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An Acoustic Journey

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Every people felt threatened by a people without a country

(Jean Genet, *Prisoner of Love*)

In the current political and cultural landscape a crucial shift has been emerging, and maturing: a shift in the (dis/re)articulation of identity and difference. Such articulations remain informed by an awareness of both the enabling and disenabling potentials of the divisions *within* and *between* cultures. Constantly guarded, reinforced, destroyed, set up, and reclaimed, boundaries not only express the desire to free/to subject one practice, one culture, one national community from/to another, but also expose the extent to which cultures are products of the continuing struggle between official and unofficial narratives: those largely circulated in favour of the State and its policies of inclusion, incorporation and validation, as well as of exclusion, appropriation and dispossession. Yet never has one been made to realize as poignantly as in these times how thoroughly hybrid historical and cultural experiences are, or how radically they evolve within apparently conflictual and incompatible domains, cutting across territorial and disciplinary borders, defying policy-oriented rationales and resisting the simplifying action of nationalist closures. The named 'other' is never to be found merely over there and outside oneself, for it is always over here, between Us, within Our discourse, that the 'other' becomes a nameable reality. Thus, despite all the conscious attempts to purify and exclude, cultures are far from being unitary, as they have always owed their existence more to differences, hybridities and alien elements than they really care to acknowledge.

MIDWAY TO NOWHERE

As the twentieth century has been referred to as 'the century of refugees and prisoners', so the 1980s might well be termed the 'decade of refugees and the homeless masses'. No longer an extraordinary occurrence that requires a temporary solution, refugeeism has become a normative feature of our times. In 1945, the phenomenon was still mostly confined to Europe; today it is visible almost everywhere, including Africa, the Middle East, Latin America and Asia. Multi-faceted 'border wars' continue to be waged on an international scale, accompanied by an unavoidable hardening of frontiers, tightening of control, and multiplication of obstacles and aggressions at the borders themselves. A matter of life or death for many, the act of crossing overland and overseas to seek asylum in unknown territories is often carried out – especially in mass flight – as an escape alone, with no specific haven of refuge in mind. Thus, the creation of refugees remains bound to the historical forces and political events that precipitate it. It reflects a profound crisis in the policy of the major powers, the repercussions of which are made evident in the more specific, devastating crises of the millions of individuals directly affected. The myopic view that the refugee problem is Their problem and one on which Our taxpayers' money should not be wasted is no longer tenable. The tragedy of tidal waves of people driven from their homes by forces beyond their control keeps on repeating itself as victims of power re-alignments, cross-border hostilities and orgies of so-called 'ethnic cleansing' continue to grow to alarming proportions, and detention camps proliferate on the world map without gaining more than fitful, sporadic attention from the international community.

How does a journey start? What un/certainties compel one to take up, again, the by-now familiar question of 'Those Who Leave'; to depart (again) through the conditions of 'the Border', a 'place' so widely and readily referred to in the last few years that it already runs the risk of being reduced to yet another harmless catchword expropriated and popularized among progressive thinkers? To ask this question, here, is already to answer it. To speak about the concept of border-crossing as a major theme in contemporary cultural politics is, in a way, further to empty it, get rid of it, or else to let it drift; preventing it, thereby, from both settling down and being 'resettled'. One is bound through speaking and writing to assert one's ability to displace all attempts – including one's own – to

rehabilitate key concepts, for the politics of the word or the 'verbal struggle', as Mao called it, will never end. Words have always been used as weapons to assert order and to win political battles; yet, when their assertions are scrutinized, they reveal themselves, above all, as awkward posturings which tend to blot out the very reality they purport to convey. The listener or reader is then invited to engage in the vertiginous art of reading not so much between the lines as *between the words* themselves.

