 9]. This is a question of a human need to be actively *located* in history, to have knowledge of our

past, rather than be *incorporated* into dominant narratives. Like Hall, I argue that identity must be an open-ended, politicised process in which we accept that while we have been, and are, positioned within historical discourse, we need not live through the identities that are ascribed to us by other, more powerful, groups. Hall argues that of necessity this is an ongoing process of trans-formation and rather than having a position we must actively position ourselves. Identities, or subject positions, are not transcendental and universal, but immanent and contingent and as Allen and Young suggest, 'a politics that seeks to enact social change needs a concept of agency' [1989: 10]. It cannot *do* without one. Moreover, the human subject is 'not an abstract knower, but a living actor that makes itself what it is within a particular historical context [ibid.: 3]. As I demonstrate in my work, and as Hall argues, feminism and post-colonialism are politics of invention, not of nostalgia.

At a more fundamental level, an anti-essentialist (but not anti-humanist) approach to the question of identity means accepting that while we have not created ourselves, we are not deprived of creativity [see Benjamin 1995: 5]. It does mean accepting that 'from the moment we are born', the hard truth is 'that we have lost our origins' [Braidotti 1994: 14]. It is this that creates what Rosi Braidotti calls a 'generative void' [1991: 99]. This is not a deficiency, some absence or loss. 'It does not constitute a lacuna that must be filled. It is nothing more, nothing less, than the unfolding of a space in which it is once more possible to think' [Foucault cited in Braidotti 1991: 1]. For Braidotti, this is a creative space opened up by the desire to know, which is always a desire for what is not yet known. Thus knowledge is always marked as much by a dark and shadowy unconscious as by the blinding light of reason. As Hall says, reflecting on his own narrative of displacement, 'it is worth remembering that all discourse is 'placed' (or we might say situated) and the heart has its reasons' [Hall 1989: 69]. Hall deliberately suggests that feeling (the heart as the seat of emotion and feeling) and thought (the mind as the seat of rational thought) are not separate, but embodied. The heart does have its reasons and the realm of affect, emotion, feeling, human experience must not, cannot, and should not be subordinate. Hall refuses to separate culture from other forms of identity; refuses the ultimately reactionary call to redefine political problems of social

divisions as merely 'cultural' while acknowledging that images are not immaterial but a question of human rights [see also Strathern: 1999: 129].

Hall argues from both the heart and mind. He comes close to providing what Flax calls 'an adequate account of subjectivity' as one which would have to do justice to a being who is simultaneously 'embodied, fantasising, rational, language-using, related to others, endowed with a distinctive temperament and inner-world, socially constituted and desiring' [1993: 118]. This is both a passionate and political, emotional and intellectual account of human subjectivity and of historical identity. Thus, Hall steers a critical path that resists an essentialist identity and the worse, ultimately disabling, extremes of anti-humanism. The uncertainties and vagaries of histories and identities are not simply problematic, but creative resources for what, borrowing from Williams, we might call a journey of cultural and political hope [see Williams 1983].

Our minds, our identities and our histories are not already made up, but are, always 'strategic political invocations' which are neither rooted in bodies nor in tradition. The 'categories of identity we take for granted as rooted in physical bodies (gender and race) or our cultural heritages (ethnic or religious) are, in fact, retrospectively linked to these roots; they don't follow naturally or predictably from them' [Scott 2001: 285].

Commenting on the work of Aimé Césaire, James Clifford puts it like this: 'the roots of tradition are cut and retied, collective symbols appropriated from external influence. For Césaire, culture and identity are inventive and mobile. They need not take root in ancestral plots; they live by pollination, by (historical) transplanting' [1988: 15]. All cultures, and we might add, all identities, are the results of borrowings, mixtures.

Differences, ultimately, have to be made; they are performative. Strategic political invocations are simply those moments 'in which discourse becomes productive....[and] performativity is that aspect of discourse that has the capacity to produce what it names...performativity is the discursive mode through which ontological effects are installed' [Butler 1996: 112]. It is the installing of those 'ontological effects' that I now want to discuss. Questions of identities and bodies have been at the heart of my work as I

have tried to understand how images and institutions, practices and histories position observers, whether in front of or behind the camera, as men or women, hetero- or homosexual, black or white. But, as I have shown, it is this that also allows us to position ourselves differently, and to suggest that there are other histories to be written, and theories to be developed, that are more adequate to the needs of the present.

3. PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE

In the Realm of the Senses: Towards a History of Human Geography

It is through the concept of embodiment that a growing literature on ‘sensual scholarship’ has emerged over the last ten years [see Stoller 1997]. Such work, originating in cinematic and photographic practice or from other disciplines, notably anthropology, has encouraged scholars to argue against ‘the denigration of vision’ and to challenge the idea that sight is necessarily, or only, objectifying, distancing and disengaged [see Jay: 1993]. While it is certainly true that sight is privileged in Western culture, it is not separate from the other senses. Embodied engagement is simultaneously psychic and somatic. Sensuous theories argue that films and photographs quite literally mediate between ourselves and our world, keeping us in touch with and bringing us into sensuous contact, rather than simply keeping us away, at a distance.

This more philosophical work has placed the human body at its decentred heart. The two disciplines from which this work emerged, feminism and post-structuralism, raised vital questions about the relationship between vision, knowledge and bodies. Following this, or rather implicitly raised within it, was the question of the scholar’s own body which has, albeit slowly, re-entered the framework of knowledge.

Scholars undertake an intellectual itinerary, a passage that is cut through the world, made by way of images, objects, bodies. Sensual approaches argue for the need to bring theoretical analysis together with subjective experiences, arguing that to look is always in the realm of the other senses: smell, taste, sound and touch. These senses aim to bring into play private memory and public history. This more phenomenological, intersubjective approach to visual cultural studies acknowledges the sensory, emotional and imaginative dimensions of looking as a sensuous archaeology of knowledge written on, with and through the body.

The limits of Language

Language, it is argued, is not an adequate model for understanding human experience. Images can counter 'the anaesthetising influence of language' [Stoller 1997: 53]. They often either bypass or move us beyond words to tears or laughter. Words can make us stop and think, but they can also cut us off from our other senses. The challenge is to find both new languages and images that are more inventive. Such approaches acknowledge the space of the image as a place of political imagination and sensual communication. In this sense bodies and images become interwoven. Visual anthropologists like David MacDougall make a powerful argument for how the visual 'opens more directly onto the sensorium than written texts' [1998: 262]. We enter into the space and the image enters into our body, not simply our head. Here hand and heart (rather than vision and voice) suggest that there are other ways of knowing and being in the world. Michael Polanyi calls this 'tacit knowing'. For Polanyi, the things we know are perhaps 'more than we can tell' [Polanyi cited in MacDougall 1998: 264]. 'The unsaid is the common ground of social relations, communication and ethnography. It is also the domain of the image' [Polanyi cited in MacDougall 1998: 274]. Durkheim, speaking of the nature of a concept, puts it like this: 'which of us knows all the words of the language he speaks and the entire significance of each?' [Durkheim 1976: 434-5]. We need both a knowledge of, and a feeling for, language.

And, this is how Nan Goldin describes the process of making a photograph: 'It's as if my hand were a camera. If it were possible I'd want no mechanism between me and the moment of photographing. The camera is as much part of my everyday life as talking or eating or sex. The instant of photographing instead of creating distance, is a moment of clarity and emotional connection for me' [1986: 6].

For Goldin, photography is a form of communication. A photograph is a caress, a form of tenderness, a way of making contact with and touching someone. Photographs are fleshy and photography is a practice that extends beyond the photograph's frame [Gundlach 1998: 6]. In her work the view she presents us with 'is not that of a detached

observer' but rather 'an intimate view from close up' [ibid.]. In her recently published book, *The Skin of the Film*, Laura Marks distinguishes (while acknowledging their relation) between optic and haptic visuality.³ She argues that while *opsis* is detached, and maintains a distance from its object, *hapsis* presses close to, has contact with. In the latter, the surface of the film, video, or for that matter the photograph, is more like skin, (and less like a screen) that brings 'its audience into contact with the material forms of memory' [2000: 162–164]. Goldin and Marks understand vision as embodied, sensory. For Goldin 'real meaning is an invocation of the color, smell, sound and physical presence, the density and flavor of life' [ibid.].