> *Whole nations don't become nomads by choice or because they can't keep still. We see them through the windows of aeroplanes or as we leaf through glossy magazines. The shiny pictures lend the camps an air of peace that diffuses itself through the whole cabin, whereas really they are just the discarded refuse of 'settled' nations. These, not knowing how to get rid of their 'liquid waste', discharge it into a valley or on to a hillside, preferably somewhere between the tropics and the equator . . . We oughtn't to have let their ornamental appearance persuade us the tents were happy places. We shouldn't be taken in by sunny photographs. A gust of wind blew the canvas, the zinc and the corrugated iron all away, and I saw the misery plain.*[1]

The journey starts with the discomforting memory of the 'discarded refuse of settled nations' which Jean Genet evoked in his attempt to recapture the years he spent with Palestinian soldiers in Jordan and Lebanon. *Refuge, refugee, refuse* . . . Genet's writing of his travel across identities and his erotic encounter with the 'other' – or more specifically the Palestinians (previously it was the Algerians and the Black Panthers) – appeared in a volume titled *Un Captif amoureux*. Significantly enough, the 'accurate' English translation of this title would have to be found somewhere between 'prisoner of love' and 'prisoner in love', embracing the passive-active action of both capturing and loving. This movement back and forth between maintaining/creating borders and undoing/passing over borders characterizes Genet's relationship with writing as well as with the people to whom he was passionately committed from the late 1960s until his death in 1986. His suicidal scepticism (isn't every critical autobiographical writing a way of surviving suicidally?), deployed with subtle humour, not only translates itself in the refusal to romanticize a struggle, its setting and its people, but also in the way the writer positions himself within a 'we' who, as in the above passage, safely 'see them through the windows of aeroplanes' and on the pages of 'glossy magazines'.

Entry into or exit from refugee status is, in many ways, neither voluntary nor simply involuntary. *I saw the misery plain.* In the past, attempts to reclassify this 'liquid waste' have always been carried out according to the interests of the settled nations involved. As in the case of the Boat People, the historical and official adaptation of such terms as 'displaced person,' 'illegal immigrant' or 'voluntary immigrant' – rather than 'refugee' – proved to be a useful device through which the host society could either endorse arguments by those at home who opposed giving entry to the influx of unwanted aliens, or deny the problem of refugees by hastily declaring them 'resettled', and hence equivalent to voluntary migrants. It seems adequate to say, therefore, that the resistance of many refugees to their being reclassified in a 'voluntary' category was not a resistance merely to the termination of direct assistance (as was often asserted among researchers and social workers), but rather to the denial of the state of indeterminateness and of indefinite unsettlement that characterizes the refugee's mode of survival. Here, refugeeism differs from voluntary immigration in that it does not have a *future* orientation (the utopia of material, social or religious *betterment*). Official re-labelling in this instance primarily means deciding who is worthy of humanitarian assistance from the international community, and who is not. Again, what seems constantly to be at stake is the problem of identification and of 'alignment' in the wider (religious, ideological, cultural, as well as class-, race-, and gender-determined) senses of the term. *Refuse.* Which side? But above all, which boundaries? Where does one place one's loyalties? How does one identify oneself?

> *As you walk or drive through the refugee camps, one phenomenon noticed after a while is the constant movement within the camps . . . the strolling seemed endless and the constant patternless flux of this tide of humanity was lulling, nearly hypnotic to watch.*[2]

Of the many movements of flight and migration witnessed across international borders, it was noted (somewhat patronizingly) that: 'The story of the Indochina refugees is the story of people *refused* – refused first and most painfully by their own governments, refused too often by neighboring countries where they sought temporary asylum and refused, initially at least, by the West and Japan, the only nations with the capacity and the heart to save them.'[3] Although feelings of gratitude for participation in a process of successful readjustment are never missing among Those Who Leave,

the 'midway to nowhere' malaise of the transit and camp period does not in any sense come to an end with resettlement. (The expression 'midway to nowhere' was used to characterize the transit situation of the Vietnamese refugees before they became immigrants in a specific country).[4] To the accusation that refugees are a burden to taxpayers, the dutiful response obtained among the 'unwelcomed guests' has been, faithfully enough, that: 'Most refugees have only one hope: "to have a job and become a tax payer"'.[5] Without endorsing the ostracizing connotations of a psychiatric diagnosis, such as the 'displacement syndrome' associated with psychological disorders among refugees, one can further state that this specific but elusive form of surviving is not a transitional malaise limited to 'long-stayers' (refugees whose prolonged stay in the camp – five to six years, or more – has often led to a situation of deteriorating morale).

The long-stayers' agonizing bind between *waiting* in uncertainty for the unknown and longing with fear for *returning* home continues to be experienced, albeit in different forms, even by those happily 'resettled'. A well-known example is that of the Hmong people among whom a 'sudden death syndrome' was said to prevail: a person, regardless of age or state of health, dies a sudden death during his or her sleep at night, without any apparent reason. Since the phenomenon could not be explained in medical terms, despite the autopsies that were carried out, the phenomenon has remained unnegotiable to Western science, and was unfailingly spoken about in the press as one of those mysterious, inscrutable phenomena of the Orient. Considered to be a reaction to the stress of both displacement and integration, this death-during-sleep is understood among the Vietnamese as the outcome of acute sadness: *buon thoi ruot*, or sad to the extent that one's bowels rot, as a common Vietnamese expression goes. A slightly different interpretation of the same phenomenon exists, however, among the Hmong, who say that the soul has taken flight during dreamtime and has here embarked on: a no-return journey.

YOU ARE THE BATTLEGROUND

> They knew just how to keep us in our place. And the logic was breathtakingly simple: If you win, you lose.
>
> (Henry Louis Gates, Jr, *Loose Canons*)

From one category, one label, to another, the only way to survive is to refuse. Refuse to become an integratable element. Refuse to allow names arrived at transitionally to become stabilized. In other words, refuse to take for granted the naming process. To this end, the intervals between *refuge* and *refuse*, *refused* and *refuse*, or even more importantly between *refuse* and *refuse* itself, are constantly played out. If, despite their relation, noun and verb inhabit the two very different and well-located worlds of designated and designator, the space in between them remains a surreptitious site of movement and passage whose open, communal character makes exclusive belonging and long-term residence undesirable, if not impossible. Passage: the state of metamorphosis; the conversion of water into steam; the alteration of an entire musical framework. Intervals-as-passage-spaces pass further into one another, interacting radically among themselves and communicating on a plane different to the one where the 'actions' of a scenario are explicitly situated. In intensity and *resonance* (more than in distance actually covered), the journey here continues.

. . . caught in the crossfire between camps
while carrying all five races on your back
not knowing which side to turn to, run from;

. . . In the Borderlands
you are the battleground
where enemies are kin to each other;
you are at home, a stranger,
the border disputes have been settled
the volley of shots have shattered the truce
you are wounded, lost in action
dead, fighting back;

. . . To survive the Borderlands
you must live sin fronteras
be a crossroads.[6]

'Never does one feel as solitary as when fleeing in the midst of millions', a refugee once said. A solitude born in/with the multitude is a solitude that remains potentially populous: utterly singular and yet collective, always crowded with other solitudes. By refusing to partake in categories of both the Refused and the Integrated, even while refusing and integrating, it may seem that

one gives oneself no place on which to stand, nowhere to head for. But to resort here – whether positively or negatively – to the popularized 'infinite shifting of the signifier' (often equated with the endless sliding/slurring of liberal-pluralist discourse) is merely to borrow a ready-made, an all-too-dwelled-on expression, that is bound to lose its relevance when irrelevantly used. Raising the doubt, however, invites contribution to the current struggle around positionalities (identities and differences); a struggle which, by its unsettling controversies, has at times been referred to as 'the war of position' in cultural politics. *You are the battleground/where enemies are kin to each other.*

Much has been written in the last few years about the totalizing nature of the logics of borders and of warring essences. Yet the questioning of oppositional stances that aim exclusively at reversing existing power relations is constantly at work among marginalized groups themselves. What has been 'a necessary fiction' to allow for the emergence of counter-narratives by second-class citizens seems to be no more and no less than a strategy in the complex fight for and against 'authorized marginality'. As Stuart Hall puts it, 'Once you enter the politics of the end of the essential black subject you are plunged headlong into the maelstrom of a continuously contingent, unguaranteed, political argument and debate: a critical politics, a politics of criticism.'[7] For many members of long-silenced cultures, if the claim to the rights of (self-)representation has been in some ways empowering, the shift to the politics of representation proves to be still more liberating, for what is renounced is simply an exclusive form of fictionalizing: namely, the habit of asserting/assigning identity by staking out one's/the other's territory, Africanizing the African, or Orientalizing the Oriental, for example, and reproducing thereby the confine-and-conquer pattern of dominance dear to the classic imperial quest.