I conclude with this example of visual practice in order to attempt to develop a more dynamic understanding of what it means to know. There is of course 'nothing known except by a knowing subject' [Adorno in Arato and Gebhardt 1978: 504]. By the 1990s questions of both ethics and sensual scholarship emerge within feminist discourse.⁴ Knowledge, it is argued, is embodied; it is contingent and contextual. We have contact with, rather than distance from, the image. Images touch us, invoke feelings as much as thoughts. We cannot always put these sensory feelings into words, but as I have argued, this does not absolve us of the responsibility to find a more adequate language for expressing the sensible and to fail to do so is to contribute to the continued absence of the senses from discussions on vision and visuality. Photography, like cinema, is a discourse that 'exists on the threshold of language and language must bring it across in order to have a conversation with it' [Marks 2000: xvi]. Marks implies that this must be a dialogic process in which one or other side is not privileged.

Such work has grown out of an antipathy to the disembodied approach of the humanities within which the human body had become alienated, suspect, denigrated. In its drive for fixed standards, the human sciences subordinated body to mind, emotion to reason. This forecloses crucial sensory aspects of knowledge, creating a kind of 'symbolic evisceration', an incapacity to acknowledge the wide diversity of our different modes of

³ Marks borrows the term from the art historian Alois Riegl who worked with textiles.

⁴ See Jane Gallop, Elizabeth Grosz, Jane Flax, and Eva Ziarek.

knowing as processes [Feldman cited in Stoller 1997: 82]. Recent debates have foregrounded the question of how we come to know rather than simply what it is we know. Knowledge and vision are thus embodied, affective, visceral, 'motivated by fantasy, by denial and by desire' as much as by reality, truth and reason [Rogoff 2000: 27]. Representations here are conceptualised less as objects and more as full of social and cultural relations, simultaneously producing our subjectivity as we endow them with meaning. This is a dynamic concept of how images literally mediate, allow us to communicate, to impart and share meanings with each other. It is a reciprocal process, reminding us, as John Durham-Peters does, that 'our interaction will never be a meeting of cogitos but at its best may be dance in which we sometimes touch' [1999: 268]. Durham-Peters' choice of dance as the analogy for communication is deliberate. It is a reminder both of the inadequacies of language for describing certain embodied practices and, of course that it takes (at least) two to tango. Communication is, even then, a hit and miss affair and standing on other people's toes might also be a necessary part of the process.

Sensual approaches to scholarship have sought to create new modes of connection between reason and emotion, seeing and touching, thinking and feeling. Here, senses are connected, non-hierarchically inter-linked. They are not distinct activities. We think through and with our bodies and we are touched and moved by images. Thus such approaches seek to explore the power of affect. This is not simply a matter of replacing one set of supposedly outmoded concepts with another, but to argue for an expanded understanding that acknowledges the relationship between corporeal, visceral emotion, and cognitive analytic reason. It marks a reinstatement of the body arguing against a language that is bloodless, dull, drained of all life and passion. Instead, what is argued for is more 'inspired language' [Lévinas 1998: 109]. Inspired vision, too, has an important role to play. To have meaning, knowledge must be brought to life and life can, and must, as Goldin shows us, be brought to knowledge.

As I suggested in the opening section, feminism has, of necessity, argued for thinking across differing registers of life, labour and language. Here epistemology is, first and

last, ontological. We need to develop the ability to work alongside and between images and words, rather than simply work on images (hence the reason for placing Goldin's tactile approach in this section, in order to find a means of bringing thought into contact with an image). This may well mean 'caressing rather than grasping' [see Davis 1993: 270]. Knowledge here is conceptualised not as possession, but as empathy. Caressing is not about appropriation; it is not about capturing something. In the caress, as Lévinas argues, it is not clear who touches and who is touched, and perhaps this is closer to the processes of viewing and touching as reciprocal process dispersed throughout the skin [Lévinas 1987: 116–118].

The Problem of Experience

Through such embodied approaches, history and reason, memory and feeling, have come into a different alignment. However, memories and feelings, as opposed to explanation and analysis, seem at first sight to inhabit an altogether different register. As Annette Kuhn puts it, 'emotion and memory bring into play a category in which film theory – and cultural theory more generally – is ill-equipped to deal: experience' [2002: 33]. Vivian Sobchack points out that experience is most commonly perceived as a 'mushy, soft term – a remainder (and reminder) of the sloppy liberal humanism that retrospectively characterised cinema studies before it was transformed by the scientific methods of the technically precise vocabularies of structuralism and semiotics' [1992: xiv].