Permanent unsettlement within and between cultures is here coupled with the instability of the word, whose old and new meanings continue to graft onto each other, engaged in a mutually transformative process that displaces, rather than simply denies, the traces of previous graftings. *You are at home, a stranger.* In the historical context of ethnic discrimination and devalorization, the re-appropriation of a negative label as an oppositional stance in cultural politics often functions as a means both to remind and to get rid of the label's derogatory connotations. At best, such a stance makes use of existing boundaries only to counter-politicize them,

leading thereby to a concurrent tightening and loosening of pre-established limits. *You are wounded, lost in action/dead, fighting back.* The question as to when one should 'mark' oneself (in terms of ethnicity, age, class, gender, or sexuality, for example), and when one should adamantly refuse such markings, continues to be a challenge. For answers to this query remain bound to the specific location, context, circumstance, and history of the subject at a given moment. Here, positionings are radically transitional and mobile. They constitute the necessary but arbitrary closures that make political actions and cultural practices possible.

The difficulties faced in the struggle around positionalities can also be found in the current, conflicted, debate over political representation between members of marginalized and centralized cultures. As has been pointed out, political criticism usually works by demonstrating what a text *could* mean (the possibilities in the production of meaning) while insinuating what a text *does* mean (the issue of its reception and political effectivity).[8] Thus, discussions of the 'politics of *interpretation*' often turn out to be complex, indirect interpretations of the 'politics of *interpreters*.' Uneasiness in 'trading on this ambiguity' has been repeatedly voiced by members on both sides; but, with the critical work effected in cultural politics, it has become more and more difficult to approach a subject by asking 'what', or even 'how', without also asking 'who', 'when', and 'where'? Power has always arrogated the right to mark its others, while going about unmarked itself. Within an economy of movement, the dominant self, the 'universal subject', represents himself as flexible, explorative, 'uncoloured' and unbounded in his moves, while those caught in the margin of non-movement are represented as 'coloured', authentic: that is, uncomplicatedly locatable and custom-bound. Always eager to demarcate the other's limits, We only set up frontiers *for ourselves* when Our interest is at stake.

While for many members of dominant groups, designating one's white ethnicity (to mention only one positioning) still appears largely 'useless' and 'redundant'; for members of marginalized groups, signalling one's non-white ethnicity remains as questionable, or even as objectionable, as denying it. *If you win, you lose.* When multiculturalism and cultural diversity (as defined by the West's liberal tradition) become sanctioned, the danger faced, predictably enough, is that of control and containment. Authorized marginality means that the production of 'difference' can be supervised, hence recuperated, neutralized and depoliticized. Unless they 'force' their

entry, therefore, marginalized 'interpreters' are permitted into the Establishment only so long as the difference they offer proves to be locatable and evaluable within the ruling norms. As Henry Louis Gates disarmingly puts it: 'Once scorned, now exalted . . . It takes all the fun out of being oppositional when someone hands you a script and says, "Be oppositional, please – you look so cute when you're angry."' (see fig. 2)[9]

Reflecting on the Black Panthers of the late 1960s, Jean Genet offered another view of the movement that further contributes to this discussion of the politics of representation. Like the Palestinian people, the African American people, as Genet saw it, are without land and have no territory of their own. Since 'land is the necessary basis for nationhood', it provides a place from which war can be fought and to which warriors can retreat. Being able neither to take refuge from, nor to stage a revolt in, the ghetto, nor, again, to march out from the ghetto to do battle on white territory – all American territory being under White Americans' control – the war the Panthers waged would have to 'take place elsewhere and by other means: in people's consciences'. Thus, the Black Panthers' first line of attack was launched by sight, by effecting visible changes in the way they saw themselves (hence in the way other people saw them). Metamorphosing the Black community while undergoing a metamorphosis in themselves, they emerged from non-visibility into extra-visibility. Not only did they build an unforgettable image of their own people ('Black is Beautiful'), they also brought to consciousness the link between every people that had ever been oppressed and robbed of its history and its legends ('All Power to the People'). Their strategy of war was to re-affirm and to push to ever greater *excess* their African identity, and their weapons may be said to consist of leather jackets, revolutionary hair-dos and *words* delivered in a 'gentle but menacing tone'. Despite the fact that they were heading for death or prison, the change they brought about with their metamorphosis made the Black struggle 'not only visible, but crystal clear'. The dramatic image deliberately created 'was a theater both for enacting a tragedy and for stamping it out – a bitter tragedy about themselves, a bitter tragedy for the Whites. They aimed to project their image in the press and on the screen until the Whites were haunted by it. And they succeeded.' In the end, 'the Panthers can be said to have overcome through poetry'.[10]

They won by losing, and they lost by winning. The forceful rejection of marginality thrives here on a vital attraction to marginality.

The conflict is only in name. 'The black words on the white American page are sometimes crossed out or erased. The best disappear, but it's they that make the poem, or rather the poem of the poem.'[11] Words and images can be starting points for actions; together they form memory and history. The powerful image wrested from the reality of despair continues to live on beyond the individuals who created it. But, with no programme to aim for, the movement quickly wore out; the spectacle of Blackness always ran the risk of being consumed as (colourful) *spectacle*. According to Martin Luther King, the slogans, which enchanted both Black and White youths, were necessary rallying cries for Black identity.[12] But above all, they were painful, reactive attempts to romanticize a cry of disappointment through the advocacy of an impossible separatism. For Genet, 'Power to the People' soon came to be a thoughtless habit, and, despite its seductive power, the Panthers' flashy image was too quickly accepted and 'too easily deciphered to last'.[13] But if, in his moments of reflexive speculation, Genet saw the Panthers as 'flamboyant youngsters' who 'were frauds', and their spectacle as 'mere figment', he also openly recognized that his 'whole life was made up of unimportant trifles cleverly blown up into acts of daring'.[14] (Genet's own tumultuous life and gay identity have been made a spectacle both in his own work and in the works of other well-known writers such as Sartre and Cocteau.) The awareness of his being 'a natural sham', invited to go first with the Panthers, and then with Palestinian soldiers to spend time 'in Palestine, in other words *in a fiction*', compelled him to go on playing the role of 'a dreamer inside a dream', or more acutely, of 'a European saying to a dream, "You are a dream – don't wake the sleeper!"'[15]

Nations and fictions. A man who spent his life drifting as an outcast from shore to shore, who explicitly refused to identify himself with the country of his birth, and whose metamorphosis had turned him into a stranger at home (France and the West having become 'utterly exotic' to his eyes), decided to engage all his energies in supporting the political dreams/realities of marginalized and dispossessed peoples. This is hardly surprising. *The soul has taken flight during dreamtime and has embarked on a no-return journey.* Yet he who persistently rejected any homeland, found himself paradoxically attracted to those (here the Palestinian people) who long for a territory of their own and whose ongoing struggle centres on an unswerving claim to the homeland from which they were driven. A claim? Perhaps the word again serves to block out another reality,

for longing here is also specifically refusing to be 'resettled.' In fact 'home', in itself, has no fixed territory: depending on the context in which it appears, it can convey the concept of settlement *or* unsettlement. The refusal to move from 'tents to huts' is a refusal to let oneself be duped into moving not only from one form of dispossession to another, but also from a mode of transitional dwelling or of resistance, to a mode of fixed dwelling or of compliance. Better service, better control.

But, the paradox, if any, is only in name. What made Genet draw the line – a line that matters here and now – and take up a position by the side of the dispossessed was not so much the voice of justice in its logic of naming, as the emotions it conveyed, or, better, its musical accuracy: *'I had greeted the revolt as a musical ear recognizes a right note.'*[16] Thus, despite his affectionate support of the Black Panther movement and passionate commitment to the Palestinian resistance, Genet can be said to have written *lovingly*: he wrote not merely to praise, but, more, to expose. To expose both the reality under 'the canvas, the zinc and the corrugated iron', and the acute consciousness of himself as not quite belonging ('a pink and white presence among them'), 'attracted but not blinded', crossing but only to *return*, standing perpetually *at the border*, trying not to pass for one of them nor to speak on their behalf. *'Justice at its best is love correcting everything that stands against love'* (Martin Luther King).[17] So goes the story of this dreamer whose fourteen years of commitment to the revolution were haunted by the memory of a little house in Irbid where he had spent one single night with a Palestinian soldier and his mother: 'An old man traveling from country to country, as much ejected by the one he was in as attracted by the others he was going to, rejecting the repose that comes from even modest property, was amazed by the collapse that took place in him . . . after a very long time, when he thought he'd really divested himself of all possessions, he was suddenly invaded, one can only wonder via what orifice, by a desire for a house, a solid fixed place, an enclosed orchard. Almost in one night he found himself carrying inside him a place of his own'.[18]