The response to liberal humanism has largely been that of an ultimately disabling anti-humanism. This has proved inadequate. Scott Warren, for example has been critical of 'the ignorance and destruction of subjectivity that has generally characterized Marxism in our century' [Warren cited in Sobchack 1992: xvii]. While the deconstruction of sovereign subjectivity was certainly necessary, the outcome as Ken Plummer suggests, has been that the subject has been 'eliminated altogether, the human being becoming an epistemological disaster' [2001: 5]. The point is that neither liberal- or anti-humanism is satisfactory. Rather, the task is to think between the two terms; to re-think the relationship between experience and knowledge and what it means to be human. More than seventy years ago, Walter Benjamin's incitement was to 'undo the alienation of the

corporeal sensorium, to restore the instinctual power of the human body's senses for the sake of humanity's self preservation and to do this, not by avoiding the [then] new technologies, but by passing through them' [Buck–Morss 1992: 5]. The senses, according to Sobchack are 'different openings onto the world that co-operate as *a unified system of access*. The lived body does not have senses – it is, rather, sensible' [1992: 77].

The desire for fixed standards in science (and human and social sciences are not exempt from this) is strong precisely because of 'the frightening indeterminacy of experience which constantly challenges the idea that there are such standards' [Hastrup cited in Stoller 1997: 91]. To experience is often to be powerfully overwhelmed in a way that is not reducible to reason alone. It is a difficult reminder of our own histories, of the fact that we have learned through our body, as well as that there are 'no facts without value, no reason without emotion, and no knowledge without experience' [Schweder cited in Stoller 1997: 91]. Psychoanalysis, as a bridge between internal and external worlds, is important here.

This need not be frightening, but enabling, exciting and enlivening. It offers an opportunity to develop an expressive vocabulary that allows us to do this. Looking is experiential. Photographs as tokens of exchange, literally pass *through* hands; they are not just looked at, but touched, pressed close to the body, even kissed and in this sense they are more akin to secular icons, curious marvels, than realist documents. The paradoxical status of the photograph is that it is both icon and index. Photographs are images that are perhaps best understood as 'a certain existence which is more than that which the idealists call a *representation*, but less than that which the realist calls a *thing*, an existence placed half-way between the "thing" and the "representation"' [Bergson 1988: 9]. This is not unlike Derrida's concept of communication as 'envois' or sendings that never reach their final destination nor return to their point of origin [Derrida cited in Jay 1993: 508]. In this sense photography is a *medium* of visual communication through which we learn about others' vision and share our own. Photographs are simultaneously spaces we inhabit and objects that inhabit us. They are places in which we can begin to

think differently about the material and conceptual, symbolic and sensual worlds we inhabit.

Epilogue

Photography, as I have argued, does have an ignoble history as a technology of ethnographic domination and control whether imperial, colonial, racial or sexual. It is, however, equally a form of counter-memory, a means of creating 'a sensory and collective horizon for people trying to live a life in the interstices of modernity' [Kracauer 1997: xxxiv].

Siegfried Kracauer argued against the view of photography and cinema as simply or only instrumental. While 'photographability' had, even by the 1920s, 'become the condition under which reality is constituted and perceived', both cinema and photography still offered their 'share of exhilarating and liberatory impulses' [ibid.: xvii; xxvi]. because of their ability to picture 'transient material life, life at its most ephemeral' [ibid.: xlix; 19]. For writers like Kracauer, photography, and cinema, equally provide the possibility of 'an alternative public sphere' [ibid.: xxxiv]. I want to preserve this idea because it is still relevant to the present. The global culture we now live in is predominantly a visual and aural culture. Our eyes and ears have been, and are, shaped by powerful corporations and there is growing evidence that 'the psychic world', as Richard Kearney puts it 'is as colonized as the physical world by the image industry' [1988: 1]. Yet, as Kracauer suggests, it is much too simplistic to suggest that this is all that happens.