A MATTER OF TUNING

Meter is dogmatic, but rhythm is critical

(Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaux*)

. . . like indians
dykes have fewer and fewer
someplace elses to go
so it gets important
to know
about ideas and
to remember or uncover
the past
and how the people
traveled
all the while remembering
the idea they had
about who they were
indians, like dykes
do it all the time

. . . we never go away
even if we're always
leaving
because the only home
is each other
they've occupied all
the rest
colonized it; an
idea about ourselves is all
we own

(Paula Gunn Allen, *Some Like Indians Endure*)[19]

Living at the borders means that one constantly threads the fine line between positioning and de-positioning. The fragile nature of the intervals in which one thrives requires that, as a mediator-creator, one always travels transculturally while engaging in the local 'habitus' (collective practices that link habit with inhabitance) of one's immediate concern. A further challenge faced is that of assuming: assuming the presence of a no-presence, and vice versa. One's alertness to the complexities of a specific situation is always solicited as one can only effect a move by acknowledging, without occupying the centre, one's location(s) in the process of engendering meaning. Even when made visible and audible, such locations do not necessarily function as a means to *install* a (formerly denied or unexpressed) subjectivity. To the contrary, their inscription in

the process tends, above all, to disturb one's sense of identity. How to negotiate, for example, the line that allows one to commit oneself entirely to a cause and yet not quite belong to it? Or, to fare both as a foreigner on foreign land and as a stranger at home? *Be a crossroads.* Amazed by the collapse that is perpetually taking place in oneself (to adapt Genet's words), one sees oneself in constant metamorphosis, as if driven by the motion of change to places so profoundly hybrid as to exceed one's own imagination. Here, the space of representation itself also, and necessarily, becomes a 'content' in the emergence of 'form'.

For Gloria Anzaldua life in the Borderlands has been equated with *intimate terrorism*: 'Woman does not feel safe when her own culture, and white culture are critical of her.'[20] She has to confront both those who have alienated her and those for whom she remains the perennial 'alien.' Terrorized by the wounds they/she inflict/s on her/self, she is likely to assume at least two exiles (external and internal), if she is to live life on her own. I am a turtle, wherever I go I carry 'home' on my back . . . though 'home' permeates every sinew and cartilage in my body, I too am afraid of going home. Though I'll defend my race and culture . . . I abhor some of my culture's ways, how it cripples its women, *como burras*, our strengths used against us, lowly *burras* bearing humility with dignity.[21] *They have occupied all/the rest.* Unable simply to return home to her mother culture where she has been injured as *woman*, nor to settle down on the other side of the border (in the lost homeland, *El Otro Mexico*) as *alien* in the dominant culture, she thus sets about to divest (their) terrorism of its violently anti-feminist, anti-lesbian, anti-coloured legacy. *The only home/is each other.* She 'surrenders all notion of safety, of the familiar . . . [and] becomes a *nahual*, able to transform herself into a tree, a coyote, into another person'. Taking the plunge, she puts in motion a new *mestiza* culture based on an emerging 'racial, ideological, cultural and biological cross-pollinization, an "alien" consciousness, *una concienca de mujer* . . . a consciousness of the Borderlands'.[22] June Jordan writes:

> *as a Black feminist I ask myself and anyone who would call me sister, Where is the love?*[23]