Our task, now, will be 'to find the forms of language, visual, verbal, that will allow for the connections between cultures – of affiliation, recognition, antagonism – without dissipating the voices in which they clash' [Rose 1996: 149]. Jacqueline Rose suggests that the solution will not be pluralism. 'The rhetoric of pluralism can also be a way of concealing the depths of our conflicts. It can also be a way of promoting them' [ibid.]. For writers like Rose, there can be no way of understanding political (and here I include cultural) identities 'without letting fantasy into the frame...fantasy, far from being the

antagonist of public, social being plays a central, constitutive role in the modern world of states and nations' [ibid.: 4].

In a contemporary analysis of culture and communication, John Durham-Peters suggests that we 'should eschew the project of assigning everyone a homeland in the world of representations...and instead join the project of attacking the inequitable allocation of the opportunity to dream and follow dreams...[we should] move from a hermeneutics of suspicion to a pragmatics of justice...the only antidote to insulting fantasies is the right of reply'. Arguing against censorship and a cultural asceticism, he suggests that we need 'a public sphere, not a smashing of images... a conflict of representations, not a purity of depictions' [1999b: 37-38].

Such a vision, or voice, will not be univocal; it will necessarily be imperfect. It will be as much about the power of the unconscious fantasy as conscious reason. It will have to be, an act of imagination rather than a simple return to realism (although, realism has not yet had its day). Cultural experimentation however, need not be at odds with politics or ethics. Shohat and Stam usefully remind us that images are representations not only in the mimetic sense, but also in the *political* sense' [1994: 180, my emphasis]. The photograph's frame thus 'marks a *provisional* limit; its content points beyond that frame, referring to a multitude of real life phenomena which cannot possibly be encompassed in their entirety' [Kracauer 1969: 58, my emphasis].

The question then might be how to expand the limits of the frames we have and really perceive them as merely provisional in order to produce a different picture.

Deconstruction, as Derrida suggested, 'must neither reframe nor dream of the pure and simple absence of the frame [Derrida cited in Carroll 1987: 131]. Deconstructive analysis can, and indeed must now be brought together with material realities. Modernity, whether late, post or liquid is still wrestling to find answers to the question with which it arrived: 'how to deal with the people' [Chow 1995: 14]. In essence the crisis of late modernity provides an opportunity to re-think and re-evaluate what modernity not only what modernity is, but what it might be. And this necessarily entails a re-thinking of

questions of political representation and cultural identity. As I have argued images are a question of human rights and visual cultural studies has a key role to play here.

For writers such as Durham-Peters the problem of communication (and this must include visual communication) is therefore now less a question of semantics, more a question of politics and ethics: the demands of morality and justice. He suggests 'we should be less worried about how signs arouse divergent meanings than the conditions that keep us attending to our neighbours and other beings different from us' [1999a: 268– 9]. Recent cultural theory urges us to think beyond either 'transcendental sameness' or 'the most dehumanising exile and estrangement, an otherness in which the humanity of the other cannot be recognised' [see Levin 1993: 18]. Narratives of either total homogenization, or of absolute otherness are unsatisfactory. Moreover such narratives have their roots in the modern body with the increasing separation between inner and outer self and between self and other. The work that I have presented here is rooted in such political and ethical debates. I argue that feminism, as a theoretical field and political practice, has placed the female body at its decentred heart (it is of course, on the left). However, as I have argued, this body can and must only be understood in its historical materiality [McGrath 2002: 8]. Moreover, it can only be understood in relation to other bodies.

From Then to Now

How then do we move from what is to what ought to be? This is a task of transformation and a question of ethics. It is a question of the relationship of freedom and obligation. This is what Eva Ziarek terms 'an ethos of becoming and an ethos of alterity' which is necessary in order to develop a 'non-appropriative relation to the other' [2001: 2]. Similarly, Paul Stoller defines lived experience as, 'one's implication in the life of others' [1992: 215]. It is we ourselves who must be responsible and accountable, in the present, here and now.

Moreover, this is a responsibility to those with whom one wishes to communicate and the historian, according to Corbin, 'must strive, at the very least, to identify what it is that conditions the frontier between the spoken and the unspoken' [Corbin 1995: 190]. Or, we

might say, the seen and the unseen. Vision and voice must be given to those archives and claimed by those subjects who have until recently remained below the threshold of vision. This means rummaging documents and images out of long-forgotten presses; of re-arranging temporal sequences; of making connections across various registers.

In the end, 'the chance of human togetherness, depends on the rights of the stranger, not on the question of who – the State of tribe – is entitled to decide who strangers are' [Bauman in Werbner 1997: 57]. Bauman draws upon writers such as Lévinas who constantly remind us that 'with the other our accounts are never settled' [Lévinas 1993: 125]. For Lévinas 'the humanity of the human is not to be found in knowledge, but in ethics. More important than epistemology, ethics is the demand for morality and justice' [see Cohen 2001: 5].

Politics and this includes cultural politics, does not, in itself, give meaning. It 'creates or refuses conditions of possibility' [Giard in de Certeau 1997: xiv]. Creating such conditions, as well as refusing others, is crucial in the present political climate of new patriarchies and racisms. The task of a new visual cultural studies is to 'redefine both what it *is* to see and what *there is* to see' [Latour 1986: 10]. Looking is always an act that involves subjects and objects; seeing is historical, and political, social and cultural. We need to keep looking, while bearing in mind that vision is embodied; it is always in the realm of the senses and therefore our ways of seeing must be linked to our ways of being. The final arbiter in any philosophy is of course, not how we think, but what we do [Hacking 1983: 31].

So, while we consume the products and values of our society through our eyes and ears, this is not all that we do. Appadurai contends that the view that 'the mechanical acts of reproduction largely reprimed ordinary people for work is far too simple....there is growing evidence that the consumption of mass media throughout the world often provokes resistance, irony, selectivity, and, in general, agency' [1996: 7]. How do we produce other subjunctive images? These will emerge from the space between how we are written by culture and how we want to write, transform, and re-make our culture.

Images, and other ways of watching, listening and writing about them are places in which we can explore the past in order to allow a different future to come into being.

Feminist epistemology is a transitional, transformative knowledge which has simultaneously resisted and acknowledged what divides us: our human differences, as much as our common bonds. It does not aim to eradicate those differences, or to assimilate them into a pre-defined norm. Feminism, as Haraway puts it, is about interpretation, translation, stuttering and the partly understood [2000:195 – 6]. It, too, is imperfect. However, ‘to make connections one needs not knowledge, certainty or even ontology, but rather a trust that something may come out, though one is not completely sure what’ [Rajchman 2000: 7].

In a spirit of hope in an age of accelerated transition, of rapidly shifting identities and horizons, incompatible ideas have to be kept alive. I would argue that this is what good enough, imaginative theories and images do. Imagination, generally seen as something childish, is often underestimated. Political imagination is about the power of transformation, to conjure up, evoke, to provide spaces in and through which we can begin to think not only about ourselves, our own subjectivities, but about the complex material and conceptual worlds we inhabit with others. Perhaps as Stoller suggests ‘the key to doing research in complex transnational spaces devolves less from methods, multidisciplinary teams or theoretical frameworks – although these are, of course important – than from the supplements of the imagination’ [1999: 703]. These are the spaces in which we all now live, where ‘difference is encountered in the adjoining neighbourhood [and] the familiar turns up at the end of the earth’ [Clifford 1988: 14]. Dan Rose’s suggestion is this: ‘In terms of the future, our link to the past must be broken experientially by reversing our methodological practices. Such reversal would foster ethnographies of intimacy, not distance; of stories, not models; of possibilities, not stabilities; and of contingent understandings, not detachable conclusions’ [1990: 6].

I will end then with my own contingent and undetached conclusion. A little over a year ago I went to visit the Archives of Glasgow City council, now located in the Mitchell

Library. The old part of the library has marble clad walls, gold paint-work, polished chequer-board floors, columns, and displays a certain civic pride which is more akin to the eastern bloc than the UK. A concierge, still, sits at a desk as one enters; attendants are uniformed in city council livery; the water in the toilets is scalding hot. As I stepped through the door, I was overwhelmed by the smell, a heady mix of disinfectant (Jeyes) and polish (lavender). This potent mix was, is, the smell of civic pride and sanitary improvement that I recalled from my childhood. It was a pungent reminder of the ways in which history, as Corbin puts it, usually 'comes deodorized' [1996: v].