Love, hatred, attraction, repulsion, suspension: all are music. The wider one's outlook on life, it is said, the greater one's musical hearing ability. The more displacements one has gone through, the

more music one can listen to. Appeal is a question of vibration. Was it Novalis who said that 'every illness is a musical problem'? Isn't it by the help of vibrations, often through the power of the word and the touch, that illnesses can be cured? For, in many parts of the world, music is not an art. It is a language and, for an attuned ear, the first language. One finds music in listening. In moments of isolation, alone with oneself or with nature. In moments of collective tuning, in the midst of a crowd or while working with a communal issue. *We never go away/even if we're always/ leaving.* 'Meeting across difference always requires mutual stretching', wrote Audre Lorde, 'and until you *can* hear me as a Black Lesbian feminist, our strengths will not be truly available to each other as Black women . . . I am a Black Lesbian, and I *am* your sister.'[24] A dive of the self into the self and out, unmeasured and unchartered, often leads to the realization that one does not in/un-habit one unitary, or two contradictory worlds. Some of us live only in a world external to ourselves, so that when we speak, we only speak *out;* when we point, we point to the world out there; from a largely unquestioned place of subjectivity. Others among us think we live in two contrasting (East–West) worlds, and when we speak, we speak within binary systems of thought. The 'other' is thus always located outside Us. When incorporated, it can only be recognized if it stands in opposition to the known and the familiar. But the dive up and down within self-set boundaries leads nowhere, unless self-set devices to cross them are also at work. Moving from flight to flight, more of us have come to see, not only that we live in many worlds at the same time, but also that these worlds are, in fact, all in the same place: the place each one of us is here and now.

In Asian cultures, it is commonly said that one should not receive a word by hearing it only with one's ears, when one can also develop the ability to receive the same word with one's mind and heart. Caught in a shifting framework of articulation, words and concepts undergo a transformative process where they continue to resonate upon each other on many planes at once, exceeding the limit of some imagined, singular, plane where all the 'actions' are supposed to be carried out. To develop the ability to receive with more than one's eyes or ears is to expand that part of oneself which is receptive but can remain atrophied, almost closed, when its potential lies dormant. For even though everyone is endowed with such a potential, almost no one is 'naturally' tuned to this pitch of acute intensity where music, flowing both outside and within

ourselves, defines all activities of life. Wrote a thinker of the West: the faculty of being 'receptive', 'passive', is a precondition of freedom: it is the ability to see things in their own right, to experience the joy enclosed in them, the erotic energy of nature . . . This receptivity is itself the soil of creation: it is opposed, not to productivity, but to *destructive* productivity.[25] *Meeting and parting at crossroads, we each walk our own path.*

Receptivity is a two-way movement. To be receptive, one has to turn oneself into a responsive mould. The simultaneously passive–active process enables one to be tuned by one's changing environment, while also developing the ability to tune oneself independently of any environment. Music, here, is both what makes creation possible and the means of receiving it. *How the people/ traveled/ all the while remembering/ the idea they had/ about who they were.* In the Chinese Yin and Yang principle, such movements of receptivity are nothing other than the fundamental movement of inhalation and exhalation that sets into motion and sustains all of life. Also called the Two *Ch'i* or the Breaths of Heaven and Earth, the Yin and Yang concept is one in which, significantly enough, the two motions inward and outward, or upward and downward, are actually understood as one and the same motion. Thus, Two does not necessarily imply separateness, for it is never really equated with duality, and One does not necessarily exclude multiplicity, for it never expresses itself in one single form, or in uniformity. The perpetual motion of life and death is represented with acuity in the emblem of the disk of the *T'ai Chi*. Here, the Yin and Yang are visually reproduced in the light and dark halves of the circle and, notably, these are not divided by a straight line, but by a curve, whose S-shape ingeniously depicts the constant ebb and flow, or rhythmic alternation, the forward/renewed and backward/decline movement, that regulates the fabric of life down to its smallest details. It stands for the active and passive, masculine and feminine, positive and negative forces found, for example, in mountain and water, sun and moon, South and North, motion and rest, advance and return. And the naming can go on, multiplied a thousandfold (see fig. 3).