It is a labyrinthine journey to the council archives located on the top floor of the modern extension. Here there are carpeted Axminster hallways in swirls of green (catholic) and orange (protestant) civic colours and, I found myself thinking only in Glasgow would you find a soft drinks machine at the entrance to a manuscript room. Moreover this was not sporting not the usual Coca-Cola, but Scotland's national drink, lurid, orange iron-bru; made, as the slogan says, from girders, (and hence its bright orange colour: rust).

All this was odd, but nothing could prepare me for what lay behind the archive doors: The place had the appearance of having been recently burgled, chaos reigned; papers strewn everywhere, maps, books piled up, desks overflowing – this was the paper equivalent of rust: dust. And instead of civic pride this was the space of civic disintegration. There were no call slips; one merely wrote down what one wanted to look at on a scrap of paper – of which there was an abundance – and handed it to the librarian; the computerised catalogue was erratic and probably dated from the days when Atari was at the forefront of computer technology. And so, eventually, I ordered photographs, letters, pamphlets and then waited and waited; several hours later they arrived, delivered by someone who appeared to be an odd-job man, as dishevelled as the archives; a length of coarse string hung out his back pocket. Kafka came to mind; maybe this is what an archive really should be like, instead of a clean, tidy, air-conditioned and efficiently ordered space.

I had plenty of time to think and after I got over my irritation of thinking this really is not good enough, I realised that here was tangible, material evidence that if history is made, it is also unmade and this is not a tidy or clean process. Efficient order conceals, represses random disorder, disguising the terrible, awful jumble of papers, pictures, objects that make up any archive. It reminded me that history is also a dirty business: chaotic and contingent; and that 'the imposition of logic or narrative on history is itself', as Joan Scott says, 'a fantasy' [2001: 289]. Archives are eccentric, mad spaces made up not only of stuff that was deliberately kept but random bits and pieces. They are places of historical absence as much as presence with their warehousing and 'stockpiling of fragments that are formed around a nothing' [Kracauer 1993: 431]. It is from such debris that we must construct history.

But perhaps more importantly it made me aware of the sensory aspects of researching. Serematakis asks 'What happens to the senses when theories haul meaning from social institutions to material artefacts and then back again as if the dense and embodied communication between persons and things were only a quick exchange between surfaces?' [1994: 134]. The body is not a surface (as my experience showed) but is penetrated by sounds, smells, memories and history and thought is made not only of words, but also of flesh and blood. Photographs, letters are handled and touched, sniffed, not just looked at; any experience is an encounter with a picture, alongside it; images smell; they conjure sounds; resonate with meanings which penetrate, and can overwhelm the body. Feelings are aroused. These sensory qualities are firmly downplayed in academic work.

What happened in Glasgow was a kind of sensory overload that made me both lose the place and find another space in which to have second thoughts and mixed feelings. I was thrown back on my own resources and reminded that memory is a kind of archive that skips time. It is, as Teshome Gabriel says, 'history read backward' [1999: 80]. My experience was overwhelming; unmanageable, indeed very frightening. I was not in control of my material. Unlike most archives which are dedicated to reassuring the researcher that their materials are clean, as if untouched by other hands, methodically

accessible, thus relieving them of the burden of his or her own body, this made me all too aware of bodies, my own and those others in a long forgotten past. Archives are commonly neat spaces where textual volume dominates and the body of the researcher, small and insignificant against the vast weight of history, virtually disappears. (Doors are usually very heavy, staircases wide, buildings clean). And so, when we make history, we do so with our body not just our mind. This is a reciprocal process that means not only taking meaning from, but the giving of historical meaning to what has previously been rendered inadmissible. And, as Paul Stoller has suggested, history in many non-western cultures is 'not a subject or text to be mastered, but a force that consumes the body of those who speak it' [1997: xvi]. This is the flip-side of the smooth, seamless world of texts and images and authorial voices that acknowledges the overwhelming power of history and memory to transform the body, as indeed it did my own and, consequently, the power of the body to transform history. History begins in the here and now, at home, in our own bodies, in our hearts as much as our minds. Perhaps this is a good enough place to end and to begin again to create a vital, visual cultural studies in which all has not already been said, or perhaps more importantly, done.

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