Refuse. Return. Resonance sets into motion and sustains all creative processes. It makes all the *difference*. As John Cage used to say, poetry is not prose simply because it is formalized differently, or because of its content and ambiguity, but rather, because it allows 'musical elements (time, sound) to be introduced into the world of words'.[26] The inhaling and exhaling is the work of rhythm, or of

Breath, manifested as voice, sound, word: whether audible or silent, spoken or written, outside or within. And rhythm is what lies in between night and day and makes possible their process of alternation in alterity. Thanks to the rhythm of the heart, mind, body and soul can be poetically tuned. The effect of music is to solicit a situation of perpetual inter-tuning, in which the rhythm of another person is constantly adopted and transformed while the person untunes him/herself to vibrate *into* the music that is being performed. What attracts a listener to a music is, above all, rhythm and resonance in the making. How it comes and goes, leaving its marks, changing the course of things, and resonating intensely in the listener at times when it is least expected. Rhythm is then always vital, for it always departs from metre and measure to link those critical moments of passage when things unfold while in metamorphosis, and when the process of tuning oneself consists in finding not only the transitional pitch necessitated at a given moment – *motion* – but also one's own (many-and/in-one-) pitch – *rest*. The struggle of positionalities may in the end be said to depend upon the accurate tuning of one's many selves. *Where is the love*?

A finale. Although he dressed, behaved and lived like a Buddhist priest, the Japanese poet Matsuo Basho likened himself to something best named 'bat', being, as he put it, 'neither priest nor layman, bird nor rat, but something in between'.[27]

Notes

1. Jean Genet, *Prisoner of Love*, trans. B. Bray (Hanover and London: Wesleyan University Press, 1992), p. 12.
2. This is a comment on the Vietnamese camps by Chuman, RAFU Shimpo, 21 May, 1975. Quoted William T. Liu, Marganne Lamanna, Alice Muratain *Transition to Nowhere: Vietnamese Refugees in America* (Nashville, TN: Charter House P, 1979), p. 102.
3. Barry Wain, *The Refused: The Agony of the Indochina Refugees* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1981), p. 10 (my emphasis).
4. See E.F. Kunz, 'The Refugee in Flight: Kinetic Models and Forms of Displacement', *International Migration Review*, no. 7 (1973), pp. 125–46.
5. Nguyen Thi Trau, quoted in Liu *et al.*, *Transition to Nowhere*, p. 170.
6. Gloria Anzaldua, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute, 1987), pp. 194–5.
7. Stuart Hall, 'New Ethnicities', *ICA Documents*, no. 7 (on Black Film British Cinema), London, 1988, p. 28.

8. Henry Louis Gates, Jr, *Loose Canons* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 183.
9. Ibid, p. 185.
10. Jean Genet, *Prisoner of Love*, pp. 47, 83–4, 86.
11. Ibid, p. 218.
12. See Martin Luther King, Jr, *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?* (New York: Bantam, 1968).
13. Genet, *Prisoner of Love*, p. 42.
14. Ibid, pp. 258, 148.
15. Ibid, p. 149 (my emphasis).
16. Ibid, p. 7.
17. King, *Where Do We Go From Here?*, p. 43.
18. Genet, *Prisoner of Love*, pp. 318–19.
19. In Gloria Anzaldua (ed.), *Making Faces, Making Soul: Haciendo Caras* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute F, 1990), pp. 300–1.
20. Anzaldua, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, p. 20.
21. Ibid, p. 21.
22. Ibid, pp. 83, 77.
23. June Jordan, 'Where Is The Love?' in Anzaldua, *Making Faces*, p. 174.
24. Audre Lorde, 'I Am Your Sister: Black Women Organizing Across Sexualities', in ibid, pp. 321, 325.
25. Herbert Marcuse, *Counter-revolution and Revolt* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1972), p. 74.
26. John Cage, *Silence* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press), p. x.
27. Matsuo Basho, quoted in Ryusaku Tsunoda *et al.* (eds), *Sources of Japanese Tradition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1958; reprinted 1965), p. 456.

Rethinking Borders

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First published 1996 by
MACMILLAN PRESS LTD
Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG21 6XS
and London
Companies and representatives
throughout the world

ISBN 978-1-349-12727-6 ISBN 978-1-349-12725-2 (eBook)
DOI 10.1007/978-1-349-12725-2

A catalogue record for this book is available
from the British Library.

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1
05 04 03 02 01 00 99 98 97 96

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